

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

54TH Sitting

Wednesday, 14TH December, 2016

The Assembly convened at 10.09 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 2017

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

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

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2017 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2016-11-28.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2017, of a total sum of two hundred and thirty billion, three hundred and forty nine million and seventy nine thousand dollars (**\$230,349,079,000**), **excluding nineteen billion and seven hundred and seventy four million, and eighty seven thousand dollars (\$19,774,087,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to continue consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2017.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now proceed in accordance with the Business Sub-Committee’s Resolution and Schedule.

Agency: 17 Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 171 – Policy Development and Administration - \$991,716,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: Could the Hon. Minister say what the reason is for the increase from \$4 million to \$9.268 million under this line item?

Secondly, can the Minister say what sum of this amount is allocated for the employment of Monitors to oversee the Hinterland Employment and Youth Service (HEYS) Project, which I understand is handicapped due to the lack of resources for visits to the many project sites under their responsibility?

Minister within the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs [Ms. Garrido-Lowe]: The increase caters for one Head Cook, two Cooks, one Household Service Worker, one Assistant Cook/maid and three Cleaners.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Can the Hon. Minister point to the line item which caters for the Monitors employed by the Ministry to oversee the HEYS Project?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, that allocation is catered for in the HEYS capital project.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Minister tell this House whether the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs will move the contracted workers onto the fixed establishment or do the employees have a choice?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the Ministry will indeed move the contracted workers to the pensionable establishment. We have started and that is why there is a decrease in this allocation.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Follow up: Could the Minister tell this House when the 62 contracted employees, stated in the Staffing Details, will be moved onto the fixed establishment?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Not all of the 62 contracted employees will be moved to the pensionable establishment. Persons on the GS1 and GS2 scales will be moved.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Is the Minister saying that the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs will not follow the lead of the Government of Guyana's pronouncement that there will be no more contracted workers and that workers will be moved to the fixed establishment?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: I understand that, by March 2017, the process will be completed with regards to the 62 contracted employees. I think the employees up to 45 years old will be moved to the pensionable establishment.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricant: I notice under this line item that there remains a huge spike in the spending as it relates to fuel and lubricants. Could the Minister quantify for this House the successes for such a huge spending for the year 2016 and say whether this amount will yield similar successes in 2017?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: This increase caters for outreaches, familiarisation visits to villages by the Community Development Officers (CDOs). It also caters for the purchase of fuel for the Ministry's vehicles, cooking gas for the Amerindian residents and the students' dormitory.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I do not think that my question has been answered. I asked whether the Hon. Minister can quantify the successes from such a huge spending on fuel and lubricants.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, I can give at least an approximation by the end of the week in writing.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I appreciate the Minister providing to this House the response to the question. We will await that response.

Could the Hon. Minister tell this House whether, under line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings, the Ministry has a multi-year contract agreement or is it on an annual basis and whether the Minister can also disaggregate the sums that are allocated here for the Rental of Buildings and who is the building being rented from?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, it is a one year contract and it is being rented from Mr. DeJesus.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, in 2015 the Ministry spent \$49.492 million...

Mr. Chairman: Could you state the line item please?

10.24 a.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: I am referring to the programme budgeting, line items 6111- 6115. In 2016, the figure increased to \$133,618,000 and it is proposed or estimated in 2017 to \$137,450,000. Could the Hon. Minister please state why this monumental increase of almost 300%. Secondly, I notice that there is less staff in 2017 as compared to 2016. What are the targeted or the value-added approaches that the Ministry is considering to distinguish these figures?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Just to clarify Hon. Member, is it line item 6115?

Ms. Dharamlall: Sorry. Mr. Chairman, I said programme budgeting, so it is total wages and salaries.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I recall you using this term and there may be persons in this House who may be more familiar with the term with references here. So maybe if you give an explanation as to what you mean, then you would get the answer that you really request.

Mr. Dharamlall: I was following from the Minister of Finance. Line items 6111–6116 – Administrative – Total Wages and Salaries *vis-a-vis* the Staffing Details.

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: Under line item 6111 – Administrative: There are seven persons, including one new staff who is the Senior Personnel Officer (SPO); line item 6112 – Senior Technical: This caters for three persons employed, a Senior Social Worker, a Student Welfare Officer and an Engineer; line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: Caters for two Welfare Officers; line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: This caters for a Radio Operator; line item 6115 – Semi–Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: The increase caters for one Head Cook, two Cooks, one Household Service Worker, one Assistant Cook, Maid and three Cleaners; line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Caters for 62 Contracted Employees.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow–up: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister what are the value-added approaches that the Ministry has considered in moving from \$47,492,000 in 2015 to \$137,450,000 in 2017?

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: The Ministry wants to operate at a high level to ensure that the mandate of the Ministry is carried out efficiently. The vacancies that were long outstanding, we have decided to fill them, eventually.

Mr. Dharamlall: Again Programme Budgeting: Other Transport, Travel and Postage. The amount has increased to \$106,385,000 in 2017, over \$36,980,000 at the end of 2015, which is almost \$68,000,000 more. Could the Hon. Minister state what necessitated this tremendous increase on the taxpayers?

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: Under line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Hon. Member, the increase caters for consultation on the Amerindian Act and Legal Officers’ field visits, monitoring projects in the communities and consultancy for the study on Indigenous Women and Children.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow–up: Could the Hon. Minister please lay over to the House the consultation plan, *vis-a-vis* the villages and what were the terms of reference (TOR) of the consultants, as part of our approval of this budget?

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: Hon. Member, we would be happy to give you that information in writing within 48 hours.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. Under line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could the Hon. Minister please state if the buildings associated with the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs would benefit from the solar electrification systems spoken about as part of the Government’s greening of the economy?

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: Hon. Member, could you please repeat the question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: The charges have increased from \$4,820,000 at the end of 2015 to \$16,451,000 beginning in budget 2017. Could the Hon. Minister please state whether, as part of the Government’s greening of the economy, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs would install solar systems and if it is not, why is the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs not proceeding in that direction?

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: Hon. Member, the increase caters for electricity charges that would be accrued for the rental of the new building. With regards to the solar system, only the students’ dormitory will benefit from the ‘green energy’.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister please state ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let us have the play. Let me thank the Minister and then call on you again. Please proceed.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you Mr. Chairman. As a follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister please state what is the expected value of the solar contribution at the dormitory?

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: Hon. Member that would be approximately \$6,000,000.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister please state why \$66,309,000 is budgeted for Security Services in 2017 verses at the end of 2015, \$12,485,000, almost a five and a half times increase. Which buildings or offices are receiving security?

Ms. Garrido–Lowe: The increase caters for security that would be provided at the rental of the new building.

Ms. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up. Did the Hon. Minister state that the rental of a new building necessitated an almost five and a half times increase in security for one building? That is outrageous.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, under line item 6292 – Dietary. Could the Minister lay over to this House the expenditures for the \$50,000,000 under Dietary Expenses? Further, could the Minister, at this moment, provide to this House the breakdown for the dormitories, the Princess Street residence and the Minister’s Secretariat, with respect to the allocations for these three areas?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the \$50 million is to adequately cater for the purchase of dietary items for the students housed at the dorms, 120 patients at the Amerindian residence and approximately 110 persons at the Amerindian residence. The breakdown for meals, which would be at the Indigenous Hostel, is \$26,901,000 and at the dorms it would be \$23,031,000. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell- Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I did not hear the Minister respond to the amounts allocated to the Minister’s Secretariat as it relates to Dietary.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, this is an exact breakdown for the \$50,000,000 that is under the line item.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to remind you that the Hon. Minister did not answer my question on the five and a half times increase for security. The Hon. Minister mentioned that there is only one additional building of the Ministry that would be using security. So moving from \$12,400,000 at the end of 2015 to \$66,309,000 beginning 2017... Which security company is it and what is the rate that the Ministry paying?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, I omitted just now that the increase also caters for the Indigenous Village in Sophia and for the electricity there. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell- Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, line item 6301 - Education Subventions and Grants: Could the Minister provide the details of the Education Subventions and Grants. Secondly, could the Minister say whether the reports for the Bina Hill Institute’s expenditures are being submitted and whether the Ministry is in possession of the latest such report and on what basis are the moneys dispersed to the Bina Hill Institute?

10.39 a.m.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, this allocation is for the procurement of uniforms for hinterland students. Were you asking for a breakdown of this allocation?

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: In 2015, there was a sum of \$4.2 million; in 2016, \$12 million; and for 2017 there is a huge increase of \$66 million which is now being requested. Could the Hon. Minister explain which local organisations would benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the \$66 million caters for contribution to the National Toshias Council (NTC); the increase of more field trips from Regions 1 to 10 and a subvention to the Bina Hill Institute. The Bina Hill Institute was previously in the Capital Budget, now it has been transferred to the Current Budget, so \$50 million is being allocated.

Opposition Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: A follow-up question for line item 6231 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Could the Government and your Ministry explain why the National Toshias Council, which represents all the Amerindian villages in Guyana, is receiving \$16 million, while the Bina Hill Institute is receiving \$50 million? Why would one not give more to the National Toshias Council because it represents almost 200 villages?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The \$16 million for NTC caters for the meetings of the Council, while the \$50 million for the Bina Hill Institute caters for the increase of the students there. That is under education. Our Government believes, and you would agree with us, that education is paramount right now in our country and the hinterland must not be left behind.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, I thank you for your response. The issue is that there are other schools in the Rupununi and when we come to the budget for Region 9, we will check the educational allocations to those schools. However, I am asking about a policy issue Madame. Does the Government believe that, under the Amerindian Act, the National Toshias Council is a legal authority, the legitimate representative of all Amerindian peoples of this country? Why would the Government only increase its allocation from \$12 million to \$16 million? Why would it not? The money allocated is for the Secretariat of the NTC, not for the Executive meetings. So, could one explain why one would be so frugal in giving to a statutory body under the Amerindian Act?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, indeed the NTC is just as important to the Ministry, but we have to allocate according to the moneys...

Ms. Teixeira: I cannot hear you Madame.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: We have to allocate according to the moneys we have and, as we get more moneys, more will be given to them.

Ms. Teixeira: The issue is that \$66 million has been allocated Madame Minister. Therefore, why would you, out of this sum, not allocate more generously, than you have already, to the NTC?

Ms Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the NTC never had an office before, so under the Capital Budget we have a further \$2.5 allocated for office space for the NTC. So, we are considering and catering for it.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Hon. Minister there is an increase, as you said, for one building. Could the Minister advise whether this is for rental from Madame Dejesus of an accommodation for herself or the Vice-President, Mr. Allicock?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The rental is to accommodate the increase of staff. Currently, it houses the Personnel Department, the Governance Department, the Project Department and the Amerindian Development Fund Department. That is what the building caters for.

Ms. Teixeira: The new building the Hon. Minister is referring to with the additional security and everything else is specifically a new building for use by the Ministry's staff. Could the Hon. Minister say where this building is located?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The building is in Thomas Street.

Ms. Teixeira: I beg your pardon?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The building is in Thomas Street.

Ms. Teixeira: Durban Street?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Thomas Street, obliquely opposite the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: In 2015, the sum was \$32 million; in the 2016 Budget, \$118 million; and in the Revised Budget for 2016 it was \$191 million. Requested now in 2017 is \$210 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what are the National Events and how much is allocated for each event?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, this sum caters for additional support for villages to participate in the Rupununi Exposition, the Moruka Exposition, the Rodeo, the Upper Mazaruni Sports and other hinterland activities. It also caters for the Indigenous Heritage Month activities, Mashramani, Independence celebrations and Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO) Youth Forum. The increase caters for a pageant, a heritage jingle, and two new programmes under the NTC, which are food and an Indigenous Conference and interactive sessions for leaders of Mexico, the United States of America (USA), Peru and Colombia.

The Heritage Jingle comes up to \$150,000; the Heritage Pageant comes up to \$14,350,000; the Heritage Month celebrations are \$76 million; assistance to the Upper Mazaruni Games, \$1.5 million; assistance to the Deep South August Games, \$1 million; assistance to North Rupununi Sports, \$1 million; and assistance to the villages for sports activities, village expositions, *et cetera*, \$2.5 million. This includes the host village for heritage which will receive \$5 million.

The contribution to the Moruka, Rupununi and the North Pakaraima Expositions comes up to \$10.5 million; contribution to the Rodeo, \$1 million; contribution to the Rupununi Music and Arts Festival, \$5 million; hosting of the NTC Conference, \$73.5 million; Independence celebrations, \$2.5 million; Mashramani, \$4 million; and the ACTO Youth Forum, \$12 million. That is the breakdown.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Could the Hon. Minister share the information with Members of this side of the House?

Mr. Chairman: The information is for the House in general?

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Yes, sorry Sir. The information is for the House because we cannot remember that long list.

Mr. Dharamlall: Going back to line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Could the Hon. Minister please state when consultations on the revision to the Amerindian Act will take place, following the announcement at the NTC of 2016 and, if that is not catered for, why is it not and if it is catered for when will it begin?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, as soon as the 2017 moneys are released, the consultations will begin.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up question: Could the Hon. Minister please provide or lay over to the House the schedule of consultations *vis-à-vis* the Amerindian Act?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Certainly, Hon. Member. We will be happy to do so.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Revised sum for 2016, \$18,850,000; 2017 proposed sum \$19,350,000. There is a colossal increase here. Could the Hon. Minister elucidate to this House whether the vehicle belonging to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, which went down into the Essequibo River at Kurupukari, whether the repairs will be taken out of this sum? Explicate please.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, all vehicles belonging to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs will be maintained under this line item.

Mr. Charlie: Mr. Chairman I asked a specific question...

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

Mr. Charlie: I asked the Hon. Minister whether a particular vehicle, belonging to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, would be repaired or if it was taken care of in 2016 or would be in 2017?

10.54 a.m.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, with regard to that particular vehicle an assessment is being carried out right now and if it is possible, then it will be taken care of under the 2017 allocations.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6261, Local Travels and Subsistence: Could the Hon. Minister please state whether staff of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs are part of the consultation team for the Amerindian Land Titling programme (ALT)? Who are the staff that comprise the consultation team? What is the subsistence rate paid to the staff who comprise the consultation team?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, with regard to the ALT, all expenses are catered for by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under which the programme comes.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow up, I recall the former Ministry of Amerindian Affairs had signed that agreement in partnership with the UNDP. Is the Hon. Minister stating that the

Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs now has transferred sole authority of that project to the UNDP?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, all expenses for ALT are catered for by UNDP.

Mr. Dharamlall: I had followed up that question by asking if the new of Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs has since dissolved the original contract and given authority to the UNDP to execute the contract solely.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: It is still a joint project. The staff of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs accompany the staff of UNDP, but all expenses are handled by UNDP.

Mr. Dharamlall: Finally, could the Hon. Minister please state the subsistence rate therefore of the ALT on those visits since the Ministry is still jointly administering the contract?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: I am looking for a line item that deals with this. There is not a line item for this.

Mr. Dharamlall: I was asking the question under line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence. The Ministry is jointly administering a contract with the UNDP called Amerindian Land Titling. I had asked: What are the subsistence rates paid to the staff of the Ministry in execution of this contract?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, as I explained, all expenses are catered for under the UNDP. Of course, as I mentioned, the Ministry does send staff to accompany and the subsistence remains at \$20,000 per day.

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: I would like to go back to line item 6291, National and Other Events. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this Assembly what criteria were used to allocate sums of money, under the national events, to the Rupununi Rodeo and to the Rupununi Music Festival? I ask this question because I would like to have a justification of why the music festival is allocated with much more than the rodeo activity which involves more than 50 communities across Region 9, mostly in Rupununi. I believe that the villages are entitled to have some equity with respect to such a traditional national event.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, I would like to give you this piece of information in writing. I could provide it in 48 hours.

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: I appreciate the response. However, I am surprised that the Minister cannot provide a verbal response to such a simple policy matter. It is a criterion. What were the criteria used to allocate?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there a response that you want to give?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: No.

Mr. Dharamlall: Does the Hon. Minister still have to answer an outstanding question then I will ask my question?

Mr. Chairman: I understood the Hon. Member Ms. Sukhai-Campbell made a comment.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Minister is aware that the Local Carbon Develop Strategy (LCDS), under the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF), where resources for the ALT comes from, that the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs is the main implementing partner. Could the Hon. Minister please state why the authority has been ceded to the UNDP to expend resources that are owned by the Government of Guyana?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, that does not comes under any line item here.

Programme 171- Policy Development and Administration - \$991,716,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 171 - Policy Development and Administration - \$1,471,232,000

Ms. Sukhai- Campbell: Project 1405400, Amerindian Development Projects: There is an allocation of \$1,341,974,000. Could the Hon. Minister advise this Assembly what are the policy area that are reflected with respect to this sum? Secondly, could the Minister lay over the total list of items to be provided under this expenditure?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member under this programme is Hinterland Employment and Youth Service (HEYS) - \$991 million, the completion of the tomato project at Paramakatoi - \$11,274,000, presidential grants for 10 regions, 215 villages - \$215 million, construction of male dorms at Bina Hill Institute Youth Learning Centre - \$40,100,000, construction of teachers quarters at Bina Hill Institute Youth Learning Centre - \$5 million, completion and construction of mechanic workshop - \$4 million, construction of female dorms - \$40 million,

construction of sanitary block for institute - \$4 million, construction of pen for chicken layers - \$3 million and the rehabilitation of the storage bond - \$2 million, the rehabilitation of the main buildings where meetings are held - \$3 million and the construction of a water trestle - \$9 million. Then there is the language revival project - \$8,600,000 is provided for that. There is the building of community centres in Hobodia, Akawini, Karau village and Kwatamang at \$1.5 million each. The total is \$1, 341,000.

Ms. Sukhai–Campbell: The Minister did not respond to part of the question and I would again ask. What was the policy consideration in determining the allocation? What was the basis that fed into the allocation as it relates to the Ministry?

11.09 a.m.

Ms. Garrido- Lowe: Hon. Member, with regard with the HEYS programme, we are working on second chances for youths. It is basically to enforce young people with the skills so that they could earn a decent living. That is for HEYS and also for Bina Hill Institute Youth Learning Centre. The language revival, we are promoting culture. “Indigenous people should have the right to the protection, preservation and promulgation of their languages, cultural heritages and way of life. Hence, it is imperative that measures be inactive to preserve the culture by passing the Indigenous languages in villages before it is completely eradicated”. There must be community centre for hosting of village meetings, social, cultural and educational activities of the community, including village meetings and storage of village assets.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Listening to the Hon. Minister with regards to the tomato project, \$112 million was for the completion. Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what the total cost is of that project? Secondly, the Minister mentioned the chicken pen with layers, could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly which village would benefit from the chicken project.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: For the construction of the tomato project facility is \$35 million plus the \$11 million to complete it with solar dryer and everything that is in the Budget 2017. The chicken project at Bina Hill Institute Youth Learning Centre would benefit the village of Annai and surrounding villages and to generate revenue for the school also.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I wish to enquire from the Hon. Minister what consideration is driving the allocation decision of the Ministry with respect to the 1,972 young people under

HEYS receiving \$900 million. With respect to this project, I wish to ask the Minister also whether the participants of HEYS were paid in full at this point in time with respect to the 2016 programme and whether they have put in place mechanisms to avoid the mistakes and the difficulties in not being able to solve the challenges with respect to payment to the HEYS participants in 2017.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Both youths and facilitators have been paid. There is Mabaruma; it was up to September; Matarkai, it was up to September, and Moruka, it is up to September. Please be assured that in the month of December all would be paid. As we speak, payments are being paid right now in Regions 8 and 9. Indeed we have had some hiccups with this which we would not take over into the year 2017. All of this will be fixed.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Just a follow-up question, my understanding as of today, many villages are still without payment only received 1.5 months of payments. Karisparu and Chenapau have received a single payment since the start of this project. Could the Minister lay over a list, as of today, the villages and participants that have been paid thus far, with respect to the amounts received since the project? Could the Minister also inform this Assembly whether the monitors have received payments? If the monitors have received payments, could the Minister tell this Assembly whether that is value for money? My knowledge is that the monitors have been handicapped and have not been able, in almost all cases, to visit project sites in the various villages falling under their responsibility.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, as we speak, Chenapau and Karisparu are being paid.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Well up to yesterday they have not been paid.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: They should reach by now. They flew out this morning so they are being paid. I am happy to tell you that. The list, which you require, we would provide it for you within 72 hours. With regard to the monitors, they have been paid. As I mentioned before, the handicap, which we have been working with, would be eased and eradicated very soon and this project would run smoothly.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Under the same project 1405400, Amerindian Development Fund, could the Hon. Minister explain to this Assembly...? In 2016, \$996 million was allocated for the HEYS project. Listening to the Minister a while ago, the Minister said \$991 million is now identified or allocated, or set aside, for this said project. We all are aware of the huge problem that this project face. My question, this sum, which is been identified, is it for the

next six months, January 2017, six months in next year or is it for a whole year because there are confusions out there presently? The other point is: Are the facilitators, where there are four or six in each village, to be continued or only one facilitator would continue in 2017? Please, Hon. Minister, explain this to the Assembly.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the programme started from June, therefore, it would end in May next year. This \$991 million includes youth's stipends for 4.5 months. Facilitators are only employed for seven months, so their work should be completed in December. We are catering for a 100 villages in the second batch and that would be from June to December, seven months with two facilitators. Therefore the facilitators would not be the same because there are different villages this time.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: I am not too clear on what is happening. Am I to understand that from January to May 2017 new villages would now be part of the project? My question is those villages that are now participating, that project would come to an end at the end of December 2016. Could the Hon. Minister clean this up for me, please?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the second batch of youths would commence in June, but the first batch, which is continuing now, will conclude in May. It is nothing running simultaneously. All facilitators are employed for seven months only, after that the youths would be attached either in groups establishing their own businesses or be attached to businesses to get some practice.

11.24 a.m.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: My final question on this topic. Are we to understand that the youths would continue until May of 2017 without facilitators, so they will either be attached somewhere or the other, or they will have to find something to do, but during that time they would be receiving their stipend? Is that what the Hon. Minister is saying to the Assembly?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, from January to May, that is the period of membership where the youths will go into purely practical and there are monitors who will be visiting them, as well as the workshop facilitators. There are workshop facilitators who conduct courses in cookery and different things. They will be visiting to say that the youths are in-line with what we expect from the course. It not that they will go and do anything they wish or just stay at home. The whole idea about the project is to make them self-sufficient, to be able to earn for themselves. There are agriculture, eco-tourism, catering, garment construction,

carpentry and joinery, masonry and embroidery, all skills being taught. Businesses, young businesses, will be nurtured within that time while they still continue to get their \$30,000 per month. It is not that they are going to start a business and there is no money for them, within those five months they will be receiving stipends while they get themselves into various businesses and at the same time be mentored. Also, I must add that “Be your own boss” trainers will be in there to ensure that their business skills will be sharpened.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Hon. Minister you are putting this project as very nicely done, but I wish to draw to the attention of this Assembly...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Pearson-Fredericks, do you have a question?

