

Official Report

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

46TH Sitting

Monday, 21ST November, 2016

Assembly convened at 2.35p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave from Sitting

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave from today's Sitting has been granted to the Hon. Members, Mr. John Adams, Mr. Collin Croal, Mr. Neendkumar and Mr. Adrian Anamayah.

Providing copies of all Documents to Hansard Division

Mr. Speaker: I have been asked, Hon. Members, to remind you to provide copies of all documents quoted from to the Hansard Division of this House.

Seminar on Parliamentary and Civil Oversight of Oil and Gas

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you are invited to attend a seminar on Parliamentary and Civil Oversight of Oil and Gas on 2nd December, 2016 in the Parliament Chamber. This seminar will be conducted in two half-day sessions. If Hon. Members are unable to attend the morning session, a similar session will be held in the afternoon which you could attend. The seminar has

been organised by the High Commission of Canada and further details will be provided by the Parliament Office.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following paper was laid:

- (1) The Supreme Court of Guyana Civil Procedure Rules 2016 No. 2 of 2016. [*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]

MOTION OF PRIVILEGE

MOTION OF PRIVILEGE ON THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH DR. GEORGE NORTON'S STATEMENTS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, 8TH AUGUST, 2016

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I received a Motion of Privilege from the Hon. Member, Dr. Frank Anthony, seconded by the Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, requesting that the Hon. Member, Dr. George Norton, the Minister of Public Health, be referred to the Committee of Privileges. Hon Member, Dr. Frank Anthony, you may proceed with the motion.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

“WHEREAS during the examination of Supplementary Financial Paper # 1 of 2016 on August 8th, 2016, the Minister of Public Health, Dr. George Norton, admitted that the government had entered into a multi-year rental agreement with a new company, Linden Holdings Company, to store pharmaceuticals and medical supplies;

AND WHEREAS the Minister misinformed and misled the National Assembly and the nation repeatedly on the occasion when he stated that

- (i) the reason that no procurement process was followed with regard to the selection of the company, Linden Holdings Company, for a three (3) year contract was that the facility was required on an emergency basis;
- (ii) the newly rented facility for storing pharmaceuticals and medical supplies was certified in keeping with international standards set out by PAHO/WHO;

- (iii) the Minister had visited the facility on several occasions and pharmaceutical and medical supplies were already being stored there;
- (iv) the cost of the space being rented was cheaper than what the Ministry of Health had been paying the New Guyana Pharmaceutical Company;
- (v) the multi-year contract referred to the rental of a bond to store pharmaceuticals and medical supplies.

AND WHEREAS the Minister was unable to enlighten the House as to the nature of the emergency which required another pharmaceutical bond, and, one in particular to be based in Georgetown, when there is adequate space at the Diamond government-owned Bond as well as the Georgetown Public Hospital Bond;

AND WHEREAS according to the transcript of this sitting, the Minister admitted to the House that there was no public tendering, and, in fact, there was no procurement process followed with regard to the selection of Linden Holdings Company for a 3 year contract;

AND WHEREAS the Minister informed the House that the new rented facility is not only suitable for the storage of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies but, in fact, medical supplies were already being stored in it in keeping with standards set out by the PAHO/WHO;

AND WHEREAS, most grievously, the Minister claimed to have personally visited the location on several occasions and affirmed it was fully in accordance with international standards for the storage of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies;

AND WHEREAS this was found to not be so; published photographic evidence illustrated on August 8th and days after, that this was an empty residential building of less than 6000 square feet which was devoid of facilities required for a fully equipped and certified pharmaceutical bond as claimed by the Minister;

AND WHEREAS the House was informed that G\$25M had already been paid in rental and security deposit for the period July to August 2016 as provided for in the Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1 of 2016 yet as of August 8th 2016 the building was

empty of any pharmaceuticals and medical supplies and was not in a position to store any medicines or any other medical supplies as was claimed;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Health when questioned, misinformed the House with regard to the cost of the rental of Bond space at the New Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation (NGPC) at G\$19 M per month when in fact under the PPPC government the Bond was provided free of cost, and, according to the Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1 of 2016 the cost of the rent for the NGPC Bond for the months of March —June 2016 was G\$9.6 M per month;

AND WHEREAS the Minister in doing so deliberately attempted to justify the cost of the rental for the Sussex Street property owned by the Linden Holdings Company at Company at G\$12.5 M per month, and in doing so, misinformed the House;

AND WHEREAS the contents of the 3 year contract with the Linden Holding Company, which the Minister subsequently shared with the House, contradict the statements made by the Minister in the National Assembly, as it states that it was a rental contract for a "professional office" and not a bond; and, nor does the contract stipulate anything about the provision of facilities to meet the requirements for the storage of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Minister of Public Health Dr. George Norton be sent to the Privilege Committee for misleading the National Assembly and the nation repeatedly during the debate on the Supplementary Financial Papers No. 1 and No 2 of 2016 at the August 8th sitting with regard to the multi-year contract with the Linden Holdings Company for a pharmaceutical bond.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. Hon. Members, I consider the motion to be in order and I have found that a *prima facie* case, in my judgement, has been made out. The matter will, therefore, be referred to the Committee of Privileges for attention. I thank you.

Motion referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: Mr. Speaker, if it pleases you, on a Point of Clarification...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the Speaker has ruled and there is nothing that I would entertain now. Please proceed Clerk.

STATEMENTS BY MINSTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I am advised that three Ministers will be making brief statements, the Hon. Mr. Basil Williams, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, the Hon. Ms. Amna Ally, Minister of Social Cohesion and the Hon. Mr. Winston Jordon, Minister of Finance. In that order, I invite the Hon. Mr. Basil Williams, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

Guyana's progress under the 3rd Round Mutual Evaluation of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF)

Mr. Williams: If it pleases you Mr. Speaker.

Guyana's progress under the 3rd Round Mutual Evaluation.

The Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) is one of eight Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBS) and is responsible for promoting consistency in the application of the FATF recommendations within countries of the Caribbean and Central America. Guyana is a member of the CFATF organisation which currently has 26 member states within the Caribbean Basin. These states have agreed to implement common countermeasures to address the problem of Money Laundering/Financing of Terrorism. The CFATF's main objective is to achieve effective implementation of FATF's Recommendations within the region. The CFATF decision making body, the CFATF Plenary, meets twice yearly.

Guyana joined the CFATF in 2002 and had its second mutual evaluation as part of the CFATF's third Round of the Mutual Evaluations in January, 2010. The evaluation of Guyana's AML/CFT regime was based on the FATF's Forty Recommendations (2003), and the Nine Special Recommendations on Terrorist Financing (2001), and was prepared using the AML/CFT Methodology (2004).

The rating of compliance with the 40 plus nine recommendations were made according to four levels of compliance mentioned in the 2004 methodology as follows:

Compliant (C)

Largely Compliant (LC)

Partially Compliant (PC)

Non-Compliant (NC)

Guyana's 3rd Round Mutual Evaluation Report (MER) was adopted by the CFATF Council of Ministers in May 2011 in Honduras.

2.50 p.m.

Guyana's MER was published on July 25th 2011. In that report Guyana was rated as follows:

- partially compliant or non-compliant on all 16 of the core and key recommendations as well as on 27 of the other recommendation;
- compliant on one recommendation; and
- largely compliant on five recommendations.

The CFATF follow-up process.

As a result of Guyana overall level of compliance with the FATF 40-plus recommendation Guyana was placed in expedited follow-up at the CFATF May 2011 plenary and was required to report under the CFATF follow-up process every plenary. Between May 2011 and November 2016 the CFATF published 11 follow-up reports on Guyana. Guyana was finally removed from the CFATF follow-up process at the recently concluded CFATF plenary held in Turks and Caicos from November 7th to 10th 2016.

The CFATF International Co-operations Review Group (ICRG) process: As a result of being rated partially compliant or non-compliant on all 16 of the core and key recommendations in the Mutual Evaluation Report, Guyana was also placed in the CFATF ICRG process at the May 2011 plenary and was required to report to the CFATF ICRG every plenary. Guyana was

therefore under the CFATF follow-up process as well as the CFATF ICRG process simultaneously.

Due to insufficient progress made by Guyana under the CFATF ICRG process, Guyana was featured on three CFATF public statements, May 30th 2013, November 20th 2013 and May 29th 2014, and was subsequently referred to the CFATF ICRG in May 2014.

In June 2014 FATF decided to take up Guyana's deficiency matter. In May 2015 the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government came to office and His Excellency the President Brigadier David Arthur Granger gave a high level commitment to the President of FATF of Guyana's intention to apply with FATF's recommendations. The result was that Guyana was removed from the CFATF ICRG process and the CFATF public statement at the recently concluded CFATF plenary held in the Turks and Caicos as aforesaid.

It should be noted that following Guyana's referral to the FATF ICRG in May 2014, Guyana continues to report to the CFATF under the CFATF follow-up process but ceased to continue to report the CFATF ICRG under the ICRG process, even though Guyana remained in the ICRG.

FATF: The Financial Action Task Force is an intergovernmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of the members jurisdictions. The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. The FATF is, therefore, "a policy making body" which works to generate the necessarily political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.

The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financial techniques and counter measures and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally. In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF work is to identify national-level vulnerability with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse. The FATF decision making body, the FATF plenary, meets three times per year.

The FATF ICRG: The FATF ICRG is one of four working groups of the FATF. The ICRG identifies and engages with jurisdictions that have strategic deficiencies and reviews and

monitors a large number of potentially high risk and non-cooperative jurisdictions around the world. As indicated earlier the FATF ICRG took up Guyana's deficiency at its June 2014 plenary. Since then Guyana agreed to an action plan with the FATF ICRG on August 2014. The action plan contained the following eight items:

- i. Criminalising money laundering and financing of terrorism
- ii. Confiscation of provisional measures
- iii. Financially institution secrecy laws
- iv. Customer due diligence and beneficial ownership
- v. Reporting of suspicious transactions
- vi. Targeting financial sanctions related to terrorism and terrorist finance
- vii. AMLCFT supervisory regime
- viii. Financial Intelligence Unit

At the FATF plenary and working group meetings held in October 2014, the FATF plenary approved the action plan which was agreed by FATF ICRG and Guyana and featured Guyana for the first time on the Public Document Improving Global Compliance: On-going process. Guyana remains on FATF public document until June 2016, having being featured on six public documents, October 2014, February 2015, June 2015, October 2015, February 2016 and June 2016. It is important to note that Guyana has been making tremendous progress since June 2015 and this was reflected in each document that was published subsequently.

At the FATF plenary held on June 2016 in Busan, Korea, the FATF decided that Guyana had finally fully addressed, at a technical level, all the items on action plan which is agreed with the FATF. In that regard, FATF ordered an on-site visit to Guyana to be conducted in September 2016 to confirm that the process in implementing the required reforms and actions was on the way to address deficiency previously identified by that body.

On September 15th and 16th 2016 the on-site visit was conducted by representatives from the FATF and CFATF. At the FATF plenary held in Paris, France, October 17th to 21st 2016 the

FATF ICRG reported that it was satisfied that Guyana has commenced implementation and recommended that Guyana be removed from the FATF public document. At that same plenary the decision was made to move Guyana from the FATF public document and refer Guyana back to CFATF to continue to be monitored by that body.

In conclusion, exiting the FATF ICRG process and both the CFATF follow-up and the CFATF ICRG processes, all in one year, is definitely a great achievement for Guyana. Financial institutions in Guyana can now carry out transactions without the hassles and delays they have grown used to due to enhance scrutiny required as a result of Guyana being on FATF public document or the CFATF public statement.

Guyana was, however, warned by both the FATF and CFATF to be cognisance of the fact that existing the third round means that we are now in the fourth rounds of mutual evaluation with which will come with tremendous challenges. Under the fourth round, countries are assessed for technical compliance to the FATF revised 40 recommendations as well as the level of effectiveness of the AMLCFT system. This, therefore, means that we still have a lot of work to do.

Thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Private Members' Day Granted

Minister of Social Cohesion [Ms. Ally]: Mr. Speaker, Members of this honourable House, I wish to categorically state that Government has not hijacked Private Members' Day in the National Assembly as it is being peddled by the Opposition in and out of this National Assembly.

I wish to refer to Standing Order 24 (2) which states:

“Subject to the Provisions of these Standing Orders, Government Business shall have precedence on every day except on every fourth sitting when Private Members' Business shall have precedence.”

The counting of the sitting began with the first sitting which was held in accordance with article 55 of the Constitution and continued numerically until Parliament is prorogued, under article 70

(1) or 70 (2), respectively by the President. In consonant with the Constitution, I have to place on record that for the Eleventh Parliament, the 1st Sitting was on the 10th June 2015. November 4th 2016 was the 45th Sitting, a Government Business Day. The 48th Sitting would be for the Opposition or Private Members' Day, whenever that 48th Sitting will be.

However, the Government, at no time, will seek to take away the rights of anyone, in particular the Opposition. However, Government has agreed to allow motions tabled by the Opposition to be debated at today's sittings. This is concessionary and a one-off concession. Very important, budget debate sessions are not in the count. I, therefore, wish to set the record straight and urge my Opposition colleagues to desist from continuing to mislead the public.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Announcement of the date for the Budget Presentation

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Mr. Speaker, it would be recalled that during the address to this House, at the opening of this session of the Parliament, His Excellency President David Granger did announce that the Budget 2017 will be presented to this House on December 5th 2016.

Since that time some events have unfolded, not least of which is the fact that our Comrades on the western side of the House will be holding an important conference for which, counting from December 5th, certain days they would like to be blocked out for their conference. Again, in the spirit of compromise, we have deliberated and decided to advance the date of the budget to November 28th 2016. Budget 2017 would be presented on November 28th.

Before I take my seat, I wish that this date, and the budget itself, remains within the purview of the executive. I say this because there have been so many different other individuals, other than the Minister of Finance, who have been speculating about this date. I have seen a while ago, reading a certain "Parliamentary Corner", a date of the budget being announced without the Minister of Finance being given the courtesy of doing so. I would wish that this courtesy be extended to the Minister of Finance before the date of the budget is announced in the future.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

INTRODUCTION OF BILL AND FIRST READING

PRIME MINISTER HAMILTON GREEN PENSION BILL – Bill NO. 23/2016

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide a pension, benefits and other facilities to Hamilton Green, Prime Minister from 1985 to 1992, to enable him to live in keeping with the high office he occupied.” [*Minister of Finance*]

3.05 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

MOTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I had indicated to you at our last sitting that an agreement had been reached between the Government’s Chief Whip and the Opposition Chief Whip in relation to Private Members’ Business being taken today. I merely reiterate that that agreement stands.

There stands in the name of Hon. Member Mohamed Irfaan Ali a motion in relation to “Parking Meter Project in the City of Georgetown.” I have received notification and I have concluded, through that notification, that this matter is now *sub judice* and would not be taken today.

D’URBAN PARK DEVELOPMENT JUBILEE PROJECT

WHEREAS Guyana is celebrating its 50th Anniversary of political independence this year, and as a consequence, the Government, proceeded to construct a facility now known as the Jubilee Park to host a number of the anniversary activities, including the flag raising ceremony and float parade;

AND WHEREAS this National Assembly was informed that this project would be funded by private individuals through an unnamed private organisation;

AND WHEREAS there were no budgetary provisions in the 2015 nor 2016 annual budgets for the Jubilee D’Urban Park Development Project;

AND WHEREAS in April, 2016, a public announcement was made by the Ministry of the Presidency that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure has been assigned responsibility to complete this facility in time for the hosting of the planned Independence celebrations;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Public Infrastructure announced that \$150M of its budgetary allocation would be expended on the completion of this project;

AND WHEREAS no public disclosure or consultations were held with the citizens or national stakeholders as it relates to this project, nor were any architectural designs and overall projected costs for its construction and completion made public;

AND WHEREAS Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1 of 2016 provided for an additional \$407.6M from the Contingencies Fund on this project;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Public Infrastructure during the scrutiny of this Supplementary provision was unable to provide the National Assembly on August 8, 2016, with the final costs of the project, nor information on the funds raised and materials etc., donated prior to his April takeover,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly in the interest of public accountability, transparency and good governance calls upon the Government to make full disclosure on the following:

- (1) The name(s) of the individuals and the private organisation which were in charge of this project from its inception to the April takeover by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure;
- (2) The donors and their contributions in cash and/or kind who contributed to the initial phase and completion of the Jubilee D’Urban Park Development Project;
- (3) Inform the House whether any and which of these contributions were submitted to the Consolidated Fund;
- (4) The list of contractor/s and the process of procurement used to secure those engaged;
- (5) The budgeted and actual costs for every phase of the project completed and a projected final cost for the overall project;

- (6) Payments made to individuals, contractors and companies as it relates to this project;
- (7) Liabilities, if any, to individuals, contractors and companies that are owed for works and services provided to this project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Government informs this House as to:

- (1) The agency now assigned responsibility for the day to day management of the facility;
- (2) The recurrent cost for the maintenance, security, utilities and all other expenditure as it relates to the operation of this facility per annum; and
- (3) Plans for sustainable use of this facility.” [*Bishop Edghill*]

Bishop Edghill: I feel compelled to open my presentation by saying that I am made to feel that it is almost a special privilege to be able to speak this afternoon, especially in light of the statements that were made, that concessions were granted and all the rest of it. My understanding is that Hon. Members of this House share that right and privilege equally, whether we are in the Government or in the Opposition benches. It is in that context that I stand this afternoon to move this motion that is standing in my name.

The first thing I would like to indicate is that I would have thought, as citizen, that this motion was wholly unnecessary had the Government simply lived up to its word that it promised the people of Guyana that it would be transparent and accountable. This motion is seeking to compel the Government to do what it promised the people of Guyana. That is a difficulty. That is because voluntarily on every soapbox and platform, which existed in the run up to the 2015 electoral campaign, there were the words “transparency”, “accountability” and “good governance”. The banners were strong across the main thoroughfares - “Time for accountability”, “Time for transparency” and “Time for good governance.” Here it is that this afternoon we have to be moving a motion to compel the Government to give information to the citizens of Guyana on a matter they ought to know. The truth about it is that I do not even know if some of the Members, who are heckling on the other side, know the answers to the questions because it would appear that this would have become a state secret.

The thrust of this motion would be found in the “BE IT RESOLVED” clause, “That this National Assembly in the interest of public accountability, transparency and good governance calls upon the Government to make full disclosure on the following...” I would go into details in what we are asking for. Transparency, as I understand, is operating in such a manner or way that the actions, which are taken or preformed, are known by the parties and stakeholders concerned. This D’Urban Park Development Jubilee Project, and based on public pronouncements, is supposed to be ongoing, even though we have seen since after the May celebrations a halted. We do not know what has taken place and there are many things that we do know as it relates to what has taken place. The questions have to be asked: Why is the cloudiness? Why is the haziness? I dare say, why is there the muddiness as it relates to the information? Why is this absence of information? The Guyanese people want to know. Why is it that we do know, for example, the name of the holding company or the private company that these donations were made to?

We are asking this afternoon, through this motion, that the rights of citizens to know and to have information must be upheld and the Government must come clean. I use that word strongly - the Government must come clean on this particular issue. Is there something to hide? Well, if there is nothing to hide, the Government has an opportunity this afternoon to prove me and all Members on the Opposition benches wrong by simply disclosing answers to all the questions.

In any democracy, transparency helps citizens to monitor the actions of their Government. The fact that citizens could monitor the actions of their Government, it is a mechanism to reduce corruption. If a Government is not allowing citizens access to information so that they could monitor the action of that Government, that Government could be accused of being corrupted. I would ask this afternoon that the Government makes the case to the people of Guyana that they are not corrupted. I would like the representatives of the Government to prove to the people this afternoon, in this National Assembly, that they are not corrupted; they have clean hands as what would have been said in this House before. It is because they have clean hands they would tell the people of Guyana the names of the individuals and the private organisations which were in charge of the project from the inception to April takeover by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. We want to know the name of the company or the private individuals who the donations were been made to and who are their principals. If you are not corrupted say it this

afternoon, and if you cannot say it this afternoon, the people of Guyana would believe that you are the most corrupted that they have ever seen.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I have a Point of Order.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have the floor on a Point of Order.

Mr. Williams: Yes, please. Standing Order 40 (a), the Hon. Member is repeatedly imputing improper motive to the Members of this side of the House, his language. He was allowed one extravagance, but he is repeatedly making that. We are objecting to that statement that he is making, imputing corruption to the Members of this side of the House. We are asking that he withdraws it and discontinues.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Bishop Edghill, you may continue. I would ask you to avoid the use of the word “corrupted. It was just drawn to my attention. It is one of the words which constitutes unparliamentarily language.

Bishop Edghill: If the Hon. Attorney General would have like me to submit my presentation for vetting by him before I speak, he should say so.

We need to know the names - we would not be distracted by this - of the individuals and the private organisations which were in charge of this project from its inception.

Secondly, this motion calls in the BE IT RESOLVED section that

“The donors and their contributions in cash and/or kind who contributed to the initial phase and completion of the Jubilee Durban Park Development Project” be known.”

We would not accept the excuse that the donators do not want their names to be made public. This is not a political party that you are donating to. It is the state. You are donating to the state. I would have a difficulty if we are going to hear that excuse this afternoon. We would have to ask the question if at the time of these donations being made, these individuals, companies or corporations, which were donating, were not aware that they were donating to the state. As far as we are aware the D’Urban Park belongs to the state. It is a state project, so we are not going to take the excuse that the donors do not want publicity or they do not want people to know.

We see donors. They donate buses, bicycles and boats. We see them making public that this person donated this bus and this person donated the bicycle, so what is the secrecy about the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project.

We need to know that if these donations were properly recorded and are part of the assets and recorded in the asset register of the state. We need to know that this afternoon in this debate. We need to know if these contributions, which were made by individuals firms and private individuals, were submitted to the Consolidated Fund.

3.20 p.m.

There are some very important questions that exist, especially in the lack of clarity and in the lack of information: Were these donors forced? Were they coerced? Were they manipulated? Were specific promises made to them? Were they advised about this new policy that we have since learnt about called political investment? Were these donations that were made to D'Urban Park, part of a wider policy? Were these donors advised of this policy, that if you make a political investment you could get certain rewards down the line? We need to find that out. More than that, the citizens of Guyana want to know what role, if any, SOCU played. That is S-O-C-U - the Special Organised Crime Unit.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, it would be good if we stick to what we are seeking to present here. I say this as a word of caution. Please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: We need to know the manner, the approach and how this whole process of persons being aware that they can donate, because I did not see any public advertising anywhere that if you are interested in donating to the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project, you could go to a particular office. Was there a special list that was drawn up and persons were contacted? If they were contacted, who were they contacted by and what were they told? We did not see, as in any other activity, that when there is fund raising that you could go to a particular bank and there is an account that you could make your deposit in. We need to have the information. The question must be asked: Was this an opportunity for all who did not donate to the election campaign of the APNU/AFC to fall in line by donating to D'Urban Park? These questions are logical questions because of the absence of information. If we had the information, we would not have to be asking these questions.

This Government has not built a bridge; it has not built a highway; it has not built a hospital; it has not built any significant infrastructure. The first project that the citizens of Guyana have an opportunity to see that this Government engaged in is the D'Urban Park. It is not only the first, it is probably the only at this particular stage, because any other thing that it is engaged in, it is completing what was started before. This was its first opportunity to prove that what it told the people would not just stop at being good rhetoric but that it will put its words into actions. It was its first excursion and it went forth. Here is it that after 17 months there is a dearth of information, secrecy prevails and we do not know and we are bringing this. The D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project was envisaged and embarked upon as publicly disclosed as providing a facility to host our 50th Independence anniversary celebrations. We need to remind this House that there is a world-class facility in Guyana, with all of the facilities that are required, called the Guyana National Stadium where this activity could have been held. We were told that the Guyana National Stadium cannot accommodate the capacity crowd that was expected. What is built at D'Urban Park, any third form math student could count that it cannot hold 30,000 people. Any third form math student will know that because that student can estimate that those wooden bleachers, which have been put up there, cannot host or hold 30,000 as proclaimed by some propagandist from the Government's benches.

What was of great concern is that there is Guyana National Stadium which has washroom facilities, running water, has parking lots inside and outside, VIP parking, and it is built in an environment where traffic could be controlled and regulated. All of that was ignored. We went into this adventure of having this D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project which, as I understand, is still incomplete, with all of the excuses that were offered.

Questions were asked in this House at the time of the presentation of the Budget 2015 about financing for D'Urban Park and we were told the answers, which we were seeking, were not necessary because the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project did not make a call on the budget. The Budget 2016 was presented, questions were asked again and similar answers were given. It did not make a call on the budget, so they did not have to answer the questions. Lo and behold, in April of this year, I think it is, an announcement was made that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure will take over responsibility for the completion of this D'Urban Park Development

Jubilee Project and a \$150 million from the Contingencies Fund would have been utilised for this project.

The Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) indicates how moneys can be drawn from the Contingencies Fund. It must be urgent; it must be unforeseen and it must be unavoidable. Here it is that there is a project that started in 2015 where there was no funding provided for in the budget, continuing in 2016 where there was no funding provided for in the budget. We heard that there was some falling out because there was *Chinagate* and some of the donations, which were rolling, and some of the machinery, which was present on the site, started rolling off. As *Chinagate* warmed up, those who were concerned and involved in *Chinagate* started rolling out and whoever were the donors were no longer coming forth. All of a sudden a project, which started in 2015 when there was a budget and no provision was made, no cost to the treasury and a project that continued in 2016 when a budget was laid, debated and passed and no moneys were allocated for this project, became “urgent, unforeseen and unavoidable”. In breach of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, moneys were utilised on this project. I would like the Members of the Government benches to explain to this House what was unforeseen, what was urgent and what was unavoidable that allowed them to have access to the Contingencies Fund to get \$150 million.

The matter did not end there because while we thought that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure would have gone in and would have done its assessment and it would have had its engineers and the technical people would have determined what needed to be done to complete the work in time for our independence celebration, and it was based upon that assessment that the figure of \$150 million was given. When we were debating Financial Paper No. 1, I think it is, we discovered that the sum grew from \$150 million to \$406.7 million of taxpayers’ money and still counting. We have since learnt from the Report of the Auditor General’s 2015 that moneys from the Guyana Lottery Fund were also used on this project. We already know that in excess of \$450 million of thereabout of taxpayer’s money has already been expended on D’Urban Park and the people of Guyana, the taxpayers of Guyana, want to know what is happening there and thus we brought this motion to be able to get clarity.

