



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

OFFICIAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION
(2020-2023) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR
CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE, LILIENDAAL, GREATER GEORGETOWN*

61ST Sitting

Wednesday, 1ST February, 2023

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

The Assembly convened at 10.14 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Update on Members recovery

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I noted we still have quite a few Members of Parliament who are not well. However, some are recovering quite speedily. Today, let us again continue in the same vein as we have done in the last two days.

Motion

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023

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

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2023 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on January 16, 2023, as summarised in the attached Schedule 1;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution requires that the expenditure of each of the Constitutional Agencies listed in the Third Schedule of the Constitution be financed as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund determined as a lumpsum by way of an annual subvention approved by the National Assembly after a review and approval of the

Constitutional Agency's annual budget as a part of the process of the determination of the national budget;

AND WHEREAS the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, Cap. 73.02, requires that the annual lump sum subvention recommended by the Minister with Responsibility for Finance for each Constitutional Agency be included in the annual budget proposal for approval by the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Minister with Responsibility for Finance recommends lump sum subventions for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2023 as summarised in the attached Schedule 2;

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

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2023, of a total sum of seven hundred and twenty-one billion, five hundred and twenty-nine million, and seven hundred and thirty-four thousand dollars (\$721,529,734,000), excluding sixty billion, three hundred and fifty-one million, two hundred and twenty-nine dollars (\$60,351,229,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in Schedule 1, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and make further provision in respect of finance:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly approves the recommended lumpsum subvention for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2023 as stated in Schedule 2, amounting to a total sum of thirteen billion, eight hundred and six million, five hundred and seventy-seven dollars (\$13,806,577,000) which is charged upon the Consolidated Fund by the

Constitution and for the sums voted for the Constitutional Agencies to form part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures of Guyana for the financial year 2023.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the sum of \$208,944,156,942, equivalent to US\$1,002,130,249, to be withdrawn from the Natural Resource Fund for the financial year 2023 in accordance with the Natural Resource Fund Act 2021.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members we continue with the consideration of the estimates. Today, we have the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. The House will resolve itself into the Committee of Supply.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. The House is now in Committee of Supply. Hon. Minister, what we could do is we could alternate between the two sets of tables. So, we could give the staff an opportunity to clean one side because the current bug is very contagious. Let us welcome the Hon. Minister, and his team from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Agency: 13 – Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Current Expenditure

Programme: 131 – Policy Development and Administration – \$376,432,000

Mr. Mahipaul: I draw your attention to line item 6111, Administrative, this line item catered for 16 staff in 2022 and they expended a sum of \$29.718 million, of which \$31.679 million was budgeted. When I do the calculation and I add the 8% increase, given that there is a decrease to 15 staff members now, it is coming below \$32.095 million. Could the Hon. Minister guide us as to why the overbudgeting to \$33.175 million taking into account the Auditor General constant guidance of us having direct budgeted figures for direct or fixed expenditure?

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Dharamlall]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, everyone. Firstly, the decrease is as a result of the resignation of an

officer within the chart of account. The increase caters for the new salaries that have to be paid to staff within the line item.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 629, National and Other Events, there is a significant decrease to \$5 million from what was expended in 2022. The 2022 expended sum is \$18.771 million. May I ask the Minister, what event was catered for in 2022 that will not be catered for in 2023?

Mr. Dharamlall: We have a number of national activities including Mashramani, Independence, and the different other holidays that we are catering for under this line item.

Mr. Chairman: Turn the microphone off when you are finished.

Mr. Mahipaul: Who? Is it me?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. When you are finished asking the question, because we are going to get a feedback.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. I am happy for that guidance. The \$5 million caters for those activities. What I am seeing in 2022, is a sum of \$18.771 expended under this line item and a reduction to \$5 million. I would like to know what is it that is not catered for in 2023 that was catered for in 2022?

Mr. Dharamlall: We have reprogrammed some of the activities that we had planned under this line item to other programmes.

Mr. Mahipaul: My final question on this line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), guided by Volume 2 of the Estimates, this Ministry targeted 185 staff members to be trained with the allocation sum of \$2.9 million. All were utilised but only 27 staff members were trained in specific areas.

10.23 a.m.

I see that there is a target now for 50 members to be trained but the same sum of \$2.9 million is budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House what are the training that will be given to these 50 staff members? Does he agree, given that 27 staff were trained with \$2.9 million that he will reach the target of 50 staff with the same \$2.9 million?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes. Mr. Chairman, I believe we will reach the target and if I were to expound more, the training is not as linear in the way that Mr, Mahipaul is describing it and so the cost of the training and the number of persons trained has nothing to do with last year figure compared to the number that we intend to train during the course of 2023.

Programme: 131 – Policy Development and Administration – \$376,432,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 131– Policy Development and Administration – \$22,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, project code 1904800, Infrastructural Development, the legend guides me that this caters for drains, fire escape trestles and plumbing system. May I ask specifically which drain or what are the drains that are catered for here?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, these are drains that are in the compound of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and some may be exterior to the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development but they serve the purposes of drainage of the compound of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Minister guide me if that means that they are widening the drains or are they going to remove the current reinforced concrete drains that exist and replace it? In terms of exterior, does this mean that you are redoing that concrete reinforced drain at the front of the compound?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, we are enhancing the compound drainage system of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. Whenever it rains, sometimes incessantly, the compound is flooded so the resources are there towards enhancing drainage of the Ministry's compound.

Programme: 131– Policy Development and Administration – \$22,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 133 – Regional Development – \$81,400,000

Programme: 133– Regional Development – \$81,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 133 – Regional Development – \$264,150,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, Project Code – 1904100, the restoration of City Hall, could the Hon. Minister give us an update as to the current status of this project, please?

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I am very happy that this question was asked. City Hall has been in a dilapidated state for a very long time, with no fault of this Government. One of the commitments President Mr. Ali made as soon as he took office was the transformation of Georgetown. At the first Cabinet meeting, resources were geared toward the enhancement of Georgetown. Subsequent to that, the City Hall, an iconic and historic structure within the landscape of Georgetown, resources were allocated for its restoration. This building has been under the administration of the City Council for all of the years that the council has been in existence. It is quite alarming, and I think even some words which we would not be able to use here, the City Council of Georgetown is controlled primarily and almost exclusively by the Peoples National Congress (PNC) and of recent vintage, the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance for Change (APNU/AFC) of which again, the PNC is the primary partner. It left this building to rot over a number of years, and it is quite unfortunate that the office of the city, at one time, was in the City Hall, and it became a national embarrassment for our country, so we have taken this grand step to ensure that this iconic structure and this structure... The city transcends the politics of our country and even goes beyond the minute details with which the Mayor would like the city to be managed.

I have the Local Government Commission staff here and often times we have decisions of the Council gone to.... Some of those decisions went to the court and those decisions had to be overturned by the court because of the imposition of the political directorate at City Hall. What it has done over the last years, it refused to put resources towards cleaning Georgetown. It refused to put resources towards the restoration of City Hall. It refused to put resources towards safety and security in the city where the Constabulary has been hamstrung for decades. It refused to put

resources to the markets of Georgetown and it refused to put resources towards the upliftment of the aesthetics of the city. Whilst it refused almost everything to be done in the city, it has spent in excess of \$2.1 billion per year. The majority of which, went to pay staff, hundreds of whom may be what we call ‘ghosts’ because a lot of resources went for political purposes rather than when to fixing the City Hall and that is why we have taken this step to make sure that we spend resources to fix City Hall and restore Georgetown to its original glory. That is what we have to do. Since this contract was signed, Mr. Chairman, we have been steadfastly working. The restoration is quite an intricate exercise and as we are working, we are finding many other things that need to be fixed as well or restored. We will not fast-track this process at the expense or compromise it on the quality of the work. We have done tremendous work already and so far; we are on time to complete at the end of the contract period.

Mr. Ramjattan: I heard the Minister indicated just now that this contract was signed, this is an appropriation to go towards the contract and is that not so?

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, when I was a young boy, we used to look forward to Mr. Ramjattan, he has always been an eloquent person in the Progressive Youth Organisation of Guyana (PYO) and he has always been studious and it shudders my mind that from 1992 to now Mr. Ramjattan has deteriorated, that he has...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think you are imputing there you know. Please withdraw that? I would not have you because the Hon. Member and I have been along the same path.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, you are getting better with time. Hon. Mr. Ramjattan ought to have known that we have had this contract running for quite a while and this is the payment that will be made during the course of this year Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Ramjattan: As regards to status report that you previously were asked, if this project is about 75% completed?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have listened to this budget debate over a number of years and one of the things that I would like to make very clear is that I am trained as a project management professional and the code of ethics that I subscribed to does not speak in terms of physical completion – percent complete – because we can complete this entire building but the washroom

is not fixed so the building is not complete. What Mr. Ramjattan is referring to is maybe the payment– the financial disbursements. I cannot commit to Mr. Ramjattan on whether a project is 75% complete or not. What I can tell him is what has been done so far and what is left to be done. I am happy to report that we are moving on schedule and I would invite Mr. Ramjattan at some point in time to visit the site, they have never visited, none of the Members of the Opposition has never visited despite they are in control of the city. They have never taken the opportunity to visit the most iconic structure in the city.

Programme: 133 – Regional Development – \$264,150,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

10.38 a.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 134 – Local Government Development – \$1,593,198,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency: Deputy Mayors, Mayors, Regional Executive Officers (REOs), Overseers, Chairmen of neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs), Town Clerks and Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the respective regions receive their benefits in the form of stipends. Mayors and Deputy Mayors in the hinterland communities were getting \$110,000 and \$85,000, respectively. Town Clerks in the hinterland regions were getting \$78,000, respectively. However, as of 2021, these sums were cut and Mayors from the hinterland regions are now getting \$75,000; Deputy Mayors are getting \$60,000; and Town Clerks are getting \$50,000. Could the Hon. Minister say what is responsible or why were these sums cut for these officers in the hinterland communities?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mahipaul,

Mr. Chairman: It is Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Member has forgotten a very important part of his questioning, the reason behind his question. That is to say that there is a document we have in the Ministry that the last Government issued on how much the stipend should be. If there is one thing we inherited and continue to pursue, is the stipend paid to Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and Town Clerks. Just to say

also, Mr. Chairman, councils are also allowed to pay additional stipends to their Councillors, which include Mayors and Deputy Mayors. They are also supposed to pay salaries to the staff of their councils, including the Town Clerk who is the accounting officer of the council. A lot of the councils have rated areas while some do not. In cases where there are no rated areas, the Government would assist in the payment of salaries as we have done since we came in 2020. Every year we have done so for both sets of Local Democratic Organs (LDOs) – the municipalities as well as the neighbourhood democratic councils. So, what we have been working on is making sure that there is better collection. Rate collection in councils is still very minimal at this point in time. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage the Guyanese people, including Members of the Opposition, to pay their rates and taxes on time. Thank you.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, line item 6211, the same line item: The stipends that are paid to Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Overseers, NDC's Chairmen, Town Clerks, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen were birthed out of the National Conference of Local Democratic Organs (NCLDO). It was a widely consultative programme that allowed for these numbers that were fixed. The Mayors of the hinterland regions – \$110,000; the Deputy Mayors – \$85,000; and the Town Clerks – \$78,000. These figures are now cut. My simple question to the Hon. Minister is: Why did they cut the stipends for these officers? Sir, I would accept if you could please put this to the Hon. Minister for an answer as to why there was a cut in these stipends?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, what is the reason for the reduction of the stipends?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have answered that question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Did you answer it? I am sorry, I apologise. In the interest of time, for line item 6294, Other, there is a significant increase here. Could the Hon. Minister say if this line item caters for more than the 13 landfill sites? If there are additional landfill sites from the 13 that were there, how many more were added?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the management of solid waste is one of the biggest challenges we have in this country. Thirteen disposal sites, dumpsites or sanitary landfills would not resolve the solid waste management problems we have in Guyana. So, we have started expanding on some of these. We have also included additional areas for operations. This line item will take care of the additional areas. Again, as I have the floor, this is a national issue which all of us need to buy into

and contribute towards alleviating, and that is the wanton disposal of garbage across our country. Last year January, His Excellency the President began and led by himself in Georgetown and across the country, national clean-up exercises. Unfortunately, we have not had the participation of any Member of the Opposition – any one of the 31 Members of Parliament (MPs). We have not even had a statement from any one of the Members of the Opposition on this issue. This is a national issue; this goes beyond your narrow political interests. So, I would like, Mr. Chairman, if you could also use your good office to encourage the Opposition to join this effort, as we move towards transforming the aesthetics of Guyana, including the City of Georgetown which is still one of the eyesores.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I would also like to use the good office of the Chair to see if you could give us an answer to the question asked about the landfill sites.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I answered. I said that we have new facilities as well.

Mr. Chairman: There were 13 and now we are trying to see how many.

Mr. Dharamlall: It has increased, yes.

Mr. Chairman: Has it increased?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it has increased.

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, Sir. I asked how many it has increased to – from 13 to what.

Mr. Chairman: Maybe it is to be determined.

Mr. Mahipaul: Pardon me?

Mr. Chairman: Maybe it is to be determined.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, with your permission, I wish to quote the *Hansard* of last year, the 44th Sitting for this very question. The Hon. Minister was very direct:

“We have 13 out of 15 landfill sites that we are paying for. We also have some additional ones that will be constructed this year.”

So, that was last year. How many were constructed this year that is added to this sum? I think that is direct. Give a figure of whether it is one, two or three that were added to the existing 13, please, Sir.

Mr. Dharamlall: Six additional sites are catered for.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Yes, let us all join in the efforts to keep our country clean. Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, you have the floor.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. Could the Hon. Minister say from this sum, how much is allocated for the Haags Bosch Landfill site? Well, the difference would be for the other landfill sites.

Mr. Dharamlall: At the Haags Bosch Landfill Facility, every day more garbage is going. One of the issues we have is that it is also taking garbage from Region 3, where Mr. Mahipaul has spent a lot of his years. For the purposes of this Parliament, communication is one of the tenets of project management. I have to communicate because people must know. Mr. Mahipaul is living very close to the sanitary landfill now so, I think that is why he might be interested. He lives very close to Haags Bosch now. It is almost \$300 million that will go towards the management of...

Mr. Chairman: Has he moved into Windsor Estates?

Mr. Dharamlall: In one of the high-end lots, with high-end buildings, I think that is where Mr. Mahipaul lives now – auspices of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C).

Programme: 134 – Local Government Development – \$1,593,198,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 134 – Local Government Development – \$16,627,109,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1302200, Community Infrastructure Improvement Project: In 2020, the budget had \$50 million under this project code. In 2021, we had \$1.172 billion. In 2022, we had \$6.9 billion and here in 2023, we have \$13,122, 609,000. It is an excess of \$21 billion or just around. This project code had \$21.244 billion since 2020. Two projects continue to reoccur under this project code, and they are the Mon Repos and Parika markets. Since 2020, they have been

coming. Would the Hon. Minister please provide us with an update on the current status of these two markets, if they are expected to be finished in 2023, or if they will reoccur in 2024?

Mr. Dharamlall: Again, we have put a lot of resources toward transforming regional economies, and marketplaces are significant centres of business in many of our regions. These markets have been a hotchpotch arrangement from time immemorial. So, President Dr. Ali, during many of his outreaches and after numerous supplications from people, we have decided as a Government to enhance the quality of services in these markets. Resources have been geared towards the Parika, Mon Repos, Charity and many markets across the country. We have consistently been upgrading these markets during different phases. So, until we are finished, we will see resources every year allocated in the budget for these markets. For instance, at Mon Repos, on the eastern wing, we are about to complete that. We will actually have tiled surfaces and an almost modern eastern wing. We also began construction on the western wing, which will have a mezzanine floor as well, something that is aliened to market structures in the country, and which is a norm in many developed countries. Mon Repos is going to be one of the outstanding markets.