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Yes. Hon. Member, about the equipment for the project the HEYS project, I am talking about. In many villages some equipment has not yet arrived and in some arrived two weeks ago or thereabout. How can the students do catering without a facilitator or a tutor or whatever it is called? Also in the area of information technology (IT), the computers arrived two weeks ago in some cases. That is my point. If the facilitators, if they are off, then what will happen?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, I admit again to the hiccups we have been suffering at the Ministry which will be ironed out. I am happy to tell you also that the majority of villages did not wait to receive the tools that we have for them and did not only recently receive them. They had begun farming already. Some of them are producing peanuts. **[Mr. G. Persaud:** They have been farming the entire time darling.] Well these youths, who had nothing to do and were not organised and motivated, they now are. Those who did not receive the stoves and what else they need, they started baking in the drums that they are accustomed to. The youths learnt instead of idling. **[Ms. Teixeira:** Where is the market?] The market, they are already getting orders. At Santa Mission - I went there - they catered for us. At Paruima they catered for people. They are catering as we speak. Furniture is being made without us, as I said. That is a sorry state which we will fix. They made furniture and they sold for themselves already. Business has started in the various vocational skills, so the youths are succeeding. They are doing something. They do not feel lost anymore.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I wish to ask the Hon. Minister, under the HEYS project, under project 1405400, Amerindian Development Projects, with all the problems and hiccups and

constraints that she has outlined to this Assembly, that is plaguing the HEYS project, could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly why is it that the coordinators employed at the head office at the Ministry have not been able to smoothly execute the project for the benefit of the Indigenous youths? Could she explain to us what is hampering the coordinators?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, we discussed that and we will fix that, as I said. We know the problems and we will fix the problems.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The Minister did not answer the question I have asked about the coordinators employed at the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs head office. Could the Minister tell this Assembly, since she has discussed the matter of the hiccups, I assume with the coordinating team that is responsible for executing this project, what were some of their constraints in smoothly executing the HEYS project for the benefit of the young people?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, I repeat. As I said, we, at Ministry, have discussed thoroughly and we have come to conclusions and we will make sure that proper solutions are implemented.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I want to move to project 1214500, Buildings. Under this project \$61.5 million is allocated. Could the Minister tell this Assembly what sums are allocated for the consultancy and whether the design for the tertiary level hostel has been submitted already to the Ministry and how much of this allocation is going to the construction of this hostel for tertiary level students? Finally, under this project, could the Minister indicate to us what has been the delay with respect to carrying out this project?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, we have with us a draft design. The template for the new dormitory has been submitted already. The construction of the new dormitory will begin next year. This is to house the hinterland students over 18 years of age attending Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE), Government Technical Institute (GTI) and other technical institutions. There are three phases to this project. The first phase of this project was the provision of consultancy services, design and bill of quantities for the construction, in which we have to design.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Campbell-Sukhai, are you through?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am a bit surprised that the Minister will indicate to this Assembly that the design is submitted in draft. The year has come to an end and the design draft has

been submitted. Could the Minister tell this Assembly when will this draft become an approved final draft and what point in time in 2017 will the construction be started?

Mr. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the design and the plan will be submitted before the end of the month.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under project 1405400, Amerindian Development Projects, could the Hon. Minister please state what is the current status of the information and communications technology (ICT) hubs? Where are the solar systems to provide electricity to those hubs? What is the current status of the home solar systems that the then Ministry of Amerindian Affairs had paid for both the industrial systems for the ICT hubs as well as the home solar systems?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The ICT hubs were not catered for this year. There is no line item for it but what I can tell you is that the Ministry of Telecommunications and e-governance department is overseeing the whole country with regard to ICT.

Mr. Dharamlall: A follow-up. Is the Hon. Minister now stating that the ICT hubs will not have the industrial systems and the computers, which were also procured, be made available to the 100 Amerindian villagers?

11.39 a.m.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Information and Communications Technology (ICT) does not come under our Ministry.

Mr. Dharamlall: I happened to have been the Permanent Secretary in that Ministry for a number of years. I am aware that payments were made for industrial solar systems.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, let us do this in the right way. Do you want to ask the Minister another question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Please do that.

Mr. Dharamlall: I am aware that payments were made for the home solar systems as well as industrial systems to power the ICT hubs. I am asking the Hon. Minister, what is the current status of the home solar systems and the industrial systems to power the ICT hubs?

I have follow-up questions.

Mr. Chairman: Do you rise on a point of order, Hon. Minister?

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: I rise in response to that question because...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister...

Mr. Patterson: The solar panels fall under my jurisdiction.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, in due course, you would answer that question but you should not seek to intervene at this time in the question posed. The Minister is perfectly capable of stating what the position is.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Information Communications Technology, as I mentioned, does not come under our Ministry and it will be efficiently and professionally handled by the relevant Ministries. They will account for everything so do not be afraid.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Dharamlall, you are proceeding on that same track. Please go ahead.

Mr. Dharamlall: I totally agree that it would be efficiently handled. All I am asking is: what is the whereabouts of the home solar systems that the Ministry paid for as well as the industrial systems for the ICT hubs? If the Minister is now saying...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Dharamlall, are you asking a different question or are you repeating the question that you asked before?

Mr. Dharamlall: I am repeating the question because I am aware that over \$500 million of taxpayers' moneys...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Dharamlall, we are not going to have this. I will ask you to take your seat. We have to follow the rules here. If you ask a Minister a question and the Minister has given you an answer, then that is the answer you must take. If you want a different answer, you have to ask a different question. Asking the same question and listing the same answer will not get us beyond where we are right now. If you wish to ask another question, then please do that.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, could I follow-up?

Mr. Chairman: You can ask another question, Mr. Dharamlall. Please go ahead.

Mr. Dharamlall: How many villages are catered for with the home solar systems that were originally paid for?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am not interfering in this question but if a Minister says that it is not under his or her portfolio, could you then reasonably ask that Minister to give you an answer to something that is no longer under his or her portfolio? That seems to be what you are doing but maybe you are not doing that. If you are not doing that, please go ahead. If you are doing that, then we will not get beyond where we are now.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, we are discussing Budget 2017 – the expenditure of taxpayers' money. I am aware that the Ministry spent over \$500 million to procure these two sets of systems. All I am asking the Hon. Minister is what the whereabouts of those systems is?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister is saying that it does not fall under her portfolio. That is what I understood her to have said. The Speaker does not want to be drawn into this but what the Speaker would like is for us to make progress. We would not be making progress if you keep asking me a question.

Mr. Dharamlall: I am asking about the whereabouts. Is it in a container or is it at a factory? That is all that I am asking.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you add to the question provided by the Hon. Mr. Dharamlall?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Chairman, I have answered the Hon. Member already.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. Mr. Dharamlall, it does not appear that your matter can be taken further at this time.

Ms. Teixeira: Under this Budget, we look at the expenditures for 2016 as well as for 2017. Moneys were allocated to this Ministry under this project code 1405400 with regard to solar panels being purchased for the household units and the computer hubs at a value of \$500 million in the 2016 Budget. We therefore have a right to ask where they are. I do not doubt that, at some point in the preparation of the 2017 Budget, it was decided to hide that off and give it to another Ministry. Nevertheless, the funds were under this Ministry and they

therefore have to be able to answer to this House. Was the money spent or not? Were things purchased and, if they were purchased, where are they?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there anything that you can add to this?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: All I can say is that nothing of the kind was in the 2016 Budget.

Ms. Teixeira: You do not know where \$500 million have gone.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Sukhai, do you wish to ask a question?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Hon. Members, please allow the speaker who is on the floor. Hon. Member, please proceed.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The Minister has indicated to the House that the programme area under project code 1403700 - Amerindian Development Fund - has been significantly reduced by many of the programmes moving away under the 2016 and 2017... Would the Minister be able, at this point in time, to justify if such has occurred why it is that they have established additional co-ordinating units in the Ministry and contracted additional special advisors or assistants in the Ministry? Could the Minister state why the establishment has been spiked so much when many of the programme areas have been reduced? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us not do this. Let us listen to the speaker. Let the person on the floor be heard. I draw to Members' attention that we have 15 minutes remaining on this item.

Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall...

Mr. Dharamlall: We will go back to project code 1405400...

Mr. Chairman: I am fully aware of what we have done and what we have not done. We have 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1405400 – Hinterland Employment Youth Service (HEYS): Could the Hon. Minister please state how many villages are currently under the HEYS and how many residents or young Amerindians are currently involved? Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether it is \$20,000 per month plus \$10,000 set aside for their business ventures?

I have some follow-up questions, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Currently, 112 villages are involved in the Hinterland Employment and Youth Service Programme. The total number of youths is 1,833 and the total number of facilitators is 373.

Yes, they are entitled to \$30,000 per month but they are actually being given \$20,000 in cash while the \$10,000 is being saved for them per month, which they will receive at the end of the year.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state what is the impact of the economic fallout as a result of over 1,800 Amerindians being paid \$20,000 per month versus \$30,000 per month, as the predecessor to this Programme?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, we are training the youths to be young entrepreneurs and saving is very important to a business person. We are teaching them to save and not to spend all their moneys as soon as they get it.

Mr. Dharamlall: I was asking, what is the economic fallout notwithstanding the deterioration in the economy as reported by the Minister of Finance?

As a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister please state...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we just keep rolling. You asked a question of the Minister. The Minister has answered the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Not to my satisfaction, but I will proceed.

Mr. Chairman: Do you want another question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state what type of bank account is in place to keep the additional \$10,000 and under what authority that bank account is established?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the savings would be paid to them, along with their grants at the end of the year.

11.54 a.m.

Ms. Teixeira: I have a follow-up question, Hon. Minister. If we are budgeted on a 12-year calendar which ends on 31st December, and you have started training students from June of this year and there is a retention of 1,833 students up to the end of the year, then that \$10,000 that you are saving for the students cannot rollover into 2017. So, they have to be paid by the 31st December – the so-called \$10,000. But you just said, Madam, that they will be paid in May, 2017. By the financial regulations, how will you retain \$10,000 for 1,800 students and pay them in May, 2017 when that money is under the 2016 Budget? How will you be able to do that? And do you have a special account that this is going into so that it does not get mixed up with other matters relating to this head? Is there a special account with signatures so that the students will get paid in May, 2017?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the savings and the grants will be paid at the end of this year.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister please state where the balance – the \$10,000 per student – is being kept? Who are the custodians and signatories? Mr. Chairman, is it a special bank account the Ministry established and under what authority? Or is it still with the Ministry of Finance?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The \$10,000 savings for each student is still within the budgetary allocation and it is being processed to be paid out at the end of this year.

Mr. Dharamlall: So, the Hon. Minister is stating that the savings are kept by the Ministry of Finance. I am asking, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: What is the question that you are asking?

Mr. Dharamlall: Is the balance of \$10,000 each being kept by the Ministry of Finance?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, it is being processed right now. So, it is not being kept; it is being processed right now. [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister stated that it is a saving on behalf of the students. So, I am asking where it is being saved.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the savings are still in the budgetary allocation, as I mentioned.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, can the Hon. Minister tell this House what is the magical schedule she has to ensure, when that money is withdrawn, how it will be paid out by the end of the year, particularly so that, for four or five months of this year, the participants of HEYS were not able to receive their payments in the right time or in record time?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Campbell-Sukhai, you meant the schedule. I understand that there is no magic in here; it is just the schedule. Thank you.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, please be assured that all the youths and facilitators will be paid by the end of December. The youths will be paid their stipends plus their savings and grants. Thank you.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Project code 2406700 – Land and Water Transport: I noticed an allocation of \$58.6 million to purchase vehicle, motorcycle, boat, engine, *et cetera*. And on the profile page, I noticed also that it entails the purchase of boats, outboard engine, buses, motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Could the Hon. Minister tell this House how many buses, ATVs, boats, outboard engines and motorcycles and where would these vehicles and motorcycles be allocated – which villages and regions? We are aware that the National Toshaos Council (NTC) had requested a vehicle. Is the NTC's vehicle budgeted for in this allocation?

Thank you very much.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the buses are to assist school children, transportation from surrounding areas of Citrus Grove, Kumaka, Waterfront, Oronoque, and Fitzburg. Moruka and Santa Rosa will receive one bus. Port Kaituma will receive one; Thomas Hill - one bus; and Moblissa in Region 10 - one bus. ATVs: Community Development Officer (CDO) in Kamarang will receive one; Arrau will receive one; Wax Creek will receive one. The CDO in Region 10 will receive a two-wheeled motorbike. Also included in that budget is a semi-ambulance for the Amerindian Hostel in Princess Street.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1405400 – Amerindian Development Projects: Could the Hon. Minister please confirm whether the Coordinator of HEYS is being paid from this programme and at what monthly rate?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, yes, the Coordinator of HEYS is being paid from the HEYS Programme at a rate of \$230,000 per month.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister please state what recruitment procedures were executed to hire the current HEYS Coordinator?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the HEYS is a unique Programme and we needed special skills for that. We needed a qualified adult educationist who would have been capable of formulating programmes – curriculum and everything – for this Programme. Therefore, we invited applications and...

Ms. Teixeira: Was it advertised?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: No; it was not advertised, but Mr. Murray was selected.

Ms. Teixeira: I appreciate your honesty. Could you say how many people responded to your invitation to apply for this position or was it just sole sourcing? And is there only one adult educationalist in Guyana?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, we had a few applications and, from those, Mr. Murray was chosen as the most competent person.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, project code 2405300 to project code 2406700: Do you have anything in this part of the Budget for a boat for Kariako? We know that it is tough there for the children getting home from school against tides pulling about 20 miles per hour.

Additionally, under project code 1214500 – Buildings - Waikrebi, Koriabo, Kariako, Santa Crus, Red Village, Blackwater Savannah and Kwabanna, where these schools are deteriorating, do you have moneys here for repairs to these schools?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the building of schools, maintenance, *et cetera*, come under the Ministry of Education. But with regard to the boat for Kariako, we have one 40 horsepower outboard engine. I do not know if you meant Koriabo.

Mr. Damon: Do you have a boat in there for them? That is what I am asking.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: No. We do not have one for Kariako.

Mr. Damon: I have a follow-up question. Minister, through a later agreement with the Minister of Finance, will you be able to bring a later budget here for boats for those people?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, that question ought to be directed to the Minister of Finance. Thank you.

Mr. Charlie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to bring to the attention of the Minister to project code 2406700 – Land and Water Transport: I would just like to follow-up on the question my Colleague asked. Could the Hon. Minister say, in the Fiscal Year 2016, if under this project code, the purchases of vehicle, motorcycle, boats and engines for the Fiscal Year 2016, if all of these were procured and what mechanism of procurement was adhered to?

12.09 p.m.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, so far, the quantity of outboard engines purchased for 2016 is 14. The villages issued are Malali, Haimarakabra, Unity Square, Cashew Island, Phillipai, Wax Creek, Kwabanna and *Emoikeing*. The quantity of ATVs purchased is four and, by the end of this year, all will be issued. So far, two have been issued to Chinowieng and Amakokopai. The outstanding villages for ATVs are Mabaruma and Masakenari. Outboard engines are for Blackwater Savannah, Three Brothers, St. Anselm, Koriabo, Barima and Blackwater.

Programme: 171 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,471,232,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you, Hon. Members. This concludes our work for this morning.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now take the suspension and return at 1.15 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.12 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.26 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is now resumed.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 52 – Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office – \$20,017,000

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: There has been an increase by nearly 100% from 2016 to 2017. Could the Hon. Minister explain or account for that 100% increase?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for his question. That is because one Librarian II had been transferred from line item 6116.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is a decline from \$10 million to \$2.6 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain the decline?

Mr. Williams: The variance is due to the expiration of contracts of the Permanent Secretary (PS) and the Systems Development Coordinator, and the transfer of one Librarian and one Driver to line items 6114 and 6115, respectively.

Mr. Nandlall: Is the Hon. Minister saying that he is not budgeting for the salary of the PS this year?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Finance budgets for the salaries of vacant positions in the Public Service.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6284 – Other: There was \$550,000 spent in 2016 and \$1,400,000 is budgeted for 2017. Could the Hon. Minister account for the increase?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, in 2016, there was no Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer. The fund now is for the M&E survey which is to be conducted.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Minister explain to us the desired impact or effect of the M&E survey that he plans to undertake?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, it is to garner information on all the public sector agencies and the perception of the public on these agencies.

Mr. Nandlall: I am a little confused. This budget deals with the Main Office of the Attorney General's Office, Ministry of Legal Affairs. I am trying to situate what the Hon. Minister said in the context of this Ministry. I am at loss to understand what kind of activity the Ministry

would be conducting to gather information about other public agencies. Could the Minister clarify that for us, please? I will be most grateful.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, as I said before, it is just agencies within the justice sector, and the M&E Secretariat comes under the PS of the Ministry.

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Would the Hon. Member be kind enough to tell us if employees who were dismissed, fired or relieved of their duties after May, 2015, who are still owed by the Government, will be paid under this head?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, we would not be able to answer that question. No one was fired and there is nothing indicating that under this line item.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, a follow-up: There were persons who were employed at the Ministry of Legal Affairs...

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking a question?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Ms. Manickchand: There were persons who were employed at the Ministry of Legal Affairs who were relieved of their responsibilities after May, 2015, whether their contracts were terminated or not. I can speak of one specific instance that I know of when the contract was terminated.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Manickchand, we will not do that this afternoon. If you have a question, please ask the question. We do not ask for illustrations. Let us get the answer to the question so that we can move on, please.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, my question is: could I be guided as to which line item caters for the payment of persons who are owed as a result of terminations?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I answered the question already. We have no idea as to what the Hon. Member spoke about. If the Hon. Member has a question on a line item in the Budget, we would be very happy to deal with it. We do not know of any line item that deals with what the Hon. Member spoke of.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, I have a follow-up question. If the Hon. Member is saying that that is not catered for under line item 6116, may I ask if the moneys owing to the persons who were fired were catered for under line item 6115?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, the line item 6115 is quite explicit. It refers to two employees, one Office Assistant and one Driver.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, I have one final question on this issue. Could the Hon. Member tell us where in the Budget caters for the persons who are owed by the Ministry and who have documents stating that?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, again, I am iterating that our Ministry knows nothing about what is being asked. What is before me does not deal with any issue of that nature. I do not know what the Hon. Member is seeking to get.

1.37 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6294 – Other: I see that in 2016, the Ministry had budgeted for more than \$1.5 million under this head. In 2017, there is a budget of only \$100,000. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with an explanation?

Mr. Williams: If it pleases you Mr. Chairman, this item catered for the hosting of a Judges' reception when the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges were last in Guyana. We got a glowing response from the General Secretary of the Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association.

Mr. Nandlall: Is the Hon. Member saying that the conference or the reception cost \$1.5 million? If it is not the conference then may I ask how much did the conference cost?

Mr. Williams: I would reiterate that I said it was a Judges' reception and any question about the conference would have to be directed to the Hon. Chancellor of the Judiciary (ag).

Programme: 521 - Main Office - \$20,017,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$89,826,000

Mr. Nandlall: Project code 1201300 - Buildings: In the 2016 Budget \$40,750,000 was approved by this House. Might I enquire from the Hon. Minister whether this money was spent and where and on what project was the money spent?

Mr. Williams: The money was not used, so it was sent back.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1201300, Buildings: I think that the Hon. Attorney General might need to relook at the answer. It is because, in the latest Estimates of 2016, there is a sum of \$0.733 million. The Hon. Attorney General just said that the entire amount...

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

Mr. Ali: Yes, Sir. The Hon. Attorney General said that the entire amount was sent back. If the amount was returned, why is the amount of \$0.733 million in the latest 2016 Estimates?

Mr. Williams: If I am allowed to speak, I am now advised that the further \$40 million was sent back and the \$0.733 million was used for repairs to the roof of the Ministry's building.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Minister explain why the \$40 million was not used?

Mr. Williams: It was because the Ministry did not proceed with the transaction.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Minister explain to the House what the transaction was that the Ministry decided not to proceed with, after the House would have approved the moneys, as was requested by the Hon. Minister last year?

Mr. Williams: The \$40 million was an estimate in the pre-2016 Budget in relation to the People's Progressive Party's (PPP) acquisition or valuation of lands.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Member tell the House where the lands identified for acquisition are located?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I am answering questions for the 2017 Budget. I indicated that moneys referred to were not spent. I do not know why I am being questioned further on the same thing.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, you put to the House Agency 52 and that is all I am looking at. Under Agency 52, there are the figures for 2016 and 2017. I do not understand because I thought that we were here to seek answers.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member just ask your question.

Mr. Nandlall: The Hon. Minister told this House that the allocation was to acquire lands. This House approved the money and it was not spent. May I ask where the lands are located that the Ministry intended to acquire. The public is entitled to know that information.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I do not see any project code in the 2017 Budget relating to what the Hon. Member is asking.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1201300 – Buildings: The Hon. Attorney General just informed the House that the budgeted amount in 2016 was to acquire lands. I am asking how this falls under the head ‘Buildings’? What was in the Legend in 2016? Could the Hon. Minister say whether the “acquisition of land” was stated in the Legend?

Mr. Williams: Might I respectfully ask the Hon. Member which project code the Hon. Member is referring in the 2017 Budget?

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I wish to remind the Hon. Minister that the project code to which I refer is 1201300, Buildings. The Hon. Attorney General informed this House that the \$40 million was for the acquisition of lands. The acquisition of lands cannot be under ‘Buildings’ and secondly, I am asking whether that was stated in the Legend of 2016. It is because, in reporting on the 2017 Budget, the Hon. Minister has to give account for the latest estimate of 2016 to form the projection of 2017. That is why the 2016 figure is there. It is not for style or form; it is there for a purpose.

Mr. Williams: The Member is asking me why the acquisition of lands was placed under ‘Buildings’. I did not compose this budget, so I do not understand that.

Mr. Nandlall: Project code 1501500 - Justice Sector Programme: There is an allocation of \$60 million and the Legend reads:

“Provision for institutional strengthening and purchase of equipment -IDB”

It appears to be an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded project. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what the institutional strengthening is that will take place under this head and what equipment will be purchased under this head?

Mr. Williams: This is the support for the criminal justice system. The project entails provision for alternative sentencing interventions, strengthening of probation services, design

and implementation of restorative justice programme, implementation of case management and court scheduling systems, training of judges and magistrates in the use of alternative to pre-trial detention and law reform.

1.52 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: A follow-up Sir. My Hon. Friend mentioned law reform, but let me ask this question. Sir, I know that the Law Reform Commission has not been appointed, could the Hon. Member tell the House how early we could expect this Commission to be appointed because a year has already passed.

Mr. Williams: Yes, please. As soon as we secure the funding we will proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: Is the Minister not saying that a portion of this \$60 million will go towards law reform? He just said that and I am asking, having regard to the fact that there now is budgetary provision, when could we expect the Law reform Commission to be appointed?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I reiterate, for one final time that, as soon as we get the funding, we will embark on constituting the Commission.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, is law reform catered for under this project code for this \$60 million?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you. I have in my hand Volume 3. I just read from Volume 3 and I just read law reform. So I am reiterating law reform for the second time.