This National Assembly is not a press conference in which people could put spins on things. This National Assembly is not a press conference in which people could hide from the press by

speaking for half an hour, allow two questions and avoid the questions. This National Assembly is the place where the Government is brought to book and it has to give an account to the people of Guyana. That is what we are doing here this afternoon – bringing the Government to book. It must account to the people of Guyana. The Government cannot just wake up one morning and determine that it will raid the treasury and it will use a \$150 million by way of a public announcement.

3.35 p.m.

Then it ends up being \$400 million plus. You then go to the Lotto Fund. To date, people do not know who, why and what so that is why we brought this motion this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we should avoid descending, where governance is concerned, into the vulgarity that says, “I do not have to answer. I do not have to tell you that. That is Government’s business.” I am reminded that human beings are allowed, because of their ego, to display some amount of arrogance, like we would have seen. If you will be arrogant, you should at least do something. And, if you will do something, do it properly.

Public accountability requires that we take a posture that we are servants of the people. That is what elected officials are; they are servants of the people. This motion is not because Juan Edghill has some private interest. It is because the public’s interest must be served and information must be given to the public. When we make decisions, the people who will be affected by those decisions must know why we are making those decisions and the process by which those decisions are derived. It is not only the decision that is made but it is how we got there.

How was D’Urban Park conceptualised? We have seen a drawing or an artist impression and certainly what you have there does not look anything near to the artist impression. The two things do not go together. I would expect that, during the course of this debate, somebody from the Government, and I have noticed in the line-up of speakers, two very important players have not been listed to speak on this motion... It is of great concern to me. The people of Guyana must know that. The Minister of State, who was publicly displayed and his photograph was in several dailies inspecting the Project with the President and the Project Co-ordinator, Col. London, is not speaking to this motion.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure who took over this Project... [An Hon. Member: He is now added.] He is now added. He has decided to be added. I am very happy about that because we want the information. Like I said, this is not a press conference; this is the place of accountability. Let the people who know the facts... A lot of the Members, who are heckling on the other side, also want to know. If the media could get anyone of the backbenchers on the Government side and tell them to give them answers to these questions, they cannot tell them because they do not know. These questions that are being asked this afternoon are not only to help the Opposition; they are even to help some of you. I know that you are interested in the answers. You might be surprised to hear what you will hear this afternoon.

We want to know what the budgeted cost is. When this Project started, how much was budgeted as the cost for its completion? What was the estimate? We also want to know what the actual cost is for every phase of the Project completed and a projected final cost for the overall Project. I am not sure that we are aware of what stage we are at in the Project – if we are in Phase I, Phase II or Phase III. We need to know what the overall estimated cost was; what has been spent so far and what it will cost to be completed. It would appear that further expenditure for D'Urban Park will be coming from the Treasury. Ever since April, everything that has been spent on D'Urban Park, as far as we are aware, has come from taxpayers' money. Taxpayers must know how much more money they will have to spend on D'Urban Park.

This afternoon, by way of this motion that stands in my name, we would also like the Government to tell us the names of all the individuals who were paid for work done on D'Urban Park. We must know who was paid. We must know the names of the Contractors, the amounts and how they were recruited. What procurement process was used? We must know that this afternoon.

The A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) regaled the people of Guyana and lectured the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), while it was in Government, about good governance and procurement practices. Let the APNU/AFC come to the Parliament this afternoon with clean hands, saying that everything about the D'Urban Park Development Project is above board, including its procurement practices.

We are very concerned about the liabilities on this Project as well. People are meeting us, as Members of Parliament (MPs), and they are telling us that they are owed. We do not know if they are lying on the Government. We would not like our Hon. Members on the other side to be defamed, in any way, by persons who meet us in the market places and in villages. We would not like contractors coming to our offices and saying, “These men took our services and they did not pay.” It is time for them to represent their credible character as people above board by saying who they owe and who they do not owe. If they do not owe anybody, they should say that they do not owe. Let the people who think you owe, hear you say that you do not owe them. It must happen this afternoon. We are calling for a full disclosure.

Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that we will not get the excuse that says: “We do not owe anybody” or “We could not owe anybody because everybody who worked on that Project was making a donation.” I hope that that is not the excuse that we will get. There are workmen who are not paid.

In our BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED Clause, we are calling upon the Government to address the issue of where we go from here as it relates to D’Urban Park. We hope that somebody from the Government’s side, who is knowledgeable, will inform this House and, by extension, the people of Guyana of the name of the agency which is now assigned responsibility for the day-to-day management of the facility.

While we were examining the Supplementary Financial Paper, the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure told this House that, by the end of the month, he will be handing it over to the Ministry of Communities. We have not heard anything since then – zilch, nothing, silence. What we see taking place at that facility is not to be discussed in this House. It is shameful.

We would like to know what would be and what is the recurrent cost for the maintenance, security, utilities and all other expenditure as it relates to the operation of this facility annually? At least we know that \$450 million of public moneys was spent. At the stage when the Ministry of Public Infrastructure took over, all it had to do was to finish sheds, the main pavilion and the tarmac. Significant works were done. In this House, we have to be very careful with the use of figures because you have all kinds of issues that arise. This is a multi-million dollar Project.

[An Hon. Member: Hundreds of millions.]
unapologetically hundreds of millions.

Yes, hundreds of millions, yes;

We need to know what will happen there. We were told at one time that the bleachers would be dismantled and taken to community grounds. That was publicly stated. When people questioned why you were building with wood and split up wood and why the work was so rough and not properly done, we were advised that it was a temporary thing; that it would be dismantled and will be taken to community grounds and all the rest of it. It would appear that that has changed. Somebody from the Government must inform this House about the future plans.

The PPP benches are not adverse to development. We are not against projects that would facilitate people coming together, places for entertainment, culture and arts. This motion must never be interpreted to mean that we are against that. But this motion is certainly calling for full disclosure and accountability.

This afternoon, we would like somebody from the Government benches to tell us about the plans for the sustainability of this facility.

Mr. Speaker, institutions like the institution of the National Assembly must not be disrespected.

3.50 p.m.

Persons who are fulfilling their constitutional obligations must not be castigated, vilified or ostracised. They must not be subjected to public ridicule because they ask questions. It is because, when questions are asked, it is within their right to ask those questions.

I would like to close by saying to my Hon. Friends on the Government benches that, if you seek public office and you preside over the spending of public moneys, you owe it to the public to let them know what you are doing with their moneys. This afternoon, because I believe that we all embrace this principle that as public officers we owe it to the public to keep them informed, this motion will be supported. I believe, this afternoon, that the Government will rise and say thanks for bringing this motion and for giving us an opportunity to level with the people of Guyana; to give them the necessary information and to write the wrongs that they would have done as it relates to this. As one person would say, "The sheet would be pulled and all the things that are now secret and hidden would be made public. I hope that we would leave here satisfied. I look

forward to the contributions from both sides of this House and I ask that this motion be supported.

Thank you very much, Sir. [*Applause*]

Minister of Public Telecommunications [Ms. Hughes]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This motion that we are discussing today, the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project, is quite specific in the information that has been requested. As such, I have left the specifics requested in the Whereas Clauses to my Colleagues who were directly involved with the day-to-day operations, and they will address those aspects of the Project. [An Hon. Member:

That is the smart thing to do.] I know you think it is a smart intervention and it definitely is because I want, at this point, to say that this Government has absolutely nothing to hide: my hands and our hands are clean.

Mr. Speaker, I have decided to start on that point because quite often I find, in this House, we repeat the same old thing over and over again. We have a very specific programme of answering all the questions and concerns our Colleagues, on the other side of the House, and the general public may have on this specific issue. So, I think it is important for us to start at the beginning. And what is that? We forget that political change came in Guyana a mere 12 months before one of the most monumental moments in our country's history. That was our 50th Anniversary of Independence - our Jubilee celebration.

In most parts of the world, including our dear Caribbean region, one starts planning for such an event at least two to three years in advance. Given the change of Government and, most importantly, given the absence of any official transitioning of plans or developments that might have been done by the other side when it was in Government, which we never received, we had the monumental task of planning what would be a great moment in our history in a mere 12 months. But, as time has shown, we were up for the challenge.

We had come out of a bitterly fought political campaign and this Government was committed to serving as a government of the people, for all of the people of Guyana, especially and including those who may not have voted for us. Therefore, we wanted to make sure that, as we planned to celebrate our 50th Anniversary, everybody would be included.

I had the good fortune to serve as Guyana's Minister of Tourism. And I feel vindicated as I was able to speak with our invaluable diaspora community in Canada, the United States of America (USA) and England, and assisted in promoting our beautiful country, trying hard to explain the challenges we face as a country, approaching our 50th birthday, correcting, where possible, the damaging and negative public relations (PR) that plagued our country for decades and which, whether it was accurate or not, actually drown us all in negatives. **[Mr. Nandlall: Relevance, relevance.]** Do not worry; be patient; we are getting there. At the end of the session, you will have a nice comprehensive view of where we have come from.

I tried not to look at the glass as being only half emptied, but half full and we tried to make the world look at Guyana with a different pair of eyes. We stopped and focused on the positive: all that we had to offer this world and, most of all, all that we had to celebrate. Our culture, music, arts and crafts and, most of all, our diverse people we celebrated. And we succeeded. We most certainly did as our tourism arrivals for May alone topped over 25,000 people.

During this period, we saw the largest display of pride and nationalism this country has ever seen. People came home and took Guyana in droves and the airlines kept adding more and more seats and still they were not enough. For the many months leading up to and after the 26th May, the celebrations took place despite the naysayers. Here, at home, hotels were filled; homes were overflowing with family and friends; the guest houses did not have enough room. The Bread and Breakfast Programme allowed Guyanese to highlight this well recognised hospitality in their homes. The restaurants, the cookshops, the roadside eating places, coconut vendors and even the rum-shops were all pouring with people and made money. And the best compliment I received was the stranger who called after many months and simply said, "Minister, we did well. Anybody who tells you that we did not make money lies."

What does all I have said so far have to do with D'Urban Park? This location, this D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project, which accommodated more than 30,000 people on the said day, was the centre of our stage. It was where all of us could gather and see that gigantic golden arrowhead unfurl and blow in the midnight wind. Hundreds from all races shed a tear with pride and hope of better days to come, which we will deliver. No one could convincingly argue that the construction of the D'Urban Park was not necessary or that it was not badly needed,

especially in the time it was completed, and that was the 26th May, to host the major Golden Jubilee event.

You should recall the inauguration of President David Granger in May, 2015, and I would like to compliment this Administration for the way we do things. When we look at inaugurations of new presidents in the past, they have always been done at a very small location; maybe the last 23 years mainly at State House with just a few selected individuals invited. It was never open to every single Guyanese of any walk of life to be able to attend. So, our focus has always been on ensuring that more and more people come.

When we look at the Guyana National Stadium, my Colleague has gone into great detail about the super location we have there. And yes, it is a great location built in 2007 so that we could host our Super 8 Matches, but it has a maximum capacity of 16,000. Our area alone on the grounds can accommodate more standing room. And, as we all know, the international cricketing body imposes serious restrictions on the management and the use of that venue at Providence. Suffice to say that the Providence Stadium has proven to be most inadequate in terms of size and seating capacity for national events.

At His Excellency's inauguration last year, the Stadium was filled and bursting, and a few hundred people took to the grass to sit. The police were stretched beyond their limits because of the traffic and the build-up on the East Coast public road. When the last speaker, my Colleague, talked about us not building any infrastructure projects in the last 17 months, I would like to remind him that he had 23 years to build that new bypass road, which might have made it easier for people to get to the Stadium if we chose to get there. This situation at the Providence Stadium created numerous safety issues. The Fire Service complained. The solid waste management people were stretched to their limit because they did not expect the magnitude of people. The health services complained. Everyone complained. It was a big challenge, and we knew that the National Park was certainly not an option. We had no other choice but to do that facility.

Yes, if we had more time, we would have been able to ensure that there was a lot more consultation and explanation of our views and our vision. And we accept that, in those areas, we have not maybe had enough time to do that. But we assure you, as I have said before, we are a transparent Government, despite the screaming and the shouting from the other side. In fact,

what comes to mind is that the Jamaicans have a lovely saying. I would not do it in Jamaican parlance but it says: *don't fry me in your own fat*. And when I think about the ranting and raving that is coming from the other side, I know you know intimately about corruption, which you scream so much about...

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am sure that you would want to keep your language within bounds.

Ms. Hughes: Certainly.

I know you know intimately about the importance of transparency and so many other issues, but, clearly, I think that your worry and concern are based on your own personal experiences in the last couple of years.

Long before 2015, we had irrefutable data confirming that more than 20,000 people would be visiting our shores. By February, 2016, the number of visitors' confirmation was just rising. Therefore, we knew that we had to have a location that could include everybody. Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that, by the end of May, 2016, we had 91,998 people who came to Guyana. The previous year, for that entire year, we had just over 250,000 visitors. So that shows you that more than half of the people, by May, had come to Guyana.

We talk about the location, but what was D'Urban Park before? D'Urban Park has enhanced the aesthetics and the sanitary conditions of what was once a Zika and Chikungunya attraction; a low stretch of land populated by tall bushes that sheltered bandits, large snakes and alligators. It was pitted with numerous holes where water stagnated and bred millions of mosquitoes and other unhealthy elements. The Park has changed the entire appearance of this community. Residents in that area now feel encouraged to repair and repaint their homes. They plant gardens.

4.05 p.m.

It is an attraction for the tourists. The 1763 Monument always has, as with the Independence Monument across the street, an array of people just sitting there relaxing and marvelling. Quite often, we underestimate the importance of open spaces.

I know my Colleague on the other side talked about what people are saying in the marketplace. I would like to share with him a very important experience I had in the market on the Merriman's Mall. I was buying some fruits and vegetables and a woman ran up to me. I did not know her and the way she was approaching me at first I thought, *oh gosh, what's this?* But I could see from the smile on her face that it was a good thing. She embraced me and said, "Minister, thank you very much. My children now have a place to play and they do not have to pay." I thought to myself, what a strange thing to say. What did this highlight to me? It highlighted that for too long in Guyana we did not have open spaces where ordinary people could take their children to sit and play in a nice, clean environment. That is one of the things this Government has been able to do in the last couple of months. We, therefore, underestimate those positive things.

This location now has the ability to hold thousands of people. It is situated inside of the City so one does not have to go up the East Bank Road. There is ample room for parking. It is an ideal location for our Mashramani, our floats. It is a suitable place for every kind of event possible which builds on our spirit of nationalism. I want to say that we take credit that, for the first time in many, many decades, Guyanese are infused and excited about Guyana. That spirit of nationalism has been missing for many, many years.

I want to say that the questions in these Whereas Clauses will be answered by my Colleagues. I also want to say, yes, we were out of time; we may not have done it the way we would have if we had more time. We recognise that but we are building on the possibilities.

My Colleague on the other side, the last speaker, went to great lengths to say that a facility cannot be built for \$400 million, but I want to remind him that he is talking about GUYANA \$400 million. I hate to go where I am going to go now, and that is to the Skeldon Factory. My Colleague on the other side should not have touched that at all. When a factory was built that does not work after US\$200 million, I want the public to understand that we are talking about the equivalent of US\$2 million to the US\$200 million we put into the Skeldon Factory which still does not work. Therefore, one has to wonder about the propaganda, the screaming and shouting which is being promoted and which comes from the other side.

He said that, in 17 whole months, we have not built any major infrastructure projects. My Colleague on the other side is absolutely correct. Why have we not done that? Do you want me

to start listing the Projects they did that we are fixing? Let us go: there is the Bridge. We would not talk about the Kato School. The streets: I want to mention that, last weekend, when we had all the rain, I was pleasantly surprised to drive down Carmichael and Thomas Streets and there was no water at all. How easily we forget all those drains. There are reports in the newspapers about outflows which had not been cleaned in 20 years. I say, “Be patient with us. There is a lot we are fixing. We are coming to those big infrastructure projects because we are committed to making sure that all Guyanese enjoy this good life.”

Again, I want to reassure my Colleagues on the other side that we understand your insecurities, given your past performance. Just last week, we were reading about World Cup Cricket 2007. When did we get the report on that? It was just the other day. Are there big issues with the audit? Please do not mention Caribbean Festival X (Carifesta). That was another problem area. I can understand that, based on where they were coming from, they would assume that we, on this side of the House, would operate the same way they operated.

I want to say that we cleaned up; we cleared up; and we understood the importance of having every Guyanese, regardless of race, colour, age or economic standing... We made sure we put on a good show in a short space of time so we could build on our spirit of nationalism. That is why I am confident in saying to this honourable House and also to the people of Guyana that your questions will be answered.

We started off with many people stepping forward. They stepped forward and got on board in all areas in cleaning up and in clearing up. They started off donating, and guess what? The job was far greater than we anticipated. Members of this honourable House, I want to say that my side of the House has a few more presenters who would be dealing with specific issues. Therefore, it is really my pleasure to say that we were proud to create a location which, from now and going forward to the future, would be a symbol of all the great and good things which Guyana has to offer. We say to you, “Come on board. We will ensure that this Government delivers a good life to all Guyanese.”

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, time is indicating 4.10 p.m. I think we can take the suspension now. We will resume at 5.10 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 4.14 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.17 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is resumed. Please be seated. The next speaker is the Hon. Gillian Burton-Persaud. You have the floor.

Ms. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion before us, The D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project.

The construction of this facility was done to facilitate the hosting of events for the 50th Anniversary of our country's Independence, including the unforgettable flag raising ceremony for which I got all dressed up but did not get to enjoy. I had my special national wear made to attend this grand event, as the patriotic citizen I am, but I could not enjoy it. There was no seat for me. However, since the month of May, there has been no other event hosted at this location. So the nation wonders if that was the only purpose that the facility was built for. If not, then the nation needs to be informed of what other activities would be hosted or allowed to be hosted at this facility. Will it be rented to private organisations and individuals? It is a national facility. I know there are many Guyanese who would like to know if they could rent the facility and what other activities would be allowed there. Or would it only be for national events?

We cannot dismiss the fact that we have three other open-air facilities suitable for the hosting of similar events. There is the National Park, the Independence Park and the Providence National Stadium.

The Hon. Member, Catherine Hughes, gave the comparison of the Providence National Stadium against the D'Urban Park Jubilee Project, but we are not here to compare facilities. We are here to get specific answers to specific questions. Instead, we were given an update on the tourism aspect of the Jubilee Celebrations. We were told about the visitors who came. I had relatives who came, too, for the celebrations. They came and have left. We, who reside in Guyana, need to know what we can use the facility for. The nation needs to know what the plans are for the sustainable use of this facility. If not, we can only assume that the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Park, a monument built in honour of our country's 50th Anniversary of Independence, is slowly becoming a colossal white elephant in the heart of the city.

Hon. Member Catherine Hughes listed all those projects she termed as bad by the PPP/C, including the US\$200 million Skeldon Factory which this coalition Government now deems a bad investment. How can we deem any investment in labour, such as the Skeldon Factory, as a bad investment? How can any investment in an agency such as the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), a major money earner in which thousands of persons are employed and families are maintained by, be a bad investment? It would seem that any investment in workers wellbeing, particularly in the urban communities and in the sugar industry, is a bad investment. Since we have heard about the bad investments of the PPP/C, let us list some bad decisions since 11th May, 2015.

5.23 p.m.

Incomplete playgrounds such as the one on the Merriman's Mall opposite the Office of the Leader of the Opposition; the clean-up campaign, which targeted only Georgetown, but left its environments in a shabby condition; forced installation of parking meters around Georgetown; the use of free river taxis to force the lowering of the Berbice Bridge toll; the closure of the Wales Sugar Factory; the non-availability of international markets for rice; the withdrawal of Guyana Power and Light (GPL) and Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) subsidies to old age pensioners; the unavailability of the promised jobs to our youths and your hefty salary increases as against that of the public servants.

A facility such as the D'Urban Park must be maintained and secured. As such, there would be utility and sanitation costs that would be incurred, as long as this facility stands. In the interest of transparency and accountability, there must be the declaration of the costs to be incurred. The fact that this facility is not a temporary one indicates that the costs of its sustenance would attract a budget. If there are no sustained plans for the use of this facility, one can be sure to expect that a budgetary allocation would be forthcoming. The question, then, is: Will this facility pay for itself? If so, how would it pay? If not, then from which agency's budget would it be maintained, since it has not been officially handed over, though we were informed in August 2016 that it should have been in April, 2016?

The issue with the most urgent need for clarity is: Which agency has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the D'Urban Park? My Colleague requested this information in his

presentation and I am now endorsing that request. Someone must be in charge. Who is that someone? It seems to be the mystery man, woman or persons. This should not be an issue shrouded in secrecy because it is a national facility that belongs to the people of Guyana.

The Hon. Member, Ms. Catherine Hughes, stated that the Government has nothing to hide and that its hands are clean. Therefore, I ask that the Government stops *tippy toeing* around the issue and give the nation the answers.

It is public knowledge that the National Park is managed by the National Parks Commission (NPC), that the Independence Park is managed by the Georgetown Mayor and City Council (M&CC) and that the National Stadium, Providence is managed by the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport. Therefore, once again, in the interest of transparency and accountability, we need to know the agency, individual or individuals that hold responsibility for this facility.

The D'Urban Park Development Project cannot be branded as nobody's child. Therefore, it must be clear who the custodian is, who the caregiver is, how it is managed and by whom. If the D'Urban Park Development Project is indeed a gift to this nation, if it is a tribute to our 50 years as an independent nation, if it is to be proclaimed as a hallmark for the sacrifices, struggles and achievements of our nation, then its business must be the nation's business. It belongs to the people of Guyana. In short, the D'Urban Park Development Project is children's property and, as such, we have a right to stick our noses in its business. It is our democratic right to enquire about its well-being.

We are hearing that we will get the answers. We are hearing that the answers are forthcoming. But, it seems as though those answers are forthcoming just as how long Christmas takes to come. It is coming on a turtle back. Christmas is just a few days away, let us hope that the answers would not take a few days, but that we would get them this evening in this honourable House.

The D'Urban Park Development Project is a fairly new project, but there are far too many unanswered questions. It is time that these questions are answered. We, on this side of the House, request that the Government stop holding the nation in suspense on this issue. Therefore, this motion is calling for answers. Who is in charge? What was the cost? How would it be sustained? This facility was built in the spirit of celebration. I, therefore, urge that we do not kill this spirit by hiding its business behind a curtain. Let us, instead, raise the curtain of transparency and

accountability on the stage of good governance, so that the celebrations of the good life could become a reality.

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

Mr. Figueira: I rise to lend my voice in support of my Colleagues on this side of the House to further strengthen our position on the need for a developed D'Urban Park, a park that already finds favour with the majority of our Guyanese countrymen and women but, more specifically, our youth.

It was my desire, from the onset of this debate, to ask a question on the motion: Why are we having a debate on this needed and worthwhile investment for the people of Guyana? Why, Bishop Edghill? After listening to the Hon. Members of the Opposition, it is clear that the architect of this motion and his supporting cast do have some intoxicating views that require some sobering clarity to correct the misconceptions and misunderstandings fabricated in the minds of their own reality.

I do concede and accept the right of the Opposition to express its views and have opinions on anything that we, as a Government, do. After all, we are a transparent and accountable Government. As a responsible Government, we are duty-bound and are always happy to provide clarifications with facts, and not opinions, to the Guyanese people. One such fact, out of many, is the criticisms being mounted about the D'Urban Park Development Project by the Hon. Members of the Opposition. It confirms that we, as a responsible Government, are, yet again, doing something good. No one pelts at an empty mango tree, or should I say that no one should. The Members of the Opposition should be thanking this Government for giving them work to do to oppose and criticise the good work that we are doing, which they failed to do when they were in Government.

This Government – the Granger Administration – has taken yet another bold and visionary step in tackling the legacy of neglect of this jungle, swampy, mosquitoes and reptile-infested land and transforming it into a needed a facility; a structure that adds to the aesthetics and beatification as we endeavour to restore the elegance of our Capital City and reclaim its garden status.

The motion's first Whereas Clause speaks to the park hosting a number of activities. True. There should be no guessing as to whether the park has the capacity to accommodate crowds of people, as was seen with the Independence Day celebrations. The President – His Excellency, the people's President and a man of the people, a man who is loved and appreciated by the people of Guyana – has the ability to pull massive crowds and that is why the D'Urban Park is needed. That is why this investment is good for the people of Guyana.

The proposed third form Mathematics of pulling figures out of the sky and being worked in the head of the Hon. Member is indeed astonishing. I now have a greater appreciation for the not so good Mathematics results under the previous Administration.

The creation of this magnificent and worthwhile investment reminds me of our renowned Guyanese poet, Dennis Craig, who, in his famous poem "Flowers", said:

“From beginning, my world has been a place
Of pot-holed streets where thick, sluggish gutters race
In slow time, away from garbage heaps and sewers”.

He further went on to state:

“One day, they cleared a space and made a park
There in the city's slums; and suddenly
Came stark glory like lighting in the dark”

That cleared space is where the D'Urban Park can now be seen. That lightening in the dark is this coalition Government. That glory is what would be shared by the people of Georgetown, the Capital City and, by extension, the people of Guyana. The Government of Guyana has not only transformed this once abandoned land into a site of beauty, but it has preserved it for present and future generations. It has also prevented it, permanently, from the possibility of any devalued sale, as experience past has shown, to a once selective special interest group or to selected individuals who were more favoured by the then Lord of the Ring.

The D'Urban Park Development Project or my preferred name, the Jubilee Park, is symbolic. It symbolises a year in our golden jubilee - a rebirth of a nation. It has ignited the once forgotten

patriotic spirit of our countrymen and women. It symbolises the renewed hope of a better life, a good life for all Guyanese.

The sixth Whereas Clause in the motion speaks to the issue of there being no public disclosure or consultation. The designs and drawings were presented in the press to all Guyanese. One just needs to check the dailies in January and February, 2016, where that information was vividly expressed.

Secondly, with whom, for the building of no hazardous recreational parks on Government lands, should Government have consulted? Should it have consulted the residents of Lodge or the People's Progressive Party (PPP)? With whom did the PPP consult for the location or for anything about the Guyana National Stadium? What is important to note is the difference in perspective. The Guyana National Stadium had a business aspect to its orientation. The D'Urban Park Development Project is a social good without a business connotation to its orientation. It is more socially recreational.

However, one did recall the first attempt to consult by the PPP to get a name for the National Stadium after it was built. Too many party people wanted to name it and the idea was shelved and the word "National" was added to Stadium.

5.38 p.m.