In Parika, the area has been relatively congested for a number of years. We have taken a decision too as a Government to expand the market in phases and rebuild it in steel so that more persons can be housed in it. When we are finished, hopefully, we will be able to also get the vendors who have transgressed onto the road, into the market, which is the proper environment for them to ply their trade.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir on the same project code, may I ask the Hon. Minister, how many national pathway workers this project caters for?

10.53 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, a commitment of our Government is to provide more opportunities for gainful employment. This pathway programme is a commitment of the Peoples' Progressive Party/Civic in our manifesto to make sure that as many persons get employment as possible. I have to give you some history behind it because you need to understand why it is here. This project came out and a lot of the attention was placed in the rural areas because of the dissemination of jobs between the years of 2015 and the mid of 2020, in that period where thousands of jobs were lost. Last year, we started the implementation of this programme and we

have had almost 11,000 persons from Regions 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10 and we are hopeful to intensify the implementation this year and to expand this project to other areas where employment opportunities are less available as they are closer to Georgetown and in the sectors of the economy.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, just some guidance, is the Hon. Minister saying that, currently registered under the National Pathway Workers project the number of persons with part time jobs, the number is 11,000 right now? I understand that they are going to expand but the current figure, is it 11,000?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I said last year we began with 11,000. In Region 2, 2,000; Region 3, 2,000; Region 5, 2,000; Region 6, 4,000; and Region 10, 1,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: I do hope the Minister take note that Region 10 has more population than two of these regions here and they should be considered for more than 1,000. The Community Enhancement Programme, how many persons are catered for under that Programme in terms of a figure?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, again, this is one of the signature projects of our Government. It was birthed before the year of 2008 by President Ali, when he was a technician responsible for community infrastructural development in our country. What we sought to do was to have more of these workers across the country and in communities. They were substantially reduced between the 2015 to 2020 period. I think during that period there were only about 1,500 to 1,600. We have now gone beyond 2,300. The intention is to go to at least 3,000 across the country, in particular, in the Local Democratic Organs. They serve an important function, they help to maintain the community infrastructure, they clean the drains. Again, I would like you to use your office, Mr. Chairman, to encourage the Opposition and members of the country, or residents, to support these workers. They work arduously for four hours per day in all conditions. Some of them even have to go into different types of environments, even at risk to themselves. So, I would like you to use your office as well to encourage this programme.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I agree with you, all Members of the House and our people should give a lot of support to these people. They did a good job in my community.

Mr. Mahipaul: I agree, Sir. Our side agrees also. We fully support them, and we believe they should get more money than what they are getting, currently.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon Member. Hon. Member, go ahead with your next question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you. Sir, this same National Pathway Workers project, does the Minister and his Ministry see the need to not only facilitate these persons with employment and pay them \$40,000 for 10 days' work? Will they conceptualise the idea of facilitating them also in these Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes across the country to further develop their skills? They can be placed into permanent employment and gain more money and contribute greater to society and building our country to becoming the little Dubai of the South America.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, two things quickly – on the issue of Mr. Mahipaul wanting the enhancement workers to be paid more, it is under the Peoples' Progressive Party/Civic that their stipend moved from \$25,000 to \$35,000 per month and that was done in the year of 2021. So, it was not during the five years. The A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) did not have time to pay them any increases in that period, but we were able to find money so quickly. In less than a year we were able to increase their stipend. We are working in national interest, the country has to be cleaned, the infrastructure has to be maintained. So, I do not know why Mr. Ramjattan thinks that by providing employment to people it is vote buying. Why would Mr. Ramjattan think so?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramjattan, the Hon. Member. Mr. Mahipaul, was asking a question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman on the second issue that Mr. Mahipaul raised on the Pathway Programme, the mere name of the programme, a Pathway Programme, would suggest that you can transition beyond the 10 days period. When the Vice President was across the country launching this programme in the different regions, I recall in Region 3, the newest Member of Parliament, Ms. Beverly Alert, participated in the launch at the West Bank at that time. I do not know if as a potential employee under the programme or whether they were supportive of the programme, but a lot of these Pathway Workers have already gone on to becoming teachers, some are in training, they have gone onto be health workers at different levels, some have become politicians as well and will possibly take over from Mr. Mahipaul at some point of time in the near future. This is because I know Mr. Mahipaul is sitting on tenuous grounds in the Opposition so he cannot even

take his own seat. I think this is a programme that has to be intensified and supported. Everyone must be given an opportunity to participate, and the Opposition should not be casting shadows on this programme. All of the persons who are employed under this programme are vulnerable, they are rural people, they are poor people, many are women, many are single mothers. This is a glorious opportunity for them to benefit from the resources of the country.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I know that you will agree with me that, billions of dollars started to flow into our coffers from the year 2020 and there is a lot of money that we now have to further develop our country. I turn your attention to project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance. This project code caters for “subventions to municipalities and neighbourhood democratic councils. The figure that goes to the NDCs is \$5 million as their subventions. I know that there is a formula in the Fiscal Transfers Act that deals with municipalities and Georgetown. For some strange reason, with the largest population, is the Capital City and has been getting for the past two or three years \$30 million when other townships have been getting \$18 million. When one looks at the population size and the workload for Georgetown, I believe \$30 million is not sufficient. May I ask the Hon. Minister if there is any intention to increase the subvention to the Georgetown Municipality from \$30 million? If so, to what figure and will he be ensuring that the Fiscal Transfers Act is applied in terms of the disbursement?

Mr. Dharamlall: Again, Mr. Mahipaul, thank you for the question. The City of Georgetown that Mr. Mahipaul seems to be batting for, there are people living across the other nine municipalities of Guyana. There are 3 in Region 6, there is 1 in Region 10, there is 1 in Region 9, there is 1 in Region 8, there is 1 in Region 1 and there is 1 in Region 2. The resources, like I said earlier, have to be managed properly. We cannot be doling out the Government’s money into a crater that seems to have a bottomless pit. I will tell you why I said what I said, and I think the residents of Georgetown need to know why. Again, Georgetown collects over \$2.1 billion in revenue annually. Every single day, in Georgetown, they are unable to pick up garbage in practically every single ward. Every single day they have vendors in Stabroek, Bourda, La Penitence, Kitty and elsewhere across Georgetown in markets that have some of the worse conditions to ply their trade. We have in Georgetown drains that are clogged; we have pumps that are not working; we have sluices that are left dilapidated. All of these were supposed to be repaired, reconstructed, rehabilitated with the resources of the City of Georgetown. However, not a dime from the revenue of the City of

Georgetown, led by the People's National Congress (PNC) Council of Georgetown, has gone towards fixing the drains in Albouystown; has gone towards fixing the drains in Sophia; has gone towards fixing the drains of in Lacytown, on Regent Street, on Robb Street, in Queenstown, in Kitty, in Newtown, in Campbellville, in Cummings Lodge, in Kingston, in none of the wards of the City of Georgetown. All are being done by Central Government – all – including the roads as well – hundreds of millions of dollars. What I can tell the citizens of Georgetown as well, in answering the question, the Mayor seems more intent on driving....

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Mayor is not here, and he would not be able to defend himself. So, please let us refrain from naming that particular office holder.

Mr. Dharamlall: Well, the Chief citizen then, or the most prominent citizen, the official citizen of Georgetown drives around in a vehicle with siren, sometimes running the Minister of the Finance off the road, sometimes running the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development off the road with resources that the Government allocated to the City of Georgetown. Then also parades at public functions with a photographer. There are many things wrong with that. With bodyguards and an armed driver. The resources of Georgetown can be programmed in a much better way.

11.08 a.m.

The resources should be fixing the physical infrastructure of Georgetown. Mr. Chairman, do you know that they also pay themselves a quite significant stipend? They also pay themselves a quite significant stipend. Some of the Members of Parliament (MPs) will be rivalled by what the Finance Committee of the Georgetown Mayor and City Council, headed by a notorious Councillor – what they pay themselves... I could also say to you, Mr. Chairman, as I have said last year, for the purpose of emphasis and the record, and for the purpose that I do not allow the APNU/AFC to rewrite the history of this country, they had procured, early, not without documentation, a contract of over \$579 million around 2017 for the clean-up of Georgetown. Over \$579 million to one contractor. They had also procured a contract for \$4 million per month, to one contractor, to clean Regent Street. They owe that contractor up until now, \$40 million for a ten-month period. That is where the resources of the citizens of Georgetown went. It did not go towards the development of the City. We have to do the heavy lifting. The Ministry of Agriculture has to fix the pumps. We

have offered, even through the Worker Enhancement Programme, to have workers installed as support to complement the staff of the City Hall at some of these drainage infrastructures, and they refused it. I have the minutes of the Meeting where they refused it. It was all to help with the development of Georgetown. This Council, led by the PNC – APNU/AFC – has refused to have the infrastructure of Georgetown fixed, and in some cases, addressed in a very efficient and effective way.

Mr. Mahipaul: Will this notorious Hon. Minister increase the subvention for...

Mr. Chairman: You have to withdraw that.

Mr. Mahipaul: “Notorious” means popular in a bad way. But I withdraw, with your guidance, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I have never seen any pleasantries around the word “notorious”.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Hon. Member used the word “notorious” and he did not withdraw it. You did not ask him.

Mr. Chairman: We are talking about to address persons in this House.

Mr. Mahipaul: Guided, Sir. Your guidance is noteworthy. Will the Hon. Minister increase the subvention for the neighbourhood democratic councils from \$5 million? If so, what is the amount that is expected for that figure to be increased? This is because the provision caters for \$1 billion. With the \$5 million to NDCs, the \$18 million to town councils, and the \$30 million to Georgetown, the expenditure there was \$714 million. Now that it has gone to \$1 billion, what is the sum of assistance to these respective organs?

Mr. Dharamlall: To borrow a term, as I usually do every year from my goodly Friend, Dr. Ashni Singh, regarding the attempts by Mr. Mahipaul to bloviate in addressing his vicarious tendencies, I wish to proffer the following. One, the subvention to the municipalities and to the neighbourhood democratic councils were increased last year, directly and indirectly. Every single one of the 80 local democratic organs in this country can tell you that their accounts were enhanced, embellished, by more resources since President Ali took Office. That is why they are able to spend and do much more than they have ever done before. This year, again, more resources will be placed in the 10

towns and to the 70 neighbourhood democratic councils – more resources. It is in the budget. I do not understand why Mr. Mahipaul would want to think that his bloviations will end up in the resources being increased. It is already in the budget. This is because of the thousands of consultations we have done across the country. We know that much more has to be done, and that is why more resources are placed in these bodies. You are aware, now, that more resources have been placed, and it is not because of the protestations of Mr. Mahipaul, and neither the bloviations of Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, and by the way, you do not have 10 minutes, you have four. We started at 19 minutes after the hour.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I have three other questions, and I crave your indulgence. I do not mind taking it back from Region 3, because I will also be questioning on Region 3.

Mr. Chairman: Just for some information for everyone. I have stopped the clock. We can use savings from a previous heading and apply it to subsequent heads, but we cannot take time from a subsequent head here. We cannot short-change the bottom head. But Mr. Mahipaul, you have done well, and you will probably have the indulgence of the Chair.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. May I ask the Hon. Minister, the \$3 million that was given to the municipalities during the second week of January this year, they were told to keep it in their account and await instructions on what to spend it on. Could you guide us on what they will be spending it on?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am responsible today to discuss the estimates of 2023. I do not know what Mr. Mahipaul is referring to.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister to turn his attention to project code 3600300. This caters for:

“1. Provision for stormwater pond and landfill gas management system - Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill Site”

This was also in last year’s budget, and the Hon. Minister committed that this would have been completed. May I ask the Minister for an update on this? I also note that there was mention about

a landfill site in Wakenaam. Upon checking and communicating with a number of residents, including the Chairman of the NDC for Wakenaam, there is no landfill site at Wakenaam, even though it was catered for in last year's budgetary spending and all was spent out. May I ask where the landfill site in Wakenaam is, and an update on the stormwater pond and landfill gas management system that were supposed to also be completed last year?

Mr. Dharamlall: On the issue of Wakenaam, we had requested the Neighbourhood Democratic Council to earmark a piece of land where the construction can take place and they have not yet done so. Resources had to be reprogrammed. Similarly, for the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill, a lot of the resources earmarked last year for the stormwater ponds were reprogrammed because the solid waste issues became much more important during the course of last year. As a matter of fact, our production of solid waste in the country, with all of the construction that is taking place with the expansion of the oil and gas sector, we are collecting much more waste, in different areas of the country as well. So, resources were garnered and reprogrammed to address a lot of those circumstances at that time. That is why we have it programmed for this year.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, my second to last question is, two years ago in the budget, there was the creation of a dumpsite at Lima. In this budget, I am seeing the closure of dumpsite at Lima. May I ask what the reason is for it to be closed so quickly – after two years?

Mr. Dharamlall: I do not recall us saying that we were going to create a dumpsite at Lima. As a matter of fact, Lima, from where Mr. Mahipaul originates, has had a dumpsite for a long time. What we did in the first period of this Government was to do some upgrading work to make sure that it does not complicate the circumstances of the environment. What we have also done in Region 2 is, we have begun to close the smaller facilities at Charity as well as at Lima. We are now constructing a modern facility at Zorg en Vlygt on the Essequibo Coast.

Mr. Mahipaul: My final question. Under Regional Economic Transformation, project code 1904300, there is a sum for \$1.5 billion:

“Provision for community driven entrepreneurial interventions.”

Which is basically the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) programme. May I ask the Hon. Minister, what are the criteria for persons to apply for assistance

through the SLED programme, and how many persons from this \$1.5 billion will be targeted? Is it that they have decentralised it to cater for persons from all the regions? If there are caps within the regions, what are the numbers?

Mr. Dharamlall: The SLED programme has a history. Again, for the purposes of the record, historically, this programme was centralised. Centralised to the extent that during the period of the APNU/AFC, Ministers of Government, Members of Parliament, senior officials, including senior officials of the current Opposition personally benefitted from the SLED grants administered by the APNU/AFC. We are currently conducting a forensic audit of the programme during the course of the administration of the APNU/AFC. To give you some titbits about what we have found, it would be egregious. When Mr. Norton hears about who amongst his cohort, how many of them have benefitted, some in the millions, some in the tens of millions, and one, in one case, through some “organisation set up in the Rupununi”, more than a \$165 million...

11.23 a.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, a point of order.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, point of order.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. Content of Speeches. The Hon. Member referred to the Leader of the Opposition by full name without saying Hon., and I believe the guidance must be taken.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for that point of order. I uphold it. The Hon. Minister has consistently, throughout the last hour, refused to either use ‘Cde’ or ‘Hon’, as stated in Standing Order 41 (5). Hon. Minister, please, the Standing Order states we use ‘Hon’, ‘Mr.’ or ‘Cde’.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Aubrey Norton would be shocked to find out that Hon. Members of his cohort in the current Opposition have benefitted from Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development (SLED), centrally directed during the last Government, millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars and, in one case, there were some bodies that were created in the Rupununi and almost \$165 million went. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that when the audit is fully completed, I would be surprised if the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) does not take action against those who pilfered the SLED grant programme. I would be utterly surprised. As part of our commitment to regional, economic transformation and, more particularly, the transformation of

our villages, President Ali made a commitment, in 2020, to make sure that small businesses benefit as much as possible and small people, many of whom are single mothers and many of whom are vulnerable, benefit from grants such as these. During the course of this year, we will intensify the distribution of grants across the county. It was never centralised under this Government, as the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, may have hinted. Mr. Chairman, could I say ‘Mr’ instead of ‘Hon.’ or do I have to say both?