Mr. Nandlall: So we are going to have law reform without the Law Reform Commission? Could I ask the Hon. Minister then what aspect of law reform does this budgetary allocation envisages? Certainly, it does not appear that it encompasses the appointment of the Commission. So what aspect of law reform are we speaking about?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, as I said before, law reform envisages the Constitution of a Law Reform Commission which is necessary to execute law reform or reform of the Laws of Guyana, which must be distinguished from law revision, which the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funding has already been given in relation thereto. That review process was modelled up by the last Government which caused us, in fact, to be prejudice in actually receiving any further funding in relation to law review.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I asked a simple question about law reform and it has not been answered. I am still asking the Hon. Member, what aspect of law reform will take place under this budgetary head.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, law reform in the context of support for the Criminal Justice System will encompass reform in the criminal law of Guyana and other related legislation that will impact questions of alternative sentencing, restorative justice, pre-trial detention and the like.

Mr. Nandlall: Is the Minister saying that we are going to proceed along that path of law reform without the Law Reform Commission?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I have already answered that question.

Mr. Nandlall: Remind me of the answer.

Mr. Williams: I am not dealing with it again.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, project code – 1501600 – Strengthening the Criminal Justice System: My learned Friend answered questions just now about the Criminal Justice System under a different head. I am now asking, specifically under this head, \$10,126,000 has been allocated, could the Hon. Member tell this House what that will cater for in terms of institutional strengthening?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, I am happy for the question from the Hon. Member. This is the Canadian funded Strengthening of the Justice System of Guyana. It is executed by the Justice Education Society (JES) of Canada. The \$10,126,000 is to complete the project in Guyana; \$115,000,000 had already been expended. That \$10,126,000 is envisaged for 2017 to be expended in relation to the final training course and coaching in January 2017. The training of the Guyana Police Force (GPF) Officers will lead to training; JES experts will provide three days of coaching to Magistrates in 2017; seminars for Magistrates will provide critical thinking skills and focus on increasing legal knowledge in key areas; topics include, crime scene investigations, effect ethics, bio-scientific methodology, standard operating procedures to track evidence and blood stains pattern analysis. They will bring Canadian experts to Guyana to monitor the results in each sector and a final report will be drafted in May, 2017. So the brunt of the work was executed in 2016.

Mr. Nandlall: Under the same head Sir, the Legend for both that head and the head above speak to the acquisition of equipment as well. Could the Hon. Member tell the House what equipment is contemplated?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, such equipment would have already been deployed in 2016. The balance of \$10,000,000 is really to complete the training in relation thereto. So as far as I know, there will be no deployment of additional equipment for these remaining subjects or topics.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the House be enlightened on what the equipment are?

Mr. Williams: I will reiterate that the equipment that I know of would have been deployed in 2016. For the remaining \$10 million that expenditure is largely to deal with people coming in to do training.

Mr. Nandlall: We are dealing with two sums, \$60 million and \$10 million. They are both in the 2017 Budget and speak to the acquisition of equipment. I am asking the Hon. Member what are the equipment?

Mr. Williams: Where is he seeing that?

Mr. Nandlall: I am reading it on page 652, in the Legend, “Provision for institutional strengthening and purchase of equipment”, one from Canada and one from the IDB. Two projects and two different sources of funding, they both speak about equipment and they are both in the 2017 Budget. I am asking the Hon. Minister to enlighten the House on what the equipment are?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, there is a question. Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, would you repeat the question please?

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you Sir. I am enquiring of the Hon. Minister a description of the equipment that is provided for here to be acquired for the year 2017, for the moneys that we are being asked to approve \$60 million and \$10 million. They both speak to the acquisition of some kind of equipment. I am asking the Hon. Minister to tell us what the equipment are?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, as far as I know, we are on the line item dealing with JES and the Canadians, and, for the third time I am saying, all equipment in relation to this project would have been deployed in 2016. This is the last time I am repeating this, there would be

no equipment as far as I know for the \$10,000,000 that is remaining for the other courses that would be completed in the first quarter of 2017.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, under the same project code 1501600 – Strengthening the Criminal Justice System: Sir, we are seeking to find out what is the equipment that was purchased and what is the remainder that needs to be spent on this year’s budget - two parts? This is because if the Legend states “Purchase of equipment”, it means that there may be a balance of payment or something because that is what is stated in the programme.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I do not know which project code it is?

Bishop Edghill: I just called the project code?

Mr. Williams: If it is the same project code, I have already answered that question three times.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, being that wherein in the well doing, then answer it a fourth if you are asked a fourth time.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I do not have to do that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, there is a question on the floor to you.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I have already answered the question three times. It is an abuse of the process of the Parliament for them to be asking and getting the same answer.

Bishop Edghill: You are abusing the Parliament.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: The Attorney General should leave that to the Speaker to determine. Hon. Members let us move on.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1501600 – Strengthening the Criminal Justice System: Mr. Chairman, in the budget for 2016 it was \$75 million and in the latest estimate is \$115,319,000. There is no supplementary provision under this head. How is it that this agency has expended in excess of the budget without a supplementary?

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

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, project code is 1501600.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, again, the question by the Hon. Member has an erroneous assumption. It is premise on the fact or the allegation that there was no supplementary provision. I reject that as out of hand and he must go and do his homework.

2.07 p.m.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I have in my hand all the supplementary provisions of 2016. I wish for the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs to point me to the supplementary provision that could justify this, please.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you are making a request. What is the question you are asking?

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I asked a question. The Hon. Attorney General, in answering, made an accusation that I am somehow accusing him of something.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member that is not the determination for the Attorney General to make. That is for the Speaker to make.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, my question remains the same.

Mr. Chairman: You have asked a question and it has not been answered properly.

Mr. Ali: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Then let us move on.

Mr. Ali: I move then, Mr. Chairman, to project code 2401100 – Land and Water Transport, the budgetary provision in 2016 was zero and the latest estimate is \$6.5 million. Could the Hon. Attorney General tell the House how did the Ministry manage to spend money that was not budgeted for and could he point to the supplementary provision? It is because, in the records that are before this House, there are no supplementary provisions for this? Could the Hon. Attorney General advise us on how this expenditure was made without a budgetary provision?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, it is a very simple answer. I would not take advantage of a first year law student, even in that circumstance. The Hon. Member ought to know that it was an inadvertent mistake by the Ministry of Finance in the questioning of the change of programming. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Williams: It has nothing to do with my Ministry. In fact, the Hon. Member ought to see that it is reflected under the change of programme, which is under 'Administration'.

Mr. Nandall: Project code 2401100 – Land and Water Transport: There is a sum of \$19,700,000 budgeted for the purchase of a vehicle. Could the Hon. Member tell the House what type of vehicle is this and who will use this vehicle or for what use this vehicle will be put?

Mr. Williams: It is for the purchase of a vehicle. The brand will have to be determined, but it is for the purchase of a vehicle which was actually supposed to have been purchased in 2015. The House would recall that the transaction left by the former Permanent Secretary (PS) had resulted in what ought to have been a new vehicle, being what was indeed a second hand vehicle, which was all part of a system that use to be deployed under the last system. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Nandall: Twenty million dollars is being budgeted to purchase a vehicle costing \$19,700,000. Is the Minister telling this House that he does not know what type of vehicle he intends to buy or the Ministry intends to buy with this huge amount of money?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister could you shed some light on the make of the vehicle?

Mr. Williams: If it pleases you, Mr. Chairman. As I was saying, unlike the last exercise, under this Ministry it is a brand new vehicle. It should be a Toyota vehicle. We would determine what the money could buy.

Mr. Nandall: Could the Minister help us at all with the size and capacity of the vehicle that he intends to purchase because it is \$20 million? It is not a normal vehicle.

Mr. Williams: If the Hon. Member insists, I would be totally unable to assist with that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Nandlall: Who will be using this vehicle Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Williams: I could answer that question, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Attorney General would be having a proper vehicle this time.

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Chairman, when we have frank answers, we can move ahead.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members we must finish consideration of this head by half past two.

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$89,826,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$63,052,000

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: Sir, Revised 2016, the sum allocated there is \$5.6 million; 2017 it is now \$14.3 million, nearly 150% increase. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Mr. Williams: The variance is due to the transfer of two Accounts Clerks, one Cleaner and one Office Assistant from line item 6116 – Contracted Employees and the appointment of two Typist Clerks and one Stores Clerk.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6271 – Telephone Charges: For telephone and electricity charges there are huge increases, \$8 million to \$13 million. May I ask the Minister what accounts for that huge rise in electricity charges? It is the same building that is being used as far as I am aware?

Mr. Williams: Which line item is the Hon. Member referring to, line item 6272 or 6271?

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6272.

Mr. Williams: The increases are as a result of amalgamating the cost from Programmes 3 and 4, since there is only one metre on the building.

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

Mr. Nandlall: No, Sir. Thank you.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$63,052,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$15,000,000

Mr. Nandlall: Project code 2501600 – Furniture and Equipment: Fifteen million dollars have been budgeted to purchase furniture and equipment. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House what the Ministry intends to purchase and where these furniture and equipment are going to be located?

Mr. Williams: Is the Hon. Member sure he does not want me to lay this over?

Mr. Nandlall: No.

Mr. Williams: Alright. Filing cabinets, five drawers, two refrigerators, three computer work stations, four visitor chairs, five heavy duty photocopiers, six air conditioning (AC) units, seven battery back-ups and stabilisers, eight stand fans, nine water dispensers, 11 vacuum cleaners, 12 spiral binders, 13 laptops, 14 executive desks, 15 typist chairs, 16 executive chairs, 17 multi-functional printers, 18 semi-executive chairs, 19 desktop computers, 20 office desks, 21 desk top colour copiers, 23 conference tables, 24 conference chairs which gives a total of \$15 million. Now, in terms of their deployment, does the Hon. Member still want to hear that?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes.

Mr. Williams: The numbers of files in the Chambers are far more than the availability of storage space for those files. More entities are being represented by the Chambers and thus, more case files are created. Files used are currently stored on shelves, corner tables and on make shifts. Also to be used for the setting up of the Law Revision Unit and the Law Reform Commission. Do you want me to stop?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please let us see how we can proceed.

2.22 p.m.

Mr. Williams: Yes Sir. I am being disturbed here...to be used in the Law Revision Unit, Law Reform Commission and Accounts Department, to be used by the Solicitor General with

a computer on the work desk. The work space becomes clustered as the computer takes up much needed desk space, also to be used in a Law Reform Commission, to be used in the Law Revision Unit and these will be the visitor's chairs. These are to be used in the Law Revision Unit, Law Reform Commission and Drafting Department. There are 6 air conditioners (AC) units to replacement of old AC units that are constantly being repaired to the Solicitor General, Personal Assistant and Drafting Department. Seven batteries back up stabilisers to be used in the Law Revision Unit, Law Reform Commission and the Admin Department. Eight stand fans to be used in the event of power outage since the generator only facilitate a few AC units, and 13 laptops to be used for consultations and workshops.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I was under the impression that details were been given and not a report. Hon. Member, is it the question you asked and want an answer to?

Mr. Nandlall: I do not want all of that information, Sir. The Hon. Member is abusing his time.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is that the question you asked and you are listing the answer there, or not?

Mr. Nandlall: No. He has gone way beyond Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Did you get your answer already?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes. I got my answer a long time ago. I was waiting for him to stop. You are taking advantage of you, Your honour.

Mr. Chairman: That is very good. Do you have another question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir. Since my learned friend is now purchasing equipment for the Law Reform Commission perhaps he could now tell us when it is going to be appointed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, was this question asked before or am I mistaken?

Mr. Nandlall: We are now buying furniture for it. We are being asked to approve furniture. It is reasonable in the circumstances.

Mr. Williams: I have answered the question four times already, that as soon as we get the funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) we will actually appoint the Commissioners. I am not sure if the Hon. Member is saying that unless and until we appoint

the Commissioners we should not make provision to accommodate them, to seat them, and to make them comfortable where they are going to be. That is the difference between that side of the Assembly and this side of the Assembly.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, is there another question?

Mr. Nandlall: No Sir. I am finished.

Programme: 522 - Ministry Administration - \$15,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 523 - Attorney General Chamber - \$388,801,000

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: There is an increase from \$61,416,000 to \$73,297,000. Could the Hon. Minister explain what accounts for that increase?

Mr. Williams: This is an increase due to the appointment of one drafting consultant.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: There is one building there and it is being maintained every year. This year there is a \$1.24 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what aspect of the building he is maintaining? In 2015 we allocated money, in 2016 we maintained; we did renovation and we are doing it again.

Mr. Williams: This money would be used for lacquering the floor in the Solicitor General and the Personal Assistant offices and repairs to walls and ceiling in State Counsels' offices at the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6241, Rentals of Buildings: I see that we are renting a building for \$5 million or we are renting a building for \$5 million per month. Could the Hon. Member tell us which building it is or where is the building located and what is the building being rented for?

Mr. Williams: This is the rental in relation to the accommodation for the Law Reform Commission and the Ministry is in the process of finalising the question of who will get the rental.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Attorney General, just inform the Assembly that the Ministry is the process of finalising who will get the rental. How can the Ministry finalise in 2016 who is getting the rental when the budgetary provision is for 2017 and the allocation have not been approved so the process of tendering could not have commence? How is the Attorney General finalising this arrangement even before the National Assembly approves the allocation?

Mr. Williams: I am not sure what the Hon. Member is asking. I have not said the arrangements have been finalised. There is no contract signed. There is a process and as the difference between that side and this side is that we have to start working so that when 2017 breaks we are in position to house the Law Reform Commission.

Mr. Nandlall: There is furniture, Sir. Has there been any building identified? I am not sure. We are budgeting a sum of money and we appear to know the rent already. If a building has been identified then I want to know, where is the building located?

Mr. Williams: As soon as the building has been identified then we will indicate it to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6284, Other: There is a revised Budget 2016 of \$1.2 billion and then there is Budget 2017 of \$202 million. That is a massive reduction, Sir. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is it that the Ministry is budgeting for?

Mr. Williams: That reduction, I am happy that he described it, related to the judgement on Rudisa Beverage that he inherited and we had to pay. We are still bearing the pain and the burden.

Mr. Nandlall: We are still budgeting \$202 million. What is that for?

Mr. Chairman: Is this a line item?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir. It is line item 6284, Other. It is a follow up from what I just asked.

Mr. Williams: This sum caters for legal fees, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) conference that is slated to be held in Guyana, law school payments, consultations, State Asset Recovery Agency (SARA) sensitisation and commission of inquiry payments.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Member give us a breakdown of how this \$200 million would be spent in 2017 and the names of the lawyers who have been contracted? They are recipients of taxpayers' money. We need to know that.

Mr. Williams: The sum of \$109 million is budgeted for legal fees, CFATF conference - \$50 million, law school payments - \$18 million, consultation - \$5 million, SARA sensitisation - 10 million and commission of inquiry - \$10 million.

Mr. Nandlall: One hundred and nine million dollars is budgeted for legal fees. Is there any particular area of law that is causing the Attorney General Chambers problems that they have to budget this kind of sum to retain a lawyer that is outside of the Chamber? I need some explanation. What are the cases that these lawyers will be dealing with?

Mr. Williams: Notwithstanding that we have not recovered our law books maybe that might be a factor, but prudence has informed us that we need to make such provisioning. The parties, we dare say, would be identified when the right time comes in 2017. Sir, we hope that we would be able to get back the law books that would help us maybe not to expend all of that money in the future.

Mr. Nandlall: The Attorney General is in an entertaining mood, but he believes that he can engage in jest. I am asking a serious question of \$109 million of taxpayer's money we are asked to approve. We are told that it is to retain lawyers. We know that the Attorney General Chambers has lawyers and they have been doing legal work providing representation for the state. That is the mission statement of this Ministry. We are going outside of that and I am asking respectfully for a sensible explanation, how the \$109 million will be spent?

2.37 p.m.

Are we going to engage in some difficult set of litigation this year, something unanticipated? If you check the budget for all the years, we have never had budgetary allocated for legal services by the Attorney General's Chambers.

Mr. Williams: I am not sure about the statement of the Hon. Member, Mr. Chairman, but I just wish to reiterate that I am deadly serious about the recovery of the law books of the Minister Legal Affairs.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we cannot indulge in excursions. We must remain rooted to the points that are before us. Please proceed.

Mr. Williams: I responded to the Hon. Member, who is saying that we are jested about the recovery of our books. Part of that money would be going to special prosecutors to deal with the recovery of state assets that public officers decided to extract private welfare from and we are very serious about that. I say no more.

Mr. Nandlall: This is the sum of money to hire special prosecutors. That is all I wanted. I do not know why you had to go around the bush. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Anil Nandlall?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I am hearing sounds issuing forth from your direction are you addressing this Assembly or are you not ready to address this Assembly?

Mr. Nandlall: I am in the process, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Yes - that word.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6294, Other: There is a \$13,506,000 budgeted for 2016 and then, there is a massive reduction. Could I be told what the budget for 2016 was for and what are we budgeting for in 2017?

Mr. Williams: That budget catered for the payment of salaries for the administrative staff and operating expenses for the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I would allow three more questions.

Mr. Nandlall: Is it for under Programme 523 or for the entire Ministry?

Mr. Williams: What is the last programme?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you are free to range as you wish because we are going to finish this in after three questions.

Ms. Teixeira: I hate to be a recurring decimal, but every time we start the clock starts at whatever time is assigned. We did not reconvene until 1.20 p.m. and there is an hour and half on this Ministry. We have not reached the hour and a half as yet, so I guess every time you say that you are giving extension because we are not. It cannot start at 1 o'clock, if this Assembly did not convene until 20 minutes past one.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you are taking up some of the time right now. I do not know if you know that but you are.

Ms. Teixeira: I am exercising my right, Sir. I thank you very much.

Mr Chairman: That is what I think.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$388,801,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, if you are going to have a conversation to disturb the proceedings, I would have to ask you to leave the room.

Mr. Nandlall: I cannot be speaking to myself, Sir, I am speaking to the Attorney General.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Anil Nandlall, we are not going to have such an exchange again.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$27,949,000

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$27,949,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$1,427,000

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$1,427,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Agency: 32 Ministry of Public Infrastructure

Current Expenditure

Programme 321 – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,803,850,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you need a few minutes to effect...?

Mr. Patterson: I would be most grateful.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, thank you. Just indicate when you are ready, Hon. Minister.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There are a number of organisations, which are listed here, that are benefiting from subsidies. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the present function is of the Hinterland Electrification Company?

Mr. Patterson: Just a bit of housekeeping before I actually do answer the question, if you do not mind, Sir. They are under - when we do get to the capital project - the stellings, equipment for the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), navigation, ferries, water transportation, Demerara Harbour Bridge and dredging. Minister Ferguson, I am just saying that now to avoid any confusion, would answer that when we do get to those, thank you.

The Hinterland Electrification Company is one of the agencies. Its mandate has continued to be providing electricity to unserved and isolated areas off the grid. It has moved from National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) and it is under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and its budget for this year, for the administrative cost, is \$46.681 million, an increase of \$3.48 million.

Bishop Edghill: Mindful of the time, I would like to go to the issues and get straight answers. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if the Hinterland Electrification Company is responsible for the distribution solar panels to Amerindian communities?

Mr. Patterson: Yes. It is.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many panels are available for distribution in 2017?

Mr. Patterson: That matter is under the capital section. I think Hon. Member is a bit premature, so I would answer that when I get there.

Bishop Edghill: I do not know that the Minister would tell me that this is under the capital expenditure. I am not asking about the acquisition of items.

2.52 p.m.

Acquisition is under the capital project. I am talking here about distribution. If this company is responsible for distribution, how many solar panels do you plan to distribute in 2017?

Mr. Patterson: With all due respect to you, Sir, that is under the acquisition and distribution and installation, under the capital project. Irrespective of how the honourable gentleman

frames his question, my answer will remain the same and I will address that under the capital with your leave, Sir. *[Applause]*

Bishop Edghill: That is what you are clapping for.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Bishop Edghill: Arrogance.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member let us try to avoid comments that can cause rancour. Let us try to avoid that. I believe we can all make our points without the need to seek to hurl bricks and stones at the other side. Let us proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, to Linden Electricity Company Inc., there is an increase of \$245 million. Could the Minister explain what is responsible for the increase of the \$245 million to Linden Electricity Company Inc.?

Mr. Patterson: The sum allocated is our provision for the cost of the subsidies for fuel of which we would have certain estimates. As you know in 2016, this year we paid \$1.8 billion. In 2017 we are saying \$2.16 billion. This is our provision and obviously it will be adjusted.

Bishop Edghill: In 2016, budgeted was \$2.7 billion and we spent \$1.8 billion. A substantial less than what was budgeted for was spent which showed that there had to be some downward movement of prices. Why is there an increase of \$245 million in 2017? What is anticipated?

Mr. Patterson: The honourable gentleman is absolutely correct. In 2016 we did budget \$2.7 billion, but we got lower fuel prices. We actually expended \$1.8 billion. Obviously this budget is our estimate and we are making provision. Obviously at the end of 2017 we will tally it up. This is our estimate or forecast for 2017. Should it move or anything such as that, there is an allowance here catered for in the Budget 2017.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly what measures would be implemented to encourage conservation in Linden, since it has been stated that the purpose of value added tax (VAT) is to encourage conservation? What measures are being put in place for the conservation of electricity in Linden?

Mr. Patterson: Linden is no different from any other part of the country.

Bishop Edghill: It is different.

Mr. Patterson: The measures that we have employed are countrywide, for energy efficiency. We will ask people to switch out the incandescent bulb for light emitting diode (LED) lighting. Obviously through the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) we will ask people to unplug unused equipment. It is the same message that we would give to the rest of the country. The people in Linden as well as in Berbice and in Essequibo will receive it. It is a nationwide effort to conserve energy.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up. If the Minister is encouraging conservation and he is increasing the subvention to Linden Electricity Company Inc. by \$245 million, we are spending more when we should be spending less. Could the Minister enlighten this Assembly as the cost per kilowatt hour in Linden and the cost per kilowatt hour in the rest of the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) grid?

Mr. Patterson: For GPL, for residential, the cost per kilowatt hour is \$39.10. For the Linden Electricity Company Inc., it is \$12.00 commercial, \$5.00 residential but there is a subsidy here. Therefore subsidy it would be \$60.00 per kilowatt from both sides.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Minister has just indicated to this Assembly that the cost per kilowatt hour on the GPL grid is \$39.10 and the cost per kilowatt hour in Linden is \$5.00 residential and \$12.00 commercial. He said Linden is being treated no differently. Could the Minister tell this Assembly what was the total revenue of the Linden Electricity Company Inc. for 2016?

Mr. Patterson: Unfortunately, I do not have the revenue of the Linden Electricity Company Inc., but I could seek to get it and provide it to the honourable gentleman.