The investment in the D'Urban Park Development Project by this Government is an investment in our youth, in education, in business, in sport, in culture and in religion. It is an investment in Guyana. The possibilities of this park offer enormous potentials for the future of Guyana. It was Robert Moses' writing on *Parks as Community Places: Boston, 1997*, a publication on the "Urban Parks Institute's annual conference", which stated:

“...parks has become a recognized governmental service needing no justification,”

And this he posited as:

“developing a social vision”

And this is what the PPP has always lacked. The real issue, thus, is the PPP's kinship with un-kept public spaces. One just had to look at how it dwelled in the city for 23 years. Everything

was a mess. Just look at how it managed the Botanical Gardens for 23 years. It placed yard fowls, donkeys and goats in a fenced area as a side attraction; their nature park, the work of Robert Persaud. Imagine that as a legacy of their social vision. How low can one really go?

The magnitude of benefits from the development of this land has begged the question as to why was it neglected by the past Administration? Many conclusions have been formulated in the minds of many, but we are happy that this Government has done the bold thing to transform this space into one that will benefit all Guyanese.

I am persuaded that, had the Hon. Members taken the opportunity, as thousands of our citizens did, in attending and remaining for the Flag Raising Ceremony, in recognition of that significant milestone of Guyana's independence, then the author of this needless motion, along with his Colleagues, would have had an experience and a greater admiration for the evolution and transformation of this once forgotten and neglected open space to the beauty and potentials it now holds.

It is my humble opinion that, had the Hon. Member taken a pence of time from his daily routine to drive and furnish his eyes, even with a cursory glance, from the window of one of his luxurious vehicles, and with an ounce of imagination, he would have been able to see the plethora of benefits that can be derived as a result of the Government and the people of Guyana's investment in this needed facility.

The second Whereas Clause speaks to:

“public individuals to fund”

It is no secret that corporate Guyana and private individuals did aid in the financing of this project, but this was not a business venture for returns. It was a call to duty as Guyana turned 50. It must be noted, however, that social good can be economic or just social, but both carries a cost. The difference is that we expect economic returns from projects conceived with an economic bias. In the case of the D'Urban Park Development Project, it is a social return in the form of a refined public space located close to the majority of the city's inhabitants.

For those on the opposite side, who find pleasure in talking down our social vision, they should reflect, not on the white elephant but on the dark elephant, the Skeldon Sugar Factory, famed as

an economic saviour to the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) that has not delivered, but continues to bleed a devastated sugar industry. This factory is the epitome of failure and a reflection of the previous Administration's leadership.

The year of jubilee is a year of healing and of newness, and the author of this motion, the Hon. Bishop, I believe, will agree with me that it was under the administration of his party that the youth of Guyana was neglected to the point that Guyana experienced the greatest exodus of our tertiary graduates. I believe that you will agree with me and say, yes, that it was under your party's rule that the largest incarceration, extrajudicial killings and unemployment of our young people, occurred.

Finally, I believe that the Hon. Member would agree with me that it is time that the young people of Guyana be given the opportunities to be given a space that is clean and safe, a place where they can go and have recreation, clean fun and exercise with the hope and aspirations of reaching the Olympics in the near future and put an end to the medal drought of 23 years. Yes Sir, I believe that the Hon. Member can be true to himself and agree with me that the D'urban Park is a good investment for our youth, a good investment for our Capital City and for Guyana. [Mr. Damon: What is happening in Wismar boy?] Mr. Speaker, I heard a voice in the wilderness from Cde. Damon and I would challenge him to a battle of wits, but I realise that he is unarmed.

Thank you. [Applause]

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Speaker, I am privileged and, indeed, honoured to rise in the cause of the Hon. Member, Bishop Juan Edghill, as he seeks to get answers to questions posed in a simple motion that has to deal with the D'Urban Park Development Project.

This motion, as I looked at it, pages 1, 2 and 3, is very simple. It outlines, clearly, what it is that the Hon. Member is trying to achieve. We have had some responses from the Government's side and I wonder which motion they are addressing.

The Hon. Minister Hughes, at least, confessed that she did not have specific answers. I was hopeful that, at least, the Hon. Minister would have provided some broad answers, if not the specifics. But my hope was in vain. This is because there was absolutely nothing. We were

regaled about tourism, about Chikungunya, about the Zika Virus, about crocodiles and all of that, when there is nothing like Chikungunya, Zika Virus or crocodile in this motion. If the Government wants to discuss the Zika Virus, Chikungunya or crocodiles, it should bring a motion to this House so that we could talk about those things. If the Government wants a motion or a discussion on the Skeldon Sugar Factory, it should bring a motion so that we can talk about it. We, on this side, want to discuss accountability, transparency and, as the Bishop puts here, “good governance” as it relates to the D’Urban Park Development Project.

The speaker immediately before me, at least, spoke about some of the benefits of parks. We are not debating the benefits of parks; this motion has nothing to do with the benefits of a park. We know the benefits of parks. All that we are saying is that this project is shrouded in secrecy. We do not know what is going on, we see things happening and we are asking this Government to come true to its campaign promises. They were the ones, as the Hon. Member said, who spoke about “It is time for transparency; it is time for good governance; it is time for accountability; it is time for consultation; it is time to involve people in what we are doing”. That is what this motion is about –transparency, accountability, good governance, who these people are and what they are all about. This motion is not about whether it is needed or not. This motion is about how is it that we arrived here. That is all we want to know.

We were told about the Skeldon Sugar Factory. The Skeldon Sugar Factory Project was advertised, bids were received, evaluated and an award was made. A contractor came in and there was a supervisory consultancy in place, one of the best I would say in the industry, in the form of Booker Tate. I understand that Booker Tate’s local representative is so good that he was hired by this now Government as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo). It could not have been that they were not without qualification because, if they were qualified or not qualified, then the person would not have been employed. The Skeldon Sugar Factory that was touted to be...

[Ms. Ally: Which motion are you really speaking on?]

I did not open the door, you opened it. The Skeldon Sugar Factory has everything to do with accountability. That is how we know about how many millions of United States (US) dollars was spent on it. Whether it is value for money or not, we know how much was spent. We are saying that, for this park, we do not know how much was spent; we do not know how much was received in kind or in cash. Where is the accountability?

The Skeldon Sugar Factory was pronounced by this Government as now delivering, after some corrective works would have been done, which was started by the previous Administration. In the *Kaieteur News*, dated 14th November, there was a letter titled *Issues at Skeldon Factory*. In that article, the production of the Skeldon Sugar Factory in 2009 was 24,000 tons, in 2010 it was 33,000 tonnes, in 2011 it was 29,000 tons, in 2012... The highest production was in 2015 – 39,158 tons of sugar. This shows a pattern from 2009 to 2015 of doing better every single year. When this Government had surpassed the target in 2015, the glory of the sugar industry was sang about by all, climbing on the highest sequoia tree around and shouting at the top of their voices that they had turned sugar around and that they had surpassed the target. No one was blaming the Skeldon Sugar Factory at that time. In 2015, there was a change in Government and what had happened in 2015 was that the harvesting of labour that was put in in 2014 and early 2015. Now that everything is messed up and sugar is going down, the Skeldon Sugar Factory has become the scape goat.

I read about an international firm doing an audit of the Skeldon Sugar Factory. Essentially, the Skeldon Sugar Factory has two components, one is for the generation and co-generation of power and the other is for the production of sugar. What I read in the newspapers has to do with an audit of the co-generation aspect that spoke volumes of not design and construction weakness, but of maintenance and deficiency in maintenance. Not a single comment was made about the sugar production aspect of the factory in that audit. Indeed, when I heard the name Wartsila, I said to myself that this was a company associated with power and power generation and not with sugar and sugar production or a factory that was geared towards sugar production. I looked at all of the articles and was trying to find where it was that the officials of GuySuCo pronounced on the audit, and where was it that the officials of GuySuCo's pronounced on Skeldon and the Skeldon Sugar Factory?

5.53 p.m.

I assure you that I have looked closely and all that I could have come up with were comments by the political appointed Chairman of GuySuCo, but absolutely nothing from the management and the technical people. The Chairman has high qualifications in different areas that has nothing to do with the construction or design of a factory. I would respect his views in areas that he is so qualified and experienced in, but to make pronouncements that is in keeping with one's political

directive, when there are technical people in the factory, is not really being truthful to what is really happening at the Skeldon Estate. [Mr. Patterson: What happen?]

D'Urban Park. I thought that I would just say that to put into perspective where it is that our Colleagues are straying, when they spoke about tourism, business ventures and all of that,

Sir, the D'Urban Park Development Project will see 30,000 people, but on the day of the celebrations, representatives of nearly 50% of the people of Guyana were unable to find a seat, with their invitations and all of that. In this 30,000 seating capacity, D'Urban Park Development Project, 32 Members of this Parliament, representing nearly 50% of the electors of this country, could not find seats. Like my Colleague, Ms. Persaud, I decked out fancy, even though it was a bit hot I still put the jacket on because I wanted to look nice and fancy for this 50th Jubilee celebrations. Sir, I even tried to get my wife to come. I said to my wife, "You know this would be a nice thing, let us go." My wife asked, "Are you certain that everything would be okay?" I said yes, we were given that kind of assurance that everything would be okay. I said, "This is our 50th Anniversary celebrations." She said, "Boy, I ain't too trust this Government, I don't know what gon happen with alyuh".

Having failed to get my wife to come with me, I tried with my daughter. I told my daughter to let us go and she said, "Pops are you sure we are going to get a place to sit down? I said "Yes", but I had to admit that they were both right. This is because when I called, after waiting for over 40 minutes to find a seat and after we had left, I said, "Girl, like you have *black tongue*. It ended up that, in this National Assembly, where we were asked to approved over \$400 million, in addition to the untold hundreds of millions that were secured and sourced by other means, that seats were not available for 32 Members of this Parliament, who turned up to join with our brothers and sisters to celebrate our 50th Jubilee celebrations.

I think that this motion is well in order. I was angry that night for being turned away, after making all that effort to turn up at what was supposed to be our showpiece for our 50th Anniversary and not a seat was available for the Members of Parliament in this, what is touted to have, a 30,000 seating capacity. Leading up to that event, there were a number of articles in the newspapers that spoke to the type of materials that were being used, the contractors that were involved, and one of the article even mentioned that the flagpole was the PPP's pole. So we have

to minus the cost of that 200 plus feet pole from this over \$1 billion dollar project because I think that is our pole.

If one looks at this motion, he/she would see that it is trying to get information. Again, we are not asking the Government to do what it did not promised. We are simply asking it to fulfil the promises that were made. They promised accountability, there is nothing like that in this project; they promised transparency, there is nothing like that in this project; they promised good governance, there is nothing like that in this project; they promised seating accommodation for us Sir, but we could not find a chair. We are saying that the Government should fulfil the promises that it made to the electorate. The Hon. Member, my Colleague, was right. We should not have had reason to come to this Parliament to ask this Government to do what it promised to do.

The Government is doing the opposite. It never told the electorate that it would have taken a 50% salary increases for its Ministers, and it did that. After telling the sugar workers that they would be given a 20% increase, two years running and the sugar workers cannot get anything up to now and they were told about a 20% increase. The first thing that the Government did, against its promises to the electorate and to the people of this country, was to put its members right. The Government never told the electorate that they would appoint three or four Vice-Presidents and a Prime Minister, but it went straight ahead and did that. Seven-eighths of the Members on the other side are Cabinet Members. They did not tell the electorate, while campaigning, that they would have had an expanded Cabinet – 28 and counting Ministers. This country must have the highest amount of Ministers *per capita* and the highest amount of Vice-Presidents, they did not tell the electorate that. That is why we are forced to come here.

The Government told the electorate that it would remove the PPP and it did that. But how did the Government do it? It promised the pensioners double pensions, but they took away their water and electricity subsidies. They promised the rice farmers \$6000...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the Speaker is reluctant to interrupt a Member in full flow, as you are, but I must ask you to remember the motion on which you are speaking. Please proceed.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you very much Sir. I am holding it in my hand and some of the matters that I referred to were in response to contributions that would have been made right here, this evening,

in this House. I did not come prepared to speak on the Skeldon Sugar Factory, it was mentioned; I did not come prepared to speak on the pros and cons of a park, but that was raised; I did not come prepared to speak on business ventures, returns and the benefits of a park, but those things were mentioned. What is in this motion was not addressed by the speakers on that side. I am forced to respond to what they are saying. Essentially, a debate is about speaking, based on what was said on a subject matter and that is how I feel about it and so we are having a debate. I am not picking up my computer to read from a prepared speech or picking up a volume to read from. I am merely responding to the comments that would have been made by my Colleagues, in response to a motion that was raised by the Hon. Bishop Edghill. I assure you, Sir, that I am trying my best to stay focus on the motion, but when other issues are brought into the discussions, in the process of a debate, I think that it is fair that we address those matters that were raised. This is because all kinds of things were thrown at this side of the House, accusing us of all kinds of things while we were in the Government. I heard that the coalition Government went to the electorate to put us out and I am saying how it was done. It was done by conning every single...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you are repeating yourself. I must ask you to progress with the motion, if you cannot then I would invite you to take your seat, but we cannot have repetition. Please proceed.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you very much Sir. So essentially this motion is going at a few fundamental issues and we are pointing these questions in as a direct way as possible to get answers out of the Government. What are the answers that we are looking for? They have absolutely nothing to do with the benefits of the park. The issue is that there was no budgetary allocation made and then we were asked, in this Parliament, to approve the budgetary allocation. We were told that a private company was established to source support to establish the park. We are asking, which is the private company, the name of this company, the principals, how much money was collected, how much support was given in kind, who they went to, the name of these people and all of that. That is what the motion is all about and that is what we are asking for Sir.

I am saying that we are not being unreasonable in making these requests because these are requests that we are entitled to as representatives of the people of this country. Every day we or some of us, pass by the D'Urban Park and we see a facility that some have said that over

\$1billion was spent on and it hurts me to see that nothing is happening there, no one in benefitting from it. If one passes there at nights, they would see the vagrants who might be happy because they have a place to rest down. I do not think that the intention of the construction of such an elaborate structure was to provide a home for vagrants. We could have easily constructed a home for vagrants somewhere else, like this Government did with the Hugo Chavez home for old people in Onverwagt.

On the issue of consultation, a lot of people spoke about alternative uses for that area. If there were consultations and the prioritising of projects, especially when the Hon. Minister of Finance would speak to and lecture us about fiscal space, if there is money, one would like to have maximum value for his/her resources.

If there was consultation about the D'Urban Park Development Project, I am certain that the majority of Guyanese would have said to utilise the National Stadium that has the capacity and all that is required to host an event. I think the Inauguration of His Excellency was done right there without any difficulties and many more thousands attended that Inauguration than the amount that had attended our 50th Anniversary celebrations.

I am certain that the Fire Chief would have told this Government that the D'Urban Park would be an ideal place for us to have the headquarters of the Guyana Fire Service. So that they would not be ham struck by traffic, narrow streets and all of that in responding to a fire, I am certain of that.

A number of columnists wrote about that; that the space for the D'Urban Park Development Project would have been more ideal for the Headquarters of the Guyana Fire Service and that would have been in use for many years to come.

I am certain that the Hon. Prime Minister did not visit the Guyana Fire Service since he became Prime Minister. He would have had an appreciation for the constraints that the Guyana Fire Service would have been faced with. Right across the street from the Public Buildings, there is now a place that is called the 'Parliament View Market' or the 'Parliament View Vendors Market'.

I am certain that if there were consultations, as promised by this Government with the vendors, with one tenth of the amount of money that was spent there, the Government could have provided an adequate market for our vendors. The vendors would have been eternally happy with this Government to have a proper place with all the sanitary facilities, everything in place to support their daily efforts to put bread on the table. They would have supported that totally.

In some jurisdictions, the pressure of urbanisation – an influx of people moving to the urban centres, put a lot of strain on the infrastructure. If one would visit Georgetown, during their midday break, it is very difficult to move through the streets because of congestion.

6.08 p.m.

What about a parking place outside of Georgetown, where all the people coming to Georgetown could have gone there and then there would be a centrally operated system in place to come into Georgetown. I am certain that, in discussion with the people, that was another idea that could have been floated for the effective utilisation of the D'Urban Park Development Project. This Government, instead of operating in a democratic way, dictatorially took upon themselves, at short notice to go about the business of constructing the D'Urban Park Development Project in secrecy without any accountability and transparency. We talk about a green economy, preservation of our forest, *et cetera*. If we are going to spend on a small place like that, how is it that we are going to spend over \$1billion to clean up some *bush*, if that was the reason? We could have easily done it for less than that. So, it could not have been that.

We, on this side of the House, are fearful that the true meaning and intention behind this project is yet to be known, hence, our questions which are posed by this motion. It is within our right, for us, on this side of the House, and it is our right as legislators, to hold the Government accountable for its action. Our democracy and Constitution provide for that; we were elected to do that. And in merely carrying out our functions, we are asking this Government to come clean on the D'Urban Park Development Project and not to meander all over the place without addressing what essentially are the questions in this motion. It is there for all of us to see. I will not repeat them, but I will join my Colleagues and say, come clean, answer the questions, and speak to the motion. If the Government wants to debate any other matter, then let it bring a motion and we will speak to its motion. For now, we are debating a motion on the D'Urban Park

Development Jubilee Project and we would want these questions answered by a Government that is essentially, every day, moving away from accountability, transparency and good governance.

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

Minister within the Ministry of Education [Ms. Henry]: This afternoon, I rise to speak on the motion on the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project. My presentation will focus on the potential use of D'Urban Park as a modern recreational facility.

Let me point out, that the D'Urban Park was conceptualised as a modern, multi-purpose facility that is intended to house major national events and sporting activities. Before I begin my presentation, properly, I would like to address some of the issues raised by the Hon. Members on the other side of the House.

Firstly, let me address the issue of seating. The Hon. Members, know fully well why they could not be seated at the Flag Raising Ceremony. May I remind this House, that seating problems seem to be a pattern of some persons in this House and this is not the first time that this country was captivated with a seating fiasco? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

In 2007, as a nation, we witnessed, what I would call a *seating soap opera* at the opening of the National Stadium, Providence when the then First Lady and her guests were asked to leave and we know of several episodes that ensued from that single event. There seems to be a *seating drama* trend by some people who are seated in this honourable House and I suppose that trend will continue.

At this time, let me first of all draw the House's attention to the *Guyana Chronicle* article dated Thursday, 20th October, 2005, under the caption *President checks on D'Urban Park Complex*. In this article, the Leader of the Opposition, who is seated in this House, pointed out that, once completed, this 1620 acres sports complex will have track, field, cycling areas, parking space and administrative centres. So, let me say that, the D'Urban Park Development Project adventure was initiated by the PPP and that the very purpose that it was intended for in 2005 still remains relevant in 2016.

Today, we were lectured to about transparency related to the D'Urban Park Development Project. In 2005, let me say that the PPP Government awarded \$45 million for Phase One, to a contractor by the name of Mr. Rameshwar Ramchand. The question which we need to ask is what was the transparency in awarding a \$45 million contract for the D'Urban Park Development Project in 2005, a project that never started until 2015, after this Government assumed office?

In keeping with transparency, what is worse is that three years after 2005, on the 25th October, 2008, Dr. Roger Luncheon, when questioned by the media on the \$44 million expenditure on the D'Urban Park Development Project, said that the area was to be used as a green pristine jungle, a green zone. Forty five million dollars of hard earned taxpayer dollars, according to the *Kaieteur News*, went down the drain. Is this the transparency that we are talking about or is this what the Hon. Member, Bishop Juan Edghill, meant when he said that if we do something we must do it properly? Throwing \$45 million down the drain is that what is proper? What is proper about that?

The same people that need answers now, needed answers then. The D'Urban Park is the only venue that can accommodate 30,000 people at any one time here in Guyana. In addition, this facility is centrally located and, therefore, has added benefits for the neighbouring communities. This park is currently utilised by many residents for physical exercises and sports. I have witnessed first-hand, increased community involvement by the residents in that part of Georgetown. Apparently, the Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj only passes there in the nights, so he does not get an opportunity to see and appreciate how the facility is being used.

The PPP promised the D'Urban Park in 2005 and the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government delivered D'Urban Park in 2016, less than one year after being in office. Parks are places where people go to get their health and fitness exercises. Since there are plans to build tennis courts and tracks, and we heard that articulated since in 2005, there is no doubt that this venue would be fully utilised, thus, resulting in the health of children, youths and adults in the nearby communities.

This Government has promised the people of this country a good life and this D'Urban Park Development Project investment and initiative is in keeping with that promise of a good life for

all Guyanese. The D'Urban Park could be considered as an essential public service space, just as water and public safety are considered as essential public services.

Parks are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in any community, ensuring the health of families and youths and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community. With regards to its economic value, and I understand that we have some economist in the House, parks everywhere improve the tax base and increase property value. It is a well-known fact that private property values increase when such spaces are within close proximity to parks. There is no doubt that those properties close to D'Urban Park will carry higher prices than they did, prior to 2016. In addition, with any big events, the vendors will obviously have an opportunity to conduct some lucrative businesses.

As I conclude my short presentation here this evening, let me speak to the social importance. The Park will be a perfect gathering place for families, social groups, as well as for individuals of all ages and economic status and we know and we underscore the value of social cohesion. It has been proven that access to parks and recreational opportunities have been strongly linked to a reduction in crime and juvenile delinquency. The young people within the vicinity of D'Urban Park are likely to engage in some activities at the park, especially sporting ones. That will keep them off the streets and from indulging in unlawful and questionable activities that could put them in trouble.

With these few words, I would like to say that this motion should have been brought in 2005 when over \$45 million of our well-earned taxpayer's dollars went down the drain.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to do what is morally correct and what is expected of us as public officials and officers. What is unfortunate in this country is that an Opposition has to bring a motion to the Parliament to get public information on how money is spent in this country. This is a gentle reminder of a period in the history of this country that I hope we never return to, where we never even had an audited report of the expenditure of Government in this country.

The Hon. Minister who just spoke about the \$45 million spent, she rightfully alluded to a process that allowed the Government to spend the \$45 million; a process that allowed for public tender; a

process that allowed the Hon. Minister, 11 years after, to know the name of the contractor still; and to know that the Government expended \$45 million. On the contrary, only one month after this project, the information of who was the contractor, who donated and how much was spent have disappeared. That is what we are faced with here; that is the issue of accountability and transparency that is before us and that is why we are so proud on this side of the House.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

We are not afraid of anything because we know that we left the records because we believe in accountability and transparency. Accountability and transparency were not figments of our imagination; it was part of our Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) and our make-up, unlike, what is happening today.

Let us not digress. The debate tonight is not about whether a park is needed. The debate tonight is about how much the Government spent, how it spent it, who spent it, who donated, where it is, which account it was put into and what did the Government do to the public's moneys. That is the issue tonight. No other issue. Do not try to derail the issue; do not try to bluff the issue; do not try to caress yourself out of the issues, deal with the issue in the motion that is before you tonight.

6.23 p.m.

It is an issue that I challenge the Government to bring a motion and I will detail to it what we did to the \$45 million, because we are accountable for what we spent, and we would account for it any time.

My honourable colleague and friend, the Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, who, no doubt, has a bright political future, I am disappointed tonight because he described the motion as needless. My dear brother and friend, how can you describe as needless a motion that seeks answers on transparency, that seeks answers on public moneys and that seeks answers on accountability in public office? It is not needless. It is necessarily for any free, open, and democratic society.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I wish to turn your attention to the Constitution of the Republic of Guyana.
216...[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Ali: It is difficult, Mr. Speaker, but I have to endure it all. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it would have at least been polite, if not obligatory on your part, to allow the speaker to be heard.

Mr. Ali: I will wish to turn the House attention to article 216 of the Constitution which states:

“All revenues or other moneys raised or received by Guyana (not being revenues or other moneys that are payable, by or under an Act of Parliament, into some other fund established for any specific purpose or that may, by or under such Act, be retained by the authority that received them for the purpose of defraying the expenses of that authority) shall be paid into and form one Consolidated Fund.”

To begin with, I am not going into how much was raised, why the Constitution was breached and the money was not paid into the Consolidated Fund. It is a breach, number one of the Constitution. Let me take your attention on a journey down the FMAA. **[Mr. Ramjattan:** That is public money, Sir.] Yes, my dear learned friend. Let me define to the Hon. Member what “public money” is. “Public money” means all money belonging to the state, received or collected by officials in their official capacity or by any person authorised to receive or collect such moneys and without limitation includes. I have now outlined the case. It is public moneys.

Let us see what the FMAA states about public moneys. Section 16 states:

“There shall be no expenditure of public moneys except in accordance with Article 217 of the Constitution.”

Let us move on. **[Mr. Ramjattan:** Why do you not talk about the exceptions?] You will speak after me I will give you a lesson in law.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I do not know that I need to remind you that you should address your remarks to the Speaker.

Mr. Ali: Your Honour, I respect your ruling and I will endeavour to do so.

Mr. Speaker: I will expect you to do so.

Mr. Ali: Yes Sir. Section 37 (2) of the FMAA, public funds, states:

“All public moneys shall be deemed to be received moneys from the time that they become public moneys until the time that they are credited to the Consolidated Fund, an Extra-budgetary Fund or Deposit Fund.”

It is not only in breach of the Constitution. It is in breach of the FMAA. What we are asking for in this motion is not a begging thing, give us this thing. It is what is required in the Constitution and the FMAA. If the information is not delivered, the Government is in breach, and it is criminal to be in breach of the Constitution and the FMAA.

Let me go to section 38 (1) of the FMAA. This is what section 38 states:

“All public moneys raised or received by the Government shall be credited fully and promptly to the Consolidated Fund.”

Yet months after we begged to know how much was raised, much less when it was credited to the fund.

The Hon. Members in their debate made lofty statements. This is a social and economic development project. Let us see what the FMAA states about social and economic development projects. When we crafted this law we did it thinking about the future. We know that somewhere along the road we might have some...

Social and economic development projects, section 40 states:

“Subject to any other law, resources allocated from any Extra-budgetary Fund for the purpose of financing Government social or economic development projects shall be included in the relevant investment plan and programmes of expenditure contained in the annual budget and such resources shall be processed through the Consolidated Fund.”

This project benefited from public moneys since 2015 as admitted by the Hon. Minister, who just spoke. Now we may have a big issue coming up in the National Assembly based on that speech. The Minister admitted that the Government was on site, the Government was involved with this project in 2015, yet that project was not in the budget and not an appropriated fund budget or brought in accordance of the FMAA in a statement of expenditure - did not. We do not have to argue anymore. The Ministers admitted.

Mr. Speaker, let me take you to section 47 (1) of the FMAA, which deals with receipt of public moneys from an outsider. The law covers everything.

“An official shall not enter into any agreement or arrangement for the receipt or custody of public moneys with any person, other than the Government, or an official -”

I am asking the Government to present to the National Assembly the instrument that was issued by any Minister authorising any person to collect money for this public project. That instrument must be brought before the National Assembly in accordance with section 47(1) of the FMAA.