Mr. Chairman: You have to say both or you can say ‘Cde’.

Mr. Dharamlall: Okay. You are not my ‘Cde’. It is the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul. It has never been centralised under the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). People from Region 10, Region 2, Region 3, the hinterland and different parts of the country benefitted. We will have thousands more who will benefit during the course of 2023. Unfortunately, in the last Government, it was a handful that benefitted. Now, the masses will benefit from this programme. I hope that answers your question, Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul.

Programme: 134 – Local Government Development - \$16,627,109,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that concludes our consideration for this Programme/Head. We want to thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development for taking us through these estimates. At this time, let us invite the Minister’s staff from Region 1 to join him at the other table. Hon. Minister, I will not deduct. You will have the full hour.

Agency: 71 Region 1: Barima/Waini

Current Expenditure

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$343,612,000

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Morning.

Mr. Chairman: Good morning.

Mr. Cox: I have two questions under this Programme. Line item 6117: there is an increase of more than 150% of the revised sum from last year. My question to the Hon. Minister is, who are the additional temporary employees, what are their responsibilities and how exactly does the region see them impacting efficiency in the administration?

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The increase caters for one Confidential Secretary, a Data Entry Clerk, two Accounts Clerks, one Checker, one Clerk II (General), two Stores Clerks, two Typist/Clerk II (General), two Office Assistants, one Boat Hand, one Caretaker, one Driver/Mechanic, one Outboard Motor Operator, two Cooks, three Cleaners, three Labourers and one Stores Attendant.

In terms of how we see their work transforming the region, Mr. Chairman, that is a very important question asked by someone who I had actually planned to address in this way, the Hon. Member, Mr. Cox. These people go to work, and we are able to monitor their work, Mr. Chairman. This is quite unlike Mr. Cox who is also a staff being paid from this region, who also receives over \$240,000 per month as a teacher, under the Education Programme of this region, of which I am the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, and for which I am responsible. Mr. Chairman, I would like to use this opportunity to encourage Mr. Cox to go to work more often. Thank you.

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, I do not see the relevance. I just want to say one thing before I ask the other question. The Regional Education Officer (REdO) is sitting right there, and I would love for her to provide the evidence that suggests I am absent other than when I am at Parliament. I want to also say that I am a teacher and I teach three subjects – Geography, Caribbean History and Spanish. Last year, those three subjects, and the REdO can confirm, got 100% passes. Expenses Specific to the Agency: could the Hon. Minister state the expenses, by giving details that are considered specific to this agency?

Mr. Dharamlall: As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, President Ali, during the National Toshaos Conference held last year, announced an increase in stipend for all of the Toshaos of Guyana and Community Council chairpersons. This line item would take care of their stipend. It will also take care of the stipend of Councillors of the regions. Again, last year, President Ali announced an increase in stipend for all of the regional Councillors. Councillors, previously, were paid a stipend

of \$10,000 per month. They are now paid a stipend of \$30,000 per month. In the same vein, the stipends for regional Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons were also increased retroactively 7% in 2021 and 8% in 2022. This is covered under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development's budget. They have also received a substantial increase in their stipends, on the directive of His Excellency the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, for which we are very grateful and for which they are all grateful.

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$343,612,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$20,000,000

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$20,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$506,525,000

Mr. Cox: Line item 6117: I would like the Hon. Minister to detail the temporary employees and their responsibilities within Public Works Department of the region.

Mr. Dharamlall: This increase caters for three Carpenters, one Equipment Operator, one Mechanic, one Plumber, one Welder, one Electrical Assistant, a Tool Room Attendant, two heavy-duty vehicle Drivers, one vehicle Driver and five Labourers.

Mr. Cox: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister state which roads, particularly the Matarkai area, will be catered for under this line item? Additionally, could he also state the kilometres of road to be catered for and the category of works to be expended under this line item?

11.38 a.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, President Ali was in Matarkai very recently and made commitments on his Government doing quite a number of roads in Matarkai, Port Kaituma,

Matthew's Ridge and Arakaka. I would like to report to you, Mr. Chairman, that a lot of those works have begun already. Four roads in Matthew's Ridge, work on the Arakaka road, and concrete roads within Port Kaituma as well. Hundreds of persons are now employed; unemployment was a major issue in the last many years. The region will also be working on doing additional roads in different parts of Region 1. As a matter of fact, in all three sub-regions. These roads will complement what is already done through the Ministry of Public Works as well as through the Ministry of Natural Resources.

For the first time, we are having concrete roads going from Kumaka in Mabaruma, heading towards Wauna and concrete roads from Kumaka waterfront, in Moruca, to Kwebanna. These are your old trails, Mr. Chairman. Within the Matarkai Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), Port Kaituma, as well as Mathew's Ridge, we are also doing many concrete roads. I received some pictures this morning of one lane of the two-lane road going towards the secondary school in Port Kaituma. Children are now on a concrete road that is going towards the school in Port Kaituma. We have quite a number of roads that have to be done. We are also extending the road network in Moruca going towards Manawarin. We are extending the road networks going towards Waramuri. We are moving into Kamwatta, and Mora, and those different areas. We are doing similarly as well in the Mabaruma sub-region. A lot has been done. A lot more is being done and we are working assiduously to make sure that Amerindians are mainstream in the physical infrastructure of our country. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cox: I want to applaud the Minister for realising that the roads that we could not eat are now a priority. Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of this sum in respect of the three districts within the region? Could he also state the level of work location to be undertaken under this line item?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, just to let you know that all of these works are going to the Amerindian people of Region 1 – Something that was alien many years ago – 5/6 years ago – and during the People's National Congress/Reform's (PNCR) time too. What we have done is gotten back on the platform that the PPP/C laid. We are doing desilting work in different areas of Mabaruma, including Kumaka. The Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, will know these areas very well. There are a lot of rum shops in these areas. In Moruca, in some of the creeks as it can be treacherous travelling in some of these creeks. **[Mr. Mahipaul: (Inaudible)]** My apologies, Mr.

Chairman. Mr. Mahipaul was transferred to Region 1 on his request and he said only one week. I have reports that he was supposed have been there for a few months. I am shocked that the Hon. Member only spent a week when he was supposed to have been there for a few months. [Mr. Mahipaul: *(Inaudible)*] The guest house bill was racked up for more than one week at the expense of the taxpayers.

In Moruca as well, in Matarkai and in all the sub-regions, we will be doing a lot of drain cleaning and desilting, cleaning some of the creeks to make sure that there is free passage and, in cases where it is impassable, to make those areas passible. These will be contracts given to the Amerindian villagers, councils, and in some cases, the enterprising Amerindian people of Region 1.

Mr. Cox: This is my final question under this programme. Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: It shows here a budgeted sum of \$210 million. I want to ask the Hon. Minister for justification in terms of a breakdown of the allocated sum.

Mr. Dharamlall: To develop this country requires electricity, energy, something that the last Government did not support a lot and which they seem to be criticising very much during their time in Opposition now. We have made a lot of commitments, as a Government, to mainstreaming the hinterland villages, including hinterland people and including Amerindian people. We have expanded the electricity network in a lot of the areas of Region 1. In Mabaruma, for the first time, Waramuri is getting electricity. We have expanded Moruca, Arakaka, Warapoka as well. Mr. Chairman, I know you know that area very well – Warapoka off the Waini River. There is Manawarin, Wauna, Parakese, Yarikita, Kamwatta – in both Kamwattas – in Moruca and in Mabaruma. In Whitewater, again over 2000 people...

In relation to fuel and lubricants, we have to spend a lot to... What we have done also is increase the hours in those areas so there is electricity for a longer duration in these areas as well. Mr. Chairman, if you fly at night across those areas, you will see how bright and beautiful the place is now looking under the People's Progressive Party/Civic. Thank you.

Mr. Cox: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister provide, in respect of Yarikita and Kamwatta, the hours provided for electricity and the expenses on a monthly basis for these two areas? Mr. Chairman, I only need these two areas.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, did he say Yarikita and...

Mr. Cox: And Kamwatta.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am happy to announce that the hours have moved from zero to five in this first instance. These areas never had electricity before. Now, under President Ali, there is electricity in Yarikita and in Kamwatta, Mabaruma.

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$506,525,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$294,000,000

Mr. Cox: Project code 1100200 – Bridges: I would like the Hon. Minister to confirm if the bridge at Kobarimo is part of the ongoing road project. If not, does this current road project cater for this bridge in a separate contract?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, again, Kobarimo is one of the areas that was left unattended by the last Government. Do you know why? Kobarimo was left unattended because they voted for the People's Progressive Party/Civic. That is a fact. The A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) deliberately left those Amerindian people out. They provided no infrastructure for them for five years, absolutely no infrastructure. We are moving electricity towards the Kobarimo village. This bridge is part of the access into Kobarimo and we will also be completing a proper road into Kobarimo at some point in the near future.

Mr. Cox: Confirmation on the access bridge, is this the landing you are speaking about or part of the road project? I asked if it is part of the road project. I know you have to pass over some waterways. In addition to that, the people of Kobarimo could not have been neglected in five years when the PPP/C was in Government for 23 years.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, one of the important things about local democracy is to make sure that when one has power, one serves everyone. One has to serve everyone. Those people were given no attention by the last Government because they are supporters of the People's Progressive Party/Civic. We have gone beyond the vindictive politics of the APNU/AFC. We are now building

a ‘One Guyana’ and I want to assure, on behalf of His Excellency, every village of this country will have an investment from *Budget 2023*. Every village, irrespective of where in the country that village is. This bridge is part of the road extension into the village of Kobarimo. It is not on the landing.

Mr. Cox: Project code 1400400 – Roads: Could the Hon. Minister provide a disaggregated amount of this sum detailing the specifics of the road from Arukamai to Wauna? Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Work is going to be done in both Moruca and Mabaruma. For the people of Moruca, the Skyland road is going to be rehabilitated. That is five kilometres. In the road towards Arawansa – this has been an area that is practically remote in the Moruca sub-region – we are going to be constructing a road towards that area. We are also going to do a gravel surface road from Arukamai to Wauna, which is going to help a lot of traffic in that area, especially for school children. Otherwise, the Arukamai people will have to come around by boat. The proper road – a farm to market road – is going to be constructed there during the course of this year. It is approximately eight miles of road that will be constructed.

11.53 a.m.

Mr. Cox: Project code 1902600 – Infrastructural Development: I am aware that there is ongoing concrete woodwork being done at the Hosororo Hill. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the construction of drains was not part of the original road project? If not, could he state when exactly these drains will be constructed as a separate contract or how is the region dealing with roads being constructed without drains if the answer is yes?

Mr. Dharamlall: From what I could glean from what the Hon. Member, Mr. Cox, asked, he was basically asking if drains will be constructed along the hill going up to Hosororo. Yes, we are going to be constructing drains in 2023. Again, that is one of the main areas where people live in Mabaruma. The road has been terrible for a very long time. [Mr. Mahipaul: How long (*Inaudible*)] I used to drive there prior to 2015. Mr. Chairman, I know you used to drive there prior to 2015 too. I know that, during the course of 2015 to 2020, as soon as it rained, one had to crawl up because he/she could not drive up. Again, do you know why the Opposition did not resurface the Hosororo area? It is because the Hosororo people voted for the PPP/C. That was how vindictive the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) was.

Mr. Cox: Project code 1400400 – Roads: I am seeking clarity from the Hon. Minister. I have not heard about it but are the One Mile road and the Eyelash road in Port Kaituma catered for under this project code?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is not catered for under the regional budget but there is another agency of the Government that usually maintains those roads.

Mr. Cox: Could the Hon. Minister provide more details on the other agencies, departments or ministries that would cater for these specific roads? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: When he comes to that, if it is under his Ministry, he will answer because you have to ask a question based on a line item or project code.

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, could you guide me, please? The Hon. Minister did answer but I am seeking clarity on the name...

Mr. Chairman: You asked where you could find it.

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

Mr. Chairman: I am saying to you to ask a question based on this and when the Hon. Minister reaches that particular area, I will ask him to crave his indulgence with us and highlight that at that time. Is that okay, Hon. Minister or do you want to answer now?

Mr. Dharamlall: I did state that it is not catered for under the regional budget, but another agency of the Government does maintenance. That is as far as I am able to answer.

Mr. Cox: Project code 2601400 – Power Supply: Could the Hon. Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the electricity distribution network in Mabaruma, Barabina and Kumaka? Those three areas. Could he also state whether or not this includes assistance for households as many may be necessary for hinterland regions?

Mr. Dharamlall: There is an extension currently going on towards Wauna and Tobago. Part of it is a retention. We are also buying a 525 Kilovolt-amperes (kVA) genset to complement what we currently have in Kumaka/Moruca. We are also upgrading the transformers and line hardware in

both Mabaruma and Moruca and expanding the electrical grid in Barabina, which is also part of the Mabaruma sub-region.

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$294,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$2,191,717,000

Mr. Cox: With reference to line item 6112, Senior Technical, education is part of my interest as well, as I mentioned previously, and so a more than \$100 million increase here is welcome. What I need from Hon. Minister, though, is for him to state who are these 63 senior technical officers or staff, where exactly are they going to be employed and their responsibilities as it relates to institutional strengthening?

Mr. Dharamlall: I did state that I have ministerial responsibility for the Hon. Member, Mr. Ronald Cox. So, by deduction, Hon. Member, Mr. Ronald Cox is my staff. There is an increase of 83 staff. It caters for trained grade one/class one master/misses who were appointed on the Teachers' Service (TS) 3 salary scale.

Mr. Cox: Could Hon. Minister confirm that he said 83 staff? A follow-up question: I need, with specifics, the schools to which these persons are appointed.

Mr. Dharamlall: I do confirm it is 83 staff. It is for the secondary schools across Region 1.

Mr. Cox: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister provide the details for schools in Moruca and Matarkai that will be catered for under this line item?

Mr. Dharamlall: Just excuse me, Mr. Chairman. These guys do a lot of hard work, so they were just making sure... Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Dharamlall: Maintenance will take place at the Mabaruma Primary School, Santa Rosa Primary School, St. Ninian's Primary School, North West Secondary School Dorm kitchen, Hosororo Primary School, Chinese Landing, Santa Cruz, Parasina/Parakese, Saint. Bede's,

Hobodia, Arakaka, St. Mary's, St. Anthony's, Kamwatta, White Water, Wauna annex, Tobago, St. Dominic, Santa Rosa Nursery School. Matthew's Ridge Teacher's Quarters, Karaburi Nursery School, the Teacher's Quarter in Wauna, Hotoquai Nursery School, St. Anselm Teacher's Quarters, Yarikita Primary School, Kariako Primary School, Warapoka Teacher's Quarters, Assakata Teacher's Quarters, Kwebanna Nursery school, Hotoquai Teacher's Quarters, Karaburi Teacher's Quarters and St. Nicholas Teacher's Quarters. There will be electrical work in some other schools as well. President Ali has given us a mandate to ensure that all of the school buildings across all of the regions are in premium condition as well as the quarters where staff live, especially for teachers and health workers. There will be upgrade to all of their facilities so that they could be much more comfortable than they previously were.