Bishop Edghill: Is the Minister indicating to this Assembly that the revenue of the Linden Electricity Company Inc. was not taken into consideration when this subsidy was provided?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir, the subsidy mainly is to pay BOSAI. The other administrative, line distribution, Transport and Harbour Department (T&HD) works in Linden are funded directly from the cost that Linden provides and charges their consumers. The Government provides the subsidy which is paid to BOSAI for Linden and the rest of the system is self-sufficient other than that.

Bishop Edghill: I am asking the Hon. Minister for a figure. If he cannot give it today, could he give a commitment of when he will provide it to the Assembly in writing?

Mr. Patterson: I am sure my previous response was that I do not have it at the moment, but I will commit to provide it in writing.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, while I am on my feet, I would just indicate to you, Sir, that in my questions yesterday, commitments were made for documents to be circulated before the end of the day and I am not in possession of any of those documents, Sir. This commitment is just one of the other commitments that are being made.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, just to be pellucid and not to leave anything out, I am not committed to give anything by the end of today. I will commit to have everything by the end of the week, Sir. My slew of whatever information, if I cannot provide it orally here, you will get it by the end of the week. I am not committing to give anything by the end of this afternoon. We have to contact the agencies.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member I have just been informed that some documents are in the custody of the Clerk and they will be circulated before we arise for the afternoon.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you very much Sir. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly the time frame when Linden will be treated as the rest of the country as it relates to the payment of electricity charges?

Mr. Patterson: That is an ongoing assessment done by the Government. The Member and this Parliament will be the first to know of any changes. It will be similarly treated as other agencies such as Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) which we have an issue with and other agencies. We will look at all of them and have it be addressed holistically.

Bishop Edghill: The same line item we are asked to approve \$430 million for the Transport and Harbours Department. Could the Hon. Minister inform this Assembly the total revenue for Transport and Harbour for 2016 to date and expenditure for Transport and Harbours Department?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is this one of the matters of which you informed this Assembly that Minister Ferguson will be treating?

Minister within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure [Ms. Ferguson]: To answer the Hon. Member's question at the moment we do not have the information but I can commit to provide the Assembly with the information.

Bishop Edghill: The question to the Minister would be if when the sum of \$430 million was sought for Transport and Harbour Department, the Hon. Minister did not do an assessment of the income and expenditure of the department.

Ms. Ferguson: If I am to respond, even though we do not have the specific numbers, I have just been provided with a figure, an approximate figure of \$624 million. I will hold to my earlier comment to provide the Assembly with the accurate figure.

Bishop Edghill: The \$624 million, is that income or expenditure?

Ms. Ferguson: It is for income.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the ballpark figure that it takes to operate the department annually?

Mr. Patterson: I know it is not my area but if the Hon. Member and the other colleagues could go to page 832 in the Estimates, it lists all the Subvention Agencies, their revenues...

3.07 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: The Minister needs to answer the question.

Mr. Patterson: I am just trying to be of assistance. If you go to page 832...

Bishop Edghill: Tell her to answer the question.

Mr. Patterson: There is a list of the revenues, the expenditures of Transport and Harbours Department for 2016.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, there seems to be something that is missing. A question is asked and, if an attempt is made to provide the answer by someone who is a Minister, is it not a good thing to get the answer? I thought you wanted that, Hon. Member Bishop Edghill.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would like to have the answer but I am indicating to the Minister that rather than being abusive by saying to go to this page, the Minister should know the answer.

His Colleague should be able to say that. I would not sit in this House and allow that kind of answering.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I would not enter into about what constitutes abuse or what does not. If the answer is being provided, let us hear the answer. If the answer is not adequate, then that is the time when you ask a supplementary question to elicit whatever answer you are seeking.

Hon. Minister Patterson...

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Have you answered the question?

Mr. Patterson: I was just trying to say that, on page 832 of Volume 1 of the Estimates, the entire revenue and expenditure, including the Subvention of 430, is listed there for the Transport and Harbours Department at Appendix T. I am just trying to be of assistance. I do not know why the [*inaudible*] is there.

Mr. Chairman: Do you wish the floor again, Hon. Member? Please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the \$430 million that is being sought will be spent on? This is the same line item.

Ms. Ferguson: The \$430 million will be spent on fuel and lubricant.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House if there will be an increase of fares and tariffs for the use of vessels in our waterways?

Ms. Ferguson: The response is no.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: If we look at Mabaruma Power Company, there is a \$27 million allocation; Mahdia Power Company - \$27 million; Moruka Power Company - \$10 million; Matthews Ridge Power Company - \$15 million; Port Kaituma Power Company - \$27 million; and Lethem Power Company - \$105 million.

Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what is the current charge per kilowatt hour in each of those areas and if there is an anticipated increase per kilowatt hour in 2017?

Mr. Patterson: Lethem Power Company: The first 15 kilowatt hours are for free. The 16 - 50 kilowatt hours is \$60 per kilowatt. Fifty-one kilowatt hours and above is \$80 per kilowatt; Mahdia, Port Kaituma and Matthews Ridge Power Companies: The first 15 kilowatt hours are free. Thereafter, it is a \$100 per kilowatt hour. Kwakwani Power Company: The supply of electricity is free, except for the four consumers who pay \$60 per kilowatt hour.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Minister did not give us the kilowatt hour for Mabaruma and Moruka. At the same time, he did not answer the second part of the question which is, will there be any increase in rates for 2017?

Mr. Patterson: My apologies. Moruka and Mabaruma will be the same rates. I would like to explain that Moruka and Mabaruma are under the Regions. This year, they will fall under the Ministry. There are no increases in rates provided that you are expending less than \$10,000 per month.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There has been a decrease from 38 in 2016 to 16 in 2015. At the same time, there is a movement in the allocations from \$42,288,000 to \$27,399,000. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what is responsible for this, what are the designations that are not being filled under this line item and where have they been catered for?

Mr. Patterson: It is not a *[inaudible]*. Twenty employees were transferred to the permanent establishment and two employees resigned - one Accounts Clerk and one Clerk. One Office Assistant was transferred to Programme 2, line item 6114. That would explain that there is no staff shortage as the Member would have alluded to.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: We are being asked to provide \$48 million. Forty-eight million dollars was budgeted for 2016 and the revised amount was \$48 million.

Could the Hon. Minister explain how Valued-Added Tax (VAT) would be paid on electricity when it is the same amount that is being budgeted?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Patterson: Sorry, Sir. I thought that was a rhetorical question; have my apologies. Obviously, we are talking about energy efficiency and conservation. It does not only apply to

the... It applies to everyone in the country, including my Ministry. I hope that explains it for the Gentleman.

Bishop Edghill: Would the Hon. Minister agree with me that, if his figures remain unchanged because of conservation, even though with the payment of VAT, the figures for Linden Electricity Company Inc. should have remained unchanged as well.

Mr. Patterson: That is a valid point but the increase in the fuel we catered for was to be prudent in budgeting practices. We made a slight allowance should the plight of fuel, which we have no control over, increase. Obviously, as the Hon. Member started off mentioning, in 2016, we had budgeted \$2.7 billion for Linden but we actually expended \$1.8 billion. Obviously, the whole energy conservation has started. It has been reducing and it will continue. The figure there is just a budgeted figure. Hopefully, it would yield even more savings than we had in 2016.

Mr. Damon: Let me deal here with Staffing Details first. I saw line item 6111 – Administrative – was increased by three. I also saw line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support – was decreased by 11. I have also seen line item 6116 – Contracted Employees – was decreased by 22.

Could the Hon. Minister tell this House why the decreases and why the increases for the various line items?

Mr. Patterson: For line item 6111 - Administrative - there is an appointment of a Principal Assistant Secretary (General) this year and just to pre-empt any...[inaudible], the salary is \$200,672; a Personnel Officer II and the salary is \$75,073; a Field Auditor was transferred and the salary is \$82,189.

For line item 6114, that was the additional one, pensionable status, as I just mentioned. If you want me to give it to you, there are three Office Assistants, eight Clerks, an Accounts Clerk, one Office Assistant transferred. This would give you the 11.

You also asked of line item 6116. Two employees resigned - an Accounts Clerk and a Clerk. Twenty were transferred to the fixed establishment. That is the complement.

Mr. Daman: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - and line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations - have a lot of money here.

Could you explain which are the agencies that you are contributing these moneys to locally and internationally and for what purposes, Hon. Minister?

3.22 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: On line item 6321, the Transport and Harbours Department - \$430 million which is for the fuel and lubricants; Lethem Power Company - \$105 million subsidy on the fuel; Mahdia Power and Light Company Inc. - \$27 million for the same subsidy on the fuel; Port Kaituma Power Company - \$27 million; Matthew's Ridge Power and Light Inc. - \$15 million; Mabaruma Power Company - \$27 million; and Moruca Power and Light Company - \$10 million. Those are for subsidy and fuel. Linden Mining Enterprise (LINMINE) - \$2,162,963,000 which is subsidy and fuel. The Hinterland Electrification Company Inc.'s administrative cost - wages and salaries, *et cetera* - \$46,681,000. Kwakwani Utility Incorporated (KUI) - a transfer of \$350,754,000; Berbice Bridge Company's subsidy in the reduction of tolls - \$166,304,000; Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) - \$100 million for administrative costs.

For line item 6322, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) - Guyana's contribution as a Member is \$1,831,000; Organization of American States (OAS) - Guyana's contribution as a member is \$1,295,000; International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) - \$11,831,000; Redic Management System - Guyana's contribution, which is under the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), is \$12,615,000; the Caribbean Aviation Safety Oversight System - our contribution for GCAA is \$13,294,000; and the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE) - our contribution is \$5,607,000.

Programme: 321 - Policy Development and Administration - \$3,803,850,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 321 - Policy Development and Administration - \$2,378,319,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1214800 - Government Buildings: A sum of \$190 million is being sought and the legend states completion of construction and rehabilitation of buildings. Could the Hon. Minister give us an itemised cost per building and works being done?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, for the completion of the document centre, the sum of \$75 million is budgeted, and that is a rollover project. For the rehabilitation of the official Prime

Minister's residence – \$10 million; rehabilitation of Work Services Group (WSG) building, building number 2 – \$30 million; rehabilitation of the National Task Force building – \$25 million; the rehabilitation of the Ministry's laboratory – \$10 million; the construction of three scale houses – \$30 million; and relocation of the Ministry's workshop to Coldingen – \$10 million. That will give us a total of \$190 million.

Bishop Edghill: Same project code 1214800 – Government Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister indicate where would these scale houses be constructed and if these scale houses are meant to monitor the weight of trucks on the road? Will charges be implemented for violations?

Mr. Patterson: The answer is yes. The exact locations have not been fully agreed. It will be along the Soesdyke/Linden stretch and also work along Linden/Lethem. We are investigating best impactful locations; we are narrowing them down. Yes - I made mention of this in my Budget Speech - it will be to monitor the weights of our roads. I did mention a while ago that the vehicles and trucks traversing our roads which are heavily overladen have accelerated the damage to our roads. And yes, Hon. Member, should you *run afoul* of the weight limits, you will be charged and other such penalties. And finally, just in case, before we go, I did mention about two Sittings ago that I will have to amend the legislation.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2606800 – Power Utility Upgrade Programme: Mr. Chairman, this Programme underperformed massively in 2016. Out of \$2 billion that was budgeted, only \$330 million was expended. Could the Minister tell us why? And he is now seeking \$1.2 billion in this year's Budget. Could the Minister indicate to us the contractor who has been awarded this job and at what contract sum? Could he also tell the House how much is the final price above the engineer's estimate?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, in the order in which the Hon. Gentleman asked the question, he is correct; \$307 million was spent. The majority of this money is to be expended on what is deemed 'Lot A' of the Power Utility Upgrade Programme which is an Inter-American Development Bank and European Union (IDB/EU) funded project. The slow implementation was to do with the fact that the contract was just only recently awarded. So that delayed the payment but I am told that the mobilisation advance, when paid, will be \$1.3 billion. That was what was catered for in 2016. Unfortunately, we were delayed. But I am pleased to say that the contract has been awarded to China National Machinery Import and Export

Corporation and China Synergy was the electrical engineering company consortium for a cost of \$4,614,020,376. And finally, the engineer's estimate was \$3,881,775,561.

Bishop Edghill: The same project code: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if the contractor who has been awarded this contract was the lowest bidder?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I could indicate clearly that the contractor that was awarded this bid was the lowest responsive bidder.

Bishop Edghill: The specific question was if he was the lowest bidder.

Mr. Patterson: The procurement regulations, which the Hon. Member knows extremely well, state that the contract must be awarded to the lowest responsive bidder and that was done.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up question: The Minister is indicating that this contract is almost \$1 billion above the engineer's estimate. Could the Hon. Minister explain on what circumstances the evaluators agree to go ahead with a project that is costing \$1 billion more than what was estimated?

Mr. Patterson: This contract is part of a larger contract for US\$64 million. At the time of the tender, this was the engineer's estimate. After, as all would have noted, there has been a delay, unfortunately and regrettably, in the assessment, when the assessment was done, the cost was determined by the evaluators to be fair and it was recommended to us, not only to the Government of Guyana, but to the IDB as well as the EU. And we accepted that because we found no reason not to accept that recommendation.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code, could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that there is a protest being lodged by other bidders in this particular contract?

Mr. Patterson: No. I cannot confirm that. No such information has reached my desk but, obviously, the Hon. Member seems to be in possession of some sort of privileged information. But we are a democratic country. We put in place the Public Procurement Commission and we also put in place the Bid Protest Committee for this exact reason. Should anybody feel that the tender needs a second examination, he or she is welcomed to go through those processes, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you. Under the same project code, could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House if this contract was awarded after the establishment of the Public Procurement Commission?

Mr. Patterson: I would assume that it was after because it is dated the 6th December.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House if this is a contract that was deliberated on by the Public Procurement Commission and, if not, why?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, no. For the avoidance of any doubt, the Public Procurement Commission is not operational.

Bishop Edghill: Is it not operational?

Mr. Patterson: It is not operational, Sir. I saw in today's newspaper that there was a statement by the Public Procurement Commission. They are not deliberating.

“Cabinet’s no objection role will continue until govt. is weaned from process – PPC Chairman”

This is from *Kaieteur News*, 14th December, 2016.

3.37 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the same project code: Could I ask the Hon. Minister if this contract received a no objection from Cabinet?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, first, the evaluators made a report.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, in the interest of time the answer is a simple yes or no. I do not think we need to hear a speech.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let me handle that part.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) provided a no objection; the IDB, on its own behalf and on the behalf of the European Union, provided a no objection; and, yes, after both agencies gave a no objection, Cabinet also gave its no objection.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code, I understand the Minister to be saying that Cabinet offered a no-objection. My question to the Minister is: is he aware that, according to

the Public Procurement Act, at the time of the establishment of the Public Procurement Commission that Cabinet's no-objection role ceases immediately?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I do not know if that is applicable here. The Hon. Member said that the legislation would be phased out and that is exactly what is being done. There is no project code to deal with that here but I am willing to entertain questions.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am referring to the same project code on the contract. I am seeking to establish if, in keeping with our law, this contract was properly awarded. I will continue.

Project code 2606700 – Hinterland Electrification: In the legend, on page 89 of Volume 3, we see:

“The project entails provision for:

1. Solar farm and upgrading of distribution network at Mabaruma.
2. Rewiring and power supply for community buildings.
3. Distribution network at Mahdia.”

Could the Hon. Minister give us the sums allocated for each item?

[Mr. John Adams in the Chair]

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, construction and supply of networks for community buildings - \$46 million; installation of metres - \$4 million; reconfiguration and upgrade of distribution networks in Mabaruma - \$27 million; installation of 400 kilowatts solar photovoltaic (PV) farm at Mabaruma - \$244 million; installation of suitable switch gear to Mabaruma Power & Light Inc. - \$18 million; and Distribution Network at Mahdia - \$10.6 million.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you. Sir, under this project code, from the numbers given by the Minister, the full amount will be used. So there is no provision here for hinterland electrification by way of distribution of solar panels to Amerindian communities and to furnish the information and communications technology (ICT) hubs in the various Amerindian communities.

Mr. Patterson: The construction of supply networks for community buildings in 25 hinterland villages is to the sum of \$46 million. I think that is the project code the Hon. Member is addressing. Yes, there is provision.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House how many solar panels will be distributed and to how many Amerindian villages?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, 25 communities will receive solar panel systems. This is a complement to the IDB programme which will be buying the photovoltaic systems. This \$46 million is for the wiring and installation of the systems under that programme.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, for the purpose of clarity, there is no provision here for households in Amerindian communities to benefit from solar panels through the Hinterland Electrification Programme.

Mr. Patterson: No, Sir; just the large photovoltaic systems which will power the community centres, *et cetera*.

[Mr. Chairman in the Chair.]

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House where the solar panels that were acquired under the Hinterland Electrification Programme, Office of the Prime Minister, which was transferred to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, are to be installed and utilised?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to say that, to date, we have installed 19,600 units to over 186 hinterland communities. We have installed all the systems, so there is none remaining.

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Minister for his answer. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many solar panels were distributed from June, 2015 to the present date and in which villages?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I could give the number which is 6,600, but I will provide the villages and areas in writing.

Bishop Edghill: I will be happy if the Minister could lay that over to the House.

Mr. Patterson: I already committed to that.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you. Under project code 2606500 – Electrification Programme – upgrading of electrification systems: Could the Minister confirm that this programme is intended to reduce technical and commercial losses?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I have been advised that this programme has been merged with the Power Utility Upgrade Programme (PUUP); the \$5 million programme was merged with the larger \$64 million programme. The impact of this was that the moneys we spent were negligible on the technical reduction. The larger reduction will come under the PUUP, which the Hon. Member was just questioning us on.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what the Guyanese taxpayers can look forward to in terms of improved electricity supply and minimum interruptions not only at Christmas time, but throughout the entire year, as it relates to us being asked to expend this amount of money, both in the EU/IDB funded programme as well as this one?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, with the combination of the PUUP as well as the investment by the Guyana Power & Light Inc. (GPL), which will amount to \$31 million for 2017 and the first quarter of 2018, we should see better service under GPL. We will be building four new substations and an additional line from Sophia to Kingston to ensure there is no redundancy like what happened last evening – I must apologise – and that it does not happen again. If it does happen, we would have another line. There would be an overall upgrade of our systems and, at the end of the PUUP, we will be looking at a 5% drop in the technical to 23.8% of our losses. We are looking to deliver a more reliable and cheaper service to the Guyanese people at the end of 2017 and onwards.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would like to bring to your attention that under project code 2606500 – Electrification Programme - budgeted for 2016 was \$550 million but we only expended \$34.6 million. Under project code 2606800 – Power Utility Upgrade Programme - budgeted was \$2 billion but we only spent \$330 million. Under project code 2606900 – Sustainable Energy Programme - we budgeted \$160 million but we only spent \$20 million. It shows massive underperformance. All three of these line items have to do with the electricity sector. It is clear that money was available for improvement of the electricity sector in Guyana but it did not happen. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what is being done to improve management to reduce the level of incompetence and mismanagement in the electricity sector?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I was tempted to say to the last part that what was done to remove the incompetence – *sleight of tongue* – was change the last Government. But I am not going to go there. I am going to stay civilised. The two programmes and the Electrification Programme

under PUUP have been combined and the delay there once again is Lot A which, I mentioned, was just recently awarded. We hope that it will be implemented immediately.

3.52 p.m.

In the interim, there are two other lots, lots A and B, which we have advanced and they will be coming out next year. At the end of 2017, all of the programmes will be well advanced, coupled with the \$31 million of local investment from the Guyana Power & Light (GPL) Company.

I can say nothing more about the Hon. Member's question about the competence of the staff of the GPL. All that I will say is that I have full confidence in them and I do hope that that is enough for the Hon. Member. I do think that it is quite insulting to come to the National Assembly and insult the staff of the GPL.

Bishop Edghill: No one insulted the staff, do not try that.

Mr. Patterson: You said the incompetence of the staff but...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, there is a proper way. It is not that way.

Bishop Edghill: I rise on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40 (a). Let it be made clear that, at no time, did I insult any public servant or staff. I spoke to the incompetence and mismanagement.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I know that we can express ourselves in language other than ones intended to give harm or to cause annoyance, but we do that routinely. Whilst this is going to happen... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

I am waiting until the Members on the two front benches allow the Chairman. Perhaps the Members would wish to leave the room, I do not know, but the Chairman may be tempted to help them in that regard.

Programme: 321 -Policy Development and Administration - \$2,378,319,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 322 – Public Works - \$3,408,224,000

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman I draw your attention to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is a reduction in the number of employees engaged, but an increase in the budgetary allocation. Could the Hon. Minister explain this to the House?

Mr. Patterson: The reduction is because 24 staff were transferred to line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled. The increased salaries are catered for here.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6272, Electricity Charges: Under the previous programme I drew to the Minister's attention that the Ministry's budgetary allocations were the same and I asked about conservation. In this instance, it has increased from \$418 million to \$423 million, could the Hon Minister explain this, in light of his previous explanation about conservation?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, I can. This is the line head under which the Ministry pays the bills for the highway and traffic lighting. Obviously, even with energy efficiency, the plan of the Ministry is to increase the numbers in several other areas. Even though, while on one end, we will become more energy efficient with the 5000 Light-Emitting Diode (LED) lights that will be made available through the Japanese grant, the number of locations that are lit will be increasing too. Coupled with the two, there will be brighter lit highways and traffic lights in greater volume.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6302, Training (Including Scholarships): There is an increase from \$17,836,000 in 2016 to \$27 million in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what the courses are and how many officers will be trained?

Mr. Patterson: This line item is catering for an Engineering Conference which will be held in February 2017 and \$13.5 million has allocated for that; there is an Electrical Contractors' Seminar, \$1.6 million; and general training for the staff of the Work Services Group (WSG), which has a total 121 staff. In total, over 250 staff will be exposed to various levels of training.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads: A sum of more than \$1.3 billion is being sought. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House what is the cost per mile per road that is to be maintained and whether he could layover the list of roads to be maintained?

Mr. Patterson: That is one of the questions we cannot answer because each road is in varying states of disrepair. I took over a lot of roads in disrepair. Some of those roads have

not been maintained in over 20 years and I cannot give this House a cost to bring those types of roads to what it should be. The cost per mile is dependent on the state of the disrepair. This head is Maintenance of Roads, for example, there is an existing road that someone omitted to look at for years and this Government is bringing it back. Sir, it is almost impossible to give a cost per mile for the maintenance per road.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, would the Minister, when he is laying over the document with the list of roads to be maintained, attach the estimated cost per road. This is because this figure must have been calculated based on some documentation.

Mr. Patterson: I have the figures. There are literally hundreds of road here. I could read them out for the Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I asked that the Hon. Minister lay the list over in the interest of time.