Mr. Speaker, let me take you to one more section, section 56 (1), accounting procedures. To all intents and purposes, based on the last request for the supplementary provision, I read here that the word “Minister” is to be the Hon. Minister Patterson.

“The Minister shall promulgate appropriate accounting standards to be employed by officials responsible for the maintenance of the accounts and records referred to in this section.”

I wish to ask the Hon. Minister: Could he make available to this House the appropriate accounting standards that he employed in the execution of this project in accordance with the FMAA? That is the final request.

This takes me to Force Account. The Force Account is an account used by Government to execute emergency works. It is an account that was utilised as part of the mechanism that was employed on this project. I have some question. How many machinery from the Force Account was utilised? What was the cost? How much money came out of the current budget of finance employees’ salaries and workers’ salaries that was utilised on this project? How much bitumen was utilised? Where did the bitumen come from? How was it accounted for? How was it

procured? Mr. Speaker, even if you are executing works on the Force Account you still have to go through the process of procurement which is outlined in the Procurement Act. I would like the Hon. Minister to present the evidence that in executing any works through Force Account the Procurement Act and rules governing the procurement were utilised. That is the issue of transparency. That is the issue of accountability.

Let me agree with the Hon. Minister who did not have the courtesy of listening to the speaker after her. It is a matter of respect that we listen to the person who speaks after us. I agree that investment in infrastructure must be transformative; I agree it must create economic activities; I agree it must be able to expand the social and economic well-being of the citizens. How can we say that the Guyana National Stadium was not transformative? How can we say it did not expand the social and economic well-being of the people?

6.38 p.m.

The Guyana National Stadium was just a part of holistic macro developmental agenda for the entire East Bank corridor. That saw investment in new malls, an international hotel, banks and the expansion of the city all across the East Bank corridor, creating today hundred and thousands of jobs for Guyanese. That is transformative; that is creative and that is understanding what holistic macro development means. We are going to judge this one. We are going to judge it. Fortunately, we invested in the Marriott. We have given you a jump-start. Let me be clear that we have no objection to any investment or any infrastructure built anywhere in this country, once it brings benefit to the people - absolutely no objection. Building infrastructure does not escape you from the issue of transparency, accountability and justice. You cannot escape those. Those are the hallmark of development and the hallmark of public office. Do not try to derail this argument. Do not try to steer it into directions that you cannot control because we could go with you there. It is to stick to the tenet of the motion, that is, the issue of transparency and accountability.

The private sector, what benefits or what concessions were given to any private individuals or firm? Were there any concessions that were given to any firm or individual who contributed resources on this project? I am not saying they were. I am asking - was there any? Then you need to make a disclosure on what was given.

What study led to the estimate for this project? Who designed the project? Who supervised the project? As you know, Mr. Speaker, you would find the same persons who designed the projects were supervising the projects. The same entity that designed was supervising itself. The same entity that was using the Force Account was a self-supervision. This is the height of unaccountability, using those words.

I think I have made a case that based on the FMAA and the Constitution, based on what is written here, the Government has a lot to answer to. It is in breach of the Constitution and the FMAA. Based upon the tendering process and procedures, it is in breach; based on the guideline for the Force Account, it is in breach; based on the standards for collecting public moneys, it is in breach. This Government is in breach of transparency and accountability when it comes to the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project, but tonight we are here in the interest of the people. Tonight we offer the Government an opportunity to provide the information that is requested, to provide evidence that it did not breach any of the laws, and then we could say to the Government that it has not fallen short of the glory of public trust.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Minister within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Ferguson]: This evening I rise from the Government benches to participate in the debate on this motion “D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project” moved and standing in the Hon. Member’s name Bishop Juan Edghill. Before I get into my brief presentation allow me to quote from the Good Book. I would quote from St. Matthew, Chapter 7, verse 3. This is what it states:

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eyes and pay no attention to plank in your eyes?”

I firmly believe that the Members, who came before me, would have spent tremendous time in outlining some of the issues raise in the motion, such as sustainability, what would be the long-term plan for the stadium, among other things. However, apart from being a recreational facility, the park is a facility where the churches which, from time to time, utilise that open space to conduct their crusade, their open air meetings, among other things. I know that many others, be it churches, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), would see the need to utilise the purposes of this particular park.

I just want to make a point, to pick up from the Hon. Member Ms. Gillian Burton Persaud. She said, in her earlier remarks, that Christmas would be taking a very long time to come, but this evening, as I stand before you, Santa Claus is here, *early o' clock*, to bring the good news. Let me state, from the onset, that this APNU/AFC Government's intention is not to mislead the Guyanese populace on transparency and accountability. I should also put on record that this Government has been cooperative and has always demonstrated high degree of creditability while in Opposition and now in Government. That is why the Guyanese people voted for us in May 2015 because they wanted transparency and accountability.

It should be noted that during the debate that my colleague following me, and I am referring to the Hon. Minister David Patterson, from this side of the House, would focus on a few WHEREAS clauses and that of the BE IT RESOLVED clauses. I had a close examination and I conducted a thorough analysis of the WHEREAS Clauses contained in this motion. However, I, along with my colleagues on this side of the House, do not support and we are not in agreement of clauses six and eight, respectively. Let me quote what these clauses are seeking to address. Clause 6:

“AND WHEREAS no public disclosure or consultations were held with the citizens or national stakeholders as it relates to this project, nor were any architectural designs and overall projected costs for its construction and completion made public.”

For me, and I guess for my colleagues, they would support me, that this particular clause is erroneous. I recalled that we had placed notices in the newspapers. According to... [Ms. **Teixeira**: Give the date.] I am getting there. [Ms. **Teixeira**: Share it too.] I will... *INews Guyana*, this is dated 06th May, 2016, the caption is “Government justifies D’Urban Park Project...releases details” To come to this National Assembly moving such a motion, stating that there was no public disclosure, there was public consultation, is totally inaccurate. We must remember that prior to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure taking responsibility to complete aspect of the works leading up to the May 2016, this project was being handled by private individuals, Guyanese.

Let us not fool the Guyanese people and this is what the Opposition intended to do tonight, to disgrace this Government, but we would not fall into traps. We made it pellucidly clear to the

Guyanese people, even in this National Assembly. We brought the necessary information. We came with financial papers seeking approval from this very honourable House. When we took responsibility of this project on the 20th April, 2016, myself and Minister Patterson, we called a press conference at the Ministry of the Presidency where the media were invited. They were told of the new arrangement made by His Excellency. Thereafter, we took the media on site and we inspected every area. After we were finished with that, we took an inventory of what the Ministry of Public Infrastructure would be doing.

Mr. Speaker, you heard about accountability, no transparency and all the negative descriptions that the Opposition tried to describe this Government, but when the contracts were awarded after we took ownership of the project, we went to selective tendering where we invited contractors from our list to bid to submit their estimates. Thereafter, what we did, the national procurement tender process was complied with. To say that we took moneys, and all manner of things, and we cannot account for them, as I said before, it is erroneous reporting and we need to get our facts straight.

6.53 p.m.

The other WHEREAS clause, and where it the last WHEREAS clause,

“AND the Minister of Public Infrastructure during the scrutiny of this Supplementary provision was unable to provide the National Assembly on Monday, 8th August, 2016 with the final cost of the project or information on the funds raised and materials etc. donated prior to his April takeover.”

This again is another erroneous report, because the *Hansard* of Monday, 8th August, parts I and II, will show every question was answered by the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure.

I now move to the BE IT RESOLVED clause. As I said before, my colleague coming after me will deal with it in more detail. Let me look at the third BE IT RESOVED clause. Here is what it states:

“Inform the House whether any and which of these contributions were submitted to the Consolidated Fund;”

As I said before, prior to us taking ownership of this project, this project was being monitored and manned by private individuals who see the need for national unity, who yielded to the call of His Excellency, because it was His Excellency's vision to bring that pristine green area into an open space where all Guyanese can congregate and enjoy the breeze.

Mr. Speaker, how can you ask us to inform this House whether any and which of these contributions were submitted to the Consolidated Fund? When we came to this National Assembly, the Ministry, the Government, we came for approvals. It is not a case whereby the Ministry of Public Infrastructure or some other Government official received contributions and we did not put it into the Consolidated Fund. The moneys, which we came for to this House to approve, were actually approved by the National Assembly. I do not want to burden the House with what we heard before.

Let us be fair to the Guyanese people. We are in Government 18 months and in less than a year we had that jungle realised. We had it realised. Earlier we were hearing the comparison between the stadium and the park. I think my colleagues need to get an understanding of what a stadium is and what a park is. The Hon. Member Nicolette Henry, I think dealt with it reasonably.

We were being preached at today, earlier in the day, about accountability and transparency, but I need to remind my honourable friends on the western half of this House that we have millions, even billions, that are still unaccounted for. Earlier in the day we had heard of some of these. We heard about Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA); we heard of Cricket World Cup; we heard of the \$500 million Clean-up My Country initiative, but the forensic audit states it all. A time will come when my honourable friends on that side of the House will have to give an account to the Guyanese people for the moneys that they spent which they cannot give an account for.

I do not feel that on this side of the House we can support this motion because, as my honourable colleague Mr. Jermaine Figueira, said this motion should not have been here this evening. With these few words, I cannot support this motion at this point in time. [*Applause*]

Mr. Nandlall: For the longest while I have not heard a debate of this type where every device known to language has been employed to stay away and to deviate from the issue that is before the House. We heard about the glories of the 50th Anniversary; we heard about the thousands of

people who came to celebrate; we heard about the fact that we, 32 on this side, were not accorded seating accommodation. We heard about so many things excepting the simple requests which this motion makes.

It is the second time that the important question of transparency and accountability is presented in this House in a very frontal way. Those who now occupy the seats of Government and who made that their watchword over the last five years... They spoke about it in every conceivable forum in this country, at every street corner and in every media house and made it such a national watchword. I do not know what is going through the minds of the Guyanese people now when they are confronted with the simple questions of accountability and transparency. There is this great attempt to elude and delude.

We had a simple motion a few months ago that called upon all Members of Parliament to declare their integrity declarations as a mechanism and a measure and an exemplification of accountability and transparency. We asked that we disclose their tax returns over the last 15 years, again, as an exemplification of accountability and transparency. They rejected that motion. Now, again, we have a very simple opportunity, uncomplicated, unsophisticated opportunity to answer a few questions about a mega project. They boast about it as being a mega project. I do not want to get into the merits or the demerits of it. All I want to know is who threw two truckloads of sand. What is the name of the fellow who threw two truckloads of sand? I want to know who weeded the grass and who cut the pristine forest. That is all that we are asking. That is all this motion seeks to do. Every mechanism, every linguistic mechanism, is used to shy away from that very simple exercise.

For the record, I want to read the motion into the *Hansard*, because subsequently one who undertakes to follow this debate may have great difficulty in understanding what the motion is, because nothing that the motion speaks about is spoken to by the other side. The motion asks for some simple questions. I will go through just the BE IT RESOLVED clauses.

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly in the interest of public accountability, transparency and good governance...

It is a very high ideal to which we all commit ourselves.

“...calls upon the Government to make full disclosure on the following:”

It is as simple as that, make full disclosure in the interest of public accountability and good governance. If the other side is not committed to that, I supposed that is why we are engaging in this attempt to divert. This is what it asks for:

“(1) The name(s) of the individuals and the private organisation which were in charge of this project from its inception to the April takeover by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure;”

Who are the people? Why are we engaging in this circumlocution and circuitous exercise? Why not just tell us the names of the people who are in charge of the project? I know a few. I know them personally, but this motion was designed to get it from the Government. For the life of me, I do not understand why such simple questions cannot be answered.

“(2) The donors and their contributions in cash and/or kind who contributed to the initial phase and completion of the Jubilee D’Urban Park Development Project;”

We were told, and the nation was told, that donations were made, that party supporters, patriotic Guyanese, persons who were endowed with nationalistic sentiments, philanthropists, charitable organisations, all came forward in all their glory, so happy they were, to celebrate with us that 50th Anniversary, and they poured their goodwill in kind and in assets. All we are asking who are these people? Give us their names. Give us the name of the company and what little *datchna* they did give. What did they give? That is all they are asking.

“(3) Inform the House whether any and which of these contributions were submitted to the Consolidated Fund;”

It is if there were any at all. My honourable colleague, the Hon. Member Irfaan Ali detailed the legal obligation both in the Constitution and in Fiscal Management and Accountability Act to put moneys in the Consolidated Fund and then it comes back out here. It is something that Mr. Ramjattan is very much acquainted with. I do not understand why he does not use his vice-presidential power to persuade his Government to tell us how much of this money was put in the

Consolidated Fund. He journeyed all the way to Eve Leary Police Headquarters once to make a report as he pursued this high ideal of his of getting all moneys in the Consolidated Fund. Here it is, a glorious opportunity is presented to him and he does not try to persuade his Government.

Then we want:

“The list of contractors and the process of procurement used to secure those engaged.”

All we want is the list of the contractors. My honourable friend, the Minister within the Ministry, offered us some information which I find very intriguing. The Hon. Member said that they had a list of contractors whom they called and then some process was engaged in. The Hon. Member used the terminology of public procurement process, but we are saying exactly that, that did not happen.

7.08 p.m.

One would have expected that the Hon. Member would have produced a piece of newspaper or take her seat, as is the recent practice in the House. Not a shred of evidence was produced; just the bald statement that public procurement was done. To increase the drama, the Hon. Minister held up two *Hansard* as if it was all in there. We are asking, if that was it, then that should have been identified and sent to us. I know that it is not there. The true picture is not there for the budgeted and actual cost of every phase of the Project completed and the projected final cost for the overall Project. Why is it that we cannot have such very simple and elementary information? Any person who engages in any type of cost-assessment of any given project would be able to break it up into phases and say what is the cost of this phase and that the incomplete phase will cost X amount of money. That is all that we are asking. That is so difficult for you to do. There is another simple question on the payments made to the individual contractors of companies as is relates to the Project.

You must have competent persons who are in charge of the public purse and who are administering public finances. From whichever source it comes, once it relates to a State project, it becomes public financing. You are obliged to keep that kind of information in that manner. The law imposes that kind of obligation. Your Permanent Secretaries know that. That is the obligation of the Accounting Officers of these agencies. I see some of them in the House. I am

sure that the request was not made or there is no information because no record of this particular transaction was kept.

Then, we have the liabilities, if any, to any individual contractors and companies that are owed for works and services provided. My information is that the list of persons who have not been paid and who have rendered services on this Project is very long. We are asking who these people are. This is not secret information. This is not a Minister building an individual house. This, as you said, is a Project of national importance and is a matter of national public importance. It concerns accountability and good governance, something that you earnestly and honestly promised the people of Guyana. I presume that you are committed to that objective. Why not tell us how much money is owed. Which is the agency that is now assigned for the day-to-day management and caretaking of the facility? I saw one newspaper columnist said that wood ants are infesting the place. Public moneys were spent, whether they were donated freely, whether they were hard-earned taxpayers' moneys, we do not know. Moneys were spent. Anyone of us who passes there will see that the facility is without any supervision. Cows are grazing; horses are grazing. Based on what this author said in the newspaper, the place is infested with wood ants. We want to know who is the person or entity engaged in the process of caretaking and management of this grand facility which will remain etched in our history as the edifice or the centre of our 50th Anniversary celebration. Fifty years from now, I presume that you would want to have that edifice or that site to still be there so that we can show our generations to come that, 50 years ago, this is where we did this grand celebration. If it is being kept in that way and there is neglect and disrepair after a year, what will happen in 50 years? It is an eminently fair question to ask who is in charge but we are not getting that kind of information.

Lastly, give us an estimate of what it will cost to maintain this facility annually. There is nothing difficult, nothing controversial, about these questions. I agree with my Colleague, Hon. Bishop Edghill, that it is quite a travesty and an indictment that a motion had to be moved, in the first place, to extract from the Government such vital, rudimentary and elementary information that is supposed to be available publicly.

I see the Hon. Prime Minister making some very caustic remarks about the Commission of Information. Information is lacking in this country. If there is one place in this land, if there is one institution in our Constitution's superstructure where information is supposed to abound, it is

the National Assembly of our country. This is not because I want to know whether two or four truckloads of sand were poured there, but there is a constituency out there who we represent. They ask us these questions because they are interested and I am sure that constituency that have voted for the Government as well... The Hon. Bishop Edghill had cause to say that many of the Hon. Members on the back benches do not know the information themselves, more so the ordinary members of the public. These are vital information that we are asking for and it is quite unfortunate that we have to descend to this level, exert so much energy and time like *pulling teeth* to get such vital and essential information from a Government that has committed itself. I read this document only last night – the joint *Manifesto*. The common thread which runs through this document, almost every theme in it there is one golden thread. The document is about an accountable Government; it is about full and frank disclosure of the workings of the Government; and it is about transparency and good governance. That is what this document promised the Guyanese people. Here it is we have to virtually beg and cajole to get very basic information.

I want to refer to the Integrity Commission Act because we heard both on that side as well as in the public sphere that a lot of donations were made towards this Project. Somehow, because the rubric of donations was used, some people may have persuaded themselves that there is no obligation to account as you normally would have had to do had there not been donations. That is not so.

My Hon. Friend, Mr. Irfaan Ali, quoted copiously from the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act and identified the Sections that state whether the moneys are for a social object, whatever source it comes from, once it mingles with public finances and once it enters into the public domain, then it becomes public moneys and has to be treated in the manner provided for by the law.

In addition to that, even if we want play the devil's advocate and treat the moneys as donations, donations beyond \$10,000, donation to a public official of which a Minister is a part or any Member of the Government is a part, has to be declared to the Integrity Commission. Failure to declare carries a heavy fine. It is the value of the donation that is the fine. I hear all kinds of sums being bandied about. Four hundred million dollars, \$1.5 billion... Whatever the sum is, under the Integrity Commission Act, that is the fine that you are playing with. I just want to make that

point when persons think that the holders of public offices can shelter under the protection of a gift. It is not so. We dealt with that and that is a standard operational procedure in public life and in public office throughout the world. It is a United Nations Convention requirement and we complied with it since 1996.

We have the Procurement Act. Section 3 (1) states:

“This Act applies to all procurement by procuring entities...”

Of course, a Government and any of its Ministries, any of its Departments or any State agency are all governed by the Procurement Act. Every contract, every piece of service that was procured and every article of goods that was procured towards that Project are supposed to have been done in accordance with the Procurement Act or else it is unlawful. We have a Ruling from the Court. I want to put on the record of this Assembly, for posterity, a case filed by BK International Inc., one of the Contractors that I have seen at the Project site - BK International Inc., 2013 75cm. In this case, this Contractor went to Court to challenge an award of a contract done by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) to another Contractor. The basis of the challenge was that the GGMC did not tender the contract in accordance with the Procurement Act. The GGMC’s argument was that it is a state agency, a statutory body corporate; I am not a department of Government; I am managed and run by a Board; I have the independence to keep my own finances; therefore, I do not have to comply with the Procurement Act; the Procurement Act is designed to deal with Central Government procurement and not me.

The Chief Justice Chang quoted from authorities in India and throughout the Commonwealth and came to the conclusion that the GGMC is so intricately linked to Central Government with a Minister of the Government exercising executive control, and that the Minister gets that executive power from the President under Article 99 of the Constitution, that you cannot delink an agency of the calibre like the GGMC from the Government for the purpose of the Procurement Act. Therefore, the Procurement Act governs all procurement once public moneys are involved. Whatever agency may have been given the task of undertaking that Project, it cannot hide from the Procurement Act.

7.23 p.m.

I hope the Hon. Minister who may speak after me can convince us, persuade us, and, more importantly, the Guyanese people that the Procurement Act was complied with and that the entire project was not done unlawfully.

Sir, as I wine up, I just want to say quickly that this motion is a very simple one. All it intended to get from the Government are answers to simple questions, answers that should have been furnished to us and all of us could have been home by now. But, unfortunately, the champions of transparency, unaccountability and good governance have failed their cause.

Thank you very much, Sir. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is now 20 minutes after seven o'clock. We will have a brief suspension for half of an hour and we will return here at 7.45 p.m. Thank you.

Hon. Members, while we go on our suspension, I beg your leave to announce the very happy occurrence that today is the birthday of one of our Hon. Members, Hon. Richard Allen, and I know you all will wish him a very happy birthday today. [*Applause*]

Sitting Suspended at 7.24 p.m.

Sitting Resumed at 8.03 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Sitting is resumed. Please be seated.

Minister within the Ministry of Communities [Ms. Hastings-Williams]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I rise to make my contribution to this motion, I would first like to signal my unwavering astonishment to the level of audacity demonstrated by the Opposition to bring forward a motion of such nature to this House. A debate on transparency and accountability should be the last item on the Opposition's agenda in their quest to expose this Government of corruption. I wish to remind the speaker who stood up just before me that millions of dollars were spent to produce law books and was taken home by some mysterious man, according to them. I would also like to refer to Hon. Edghill's remarks, "at least do something". Well let me tell this House and the Guyanese people that this Government will not go down that road for doing something just for doing sake.

Probably, the previous Administration went down that road to “do something”: do something for the hinterland children; build a school in Kato which is now a white elephant because, up to this day, it cannot be occupied. Do something: build a building in High Street for social protection which was former social services, and up to this day it is a white elephant. Do something; at least do something: clean up the city and, up to the day when we took over, some of the drains and the parapets were still not cleaned and millions of taxpayers’ moneys were spent. Do something: the Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Project and, Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on of doing something. They did a lot of things but they did not have positive impact on the lives of the Guyanese.

Mr. Speaker, as I now turn to the D’Urban Park Development Jubilee Project, what I refer to as the people’s Project, and when I say, “people”, I am referring to every single Guyanese, let us take a quick look at the foundation on which the Opposition stands. I think it is crucial to first examine the track record of the Opposition as to ascertain if they have the integrity to scrutinise this Government on accountability and transparency.

According to the Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Guyana had slipped five points at the end of 2015, making it the 119th country out of 168 with the highest level of public sector corruption. However, as perceived by the President of the Transparency Institute of Guyana, which was published by *Demerara Waves* on the 27th January, 2016, titled, “Guyana’s perceived corruption worsens; local watchdog says it was avoidable”:

“...the nine-month old coalition-led government could not be blamed altogether for the low CPI marks.”

According to the article, the main cause for the low CPI mark was as a result of the absence of a Public Procurement Commission, an entity that this Administration has made a reality.

I am quite sure that it was known in the public domain for an extended period of time and we are all cognisant of the unprecedented level of corruption committed by the past Government in the execution of many projects. And here I am referring to the surreptitious deals about the financing of the Guyana Marriott Hotel, name of investors, *et cetera*. Those were never revealed to the Guyanese people.

If we were to look at another project, let us say the Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Project, we will observe an even more bizarre pattern, as outlined in the *Stabroek News* on the 29th March, 2013, under the caption: “Amaila Falls Hydro – A disaster in the making.” The author described the approximately US\$840 million invested as mind-boggling.

According to the author:

“...the Government does not think it necessary to inform, let alone consult, Guyanese but that it has a divine right to do as it pleases and Guyanese should be thankful.”

In other words, it was pellucid that the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project was riddle with corruption and the overall level of corruption by the past Administration was insurmountable.

This Government should be commended for putting a halt on the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project and ultimately saving our future generation billions of dollars in debt.

Seventeen months has passed and there is a lot more to be done. Instead of coming to this House with frivolous and banal motion to pillory us and criticise for criticism’s sake, the Opposition should assist in cleaning up the mess we inherited from them. **[Mr. G. Persaud: You are paid the fat cat salary; remember that.]**

[Mr. Damon: Talk about your salary.]

The motion is not about my salary; the motion is about the D’Urban Park Development Jubilee Project. At one moment, I thought the motion was about the Skeldon Factory and other things that were going out of the way but I will not follow that road. I will refer to the Jubilee Park. The *Guyana Chronicle*, Friday, 4th November, 2016: “From swampland to recreational facility”: I cannot see how the Opposition will say that the Jubilee Park is a white elephant.

Mr. Speaker, I will take this as an opportunity to enlighten the public of the commitment by this Administration to create a good life for all and not only a selected few. First, as I said, the D’Urban Park is the people’s Project, a project undertaken in the interest of the people of this nation to facilitate the celebration of our 50th Independence Anniversary. This Government recognises the importance and significance of our Golden Jubilee Anniversary and is cognisant of the economic and social benefits that would have accompanied this event and the level of impact it will have on every Guyanese both directly and indirectly.

According to the half year’s report:

“Value Added Tax collections totalled \$17.3 billion during the first half of 2016, 5% more than the same period in 2015.”

In other words, the increase in VAT was a result of an increase in consumption, which supports our hypothesis that the Jubilee celebration did indeed have an impact on our economy.

Mr. Speaker, the overall sentiment echoed by the people in support of D’Urban Park was positive. Articles in our local media were sporting headlines such as, “The Durban Park experience - A welcomed change”. The *Guyana Chronicle* on the 27th May, 2016:

“The Park was seen as a critical component in the successful hosting of the event as approximately 30,000 persons were able to be accommodated to witness the float parade.”

And my Colleague over there confirmed the massive turn out. If they had known the proverb, *the early bird catches the worm*, and they were loyal, had integrity and patriotism, they would have been there on time and they would have been given their seats. [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Ms. Hastings-Williams, what I must say to you is that the language which... Hon. Minister Dawn Hastings-Williams, please attend to the Speaker on this matter. Hon. Member, the language you used is not acceptable in this House and the remarks about loyalty and patriotism should not form part of your presentation; it should be withdrawn.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I acknowledge and I withdraw, peacefully.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Mr. Speaker, the point I am getting at is that the D’Urban Park was pertinent in the hosting of our 50th Anniversary celebration and the Government will stop at no cost when it comes to the wellbeing and socioeconomic development of the people of this nation. Unlike the previous Administration, we will support inclusive economic growth and will not renege on our promises to the people of Guyana in delivering the good life to all.

One of the Whereas Clauses is to know who will manage the operations of the Jubilee Park. We have plans and they knew about the plans because they told us, this evening, that it would soon be handed over to the Ministry of Communities and, when it is handed over to the Ministry of Communities, we will ensure that the Mayor and City Council manages, operates and maintains the facility, as how it should be done.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I do not intend to support the motion that is brought before this House.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

8.16 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple motion. Whether the Hon. Member who just spoke before me believes it is audacious or not for us to ask the Government to come to account, I wish to refer to 23rd Edition of Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, page 74.

“Ministers have a duty to Parliament to account, and be held to account, for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments and...agencies; it is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information in Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister;”

That is the British system.

“Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament, refusing to provide the information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest.”