Mr. Cox: A follow-up question: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that under this line item, there is no provision for the Peter and Paul Primary School in Morawhanna where children have to traverse the Barima River to Smith Creek at a building where there is no provision other than a building to attend classes?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is in the budget, but it is under the capital programme of the region. We are happy to report that we are going to be building the school. We have already done upgrade works for those kids who are going to schools from Smith Creek as well. The Hon. Member would know...well, I do not know if he would know because I have not really seen him around Morawhanna and whether he has gone there. Usually, whenever I go to those villages, I would go through the visitor's book because I want to know who visit the people. I do not recall seeing the Hon. Member, Mr. Ronald Cox's, name in the visitor's book in Morawhanna neither across the river in Imbotero nor at Smith Creek...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Cox, please sign the visitor's book the next time.

Mr. Cox: Let me inform the Hon. Minister that for December I was in Imbotero and Morawhanna two times. [Mr. Mahipaul: You signed the book.] I did not sign the book because I did not visit on an official working day, so I could have visited the institution to sign the book, but I was there. Line item 6292 – Dietary: I am interested in knowing the number of schools in Region 1 which will be catering breakfast for pupils/students under this line item for 2023.

Mr. Dharamlall: All primary and nursery schools in Region 1, I am happy to announce, on behalf of the Minister of Education and the President of Guyana, will all get hot meals.

12.08 p.m.

Mr. Cox: The question is specific. The Minister replied, hot meal, but I asked... I do not know which hot meal he is referring to, but I asked specifically to breakfast. I know they have lunch. I know the Ministry is also implementing a breakfast programme. I am interested in knowing how many schools will be on the breakfast programme in Region 1, not lunch.

Mr. Dharamlall: The hot meal that is provided is provided at lunch time. These children have never received breakfast before. At some point in time, when we get to that stage of being able to provide, we will be able to provide. I do not know if Mr. Cox is referring to the Five B's programme. The Five B's programme in the last Government was very discriminatory. There were only 18 buses for 214,000 school children, there were only 30 boats for 214,000 school children, there were less than 1,000 bicycles for 214,000 school children. Again, when these bicycles were distributed, a lot of these poor Amerindian children, a lot of the poor rural children, did not get because their parents were not APNU/AFC supporters; and the People's National Congress (PNC) agents, not teachers, but PNC activists, were the ones deciding on the ground who must get these bicycles.

Then for one of the other B's, the boots. Mr. Chairman, if you go to any Amerindian village including the Rupununi, and including Shulinab, where the Hon. Member Mr. Vincent Henry purportedly resides – having come from Orealla, now resident of the Rupununi – and you ask about the five B's... When I found out about the Five B's, as I said last year, the people in the Rupununi said, Cde. Nigel – you hear, Cde. Nigel – our children did not receive boots, they received shoes that grow. It was adjustable sandals. That is what the children received; shoes that grow. You know what, Mr. Chairman, that was not the end of it. When they were walking in the Savannahs, many of them use to trip down because the shoes were too big for the Amerindian children. When I went to Parabara, as I said some other time. I do not recall if I said it here. When we asked about the Five B's programme, one of our colleagues in the crowd said Cde. Nigel, which Five B's, the Amerindians get two B's in the Rupununi. I know the Hon. Member Mr. Vincent Henry continues to extol the virtues of the Five B's programme in this House. He does not speak about it in the

Rupununi. When I ask them about the Five B's in Parabara, the guy said, Cde. Nigel it is two B's we get not Five B's. I asked them which two B's. He said *bare blows*. That is what they did to the Rupununi people. The Five B's programme was heavily discriminated. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, I have answered.

Mr. Cox: Let me thank the Hon. Minister, first of all for his half-time show. The question is still specific. Anyway, to the Hon. Minister, just for confirmation and clarity, no schools in Region 1 will be receiving breakfast for 2023. Is that so?

Mr. Chairman: Before I put that to the Hon. Minister, I just want to let you know Hon. Member, you have 14 minutes for the lunchtime show.

Mr. Dharamlall: The children who are receiving breakfast are those children in the dormitories (dorms). In Berbice we would say tea, breakfast and dinner. For the purposes of the National Assembly, we will say breakfast, lunch and dinner. The children of the dorm receive breakfast, lunch, dinner and two snacks. [Mr. Mahipaul: Break-fast.] Breakfast, it is not break-fast. Where did you learn English? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$2,191,717,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$211,000,000

Mr. Cox: Project code 1202600 – Buildings – Education: Could the Hon. Minister provide an update on the Santa Rosa Primary School with respect to work being done and further projections anticipated for completion date?

Mr. Dharamlall: Under this project code, we are catering for the completion of the education office at Oronoque in the Port Kaituma area, and the construction of a Primary School at Oronoque as well. For the first time the children of Oronoque will have their own Primary School, under the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). Again, I am wondering whether the last Government deliberately left out the school children of Oronoque, because the people of Oronoque voted for the People's Progressive Party/Civic. One would be terrified, if I were to use that word, that the

last Government discriminated against school children. We will also be completing the rehabilitation of the Santa Rosa Primary School. That school has produced some quite outstanding Guyanese, some of international repute as well. It has been overcrowded for a while; it has been not fixed up for a while. We are going to complete the rehabilitation.

I would like to state to Mr. Ronald Cox, Hon. Member, that Peter and Paul Primary School, a new primary school, will be constructed. We will be extending Kamwatta Primary as well. The current school has over 300 children and the capacity is just about half. The Kwebanna Primary school will be extended too. The Waramuri Primary School will be extended. One of the areas called Tassawini will have a teacher's quarters which we will also fully furnish. Those are the items under this project code.

Mr. Cox: Project code 2502600 – Furniture and Equipment – Education: Could the Hon. Minister state which schools this sum caters for in the Mabaruma and Matarkai District?

Mr. Dharamlall: We have a budget of \$782 billion, more than 41% over the last budget. We have within the regional development sector a budget of over \$68 billion. Hon. Ronald Cox of the APNU/AFC, a senior teacher at the North West Secondary School is asking a question on a budget line of \$1.5 million. That is why I have been taking time to explain all the other things that are happening in the region. We will be buying, for the purposes of this \$1.5 million out of \$782 billion: double beds, wardrobes, electrical fans, three-piece suites. Mr. Chairman, before I finish, in 2019, in Region 7, when we get to Region 7, I have received at my office invoices under the last Government for a wardrobe in Eteringbang, \$400,000 in 2019. I have also received for a similar amount for a bed set in Eteringbang in the last Government, \$400,000. I have also received, during the last Government, an invoice in Eteringbang again to weed a school compound in the last Government in Eteringbang, \$400,000. That was how schools and school children were treated in the last Government – a bed for \$400,000, a wardrobe for \$400,000 and to weed a school compound of all places, \$400,000. We will also be purchasing dinette sets, stoves, and refrigerators, quite a substantial number of things, for almost the same amount of money that APNU/AFC was spending.

Mr. Cox: With relevance to my time, could we be guided that the Hon. Minister stick to Region 1. We know the other regions will be coming up later in the day. Project code 2401500 – Land and

Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister provide details of the boats and outboard engines to be purchased, their horsepower and will this be utilized by the Department of Education or will this be utilised by various communities for transportation purposes?

12.23 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, these are commitments... The President, when he goes out, some of the issues that people raise, especially in these Amerindian villages, they are gut-wrenching, they become very visceral. [An Hon. Member: *(Inaudible)*] In these same villages, Mr. Chairman, with the Honourable and glorious Members of the Opposition, who have been in Government for five years, we have to finally buy boats and engines. They bought a lot of boats and engines, but we do not know where they are in some cases. We will be buying on commitment a 15 horsepower (hp) engine; we will be buying seven 15 hp engines; we will be buying five 40 hp engines; and we are buying one 75 hp engine. It will provide transportation for 38 children in St. Anselm's; 30 in Canal Bank; 40 in Moruca, Kamwatta; 23 in Barabina; 39 in Kokerite; 55 in Morawhanna – so they will have their own school and their own boat; 50 in Barabina; St. Peter and St. Paul – you know we are building a new school – they will also have a boat assigned to them. Currently, children are paddling across the river and that can become very treacherous. We are also providing for St. Nicholas, Santa Cruz, Kwebanna, St. Bede's, Kariako and areas along the Barama River. So, we will be practically providing transportation for almost all of the school children in the riverine areas of Region 1; that is a commitment of President Dr. Ali.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$211,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$1,621,476,000

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, line item 6117, Temporary Employees: We see an increase from \$22,930,000 to \$156,321,000 which is just over \$130 million. I just want the Hon. Minister to detail the 114 or more temporary employees and their specific job description.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, this line item caters for additional vehicle drivers, nurse aids, ward orderlies, two lighting plant operators, labourers and laundresses. So this line item will cater

for their salaries and the revision of their salaries as well. Mr. Chairman, just to indicate to you, His Excellency has made a commitment in the hinterland regions, including Region 1, that anyone who is willing to be trained as a health officer, whether nurse, nurse aid/assistant, Community Health Worker (CHW), irrespective, or as a teacher, teaching assistant, a clerk, that we will employ all of them. And I would like to use this opportunity through your chair, Mr. Chairman, to advocate for these areas and for these people to come on board so that we can continue to expand the quality of healthcare in Region 1 and all other regions.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Cox, we have now reached the one hour, but I will give you one question on Health Services, Capital Expenditure; Agriculture, Current Expenditure; and Agriculture, Capital Expenditure.

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$1,621,476,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$335,500,000

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, I do understand that health is very important and so I have only one question under this programme. Line item 1202400, Buildings, Health, a sum of \$220,000,000 – “Provision for health facilities, quarters and payment of retention”. I just would like the Hon. Minister to tell this House the health facilities in which communities will benefit, and if he could provide a breakdown with respect to that. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, happily so; I have until 10.30 p.m. this evening. And I trained for this course, so I will answer as many questions as possible. We have some retention on work that we began last year: a pharmacy bond at the Kumaka District Hospital (KDH); the Arakaka Health Centre; the maternal waiting home in Mabaruma; the doctor’s quarters in Whitewater; the Health Centre in Assakata – this is one of the remote areas of Moruca; the upgrade of Kariako Health Centre to a cottage hospital – I would like to reiterate that; for the first time we are going to have a cottage hospital in that area. This all part of His Excellence’s commitment to expand healthcare.

Last year we intensified maintenance work on practically all of the health facilities of the hinterland and on the coast. And this year we will extend the St. Anselm's Health Hut; we will be constructing living quarters at Chinese Landing – this is one of the areas where there are basically a lot of transient people; we will be extending Hosororo [inaudible] better services; we will be completing Matthew's Ridge Hospital – the facility is partially complete so there will be massive rehabilitation; we will also be extending the living quarters at the regional hospital; we will also in Barima, Koriabo, be constructing living quarters. Often times, Mr. Chairman, in these areas, we do not have the optimum services because of the conditions. I would also like to join with the Minister of Health in reporting to you, Mr. Chairman, that we are now doing surgeries, not outreach surgeries but in-house theatre surgeries, at both the Kumaka District Hospital, in Moruca, and the Mabaruma District Hospital. More than 60 persons did surgeries at the Kumaka District Hospital recently. And you will find more doctors being placed, better services and, with the enhanced telemedicine services now pursued by the Government, you are going to find much more enhanced healthcare in the interior regions of Guyana.

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$335,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$29,393,000

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$29,393,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$28,000,000

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state the agriculture development initiatives to be undertaken under programme 1301200, Agricultural Development, with the sum of \$28,000,000? Could he also provide a breakdown for the three districts knowing that Region 1 has a very large number of farmers, and how exactly these initiatives will impact the agricultural development for these farmers? Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, it is true that agriculture is significant to Region 1, and since we came to Government agriculture has now come on the front burner; it was left unattended for a long time – for five years as a matter of fact. The Opposition will laugh at this, but the farmers of Guyana suffered tremendously when the APNU/AFC were in Government. I recall, as an Opposition Member of Parliament (MP), when we had asked for support to farmers in the North Pakaraima, the then Minister who was answering questions on the regions said that there were no planting materials or any support for the Patamona and Macushi farmers of the North Pakaraima. I recall too, when there was flooding in many areas of the country, including Region 1, support to farmers was negligible or practically non-existent. So, with the advent of the President, Dr. Ali, now the lead spokesperson for agriculture in the Caribbean... Mr. Chairman, at one time during the presidency of Mr. Jagdeo, we were also leading on agriculture in the Caribbean. We lost that mandate because of the repositioning of the economy between 2015... the reorganising of the economy between 2015 and 2020, agriculture was practically dismantled, for want of a better term. So Region 1 suffered tremendously as a result; and every time one goes to Region 1, farmers are always knocking on one's door for support to the agricultural sector.

12.38 p.m.

So we work very closely, the regional administration works very closely, with the agricultural agencies of the Government, which are led by the esteemed and distinguished Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Mr. Mustapha. He has done tremendous work in the last two and a half years in every region, sector or subsector of agriculture in the country. He has made sure that farmers get benefits; he has made sure that fisherfolks get benefits; he has made sure that the sugar workers – Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan – also get benefits. By helping the sugar industry, the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, will indirectly benefit.

In Region 1, during this year, we will intensify the expansion of agriculture. We will be constructing shade houses in some of the schools and communities. One of the challenges of agriculture in Region 1 has to do with storage, distribution, and handling. This is a commitment of the President, Dr. Ali – we will be building a storage facility in Mabaruma for farmers. This, again, complements all the things the Ministry of Agriculture is doing. We will be providing equipment as well, such as Swingfog machines, motorised mist blowers and brush cutters for farmers and farming groups. We will also be doing some impoldering. As a matter of fact, on the banks of

many of these rivers is where agriculture usually takes place. So, impoldering will be done at Unity Grant. It will also be done in other areas of Region 1, but primarily in the Unity Grant area. As you are aware, we are also doing a lot of work in Morawhanna, Smith Creek and Moruca, through other agencies. When one goes to the Matarkai sub-region, some of the biggest meetings that one has are the ones that farmers attend. So, we will also be providing a lot of support in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture to farmers in Matarkai. Thank you very much.

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$28,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister and your team, for taking us through Agency 71.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will take a one-hour suspension for lunch.

Sitting suspended at 12.42 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 2.06 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will return to the Committee of Supply and reinvite the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development and his team from Region 2, Pomerook/Supenaam, to join us.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: I think they may have forgotten to take off the air conditioner during the lunch break. Hon. Members, can we please turn to pages 338 and 339? We will start the clock rolling at 2.07 p.m.

Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: It is hard to get the Members back after lunch.

Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: It might be the Chair. Hon. Members, I invite you to turn to pages 338 and 339.

Agency: 72 Region 2: Pomeroon/Supenaam

Current Expenditure

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$311,020,000

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chair, for line item 6117, Temporary Employees, could the Minister explain? I noticed that the number of employees moved from 3 in 2022 to 12 in 2023. Could the Minister explain the reason for the increase of nine new temporary employees?

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon.

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon.

Mr. Dharamlall: We have nine persons in this line item. The categories are Typist Clerk, Clerk II (General), Supply Expeditor, and Accounts Clerks. I do not know if that satisfies the answer to the question.

Mr. Holder: Is that under line item 6117?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, that is where you asked the question.

Mr. Holder: Temporary employees, Typist Clerks...

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, there were three.