Mr. Patterson: If I am allowed to respond to the question. We are Live and I do not want anyone to think that there is anything to it. Just to state that in 2017, there is an allocation of \$269 million for the maintenance of roads in Georgetown; for Region 2, \$40 million is allocated which is a 25% increase; Region 3, \$132 million is allocated which is a 70% increase; Region 4, \$253.5 million which is a 55% increase; Region 5, \$65 million which is a 38% increase; Region 6, \$120 million which is a 41% increase; Region 7, \$105 million which is a 51% increase; Region 8, there is a decrease because works are being conducted on the internal roads; and for Region 10, \$102 million is allocated for repairs to road.

The road safety measures, \$35 million cleaning of shoulders; \$40 million for rental of equipment; \$15 million miscellaneous; and \$2.5 million for wages and salaries. This amounts to \$120 million. I have about six pages with the names of roads to be maintained which I will lay over. I did not want to leave the public with the impression that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure had not examine each and every road and determined what had to be done.

Mr. Chairman, my apologies. I was told that I left out Region 5. Region 5 has been allocated \$65 million which is an increase of \$38 million.

Mr. Chand: Mr. Chairman, under the same line item, could the Minister say whether the roads in Canal Polder are included?

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member would be please to know that the Canal Polder 1 and 2 roads have been catered for under two line items - Main Access Roads and under the Maintenance of Roads, there is Canal 1 and 2 catered for at a cost of \$20 million each, it is also there under another programme as well. To complete the answer, under the “Rehabilitation of public and main roads” there is an allocation of \$40 million for Canal No.1 and \$30 million for Canal No.2.

Programme: 322 – Public Works - \$3,408,224,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 322 –Public Works - \$15,185,816,000

Mr. Chand: Project code 1101100, Demerara Harbour Bridge: Budgeted for the Demerara Harbour Bridge is \$2 million in comparison to \$150 million for 2016. This suggests that the bridge will be self-financed during 2017. Could the Minister state by what percentage will be bridge toll increase and when will the increase be effective?

4.07 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: To answer the Hon. Member’s question, let me itemised. For motor cycle the proposed toll for 2017 would now move from \$20 to \$40, which would give projected revenue of \$8,702,440. Sir, it is 100% increase. The toll for motor cars would increase by 100% from \$100 to \$200; motor car (hire) would increase by 100% from \$100 to \$200; four-wheel drive jeeps would have no increase, the toll would remain at \$200; there would be no increase for mini-bus, the toll remains at \$200; motor tractor will increase by just 50% from \$200 to \$300; then there is the one-axle trailer which would move from \$200 to \$300, which is another 50% increase; two-axle trailer would have no increase, the toll will remain at \$300; the toll for a hearse will increase from \$100 to \$300, which is a 200% increase; then there is the goods vehicle, up to 2200 pounds, this would move from \$100 to \$400, which is a 300% increase; then the goods vehicle with 4400 pounds, this will move from \$200 to \$400, which is a 100% increase; the motor lorry (two), will increase from \$500 to \$700; motor lorry (three), this is for large buses which we are referring to, this will move from \$600 to \$700.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Hon. Minister if these fares are coming in effect as of the 1st January, 2017 and if there was no question asked under this project code, when would an announcement have been made?

Ms. Ferguson: Through the Chairman, to answer the Hon. Member, yes the new fares will take effect from the 1st January, 2017. To respond to the other question, the announcement would have been made before the end of this week.

Bishop Edghill: We are getting to more interesting times. Project code 1214900 – Infrastructural Development: Last year \$72,869,000 was budgeted, expended was \$479,647,000 and we had a supplementary that came to the House for \$406,007,000, which was for the D’Urban Park. Under this project code, a provision is being sought for \$607,000,000.

Sir, I would like to direct the House to page 93 of Volume 3, where the Legend states that the money to be expended is for the “Completion of pedestrians’ sidewalks and highway lighting. Provision of outstanding payments on D’Urban Park. Construction of pedestrian sidewalks along Woolford Avenue. Provision for geometric improvements to sections of Railway Embankment. And Provision of highway lighting to sections of the public road, Essequibo Coast”. Could the Hon. Minister give the amounts to be expended on each item here in the Legend?

Mr. Patterson: Infrastructural Development: Completion of pedestrian walkway in Corriverton, \$1.5 million and that represents the retention; completion of pedestrian walkway Woolford Avenue, Vlissingen Road to Albert Street, \$1.6 million, that is the rolled over retention; and the completion of highway lighting for the Corentyne, Adventure Arch to Philippi, \$2 million; the outstanding payments for D’Urban Park, \$500 million...

[Bishop Edghill: Whoa!] ...the construction of pedestrian walkway along Woolford Avenue, \$28 million; geometric improvement to sections of the Railway Embankment, National Aquatic Centre, Caricom Secretariat and Annex, \$60 million; and the installation of Light-Emitting Diode (LED) highway lights in a section of the Essequibo Coast Public Road, \$14 million.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you. Sir, I apologise for my ‘whoa’ it is just that I was surprised...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, some things without remedy must be without regard. You could have avoided that, but please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, with a \$500 million...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please proceed with the question.

Bishop Edghill: I am proceeding with the question Sir. With \$500 million, not for new works, but for the payment of outstanding works, that is what is stated in the Legend, could the Hon. Minister indicate who will be paid, how much they will be paid and for what they are being paid?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I will seek your protection to complete my answer. Sir, the D'Urban Park Development Project, Homestretch Development Inc., which was incorporated on 22nd January, 2016, was a company established to complete the D'Urban Park Development Project in time for the Guyana 50th Anniversary Celebrations on 26th May, 2016. Through private sector donations, as well as contributions in kind from the public, no public funds were disbursed to the company. The company has provided an audited report which states that they have collected \$27.7 million in cash donations. Significant contributions were made in kind to the value of... [*Interruption*] Sir, may I seek your protection to finish my response in full.

Ms. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we must allow the Minister to give his answer. The answer cannot be heard if Hon. Members continue to talk. Hon. Minister please proceed.

Mr. Patterson: Contribution in kind, as provided by the company, was \$33,956,000. On the 22nd November, 2016, the company wrote to the Ministry of Finance seeking assistance to liquidate its liabilities and following discussions, it was decided that the sum of \$500 million would be provided for in the 2017 Budget, under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, in order that Homestretch Development Inc. (HDI) could offset its liability.

It was felt that since the project was for the national good of the country and the facilities of the D'Urban Park belonged to the Government and the people of Guyana, the sum of half of a billion dollars would be given as a contribution to aid HDI to offset these liabilities. As I would have reported on several occasions before, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure took over the project on the 21st April, 2016, and the reports have been circulated.

In response to the information received, the donations amounted to \$27.7 million, I have the names and I will read them out. There is \$10 million from Suresh Singh, Gajadar would be

\$2 million, Hardat Singh - \$1million, Mohammed's Mining - \$5,000,000, RUSAL and Saddick - \$1,000,000, Tilku - \$500,000, STP Investments - \$500,000, Ramnarine and Gobin Mining – \$500,000, three anonymous donors which amounts up to \$900,000, one is a 100,000 and the other \$500,000, there is a donor called Donnia WF that is what is written here - \$2,000,000, Palm Court - \$500,000, Pan Global Commodity Trading - \$200,000, and Surgrim - \$500,000. That gives us the sum of - \$27,700,000.

On the questions of contributions in kind - Sir, Chung's Global, unfortunately, I did not add them up, they are for lighting towers valued at \$4.7 million; hauler - \$280,000; rental of hauler - \$70,000; rental of tele-hauler - \$9.6 million, and in terms of painting of the monument areas - \$611,000; Car Care Enterprise, the provision of an air conditioner, inverter - \$200,000; Agri-parts - two rollers- \$4 million; Courtney Benn Contracting Services, a large roller and these are contributions in kind; and BK Quarries, roller and generator - \$2,800,000. There are for truck loads from several individuals, Courtney Benn Contracting Services, Bai Shan Lin, Jagroop General Construction Services, Hopkinson Mining, Top Brands, Aubrey, BK International, Pritipaul Singh Investments, National Hardware, Dashodeen, Buxton Gas Station, Splashmins, Bacchus, Ramroop and NABI have all donated truckloads of sand. From two truckloads to the largest donation being 100 truckloads. Sir, Puran Brothers donated 150 cubic yards of concrete, another donor donated 30 cubic yards of concrete and Mr. Beni Sankar donated labour to the value of \$300,000. That brings the contribution in kind to \$33,956,000. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, do I still enjoy your protection? Thank you. The final part to the Member's question is the list of creditors based on information provided by the Homestretch Development Inc.

4.22 p.m.

This is the list of donors that I have and I am going to put them into record. There is Chung Global Enterprise, Northe Construction, Car Care Enterprise, Ambrose, Barnes and McCoy, Barama Company Ltd., Mahase and Mahase.

Bishop Edghill: Are these donors?

Mr. Patterson: This is the list of creditors.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I stand on a Point of Order, 40 (a) Sir. My specific question was: Names of persons who the Government owes and this \$500 million has to be paid to; how much is owed; and for what works? So, there are three things the Minister needs to give: The names of the persons the Government owes; how much and for what works to be done.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, thank you very much. The Member seems a bit excited. This has been received from the Homestretch Development Incorporated and it states Chung's Global - drains, land preparation, labour, bleachers, phases one and two, miscellaneous goods, services provided, construction of 10 bleachers. They have submitted a payment of \$426,323,106; Nabbi Construction Incorporated - bridges, pavilions and 13 bleachers - \$81.8 million; Car Care Enterprise - transportation and crusher run - \$53.8 million; Ambrose - Construction of bleachers - \$6.9 million; Barnes and McCoy - construction of bleachers - \$4.3 million; Barama Company Ltd. which is timber - \$27.8 million; Mahase and Mahase - \$30.5 million; Mr. David Williams, who is a quantity surveyor - \$6.7 million; there is a Mr. Boyce who is an Architect - \$3.5 million; there is a Mr. Ceres Geo-Technical Surveyor - \$3.3 million; there is a Mr. Ben Corlette - welding of flag base - \$600,000; Toolsie Persaud Limited - crusher run - \$2.3 million; Gupta Engineering - bleachers and rollers - \$1.7 million; Splashmins Fun Park - sand and loam - \$2.5 million, Mr. Kirk Noel - equipment and horns - \$3 million; Cummings Electrical Co. Ltd. - \$12.1 million; RG White - electrical supplies - \$3.5 million; BK Super Mix Inc. - supply of concrete - \$18.5 million; BK Quarries - crusher run - \$32.6 million; Demerara Sand and Aggregates - \$21.6 million; Trotman Survey - \$1.8 million; Mackintosh - Clerk of Works - \$1 million; Star Party Rentals for tents, stage and towers - \$2.1 million; Cevons Waste Management - portable toilets - \$130,000; Kalibur Security - \$230,000; Baracara Quarries - crusher runs - \$5 million; Guyana Power and Light - wallaba posts - \$2.75 million; Tagman Media - design printing - \$205,000; Guywaste Disposal Services - rental of portable toilets - \$1.13 million; Mega Movers Inc. - transportation of containers - \$195,000; National Hardware Ltd. - supply of fasteners - \$2.1 million; Guyana National Industrial Company (GNIC) - fabrication of brackets - \$9.6 million; Custom Design - accreditation of vending - \$36,000; N. DeSantos - \$200,000; and T. Garraway - recording the deliveries of materials for 16 nights - \$128,000.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Minister if a project, that from all estimation, \$900 plus million from taxpayers' money, plus \$60 million in cash and kind donation, can be described as a project that was done by private funding?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, it is probably the lateness of the hour, but I do not understand the question. Could the Hon. Member repeat it?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I prefer to move on in the interest of time. We are asked to approve an additional \$500 million to pay people whom Homestretch Development Incorporated entered into agreements with. Now the Ministry of Public Infrastructure is seeking the money to pay these people. Could the Minister of Public Infrastructure indicate what procurement process was used to engage these persons?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, once again I really do not understand the question by the Hon. Member and where he is going with it. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure did not engage any of these people. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure will not be paying these persons directly. There is no contractual agreement. The company Homestretch Development Incorporated will be paying these persons.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am asking...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you will be given the floor. Just allow some time.

Bishop Edghill: Okay. Mr. Chairman, the Minister just informed this House that this money will not be paid by the Ministry to the contractors, but that it will be passed on to Homestretch Development Incorporated for payment, which is a private company. We came here not so long ago and approved...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member...

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am asking a question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, well...

Bishop Edghill: Sir, we came here not so long ago and approved a specific sum for Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations and on that list of organisations that I questioned the Minister on, Homestretch Development Incorporated was not included. Could the Hon.

Minister indicate to this House which process he will be using to transfer \$500 million approved under Infrastructural Development, a capital item, to a private company to pay people who are owed?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the asset belongs to the State. The D'Urban Park belongs to the country, the State and the people. The transfer will be made to pay for an asset which, in the end, the State does have at the moment.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, the Minister indicated that he did not engage any of the contractors. So, could the Minister indicate to this House on what authority, in statute or in law, he is approaching this House for \$500 million, not to be expended by his Ministry but to pay to a private company that owes people and have private arrangements with them.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, on the authority of the exact statute and law that the previous Administration used to transfer \$183 million to Buddy Shivraj and \$38 million to Cacique Hotel. The asset, in the end, was not owned by the Government of Guyana. This, Sir, is owned by the Government of Guyana.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is that the answer you are giving to the question?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I just want the Minister to answer whether he is aware that the sums which he has just highlighted to the House went to those companies by way of a loan and did not come from the Consolidated Fund? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have to try to resist the urge to convert the Chamber into a horse race pavilion. It really is not. We can express pleasure and delight without the manner in which we do it. Hon. Member, do you have another question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. Could the Minister tell this House if it would be reasonable to conclude that, out of a project that will... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Bishop Edghill: Can I proceed, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am asking the Minister to respond whether it would be reasonable to conclude that a project that cost \$1 billion, of which only about \$60 million came in cash and kind donations from private individuals, but was executed by a private company, could be best described as a way of using taxpayers' money without proper procurement processes.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I obviously do not agree with the Hon. Member. I do not know how he arrived at his conclusion. It is a bit farfetched, but I do not agree, so I cannot conclude or not.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister say whether it would be reasonable to conclude that the Homestretch Development Incorporated was just a company that was used to engage private contractors of which, ultimately, all of the moneys to be expended are being paid by taxpayers and without any tender process?

Mr. Patterson: My exact answer is as before, which is no. It is not reasonable to conclude that. That is my response.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, would the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, an elected representative of the people of Guyana, say that he is comfortable with expending in excess of \$900 million of taxpayers' money on a project which was undertaken by a private company, where there was no procurement process engaged in getting those works done?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, my response, once again, is as before. The project is there and it is the Government's project.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let us move on from here. We are not going to get anywhere.

Bishop Edghill: I am on the same line item Sir. Could the Hon. Minister indicate on what date did he become aware of the liabilities to these various contractors?

4.37 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, in my statement, which I took time to read. It states, and I will repeat it again just for emphasis, the company on November 22nd 2016 wrote to the Minister of Finance seeking assistance to liquidate its liabilities. Is that clear enough for you, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: On November 22nd the Minister became aware that there was need for a \$500 million more to be added to this line item. The budget was read to the 28th of November. I would just like to bring that to the attention of the Assembly. Are we to understand that sometime between the 22nd and the 28th this inclusion was made in the budget?

Mr. Patterson: Where are we going with this? The Ministry of Finance has included this, and that you mean, and it was the 22nd and the budget is read on the 28th. If the Hon. Member is trying to openly admit that the finance was not as efficient under his tenure, as it is now, I could accept that admission.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, just to indicate that there are a number of line items under this particular head that have not been examined.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member I did hear you say it is your last question.

Bishop Edghill: It was on this particular line item Sir.

Question put.

Mr. Ali: Division.

Committee divided: Noes 31, Ayes 32, as follows:

Noes

Mr. Bharrat

Ms. Veerasammy

Mr. Gill

Mr. Anamayah

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Charlie

Mr. Damon

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Chand

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Mustapha

Ms. Selman

Dr. Westford

Dr. Ramsaran

Ms. Burton- Persaud

Mr. Croal

Mr. Hamilton

Ms. Chandarpal

Dr. Persaud

Mr. Seeraj

Bishop Edghill

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai

Dr. Anthony

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. Ali

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Jagdeo

Ayes

Mr. Rutherford

Mr. Rajkumar

Mr. C. Persaud

Mr. Figueira

Mr. Carrington

Mr. Allen

Mr. Adams

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. Jordon

Dr. Norton

Mr. Bulkan

Dr. Roopnaraine

Lt. Col.(Ret'd) Harmon

Ms. Ally

Mr. Williams

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. Nagamootoo

Programme: 322 - Public Works - \$15,185,816,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 323 - Transport - \$83,404,000

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Out of the total sum of \$83,404,000 being sought, \$60,770,000 is being sought... Could the Hon. Minister indicate what are the works to be done and where?

Mr. Patterson: This is routine maintenance of 15 aerodromes and in all the regions.

Bishop Edghill: I did not hear the Minister words so I could not be able to hear.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Member could not hear you. Could you start again, please?

Mr. Patterson: It is routine maintenance of 50 aerodromes in all the Regions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 and 10. The price cost ranges between \$900,000 to \$480,000 and that will give the total amount which is requested.

Bishop Edghill: This programme is staffed by one person and under line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence, there is \$168,000 and then under line item 6265, Other Transport Travel and Postage, there is an allocation of \$16 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain the expenditure under line item 6265?

Mr. Patterson: The \$16 million is chartered of aircraft. We do have to visit during the course of the year all of the 50 airstrips which I mentioned.

Programme: 323 - Transport - \$83,404,000 agreed to and ordered stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 323 - Transport - \$9,696,604,000

Bishop Edghill: Project 1601100 - Hinterland /Coastal Airstrips: An additional \$110 million was expended beyond what was budgeted in 2016. Could the Hon. Minister in the first instance explain why there was excess expenditure? Secondly, what would the \$385 million that is being sought in this year's budget be for?

4.53 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: I hope the Assembly could recall that I came for supplementary for an extension of the Fairview airstrip that accounts for the additional \$100 million referred to by the gentleman, which was in the supplementary that was passed, I think, in August of this year. The expenditure of \$385,061,000 is the completion of the Fairview airstrip in 2017 - \$7.7 million, Eteringbang airstrip - \$38.3 million. These are projects that started already, complete. Kurupung airstrip - \$14.49 million, Paramakatoi airstrip - \$19.97 million, Kato airstrip - \$32.8 million, Kopinang airstrip - \$19.3 million, Monkey Mountain airstrip - \$11.9 million, Annai airstrip - \$28.472 million and Kaikan airstrip - \$42 million. Those are projects that are currently going on. New for Baramita - \$80 million, Ekereku Bottom - \$40 million and Chi-Chi, west - \$50 million and could round it off.

Bishop Edghill: I move to project 1601300, CJIA Modernisation Project: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what is the current status is as it relates to expenditure and the date of the last interim payment certificate and how much was paid?

Mr. Patterson: The last payment paid to the contractor, Sir, is certificate number 23 and that was done by the Export-Import Bank (EXIM) Bank, the total was US\$12,986,533.75 to the China Harbour Engineering Company. The letter of notification was the 17th December, 2016, but, however, there are also two additional payments, which are already waiting to be processed and to be paid, certificates number 24 and number 25. Number 24 is US\$2.274 million and number 25 is US\$1.21 million. The total expenditure to date, based on that, is US\$66,523,585.92. I think that is all you asked.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how much of the \$9.5 billion that has been approved by way of budget and supplementary have been expended to date?

Mr. Patterson: Eighty-two per cent of this sum has been expended to date and we have our balance remaining, which is being processed at the moment. The balance remaining is \$1.7 billion to be programmed as we speak.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Minister is indicating to this Assembly that from this \$9.5 billion that is listed, as the latest estimates, only \$8 billion has been spent, so this figure is not correct. That is in the document for budget.

Mr. Patterson: I am somewhat confused because the figure listed in the document for the budget is what would be expended at the end of the 31st December, 2016. The Hon. Member asked me what was spent to date and I explained. I am somewhat confused as to what the Hon. Member wants to know.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister give to this Assembly in Guyana dollar value for interim certificates number 24 and number 25, which he indicated, are to be paid.

Mr. Patterson: Certificate number 24 is \$506,944,530 and certificate number 25 is \$269,834,015 and in anticipation of the Hon. Member's nimble mathematics there are certificates been processed or submitted if I do recall today or tomorrow for the balance of the amounts.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Minister is indicating, apart from the payments made to today's date, that he would have paid out just over another \$700 million, which means he would have

another billion dollars that would not be expended before 31st December, 2016. The figures, which are stated in this book, are not correct.

Mr. Patterson: I am not indicating no such thing. Once again, it is a quantum leap by the Hon. Member. The figure, which I quoted there, is up to 30th November, 2015. We have already another certificate had been submitted or is being submitted, which would be on or before the 31st December, 2016. A bit of a background, obviously construction work is paid in arrears, so when they work, then you actually do the valuation and pay. We had to pay what was done in November because the late certificate would have been the one that was done in November and we have to pay what is being done in December as well. It is no. The Hon. Member and myself had indicated we would expend what we projected to expend.

Bishop Edghill: This project is listed to cost \$30,900,000,000. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the price remains unchanged for this project?

Mr. Patterson: I made it pellucid and I would say it once again, in 2016, and no doubt the Hon. Member will ask again in 2017. My answer from 2015 and 2016 and will be in 2017. The cost remains the same as listed there.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what was the original square footage as it relates to the design at the time of the signing of the contract and what would be the square footage with the changes that has been made to the contract for the terminal building, the apron and how many parking gates?

Mr. Patterson: I am positive that we would have laid that over because that is a question that comes all the time. I brought it and I asked Member of Parliament Rutherford the last time that we were having the question to ask me the question, so that I could have laid it over too. I laid it over because the Leader of the Opposition keeps saying this... He is making his remarks. Sir, I have not walked with it again, but I am sure if he consults the Clerk of the National Assembly, he could give it to you. The last time the consideration of Estimates were been done, the question was not asked. I ask Mr. Rutherford to ask me the question and I responded and laid my response to the Clerk of the National Assembly, so I did not walk with it again.

Bishop Edghill: The only reason why I am asking the question is because I am not in possession of the information and I would be happy to receive it. Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this Assembly that there is a reduction in the square footage in the new terminal

building that was to be built and there is a reduction of the amounts of parking gates from eight to three?

Mr. Patterson: On the first part, no. Sir, I do seek your help and support. I handed it over. I have done everything. The Hon. Member keeps asking the same question. I handed it to the Clerk of the National Assembly the last time. I printed it out, handed to the press. It is in the public domain. The square footage remains the same. The parking gates, as everyone is saying, we are making provisions for four. We will construct under this contract and we would construct the other two later. I would like to say, for the records, finally, once again, to the part of the square footage, the answer is no. It was laid in this House. I should have some amount of protection to stop the Hon. Member asking the same question even though I provided the information in numerous times.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, before I ask my question, I would like to reiterate for you, the assurance, I am not in possession of those documents. I would be happy to receive it. The Member indicates that he had furnished that information. Maybe he had given it to somebody else. I do not think that we, on this side, have ever received a circulation of such a document.