The motion is based on that premise. The Opposition is calling on the Government to provide information that is not publicly available. You can have fun talking about audaciousness; you can have fun accusing us in relation to our integrity; you can make all sorts of statements which are not upheld by your own Ministry of Finance's website, which has the forensic audits you referred to, but I am not going to get into a debate on some of the statements and accusations made in this House.

We originally thought of asking questions on this matter. The August, 2015 Budget had no provision for the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project. The 2016 Budget had no provision for the Park. In fact, in 2016, in this House, the question was raised as to whether there was money put in for the D'Urban Park Development Project because, by then, the Government was talking about using that arena, that venue, for the flag raising ceremony. There were no moneys put in the Budget. In fact, if my memory is correct, the Hon. Minister, Mr. Harmon, got up at that time and pointed out that the Project was being funded in part by donations from civil society and that a private company was managing the Project. No information was available. All the quotations from the newspapers that have been given here do not provide the information we are seeking.

The *Hansard* of 8th August, which has been referred to earlier by a number of speakers from the Government side, is not helpful, either, in relation to the questions we are asking. For example, Part II, 8th August, page 10635, the question was asked:

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

That was when \$407.6 million was sought from the Contingencies Fund, not the Consolidated Fund. Minister Greenidge, who is not here in the room now, has been an advocate for correcting any wrong use of the Contingencies Fund in the past when he was in the Opposition. The response by the Hon. Minister Patterson on behalf of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure was:

“...while the 50th Anniversary was not unforeseen, it was not budgeted to be done by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.”

The questions continued to do with where the money was coming from and the Minister then pointed out that he used the \$72 million, which was in that Supplementary Financial Paper, to do a number of road works, side works, in his Ministry. The question was again asked in relation to which company managed D'Urban Park prior to the takeover by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure on 20th April. This is what the Minister said:

“I build things and occasionally I have to break them. I can in a matter for full clarity and declaration, as I see where the Hon. Member is heading, say that yes it is widely publicly

known there was a private company previously dealing with the D'Urban Park. This Ministry took over on 20th April 2016..."

Our belief is that the Hon. Minister and his Ministry took over on 20th April on instructions to save the Project because money was collected, supplies were collected, labour was provided. It was either not being built or things were not being accounted for. When the Ministry took over on 20th April, the Ministry did not commence building D'Urban Park as a Jubilee Park for the flag raising ceremony. It took over a Project which had commenced sometime in November, 2015. The Ministry of the Presidency, through Mr. Harmon, and some other individuals from the diaspora, under the name of an unnamed private company, made several site visits with the now deceased, Mr. Walter Willis, and were concerned about what was going on. Contractors were called and donations and supplies were sought. The swampland you described took thousands of tons of sand to fill. How much did it cost or was all donated? If the sand was all donated and the Ministry of the Presidency had oversight, we have a right to ask for accountability. Contractors provided labour for the site which they paid for. Contractors provided materials and wood on site, all before 20th April. In fact, as of 20th April, the stands were almost finished, except, I remember reading, that some stands had to be rectified because, by then, the media was seeing very shoddy and bad work being done. The questions we asked were about the entire Project because money was accrued; money was donated; supplies were donated, but the Government was reluctant to make disclosure on its flagship project in the name of our 50th Anniversary.

The Hon. Member who spoke before does not intimidate me whatsoever by stating that it is the audacity of the Opposition. The questions are very simple. The longer you hold out, the worse it looks for you. I am the eleventh speaker and there is only one more Government speaker. I think there were six, five Government members who have spoken but not one has offered an answer. We have had abuse, accusations, red herrings and all sorts of things thrown into the pitch, even diversionary tactics. The issue is this: we, on this side of the House, do not have a problem of the Park being built where D'Urban Park was. One of the Members accused us of not liking D'Urban Park because it is near Lodge. Any government has the right to put its flagship projects where it wishes. If, in your wisdom, you thought that was the best location, you will live and die with your wisdom for a lot of the Guyanese people...

When the Stadium was built, it was certified by the International Cricket Council. We built it with a loan of US\$16 million from the Government of India. It is an entire complex which fulfils international requirements. It has been used since 2007 up to now for international sporting events. There are laboratories for anti-doping, facilities for disabled persons, proper washrooms and not outhouses or latrines or those plastic removable toilets that were at the Jubilee Park; there is proper parking; from a security point of view, there are rooms for very important persons (vip) and very, very important persons (vvip); special press rooms for the press; and special changing rooms for the artistes and/or the sportsmen. The Stadium could have accommodated over 30,000 people very easily.

However, we understand your position that you wanted a “fresh start”; you wanted to have something in your own name. That is fine. The fact that you used over half of a billion dollars and do not want to account for it is a problem. You want to put your flagship somewhere and that is your business.

What is clear is that one of the speakers tried using an advertisement, which is not an advertisement she read from the newspapers, to show that that there was consultation. First of all, there is no evidence anywhere that there was consultation with anybody on the location, the architectural design and the scope of works or the projected or overall cost. A drawing on a billboard in front of the Park is not what we are taking about. That is an artistic impression. We are talking about an architectural design.

At the Cricket Stadium, there was a board with oversight as well as a project management unit. A Coordinator, the late Mr. Walter Willis, from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, had oversight for the entire Stadium. One of the members who sat was officially from the People’s National Congress, named by the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Corbin. If there are any questions about how the Stadium was built, the information was all public. It was all known. At no point had anyone on the Government side publicly said that, when we were building, we thought that it would cost \$2 million, but, on review, we have found it is going to cost \$500 or \$600 million and here are the reasons.

My point in starting out by reading from Erskine May’s *Parliamentary Practice* has to do with being provided with information. The Government’s responsibility is to provide information, to

be called to account. If you do not like the interpretation after the information has been made public, that is part of being in Government. Get thick skinned. You cannot get into Government and have wimps. You have to be able to take licks, as we faced it on that side when some of you were on this side of the House. I remember the bashing we got, and the former Speaker would remember the bashing we got on anything and everything one could think of, no matter what we said. What we do know is that information was provided.

I remember comments were made about the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. Maybe the young Member of Parliament and Minister is unaware, because she was not part of the official delegations which met on Amaila with the Government, of the stacks of documents which were provided to the then Opposition, which were five binders high. For me, it was always something I smiled about because Mr. Greenidge was the one who had to fetch all those binders out. Mr. Greenidge and I are kind of challenged in terms of our height. My memory of that meeting is of Mr. Greenidge walking out with stacks of binders and being unable to see where he was going. We provided information on Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. The issue with this motion is that there were no architectural designs and no overall projected costs were ever shared or made public.

8.31 p.m.

There were never any discussions, even with the residents of Hadfield Street. [An Hon. Member (Government): How do you know that?] There were not. [An Hon. Member (Government): How do you know that?] Do you have a territory that I am not allowed to go into? You are rather audacious. Mr. Speaker, protect me.

No budgetary provisions were made. Money was spent. There were no designs, no overall projections, no cost and no final account by the Government. Having had the flag raising ceremony, and all of those things done, at no point did the Government say, “We thank you everybody. We had a wonderful time at the flag raising ceremony. The cost of this lovely legacy, which we have left for the Guyanese people, is ‘x’ amount.” Nobody has said that, on the Government side. The issue that we are talking about is full disclosure.

We have just finished the Parliamentary Forum on Anti-Corruption, last week, which was held at the Marriott Hotel, Guyana. It is a nice place, by the way, for those of you who think that it

should be shut down and thrown away. A number of us, on both sides of the House, attended. One of the issues which came up in the course of the discussions – not everyone stayed all of the time; some of us did – was about Ministers answering questions. The same quote, which I quoted, was presented to us. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) United Kingdom (UK) delegation's statement was absolutely unequivocal. Ministers must answer questions. Where they fail to do so, they can stand the sanction of the House.

Someone said that this is a needless motion. Another person said that the Opposition has the audacity to even dare to ask such questions. We are the Opposition. If I were you, on the other side of the House, I would keep in mind, always at the back of my head, that the difference is 4,506 votes. Do not ever forget. When the election petition is heard in this country, you shall wake up and smell the roses.

I could be just like the Hon. Member, who spoke about the audacity of the Opposition, and reel off a number of things. Kato Secondary School: You have been in power for 18 months now. What have you done with the Kato Secondary School? We are still waiting for the assessment study to be done on the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, by the Norwegian independent group, because you want to assess it to see if it is viable and feasible. That is fine. You need your time to think about. I am not aware of statements made by Ministers to the press that the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project had been thrown out of the window completely. The Hon. Minister speaking was either letting us know something new or she is out of sync with her colleague Ministers on the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project.

On the issue of accountability of these funds – it is what we keep asking on this side of the House - why can the names of the group of individuals who made up this secret company – it is secret because nobody knows the name - ...What is the name of the company? Was it registered? Does it pay tax?

The Hon. Minister Jordan introduced a ream of taxation. Even if one wants to get a licence, one has to show that one's Guyana Revenue Authority's (GRA's) payments are in order. I assume that this company is registered; that it is in order; that it has been paying its GRA due; that it is in compliance. We have a right to ask and we have a right to be answered. It is the names of the individuals and the contractors. It is not good for this country when contractors are talking about

having received phone calls by political appointees, inviting them to give \$2 million and \$5 million towards the project, provide tons of sand, provide wood, provide labourers, provide excavators and rollers. We know. We are all living in the same country. There are only 747,000 people in this country. The People's Progressive Party (PPP) knows a thing or two about what is going on. We are asking for accountability and transparency.

Regarding the points that have been raised, I find it disheartening that, after the statements from the other side of the House, to do with the flag raising ceremony... I heard comments on inclusivity. How could it be a laughing matter in this House when 32 Members of Parliament, representing 49.8% of the population, could not have had a seat? We were standing in the corridor or milling around... **[An Hon. Member: You were late.]** We were not late. That is a mistake. We have answered that in the press, so do not even worry with that. We went there early, according to the ticket. If the Hon. Member and Hon. Members believe that we were superfluous and unnecessary to the flag raising ceremony of the 50th Independence Anniversary of this country, we are getting the message loud and clear. When Members of the Government talk about inclusivity and national unity, we know that it is just words. It means nothing. It is rhetorical.

I have heard in this House too – I am responding to some things – that the Government established the Public Procurement Commission (PPC). Congratulations. The reason why the Government was able to do it is because it got the two-thirds majority. When we were in Government, we could not get the two-thirds majority from you. Those who are now shouting were not even in the National Assembly at that time. They do not even know. We could not have gotten the two-thirds which was required. Therefore the magnanimity of this House is on this side. We gave our support to allow the PPC to be established. Suppose we had not given the support to have the two-thirds, you could not have bragged now about the PPC. The Constitution states that there must be a two-thirds majority. **[Ms. Ally: We did it.]** You did not do it. You did it because we agreed to support you.

In addition to that, the resolution to establish the PPC was passed on 8th August, 2016. Yet, August, September, October and November have passed. Only a week ago did the Government put in place the PPC. You were in such a hurry to do it. In fact, the anti-money laundering legislation was held up because the AFC Member had said that that the AMLCFT legislation

would not go through unless the PPC was appointed. Yet, you waited four months, after this House passed the legislation, to swear in the Commissioners.

I heard the Hon. Member also say that we know who is going to take over the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project. Again, the Hon. Member, Minister Patterson, on page 10643 of the *Hansard*, as Mr. Neendkumar had asked when this project would be handed over to the Ministry of Communities, said:

“It was actually supposed to be handed over on the 31st July, 2016, eight days ago. We took off some lights, as you probably would know, for safekeeping...We want to make sure that we put back at least some of those things to hand over back to the Ministry”.

This is in the *Hansard* of 8th August. Today is 21st November. Regarding our question of who is going to manage this facility, we heard from a Hon. Member just before me that it is the city council. This *Hansard* of 8th August, in response to Mr. Neendkumar, states that it appears to be the Ministry of Communities. Maybe, that is the wrong deduction, but the Minister did not say that it was not.

We can *pampazette*, as they say, as much as we want in this House. The issue is that this Opposition is requiring the Government to answer some very simple and basic questions. The information which we want predates 20th April.

The only Minister in this House, who could answer from 20th April, is Minister Patterson. Maybe, Minister Patterson needs some help from Minister Harmon. It is because the Minister, who I like to call the mega Minister – I am sure he likes being called the mega Minister – knows everything in Government. He is equivalent to Dr. Luncheon of the PPP. Therefore I assume that Minister Harmon is the one who could enlighten this House. I am surprised that he is not speaking. He is the one who is best placed to be able to answer the questions relation to pre 20th April. It is so that this House could have a total picture, pre 20th April and post 20th April. The people of this country have a right to have information. They have a right to be given that information. This Government has to understand all the attacks which were made on us. The shoe is on your foot now. If you are so lean and clean and so “fresh start” and all of the things which you described yourself as, then this is a great example for you to show how different you think you are from the PPP.

After ten speakers, in which you have not said one iota of anything. All we have got are platitudes, lectures, accusations and not one word of who the contractors are, what is the name of the secret company, who were the directors, how much money was collected, how much money was donated in cash and kind, whether the contributions were handed over to the Consolidated Fund and what process was used to select the contractors.

From the *Hansard* of 8th August, the Minister pointed out that the 16 contractors, who were hired after 20th April, it was done by selective tendering. He admitted that and it is in there. I could quote the page if it is a problem. It might be useful to know what the budgeted cost of all of this was and what the final cost is. Lastly, do we owe people and how much we owned? What liabilities are there?

Since there was a promise to take down the stands and give them to communities for the community grounds, could anyone say if that proposal has dropped off of the shelf, has been changed or has been amended? Communities are looking out for their stands. These are basically bleachers. These are not real stands. Come off of it, Members. I could probably sit on a better stand if I go to some of those drinking holes, which you men go to, where there are those bleachers at the side of the road in which you would climb and watch what is going by. I could have a better bleacher to sit on at one of those road sides “watering holes”, as some of you would go to. What is the cost going to be to maintain this?

I sincerely hope that the Government recognises that the issue of transparency and accountability is not whimsical; it is not fanciful. It is not to be treated in a cavalier or capricious manner. It is a question. We have a right to question. The people of this country have a right to question. People have been writing letters in the newspapers about this. How much did it cost? What would be the long-term burden on the taxpayers? How could you make it financially viable?

8.46 p.m.

We have not come here to attack the Government’s choice of venue because that is not our interest. Our interest is, the Government having made its decision, having made its choice of where it wants to have its legacy or flagship project for 2015/2016 placed, tell us how much it cost and account for it. That is the bottom line, nothing more sophisticated than that. We are in our right as the Opposition to ask and demand that information.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and honour to speak on this motion on behalf of the Government. Mr. Speaker, I had asked you, initially, to excuse me this evening, since I was not previously listed to speak on this motion. However, the Hon. Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, Minister of Education, has graciously allowed me to speak in his stead. As a result, unfortunately, I did not walk with copies of all of my documents. I do apologise for that, but I will not be quoting from any document, I will be reading from my notes.

I will start off by saying that patience is virtue. Previous speakers from this side of the House all said that someone would stand on behalf of the Government and address the questions in the motion. If a bit of patience was exercised Members would know... because I am here to respond fully on behalf of the Government.

Before I actually get to the Whereas Clauses and the Be It Resolved Clauses of the motion, I need to address a few general... [**Ms. Lawrence:** Inaccuracies.] Inaccuracies.

Thank you very much. The first being that the Opposition had to bring this motion to get answers with respect to this project. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure provided a full response on 2nd May, 2016 with all of the information the Government had in its possession, at that time. On 2nd May, 2016, several questions were asked. [**Ms. Teixeira:** On 2nd May there was no Sitting. Get your dates correct] It was 4th May, my apologies. The question was asked whether the structures were permanent and were only for the Jubilee celebrations, and responses were issued for that.

The second question was for the Minister to say whether consultations were held with citizens and stakeholders on the development in the area. The Government responded to say that there was a town hall meeting at the St. Sidwell's Primary School in Lodge and one at the Salem Primary School on Hadfield Street. Furthermore, the information on the upgrade of the D'Urban Park Development Project, as we would have heard the entire night, has been with this country for several decades. It is not only this Administration, but it was since the D'Urban Park was formally a racecourse. We heard that in 2005, the former Administration, the then President Bharat Jagdeo, spent \$45 million. During my speech, on the last occasion of the Sitting of the National Assembly, I said that this Government spent \$134 million. The previous Administration

actually spent \$179 million on the D'Urban Park Development Project and they left us with the *camoodie* infested jungle.

Taken from the Hansard of 4th November, and I quote... [Mr. Bulkan: What year?]

This year, 2016.

“In relation to the Durban lands, yes, resources were expended there and those of us who know the area know that it was swampy. A lot of resources were spent in filling the area and building up the area. That was a number of years ago.”

They tried and they failed. The reason this motion is before this House is because... [Mr.

Bulkan: They are embarrassed.] Exactly, Sir, they are embarrassed. Almost \$200 million was spent and yet they left us a jungle. This Administration is good to the task. Just like the other projects, the Hon. Member, Dawn Hastings, mentioned, which this Government took over and had to rectified, even like the Hope Canal Bridge. We are doing it without qualms. It is only when the Opposition raises it then it becomes a political issue. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure has been repairing and fixing legacy projects from the Opposition since I have been honoured to take up the portfolio without any ado. Maybe, it is time that we start blowing our own trumpets and telling the people what exactly took place.

For the record, I would like to address some inaccuracies that were stated. The capacity of the Guyana National Stadium, Providence was mooted as an alternative venue. At the Inauguration of His Excellency, the President, on 26th May, 2015, as Minister Hughes stated, the National Stadium was packed to capacity. There were several thousands of persons who were outside of the venue. Immediately, after the Inauguration ceremony, the International Cricket Council (ICC), through the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB), issued a letter stating that social events should not be held on the cricketing pitches or should be declassified.

In addition to that, the police and, more so, the Guyana Fire Service, Fire Department, warned this Administration of attempting, again, to house that amount of persons in the National Stadium. That started the search for an alternative venue and that was where the D'Urban Park Development Project came in.

Let me put this in the record, the Police's estimates for the number of persons under the age of 26 on Independence Day was 44,000. That record is not from David Patterson but that estimate came from the Police.

Another inaccuracy I need to correct is that when I came to the House in relations to the Contingency Fund spending, there was no breach of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA). The Minister of Finance always says that it was at the discretion of the Minister of Finance. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure had a total of 24 days to complete the project, hence, the issue of the Contingency Fund payment.

I will start by addressing one of the questions raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He had asked for the spending since April. We have spent a total \$3,172,646 on the D'Urban Park Development Project to date, which is \$576,846 monthly. That is the amount spent on the D'Urban Park Development Project up until the end of last week.

The Hon. Member, Ms. Gillian Persaud, made a few comments which I would like to address. A "bad decision" she said; clean-up campaign only in Georgetown. Obviously, the Member is a Georgetown centric person because the clean-up campaign was countrywide and everyone could acknowledge that. The representatives from the different regions could be asked whether the clean-up campaign was countrywide. The Hon. Member said that it was "a bad decision" by this Government to force the water taxis because it wanted to lower the toll and the cost to use the Berbice River Bridge for our people in Region 6. I am surprised by that comment. The people of Region 6 demanded that the toll be lowered. I am proud to put in the water taxis and I would do it again for the betterment of the people of Region 6. [Ms. Lawrence: And Region 5.]
Yes and Region 5.

On behalf of the Government, the school children, the teachers and the elderly benefitted from what the Member... [Interruption]

The Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, mentioned about the Government's campaign slogan in 2015, but failed to remember that one part of our campaign slogan was that "It was time to remove the PPP" and we kept that promise. The Hon. Member also went through the list of the production quota at the Skeldon Sugar Estate and he was seemly quite happy to say that, in 2015, the Skeldon Sugar Estate produced 39,000 tons of sugar. What the Hon. Member omitted was that

when the PPP commissioned that project it was supposed to produce 120,000 tons of sugar. Thirty-three per cent of what the Skeldon Sugar Factory was supposed to produce and the Hon. Member is saying that that is a good project. Two hundred million United States (US) dollars went down the drain. *[Interruption]*

The Hon. Member Mr. Seeraj asked how \$1 billion could be spent to clean up some bushes. I think the Hon. Member was referring to the D'Urban Park Development Project. First and foremost, this Government did not spend \$1 billion and secondly, he should know the answer to that question. In 2014, the previous Administration had a \$1 billion clean-up project for Georgetown. He should be able to tell us exactly how \$1 billion could be spent and Georgetown was not cleaned. Only bushes were left. That was a rhetorical question.

Still addressing some inaccuracies, when the Hon. Member, Mr. Irfaan Ali, said that accountability was in his DNA. It reminded me of a previous saying that politics was in their DNA, but I agree. That is why, when the Hon. Member, Dawn Hastings, spoke about why Guyana was ranked 119 out of 168 countries under the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. We were listed as the second...

9.01 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Irfaan Ali, do you rise on a Point of Order?

Mr. Ali: Yes, Sir, Standing Order 40(a). Could the Hon. Member quote the source of his information please?

Mr. Chairman: Standing Order 40 (a)?

Mr. Ali: Yes. The Hon. Member gave us a specific ranking for Guyana...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, on a Point of Order, you know exactly what you must do. If you cannot do that then please resume your seat.

Mr. Ali: Standing Order 40 (a).

Mr. Speaker: What is the question that you have? You will repeat the question and then take your seat.

Mr. Ali: Thank you Sir. Could the Hon. Member point us to the source that he is quoting from?
Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I thank you Hon. Member. Minister, please proceed.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. As I said, referring to the information provided by the Hon. Minister, Ms. Dawn Hastings, getting us that sort of ranking is in their DNA. So I agree that the Hon. Member should know, but fortunately, the DNA of this country has changed and it has changed for the better.

Sir, the Audit Office of Guyana General Report, December 2006, page 24, under the Ministry of Finance – Programme 1 – Ministry Administration:

“The Audit Office recommends that the Ministry of Finance take appropriate measures to close Bank Account # 3119 and transfer the balance to the Consolidated Fund...”

This is in relation to the Lotto Fund.

“During the period 1996–2006, totals amounting to \$2.95 billion were received by the Guyana Lottery Company and deposited in a special account # 3119. The balance of this account, as at December 31st, 2006, from \$2.95 billion, there was only \$74.6 million. Therefore payments totalling \$2.875 billion were made during this period”.

Sir, that is accountability in their DNA; that is the DNA that they were referring to. Mr. Ali also made a statement referring to who were the supervisors of the D’Urban Park Development Project. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure supervised the project from the 21st April onwards and we had to do remedial and additional designs, as I had reported. That was the reason why there was an increase in the request and I completely and totally ventilated that topic when I got up to speak. I would like to say, in relation to the Ministry designing and supervising, we are doing that every single day. Right now, I am designing and supervising the roads in Leguan, Berbice, Essequibo, Mahdia, Linden, Georgetown and the East Coast and there is nothing wrong with that.

The Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, spoke about consultations and she regaled us about the Vice– President being weighted down with several volumes of books. She said that in the hope

of the previous Administration being seen as very transparent and opened with the Opposition. When the previous Administration demitted Office and we took over, only then the financial and engineering parts of the Amaila Falls Hydro-Power Project would have been revealed to us. That is what they called open consultation.

I would like to address the issue of the Public Procurement Commission (PPC). The Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, said that she had never received the two-thirds support from the Members. I was a Member of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) from 2006– 2011. I sat there every Monday in this august Assembly where the PAC met, and every week the Hon. Member, Mr. Komal Chand, had the unfortunate job of reporting to the Committee. This was because of the first item on the agenda, at every single PAC meeting, and the *Hansard* would hear me out and the Hon. Member is here, if he is willing to say, he reported that the PPP would not be submitting any names – every Monday when the Chairman...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Chand?

Mr. Chand: Yes. Cde. Speaker, on a Point of Correction, the Hon. Member was the one most absentee Member at the meetings. We did not hold meetings every Monday.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Komal Chand, do you mean the Hon. Member?

Mr. Chand: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I repeat, every Monday, the response to the question was that the PPP would not be submitting any names or nominations. I was there. The AFC and the PNC submitted names.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, is it a Point of Order?

Ms. Teixeira: On a Point of Order. I was a Member of the PAC from 2012–2015, where it was discussed, we advertised and we had 64 names...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira.

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Ms. Teixeira: Elucidation – Standing Order 40 (b)

Mr. Speaker: Ms. Teixeira, on a Point of Order, a Hon. Member would state the Standing Order and what the problem is and you would not give a speech.

Ms. Teixeira: I will.

Mr. Speaker: I would not permit a speech. The Standing Order, a statement and then you take your seat. Please proceed.

Ms. Teixeira: Standing Order 40 (b) - the PPC was discussed during the Tenth Parliament of the PAC, which I was a Member of, we advertised and had 64 persons and the Minutes would record what transpired in that Committee. That is all I wish to say.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member. Please proceed Hon. Minister.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, for emphasis, I was a Member of the PAC from 2006–2011 and every Monday the question was asked and the representative, the Hon. Member Mr. Komal Chand, reported that the PPP Government would not be submitting any names at those meetings.
[Interruption]

Sir, I would not address the Whereas Clauses because the other speakers would. Sir, I would address the Be It Resolved Clauses.

Clause 1,

“The name(s) of the individuals and the private organisations which were in charge of this project from the inception to the April takeover of the Ministry of the Public Infrastructure;”

The name of the company is the Homestretch Development Inc. and some of the names are Mr. L. London, Mr. B. Ram, Mr. G. Miller and Mr. V. Wilson.

Clause 2,

“The donors and their contributions in cash/or kind who contributed to the initial phase and completion of the Jubilee D’Urban Park Development Project;”

As I mentioned above, this work was completed and carried out by a private company. I assume that this information would be in the statutory audited accounts – the donations and contributions - cash or in kind.

Clause 3,

“Inform the House whether any and which of these contributions were submitted to the Consolidated Fund;”

Sir, it is a private company and, once again, no contributions were paid over to the Consolidated Fund.

“The list of contractor/s in the process of procurement to secure those engaged;”

As I have mentioned, and I will do so again, under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, and for emphasis I will give the House the names of the contractors and I also... [Ms. Teixeira:

Are these the same 16 contractors that went to selective tender?] Yes Sir. [Ms.

Teixeira: Then the names are in the *Hansard*. We do not need it.] Sir, am I not allowed

to answer as fulsome as possible?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please continue to answer the questions.