Mr. Holder: That is strange, but we will proceed. For line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is a reduction of one. Could the Minister state the designation of the person who is coming off, has resigned or intends to resign?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, this is just to clarify line item 6117 as to why the nine persons are temporary: Temporary is not a new concept in contract management for employees, but it is just that they are not yet on the Permanent/Pensionable Establishment. That is why they are called temporary employees; they are given a one-year contract. On line item 6116, the Deputy Regional Executive Officer (REO) has now moved to the position of the Regional Executive Officer, so that is why you are finding a reduction of one contracted employee.

Mr. Holder: This is just a follow-up. When did that occur? Are you catering for that transition this year, or did it occur last year?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, usually the staffing details would reflect the end of the year. So, the staffing details are the rollover from 2022 into 2023. Since the 13th October, 2021, the position of REO was filled by... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members online, please mute your microphones. If you need to interject, then put it on. Thank you.

Mr. Holder: I have no further questions on this programme.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$311,020,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$29,900,000

Mr. Holder: Project code 1202900, Buildings – Administration: Could the Minister disaggregate the sum? Could he say which buildings fall under this provision?

Mr. Dharamlall: In keeping with our position to enhance the quality of service that we provide to our Amerindian people, in Region 2 which has many Amerindian villages, we will rehabilitate the... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: We will rehabilitate the Supenaam Amerindian Hostel, the Anna Regina Amerindian Hostel and the Charity Amerindian Hostel. We will also do rehabilitation work at the administration office. We will also do rehabilitation work and the plumbing system on one of the other buildings within the state house's compound.

Mr. Holder: Project code 2401600, Land and Water Transport: I see there is a purchase for a boat and engine. If I recall correctly, in the last budget there was the same provision. My question is, is

the boat and engine that was previously purchased under this programme still operational or functional? What exactly are you going to use this additional boat and engine for?

Mr. Dharamlall: We are intensifying the monitoring of the interventions and investments of the Government in Region 2. We are also ensuring that our staff become more accessible, and that they are not just accessible at their office but in the communities. There will be a 40-horsepower outboard engine for Pomeroun as well as a wooden boat with a shed. The previous boat that you are speaking about is used to transport school children in the Wakapau area, as part of the President, Dr. Ali's commitment to ensure that everyone gets a fair opportunity to go to school.

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$29,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.17 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$530,699,000

Mr. Holder: Line item 6116, Contracted Employee: Could the Minister state the designation and emoluments of the new employee?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, there is only an increase of one and because we are expanding our support to the agricultural sector in Region 2 and a lot of the structures are not manned the way they ought to be manned, we have had challenges previously in terms of drainage, so we decided to employ a Sluice Attendant as part of this line item. The emolument is \$120,483.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: The five new temporary employees, could the Minister shed some light the same way on those five new employees?

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have employed five additional persons – four Pump Operators and a Sluice Attendant.

Mr. Holder: Which locations, areas or which pumps would these Operators serve? Is it that the Minister is saying that there are no Operators, currently, at those locations?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am not saying that and I do not understand how the Hon. Member, Mr. Holder, has surmise that I am saying that there are no Operators. We are employing more so that we can make sure that at no time.... As has happened during the time of A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) where a lot of these pumps were not operating and, sometimes, these sluices were left open or in cases left closed. The communities got flooded. We are employing more Sluice Attendants and more Pump Operators to make sure that they are optimally manned. The locations are Capoey, Taymouth Manor and Three Friends.

Mr. Holder: With the addition of these five new persons, what would that bring the number of Sluice Attendants, in Capoey for example, to? For the other areas, how many?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I remembered when, I think it was Three Friends that was being commissioning, the Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, went to that commissioning with the rice farmers and the former Minister of Agriculture of the last Government went to that opening. I recall the details of that commissioning where some of the most outrageous things were said to rice farmers, especially those who were benefiting from the use of that facility. Now that the Government has changed, we have to man these pumps properly. There was one Operator, but now there are two Operators.

Mr. Holder: He used five minutes to answer that question. Alright, let us move on. Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: I remembered the Minister stood in this House during the last Budget, I think, or it was in the year of 2021, and he made a lot of pronouncements on the purchase of a new tractor and what it would have done in terms of maintenance of the farm-to-market roads. I am asking him, in this provision under this line item, how many farm-to-market roads would be maintained using that new tractor that you mentioned? How many were maintained last year using that very new tractor that you spoke so gloriously about in this House? Could you name the farm-to-market roads where the tractor was used on? Give the House... If you could recall Cde. Chairman, he said, when I questioned him, 57,000 acers of land and a whole story about the use. Now, I am asking what are the particular farm-to-market roads that this tractor was used to maintain? Is there anything there under that sum?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I was avoiding our path down history.

Mr. Chairman: Would the tractor take us down that path?

Mr. Dharamlall: It was not this year; it was last year and the year before. Hon. Member Mr. Holder and I have not a long history but we worked very closely on 2nd March, 2020. Both of us sat at the Guyana Election Commission (GECOM) Office in Anna Regina during the course of the night and we counted all the Statement of Polls (SoPs) for 135 polling stations and Mr. Holder did not question a single SoP.

Mr. Holder: A Point of Order, Mr. Chairman, – Content of Speech.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister...

Mr. Holder: I am citing Content of Speech. [Mr. Mahipaul: Standing Order 41 (3).] Thank you, Cde. It is not relevant to the discussions here... [Ms. Walton-Desir: ...and *sub judice*.] ...and *sub judice* as my dear Cde. indicated.

Mr. Chairman: When the Hon. Member, Ms. Walton-Desir, is in the chair she will [*inaudible*]. Hon. Minister, you may continue.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. Mr. Chairman. Mr. Holder and I have a history. so maybe that is why he wants to go back in history. For the purposes of this Committee, Mr. Holder.... [An Hon. Member: (*Inaudible*)] I was in the first batch; I was in the bright set, not in the set who speak like you. [An Hon. Member: You could not have gone.] I could not have gone? I was in the top 60 students of this country; where were you? Mr. Chairman, now that Mr. Holder has raised history, I would just like to put on record that Mr. Holder has never contested any of the SoPs of Region 2 in the 2020 Elections, the chairman of the People's National Congress (PNC) Hon. Member. We have also won the elections; we won the recount; and we are staying in Government for a very long time.

We intend to do maintenance work on 43.5 kilometre of farm-to-market roads. I can venture: Lima, Devonshire Castle, Sparta, Better Hope, West Muri, Fear Not, Dartmouth and West Muri. I know you will ask about those. Dartmouth and West Muri are areas populated with supporters of the APNU/AFC. We work in all communities in Region 2 quite unlike what happened during of 2015 to 2020.

Mr. Holder: My question was specific to the new tractor.

Mr. Chairman: I thought so. I thought you wanted the number of roads fixed by the particular tractor; right?

Mr. Holder: Yes, the particular one that he spoke so glowingly about – This new tractor – so I was interested. I do not want to say that he bluffed the House when he spoke at the last Budget presentation. I am trying to give him that opportunity to present facts, to clarify and to present the facts. I wanted to know the specific roads that this particular tractor where \$20 million was spent, if I can recall. I am really trying to get to the point to know if it is actually being used for the purposes that it was intended to. The taxpayers spent over \$20 million, so I am just trying to ensure that we get value for the money. Repeating the question again, I would like him to name the specific farm-to-market roads where this tractor was used to maintain. Are there any provisions under this line item, Maintenance of Roads, and I am assuming here it is the farm-to-market roads, because we are talking about agriculture. I want to know the roads that will be done this year by that very same particular piece of equipment.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I do not know if the tractor has an odometer on it that will measure the distances fixed and so forth, but the Hon. Member has asked a very specific question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response to the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member is speaking of specific tractor, but the region has more than one tractor. So, I am not sure which one he is speaking about.

Mr. Chairman: The one we bought last year.

Mr. Dharamlall: The one that was provided last year... There were actually two, so which one is it? I do not know which one. Now that the Hon. Member wants me to refer to both tractors that we procured, both tractors worked on more than 540 kilometres of dams in Region 2.

Mr. Holder: I am trying to pin him down to this specific farm-to-market roads but he is dodging. In the interest of time, we will have to move on. I will confirm this information. Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: Could the Minister be kind enough to lay over – I am assuming that the cleaning of trenches manually and mechanically are covered under this sum – the trenches that were cleaned manually and those that were cleaned mechanically? I will tell you the problem, Cde. Chairman. I have observed that trenches that were awarded to be cleaned

manually are so often cleaned mechanically. Do you know what that does? Persons might be paid manually while machines are being paid to do the work, fuels *et cetera* comes out from the region. I would like the Minister to lay over for me, because it would take some time to bring the facts back to this National Assembly and to the people of Guyana.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister are you prepare to lay over the information?

Mr. Dharamlall: No, Mr. Chairman. I am not prepared to lay over because I have the information. I will share it, in the interest of the public, because we believe in transparency and we will not hide any information as those SoPs that have been hidden by APNU/AFC. This Hon. Member worked in the Public Works Department of Regional Democratic Council (RDC) 2 for a period of time.

[Mr. Chairman hits gavel.]

What I find very difficult to understand, even though we may weed canals manually, time and again they will have to be desilted. There is a difference between manual weeding and the desilting of canals. Naturally, one would find excavators going on the very canals at some point in time. Mr. Chairman, if you permit me, I shall proceed to identify the canals and I have the information. I have a prerogative, as a Member of this House, to make it public.

2.32 p.m.

We will be working in all of the Neighbourhood Democratic Council areas. For these NDCs, a total of 251,232 rods. So, SS12, SS23, SD24, D23, SD20, SD21, SD22, SD11, Fairfield first cross drain, second cross drain, SD10, SD09, Pomona last cross drain, main canal at Good Hope to Aurora, at Good Intent to Fairfield and so on. Mr. Chairman, I am willing and prepared to read every single thing, but I do not intend to hand over because I have the information here. If you would like for me to continue to read all, I will read all.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Holder, would you like the Minister to go into the...?

Mr. Holder: I ask that he lay it over, not only for 2023 but I would like for 2022 as well. Please and thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of the public, we have to share information to the public. I do not intend to have any personal arrangement with the Hon. Member from Region 2.

We are also discussing *Budget 2023*, so I have information that we will be pursuing in *Budget 2023*.

Main canal, Goed Intent; SSC11, Pomona; SD11, the outfall channel at Huist T'Dieren; the outfall at Vilvoordeen; the outfall at Hibernia; at Goed Intent, this is SSC23; SSC23 at Goed Hope; SSC23 at Huist T'Dieren, again; SSD10 at Huist T'Dieren; SSD23 at Spring Garden; SD7/2 at Airy Hall; SD14 at Fairfield; Warousi facade; SD16 outfall at Dry Shore; SSC20 at Goed Intent; 22 at Goed Intent, cross drain at Good Hope; the seventh cross drain at Good Hope; Warousi facade; Vilvoordeen SSC14; SC12 at Middlesex; SD13 at Middlesex; SSC10/A at Riverstown; 7/4 at Riverstown; SD15 at Hibernia; SSC15 at Fairfield; SD14 at Vilvoordeen; SSC22 at Spring Garden; SSC21 at Goed Intent; SSC20 at Aurora; SSC23 at Good Hope; SSC19 at Aurora Estate; and SSC18 at Makeshift; – these are all villages along the Essequibo Coast – SSC16 at Dry Shore; SSC 16 at Hibernia; 17 at Dry Shore, Warousi; the first cross drain at Good Hope; the second cross drain at Good Hope; the fifth cross drain at Good Hope; the eighth cross drain at Good Hope; the fourth cross drain at Good Hope; the sixth cross drain at Good Hope; main canal from Fairfield to Middlesex; from Middlesex to Huist T'Dieren; the relief drain at Good Hope; SD10; first cross street at Huist T'Dieren; the first cross drain at Adventure; part of SSC5 at Adventure; SD6; cross drain at Adventure; the Riverstown cross drain; Airy Hall; Adventure cross drain; 7/3 at Airy Hall; 7/2 at Airy Hall; SSC09 at Airy Hall; first cross drain at Airy Hall; second cross drain at Airy Hall; JD1 at Annandale; JC1 at Annandale; SSC6 at Adventure; SD6 at Adventure; SD5 at Onderneeming; Mariah's Lodge to Onderneeming façade; JD6 at Golden Fleece; JC4 at Cullen; JC10 at Johanna Cecilia; JD7 at Zorg; JC9 at Zorg; Cullen to Golden Fleece facade; JD2 at Abram Zuil; New Opportunity Corps (NOC) cross drain; SD5 at Onderneeming; JC08 at Golden Fleece; Golden Fleece to old Supply façade; Unu Creek at Cullen; JC Tree trench at Abram Zuil; 7/2 second drain at Airy Hall; SSC8 at Airy Hall; second cross drain and third cross drain, again, at Airy Hall; first cross drain at Riverstown; the sixth cross drain at Riverstown; the fifth cross drain at Riverstown; the fourth cross drain at Riverstown; the second cross drain at Riverstown; the JC to Golden Fleece façade; ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am personally satisfied you have the information in the details required and you have provided sufficiently at this time to satisfy the question.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, in the interest of time, let us move on to the next.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$530,699,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Estimates

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$99,895,000

Mr. Holder: Project code 4400800 – Other Equipment: Could the Minister disaggregate the sum and say, Region 2 being an agriculture region, in the context of our country receiving billions upon billions of oil and in the context of the budget being increased three times over, why is it there is a 32% reduction in the budget, across these items, for the region in terms of agriculture?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, this line item is to procure capital equipment. The agriculture expansion in Guyana has taken off, once again, since Minister Mustapha. Every year we are consistently expanding the fleet of equipment to provide support to the agricultural sector in Region 2. In addition to the things that we have already bought, we are also buying a romo plow, fogging machines and we are buying a mini excavator. For the purpose of the people of Region 2 and for the purpose of the Hon. Members of the Opposition, we have not increased the budget three times over. The budget was increased from last year to just over 41%. The last time, the Hon. Member, Mr. Shurwayne Holder, spoke in National Assembly, the Hon. Member made merry of the numbers when he spoke about the benefits to the Guyanese people from the oil economy. He could not calculate the amount of money that was coming from the oil sector for the people of the country. The Hon. Member made the same mistake again. The Hon. Member said that we are receiving billions upon billions of dollars, but we have not yet received billions upon billions. We have not received billions upon billions. I think...

Mr. Chairman: You will need to clarify if it is United States (US) or Guyana dollars.

Mr. Dharamlall: I believe it is US that I am referring to. The honourable “They” create this impression that we have received billions and billions of US dollars. We have not yet. We will and we will be in Government when we receive those. We will spend more in Essequibo as we will spend in all the regions of the country, quite unlike... Mr. Chairman, do you know that up to now, we do not know where US\$18 million is that the Hon. Members on that side of the House collected when they were in Government? They said that the US\$18 million came as a gift.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I may have to do what a previous Speaker of the National Assembly did when the issue of drug bond came up consistently. He suspended the House and sent a team to my neighbourhood. We may have to send a team to the Bank of Guyana. Let us move on.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I was on that team to go to Albouystown that evening. The Hon. Member, Ms. Volda Lawrence, was also on that team when we went to the drugs bond on Sussex Street.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have to clarify.

Mr. Chairman: I was just saying that similarly, I may have to send a team to the Bank of Guyana. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Dharamlall: So, is it not a gift anymore, Mr. Chairman? For the purposes of my...

Mr. Chairman: I cannot say. I am going to have to find the accuracy of the information.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$99,895,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Estimates

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$181,644,000

2.47 p.m.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: There is a sum of \$26 million there. Could the Minister say which buildings and if the Daniels Town Community Centre would be covered under the provision? It is in a very terrible state and I know that it is not covered under the youth, sport and culture. I did not hear anything under that. We do not see anything there in the budget under youth, sport and culture so I revert to this line item to ask the question, is there anything for the Daniels Town Community Centre.