Could the Hon. Member indicate to this Assembly how many aerobridges were in the original design? If it was eight, and the Hon. Member has just indicated that there would now be four, you are putting in less aerobridges. What is happening as it relates to the square footage and the price?

Mr. Patterson: I have answered it already. Maybe for the help of the Assembly square footage is the building. You could put in 2,000 aerobridges. The building size probably would not change. I have said that there would be four and there were originally eight. I am at a lost on how I would answer the question at the satisfaction of the Hon. Member. I have stated it. I have handed over proof. The Hon. Member is more than willing - I have said it before - to come with his tape measure. Maybe that is the only way he could be convinced of what happened.

5.08 p.m.

Besides that I do not know what else. Then he could bring the Leader of the Opposition with him when he comes to hold the other end of the tape and maybe we can have that resolved.

Programme: 323 – Transport – \$9,696,604,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, before you resume, it is just to indicate that we started the examination of this agency at a quarter to three and the allotted time was two and a half hours. Even though we requested additional time on that particular line item when we said that there were other items to be considered the question was put and we are way ahead of time by 20 minutes. I just want to put that on the record.

Mr. Chairman: To what end Hon. Member? If I may, we ask the question, to what end is that being put?

Bishop Edghill: To indicate, Sir, that while we requested that there were other items under the particular project, time could have been allotted for the consideration of those other items which were of significant importance.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his observation. Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resume.

Assembly resumed

Sitting suspended at 5.11 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.12 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we resolve into a Committee, I want to bring to your attention a transgression which promises to become a matter of great concern. I have had occasion, at least once, perhaps twice, to remind Members that the Members' lounge, Members' dining room is exclusively for Members. I formed the impression that Members observe that rule. It has been brought to my attention that I am mistaken about that. I remind Members, once again, that the Speaker believes that there is no need for anyone who innocently is directed to the lounge to be prevented from entering. That is not a course we should even contemplate. It is enough that Hon. Members know they ought not to expose any would be guest or friend to the indignity of having to be removed from the chamber. What I say to the Members, it is a reminder. Every Member is obliged to observe that rule. There is no equivocation and no room for exceptions.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 42 Ministry of Communities

Current Expenditure

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management - \$540,874,000

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Jagdeo]: Mr. Chairman, I was just seeking your indulgence on that matter that you just spoke of.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, should we do that now? Should we not wait until we return to the Assembly? We are now in Committee.

Mr. Jagdeo: I could raise it at any point in time, but I would wish to return to the matter just to bring it to your attention.

Mr. Chairman: When we return to the Assembly.

Mr. Jagdeo: Sure.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6272, Electricity Charges: Even when the 14% VAT is added to the amount spent in 2016 this would still be \$5.7 million less than the \$22 billion allocated in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister inform this Assembly what is the reason for such an increase?

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: That is a good question Hon. Member. It may be recalled for the first time last year all of the Ministries were expected pay their own electricity and telephone bills as opposed to them being paid by the Ministry of Finance as before. There was a surplus in the 2015 allocation, but the sum that is budgeted for 2017, a total of \$21,944,000 million, is to cover the charges for the four locations, the three buildings that comprise the Ministry as well as the residence of the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6273, Water Charges, remains the same as \$1,280,000, but if you add the 14% VAT, the 2017 allocation would increase to \$1.5 million. Is this an oversight by the Minister or is the Hon. Minister asking employees to conserve on water?

Mr. Bulkan: Indeed the observation is correct and there is provision at the level of the Ministry of Finance to cater for the additional charges to be incurred should they become necessary as a result of the 14% VAT.

Mr. Croal: May I return to line item 6272, Electricity Charges? The budgeted allocation for 2016 was \$40, 698,000. There was an actual expenditure of \$14,453,000. The Hon. Minister

indicated that there was a surplus but they were catering to pay for some increases and some additional locations. Now the Hon. Minister is budgeting for \$21,944,000. I cannot really reconcile with it.

Mr. Bulkan: The provision for 2016 was actually was an estimate of what was expected to be the consumption but the actual consumption and charges was considerably less. That is why the actual sum and the expenditure the latest Estimates would have been less than the budgeted sum.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I will move on because the 2015 allocation was \$4.5 million. If you are doing estimation as normal and increasing it to \$40 million, then it does not add up. Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is a decrease of 14 employees. Could the Minister indicate what represents those reductions?

Mr. Bulkan: The reason for the reduction of the staff by 14 arises as a result of the transitioning of persons from contract to the fixed establishment as well as the movement of two persons from programme 421 to 422.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support, there was an increase in staff. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the designation of those new staff?

Mr. Bulkan: Those will be the additions - Accounts Clerk II, Clerk II General, Office Assistant, Radio Operator and three Clerks III.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Croal, are you through? Do you have a follow up question?

Mr. Croal: I have some others but I see the honourable Member is on the floor so it is up to him so let him go ahead.

6.24 p.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: I have noted that there is an increase from \$99.901 million to \$131.119 million.

Would the Hon. Minister share with us the following: the reason or justification for the increase, the list of non-elected officials who are being paid under this Head, their names, designations and emoluments?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ganga Persaud, I have given thought to the question of names. If the names will add to the information that you seek...

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, it certainly would be.

Mr. Chairman: I would be interested to see that. Hon. Member, do not ask me to do things which I know I will not be willing to do. What I am saying is that if the name of the person is going to add to the enquiry that you are making, then there is something for me to think about.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I wish to assure you that it will certainly add to the [inaudible]

Mr. Chairman: We will see. Please proceed.

Mr. G. Persaud: Should I repeat, Hon. Minister or have you got the question?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, I got it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you through with your question?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Bulkan: The increase in the allocation is to cater for increases for the Regional Chairpersons, the Regional Vice-Chairpersons as well as the Regional Executive Officers.

There is also a provision of \$5 million for regional consultations and a leadership forum.

Mr. G. Persaud: A follow-up: The second part of the question requires the names, designations and emoluments for the non-elected officials who are paid under this Head.

Mr. Bulkan: The non-elected officials that the Hon. Member is referring to would be the Regional Executive Officers. I have the list with the names here and I can provide that in a short while to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am not convinced that giving the names would add to the designation if you are speaking of particular offices.

Mr. Bulkan: It would reflect the amount in the increase. I think that the names of the respective REOs are well known. I think that the Hon. Member might be interested to know what the amount of the increase is. I can provide that in a short while.

Mr. G. Persaud: The names of the REOs can be found in the Estimates. It is not private information but it is public information. I am asking to have all this information in one document and in one place. I do not see how unreasonable such a request is.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister please state the date of commencement of the Local Government Commission?

Mr. Bulkan: The Local Government Commission is not yet operationalised and there is no date that could be provided at this point in time.

Mr. Dharamlall: A follow-up: There is \$30 million budgeted for 2017 for the Local Government Commission. How did the Minister arrive at this when the Commission is far from commencing?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision was made. It was anticipated that the Commission would have been operationalised during 2016. It is perhaps regrettable that we are not there at this point in time. Nonetheless, the provision was made but there is no expenditure as of now.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Dharamlall, do you have another question?

Mr. Dharamlall: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister please state what are the challenges affecting his Commencement Order for the Local Government Commission to begin?

Mr. Bulkan: Following receipt of correspondence from the Hon. Leader of the Opposition naming his nominees to be Members of that Commission, there were two responses from the Ministry. The first one was acknowledging receipt of that correspondence and then it was followed shortly thereafter by a second correspondence seeking clarification or confirmation of whether the nominees were in keeping with the provisions in the legislation that required consultations with other parties in the National Assembly. A question was asked if that condition was met and, to date, we have not had a response.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Could the Hon. Minister say why there is a 40% increase in the allocation under this head when the Secondary Schools Improvement Programme (SSIP) was slashed by 70% and the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Development (SLED) Programme has been transferred to the Ministry of Social Cohesion?

Mr. Bulkan: The two Programmes that the Hon. Member has referred to – the SSIP and SLED - were under Programme 2 and the allocation that we are dealing with here is under Programme 1. The Hon. Member is correct that there is approximately 40% increase in the 2017 provision. It caters for increased activities under that particular head, involving both travel by the three Ministers as well as key personnel in the Ministry.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6321 – the Hon. Minister is fully aware that there is only one parliamentary opposition party. Could the Minister please state which other party the Hon. Minister expects the Leader of the Opposition to have consultation with?

Mr. Bulkan: There is reference to the word “opposition” but my recollection is that the word “opposition” does not appear in the legislation. It refers to other parliamentary parties.

The second letter to which I referred was quite specific. I think that my response was unambiguous and there has been no response to that correspondence as of now.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could I therefore ask...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Dharamlall, you must wait until I give you the floor. Just temper your exuberance. You are going to be able to ask the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister therefore state which other parliamentary party the Opposition needs to consult with?

Mr. Bulkan: I was merely trying to act in accordance with the provisions in the legislation and that is the best answer that I can offer to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6291 - National and Other Events: The budget for this line item has been increased considerably from \$1.5 million in 2015 to over \$10 million this year, as part of our 50th anniversary celebrations. Could the Hon. Minister explain what other gala events are planned for 2017 to justify spending another \$10 million under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: I do not think that I am required to speak on the provision for 2015 but rather 2016 for which there was an allocation of \$8.8 million and for which the revised spending was a little over \$10 million, which is the same allocation or provision in the 2017 Budget.

There is indeed a slight increase over the 2016 allocation. It caters for increased support in a number of areas – National and Other Events - among these being participation in the Mashramani celebrations which would allow for participation by our Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) and other Local Democratic Organs, Neighbourhood Democratic Councils and Municipalities as well as participation in other national activities such as the National Tree Planting Day and the National Day of Villages.

The expenditure also includes for participation in other cultural and national events such as Independence Day, Youman Nabi, Arrival Day, Easter, Phagwah, Emancipation Day, Diwali, Eid-UI-Adha and a number of other national events.

Mr. Gill: Follow-up: 2016 was a special year. We all know that. It was celebrating our Jubilee 50th Year of Independence so this Budget was increased from \$1.5 million last year to \$10 million this year. I am saying that...

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

Mr. Gill: I am asking the question, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Please ask the question.

Mr. Gill: Why are we not seeing a reduction in this line item because we are not celebrating our 50th anniversary anymore? Why are we not seeing a reduction in this line item as opposed to the same or an increase?

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member would recall, of course, that the Budget for 2015 was approximately for three months and it was not a full 12-month calendar year.

6.39 p.m.

With regards to the comment that has been made by the Hon. Member, while indeed the year 2016 was a special one, the activities that are contemplated for participation by the Ministry under this particular line head are annual events. In addition to the ones that I have named, it includes for support and participation in new activities, such as participating and supporting the Upper Mazaruni District sports, International Day against Trafficking in Persons and all of these activities which are, of course, national and do have strong community engagement and involvement. It is not considered that the sum of \$10 million being allocated by the

Ministry for support to all of these national events is, by any means or stretch of imagination, an exorbitant sum, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, line item 6271 – Telephone Charges: With an expenditure of \$4.4 million in 2016, the Government is asking for a 100% increase in 2017. Can the Hon. Minister indicate the reason for the doubling of this expense in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is anticipated and provision is being made for an expansion of the Ministry's programme that will allow for and include for more telephone calls across the departments and the Ministry's buildings, in addition to scheduling of additional meetings and increase usage of the internet.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, if that answer is in light of us requesting a \$9.2 million in 2016...

Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what this is going to be expended on? Secondly, only \$2.2 million would have been spent out of \$5.8 million budgeted for 2016. What mechanism do you have in place or indication that you will be spending what was asked for in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is being made for maintenance of the three buildings that comprise the Ministry, the infrastructure within the buildings, and this would be at the Kingston, Brickdam and Camp Street locations. Among some of the components are paving, cleaning and printing of the fence, repairs to the vehicle shed, water tanks, trestles, drains, parking areas, cleaning of the gutters and parking lots in all of the three locations.

Mr. Croal: The second part was an explanation on not expending the allocation that was provided. And while I am on it, let me just ask one more question. Line item 6281 – Security Services: Can the Hon. Minister indicate who the current provider of the security service is and, secondly, can the Minister give an explanation or justification on the decrease in the allocation for 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: The premises that are secured under this allocation would be the three Ministries as well as the residence of the Permanent Secretary (PS). The provider is Federal Management Systems Security Services. And the reason for the decrease is that for one of the locations that were formerly catered for, namely the Haags Bosch landfill site, such security is no longer being provided with the service that is now being offered there.

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

Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Budget 2016 would have given an allocation of \$4,009,000; the revised expenditure was \$8,018,000 and the requested in 2017 is \$6,789,000. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us an explanation with regard to the fluctuation in terms of the request? Secondly, give us a list of the buildings which would be maintained with the 2017 allocation, the expected costs that would be expended on each of those buildings and, if any of those buildings are used as residence, give us the names of the occupants of those buildings. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bulkan: The reason for the fluctuation or increase in the 2016 figures was mainly attributable to unanticipated and unexpected works to the electrical system at the main Ministry building in Fourth Street, Kingston. I do not believe that the Hon. Member would be surprised to learn of that particular fact, given his knowledge of the age and condition of that building but that was the main reason for the spike in expenditure for maintenance in 2016. With regard to the 2017 provisions for maintenance to buildings, none of these would be for any residence. They are all for the Ministry's buildings - the main office as well as the Camp Street office and the Brickdam building – at the projected sum of \$6.788 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: There is an approximate 50% increase in electricity charges. Hon. Minister, could you please state why your Ministry has not implemented conservation measures similar to the public broadcast on television that you spoke on advising citizens to conserve on water and electricity?

Mr. Bulkan: Thank you, Hon. Member. It is an entirely valid observation and comment, save and except to say that this is a provision, an allocation that is being provided for, but the Ministry does not encourage ill-advised use of electricity and we encourage conservation, so we may very well find that there will be savings at the end of the year if our efforts in encouraging conservation is successful.

Mr. Bharrat: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Line items 6111 to 6117 (Total Wages and Salaries): There is a reduction of almost \$24 million. Can the Hon. Minister say why there was a massive reduction, taking into consideration that, based on the Staffing Details, there was only reduction by one staff and the salary increases and the amount of new departments that the Minister mentioned?

Mr. Bulkan: Of all the line items that the Hon. Member has referred to, a few of them have actually increased in 2017. The one with the major decrease is line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - moving from \$138 million to appropriately \$110 million, for which an explanation has already been offered.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: I noticed that the budgeted sum for 2016 was \$9.985 million and the actual was only \$6.657 million. Why is it that approximately \$10 million is being budgeted for in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is indeed correct that the 2016 allocation was not expended in its entirety but the provision that is being made in 2017 is to take it up back to the full sum and the expectation is that it would be required and utilised in 2017.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: Can the Hon. Minister tell us how many vehicles and boats and engines will be utilising this amount of fuel and lubricants?

Mr. Bulkan: This allocation is to provide fuel and lubricants for the Ministry's fleet which totals approximately 18 vehicles. And there are no boats and engines under this allocation.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Allocated in 2016 was \$5.836 million and utilised was \$9.036 million. I would like to know why it was increased and why is it that you are asking for another \$9.036 million in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: The 2016 allocation was found to be insufficient and inadequate to maintain the vehicles. Hence that is what is responsible for the revised figure being greater than the original allocation. The provision is for the sum that was utilised in 2016, a total of just a little over \$9 million.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Under line item 6302 –Training (including Scholarships) - could the Hon. Minister say who would be the beneficiary of this training, what kind of training and how the people will be selected or have been selected? Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. None of the training actually caters for individuals but it is for training both at the level of the Ministry and it includes leadership, governance and technical training as well as the bulk of the allocation will be for training to the councils or local government organs and officials in our councils. It has to do

with local economic development, financial management training, constabulary training and other forms of training to the councils as opposed to individuals.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: In 2016, there was an allocation of \$30 million of which the revised estimate as to the present position is \$28,444,000.

6.54 p.m.

We just heard that the Local Government Commission has not been operational. Could the Hon. Minister say what this expenditure was based on?

Mr. Bulkan: That is a very good question, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, the sum stated there was released by the Ministry of Finance in anticipation that it would have been necessary, but, given the fact that this sum was not utilised, of course, it would be returned to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: The 2017 Budget was only presented a few weeks ago to us. At that time, the Minister must have been in a position to form a conclusion that this amount would not be utilised and hence return it to the Consolidated Fund. In the Revised Estimate in the 2017 Budget, it states \$28,444,000. It gives the impression that this was expended. What was budgeted was \$30 million but this is only \$28,444,000, not the full amount in the Budget. If there were no Local Government Commission, then the entire amount should have been returned to the Consolidated Fund. Could you please bring clarity to this issue?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier, the sum stated here was released by the Ministry of Finance in anticipation of its use, which did not materialise. As the sum was not expended, it will be returned.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say when this amount was released by the Ministry of Finance? As far as we are aware, the Ministry of Finance releases money in tranches and not in bulk. I would like the Hon. Minister to say when this amount was released by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the most reliable information I have at this stage, which I believe to be fairly accurate, is that this sum would have been released sometime in the second quarter, closer to the middle of the year, in anticipation of the Ministry's programme

that the Commission would have been operationalised in the second half of the year, which, regrettably, did not materialise.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say on what date he responded to the letter written by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the operationalising of the Commission?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I earlier referred to two responses and provided the details. I do not have those two dates in front of me. I believe that the Secretariat of the Leader of the Opposition would be aware. In fact, I believe that the Opposition Chief Whip did, on one occasion, refer to both of those correspondence. But I can provide the date at a later stage.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: Would the Hon. Minister be in a position to say whether this release was made before or after 7th August, 2016?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the expectation and anticipation of the Ministry was that the Commission would have been operationalised during the second half of the year. I must confess that I do not see the relevance of the question because we have no way of knowing on what date or when a response would have been forthcoming from the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. I do not think the question is quite relevant.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, over \$1.5 million was spent from this head. What did you spend it on?

Mr. Bulkan: I assume you are speaking about the same line item.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, sir, the same line item. We have not moved from that nor are we going to for a while.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure where the deduction is coming from or on what basis the Hon. Member is deducing that \$1.5 million was spent. The revised figure that is stated here is the release that was made by the Ministry of Finance. As I said earlier, none of it was spent.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, \$30 million was budgeted for the Local Government Commission in 2016. What we are seeing in the revised column is \$28.444 million but then \$30 million is put back for the Local Government Commission. First of all, let me remind the

Hon. Minister that, on 21st November, 2016, a question was asked in this House about when the Local Government Commission would be established.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Teixeira, please, we must have a question.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister said that the reason the Commission had not been appointed was that the commencement order...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you must ask your question.

Ms. Teixeira: I will. Could I then ask when the Minister will give the commencement order to bring the Commission into being? He keeps playing around issue of the letter from the Leader of the Opposition. He is fully knowledgeable that the second letter was sent to him and signed by his Secretary. He kept misleading this House on three occasions. You should be sent to the Committee of Privileges. It is no use putting \$30 million in the Budget and the Minister refuses to sign an order that states one sentence that the Local Government Commission comes into effect on so and so date. He could not do it for all of 2016 and is *mama guying* this House about a letter from the Leader of the Opposition. Up to now, we do not know who the President's appointees are and we do not know who the Minister's appointee is and he is just *mama guying* this House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you have an answer?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I will try to design an answer based on what I just heard. A provision of \$30 million is being made to fund the activities of the Local Government Commission in the year 2017. It is the expectation that this Commission will be operationalised in the year 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Minister answer a simple question, Mr. Chairman? When will the commencement order be issued in the *Official Gazette* to bring the Commission into being?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer is in the year 2017.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - Local Government Commission: Could the Hon. Minister please state whether his Excellency has named the Commissioners and whether the Ministry has named its Commissioner?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it may be recalled that, in my Budget presentation, I spoke on this question of the Local Government Commission and the fact that it was not operationalised as yet. Notwithstanding that fact, the pace of local government reform was not stymied in any way. In fact, the reform process was being accelerated and it would allow for a more functioning system when that Commission is eventually operationalised, as I said, sometime in 2017. With regard to the question being posed as to the Commissioners to be named by the President, I am not in a position to provide an answer at this stage.

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management – \$540,874,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management – \$1,068,200,000

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, project code 1902900 – Project Development and Assistance: Could the Hon. Minister say when the first tranche of releases was made to the various Neighbourhood Democratic Councils in 2016?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, these releases were made at the request of the respective Councils, the bulk of which was provided shortly after the new Councils came into being after the Elections in March of last year.

Mr. Ali: When?

Mr. Bulkan: The bulk of the initial allocation was made shortly after the new Councils came into being at the request of the respective Councils. That activity continued up until yesterday.

Mr. Ali: Same project code 1902900: Could the Minister say whether the Ministry spent any of these resources on behalf of the NDCs or any councils or municipalities to which the moneys were supposed to go to?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question is no.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister assure this House that, as of now, the complete subvention has been released to all the NDCs and the Municipalities?

7.09 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, with the exception of the one council which I referred a moment ago, for which it was only provided yesterday, the answer is yes, for all the other councils releases were made.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I have a number of questions on the same line item 1902900, Project Development and Assistance.

Firstly, there has been over 100% increase in the allocation for subventions. Could the Hon. Minister give the House the breakdown of the allocation for the subvention?

Secondly, could the Minister say on what basis will the subvention be allocated and what methodology would be utilised for the allocation?

Thirdly, could the Hon. Minister confirm what basis was used for the 2016 allocation of the very subvention and then I will ask some follow up questions?

Mr. Bulkan: The details pertaining to the allocation, there are a number of areas and activities. First, there is the subvention to the municipalities for a total of \$206 million; there is the subvention to the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) for a total of \$264 million; there is the inclusion of the community enhancement component of the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP), which is formerly under Programme 2. That programme is now being directed to all of the local government organs for their management and control, for which the sum of \$566 million is provided for. That should give the total of \$1,043,000,000.

With regards to the basis for the allocation of the 2016 subvention, I believe that this question was asked before by the very Hon. Member. Generally, it was the Fiscal Transfers Act which was utilised to govern the releases of those subventions. Approximately half of those organs would have qualified for a sum greater than the actual subventions. Of the other half, if the strict application of the criteria in the Act would have been applied, it would have resulted in a shortfall between \$20,000 and, in very few instances, maybe half of one million dollars. The shortfall would have resulted in the other half of the councils.

With regards to the 2017 allocation, it is the expectation to use the formula that is provided for in the Fiscal Transfers Act.

Mr. Croal: Let me go back to the application of the Fiscal Transfers Act. Very simply, and I guess...

Mr. Chairman: What is the project code?