Mr. Patterson: Mc Branz, Barnes and McCoy Construction, N. North and Sons Quarry, Car Care, C&L Construction, TBL Engineering, House Designs and Engineering Associates, Bassoo and Sons, S. Jagmohan Hardware Supplies and Constructing Services, Chung’s Global, Gafsons, Paragi Developers Inc., Mohan Bar Services and RW Electrical. The materials that were supplied - the crush and run – were supplied by Baracara Quarries Inc., Toolsie Persaud Ltd., BK International Inc. [Ms. Manickchand: How much?] Seven thousand tonnes,

Toolsie Persaud Ltd. 4770 tonnes and BK International Inc. 500 tonnes.

To make mention by the Hon. Member, Mr. Irfaan Ali, who supplied the asphalt - the Demerara Harbour Bridge and they were paid \$59,325,000. There is nothing to hide in the books of the Ministry of the Public Infrastructure. Patience is a virtue.

The procurement methodology – the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, on the 21st April, 2016, a letter addressed to Mr. Berkley Wickham, Chairman, National Procurement and Tender

Administration Board (NPTAB), the Ministry of Finance Building, Main and Urquhart Streets,
21st April, 2016.

“Request for the Board’s approval of shortlist of Contractors

The Ministry proposes to use the restricted tendering method for the selection of contractors for the caption ‘Emergency Civil Works Project’. The estimated cost for each contract /tender is \$16 million. The following justification methods are used:

To avoid any likely exposure of time lost risked in the normal opening bidding procurement process. The process is lengthy and presents a challenge for us to meet the urgent intervention needs of the captioned project and the caption project is the ‘D’Urban Park Development Project’.”

The second reason for the justification was that,

“The Ministry is acquainted with the format of the contractors who demonstrated the capacity, reserve resources and availability to tender for these works. The contractors proposed are not currently burdened by existing projects so their capacity to mobilise with immediate effect and execute efficiently is available to us.”

9.16 p.m.

Sir, accordingly, we have listed the contractors.

“Funding for the emergency works for the rehabilitation and construction of timber bleachers would be met by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Agency 32, project code - 1214900 -Infrastructure Development. The approval of this tendering process and the shortlist of contractors are hereby sought.”

Sir, that was the procurement process, which was full, open and transparent.

Clause 6:

“Payments made to individuals, contractors and companies as it relates to this project;”

Phase one, on behalf of the Government of Guyana, there were no payments at all. I will say it in two phases as the motion would have. No payment was made on behalf of the Government of Guyana for phase one, which I consider had happened before 21st April, 2016. For the capital works, as I have said, it is already in the public's domain for the sum \$407.6 million, plus the moneys which I had said previously in my open statement.

Clause 7:

“Liabilities, if any, to individuals, contractors and companies that are owed for works and services provided to this project;”

Like the Hon. Member and mover of this motion, I have also heard and received complaints about outstanding liabilities. While this Government and I am concerned about any citizen who has given meaningful contribution to any project, private or public...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, you have been speaking for 30 minutes. I will allow you six minutes more to wrap up your presentation.

Mr. Patterson: Most gracious, Sir. We are concerned if any citizen gives a meaningful contribution to a private or a public project and has not been paid. We must be reminded that the contract and the works that they would have done was with a private company, which I have named already.

Notwithstanding, I have asked my team to request the relevant information from those who claimed to have outstanding liabilities. While I cannot give an undertaking or any commitment on behalf of the Government, I can and will undertake, without commitment, to review those submissions and present a report to my Colleagues for their consideration, discussion and guidance on what could be done. I will present a report to them. They will be guided by, one - what is verifiable and two - what the Attorney General would have advised me. They will be guided by every aspect of the legal rubric and then I shall be guided on that. This is because we are minded that if persons would have legally and lawfully done work on any public or private project that it would be out of pocket.

So, Sir with those few words that I have addressed, I would like this to be recorded here and I have stated it clause by clause. It is because I do not want any misinformation to state that this

Government has not addressed the Resolved Clauses that were listed. I have addressed every clause to the best and fullest of our knowledge and the information that I have available to me.

With that, I would like to thank you and the Hon. Minister for allowing me the time to speak.

[An Hon. Member: ...*Inaudible*] The management is actually done, and I can say this, jointly. It is between the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and the Ministry of Communities. The bulk of the funds, for the security and those things will come from my Ministry with the others, for example, the usage, *et cetera*. [An Hon. Member: ...*Inaudible*] There are no portable toilets there, but if you need to go to a toilet, there is one outside.

Sir, with those few words, I would like to thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Bishop Edghill (replying): I first want to begin by thanking all the Hon. Members of this House who contributed to this debate and more particularly, to my Colleagues on this side of the House who stood and spoke in support of this motion.

It took us almost six hours to get some sketchy information that we have just received. I will tell you in a moment, Sir, why this information is sketchy. It is because it sounds nice, but it does not address the core issue and the Hon. Member will discover that just now.

Throughout this debate, we have listened and experienced a level of stubbornness that came from the Government benches, as it relates to the issue of transparency, accountability and good governance. I empathise with those who were selected to speak from the Government benches because they were practically set up as time fillers. This is because they did not speak to the motion.

This debate tonight has indicated that the coalition Government is suffering a credibility crisis and that is what is taking place. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

I am aware that, in the heat of any debate, very uncomfortable things are often said, so I can understand the noises. Let me explain why I am saying there is a credibility crisis. The Hon. Member, Ms. Annette Ferguson, in her presentation, said that she was quoting from the good book and she said these words:

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eyes and pay no attention to plank in your eyes?”

That is exactly what the APNU/AFC is doing. The Hon. Member did not tell this House that the verse before that verse which she quoted, states these very same words, which I will tell Hon. Members now:

“For in the same way you judge others, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

All that we are doing here tonight, is judging this coalition Government by the same measure they judged the PPP/C. You are being judged by the same rule that you judged us by and you are having...

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I interrupt. Is it that you are winding up or is it another matter that we are onto now?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am rebutting. I am allowed to rebut.

Mr. Speaker: You are rebutting or winding up? What are you doing?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am offering my rebuttal to the motion and I am making my closing arguments.

Mr. Speaker: Very good. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: So, I am saying that this credibility crisis that they are facing, they have sought to be elusive, to use diversionary tactics, to raise every red herring and to be engaged in what could be called scandalmongering. Every time you spoke, whether it was about the Amalia Falls Hydro-Power Project, the Skeldon Sugar Estate and everything, you will be judged by those very same standards... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

This is because all of the information that you provided was information that was available to you because you were able to find it.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, said that he did not know that he was supposed to speak. One of the principal persons who was involved in this project was not listed to speak? So he did walk with his notes, but he had figures of \$139 million that was spent how long ago. The Hon. Minister, Ms. Nicolette Henry, was able to talk about some \$45 million. Now, all of this could have been referred to simply because information existed where they could have had access to it.

The issue here is that this coalition Government had to be pressured by way of this motion. I can say pressure because if they were interested in providing this information, this motion was on the Order Paper since 21st October. They had all of that time from then to now to provide the information and even the information that is provided is sketchy. We have heard a lot of things tonight, a lot of criticisms, a lot of accusations and all of it.

9.31 p.m.

Do you know something, Sir? Nobody, including the Hon. Minister Patterson, has answered the question what the cost is of the D'Urban Park Development Jubilee Project. They have not answered the question yet. The Hon. Member has sought to hide behind a company that is now named Homestretch Development Inc., by saying that it is a private company. We do not know what they collected and we do not know what they spent. He called out a number of names of contractors who were engaged in the project, but he was only speaking from April 21st onwards. Who were the contractors from November or October last year until April? Name those contractors; name the contract sum and name the amount of moneys that they were given. That is what this motion is asking about.

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

Mr. Patterson: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Would you tell us the Point of Order, state the problem, and resume your seat?

Mr. Patterson: Standing Order 40 (a) imputing improper motive to the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member is claiming that I have knowingly withheld information by saying that I am hiding

behind a private company. I have declared the information that I have at hand, as I said before, and it is not hiding. I would ask the Member to withdraw that, because this Government is not hiding behind any private company.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, do you wish to express that in a different fashion?

Bishop Edghill: Yes Sir. I would like to assure the Hon. Member that I meant no harm and did not mean to impute any improper motive. The fact of the matter is if you are having a motion...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am interested in how you would proceed.

Bishop Edghill: I am going to put it... [*inaudible*], Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure you are not going to spoil whatever you assure me of.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, this motion is before us for more than a month. If the Government wanted to make full disclosure, it could have got a report from the Homestretch Development Inc. and brought it to this National Assembly tonight. The fact that Homestretch Development Inc. has not provided or the Government did not seek to get that information from Homestretch Development Inc., as it is named tonight, leaves the Guyanese people with more questions than answers.

I would like to remind this honourable House that the Hon. Member Mr. Ali spoke extensively of what is provided for in the Constitution as well as the FMAA. [Ms. Ally: It is not going to help you with the vote.] We know might is right. That is what we are about to see just now – might is right.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, we really should stay focused on the point that you are making and stay with the Speaker. It is a very good way to do.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, I apologise. The Hon. Member Mr. Ali informed this House of what is required based upon articles 216 and 217 of the Constitution as well as the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act. What this House is hearing is that there was a private company by the name of Homestretch Development Inc. that acted on behalf of the state, that collected moneys on behalf of the state, that executed works on behalf of the state, on a property that is owned by the state. We are being told tonight that for the private property we do not have

that information. Well, use your one-seat majority vote and defeat this motion tonight, but it is still before the public that you have not answered the questions and you have not account to the people of Guyana for the moneys that were collected.

We did not come to this House tonight to debate the merits or the demerits of the park. We did not come tonight to debate if this park would be useful for social purposes and interaction. We came tonight to get specific answers.

Now, the question was asked in the further BE IT RESOLVED clause, the recurrent for maintenance security utilities, and so on, we got a figure from the Hon. Minister Mr. Patterson and I probably have to say thanks because it was like pulling teeth. The agency has signed responsibility for day to day maintenance of the facility. The Minister is now telling us tonight that it is a joint arrangement, but he told us that he was willing and ready to hand it over by the end of the month while we were considering Financial Paper No. 1. Then we heard from Minister Hastings that Ministry of Communities would be taking it over and it will be city council. Do you know what? We are leaving here tonight no more the wiser.

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

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir. I rise on Standing Order 40 (a), once again. Sir, it was clearly stated what is happening and it is done jointly, because, obviously...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you should state the point you wish to make.

Mr. Patterson: The point is that the Government has not addressed who is monitoring the D'Urban Park. It is done jointly by my Ministry and the Ministry of Communities. For the Member to say that he is not the wiser is very inimical with the term.

Bishop Edghill: One Hon. Member, Minister Ferguson, I guess, Sir, it escaped your attention while she was speaking, said that we brought this motion because we wanted to disgrace the Government. I would like to thank her for her presentation because she did an excellent job of doing it. I would want to sum up what we heard here tonight and to remind this House that in as much as we had Members quoting from *INews Guyana*, May 6th, and people quoting about this is in the public spaces, I would like to remind that the first time any information was made public on D'Urban Park was when yours truly submitted a list of questions to this House. It was not

allowed under the item Oral Question Without Notice and the Minister sought to respond to that in this House which was not allowed and issued a press statement. The bottom line is the information, even though limited that was provided then, was not done so voluntarily. It was done under pressure from the Opposition because there was no intention to provide information to the people of Guyana. Every ounce of information had to come as a result of pressure. Even what we heard tonight, up until now, we cannot answer. What is the total cost of the project?

We are going home tonight and the people of Guyana do not know what the total cost of D'Urban Park is. What they know is that \$406 million from the Contingencies Fund was spent. They know that money from the Guyana Lottery Fund was spent, but they do not know how much money Homestretch Development Inc. received. We need to know how much money Homestretch Development Inc., and the names, received. We also need to know what instrument was issued by the state to Homestretch Development Inc. that authorised it to receive moneys on behalf of the state and to expend those moneys on behalf of the state.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, is that part of the motion which you have before us?

Bishop Edghill: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Could you direct the Speaker to the particular provision?

Bishop Edghill: I am speaking to the issue to inform the House whether the contributions were submitted to the Consolidated Fund at number (3). I am addressing that issue.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40 (a). The Hon. Member mentioned that the private company received money on behalf of the state and it is authorised to receive money on behalf of the state. That is a total fabrication and I want that to be withdrawn. Sir, he must bring any proof that he has that any company was authorised on behalf of the Government

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister is saying that nothing that he said indicated that a private company collected moneys on behalf of Government. He is questioning the expression in which you used and if it is incorrect it should be withdrawn.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, I never said the Minister said that. I am indicating that the property at D'Urban Park is state property. It is not the property of the Government. It is the property of the state. I am indicating...

Mr. Patterson: Once again, on the same Standing Order, I reinstate my objections.

Bishop Edghill: Am I going to be allowed to speak tonight? The Hon. Member was allowed to speak and I did not interrupt him. If we are going to continue like this we are going to have a problem.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you are probably right. If we will continue like that we are going to have a problem, but you must give way if the Hon. Member wishes to make...

Mr. Patterson: On the same Standing Order, Sir, I am reinstating my objection to the statement made by the Hon. Member that the private company collected funds on behalf of the state. That is the exact statement, that it was authorised to collect funds on behalf of the state. I am asking him and I am asking you to ask him to withdraw or provide proof of that or to withdraw the statement.

Mr. Speaker: You will have to express whatever you want to express differently. There is an objection which I am inclined to call upon you to withdraw. If you are going to insist on that then you are going to find a different way to express it. Even with conclusions, I make bold to say that you cannot conclude what is not the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from a set of facts, which is what you are seeking to do. I would not allow that. You would have choice. You would repeat what you want to say in a different way or you would withdraw it.

9.46 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: As you please, Sir, I would make it pellucid. The Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure was instructed by His Excellency the President to take over a project that was funded and managed by private individuals on state property and to expend public funds to complete that property. Sir, if that is what the Minister would like to bring to notice of this National Assembly, then we have a scandal of monumental proportions to deal with, because the Minister would have to explain to this National Assembly and the people of Guyana. How could you spend half a billion Guyana dollars on a project that was being funded by private

individuals, handled by a private company that is not belonging to the state? You would have to tell the people of Guyana that and that is the issue that we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, would I be allow to...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you must give way.

Mr. Patterson: Standing Order 40 (a), once again, I was called directly. Before we do have a scandal, I would like to remind the Hon. Member that Buddy's International Hotel and Cacique Hotel were private projects which the state, under the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, expended public funds. We will work out in 2017, so the scandal is equal.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister Mr. Patterson, you rise on a Point of Order.

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir, and I was elucidating...

Mr. Speaker: I thank you, but let me do this. What is the Point of Order that you wish this House to...

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I was just elucidating on the fact that the scandal that the Hon. Member is alluded to is not a scandal unless the Leader of the Opposition would like to say that he started scandals.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Patterson is there a...

Mr. Patterson: I withdraw unconditionally, but that was the point. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the hours are getting late and perhaps patience is a bit fragile. I do not know whether that is accurate, but I am under the impression that we were winding up, or the word the Hon. Member preferred, whatever is the word. We ought not to be in this degree on this level of exchange at this time. Hon. Member Bishop Edghill, you will resume.

Bishop Edghill: Clarification is what brought us here. I recalled in my opening statement that I said "why the haziness", "why the cloudiness" and "why the muddiness", but we are leaving here tonight entering into more clouds, more confusions and it is now worse than from when we started. I have listened to a number of speakers who told us that on the Corrupt Transparency International Corruption Index, we are at 119, but with this taking place tonight we are going to

170. We would be moving to 170 because what we are hearing tonight is unbelievable. We are hearing, which is public knowledge, that the Head of State, the Minister of State and others were visiting a project that was ongoing and when we came to the National Assembly tonight they have totally disowned the company and said that the people were not acting on our behalf and nothing that they were doing was on our behalf, but we eventually took it over and we are spending half a billion dollars to complete what was nothing to do with us. Well, we have serious problems in Guyana. I am sure that we would have to come back to get some more answers to this House.

I would want to close because it looks as if we not going to go nowhere. It is the beliefs of some of my colleagues, from what I am hearing, that the rambling, which we would have heard about some issues here and name here and a figure there, is adequate and enough, and they have called that full disclosure. The way this debate has gone tonight. The way the issues have been dealt with, the diversionary tactics, how we were elusive rather than dealing with the main subject, it has shown great disrespect to the people of Guyana and their right to know and to receive information by those who they have entrusted to govern this country in keeping with good governance.

I ask that the question be put. It is because, now that the question is to be put, it is where the rubber would hit the road, where we would have to declare publicly to the people of Guyana where we stand on the issue of transparency, accountability and good governance.

A vote of no to this motion is a betrayal of the trust of the Guyanese and the break of the social contract the APNU/AFC made with the people of Guyana. I invite all Members of this Assembly to support what we tell the people we would do, and that is, we would be transparent, accountable and have good governance.

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

Question put.

Bishop Edghill: Division.

Mr. Speaker: Division is called

Assembly divided: Noes 30 and Ayes 28 as follows:

Ayes

Mr. Bharrat

Ms. Veerasammy

Mr. Gill

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Charlie

Mr. Damon

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Chand

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Mustapha

Ms. Selman

Dr. Westford

Dr. Ramsaran

Ms. G. Persaud

Mr. Hamilton

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Seeraj

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai

Dr. Anthony

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. Ali

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Jagdeo ---28

Noes

Mr. Rutherford

Mr. Rajkumar

Mr. C. Persaud

Mr. Carrington

Mr. Allen

Ms. Bancroft

Ms. Wade

Ms. Patterson

Ms. Henry

Ms. Charles-Broomes

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Sharma

Ms. Garrido-Lowe

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Hastings-Williams

Mr. Holder

Mr. Gaskin

Ms. Hughes

Mr. Patterson

Ms. Lawrence

Mr. Trotman

Dr. Norton

Mr. Bulkan

Dr. Roopnarine

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Ms. Ally

Mr. Williams

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. Nagamootoo --- 30

Motion negatived.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to crave your indulgence. We are fast approaching the hour of 10 p.m. when we would usually adjourn the Assembly to another date. I have seen a list of speakers proposed for the next motion on the agenda, which has some 12 persons. It means that that would be another, at least, six hours

10.01 p.m.

In the circumstances, I would like to move a motion for the adjournment of this House until Monday, 28th November and that the matter that is remaining on the Private Members' agenda be taken at the next Private Members' Day. It is a motion that I propose.

Ms. Ally: I wish to second that motion.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, we would like to ask your indulgence please. This is our day. One of our items was removed as *sub judice*. We have discussed one item and we have a second item. If we are to wait for when a matter is to come up it will have to be heard in January or February of next year.

Mr. Speaker, let me just have your indulgence. Since this Eleventh Parliament began, we have had Thursday, 21st January as our day, Thursday, 12th May as our day, Thursday, 4th August, as our day and today. Four days alone were for the Opposition in this House. Sir, if we do not go through the balance we might not have a chance until January.

Just to give an idea. There has been 46 sittings of this House, 20 have been delegated to the budget, both 2015 and 2016. That leaves 26 days of other business. Every fourth day is ours but we have had to wait on an average six and a half sittings before we get a chance - on average. It is only January, May, August and November that we have had four sittings. We always have a pile up of our issues on the agenda. On Monday 8th August, which was the date before recess, we left here four o' clock in the morning in order to make sure that the Public Procurement Commission Bill passed and also the Local Government Commission Bill. All those things were important. We gave our support to that. As soon as we had our day, the first hour and a half of the sitting was Government business. It is unfair and we want to lodge a profound disappointment with what is going on.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, is it that you are requesting that the session continues? Is that that you wish for?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. We are prepared to go and finish our work, Sir.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The motion has been seconded, Sir. I would ask that the motion be put. Your Honour, a statement was made earlier by the Chief Whip of the Government side in which it has been said that in the 44 sessions of the sitting of the National Assembly... [*Interruption from Members of the Opposition.*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this is not the time. Let us allow this to be handled in the proper manner. Prime Minister, proceed.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The Opposition was allowed a number of...

Hon. Members (Opposition): We want our days.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, if you are going to continue in disorder to this House, the Speaker might wonder whether there are actions that he can take against Members. Let us be clear about that tonight. Prime Minister, I will listen to you.

Mr. Nagamootoo: If you may permit me, Sir, the remarks made were not accurate and not reflective of how the House conducts its business. It is well known, under our Standing Orders and also Cromwell's Standing Orders, that when debates ensue on national budgets, no other matter, dilatory matter, would be accepted by the Chairperson. No motion can, in fact, interrupt the debates on national budgets. We have had a historic and extraordinary situation of having two budgets in last year and then we had two supplementary budgets, then we had two budgets dealing with constitutional agencies. In none of those sessions or sittings would Opposition Members or other motions be allowed. Therefore to say that the Opposition has been reduced to only four of these sessions would be inaccurate, misleading and totally false. If this day falls under the time allocated for budgetary estimates, then they could not be held. That is the procedure. I am not inventing anything here. Usually our sittings go to 10 o' clock, unless there is some extraordinary matter that is before the House and the debate has started, I would usually move a motion for the debates to continue until the conclusion of the matter. In this case the

second motion has not started and the 10 o' clock, when I should have moved for either the continuation of the sitting or for the adjournment of the sitting is upon us.

I now move, as I did before, that the question be put and we be allowed to have this Parliament function within the ambit of approved procedures, known in any democracy. This is not an attempt to truncate the Opposition. The Members have had their day. They have had 13 speakers, almost eight hours of expatiation on an issue that had been vindicated and answered, and you see the conduct, Mr. Speaker. I ask that the question be put, which is a democratic right, on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we must be careful not to transform the House into something else, where people hit on counters to demand what they wish. This is not the place for that. Hon. Members, there is a saying, in local parlance, "*You wrong talk*". I do not know if it has any meaning for you, but I will tell you that it has meaning for me. Sometimes silence is golden. It is very true.

Hon. Members, I thank you for the forbearance which you have displayed in this matter. We have before us a motion which the Prime Minister has requested. I used my authority as Speaker not to put that motion at that time when it was requested of me. What I am going to put to the House is whether that motion could not properly be amended before the matter is put, to allow for some extra time so that the other matter, "The Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service of Guyana", be considered tonight. It is because of the concerns about time and other issues, there would necessarily be a good deal of forbearance on the part of Members who speak.

Hon. Prime Minister, would it be that you will accommodate an amendment to the proposal that you made?

Mr. Nagamootoo: If it pleases you, Your Honour, I must bow to your superior advice at this point in time. Also I would like to be placed on record as being very grateful for the patience you have exercised in having consultation on the issue, which is the proper thing to do. I am moved by the pleadings of Members of the House, particularly on the other side, to vary the motion from ending the session at 10.00 p.m. to bringing the session to an end at a time not beyond midnight. I can move now that the House proceed until midnight.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister for that amended motion. I will put the motion. The motion is that the House will proceed on its business until midnight.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF GUYANA

WHEREAS the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service was appointed by the President of Guyana on August 17, 2015 “to examine, advise and report of the salaries, conditions of service, training and other matters pertaining to the improvement of the efficiencies of the performance of the public service and the well-being of the public servants in the public service”;

AND WHEREAS the report on the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service was tabled in the National Assembly on May 24, 2016,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this report be placed on the Order Paper for a sitting before the recess for a debate of its contents and recommendation.” [*Ms. Teixeira*]

Mr. Speaker: I thank you very much Prime Minister and I thank the two Chief Whips for their input into this agreement. Can we proceed immediately? The first speaker is the Hon. Member Gail Teixeira. We are considering the motion on “The Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service of Guyana.” Hon. Member Ms. Gail Teixeira, Chief Whip, will move the motion. You may proceed Madam.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: May I interrupt only to recognise the presence of the Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry, Professor Harold Lutchman who has been with us since five o’ clock this afternoon. Thank you for coming Professor Lutchman.

Ms. Teixeira: I am the mover of this motion because I believe that the Commission of Inquiry’s work, which was laid in this House on Tuesday, 24th May, 2016, requires some attention from the House, in terms of some of the recommendations. The recommendations, which had been

made, are eighty-nine recommendations in the Commission of Inquiry. Some are of a very serious nature. Some require the attention of the House in a Parliamentary Special Select Committee. I also believe that some of the recommendations require national consultations because there is a major concern, particularly in terms of some of the ramifications. As I said, there are eighty-nine recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. I am very pleased that Professor Lutchman is here and I hope that he has found our debate of interest as sometimes people do not come here to see what is really going on, but I hope that you have found it of interest.

Generally, the Opposition will not support anything that is inimical or that will hurt the public servants of this country. That is our bottom line on a number of the issues, that have been raised, are our perspective coming in and looking at the recommendations. In what way will it improve or will it hurt or will it be inimical to the public servants? We support the bipartisan approach and therefore propose, as I said, that the matter goes to a Parliamentary Special Select Committee to allow for greater scrutiny, to allow for consultations on the long-term interests of public servants as well as the ramifications starting from a fiscal point of view and other areas of resources and what would the impact be.

10.24 p.m.

We also believe that there should be inclusion in the Committee through consultations and hearings with the Labour Movement, public servants and other agencies, such as the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and so on, which should be part of it.

One of the concerns we have with the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service is that, although the Report was tabled in this House and the Government did not make any effort to move it into discussion, and, therefore, we brought a motion to have a discussion on it. We did not, in our motion, recommend that any particular recommendations be adopted. We felt that we needed to go another level other than debate on the floor of this House.

We are concerned that the Government appears to be implementing some areas of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service without any public announcements and may

have been implementing what appear to be recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry before it completed its work. An example of this is the contractual workers in the Public Service.

This has been an issue that has been debated and is controversial between the then Opposition and the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPPC/C) when we were in Government. We are aware that Personnel (departments) have sent out Circulars for persons to go on the pensionable establishment. This has some major concerns to do with young people in a modern age which is very mobile, both in and out of Guyana. This is not a trend just in Guyana; it is a trend globally in terms of the younger generations being part of the pensionable Public Service. Therefore, when we look at this contractual, and what appears to be a rather arbitrary removal of contractual arrangements, you are hurting some persons in the Public Service, who are highly professional. I do not believe that the Commission of Inquiry may have intended that. If we give the most recent example where there has been a sudden move to put persons on the pensionable establishment, there are, among those persons, the Doctors who have been trained in Cuba and who are not on the contractual arrangements but whose salaries have been cut quite significantly; their benefits have been cut significantly. These are not positive signs when we are trying to ensure that we do not have a brain drain; that we are keeping young, talented, educated people in the country and in the Public Service. This can be done with contractual arrangements. Young people today, as I said, do not see themselves staying in one place for 35 years to get a pension. It is just not what the modern world is.

We also have young people who have been in the Public Service who are educated, have their Degrees and Masters and have been told that they now have to apply to go on the pensionable/non-contractual arrangement. They are also being told that they will start all over again. As public servants, they will now have to go on one year probation and, therefore, would not be able to access some of the benefits they had before. These trends seem to be outside of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service - the areas which obviously the Commission of Inquiry refers to - but the Government is moving in that direction.