Mr. Dharamlall: On the first part of the question, we are doing maintenance work on one of the living quarters building at Adventure for a doctor. We are doing maintenance work on a Physiotherapist living quarters in Cotton Field. We are doing maintenance works on the Hinterland Affairs Living Quarters, that is in Cotton Field as well, on the Engineering Department office building, the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) building in Cotton Field as well. We have a force account, so we are also procuring some materials for the force account team.

On the second issue of Daniels Town Community Centre, for the purposes of Members of the Opposition, the Hon. Member asked me specifically about Daniels Town because there is where the Hon. Member is from. His family is from Daniels Town. They referred to this Budget as a friends and family Budget but they are looking out for their family. Do you know what was the development in Daniels Town? The last Government did an avenue. They left all the other villages of Region 2, but because the People's National Congress's Chairman of Region 2 lives in Daniels Town or has interest in Daniels Town, that is where they built the avenue. It was not just an ordinary avenue. It was extra ordinarily expensive. As a Member of the former Public Accounts Committee, I recalled the former Regional Executive Officer (REO) said that when the region had savings, it was excited – if you recall Cde. Bishop Edghill – and so the region would use the money for developmental work in Region 2 to build an avenue with about 12 benches and a snackette for more than \$18 million. That was the investment in social development in Region 2. The money did go to the rehabilitation or the construction of the community centre in Daniels Town. It went to, not a street but to an avenue – between two streets.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, they began building parks. Some of this same money went to a park in Exmouth. If you go to the park right now, Mr. Chairman, as I did for five years from 2015 to 2020, that park had cow dung, horse dung, the structure was dilapidated, there was no washroom and it was overgrown with bushes. That is what it is.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, is there no money for Daniels Town Community Centre under this head?

Mr. Holder: That is the point, but he went on to speak about the avenue. We are proud of that avenue.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Holder I just asked for some clarification from the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, this is Public Works – maintenance of buildings. This is not maintenance of a community ground.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Holder: It is a building and not a ground I asked about. The Minister went on to talk about an avenue. The avenue was not built in Daniels Town, *per se*. It is on the border between Daniels Town and Sparta. They are two strongholds. Can I explain, Cde. Speaker? The Government and the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change stronghold. The idea was that people can come together in unity. It is a wonderful facility for \$18 million. Just recently, an ambulance that was very rusted was commissioned in the region for \$25 million. Easily, \$18 million could have been spent for the purpose of unifying this country. Let us move on to the capital expenditure.

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$181,644,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$171,000,000

Mr. Holder: Project Code 1400500 – Roads: I am just verifying that is the correct project code, for \$108,000,000 for upgrading of roads. In April of last year, the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) announced that it was given approval for over 100 roads. It is my observation that most of those roads either barely started and, in many cases, no works were commenced. I can name some – Bagot’s Dam, when I highlighted it they went and they graded it and it is left there – Daniels Town, Bus Shed Street, Henrietta, Back Street and a number of other roads all across the region. I am asking the Minister, is Daniels Town, Bus Shed Street, Henrietta Back Street, Barber Shop Street, Bagot’s Dam catered for under this provision, also Charity, River Dam which have been rolling over and rolling over constantly since this Government took Office? It is in the Budget and it keeps rolling over. I would like to know if that is also under this sum.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, went at length to explain to this honourable Committee that we are currently constructing 1,084 streets along coastal Guyana of which 122 would be constructed or are currently under construction in Region 2. There are 261 roads or streets that we have identified in Region 2 that need to be upgraded to either asphaltic concrete or reinforced concrete. We have begun construction of 122 across the NDCs of Region 2 and the municipality of Anna Regina. It is just to clarify those to the Hon. Member, Mr. Holder. The budget for that is considered under the Ministry of Public Works. Unfortunately, you have to seek that information from the Ministry of Public Works. We have done public signing of contracts in all of the NDCs areas where roads are to be constructed. These are all requests from the people of Region 2, as they are in the rest of the country.

Mr. Holder: There is no doubt that contracts were signed, Cde. Chairman. I was really hoping for an update on these specific roads, but we will move on. It is known as Khan Street, Henrietta. It is not very far from my home so I can tell you. The Minister does not need to rehash that because it is a terrible street. It is the first street that runs north to south in Henrietta. It runs from the northern end to the southern end of the community. That is in a terrible state. Surprisingly, the Administration wants to do the street that is... I do not know if it is a street, if it is Gazetted but I would consider it as a reserve across the trench, a parallel street, they are now embarking on works there rather than deal with the main streets there. Again, under this line item, are there any sums that caters for Khan Street, as I put it and I am certain that your Engineer is familiar with that street and that name, that will be used there to rehabilitate that street? How soon will that contract be signed, if it is not signed already so that works can begin?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is Khan Street included?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I know the area that Mr. Holder is speaking of. How I happen to know that Mr. Holder lives on that street is because when we were campaigning, there was a car with loud hailer that went in front of Freedom House and whoever was announcing was making very outrageous remarks about leaders of the PPP/C. We followed the car to Golden Fleece and it stopped in front of the former REO's house in Zorg and personally attacked him. We followed the car and that is why we ended up in front of Mr. Holder's house.

Mr. Chairman: Is that on Khan Street?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, on Khan Street.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is Khan Street included?

Mr. Dharamlall: We will be upgrading Six Cross Street, new housing scheme, Charity; Second Cross Street, old housing scheme, Charity, East Street, Bounty Hall on the Adunkel sluice street, Adunkel. I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, the street that the Hon. Member, Mr. Holder, is referring to is a street that is 90% better than some of the streets that have to be done and that are currently being done. The priority has to be where schools are, as the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill said, where a lot of elderly people are and many that are very dilapidated. We would not be pursuing projects as the last Government did because members of the government live there so that is why streets are done there, as was done at Liliendaal when the last Prime Minister... Where is he by the way?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the policy is to fix the streets that are really bad and will serve the greater good.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Member Mr. Holder, Khan Street right now, may have to wait.

Mr. Holder: It appears so. It is a good thing that I do not live on that street. I live at 55, Side Line Dam.

Mr. Chairman: Is that near to Khan Street?

Mr. Holder: It is adjacent to Khan Street. I do not use it.

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

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. The Minister made mention that a lot of these streets will be done using concrete. I would like for him to explain the rationale behind using concrete; if there was consultation and if there was expert advise.

3.02 p.m.

I will tell you this, Hoppie Street in Dartmouth, that he gloriously spoke about again in this House last year and maybe even the year before, is being done in concrete, and it is a disaster in my view and in the view of the residents there. As an engineer, I think that it should not have been done in concrete. If one was going to do it in concrete, other measures had to have been taken. Different types of engineering *et cetera*. As a result of that, there were vehicles unable to access their yards in and out. There was a resident that fell because of the steep slope that came off from it into the accessway to persons' yards. I would like the Minister to say which of these streets will be done using concrete rather than asphalt. Let the Minister name the specific streets. I do not want a whole host of streets. I want the specific streets that you are changing from asphaltic surfaces to concrete surfaces.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, this Hon. Member said that he is an engineer wants the Hon. Member who is a layman, the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, to make an engineering pronouncement on a street. I would like the Hon. Member, in a rhetorical way, to tell me why an engineer would move from the public works department of a region into a mortuary. The 122 roads that we are building in Region 2, Hon. Member, is not within the auspices of the regional administration of Region 2's budget. I am unable to give you the names of those streets but as a representative of the people of Region 2, I would be willing to find those streets and give the names to you or we can visit together.

Mr. Holder: Project code 1100300 – Bridges: There is a sum of \$55 million, in Anna Regina. Could the Minister state where specifically in Anna Regina these works are being done? Where the bridge is being done?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, one of the requests we have had from the residents of the township – and this will also enhance the traffic flow within the township – is to construct a bridge at station street that would link central township with the Henrietta community, where the Hon. Member lives.

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$171,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are at just about 3.07 p.m. When we started this head, and the time allocated for this head is one hour. I have four more programmes to put under this head. I will

allow the Hon. Member to ask one question on 724, Education Delivery, current and capital, and on 725, Health, current and capital.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$3,509,719,000

Mr. Holder: If I understood you clearly, you are allowing one question for current and one for capital.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Holder: Okay. Thank you. Line item 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies: Cde. Chairman, we are still in a Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) environment. As such, cleaning and sanitation is paramount in ensuring the safety of our children. Could the Minister confirm if this provision covers sanitation in every classroom of every school to ensure that our children can have their little handwashing liquids *et cetera* to ensure that they are kept safe or will we continue, as parents – I, myself, being one – have to provide sanitation items and cleaning agents for the school?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, one of the hallmarks of our Government is the way we treat school children. We are the Government that gave the school children a school grant and the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) is the Government that took it away. There is no comparison in terms of how we will treat our school children. In this country, every school child is safe as long as the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government is in place. Every school child. Their health is also in the very capable hands of the Hon. Member, Dr. Frank Anthony. Quite unlike the three Ministers of Health, in three areas in the APNU/AFC – the former Hon. Member George Norton, the current Hon. Member Karen Cummings, who also served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana when the accreditation of the election observers were withdrawn, and the Hon. Member Volda Lawrence.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I cannot remember any accreditation being withdrawn in 2020.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have a video in my phone where the Hon. Member Karen Cummings, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, threatened the election observers...

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Dharamlall: ...to withdraw their accreditation. I have the video.

Mr. Chairman: You were very definitive just now in saying 'were withdrawn'. Hon. Minister, any other information with respect to the question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, there are 34 nursery schools with two annexes, 38 primary schools with four annexes, seven secondary schools and one annex. All those schools will be adequately provided with janitorial supplies to take care of our children.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Holder, are you going to take the second question and sacrifice the one on capital?

Mr. Holder: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$3,509,719,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$446,800,000

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Mr. Chairman, my question is on project code 2502900 – Furniture and Equipment - Education: I want to recall last evening. This is, perhaps, not a question for the Minister but clarification from you as the Chairman. Last evening when I asked a question under project code 2607400 – School Furniture and Equipment, the Minister of Education said to Mr. Cox and me, that this is a project for Regions 1 to 10, and it falls under local government. [Ms.

Manickchand: Yes.] We did not have a definitive answer from you. I did not see the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance here last evening. I do not know if we have staff from the Ministry of Finance here today. We approved that sum that the Minister said she cannot account for because she would not be carrying out that project. We approved it under the Ministry of Education. It is a large sum under primary and nursery education. We approved it. I do not know if that could be fixed. I am asking here today, under this project code where it says furniture and equipment for education, if we can make that adjustment, if we can ask the Chairman or the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for

Finance to make that adjustment. Additionally, could the Minister say which one of the schools will benefit from the purchase of furniture and equipment here?

Mr. Chairman: I could be wrong because I am in the cohort of the Hon. Member Khemraj Ramjattan. I could be wrong, but I thought I heard yesterday, the sum we spoke about was for Region 4 schools. I will have the information checked. When we considered that sum, I was asking the Minister if it was mislabelled because it had Region 1 to 10, I think.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: It had 4 too. Correct?

Ms. Singh-Lewis: It states national.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. In respect of education here, there is a specific sum under capital provided for the schools of Region 2. This Minister of Local Government and Regional Development is competent enough to answer for this sum.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Yes, Sir. My question remains to the Chairman of this session...

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: ...how can we rectify approving the sum yesterday and the Minister of Education...

Mr. Chairman: It is not the same sum. It is not the same sum.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: No, Sir. How do we rectify that? We have approved it under education.

Mr. Chairman: It is not the same sum. This is a specific sum under the Ministry of Education and this here is a specific sum under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Region 2, education. They are two different sums.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: There are two different things I am asking here, Sir. One, if we can rectify yesterday because the Minister referred us to the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development...

Mr. Chairman: You are asking two things and I am saying one thing.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: They are two different sums so there is no rectification at this time.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Sir, may I seek your clarification?

Mr. Chairman: You may proceed.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Last evening, we approved \$88 million under the Ministry of Education as the executing agency when the Minister of Education is on record as saying that she will not be executing that project, you can ask the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

Mr. Chairman: I will have the transcript done. I am sure that we may be using education synonymously as meaning the same things, but it is not. It is under education, and this one here is under education for Region 2. In my view, it is quite clear. Two very specific sums catering for education.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Mr. Chairman, I agree with you. There are two specific sums, two separate issues. I am standing here because last evening, the Minister of Education referred me to the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development. I am not going to ask him because it is not on his legend.

Mr. Chairman: When she referred you, my understanding was that when this particular head comes up under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, you can ask some of the questions. At this time, in my mind, I do not have any conflict. We will have it checked.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I am confident that we are speaking of two separate sums.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: I agree with you.

Mr. Chairman: In this instance, if you want to ask a specific question in respect of education, capital, Region 2, you may proceed while we try to clarify if there is the same thing that was being referred to previously.

3.17 p.m.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Does the clarity come from the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance?

Mr. Chairman: I am going to check the wording first.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you, Sir. My question for this is under project code 2502900, Furniture and Equipment – Education; could the Hon. Minister state which of the schools will benefit from the furniture and equipment?

Mr. Dharamlall: There are 80 schools in Region 2. I could read out the list of 80 schools.

Mr. Chairman: I would not allow you to do that because we are already...

Mr. Dharamlall: All 80 schools of Region 2 will benefit from the furniture and equipment that will be procured by the regional administration.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$446,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 725 – Health Services – \$1,473,511,000

Mr. Holder: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee how many temporary employees are at the Anna Regina Health Centre and Windsor Castle Health Centre and what is their scope of work and how do they contribute to the improvement of the health centres? I notice that it cost the taxpayers an extra \$38 million by employing these 27 persons, so could he say if it would be more prudent if that \$38 million was used to advance the health service, for example, ensuring there are stripes for diabetic patients and those sort of things?

Mr. Dharamlall: Under this contract arrangement, there were 10 warden mates appointed, two bond clerks, one lighting plant operator, three blood donator attendants, one orthopaedic technician, three staff nurses, five patient care assistants, one accounts clerk II and one typist clerk II. They will aid in the administration of health services in Region 2.

Programme: 725 – Health Services – \$1,473,511,000 000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 725 – Health Services – \$173,000,000

Mr. Holder: Project code 1202700 – Buildings – Health: When I checked Volume III, there is mention of repairs to the nurses’ hostel. Now, my question is, when will these works begin on the nurses’ hostel and is it due to these repair works that commenced that caused 15 applicants or 15 persons coming from the hinterland that was registered under the new Nursing Assistance Training Programme kept at a hotel in Henrietta for about two weeks? Could the Hon. Minister state the cost which the taxpayers had to bear because of that?

Mr. Dharamlall: For the purposes of clarity, we, the People’s Progressive Party/Civic, is not going to comprise the equality of healthcare that we are providing to our people in Region 2.

Secondly, because they are from the hinterland and because this PPP/C work so closely with people of the hinterland, especially the Amerindian people whom we respect enormously if we have to put them up in a hotel until we have alternative accommodation, we will put them in a hotel and not under some shed that happened under the last Government. I find it very strange that the Hon. Shurwayne Holder of Region 2 will question why Amerindian health workers are being placed in a hotel. If there is no other accommodation at the current time, we will put them in a hotel because Amerindian people should also be able to go to a hotel. There is no discrimination in the way we do our business in this Government compared to how the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) treated Amerindian people, with utter disrespect and decimation of who they are.