Mr. Croal: Project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance: Could the Hon Minister state, yes or no, whether the Fiscal Transfer Act was applied on the 2016 allocation? Could the Hon. Minister confirm that he will be applying the Fiscal Transfers Act on the 2017 allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: The Ministry of Communities was guided by the Fiscal Transfers Act and, as I said one moment ago, 50% of the councils that utilised the criteria in the Act would have qualified for a sum greater than the subvention or the allocation. For the other 50%, if the Act was strictly applied, it would have resulted in a shortfall varying between \$20,000 and, in a few cases, maybe, closed to \$500,000. The Ministry was guided by the parameters and criteria in the Fiscal Transfers Act, but it was not utilised in the strictest sense because it would have resulted in the shortfall, to which I referred to, in some of the councils.

Mr. Croal: Under the same project code, the Hon. Minister is indicating to the House that he is applying a hybrid method of the Fiscal Transfers Act because 50% is being applied on a certain criteria and another 50% on other criteria. The question remains, therefore, do we come to that determination, because the Fiscal Transfers Act is applied based on a ballpark figure that is provided for here in the budget? In this case, for next year, there is \$206 million for municipalities and then the formula is applied, whether it is based on the population geographic size or rate of collection. So I am still confused as to how the Hon. Minister could determine what the Fiscal Transfers Act should be applied to or not and when he should or should not apply it, when there is a clear cut criteria.

Mr. Bulkan: The 2016 allocation and provision was for the sum of \$4 million each to the 62 NDCs. As I said, the strict utilisation of the criteria would have resulted in approximately half of the councils receiving marginally less out of that allocation of \$4 million which was provided by the Central Government. The Ministry was, indeed, guided by the conditions in the Act, but it was not applied in its entirety because it would have resulted in a shortfall or meanness towards those councils that did not qualify to receive 100% of the allocation.

Mr. Croal: Project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance: On the same issue. The \$4 million would be a guided figure...

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

Mr. Croal: Yes, I am Mr. Chairman, but there must be an explanation to the question.

Mr. Chairman: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Croal: I must have a precursor for the question for us to understand. Fair enough I will ask the question.

Four million dollars was allocated as guidance, could the Hon. Minister indicate how a conclusion could be drawn of applying the Fiscal Transfers Act 50/50% when there will never be a \$4 million flush amount being provided to the NDCs or the municipalities?

Secondly, would the Hon. Minister agree that the law does not make space for one to arbitrarily or conditionally use the Fiscal Transfers Act?

Thirdly, would the Hon. Minister indicate too, now that CIIP is part of this line item, that the Legend should include some write-up on that?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation of \$4 million that was made in 2016 or the subvention for support for the NDCs was meant to provide support to those councils that were badly in need of support from Central Government. There is no way that it could be found that the approval is tied to the utilisation or application of the Fiscal Transfers Act. That is a piece of legislation that is there to be used by the Central Government to determine whether a particular local democratic organ should be penalised, prevented or denied from receiving 100% of the allocation that is being made to it.

It is the case that the capacities of these councils were severely degraded and many were actually dysfunctional at the time when the elections were finally held on 18th March, 2016. The process of rebuilding the capacity of these councils has been said, at least by me on many occasions, that it will be an arduous and laborious task. The Central Government is not of the mind, at this stage, to penalise the councils, but rather it is seeking to provide support to the councils. The shortfall, if strictly guided by the criteria in that legislation, namely the Fiscal Transfers Act, if it was strictly applied, it would have resulted in marginal reductions in the provision that was made in the 2016 allocation.

As it regards the second part of the question, yes, the Legend, indeed, does not refer to the CIIP activities. Nonetheless, it can be captured under what is stated in the Legend, which is capital subvention. It is meant as a support or subvention to our local democratic organs. In this case all 71 local democratic organs, both the municipalities and the NDCs.

Mr. Croal: Under the same project code, could the Hon. Minister provide to the House a breakdown of the CIIP programme per region?

Mr. Bulkan: At this stage, the information I can provide to the Hon. Member is that the allocation is for all 71 of the local democratic organs to fund the wages for 1300 workers at an average of \$28,000 each. The specific details as to how many workers will be employed in the respective organs, I can lay over this information, subsequently, for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance: Could the Hon. Minister provide this House with the dates and the amount of money each of the 71 local democratic organs received, the time and date?

Further, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, how much did the REOs dictate to the NDCs that they must buy crusher-run?

Mr. Bulkan: If any specific any information can be provided I could seek to undertake to provide an answer to the Hon. Member. The question is much too vague and general and I am not in a position to offer a response.

With regards to the 2017 allocations, the list to which I just referred, it is in hand here and I could provide it to the Clerk of the National Assembly.

Mr. Neendkumar: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister... Both of us were at meeting where we were told that there are workers at the NDC who were receiving salaries far below the minimum wage. This proves that if the Local Government Commission came into place, this matter would be addressed. So, I am appealing to the Hon. Minister, several attempts were made, and he must ensure that the workers are paid properly.

7.24 p.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: Project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide to this House, for each of the 71 Local Authority Areas, what would have been the allocation if the fiscal transfer was applied in its entirety? Also what allocation was actually given to each of those 71 Local Authority Areas? Mr. Chairman, could we get a response from the Minister please?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I think it is easier for me to give the Hon. Member an aggregate sum. So if the conditions in the legislation were utilised for the NDCs the total of the subvention would have been greater than what was the actually subvention. The subvention was \$240 million and an application of the criteria would have resulted in the need for the sum of \$248 million.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, can I crave your indulgence please? I am asking the Hon. Minister to please lay over to this House the actual sum that was received by each of the 71 Local Authority Areas and what would have been the allocation, if there was a strict conformity to the fiscal transfer by the Ministry of Communities?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, you have heard the request of the Hon. Member, is there a comment you wish to make?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the comment I would like to make is that these sums of money are designed to offer support to our Local Government Organs. I think it is no secret that these sums are quite inadequate with regards to the need for these councils. But I have noted the request of the Hon. Member and it poses no difficulty for us to lay over this information.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much.

Programme: 421 - Sustainable Communities Management - \$1,068,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development - \$1,455,154,000

Mr. Croal: Line item – 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister, indicate the expenditure and the designations of the persons who were paid \$6.6 million in 2016 when there was no allocation? Secondly, in 2017 the Staffing Details states 35 staff, and in 2016 it states zero, but \$6.6 million was paid. Could the Hon. Minister give the House the designations and salaries of the new contracted employees and the top 10 paid contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I will answer the second part of the question first. The top 10 persons that were paid under this programme were a Technical Advisor of Solid Waste - \$420,000, the first category is GS13; a Specialist Engineer, there are two GS11 for Special

Engineer at \$286,000 and an Economist at \$265,000; five additional Engineers under GS9 at salaries ranging from approximately \$200,000 - \$191,000 and there is an Overseer also on GS9 at a sum of \$191,000. So that would be nine persons. There would be a District Community Development Officer on GS8 – at the salary of \$172,000 monthly.

The 2016 allocation of \$6.6 million would have been payment for two staff at the Ministry – an Economist and an Engineer, who would have been transitioned from Programme 1 to Programme 2 in 2016.

Mr. Croal: Just a follow-up. So the Hon. Minister would agree that the 2016 Staffing Details should reflect two employees since \$6.6 million is being paid. Secondly, the Hon. Minister would have provided to us an Advisor to the Solid Waste Management, could the Hon. Minister say whether the recruitment process was by the new methodology imputation, if it was by advertisement, in-house or whatever was the case?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the Advisor on Solid Waste Management was acquired from the Georgetown Solid Waste Programme which came to an end last year and was absorb by the Ministry in 2016.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister state the amount of funds that would be transferred to the Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) as subsidy?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, provision is being made, if necessary, for the sum of \$500 million.

Mr. Gill: A follow-up to that question. The Guyana Water Inc. will now be collecting an additional \$100 million in revenue as a result of the 14% Value Added Tax (VAT) that will be added on water. Could the Hon. Minister give the rationale for providing this subsidy to the GWI?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman subject to correction, to the best of my understanding, any agency that receives VAT is merely a conduit and the VAT is meant to be transmitted to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). It does not stay with the agency; the agency is just the collector.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, line item 6294 – Other: There was a 117% increase on the expenditure for 2016. Firstly, could the Hon. Minister indicate what this increased

expenditure was for? Secondly, could the Hon. Minister give the House a breakdown of the allocation for 2017 which amounts to \$790 million?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the increase to which the Hon. Member has referred and the basis of his query, the actual sum works out to \$501 million. The Hon. Member would recall that a supplementary provision was passed in this honourable House in 2016 for that sum of \$501 million to pay for activities under that programme. The 2017 allocation of \$790 million is to provide for four major components.

There is a 2016 rollover, Infrastructural Development, Institutional Strengthening and Public Awareness. The respective sums are: For the rollover and this has to do for the final payments for the Haags Bosch settlement - \$339 million; the Infrastructure Development caters for the operation at a number of landfill sites namely Haags Bosch, Lusignan, Bartica, Mabaruma and Belleview for a total of \$340 million; for the Institutional Strengthening component, the budgeted sum is approximately \$96 million and it has to do with the support to our local organs, both for the solid waste management as well as management at the sanitary landfill sites; and the final component, Public Awareness, the sum of \$15 million is budgeted for that component.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, under this very line item 6294, the \$339 million alluded to, this will bring finality to the settlement that was made by the Government of Guyana with respect to the Haags Bosch site. Is that correct?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. That is correct.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister provide to the House that breakdown that he would have just provided for the other?

Mr. Bulkan: Is it for the remainder to make up the \$790 million total allocation?

Mr. Croal: Yes, the total sum.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I could lay over the information to the Hon. Member.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Mr. Chairman, the allocation in 2016 was \$4.2 million and the requested amount in 2017 is \$4 million, 14% on approximately \$4 million would have been \$560,000. It, therefore, means that the Minister is seeking to assure the House that there will be no need for a supplementary with regards to electricity charges

because of the Government's policy on conserving. Maybe that is the reason why the allocation is below the...

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

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Well, please ask it.

Mr. G. Persaud: Well, I am asking, is the justification which I just shared the reason why the allocation for 2017 is below what it was for 2016?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the budgeted sum of \$4 million is a provision that is being made for the consumption of electricity by the Ministry. I believe it is no secret to the Hon. Member that budgeting and this sort of activity is not an exact science and the Hon. Member would also not be unaware that supplementary and shortfalls are uncommon though undesirable, but the sum of \$4 million is the provision that has been made available to the ministry for consumption of electricity in 2017.

7.39 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: This is the last question Mr. Persaud.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6273 – Water Charges: Here again, the requested amount is similar to the allocation in 2016, so listening to the Minister it is so unfortunate that the households out there, for them, budgeting is exact. One could assume...

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

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. G. Persaud you are abusing the opportunity that you have.

Mr. G. Persaud: Sorry Sir, if you got that impression. It was not my intention.

Mr. Chairman: Ask your question please.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Sir I will do that. Would the Hon. Minister deem this sum of \$484,000 as being adequate to meet the water charges, inclusive of Value Added Tax (VAT), for the year 2017 for the Ministry?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer is, yes.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development - \$1,445,154,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development - \$2,888,078,000

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, project code 3600300 – Solid Waste Disposal Programme: Firstly, the Legend states that this was brought from Programme 421. So, firstly my question would be, could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what is the current status in terms of the management of the Haags Bosch Landfill Site because we would have been told that a temporary contract has been awarded.

Secondly, an allocation was made of \$300 odd million, but only \$200 and something million was expended on the 2016 amount. So, could the Hon. Minister indicate what caused the shortfall in the expenditure?

Thirdly, could the Hon. Minister indicate, as part of this line item because provisions have been made for landfill sites, what is the status or the Government's intention with respect to the recycling programme?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Hon. Member to repeat the first project code from which he quoted please?

Mr. Croal: Sure. We are referring to project code 3600300 – Solid Waste Disposal Programme, but the Legend indicates that provision for the Solid Waste Disposal Programme was previously reflected under Programme 421, so, we cannot look at this one without looking at where it came from.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you asked the first question already?

Mr. Croal: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am clarifying for the Hon. Minister. I was waiting for his confirmation that he got it.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there is no allocation in 2017 under that project code and the sum that was quoted in 2016 was for the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) programme which came to an end in 2016.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, just to provide clarity. We are finished with Programme 421. So, do not get confused with that, but Programme 422 for Solid Waste Disposal makes reference to the last one from Programme 421. There was a transfer because the Solid Waste Department is now under Programme 422.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, as explained in the Legend, it has been transferred from Programme 421 to Programme 422, the sum of \$338 million. The activities to be funded under that Programme are under five headings: Roll Over, Infrastructure, Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building. There is a public awareness and community involvement component and finally project supervision. The respective totals are: For the roll over it is approximately \$111 million; for the infrastructure component it is the sum of \$200 million - this has several components and it is broken down to the upgrade of dump sites in three locations totalling \$60 million; there is soil testing for new sanitary landfill sites at four locations in three regions for the sum of \$50 million; there is design and preparation for new sanitary landfill sites in four locations for a total sum of \$90 million; for Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building the sum of \$8 million is allocated; for the Public Awareness and Community Involvement the sum of \$14 million is allocated; and finally for the Project Supervision, the sum of \$4 million is allocated.

Mr. Croal: I thank the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: One other question after Mr. Croal and then I will put the question. Please proceed.

Mr. Croal: Coming back to project code 3600300, could the Hon. Minister provide an update in terms of the current management arrangement with the Haags Bosch Landfill Site? Secondly, are there any provisions or could the Hon. Minister update this House on the Programme with respect to recycling because I know that he did speak about this too?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, provision for the operations of the Haags Bosch Landfill Site is provided for under the recurrent expenditure, and not under the capital estimates or the programme that is under consideration here.

With regards to efforts and activities relating to recycling, there are National Solid Waste Management consultations that are currently being undertaken by the Ministry which started in August and is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2017. These consultations

are being done countrywide and it is certainly expected that the need or the imperative for recycling will be articulated and identified by that particular strategy.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, same project code 3600300, could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House what is the timeline for the completion of the consultation for this strategy?

Secondly, we were doing a number of landfill sites in the region, as part of the expansion of regional programme. What is the intention of the Ministry, in terms of the management of those sites and what kind of arrangement is intended for the management of those landfill sites? Will it be retained by the Ministry, regions, *et cetera*?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer to the first question is the first quarter in 2017 which I did say a moment ago. With regards to the operations of the new landfill sites, the strategy of the Ministry is to support the efforts of the respective councils and organs and the capital investment is being provided with regards to the identification and to bringing the site up to the condition of being usable. The actual modalities of the operation of the site, I think I could say that, it would be the expectation of the Central Government that that should be a responsibility of the respective organs and that it should not be funded, at that stage, by the Central Government. However, the initial activities are being funded by the Central Government.

Mr. Croal: Same project code. On this same Regional Solid Waste Programme for the landfill site, I heard the Hon. Minister mentioned about it being managed by the local authorities, will there be a general management system in place or would it just be the local authority on which the landfill site falls or would it be by the region? I am trying to narrow it down a little.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, following the conclusions and the recommendations arising from the National Solid Waste Management Strategy that I have referred to, a number of these details will be identified and addressed, but I think it is fair to say it would be a combination that would allow for the involvement of both the NDCs, as well as the RDCs or the municipalities and the involvement of the RDCs. It would be a combination.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, project code 2802100 – Hinterland Water Supply: In Volume 3, it would state:

“Upgrading of water supply system at schools, health facilities and government buildings.”

Could the Hon. Minister provide some more information as to the schools and the health facilities and to which government buildings they are referring to?

Mr. Bulkan: The schools and the health facilities that would benefit under this intervention would be in Regions 1, 8 and 9, and the locations are actually there also. Is there a second part to your question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister then provide that information to the House because I think that it is a little detailed and lengthy information he has there.

Mr. Bulkan: Okay. I will lay over this information with the Clerk of the National Assembly, Mr. Chairman.

7.54 p.m.

Mr. Croal: Project 1302200 the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP) programme: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the cluster areas that you are implementing this project? Secondly, did he cater for expansion on the programme?

Mr. Bulkan: This allocation is intended only for and all of the municipalities initially 2017. It is to fund activities consistent with the green agenda and in particular to fund intervention relating to green pathways, green energies and green spaces as far as infrastructure is concerned. In relation to institution of development, there is going to be training an institutional support. There is a small component of the programme that allows for supervision of the payment of salaries totalling approximately \$11 million.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister, with the other documents, provide that information to the Assembly?

Mr. Bulkan: What has been identified at this stage is the allocations against the intended activities but the actual activities themselves will be identified by the respective municipalities in conjunction and consultation with the Ministry prior to final approval. What we have here are just the sums and not the activities that will arise as a result of consultations with the respective municipalities.

Mr. Croal: The Hon. Minister, would it be implemented in all the municipalities and all local authority?

Mr. Bulkan: No. It is just the municipalities.

Mr. Croal: Project 2802800, Hinterland Sustainable Housing Programme: Could the Hon. Minister provide some information as to where these housing programmes are intended and how many household?

Mr. Bulkan: This was for households and communities in Region 1, and Region 9. In Region 1 there was a total of 20 beneficiaries in 2 communities namely Sebai and White Water. In region 9 there were a total of 5 beneficiaries in three villages Kwatamang, Massara and Katoka.

Mr. Croal: This is my final question on this programme Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister indicate when the IDB loan programme is expected to be concluded?

Mr. Bulkan: That programme is expected to come to an end in the year 2018.

Programme: 422 - Sustainable Communities Development - \$2,888,078,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Sitting suspended at 8.00 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.30 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 71 Region 1: Barima/Waini

Current Expenditure

Programme: 711 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$184,668,000

Ms. Sukhai–Campbell: Line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly whether there are adequate provision for the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) committees to adequately exercise the required level of oversight of projects and activities under their portfolio, including engagement with the people of the regions in the different sub districts?

Mr. Bulkan: The 2016 allocation under line item 6211 is the sum of roughly \$35 million which corresponded to the actual expenditure. The statutory meetings of the RDC there are six, in addition to the other activities and outreaches that the Hon. Member referred to. In 2016 the RDC did keep all of the statutory bi-monthly meeting which is a total of six and the allocation for 2017 is a slight increase over the allocation in 2016. It is undeniable that if additional resources are available that they will redound to the benefit of the council to allow it to undertake more activities. What we have here is a situation where the 2017 allocation is greater than the 201, and as a result, the current activities, which are being undertaken, would not suffer. It would be able to be maintained at the same level or slightly increased. I think that is the best answer I can give the Hon. Member.

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: Am I to believe, from the response received by the Minister, that the subcommittees of the RDC will remain handicap and will depend solely on the reports of the heads of department or an engineer, for example, the Works Committee? It is my understanding and my knowledge that many of the committees are constrained in actually carrying out their mandate as elected to do and this goes across the political divide, on both sides, that the committees are unable to adequately conduct themselves as it relates to the responsibilities entrusted upon them. I am quite aware of the six meeting held at the council level but I am more concerned about the work in the committees.

Mr. Bulkan: It is indeed a valid comment being offered by the Hon. Member. It is the desire of the administration to strengthen the effectiveness of our respective RDC and to allow for a greater level of engagement, but as it is always the case these activities could only be undertaken given the ability of the central Government to fund same within the fiscal space if you will that is available. The Hon. Member has referred to the fact that support is being provided through the regional administration and at the levels of engineers and other staff of the council, but the general intention of the administration is to allow for a greater degree of empowerment, certainly at the level of the RDC. Going forward, it is indeed desirable if greater budgetary allocation can be made available to fund a greater level of consultation at the level of the subcommittee of the RDC that the Hon. Member has referred to, but for the time being we are constrained operate within and working with the allocations that has been provided.

8.40 p.m.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under the same line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency, could the Minister tell this Assembly whether the stipends for the Toshaos would be increase now noticeably? There are many taxes that would obviously have an impact cost of living and other services and we know full well that in the hinterland many of the impacts are more heavily felt when these things take place.

Mr. Bulkan: There is no provision in this allocation for the increase in those stipends.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly whether there is any intention of providing an increase to the Toshaos as it relates to their stipends in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: No. Mr. Chairman, in the allocation for 2017 there is no such provision for any increases in those stipends.

Mr. Croal: It is same line item. Could the Hon. Minister confirm the repairs for motor vehicle assigned to the Regional Chairman and Regional Vice Chairman, whether expenses come from this line item? I just want a confirmation and then I would have a follow-up question?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that currently there is no vehicle assigned to the Regional Vice Chairman, but provision has been made under this allocation for repairs to the vehicle that is being used by the Regional Chairman.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister, through the Chairman, confirm...? It is because the RDC has requested a vehicle for the Regional Chairman and Regional Vice Chairman for the very reasons. It is a dedicated assigned vehicle, I should say, because there is an assigned vehicle. The question remains, what consideration was there that a vehicle has not been provided, a dedicatedly assigned, for the Regional Chairman and Regional Vice Chairman as it is customary in the other region?

Mr. Bulkan: There is a dedicated vehicle assigned for use by the Regional Chairman, but there is not one for the Regional Vice Chairman and there is no provision for a vehicle for the Regional Vice Chairman in the 2017 Estimates.

Mr. Croal: It is line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency, the question was just asked by my colleague, in term of the RDC. Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether he is aware that there is in place, they have a rotational for each subregion for the RDC? I will tell him why I am asking that, but I just want to know if he is aware that it is in place, a policy.

Mr. Bulkan: I am aware that it is the expectation that these meetings should be rotated between the three subregions.

Mr. Coral: Could the Hon. Minister confirm, therefore, that there have been times when they have to resort to keeping the RDC in Mabaruma simply because there are not adequate resources to hold the RDC whether it is Moruka or Matarkai, whichever one it is at the time?

Mr. Bulkan: RDC meetings were indeed held in all of the three subregions, Matarkai as well as Moruka in addition to Mabaruma. The answer to the question is yes, that there has been as a result of financial constraints, the non-adherence to the rotation from one to another, but there have been held in each of the subregions.

Mr. Croal: Therefore the Hon. Minister, through the Chairman, is confirming that in order to keep that policy the current allocation is inadequate.

Mr. Bulkan: It was not possible in 2016, but the hope would be that in 2017 that the rotational principle can be achieved.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under the line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, I wish to ask the Hon. Minister to detail to this Assembly what measures are being considered by his Ministry to close the gap between the hinterland and the coastal regions as it obtains to conditions. I have heard that there is going to be no increase for the Toshaos; there are no adequate funds to support the work of the subcommittees of the RDC; there is no vehicle assigned directly to the Regional Chairman. I would like to hear in this Assembly what measures would be considered in the very near future to support Region 1, with respect to the conditions which they operate, particularly in light that the Government has been outlining in the budget and in many other speeches that it is willing to deal with the gaps exist between coastal regions and hinterland regions.

Mr. Bulkan: First of all, the Hon. Member, referred to the line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, I believed, but I think she is actually referring to line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency. With that being the case the budgetary allocations to the regional is not confine merely to this line item, so that would be the first observation that I would make.