There are persons who have Master's Degree and Bachelor's Degree in the Public Service who have been serving for five to six years and are now told that, when their contracts end in 2016 or 2017, they must apply to go on the pensionable establishment. They would then be adjudicated as to if they are qualified. This adjudication is chasing away particularly young people who are

trained and are in the Public Service. Here is a letter that I want to read. It is from a disappointed public servant and was printed in the newspapers of 25th August, 2016. Basically it states:

“We as Public Servants were comforted knowing that those attached to Governmental offices as Contract Workers would become ‘Permanent’ Staff but what we weren’t aware of is the list of rules and regulations that are attached to the package. Disappointedly, we were told that we are being placed on one year probation and we are not entitled to have sick leave (concession) and annualised vacation leave. Should we report sick and or produce sick leave our salaries will be deducted. We are knowledgeable of the fact that most times when commencing a new job, one will be placed on a three to six months’ probation nevertheless we have no issue with the one year.”

The issue of contract workers is a major concern in the Public Service and amongst workers in this country. There are ominous signs that we have seen and I will come back to those when I deal with some of the recommendations. As I said, there are 89 recommendations in which I have grouped them, not totally accurately, to about 11 main recommendations:

Constitution legislative reforms will allow for the Public Service Commission to appoint Permanent Secretaries and Regional Executive Officers (REOs) and the Judicial Service Commission to appoint or to discipline support staff: this is a matter that requires constitutional amendments and, therefore, requires further attention, both by a Parliamentary Special Select Committee to go through the Report and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Constitutional Reform to examine the Report.

The age of retirement to be moved to 65 years and all consequential changes – legislative, administrative, *et cetera*: This was an issue in 2012 that I remember in the discussions between former Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Granger and former President Mr. Ramotar in April, 2012, when we were looking at the Budget. This was one of the demands of the then Opposition to have the age of retirement moved to 65 years. At that point, we, on the Government’s side, felt that this required a national consultation because there are very many ramifications of this that could impact negatively and also aspects that may be positive, but that it could not just come through a parliamentary

process and not go through a national consultation. I really mean “national” - going region by region, including the Trade Unions, the private sector, the State agencies and civil organisations.

Prohibiting public servants under the age of 65 to be hired on contract: This issue, again, is highly controversial. Again, we require further consultations. If we are living in a modern age where 58% of the population in Guyana is under the age of 35, we should really look at this more clearly and carefully. Therefore, this is something I believe that needs more consultation and discussion.

The absorption of contract workers into the pensionable Public Service establishment reserves contract workers for higher level of professional positions in the Public Service where skills are not available in the Public Service.

The Public Service management is solely responsible for wages and salaries, administration and fixing salaries and not the Ministry of Finance: I would be very interested if the Minister of Finance were here to hear what the Government or the Minister of Finance’s take is on that. The wages and negotiations issues have always made Ministers of Finance very nervous when it comes to projecting financially and so forth.

Wages and salary agreements should exist for three to five years: That is an issue that really includes the Unions, Ministries and State agencies.

Restore collective bargaining with the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) and the relevant public authorities in keeping with the Union’s legally recognised status, *et cetera*: Again, this is an issue that is pending and was promised a while ago.

Parties negotiating allowances should be settled at the level of the Department of the Public Service. This, again, is an issue that has been controversial even when we were in Government. Now, it has been passed on to you, where allowances are settled for public servants. Certainly, this is a major step in terms of the Department of Public Service having that authority to change, upgrade or amend the allowances. This is an issue that

we would be supportive of but would be interested in ensuring that this is supported by the Government.

Consideration of establishing a model for remuneration for high level political and Public Service offices, including the President, Vice-Presidents, Prime Minister, Ministers, Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament (MPs), Permanent Secretaries (PSs), Regional Executive Officers and Regional Chairpersons: This is obviously a new model that is being proposed by the Commission of Inquiry and would certainly need to have the comments, proposals or reactions of the Government as well as all the persons in the National Assembly.

The creation of a Public Service Wages and Salaries Commission: This would require consequential amendments to the Labour Act. This body will settle disputes with wages and salaries and be required to make recommendations to the National Assembly within a set time frame.

Continued support for the E-Governance Unit with details of expectations: This has to do with the interconnectivity database and bringing Guyana and the Ministries into a more modern age in terms of the use of modern digital technology.

I have not done justice to the 89 recommendations but I tried to capture and group what I believe, of the 89 recommendations, are very important.

However, the issue is that this Report was tabled by the Commission and brought to this House on 24th May, 2016. I do not recall *hearing a peep* from the Government of what their views are on this Report. We had the experience with the GuySuCo's Commission of Inquiry being brought to the House and then learning that a number of recommendations were thrown out of the window, for example, the closure of the Wales Estate and the further closure of La Bonne Intention (LBI) Estate and LBI and Enmore Estates being merged, the closure of Rose Hall Estate and now we are hearing of the closure of Skeldon Estate. That Report stated very clearly that it did not recommend any closures of any Estate.

When there was just silence from the Government benches, I became very worried as to why a relatively long length of time would be invested by the Members of the Commission into a

Report which seems to be just gathering dust on the shelf at this point. Maybe it is because of a lack of information. I do not know what the Government is doing about this. The Government has been silent and has not said what it will do.

However, there are some concerns that we have. The recommendation that the Government has spoken about prior to the Commission of Inquiry was the Public Service College. This was one of the issues that the Government came in on its Manifesto about, having a specific college to train public servants. This college, apparently, has been set up. It has been named. We are on the outside looking on. When you look at the leadership of the Staff College, it is partisan. The staffing is partisan. It is exclusionary of any other ethnic group in Guyana. Therefore, this is a worrying sign that we are seeing and we are concerned that, when there is a recommendation to have a public service training institution or college, it should be reflective of who we are as a people. We are a diverse nation.

We also feel that, although there have been discussions on the Report, talks about having restrictions and controls on contract workers, at the same time, we are seeing a number of persons hired by the Government on contract who are doing political work and who are not public servants.

I have already pointed out the issue of the 65 years. We believe it cannot just be done whimsically; it must include a meaningful and inclusive national consultation, including, most importantly of all, the young generation who are at the University or are in training colleges, even those in the diaspora and those of the 58% who are below the age of 35. If it is a consultation that includes some of us who are in our 60s and older, then it is not going to come to the right decision in the interest of our people in the future.

Of course, what we have seen is the termination of a number of persons based on ethnicity or assumption of their political support since this Government took place. We feel that these are ominous signs. We believe that the Commission of Inquiry did not have those objectives in mind when the Commissioners were dealing with their work.

10.39 p.m.

There is one part of the Commission of Inquiry's Terms of Reference which I will just refer to as I come to an end, Mr. Speaker, because we did make a commitment. Page (ii), paragraph 1. a):

“to inquire into and make recommendations on the role, functions, recruitment, training, remuneration, conditions of service and other matters pertaining to personnel employed in the Public Service;”

And it is because of this number 1. that there was great interest by the Trade Unions, Labour Movement and public servants in general and, of course, those of us on this side of the House. However, in going through the document, the issue of remuneration has not been addressed in the Report. It does propose mechanisms that it believes could be looked at to deal with wages and salaries. And under conditions of service, there are some areas where, I believe, if we were to get into a Select Committee, that Members of this House on both sides could actually bring a lot of wealth and experience to even add more in terms of issues of conditions of service, allowances, promotion, methodology and mobility within the Public Service as well as lineal mobility.

The Report does not deal with mobility in the Public Service; it does not deal sufficiently with lineal or trans-lineal movement of persons who are qualified within the Public Service, for example engineers, doctors, teachers or human resources managers and so on.

Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to try to finish by a certain time so I would not go into all the details. My presentation may be a bit truncated because I am trying to go as quickly as possible. But I believe the 89 recommendations of this Commission of Inquiry should be taken seriously. I believe it is a noble initiative. However, it does not adequately go into the issues of how and where the resources to do all this will come from. And I do believe that we are all playing a rather academic posture because we do not have a clue of what the Government's response to this is. We would really look forward - and that is why we brought it to the House - to hear what the Government's take on this is. If the Government is in support of it or if the Government has problems with it, we would really like to propose, formally, at the end of this, that the matter goes to a Parliamentary Special Select Committee for further examination with a view to be able to take the recommendations seriously and to bring a number of them back to the

House with support, disagreement, *et cetera*, as we did with the Disciplined Forces Commission Report years ago.

Thank you very much, Sir. [*Applause*]

Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Lawrence]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when His Excellency President David Granger established the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service, this was done after much thought and consideration unlike what the speaker before me said in the beginning of her presentation, giving the impression that this was a *hairy-fairy* something. Sir, let me read into the records the mandate that was established by the terms of reference which states that it will, among others, inquire into, report on, and make recommendations on the role, functions, recruitment, training, remuneration, conditions of service and other matters pertaining to personnel employed in the Guyana Public Service.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to address two key issues in the motion before the House, namely training and development and the retirement age for public servants. These issues were discussed within the framework of the Commission of Inquiry Report into the Public Service of Guyana. I would like to present and elaborate on the findings of these two key issues in this honourable House.

Please allow me to express my deep appreciation and offer congratulations to Professor Harold Lutchman and the Commission for the comprehensive report on the Public Service of Guyana. The Ministry of Public Service now has in its possession an excellent working document that will provide guidelines and will enable the Minister to craft strategic plans and programmes for several years, as the APNU/AFC Government seeks to initiate changes that will significantly impact on the quality of the service that the Public Service Ministry offers, but, more importantly, to enhance and to provide a good life for all public servants.

I wish to begin my discussion, Mr. Speaker, by addressing the second thematic area which is the retirement age of pension for public servants. This is a dynamic and critical issue for Guyana, whose public servants retire from the Public Service at the age of 55 years and, with approval, at 50 years. Paragraph 311 of the Commission's Report elaborates that, while this is so for Public Service workers, the other public sector organisations have a retirement age of 60 years while the

private sector provides for retirement between 60 years and 65 years. There is no retirement age for Parliamentarians and Ministers, Hon. Dharamlall.

The moot that arises is that the age of 55 years is too early an age for our public servants to retire. In fact, the Commission reports that all testimonies from both the private and public sectors are advocating a higher age of retirement for the Public Service's staff. The general consensus pointed to a retirement age of 65 years with an option of retiring at 60 years.

Paragraph 314 of the Report does provide us with what pertains in some of our sister CARICOM member states and other countries. According to those statistics, Barbados and Dominica have a retirement age of 66.5 years, while, in Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the British Virgin Islands, retirement is set at 60 years. From these statistics, there is an arguable case for consideration to be given to increasing the age of retirement of our Guyanese Public Service workers.

The Commission does posit the argument that there is a great loss of skills and expertise at age 55 and that a higher retirement age of 65 years would not only cull the deep knowledge and wide experience that would have been acquired in public management and in areas of specialisation, but also that the additional five years would further increase the finances of the National Insurance Scheme, thus contributing to its continuing viability. In fact, citing paragraph 315, the Commission states:

“...We are convinced that a higher retirement age for Public Servants would be mutually beneficial to the State, the public employees, and the National Insurance Scheme.”

Sir, I would have liked to take you through the Barbados experience but I will just do a small synopsis of what has taken place in Barbados. The decision of the Barbados Government has resulted in a series of amendments to the pension legislation over a period of time. The National Insurance Pension Scheme there is a defined benefit and is based on the contribution of workers and employers, just as in the case of Guyana. However, studies are conducted periodically to review the contributions being paid to determine the viability of the Scheme, and it must be noted that, prior to 2006, the latest actuarial study called for an increase in the contributions in order for the Scheme to remain viable up to 2030. As a consequence, they have introduced several measures.

Further, the Government took the opportunity to establish a National Pension Plan and adjusted the retirement age in concert with the National Insurance Schedule of the 1st January, 2017, thus introducing the notion of voluntary retirement with the new retiring ages.

The Scheme does allow for flexibility; an officer whose voluntary retirement age is 55 and compulsory age 60 can, at age 60, indicate his or her intention to continue working under the new provisions for retirement. Similarly, under the new provisions, an officer over 65.5 years at January, 2016 can continue to work until the age of 66.

The Barbados model underlines some important factors, namely that the decision of the retirement age was not arrived at overnight and that various actuarial studies in conjunction with labour force data were undertaken and the age determined to ensure the viability of the National Insurance Scheme.

Likewise, I wish to state that we, in Guyana, would need to conduct extensive forensic, scientific and actuarial studies to ascertain the retirement age that would benefit our workers, our labour force, as well as our pension scheme.

Mr. Speaker, let me turn my attention to the issue of training and development which are key factors in ensuring that the workforce remains qualitatively effective in its provision of service to the nation until retirement age. According to Chapter 3.1: Training Priorities, paragraph 122:

“Training for staff development is an essential requirement in public management and administration to provide a competent cadre of public servants to deliver timely, quality, efficient, and professional service to the public. In Guyana, it is the responsibility of the Public Service Commission and Senior Management at various levels in Ministries and Departments of Government to ensure that the Public Service is comprised of persons, recruited and selected on the basis of merit, who are suitably qualified and have access to necessary training.”

This is for the effective delivery of the APNU/AFC Government policies and programmes. The realisation of this objective would be largely dependent on the quality and quantity of human resource inputs at all levels of the delivery system. The current Administration’s Manifesto is hinged on the good life, a good life for all the people of Guyana, including my Friends on the

opposite side. The good life concept, however, would only be realised if the economic development programme is successful.

Paragraph 123 further emphasises that the Public Service, the economy and industry require adequately trained professionals with ability for independent thought and creativity, analytical and problem solving skills and initiatives.

10.54 p.m.

This is the basis for the successful implementation of any economic programme. It must be conceived within a strategic framework which means that every Government Department and Ministry must, in turn, develop specific strategic plans for which the human resource input would be central to the realisation of these programmes. Once the human resource needs have been properly identified within the various strategic plans, then it would be necessary to identify and maximise utilisation of existing facilities as well as the development of new facilities to implement the required training and development programmes.

The Commission underscores, at paragraph 127, that systematic training should be training specifically intended to meet defined needs. It calls for a definition of the training needs of Departments and Ministries of the Government, the decision on the kind of training necessary, the planning and delivering of appropriate training, the use of suitable resource persons and facilitators to plan and conduct training and the reviewing and evaluation of the training at periodic intervals so as to ensure that it is effective and is achieving set objectives.

Among the existing facilities, institutions of training, such as the Critchlow Labour College, the Guyana School of Agriculture, the University of Guyana, the Board of Industrial Training and other specialised institutions, must be properly incentivised in order to maximise the quality and quantity of human resource input. The Government has already committed substantial amounts to a number of these institutions not only to widen the range of intake, but to improve the quality as well.

The intention to upgrade the previously underutilised Public Service Training College into an administrative staff college is a significant development in order to effectively generate adequate administrators to implement Government's programmes in addition to identifying and pursuing

external training in the form of scholarships and fellowships for those disciplines which are not currently available in the country.

The need for a structured and comprehensive training and development plan now becomes an absolute necessity if the Government programme on sustainable goals is to be realised within the framework that is intended.

In conclusion, the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations for training and development as well as the retirement age of public servants must be duly taken into account and implemented if the Public Service Ministry and its workers are to enjoy the changes which will provide sustainable growth and the good life for all.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the motion moved by the Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira. I am happy that we have this opportunity to have a discourse on this document.

I agree with both of the previous speakers that this document is comprehensive in many regards, but, like everything else, it is not a perfect document. My first statement is that I support the recommendation that this document be taken to a special select committee of this House so that we can have, as we said, a working document transformed into a better document because this is dealing with Guyana's Public Service.

I say this because, when I look at Table 6 in the Report, it could be recognised that a number of interviews were done, totalling 187; 13 of those interviews were repeated. Based on the information provided in the document, in terms of persons and particulars of persons who were interviewed, I found that approximately 130 interviews were done with persons who are non-active public servants. That, in itself, is saying that, if we are talking about Guyana's Public Service when approximately 45 of the interviewees were active public servants, and in that 45 grouping were a number of persons who were on the Government Scale (GS) of 11, 12, 13 and 14, it means, therefore, that 90.7% of the public servants, using the figures provided in that Report, are below GS 10. If just a small percentage of that scale was interviewed by the Commission of Inquiry, it means that, maybe, the sentiments, views and opinions of the majority

of public servants were not captured in this document. Having said that, I think we can, if we take this document to a select committee, have a better working document based on the terms that were presented.

If we look at page 45, there is Public Service Staff College. The statement I will make will delineate some fear factors because the Government has commenced acting on certain sections of this Report. I have read, from the media, that staff for the Public Service Staff College have been identified and appointed. There was a photograph in the newspapers reflecting the 18 office holders. One would recognise that they are from only one ethnic group in Guyana.

The second thing is that recruitment for the Public Service Staff College conflicts with what is stated in this Report on enhancing transparency, creating equal opportunities and garnering the best in the Public Service. A discourse at the level of Parliament, in a more detailed manner, in a select committee, could help with this. That is a wrong start, a misstep for a Public Service Staff College.

Also, this document speaks clearly to the roles and functions of the Public Service Staff College. Nowhere in this document have I read that one of the purposes of the Staff College is to deal with non-public servants or prepare persons to be employed within the Public Service. The document spoke to offering training and staff development to persons within the Public Service. From what I have read, it seems there is some misinterpretation by the persons who are responsible for that Staff College, in terms of the mandate, if we are to go with this document.

We looked, too, at the retirement age and recognised, yes, obviously there would be value in an adjustment to the retirement age but there is something called legitimate expectation out there. When present public servants joined the Public Service, they would have planned their lives in a certain manner. They would have seen goal posts, 55 years being one such and for some 50 years being another. If we are going to shift the post or lift the bar, then, obviously, we need to have public discourse with all those persons who are nearing 50 years or above 50 years and are still in the Public Service. We cannot have other persons speaking on behalf of these persons when an opportunity should have been created for these people to speak. It is the responsibility of the Government, I think, to create that consultative mechanism where this particular target group could be brought in to have their say, give their discourse, on this issue. If we play with people's

future, their expectations, we may be creating an unhelpful working and separation environment. I thought that whatever exists in other jurisdictions can obviously be a guide to us in this jurisdiction called Guyana. But I believe that we should ensure that we get the feelings, views and opinions of our public servants, here in Guyana, who are nearing the age of retirement now.

On page 90, there is a statement, Recommendation #73:

“...that the Department of the Public Service and the Public Service Commission should be constituted with professional personnel with integrity to rebuild public trust and confidence in the Public Service.”

This recommendation is somewhat worrying because article 200 of the Constitution of Guyana clearly defines the process by which this Public Service Commission is constituted and also the role, functions and mandate of the Public Service Commission. This is speaking to constitutional changes. I think that a discourse at the level of this Parliament, particularly at a select committee – I was told 30 minutes, then 15 minutes and now eight minutes – would allow more time to look at the Report. I need to say that that recommendation could be interpreted as saying to this National Assembly, to His Excellency the President of our land - because he has to make appointments based upon recommendations coming here for the Public Service Commission - that we have been failing in our duty, we have been failing the Guyana Public Service, and we have been failing this nation because we have been selecting people who do not have the kinds of skill set, integrity and the like to occupy these positions. That can be an interpretation which would not cause us here or anyone who is part of this process to draw comfort or feel comfortable with such a recommendation. Maybe there is another interpretation to that recommendation. Maybe the flaw came when we mixed the Public Service with the Public Service Commission and sought to dictate that.

The Report, I think, somehow has not given us sufficient information as to how the Public Service Commission will be able to execute its mandate, given all the suggestions, some bordering on taking away of the functions of the Commission and placing them elsewhere, if we were to go ahead with what is proposed in this document.

11.09 p.m.

My final comment on this document is on the salaries and conditions of service. Honestly, that is my greatest disappointment. It is because I thought, given the mandate which is reflected at the very beginning of this Report, and which reads:

“TO EXAMINE, ADVISE AND REPORT ON THE SALARIES, CONDITIONS OF SERVICE, TRAINING AND OTHER MATTERS PERTAINING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE WELLBEING OF THE PUBLIC SERVANTS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE.”

I can recall reading, several times, that the Government was awaiting the submission of this Report to determine the wages and salaries and conditions of service for the public servants. If that was an expectation of the Government, then I am certain that it has some disappointment. I, too, thought that there would have been more meat with regard to the salaries and conditions of employment of our public servants. I thought that the Report would have been more specific and less general in its recommendations. It is because quite a number of the entries in the Report are rehashing what actually exists and maybe semantics would have brought some difference to it.

With that, I wish to urge as I started. We, in this House, should find this document as one which we can work with and work on to make it a better document if it is sent to the Special Select Committee. I also wish to urge those on the Government benches, if they are moving ahead with implementing any aspect of this Report, to please ensure that they consult the public servants, hear their views and share the Government’s views so that we can build partnership with change.

If there is not public buy-in with any proposed change, it would certainly fail. It is because, as human beings, while change is inevitable, there is always suspicion in every human being with regard to change. It boils down to that statement that we know what we have but we do not know what we would get.

I wish to encourage caution and care as we move ahead in our implementation. I thank you very much, Sir. [*Applause*]

Minister within the Ministry of Social Protection [Mr. Scott]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, Ms. Africo Selman is scheduled to speak before Mr. Scott. In the cutting of the list of speakers, it may have led to some confusion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, would you give way to the next speaker? I had hoped that I would have had a list which would have given me a better picture. Hon. Member Ms. Africo Selman, you have the floor.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) to support the motion which was moved by the Hon. Gail Teixeira. This motion is timely. The mover of the motion, Ms. Gail Teixeira, and the seconder, Dr. Jennifer Westford, must both be commended for tabling this motion at a time when public servants are demanding a review of their wages and other benefits, training and development and other matters pertaining to the improvement of the efficiency of the performance of the public servants in the Public Service.

The Commission, upon completion of its Inquiry, made several recommendations, many of which have been attended to by previous speakers. I wish to speak to Recommendation # 2 which recommends that urgent action be taken to enact a code along the lines proposed by Government.

There are, in effect, Public Service rules which have been in existence since the early 1980s. It is our submission, therefore, that there is no need to enact a code for public servants but the public service rules should be expeditiously reviewed and, perhaps, restructured, as some of the existing rules are outdated. This, along with the other recommendations, could be comprehensively reviewed in a Special Select Committee. I wish, therefore, to endorse and support the call by my other Colleagues, on this side of the House, for the Report to be sent to a Special Select Committee for further examination and greater deliberation. I wish to urge all Members of this National Assembly to support the motion and that the Report be sent to a Special Select Committee for greater consideration. I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Scott: Before I begin, let me shower some great praise on the Professor and Attorney-at-Law, Mr. Harold Lutchman, for bringing his great years of experience in the Public Service to bear on this wonderful Report before us. Let me, at the same time, lament that violence has been done to the tenor of this Report in that, in a short amount of time allotted, we cannot give justice to what we ought to be doing in our discussion of such a report. It is really unfair to the process

that we had to truncate our speakers and our speeches, as was seen with the Hon. Africo Selman's contribution to this honourable House. We have lost a lot by not being able to benefit from such a thing.

I begin by saying that I totally support the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service of Guyana. The idea of it being sent to a Special Select Committee may sound nice but it deprives the public and the other Members from being able to make a meaningful contribution. I must lament that.

I wish to emphasise that the Commission has done a wonderful job, as I said. My task is to examine four aspects – the conditions of service, job structure, wages and working with other stakeholders. It is going to be very difficult to cover all of the areas, but I recognise that, at least, the first two are important to the process.

Within the framework of the conditions of service, attention would be paid not only to the deplorable physical conditions to which the public servants have been confined, but the opportunity must be taken to address the issue that affects not only the morale, but the extremely bad conditions under which, for years, civil servants have had to work. The Commission found that those issues beyond financial and monetary matters, which negatively impacted on the morale, have been the poor working conditions of service. At paragraph 304, on page 80, the Commission stated:

“Specifically, we advert to the physical and other conditions in which Public Servants are required to function. Apart from complaints received during our enquiry, we personally experienced examples of situations which could at best be described as unsatisfactory and in urgent need for remedying.”

These remarks are quite true. We wish to say that these deplorable conditions had existed long before the Commission appeared and it has been so for over two decades. It is our intention, however, within this current Government, to see that these conditions are addressed as expeditiously as possible. We are aware that they are not good enough. We were not waiting on the Inquiry only, but we began working immediately towards making sure that those unfavourable conditions were addressed.

We have also noticed that the Commission has advanced nine sets of responsibilities within the Department of Public Service which are required in terms of the conditions. The fact that many of those suggestions are reflective of the atrocities which public servants have had to endure during more than two decades, we intend to also address them and ensure that public servants get an opportunity to enjoy the good life which we promised.

Our aspirations are to create the conditions that reflect enlightened public servants as well as to be in keeping with our agreement with international labour organisations. Together, we have crafted a decent work programme. That link between decent work and proper conditions is inseparable today. These opportunities for a fair income, security at the workplace and productive delivery of work will be enhanced as we address those conditions.

We are going to a position where we have to consider contract workers. Contract workers were used for the past two decades. The Commission found that there were 14,466 employees in the Public Service, of which 4,471 or 31% are contract workers. The Commission noticed that this is a practice of recent vintage, but that is not so. It has been there for a long time, at least over a decade. What is most immoral about the employment of contract workers is that it was a device that was initially crafted to make the Unions superfluous and impotent. That element has been taken to levels beyond belief.

Just now, we were hearing the talk about the plight of doctors and young civil servants who are non-contract workers. What the speaker before the last speaker sought to do was ensure that the sweetheart benefits that they were getting as contract workers, as they became absorbed into the pensionable establishment, would remain. They did not want to accept that they had to go through a period of training, a period of one year of temporary adjustments. What they want is to have the same thing as they transferred into the pensionable establishment. It is not done that way. It is a level playing field once they start to reintegrate into the pensionable establishment of the Public Service.

What has happened, also, is that those contract workers were used in a most despicable way in that they were dangled a few dollars more. For that, they were used. Many of them had been fooled into believing that, for a few dollars more, were better off.

11.24 p.m.

That arrangement has not worked and it is because it has not worked that we are now moving to reintegrate those people into the regular public service. The public servant must be professional and committed to what their career should be. We are going to see that the public servants are properly treated, unlike what some contract workers are currently experiencing. For example, we recently discovered that a certain group of public service workers were, since 1992, placed on a fixed-termed contract for periods of one month at a time. With the advent of the 2016 Local Government Elections, we also found that the Council at Toevlugt/Potentia Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) is attempting now to reduce that month by month contract to fortnightly contracts. Further, we found that young female professionals who proceeded on maternity leave during the period of their fixed-term contracts are having their gratuity denied or reduced proportionately. What could be more abominable than that? [Ms. Teixeira: You keep repeating that argument, fix it.]