Thirdly, we are extending the nurses’ hostel at the public hospital in Suddie to house more nurses. As part of the capital programme, we will also be constructing a health post and landing at Sirikie for the first time. We will be rehabilitating the physiotherapy department at Suddie. We began those last year, and we will complete them this year. We also will be rehabilitating one of the doctor’s quarters at the Suddie Public Hospital compound. We will rehabilitate and extend the Barakara Health Centre at Akawini. We will extend the public health department at the Suddie

Public Hospital. As I said, we will also extend the nurse's hostel at Suddie Public Hospital compound.

Programme: 725 – Health Services – \$173,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much, Hon. Minister and your staff of Region 2. Hon. Members, I want to say that the one and half hours we used up for the breaks later this afternoon have also all been exhausted today, so we are supposed to have been through Region 3 already. Hon. Members, we can get through these heads within the allocated time. I do not think I would have the luxury of giving a question to every head henceforth because we have used up all the time for the breaks now. Let us ensure that we can cut out the preambles, historic, and be very succinct with respect to our examination of the regions, henceforth. We are starting Region 3, according to my time on the computer, at 3.28 p.m.

Agency: 73 Region 3: Essequibo Islands/West Demerara

Current Expenditure

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$303,031,000

Ms. Alert: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: Could the Hon. Minister share with us the specifications for those workers; the categories that they will fill, specifically, if any of these workers will be working in any of the Essequibo Islands?

Mr. Dharamlall: The increase of four caters for one accounts clerk, two typist clerks and an office assistant. One of these will be placed in the Leguan office.

Ms. Alert: Moving quickly to line item 6281, Security Services; there is an increase. Could the Hon. Minister state what had occasioned this?

Mr. Dharamlall: The number of locations occasioned this. Also, we have to meet some requirements in terms of the offices so that is why there is the increase.

Ms. Alert: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister list, specifically, what events could the people in the region look forward to in the region that is supported here under this allocation?

Mr. Dharamlall: The reason why this is ‘national and other events’ is because we will be participating in some of the national events, if not all of them, and some of the other events.

3.32 p.m.

These include Flag Raising, Phagwah, Easter, Labour Day, Independence Day, Amerindian Heritage Day, **Eid al-Adha**, Diwali, Remembrance Day and Emancipation– those events.

Ms. Alert: From me the last one on this here, line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, what specifically or what sort of projects or works will be addressed under that allocation? If we could get some details as to the nature of what will be done there.

Mr. Dharamlall: This is \$6 million. Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure is \$6million. I row that the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) paid \$400,000 to weed a school compound and paid \$400,000 to buy a wardrobe and \$400,000 to buy a bed in Eteringbang. Under other infrastructure, we will be doing some landfilling in Leguan Island at the guest house. You are encouraged to stay when you go and pay. [**An Hon. Member:** *(Inaudible)*] It has beds. I am being asked if there are beds at the guest house. We would be repairing a fence at Tuschen. There are Government quarters there. The Government quarters at Leguan Island. The Government compound at Crane and the regional administration compound.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, the same three employees for 2022, are those the same three for 2023?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. That was your shortest answer so far.

Mr. Mahipaul: A clap for that. I want to ask him, why is it that the sum allocated there does not reflect the 8% increase? In fact, it is significantly lower than what was spent in 2022. In 2022, it was \$5,094,000. In 2023, has \$4 million plus dollars.

Mr. Dharamlall: A cleaner and a labourer were replaced in 2022. The numbers are the same. It is just that the categories, two staff were released and [*inaudible*].

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$303,031,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$4,500,000

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$4,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 732 – Agriculture – \$621,548,000

Ms. Alert: Again, line item 6117 – Temporary Employees, we see it moving from \$22 million to just over \$26 million. I am sure the Hon. Minister could provide some quick details to explain this little, what may seem in his eyes as a little increase.

Mr. Dharamlall: There was the appointment of an overseer, so their salary will take effect and the salary increases.

Ms. Alert: Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works, could the Minister disaggregate that amount? Could he also advice on whether they were farmers meetings, community meetings or any sort of consultation to determine that work and to say whether any additional farmlands will come into cultivation as a result of this D&I works being planned?

Mr. Dharamlall: There would be weeding and cleaning of the Georgia collector drain, weeding and cleaning of the new line irrigation Vreed-en-Hoop, weeding and cleaning of Bordeaux Sideline, weeding and cleaning of Windsor Forest and Vreed-en-Hoop collector, weeding and cleaning of Ruby main drain, Parika main drain, Tuschen West and Cross Sideline, Tuschen East Sideline, Tuschen Middlewalk, La Jalousie West Sideline, Windsor Forest Middlewalk, Zeelugt East Sideline, A-Line main drain, Centre Line main drain, B-line to Tail Wall at the Conservancy, Ruby Boerasirie distributary, Kashmir Middlewalk, B-line to Tail Wall at the river sluice,

Naamryck escape channel, Parika/Hydrone Crown Dam, Ruby KI6 to KI8, Parika west irrigation Bonasika trench and Aliko drainage canal. I also have a lot more. Should I go ahead?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, should the Minister go ahead with the entire list?

Ms. Albert: No.

Programme: 732 – Agriculture – \$621,548,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 732 – Agriculture – \$114,000,000

Programme: 732 – Agriculture – \$114,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 733 – Public Works – \$217,165,000

Ms. Alert: I appreciate the pace of which we are moving through Region 3. I am sure the works will move just as well. Under line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads, could the Minister again disaggregate and kindly specifically identify the roads on the West Bank and if any in the Islands are going to be done under this?

Mr. Dharamlall: As you are aware, we have quite an extensive road programme last year and this year. A lot of the roads would be constructed through our region plus the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Housing and Water. A substantial amount of road construction will take place. For the purposes of maintenance, under this budget, we will be doing work at Leonora old housing scheme, the internal roads at Zeelugt North, Uitvlugt, Meten-Meer-Zorg, Anna Catherina, Vergenoegen, Crane, Goed Fortuin and the procurement of road building material for the force account team that we have.

Programme: 733 – Public Works – \$217,165,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 733 – Public Works – \$259,000,000

Ms. Alert: Could the Minister say what type of bridges are going to be constructed? Is it timber or, concrete? Are they going to be for vehicular traffic or pedestrian boost? If the Minister could provide some details therein. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: We would be constructing a reinforced concrete bridge at Leonora hospital at New Road. We will also be constructing a reinforced concrete bridge at La Bagatelle, Leguan; a reinforced concrete bridge at Centre Street, Uitvlugt; a reinforced concrete bridge at Sarah, Wakenaam; a reinforced concrete bridge at Crane old road; a reinforced concrete bridge at Bank Hall Friendship, Wakenaam and a bridge at Belle Vue squatting area. All of these bridges you could use vehicles on them.

Mr. Mahipaul: I heard the Hon. Minister saying Leonora hospital. Does that mean that they will be breaking up that concrete bridge that exists there to put in a new concrete bridge?

Mr. Dharamlall: No. We are not breaking up any bridge, but a lot more roads are being done, accesses are created, so we have to build bridges to link them as well. This will be a bridge on the new access that we are creating for the hospital.

Ms. Alert: Could the Minister say if there are any allocations here for the repairs to the bridge leading to the school Genesis along the Canal No. 1 Road?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is under the recurrent programme. Maintenance is under the recurrent, not capital. But yes.

Programme: 733 – Public Works – \$259,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$5,163,265,000

Ms. Alert: Again, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, I see it has moved up from 0 to over 200 therein. Could the Hon. Minister say how these persons are going to be employed in terms of what they will be doing in the sector?

3.47 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: This is a commitment President Ali has made across the education sector in our country where this covers all of the sweeper/cleaners on their granted contracts. They were removed from line item 6284 and now they are granted contracts, thanks to President Ali, 239 of them.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Member, Ms. Alert, you may have the floor. Are you okay, Hon. Member, Ms. Alert? Thank you very much, Hon. Member.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$5,163,265,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$372,000,000

Ms. Alert: Mr. Chairman, Land and Water Transport, I see here they have,

“Purchase of vehicles and engines.”

I think they are outboard engines. Could the Hon. Minister assure this House that the boats for those outboard engines are available and the lifejackets for the persons who will be using those boats are available?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, we are a caring Government, we know what is required to run the country and how to take care of our school children. A 25 horsepower (hp) outboard engine, four will be bought for La Harmoie Primary School, Fort Island Primary School, Saxacalli Primary School, Hog Island and will also be used at Upper Bonasika.

We will also be procuring two (32)-seater buses to help with the transporting school children along the West Coast/West Bank. We will also be using one of the buses. There are about 70 special needs children in Region 3 and we currently have one bus. On a commitment of His Excellency,

we will also be buying a second bus for the special needs children. The first bus was procured last year, and I had the honour of handing over that bus last year as well to the parents.

Ms. Alert: Furniture and Equipment, could the Hon. Minister say what proportion or how much of this allocation will be going specifically to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in the region and, specifically, which schools will be targeted?

Mr. Dharamlall: When we procure furniture, we tend to procure for every school and for every need. I can proceed to identify, it will take a while, if the Hon. Member would like me to go ahead and say exactly what we are procuring.

Ms. Alert: Could the Minister lay it over to the House, Sir?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have the list and I am willing to publicise the list in the House.

Mr. Chairman: With there being a stalemate, I will move on to the next question.

Ms. Alert: From me Minister, the last one here on Education, the staff quarters, could the Minister say where this work will be done and specifically what will be done?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you have a long list again?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman yes – a bed, a dinette set, a wardrobe, a gas stove, a three-piece set. There will be two beds, two dinette sets, two wardrobes, one gas stove with oven and three three-piece sofa suites will be bought. It will be used to furnish the living quarters at Great Troolie Island, Wakenaam, Leguan, Santa Mission, Saxacalli and Upper Bonasika.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I just need some guidance because that list that was just called out speaks to furniture and equipment for a home, a living quarter. But, when I look at the description here, it is saying school furniture and equipment. I just need the clarification as to whether it is actually going to homes or to a school? This is because the description I have here, Sir, speaks to school furniture.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think I heard you pertain to schools. It is for the teachers, right?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, project code 2513600 – Furniture and Equipment – Staff Quarters, that is what it said. It does not say school furniture.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, just for clarity, I am making reference to the Legend that was given to me and these are the documents that guide us in asking our questions. The Legend tells me that this project entails purchase of school furniture and equipment. I just needed that clarity. Clearly this was a mistake in the book.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, there are two different items, project code 2513600 – Furniture and Equipment – Staff Quarters, \$2 million; and project code 2503300 – Furniture and Equipment – Education, which is for the purchase of furniture and equipment for schools.

Mr. Chairman: For the long list of schools you gave earlier.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, I am referencing project code 2513600 and the reference number is 328 and I am looking at 328. What I am saying here is that the book clearly, based on the answer the Minister is providing, does not have the correct information.

Mr. Chairman: That is the profile book.

Mr. Mahipaul: The profile book. However, I am guided, Sir, by the Minister's answer.

Mr. Chairman: I will ask the Advisor to the Minister to just clarify.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, you are directing me to which book I must use, I am using the book that you are directing me to, which is Volume 1. Mr. Chairman, I am referring to the book that the Chairman of the Committee of Supply is using for the conduct of the...

Mr. Chairman: On 734 at page 535. Hon. Minister, remember all three volumes are read in conjunction with each other. So, what we have to do if there is a discrepancy with respect to the description, Hon. Minister of Finance will have to start cleaning up some of these heads to ensure that what is reflected in Volume 1 is the same headings in Volume 3.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$372,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$2,403,758,000

Ms. Alert: Clarify for me please, Mr. Chairman. Are we talking about Health Services, Current Expenditure or...

Mr. Chairman: Current Expenditure on pages 360 and 361.

Ms. Alert: Sir, again the Temporary Workers and I am afraid I have to question this repeatedly, Chart of Account 6117. Again, could the Minister say what is the nature of the jobs these Temporary Workers will be carrying out? Very importantly, Mr. Chairman, in the health sector, Temporary Workers just may be exposed to all manner of harmful environments. What assurances will the Minister provide to this House and the nation that these Temporary Workers are covered under some sort of insurance programme, whether it is the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) or any other sort of insurance programme in case there is some sort of industrial accident, loss of limb or any contagious disease they contract?

Mr. Dharamlall: Just to clarify what the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, said. Both in Volume 3 are actually covered. If the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, turns the page, he will realise that it is covered for both furniture and equipment for schools, as well as for the staff quarters.

On Health Services, line item 6117, this accounts for two Medical Laboratory Technicians and the salary increases.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I just want to let us get it clear. My concern is not that it is not covered. Both pages are covered, but the description of a project, based on the answer that the Minister gave, it was clearly furniture and equipment for a house to accommodate the staff in their respective living quarters. The description is saying, however, that it is school furniture. My position is that it was guided incorrectly.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Hon. Members and we ruled on that.

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, the Minister referenced it, that is why.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, you may have the floor.

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance [Dr. Singh]:
Mr. Chairman, if I may in that particular instance, the project profile should in fact have said

‘Furniture and Equipment’ and not ‘School Furniture and Equipment’ the word ‘school’ should not be there, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, we have another clarification which I have asked the staff to get the transcript and clarify with you.

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$2,403,758,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$243,750,000

Ms. Alert: To the Hon. Minister, could you say where this ambulance is going to be deployed? Can you assure this House that you have in place the drivers for this ambulance so that it would not be parked at any hour?

Mr. Dharamlall: These ambulances would be for Parika to Leonora and that one will transit that area, one will also be at Wakenaam and one at Leguan.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have the drivers for them?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I am interested in project code – 1203100. I am interested based on the description of the project here, the upgrade of the West Demerara Regional Hospital. Would the Hon. Minister please tell us what are some of the upgrades we will find during 2023 for the West Demerara Regional Hospital?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, for the West Demerara Regional Hospital, there will be the renovation of the theatre, the electrical system of the hospital and we will also be rehabilitating a health centre at Met-en-Meerzorg, the reconstruction of Verna Luke Health Post in Wakenaam and the reconstruction of a ramp at Aliko along the Essequibo River.

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$243,750,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.02 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us thank the Hon. Minister and his staff from Region 3 for taking us through Agency 73. As they depart, let us turn to pages 366 and 367, and invite the Minister and the staff from Region 4 to join us. It looks like there are 26 minutes saved. It is not 26, 18 minutes. Hold on. Yes. It is 26 minutes.

Agency: 74 Region 4: Demerara/Mahaica

Current Expenditure

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$253,989,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: I would like to turn the Minister's attention to line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings. I noticed that there is a decline in the cost, and I would like to find out which building will not be maintained this year.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, a question with respect to what the money is allocated for...The not being maintained... So, you may say, would the Mocha/Arcadia shade centre be included or something like that.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I am so guided. Could the Minister identify the buildings that would be maintained with this cost?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, we have estimated \$4 million to do maintenance work at the Regional Democratic Council's (RDC) main office. That is a massive building, it is 150 ft by 60 ft. There is the Enmore's sub-office which is 30 ft by 50 ft and the Grove Craft Centre which is 30 ft by 24 ft.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6281, Security Services: Cde. Chair, I note that all the other regions had an increase in this particular sector but when it came to Region 4, the cost declined significantly by \$14 million. Could the Hon. Minister say why?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the reason last year seems so much is that there was a liability paid to one of the providers that we inherited from the APNU/AFC.

Ms. Philadelphia: We are at line item 6116, Contracted Employees. I recognise that the number has increased from seven in 2022 to 10 in 2023. May I ask the Hon. Minister what may have constituted this increase? Could he provide the job descriptions and emoluments for these three added employees and, of course, which departments these employees will staff?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, it is just the last part I did not get very clear. Could it be repeated?