It is also the case that the budgetary allocations for every region has been increased in 2017 over 2016 and Hon. Members may recall in my budget presentation, one of the initiative that I spoke about was an annual activity, a new initiative, which would be currently known as the

National, Regional Development Consultative Committee, which would take place early in the new calendar year, which would bring together all our RDCs to discuss issues relating to each of our regions and would have a heavy focus on planning, management, development and financial training to strengthen the administration and effectiveness of our councils.

Within the National, Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC) allocations have already been made by the central Government to fund regional consultations, which would help to inform, in addition, to the other activities of the RDC to inform the deliberations of the annual NRDCC. Again, I would say that allocations to the regions have been increased this year by over \$2 million from a \$33.5 to a \$35.5 billion and each region has benefited from an increase.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: A follow-up on the response that the Minister provides to the Assembly. My question: Am I to understand that the funding, as the Minister noted that would be allocated at the NRDCC, would mean that there is going to be greater control over the RDC by the Minister of Communities?

Mr. Bulkan: One of the two Cs relates to the word is “Consultative”. The two Cs are the words “Consultative Committee” and not “Control Committee”. I think that betrays the intent of the programme.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6255, Maintenance of other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister provide some details on this?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision for 2017 is a sum of \$6.6 million and the activities to be funded under the maintenance, these include upgrading the electricity network in Mabaruma, repairs to the storage tank at the Mabaruma power house, similar activities at the Moruka power house. It includes the repair to a guard hut at the Mabaruma administrative office, the fuel bond at Mabaruma, the Mabaruma boat house, the Moruka power house, maintenance works at the Moruka guest house and the Moruka administration office as well as the Moruka boat house.

Mr. Croal: Two final questions under this programme. One, same line item 6255, Maintenance of other Infrastructure, the Hon. Minister would have indicated an allocation going towards, for one reason or the other, for Mabaruma power house. We would have had the Minister of Public Infrastructure, so making mention of allocations to the Mabaruma

power. My question would be, therefore, what guideline and what system is there in place to ensure that we do not have duplicity in terms of allocation to Mabaruma power?

Mr. Bulkan: I thank the Hon. Member for the question. It is entirely valid. There would be coordination between the Ministries and, of course, the RDC based there at Mabaruma. I think there is very little likelihood that you could have any duplication of the activities, but I would like to assure the Hon. Member, that there would be coordination between the respective agencies to ensure that their money is spent effectively and there is no duplication in relation to the works being undertaken.

8.55 p.m.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister provide to us an intended breakdown of the allocation and the fleet of vehicles under the administration programme?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the current fleet of vehicles is two vehicles and the allocation is intended for maintenance and spares for those two vehicles.

Mr. Croal: I did say the last, but just on this same one. The two vehicles, could the Hon. Minister provide to us who they are assigned to, or department I should say?

Mr. Bulkan: One vehicle is assigned to the Regional Executive Officer (REO) and one to the Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO), the AREO located in Moruka.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what is the security risk in the region for the budget to the administration to have the security budget the fourth largest amount allocated?

Mr. Chairman: Is there a line item, Hon. Member?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Yes Mr. Chairman. It is 6281, Security Services at \$22,368,000.

Mr. Bulkan: Could I respectfully ask the Hon. Member to repeat the question please?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: My question had to do with whether the Minister can detail to the Assembly the security risk which exist in Region 1 to have allocated the fourth largest allocation under the regional administration and finance budget, bearing in mind that the

security vote got \$22,368,000 and when I look also at line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency it is a mere \$37 million.

Mr. Bulkan: The budgetary allocation and the provision is to provide security services at the three locations, Mabaruma, Matarkai and Moruka. That is how it has been in years past.

Mr. G. Persaud: A very simple question to the Hon. Minister, line item 6272, Electricity Charges: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the current allocation for 2017 includes the VAT computation for this programme?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer would be similar to the one I gave earlier in relation to the Ministry. The answer is yes. It does take into account that this is the allocation that is provided for electricity charges in 2017.

Programme: 711- Regional Administration and Finance - \$184,668,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 711- Regional Administration and Finance - \$25,975,000

Mr. Croal: Project 1208600 Buildings – Administration: The legend states that there are two, one for the regional administration office at Mabaruma, which is the provision for the regional administration office and the enclosure at Port Kaituma. The first question pertains to the building for Mabaruma. Could the Hon. Minister provide the dimension or the size of the administrative office that is going to be constructed? Secondly, the enclosure for Port Kaituma, just to confirm, is that the new administrative building at Port Kaituma? I am just confirming.

Mr. Bulkan: The dimensions for the first component, that is the administrative building at Mabaruma, are 80 x 30. The answer to the second question is yes. It is the building at Port Kaituma.

Mr. Croal: As a follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister therefore confirm if the building at Mabaruma is the very building for skill training being referred to for the completion for administrative purposes?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is yes.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that this is a capital item and you are speaking of the construction of the administrative building but the building that you are referring to is - I am not an engineer but by my own estimation - probably about 50% complete, it may be less, of an existing building for administrative purpose? Therefore, somewhere along the line, the legend has to reflect the correct information.

Mr. Bulkan: I am not sure I can agree with the comment that is made by the Hon. Member because it is actually completion of the building and it is by nature capital in scope. I do not think it is incorrect, the way it is stated here in the legend, that it is a capital project.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under the same project 1208600 Buildings – Administration, could the Minister confirm whether this building is being rehabilitated for use by the town council?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no. This building is intended to be used by the RDC and probably at some stage later in the consideration of the Estimates there is provision for support for completion of a building for use by the municipality of Mabaruma. The answer is no for the RDC use.

Mr. Croal: Project 1208600 Buildings - Administration: Could the Hon. Minister provide to us the allocation for the Mabaruma building and the allocation for the Kaituma building?

Mr. Bulkan: Those sums are \$10 million and \$8 million respectively.

Mr. Croal: Project 2401500 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister provide to us the cost allocation of the boat and engine to be bought and to whom it will be assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation is \$5.1 million and it is intended to procure a boat with canopy together with a 200 horsepower outboard engine and is for use at Mabaruma for the use of the RDC.

Programme: 711- Regional Administration and Finance - \$25,975,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$286,601,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the allocation, the areas which are identified, and probably the length or the duration, from where to where, for the maintenance of roads?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation is meant to fund rehabilitation works in 11 locations. These are namely rehabilitation to 1.2 kilometres of roads at the Mabaruma airstrip, 2.9 kilometres at the Mabaruma/Kumaka stretch, 3.9 kilometres to repairs to Hosororo Hill, 3.1 kilometres to Thomas Hill, 4.5 kilometres to Barabina Hill, 16.1 kilometres to Bumbury Road, 3.3 Kilometres Kumaka District Hospital Road, 4.2 kilometres to the Bemichi airstrip road in Moruka, 10 kilometres in Manawarin, that is for repairs and 2.5 kilometres to the Orinduik Swamp Road.

Mr. Croal: Just briefly. It is if the Hon. Minister can indicate the nature of the work. For example Mabaruma will have roads most likely it will be patching but for some they are more problematic in terms of layering. Just give us the nature of the roads from Moruka, Mabaruma and the one that is near to Kaituma.

Mr. Bulkan: The scope of works mainly has to do with addressing the numerous potholes, inadequate drains, in many cases the shoulders are too high and that, of course, would affect the drainage, reduce the width of the road to address issues such as erosion and inadequate drainage. That is the main scope of work.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6231, Fuel Lubricants, allocation \$100,887,000: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide the list of vehicles and equipment which will benefit from this allocation and also to whom these vehicles are assigned?

9.10 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that approximately 80% of the allocation is for the generator for use at the Mabaruma Power Station. The other 20% would allow for fuel and lubricants to the road maintenance equipment.

Mr. G. Persaud: A follow-up: I am confirming that there was no vehicle under this Programme.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the vehicles are strictly road maintenance vehicles. I am not sure if the Hon. Member is referring to the vehicles that are used by the regional administration. I am told that the allocation is for the road maintenance vehicles.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6254 – Vehicle Spares and Service - \$18.5 million: Would the Hon. Minister tell us how many vehicles are under this Programme and to whom these vehicles are assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member referred to line item 6254 but the figure that he quoted does not correspond with that line item.

Mr. G. Persaud: Sorry, Mr. Chairman; it was my error. It is line item 6264.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the budgeted sum of \$18.5 million is also intended to be used for the generator as well as the road maintenance vehicles that I referred to earlier.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am sorry to belabour this question but line item 6264 states Vehicle Spares and Service. I am not seeing anything dealing with equipment. Equipment Maintenance is line item 6282. I am talking about line item 6264.

Mr. Chairman: Is there a question that you have asked?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bulkan: The Legend does refer to Vehicle Spares and Service. Even though it is road maintenance equipment, they are indeed vehicles. I am advised that this allocation is utilised towards the maintenance of those particular vehicles.

Mr. G. Persaud: I put five questions and I am still awaiting the answer. How many vehicles are under this Programme and will benefit from fuel, spares and services?

Mr. Bulkan: There is one roller, one tractor and one All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV).

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: The Minister noted a small but increasing volume of money from \$60,000 in 2015 to \$120,000 in 2017. Who has determined the drugs to be purchased? What is the method of procurement and who will be managing these drugs under this single Programme – Public Works?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that the Hon. Member would be aware that this particular allocation is not for the medical programme but it is for Public Works Programme and the items to be procured are basic First Aid kits. It is a function of the administration to determine what items would normally be in the First Aid kit.

Dr. Ramsaran: I fully recognise that this is not the full-blown health programme. This is just a subset in Public Works. The increase has been significant from \$60,000 in 2015 to \$120,000 in 2017. What accounts for that increase, Hon. Minister? Do you recall that we are on top of malaria and other diseases in that area? What accounts for 100% increase in one small Programme when you had medical supplies in the medical programme within two years?

Mr. Bulkan: I notice that the Hon. Member is taking us back to 2015. The increase in 2017 as against 2016, if my Math is correct, is about 20%. It takes the sum up by \$20,000, from \$100,000 to \$120,000, not insubstantial amount of money but, by the same token, it is a modest increase.

Dr. Ramsaran: I went back to the previous year because, with the span of about 18 months, it is 100% and this is repetitive in every Programme. My concern is: are we suddenly not on top of the public health issues? If you are increasing from \$60,000, do you recognise that \$60,000 in 2015 to \$120,000 in 2017 is within two years? What accounts for that increase? Are there certain diseases? More particularly, could the Minister note that this repeats in every other small Programme. For example, the previous Programme was \$50,000 I think. It continues to be over \$2 million in Education, and so on. Those are small but significant numbers other than the Health Programme.

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member is correct that the percentage increase does appear to be significant but the actual sums are certainly not significant. It has moved from \$60,000 to \$120,000 in the period of two years.

Mr. Croal: This is the last question for us on this Programme. Line items 6251 to 6255: Could the Hon. Minister provide to the House a breakdown of this allocation? There is no necessity to read it out; just submit or layover, as they say.

Mr. Bulkan: I noted the request by the Hon. Member to layover the details. I can certainly do so.

Programme 712: Public Works – 286,601,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$53,586,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Project code 1100200 - Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister provide the details of the allocation for the bridges and what amount is allocated for retention?

Mr. Bulkan: The retention amounts are approximately \$1.394 million for the Bridge at Papaya in the Matarkai sub-region and the sum of approximately \$1.637 million retention for the bridge at Arucuru in Mabaruma. The remaining amounts are the sum of \$10.167 million allocated for rehabilitation of a bridge at Fifty Acres, Mabaruma and \$7 million for the rehabilitation of a bridge at Para on the Kaituma Main Road.

Mr. Croal: Project code 1400400 – Roads: Could the Hon. Minister provide similar information as he just did for the bridges?

Could the Hon. Minister repeat the allocation under project code 1100200 for the last allocation that he gave?

Mr. Bulkan: The final item under project code 1100200 is the sum of approximately \$10.167 million for rehabilitation of the timber bridge at Fifty Acres.

Under project code 1400400 there are two retentions at approximately \$790,000 for works done to the Kumaka/Kwabanna Road and a retention of approximately \$696,000 for the Kumaka Junction to Kobarimo Bridge on the Hosororo Road. The sum of \$16 million is allocated for completion of the Double Bituminous Surface Treatment (DBST) Road from the Mabaruma Nursery School to the North West Secondary School in Mabaruma.

Mr. Croal: The same project code 1400400: Could the Hon. Minister, in conformity with his Regional Executive Officer (REO) provide to us where we have an allocation for the Wauna stretch?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that an allocation for the Wauna stretch has been made under the Hinterland Roads Programme which is being conducted under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. It is not an allocation under the Regional Democratic Council.

Mr. Croal: My last request under this Programme is: Could the Hon. Minister, like the others, provide the information to the House of the entire allocation and its intent?

Mr. Bulkan: There are just three activities.

Mr. Croal: The submissions not...

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$53,586,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

9.25 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery - \$1,160,448,000

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Under 2016, there was an increased spending over the allocation for 2016 and then, under 2017, there is an allocation that is less than the actual expenditure for 2016. So, can the Hon. Minister provide to the House the reason for the increased spending in 2016 and what makes a difference to have a decrease in 2017?

Mr. Chairman: Could the Hon. Member repeat the line item, please?

Mr. Croal: It is line item is 6291 – National and Other Events.

Mr. Bulkan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. The increased expenditure in 2016 was as a result of activities relating to the Jubilee celebrations and the 2017 provision seeks to bring it more in line with the original 2016 allocation but with a slight increase from \$18 million to \$19.8 million.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Can the Hon. Minister indicate where the \$90 million would be expended and for what?

Mr. Bulkan: The list is actually quite long. It covers many activities in many locations. Among the locations are Saint Nicholas, Moruka, Mabaruma, Wallaba, and Arakaka; Nursery Schools in Saint Nicholas, Katchikamo, Saint John's, Falls Stop, Yarikita, Saint Margaret's, Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's, Arakaka and Saint Mary's; Secondary Schools in Port Kaituma, North West Secondary, Santa Rosa...

Mr. Croal: Okay, Hon. Minister; I noticed the number of pages. So, can you have that submitted to the House?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes.

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

Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could the Hon. Minister say to us whether this allocation caters for hot meals to the students in Region 1, if it caters for children at the nursery as well as the primary schools and whether this allocation is intended to take care of the students who also reside in the dormitories across the region? Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to the first question posed by the Hon. Member is that this allocation does not provide for the hot meal programme. I believe that is under the Ministry of Education. This allocation is for the dormitories at the three locations – North West Secondary, Santa Rosa and Port Kaituma.

Mr. G. Persaud: Hon. Minister, I am confirming that no allocations were provided to Region 1, Programme 713 – Education Delivery - for any hot meal programme in this region. Is that correct, Sir?

Mr. Bulkan: That programme is funded by allocations under the Ministry of Education and not the Regional Democratic Council.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Minister say to us who will benefit from this training? How will the beneficiaries be selected? Where would the training be done, as well as the types of training?

Mr. Bulkan: The beneficiaries are teachers across the region. The determination is generally made by the RDC and the institutions where the training is conducted are the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) and the University of Guyana.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister say to us how many vehicles, boats and engines will benefit from this allocation? And would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over the details as to the location of these vehicles, boats and engines?

Mr. Bulkan: In the interest of time and accuracy, I think it is much better to lay over this information for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Is that acceptable, Hon. Members? Yes, it is. Thank you.

Mr. Bharrat: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Can the Hon. Minister say what the \$23 million will be spent on? There is an increase of \$4 million, taking into consideration line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - the \$90 million allocation.

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum covers many activities such as maintenance of bridges in Barima/Waini locations - Saint Peter and Paul, Saint John, Katchikamo, Warapoka, and Arukamai. It includes desilting of trenches in various locations such as Barasina, around the Sacred Heart Primary School, St. Dominic's Primary School compound, and Saint Mary's Primary School compound. It includes repairs to revetment in locations such as Mabaruma as well as Saint Peter and Paul; repairs to fences in about eight locations. Those are some of the activities, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, our last request under this programme from this side would be for line item 6252 to line item 6255. Can the Hon. Minister just submit it to the House?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the request is that you submit the information to the House.

Mr. Bulkan: Will do.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$1,160,448,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$130,406,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1202600 – Buildings – Education: There is an \$80.079 million allocation. Can the Hon. Minister provide some information on this allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation is to fund 10 activities, two of these being retention payments and the other eight both completion and construction beginning with a construction of a secondary school at Waramuri – approximately \$4.5 million; a nursery school at Baramita – \$17 million; and teachers' quarters at Morawhanna – \$10 million. There is a similar activity at Baramita for the identical activity as well as sum; in Matarkai, and Matthew's Ridge teachers' quarters; extension of Baramita Primary – \$10.8 million; enclosure of the teachers' building at Moruka –\$8 million and enclosure at Kwabanna building for a similar sum of \$8 million.

Mr. Croal: On the same project code 1202600 – Buildings - can the Hon. Minister provide the allocation for Matthew's Ridge? And then the last information provided was the enclosure of teachers' quarters but the legend states Wauna and Kwabanna. Kwabanna will cover Moruka and then the other one is Mabaruma. So, maybe I think you made a little mistake in mentioning it.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, for Matthew's Ridge, it is the teachers' quarters for the sum of \$10 million. At Wauna, it is \$8 million. The Hon. Member is correct; the last one at Kwabanna is for the Moruka sub district for \$8 million.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$130,406,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$641,263,000

Dr. Ramsaran: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Could I take you to line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies? Does the Minister recognise that, within the past two years, there is a 100% increase from \$42.164 million to \$84 million, as published in his Budget?

9.40 p.m.

Could the Minister please say why the changes and what are the emerging public health threats? Would the Minister say if it is reasonable to deduce that, with this 100% increase, there are some changes with the public health threats? What are those public health threats? Who has determined the list of medications? Could the Minister give us a detailed list of the medications which this sum of money would buy? Could the Minister say who will be responsible for custody and accountability for the medication in the region? Finally, what would be the method of procurement of these drugs?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am unaware of any public health threat in the Barima/Waini Region. It is, however, the case that the allocations have almost doubled from 2015 to 2017. I think it speaks to a commitment on the part of central Government to provide more drugs to the residents in the region. Given the fact that there is no public health threat, I do not think it is something that is ill but it signifies greater care and concern.

With regard to the identification of what medication and drugs are to be procured, I am advised that this determination is made mainly by the Ministry of Public Health, upon the advice of the Regional Health Officer based in the region. The method of procurement remains with the central Ministry. I believe it is well known that this is *via* the competitive bidding processes.

Dr. Ramsaran: Mr. Chairman, I welcome the concern and care taken to provide health services. Does the Minister recognise that medications and medical supplies are very specific? Does the Minister recognise that there is a 100% increase? Does he recognise that the technical people giving that indication for a 100% increase must have identified the need for it? Does the Minister recognise that the Budget is a costed plan? And from that perspective, does he recognise that his answer might need strengthening? Does he recognise that he needs to tell us why there has been a 100% increase in this small region? Could he address his mind to that? Coming out of what the Minister said, could he give us a list of the medications which would be purchased with this sum of money and which would be lodged in that region for use in that region?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member has requested a list of the drugs intended to be purchased under this allocation and such a list will be provided to the Hon. Member.

With regard to the identification of the drugs, I am advised that the Regional Democratic Council is consulted and is aware of what drugs and medications are intended to be purchased under this Programme. The RDC is involved in this process. This is not an activity that is conducted outside of their purview and engagement. While the major determination would be done at the level of the Regional Health Officer, it certainly allows for the involvement of the RDC. The list that was requested by the Hon. Member I can certainly undertake to provide for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Dr. Ramsaran: Thank you, Hon. Minister, for such a detailed answer. The final question is: will we be given the exact list of the drugs which will be deposited in the region for this sum of money? Who will be accountable for the drugs in the region? For example, if 10 aspirin is bought, would it be sent to that region because that money was voted for that region? Who will be accountable for the medication in the region? Would the auditors check the specific drugs for the region? Why do I ask? I ask because the list that the good Minister will give me will have to reflect what is being sent to the region. The Minister, I do know, recognises the accountability aspect of that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there a response you wish to give?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the list that will be furnished is not a list of items that will be supplied but a list of items that has been requested by the RDC. That is the information that the Hon. Member will receive. The allocation is specific to Region 1. This provision only caters for drugs and medication to be supplied to Region 1, in accordance with the list that would have emanated from the RDC *via* the health programme.

Mr Croal: Mr. Chairman, line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what would be the methodology for the procurement of drugs for the regional health programme.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe this matter was addressed already and rehashed in the previous Budget discussions. Under programme budgeting, the allocation is made *via* the RDC but the procurement is done at the central level. It is consolidated, I believe, for efficiency and more competitive prices. The method of procurement is *via* competitive bidding.

Mr. Croal: Thank you, Hon. Minister. While you would have done that method in 2016, we still want confirmation for 2017. When we get to the Ministry of Public Health, we would ask differently.

The last question under this programme – Maintenance of Buildings – there is a slight increase...

Mr. Chairman: The line item, Hon. Member.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: There is a \$15 million increase. Could you say what it is intended to do?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there are quite a number of activities. Briefly, it is for repairs to the Kumaka District Hospital, the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) quarters in Mabaruma, the Medex Quarters in Waramuri, Health Posts in Kariako, St. Johns, Morawhanna and Lower Kaituma and the Medex Quarters in Arakaka. I am willing to lay over this information for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: I will now put the question.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, just a confirmation that we would like to have it in writing too.

Mr. Chairman: I beg your pardon, Hon. Member.

Mr. Croal: I was just confirming the suggestion by the Hon. Member that it is welcomed that he submits the list to the House.

Mr. Chairman: Very good. Thank you.

Programme: 714 – Health Services - \$641,263,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 714 – Health Services - \$127,375,000

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, project code 2401500 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister provide what is intended to be procured here and to where they would be assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the allocation is to fund the purchase of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) for Baramita and a boat and engine for Moruka.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, a little finer detail in terms of the allocation for Moruka...

Mr. Bulkan: Hon. Member, did you say the amount for the allocation to Moruka?

Mr. Croal: Is the allocation to the hospital or a particular community?

Mr. Bulkan: It is for the hospital, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Ramsaran: Project code 1202400 – Buildings – Health: Could the Hon. Minister please tell us what is the intention and in relation to what? Could he give us the breakdown for the three sub items - payment of retention, construction of living quarters and upgrading of health post?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there is one retention payment in the sum of \$781,000 for the construction of a health post and living quarters at Katchikamo. The other capital projects are the construction of a medex and midwife quarters at Manawarin at the budgeted sum of \$10.218 million; construction of a doctor's quarters at Kwabanna at budgeted sum of \$10 million; upgrading of the Baramita Health Post at the budgeted sum of \$37 million; and construction of nurses' quarters at Baramita to the tune of \$12 million.

Programme: 714 – Health Services - \$127,375,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

9.55 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members. That has brought to an end the work that we have allocated to us for today. Let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: The Assembly is resumed. Hon. Prime Minister, we will receive from you a motion for the adjournment of the House.

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: I move that the National Assembly be adjourned to Thursday 15th December, 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow Thursday 15th December, 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 9.59 p.m.