That is what we are fixing because we recognised that that NDC is using contract workers and exploiting them. If you did not know that it existed then you know now and we are aware of it. We are talking about a NDC that is controlled by the PPP.

It was recognised that within the frame work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) this is called fishing of employment and we are stopping it. We found that the same problem exists in Trinidad and Tobago and in other islands in the West Indies, where the fishing of employment is taking place and the ILO is addressing that currently. I am speaking in a serious way, unlike the posturing that some people who normally are full of empty air unusually project and see themselves as being rhetorical when they speak.

As I would have said before, we are moving at a fast rate, but in the pursuit of the stable development goal and a good life, we intend to reintegrate those contract workers into the public service. As one understands the basics of the job structure it is to use the current structure within the organisation, which would mean that the structure of salary would always be an attempt to join the remuneration with the levels of responsibilities.

Prior to the advents of the Commission, the job structure in the public service had been in place for over two decades following a job evaluation exercise that was conducted by Peat Marwick in 1991/1992. This study had reflected 14 grades of pay from a GS1 to a GS14. The Commission found the structure to be too cumbersome and had observed five categories – Administrative, Senior Technical, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, Clerical and Semi-Skilled Operatives. The

Commission also cut across those and have now derived three structures – Management, Supervisory and Non-Management. It would appear that to compress to three categories, no amount of survey was done. We do not know what they used as a standard, but nothing is wrong with us examining the proposal as time goes by. The proposal is worth an examination.

It cannot be denied that the Commission has done an excellent job in addressing most of the essential elements of wages and salaries. The Commission's submissions represent an outstanding exposition on the development of job classification, wages and salaries and the development of job structuring. It has demonstrated technical competencies in addressing issues such as green circling, red circling and matters associated with debunching, as well as the pitfalls across all boards. Having addressed these technical matters, a series of recommendations have been advanced to rectify the confusion which exists in the salary structure at present. Of great import is the fact that several persons were found to be below the minimal of their scales, while others were found to be above. This has to be addressed. The public servants who are above their respective scales might be addressed easily, but for those who are below it would be difficult. Those below their scales will move from the GS1 to a maximum of \$50,000 per month. The highest on the GS 14 would move from \$349,473 to \$534,966. That would definitely be a heavy burden at the moment, but no recommendation would be cast aside because we are looking to find ways and means of addressing public servants requirements so that we can deliver.

We have set about on a national road to prosperity and hence, we have lived up to our promises to make life a better one for all. We took office in May, 2015 and by Public Service Circular No.1 /2015, we have increased the minimum wage. I will quote:

“The Government has approved a minimum wage equivalent to \$50,000, effective from 1st July, 2015. “

That was moving minimum wage from in excess of \$42,000. In addition to that we also paid out a \$50,000 bonus, plus a 5% increase in July.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I apologise for interrupting, but I understand that there is a limit allotted to each speaker in this segment of our proceedings. I must tell you that you have exceeded the limit.

Mr. Scott: I had no idea that I had gone so far. I do support this Commission and its recommendations. Many of them we will take on board and many cannot be implemented, immediately, but we are going to deal with that. We have already begun to implement some of the recommendations. I support the Commissions' recommendations. [*Applause*]

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the motion before the House that the report of the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) into the Public Service be debated. My only concern is that important matters, as it relates to Government's reaction to this report, would not be adequately addressed because of a pressure of time. I feel very uneasy that several important matters of Government's policy, with respect to this report, would have to be truncated because of time.

Mr. Speaker, I can give you a recital of Government's response to the 89 recommendations that have been made in this report, but that will take the time of the entire debate and I do not propose to do that tonight. As the budget is coming up a little later, I will reserve some of what I intended to say tonight for that occasion. What I propose to do instead is to highlight features of Government's response to the report in a general sense and to give timelines for the implementation of key features of the report.

At the outset, though His Excellency had expressed the gratitude of the Government and the people of Guyana to the Commissioners for the sterling work which they did. Permit me please, Mr. Speaker, in this House, on behalf of the Government and the people of Guyana to thank the Commissioners for the outstanding work which they did, and to all those Guyanese who contributed to the work of the commission of inquiry. Professor Harold Lutchman, Ms. Sandra Jones and Mr. Samuel Goolsarran, the nation owes a debt of gratitude to you for the quality of report which you have produced, after many months of hearings all across this country.

So it is that the recommendation of my Colleagues, on the other side, that this matter goes to a Special Select Committee cannot stand because the work has already been done. The work in the communities has been done and all of the consultations have been done. I wish to say that we so appreciate the work done by this commission that, very shortly, after the report was presented to His Excellency the President, the President instructed that copies be handed to the Leader of the Opposition, to this honourable House, to the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the Guyana

Public Service Union (GPSU), that they be given an opportunity to study this report and make their recommendations of findings on the report.

Tonight, I want to thank the Members of the Opposition for bringing this motion to the House and for debating it. I do trust that the recommendations which come out of this debate will serve to enhance the quality of the report and eventually to produce a quality of public service that we can all be proud of.

The APNU/AFC coalition Government, upon assuming Office in May 2015, inherited a public service that was ill-equipped to perform its functions in transitioning Guyana into a modern state. Among the key irritants which we found were arbitrary increases in wages without reference to the Collective Bargaining Agreement and respect for the unions; the presence of a large number of contract employees that had led to a high degree of uncertainty and insecurity in the workforce; and many employees, especially those recruited through the traditional public service, were left to function with little or no prospect of promotion, while the contract system was used to catapult contract employees into senior positions, thus eroding the strength of the union that represented those workers.

Let me also say that, in a few short days, we will have the budget for 2017 being presented in this honourable House, therefore, we must view the implementation of these recommendations, in the report, within the confines of fiscal constraints and finite budgets.

11.39 p.m.

In an age where the expectations of our citizens are growing, there is an obvious demand for speed and user friendliness and an instance on a clear public service ethos that places the people first, regardless of whether that means abandoning old habits and practices.

On a lighter note, it is late in the night so let us bring some levity into the topic, some of us would have seen the classic British TV series, *Yes, Minister*. In that show, the Cabinet Secretary, Humphrey Applebee, represents a civil service that fears change and being held responsible for anything. In one of the episodes, the new Minister who had just taken over, Jim Hacker asked one of the civil servants what was going to be done with all of the letters he had received. The civil servant answered, that they could draft official replies stating that the matter was under

consideration or that it was under active consideration. The Minister then asked what was the difference and the civil servant replied that ‘under consideration’ meant that they had lost the file and ‘under active consideration’ meant that they were trying to find it.

The time for that type of public servant has long passed. In an era of fiscal constraints, the public service must be innovative. Some countries in the Commonwealth have inherited the British system as we have and have started to look for innovative means to deliver a quality service to their people. In Guyana, even as we deliberate on the commission of inquiry report, as a Government, we have to continue to deliver quality service to our people. In this regard, I had the opportunity, in August of this year, to sit with 53 other Ministers of Public Service in the Commonwealth to look at the subject of “Innovation - a Public Service Imperative”. Some countries, led mainly by Malaysia, have embraced the Public Service reforms under what is deemed as a *blue ocean* strategy.

In essence, the strategy is based on low cost, high impact and rapid execution of Government’s services. It also seeks to be innovative in removing what are called silos in our thinking and structures so that quality service could be provided to the people. In Guyana, we are examining ways to be more innovative in the delivery of Public Service, so that the service goes to the people and not the other way around.

During 2016, we introduced several new initiatives including taking the Government’s services under one big tent to various communities of this country. Our feedback is that the people are very satisfied that they were able to have their issues addressed and decisions made on the spot. I am advised by the Minister of Citizenship, that in 2017, the Government would be implementing community services for passports and birth certificates delivery.

The report of the commission of inquiry comes 50 years after the Collins Commission of Inquiry into the Public or Civil Service of 1966 and several other attempts at public service reform by successive Governments, from 1966–2015. It can be conceded that, despite the various reform initiatives, the basic condition of our Public Servants remain, to a large extent, unchanged. It is now the challenge of all us to critically examine the report and to take decisive action. While, I said I would give timelines for some features in the report, let me highlight recommendation no. 71. This recommendation addresses strategic planning in the ministries. It states that:

“Every Ministry/Department should have a strategic plan with its attendant, strategies and actions to ensure that the key objectives are achieved within a defined time frame, in accordance with the budgeted annual estimates ...”

It is recognised that in the Public Service, there is a lack of capacity in the area of strategic planning. In this regard, beginning January, 2017, planning departments would be introduced into the Government ministries. This will include capabilities in Government’s articulation of the green economy. In this regard, officers will have specific responsibilities in understanding, incorporating and ensuring the execution of Government’s green economy agenda. This would include green education, green technology and green tourism among other features. We believe that this will also open up new vistas for our Public Service. It will entail training in areas that give credence to the idea that the Public Service is not static, while improving the Public Service’s capacity to deliver on issues of a green economy and the good life for all Guyanese.

Mr. Speaker, allow me please to now address some timelines in the delivery of some of these recommendations. It is clear to all of us that some of the recommendations are implementable in the short term, some in the medium term and others in the long term. In terms of the short term measures, the commission of inquiry recommends that urgent action be taken to enact a code along the lines proposed by Government. As it is aware, a draft code of conduct for Ministers and Members of Parliament is before this House. Only a few days ago, all Members of Parliament, at a conference, which was held at the Marriot Hotel, on corruption, this code was one of the matters which we had discussed and there were some recommendations coming out of those discussions. I trust that we will take those recommendations into consideration to ensure that we have a stronger document that will embody the ethos of the Members of this Parliament.

A code for public servants is now being discussed by the permanent secretaries at their monthly meetings and so, the issue of establishing codes of conduct is something that we have taken very seriously and we are addressing. We have commenced the process of assimilating contract workers into the pensionable public service. My advice is that, as of today, 1784 contract employees have so far been assimilated into the pensionable public service under the GS1 and GS2 rates. We expect that an organisational audit will be done and we have already started discussions with consultants and terms of reference are to be agreed upon. We expect that this should be done by February of 2017.

The CoI also recommends the establishment of a Committee of Permanent Secretaries from the key Ministries under the Chair of the Head of the Department of Public Service, who is the Permanent Secretary that would help to identify candidates to be awarded such fellowships and scholarships. This has been a major *bug bearer* in the past with all sorts of claims of favouritism in the award of scholarships and fellowships. I would like to say that, since this matter came before the commission of inquiry, when evidence was given and the commission of inquiry had indicated its intention of making this one of the key recommendations, we started to take action in this regard.

So, apart from the permanent secretaries, we have widened the committee that looks at selecting persons for scholarships and the establishment of what is called a National Scholarship Interviewing Panel, which comprises persons from the University of Guyana (UG), the Private Sector Commission (PSC) and the public service. Those persons work under the guidance of the Permanent Secretary, in the Department of Public Service.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, we have two other speakers, in addition to the intervention, which must remain, of the proposer of this motion and we have 15 minutes to our agreed time.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Speaker, I can wrap up in two minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, if you could in a minute it would be preferable.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Speaker, I feel very hamstrung because this is my Ministry, it is my responsibility and it is my duty to ensure that the people of Guyana understand what their Government is doing about this report.

Under recommendation No. 60, the Commission advises about the "...early re-appointment of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal..." What I can say is that the Government is currently looking at the Curriculum Vitae (CVs) of several persons who could be considered and it is expected that, by February of 2017, the President and the Government would be in a position to call upon the Leader of the Opposition for consultations in this matter. Already, the building or the office accommodation which houses the Public Service Appellate Tribunal is going through some major renovations and, by the end of this month, I am advised that the office accommodation would be ready for the Public Service Appellate Tribunal.

As I said, I feel very hamstrung about the time given here, but I want to ask that the Members of the Opposition join us in making very firm recommendations to ensure that we could give life to the recommendations of the commission of inquiry. Also that we put our heads together so that we could provide a public service, that provides or delivers a quality service to the people of Guyana, as we all understand that they require, need and deserve a good life.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

Ms. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of the motion before us. I do so from the standpoint of someone who has been involved in the aspects of labour, at the highest level, in this country, having to be the first woman to head the GTUC in this country. So the issues of workers are very close to my heart at all times. Therefore, I would state that it is important that our country has the type of Public Service that is tailored to meet the demands of our society and, at the same time, provide efficient and accurate service. We are all aware that they are changing trends in today's work environment and we, in Guyana, must take note of these changes and endeavour to make them applicable in our system.

Therefore, we must have an opened-mind approach in our quest for the reforming of our systems at all levels. The Report on the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service is timely and, indeed, necessary if we are to incorporate the advancement of our core labour standards in our business structure. The recommendations provided in this report must be seen as the platform on which we advance the advocacy for an enhanced, effective, reliable and manageable Public Service.

However, in Chapter Two of the report under the heading, "Contract Employment in the Public Service", it lays lots of emphasis on the contract employee. Therefore, it is important that we review the recommendation that contract workers, on all grades of the public service positions, be absorb into the pensionable establishment provided, which they are suitably qualified to fill the established positions.

11.54 p.m.

We must be careful that our actions do not deprive anyone of the right to choose. Many of our young people today, choose this type of arrangement because it affords them the flexibility to

work and to study at the same time. Many of these youths carry the responsibility of having to finance their studies and we must be careful not to rob them of this opportunity.

Our country's development depends heavily on the need for qualified and skilled professionals, and so we must provide the environment to capture this requirement. This type of employment also eliminates the many requests for time off to attend classes, something that could be a heavy burden on the production in any organisation. However, we must acknowledge that, in today's work environment, there are three distinct categories of workers; the employee who supplies a service to an employer for wages or salaries and other benefits such as a pension, medical schemes *et cetera*, which is based on a written or verbal contract for an indefinite period. Then there is the contractor who supplies a service to a client, by way of a contractual agreement which includes, the terms of payment, the contractor determines his or her own work schedule, works out of his or her own office or location, and is a separate entity from that of the client. Then there is the contract employee, who supplies a specific service to an organisation, such as the Government based entirely on a written contract, which defines the duration of the employment, hours and location of work, rate and periods of payment, the deductions that will be had from those payments and the benefits to be added, such as a gratuity. The contract employee has a specific job title and job requirements. In many instances, these persons are specialised in a particular field of work.

In the report it is stated, that there is the assertion, that contract employees are usually needed to supplement, compliment and augment skills deficits within the public service, and it is for this specific reason, that this category of workers are employed.

I would like to respond to the Hon. Minister, Keith Scott, on contract employees and salaries. There is a need for the clear comprehension of who is a contract employee and how the system operates. That is why the need and the call for wider consultation are weak. If we do not speak with these persons, in-depth, we will not understand why they prefer to be contract employees and why there is the need to have contract employees. If the Government will continue in its development to have projects, there will always be the need for contract employees.

The industrial relations climate within the public service, at this time is worrying. In fact, it is not as stable as one would like it to be, particularly, coming from a trade unions' perspective. There

are indeed many factors that need to be addressed, and this must be done urgently, if we are to ensure that we get value for money from our public servants.

We must be certain that the mechanism is in place and is workable, if, recommendations 53 to 56 are to be implemented and effective. We must seek to enhance the collective bargaining process. The Hon. Member, Lt. Col (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon made the mention of arbitrary increases. Well, based on your view that the situation continues, as it relates to the GPSU and the Government's recent wage increase talks, where there was the dispute that the union did not agree to the increase that was offered. However, the Government had insisted that it would go ahead and pay the increases offered, after we got the notion that was placed before us that talks were continuing. Well, if there is a dispute, a misunderstanding or a disagreement with a wage or an allowance increase, if one was to go ahead whether one is Government or management and pay that increase, it is arbitrary.

Our public servants must be made to feel comfortable, respected and conscious of the fact that they are an integral part of our country's developmental process and that their contributions are acknowledged. They must be properly recompensed for their involvement. Therefore, it is our responsibility, not only to ensure that our Labour Laws are in conformity with the ILO and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Core Labour Standards, but that there exist the accompanying policies to complement its enactment.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I interrupt you only to remind you that there are two other speakers - one other speaker, plus, the wrap up and our deadline is 12.00 midnight.

Ms. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I will be wrapping up quite shortly in a minute or so. Many persons are troubled by the fact, that, as a public servant, they are placed into retirement when they are yet in the prime of their working years. Some seek employment in the private sector or become self-employed because they have no desire to be forced into inactiveness far too soon. At the ages of 50 and 55, they have a lot yet to offer in the world of work. Recommendations 64 to 68 set out to eliminate this policy and replace it with the new retirement age of 60 to 65. While this is seemingly alright it must not be overlooked, that there exist the possibility of having a bloated system, since this amended age, coupled with the elimination of contract employees, will see an excess of persons under the fixed establishment and for a longer period.

The question to be asked is: Could this increased cost be afforded? How will it affect job availability and promotional opportunities? Also, the recommendation that the retirement age for new entrants and the current public servants, below the age of 50 years, be amended to age 65, with an option for early retirement to age 60, is discriminatory to those current public servants who are 50 years and over. We must ensure not to create one problem while fixing another.

Finally, we need all hands on deck, if we are to move our country forward at a steady and successful pace. Therefore, it is important that as we strive to enhance our public service and the lives of our public servants, that we work collectively to *fine tune* the recommendations in this report. Hence, I will like to submit that this report has wider consultation and that it be sent to a Special Select Committee, to be reviewed in the interest of the public servants of Guyana.
[Applause]

Mr. Williams: If it pleases you Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me congratulate the Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry, Professor Lutchman and the other two Commissioners, Ms. Jones and Mr. Goolsarran, for this comprehensive report which they have produced.

The motion that has caused this report to be in this honourable House is a simple one. In fact, it is merely to debate its contents and recommendations. It is not approbating or reprobating, but suddenly we are hearing about a Special Select Committee. I do not see it anywhere. I have tried to use all my faculties and I have not seen anything like that. I do not see any amendment either. So, the Hon. Member, the Minister of State, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon has given Members the reason why that would not be necessary.

The former President of the Guyana Trades Union Congress, felt that she should take extra time because of her experience in the trades union movement and because she is a trades unionist. I think I have coordinated 27 unions in my time, including the Guyana Labour Union (GLU) and if I were to follow her, we would be here for a very long time.

Suffice it to say that I approve of most of the recommendations, if not, all of them. I will lament the fact that we do not have time to go into that, but I wish to reiterate the importance of collective bargaining and the importance of the trade union recognition. We are having problems where we have a company purporting to derecognise a union that is certified and, obviously, that is in breach of our law. We have laboured over the years to have improved wages and salaries for

public servants. Yours truly, lamented the fact that the last Government had workers marking, time without any real increase in their income for well over a decade and a half with just 5% of impositions.

The issue of recommendations 58 to 59, the Wages and Salaries Commission, this is something I have been plugging for not a few years. We need a Wages and Salaries Commission and we also need one with respect of the judiciary. So, we will have to decide whether this will be an all-encompassing Commission, just restricted to the public service or whether it should be, as in Trinidad, a National Wages and Salaries Commission so we that could take care of all public servants and members of the judiciary.

The Hon. Minister of State dealt with the Public Service Appellate Tribunal. Since 2005, it has gone into disquietude. In other words, workers were robbed of the opportunity to redress for many years and those were the years that they were severely oppressed. Years ago *I blew the whistle* on contract workers when I was shadowing that portfolio. I have lived to see that the mushroom, which in fact crated a parallel workforce within the public service, and it was discriminatory in the sense that it was used as a tool to advance the cronies of the last Government and at the same time it had debilitating effect on traditional public servants.

Sir, I am happy now that, under APNU/AFC Government, we have embarked on assimilating all workers into the public service where there is security of tenure if nothing else.

I was surprised to see that the Commission, in its third recommendation, recommending the introduction of the Protected Disclosure Whistle Blowers Bill. I think that it is far-reaching on the part of the Commission of Inquiry and it must have had, uppermost in its mind, this malady of State assets being unlawfully appropriated. It is important that it is in the report though because we have to sensitise the public servants that they could *blow the whistle* on a fellow employee, if they feel that they are extracting private wealth from public assets. **[Bishop**

Edghill: They can also blow the whistle on Ministers.]

Well I could give you more

reasons if you want to stay until 3.00 p.m., Hon. Member.

12.09 a.m.

So, what I would describe as a fast sweep, I would like to say notwithstanding, the entreaties of the Hon. Member Chandarpal at this late hour, that the work of the commission of inquiry is properly complemented and I think that it will go a far way in contributing to a vastly improve public service in Guyana and improve a lot of the public servant also. *[Applause]*

Ms. Teixeira (replying): I would try to do this as quickly as possible. Just to remind the Members of the House that this motion was published in the seventh month, 27th July and we have brought a simple motion saying “let us get it on the Order Paper to discuss,” because the Commission of Inquiry report was tabled in this House on May 24th. We had thought that the Government would be the lead to bring the commission in to some form of debate in this House and to do what Mr. Harmon did in a succinct way as he did today. We expected that the Government would lead on this issue. When we saw that nothing was happening we then brought the motion on July 27th and we waited four months for it to be debated.

Whilst I appreciate Mr. Harmon, and you have my sympathy, as I would have liked, a long time, to debate it, and so would a number of colleagues here. I believe that I am very happy that you were able to speak and to get a number of your points over, because a lot of them we do not know and we have not seen in the press. The Hon. Member Mr. Williams said that it is a simple motion. It is.

However, the more we look at the Commission of Inquiry (report), the more we felt it should go to a Parliamentary Special Select Committee. The speakers on the other side have generally said no. However, we still believe in the wisdom of the two sides, and the fact that there are people on this side who had a lot of experience in the public service, acquired over years. I know that there are Members on the PPP side, who are not in this House, who have also been helpful to Mr. Harmon in his new post and are willing to continue to help to ensure that we are able to advance in the way that our public service is developed.

Mr. Williams, I will be moving an amendment to take the matter to a Parliamentary Special Select Committee, which I can do.

However, there are a couple of points I just want to make. The Hon. Member Mr. Scott referred to the Peat Marwick Report of 1991. I wish to remind the House that the Public Sector Modernisation Project, which I think was a five-year project, dealt with the modernisation of the

public sector, including the public service, training, management, job description, organisation structures of various Ministries. This was the Government of Guyana/Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Project which went on for a number of years, for 2000 and 2005. All of that was a part of it. I just want to get that in. I think Mr. Harmon was saying that nothing happened to the 1966 Report. I do wish to bring to Mr. Harmon... I believe that there is one or two of your technical people, who may be in this room, who were actually a part of the Government of Guyana/IDB Public Sector Modernisation Project. [Lt. Col. (Ret'd)

Harmon: Between 1966 and 2000 there were several governments... [inaudible]] I am just adding to your repertoire, Sir. Is that a problem? [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) **Harmon:** It is not.] I would think so. I thought you were more big-hearted than that.

The issue of a modern public service, I believe that that is where the report becomes rather staid, in that, what the modern public service is and what we as Guyanese want the public service to look like. The issue of innovation and the recognition that the working environment is not necessarily in an office, that people are mobile, people work from home, people work on the move, people do not necessarily have to have an office. If we are going to incorporate the interior of Guyana, with Ms. Hughes and Telecommunication Act, and with the interconnectivity that we have talked about, there are ways in which we can make the public service of this country function in a very modern and innovative way without having to put people in office and only having to operate from offices.

Therefore there is the issue of working from different type of days, not Monday to Friday only, in terms of delivery of services. In fact, in many public services they are there working for 24 hours, splitting into systems so that certain services are available 24 hours a day.

For me, when I read the report it lacked an examination of innovative ways of using our limited human resources. We do not have plenty numbers, and it is to use it in a more creative way. It is outsourcing certain facilities, certain jobs, to make sure that we are able to be more effective and efficient.

Of course, there is the issue of professionalism. Professionalism cannot be defined by whether one is a member of the pensionable establishment or whether one is a contract worker. Your professionalism is based on your capacity to work, produce, be efficient, be able to offer services

and goods to the population of this country in a fair and balanced manner. It has nothing to do with whether you are a pensionable establishment or contract worker. It has to do with the services you are able to offer and the manner in which you offer. I have a big difficulty with this view that professionalism is defined by the pensionable establishment. That is utter “poppycock”.

Last lick, contract workers and all the talk about the issue, which Mr. Williams was pointing out, about the public service and contracts...Let me just remind you that it was Mr. Christopher Ram who wrote, in his report on the Budget 2016, that in fact the number of contract workers have gone up 1,000 between June 2015 and February 2016. Whilst my dear Mr. Harmon, who I have great respect for, talked about we have lost 1,584 people who have now been absorbed in the pensionable establishment from G1 and G2 scales. You have not hit the top level comrades as yet. You are still grubbing at the bottom.

I just want to say that this is an opportunity...When we talk about social cohesion and national unity and inclusive governance, could we please take this Commission of Inquiry report which is useful...? The three persons who worked on it, I think, did an admirable job but there is more work to be done on it. It is time for the Members of Parliament to put their brains together, hold hearings of a different nature and come up with a more modernised public sector, innovative one, upon which this Government can build and do better for our country and our people.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Before we go any further with this motion, Hon. Members, I must bring to your attention the resolve clause that was contained in that motion. Do you recall this motion was before we had our recess in August? Does it satisfy the request in the present wording because it does not appear to require anything of the House?

Ms. Teixeira: Agreed Mr. Speaker. That is why I said that I brought an amendment calling on the House to send this report to a parliamentary Special Select Committee.

Mr. Speaker: At the second resolve clause, you wish to propose...

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. It is a new “BE IT RESOLVED” clause that this report be sent to a parliamentary Special Select Committee for further review, scrutiny and to report back to the House.

Mr. Speaker: We have that text before us, which is the present motion with the amended “BE IT RESOLVED” clause and that would be the matter which I should put before the House namely... Someone will have to second that. Do I have a seconder on that?

Mr. Persaud: I will second that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment reads:

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the report be sent to a parliamentary Special Select Committee.”

That is the text, Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir. If we would not have the budget consideration I would have said report back to the House within six weeks. Based on budget, I am a bit torn with how to deal with the time factor, because I do not want the Government to think that we are going to stymie the report in the Committee. It is because the budget consideration will be taking up in December, I decided that I would not put a date on it because I am not sure how to deal with it.

Question put, and agreed to.

Amendment negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have come to the end of our business for today. I must first of all express my appreciation to the Prime Minister for finding a way to give us some extra time and all Members for cooperating in that regard. Hon. Prime Minister, I ask that you move the adjournment.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that this House be adjourned until the 28th November at 2 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The House stands adjourned until the 28th November.

Adjourned accordingly at 12.23 a.m.