Ms. Philadelphia: Mr. Chairman, my question has several parts. So, I will have no difficulty if the Minister answers the first and then I will ask the last that you asked me to clarify. Or do you want me to repeat it?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead and repeat it.

Ms. Philadelphia: I am saying in 2022, under Contracted Employees, we had a total of seven staff. In 2023, it is now 10. I am asking what may have constituted this increase – one? Could the Minister be kind and provide this Committee with their job descriptions or emoluments and say which offices will be staffed by these three added members?

Mr. Dharamlall: There is one Supply Expeditor, a Security Supervisor and an Accounts Clerk 11. The emoluments are: Security Supervisor – \$105,542 per month; Supply Expediter 1 – \$96,277; and Accounts Clerk 11 – \$84,036. They are a part of the Regional Administration and Finance Programme.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6291, National and Other Events: I note that all the other regions had an increase under this line item. So, I would like to know why is it that Region 4 was not given any increase under this particular line item.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, it is the same amount as last year. We have also budgeted in some of the programmes for some of the activities that have been carried – activities that tend to repeat themselves – so the cost is shared.

Mr. Mahipaul: There is one question that I have. This is on line item 6211.

Mr. Chairman: Are there several parts?

Mr. Mahipaul: Well, it depends on the answer. Line item 6211 shows an increase from \$18,230,000 to \$26,200,000. It is the largest budget, of course, and all the line items got increases across the entire budget. This line item caters for Expenses Specific to the Agency and is utilised by the Chairperson and Councillors of the RDC. When I take into account what the President announced – the increase in stipends for the Regional Councillors, the Toshaos and Deputy Toshaos – and I do the calculations, last year, the sum of money that was left for the Regional Chairman and Councillors of the RDC amounted to somewhere around \$15 million. This year, when a similar calculation was done, the amount that is left for the Chairman and Councillors of the RDC is \$13 million – a decrease. Could the Hon. Minister explain why is it that they have decreased Region 4 when in comparison Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 were all increased substantially?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, there is nothing underhand in this. There are more Amerindian villages in Region 1. There are more Amerindian villages in Regions 7, 8 and 9. So, naturally, you will find the stipends going to those areas. The President did make a commitment to increase the stipends for the Toshaos and it is catered for in Region 4. There is only one Amerindian village in Region 4 actually. This is where the Deputy Speaker is from. The Deputy Toshaos' stipends have also increased. There are 33 current Councillors, and they are being paid the increased stipend of \$30,000. The Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons are paid by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development through the Ministry's budget under Expenses Specific to the Agency. I mean, it is basic arithmetic that can clarify the questions of the Hon Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, this is on the same line item. I have catered for all those increases to pay the Councillors of the RDC which moved from \$10,000 to \$30,000 and, also, the Toshaos' and the Deputy Toshaos' increases. I have done it across all the regions. When you do the breakdown, for Regions 4, 7 and 10, the amount of money that is left for the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Councillors to utilise within line item 6211 in their respective regions, has reduced whilst for the other regions, Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9, it has increased. I have said to you that the decrease for Region 4 is from \$15 million or thereabout to \$13 million. So, whilst every other line item sees an increase to spend, the Region's RDC Councillors have seen a decrease which mean that their activities are now limited in terms of going out to meet with communities to do

consultations and all the other items that fall under their programme. My question is simple: Why is there a decrease for Region 4? I will ask the same for Regions 7 and 10 when we get there.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul started his epistle with a caveat that this is the Chairman's budget. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** I said it is the Chairman and Councillors.] He said, it is the Chairman and Councillor's budget. For the record of the people of Region 4 and for the Members of the Opposition, the Chairman of Region 4, the Chairman of Region of 7, the Chairman of Region 10 and the Chairpersons of the other regions have all signed off on this budget. For Expenses Specific to the Agency, this being the Regional Chairpersons' and Councillors' budget, they come up with the activities that have to be pursued under line item 6211. If the Chairman does not want to increase the budget that he is requesting, then you cannot blame me if the PNC related Chairpersons of Regions 4, 7 and 10 did not ask for more money. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** They have asked for more.] I do not know what they have asked for. I know what the budget is. That is what I can deal with. I cannot deal with the whims of anyone else.

One of the things that I would like the public to know is that because we have to be more accountable for the taxpayers' money, for the line item 6211 across all 10 regions, they will now have to provide reports of their visits so that we can make sure that they are spending the money according to what they promised the taxpayers. So, when they go to community meetings, they must show us reports that they visited these communities. This is not for them to 'palaver' around the place. Thank you very much.

Mr. Mahipaul: In the interest of time, I will leave the public to judge what just happened.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry. Do I not have a right to reply? If the Hon. Member makes a statement, I am also allowed to make one.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you have a right to make a statement.

4.17 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to confirm to this House, the Committee of Supply, and to all those who are following, what is happening. The Chairpersons of

Regions 4, 7 and 10, those Chairpersons came from the APNU/AFC and if they have not requested additional resources to conduct their work then how would we be able to grant them, if they are in control of this budget item?

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$253,989,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$3,000,000

Ms. Philadelphia: Project code 2506800, Furniture and Equipment – Administration, if it pleases the Hon. Member I would be grateful if he could provide this House with the office that will be furnished with furniture and equipment from this project code. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: We will be upgrading the security camera system at the Triumph Office. A biometric system will be in place for time keeping purposes so that we can have more discipline in the workforce at Triumph. We will also purchase computers and office desk for the Triumph Office.

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 742 – Agriculture - \$425,637,000

Ms. Flu-Bess: The line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads, I see there is an allotted sum of \$15 million. I was trying to figure out which roads they plan to maintain. Could the Hon. Minister give me that information?

Mr. Dharamlall: There are many farm to market roads and, so far, we have been able to identify, Huntley in Cane Grove, sectional repairs to the farm to market road along Agriculture Road that is in Mon Repos and resurfacing of a farm to market road at Beterverwagting (BV). Just to let you know, Mr. Chairman, this road at Beterverwagting, I had spoken during the Debate, about \$500 million was spent by the last Government in Beterverwagting and, at the community meeting, the

residents claimed that they did not have access to the lands where that \$500 million was spent. As a matter of fact, they had no evidence that it was properly spent, and so, we now have to resurface the road to make sure that they have easier and better access to their farmlands in BV.

Ms. Flu-Bess: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up on that very question. The Hon. Member would have given us three roads, those being: Huntley in Cane Grove, Mon Repos and Beterverwagting. Could the Hon. Member give us a breakdown as to the costing per road?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, these are estimated figures and I guess when the actual procurement process is pursued, we will get the exact cost. For Huntley in Cane Gove, the engineers have estimated that it will be at least or not more than \$6 million; for Mon Repos, it will not be more than \$4 million; and at BV it will not be more than \$5 million.

Ms. Flu-Bess: Under the same line item, I want to turn the Minister's attention to Volume 2 and with the profile that they have here, at number 8, it states,

“Km of farm to market roads prepared.”

I see they have a target of 13. Does this refer to what you are speaking to here about this \$15 million?

Mr. Dharamlall: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, could I be guided again on the question please?

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

Ms. Flu-Bess: In Volume 2, under your profile, the indicators, I was making reference to what I saw in Volume 2, Programme Agriculture 742, under indicators there are some 1 to 9 listed here....

Mr. Chairman: Is it Agriculture, Region 4?

Ms. Flu-Bess: Yes, it is. There are: Number of works, work sites inspected and stuff like that – the performance indicators in the book. Would you like me to repeat the question?

Mr. Dharamlall: No, I have an answer for you.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member, you are on the right track.

Ms. Flu-Bess: Thank you. Well, the Minister just alluded that I am not bright, so I do not know what I should say to him now. Following on, number 8 in the indicators, I see there is,

“Km of farm to market roads prepared.”

I see a number 13 subjected there. So, I am asking if this will be covered under this same line item of 6251?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, when you are preparing the budget, you have to establish targets and the target was 13 kilometres. Unfortunately, or for the purposes of this budget, some of these activities that will be pursued are roads, farm to market construction by other agencies of the Government. So, for the purposes of this programme, in Region 4, these three roads will be maintained, whilst other agencies will do the balance to meet the 13 kilometres.

Ms. Flu-Bess: The line item 6284, Other, I noted that there is a sharp decrease in the sum. I would like the Hon. Minister to say what activities will be covered under this ‘Other’ with this sum?

Mr. Dharamlall: This occurred because 14 Sluice Attendants are now placed under the line item 6116, Contracted Employees. They have move from this line item and their salaries will be paid under the line item 6116.

Ms. Flu-Bess: Well, I was coming to line item 6116 because, when I look at the Legend, you have here in Staffing Details, I saw there are 19 more Contracted Employees added. I was wondering, what the designations of these people are. Are you saying the Sluice Attendants will be the persons going over there? Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. I am confirming that they are all Sluice Attendants who will be paid under this line item.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture - \$425,637,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 742 – Agriculture - \$37,000,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: I looked at project code 1701200, Agricultural Development, and I see there is provision for revetment and sluices. When I check the Volume 3, I see it is listed as,

“1. Construction of sluices at Friendship and Herstelling.

2. Construction of revetment at Soesdyke.”

Could the Hon. Minister say how much each of these projects will cost?

Mr. Dharamlall: The region has under its management 52 sluices: 38 on the East Bank Demerara, 14 on the East Coast Demerara and 6 pumps. In addition, a steel door will be constructed at Friendship, and it is 15ft long by 8ft wide. It is more than \$13 million. A timber sluice door at South Herstelling, 15ft long by 14ft wide approximately \$9 million and these are estimated cost, it can cost less when it is tendered out. Construction of timber revetment at [inaudible] in Soesdyke, it will be 220ft long by 15ft high, an estimated cost of \$13.8 million.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture - \$37,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.32 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$236,692,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see there is almost a 90% increase. When I look at the Legend, I noticed that there are two added contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister say what the designations and emoluments for the two added employees are?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, there is an Engineer and an Overseer in the Public Works Department. The Overseer’s salary is \$103,364, and the Engineer’s salary is \$256,371.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Under line item 6242, I note there is a decrease in that sum. Could the Hon. Minister say which building or buildings will be maintained with this allotted sum?

Mr. Dharamlall: It will be the office building at Triumph and repairs to roof, defective staircase, and the plumbing system as well as sectional painting of a wooden building at Triumph.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Under the same line item, I would like to turn the Hon. Minister's attention to Volume 2, Public Works, page 332. For your indicators, you have at 3.1:

“Number of buildings maintained...”

There were 90 in 2022 and now we are looking at 2. You just gave one building. Which is the other building that would be maintained?

Mr. Dharamlall: One is the public works area of the administrative building and also the building where the former Regional Chairman resided. That estimated cost is \$3.5 million. The office building at Triumph will be just \$1.5 million.

Ms. Flue-Bess: In the same Volume 2, indicator 3 states:

“Number of roads, rails, bridges, and building maintained...”

I see that we have moved from 121 last year to a projected 41. We are dealing with public works, the same Volume 2.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure under which line item I am interrogated on.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please repeat.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I am still talking about line items 6251, 6252, and 6253, but I am referring to Volume 2 where you have the indicators. It states at number 3:

“Number of roads, rails, bridges, and building maintained...”

It is expected to be 41. Could the Hon. Minister say what the total number of bridges is, what the total number of rails, and the total number of roads and buildings that you are referring to that gave you this 41?

Mr. Dharamlall: There is zero allocation for line item 6253, so I would be unable to respond to 6253.

In terms of line item 6251, repairs to Second Street, Latchman Singh – Lusignan, Waterside Street – Cane Grove, Friendship Road – East Coast, Unity-Lancaster – Moss Street, repairs to Paul's Lane at Beterverwagting, first cross street at Enmore Hope Primary School, repairs to East-West

Street at Annandale Sand Reef, Mon Repos North – third cross street, repairs to second cross street – Non Pariel, repairs to Middle Street – Plaisance, and repairs to cross street at New Hope Housing Scheme, East Bank Demerara, (EBD), repairs to first cross street at Ivan Road at Soesdyke, the cross street at Voorzigtigheid, East Coast Demerara – that is in Mahaica, Niles Street in Grove, and Harry’s Avenue in Friendship.

At line item 6252, repairs to second bridge, North to South – this is at Grove, East Bank, repairs to East to West side-line connecting bridge at Moravian Street in Victoria, repairs to bridge leading to Enmore Hope Primary School, repairs to a vehicular bridge along Church Street in Bachelor’s Adventure, Ramos Street in Plaisance, a timber bridge at Market Street in Better Hope, a bridge contiguous to the Mahaica Market, repairs to bridge at second cross street at Nabaclis, repairs to foot path bridge at Anne’s Grove, and repairs to a timber bridge at Land of Canaan. I hope that clarifies your question.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I know I asked for the total number and not the listing, but I would be happy if the Minister could be kind enough to lay over the listing to the honourable House. Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): I note that there is a sum of \$252,000. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister if it is one person who will benefit from this meagre sum.

Mr. Dharamlall: There is continuous training across the Government. In this case, seven persons will be attending a five-week training programme on risk management.

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$236,692,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$179,480,000

Ms. Philadelphia: Under project code 1400700, I recognise here, in Volume 3, there are nine roads to be constructed and/or upgraded. Would the Hon. Minister be so kind to provide the honourable Committee with the number of roads to be constructed and the number of roads to be upgraded?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, will you permit me to sit for a bit and answer?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I will.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. There are seven roads; we were not able to get all nine. However, if there are savings, we will be able to have an inclusion and have more roads constructed. There are three to be upgraded and four to be constructed.

Ms. Philadelphia: During my budget presentation, I made mention of the deplorable roads in Nabaclis, and I heard the Minister mentioned just now, “if there are savings”. I want to implore on this House that some consideration be given to the village of Nabaclis to get those roads repaired.

Mr. Chairman: Is the question, would the Minister consider putting Nabaclis roads as a priority if there are savings? You have to put a question. If it is a statement, I will ask the Minister to respond.

Mr. Dharamlall: Minister Edghill spoke about this recently. We have been able to pick up over 4,000 roads that need to be upgraded, reconstructed, and in some cases, constructed on a study commissioned by the Vice President. We have indicated, through the Ministries of Public Works, Housing and Water, and Local Government and Regional Development, and the regions, the roads that we are currently doing. Naturally, if there are savings, we would look at the priorities and ensure that we allocate to those areas. I would also like to say, with equal vigour, that last year, through the request of residents of Nooten Zuil, we were able to get one of the roads in Nooten Zuil constructed. I think Hon. Member Philadelphia visited when I had that meeting. Sorry. The Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) Chairperson was aware. The NDC Chairperson visited with me as well. I will speak to the NDC to find out about their priorities within the area. I know that Nabaclis has roads that need repairs. We can also look at some of these through the maintenance programme. But I can tell you, the areas in which we are building roads now that I have identified, they have never had roads in these seven areas. It is either sand or mud. That is where the priority is, but we would be willing to look at all other areas. I want to commit, too, on behalf of the Government, to reconstructing and upgrading all of the roads, to the extent that, on an instruction of His Excellency, all roads will be done in asphaltic concrete or reinforced concrete. They will have a much longer life.

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$179,480,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.47 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 744 - Education Delivery – \$7,073,433,000

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: in 2022, there were three staff but in 2023, it is now 425. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what may have given rise to this increase and could we be provided with the job specification of the top five personnel?

Mr. Dharamlall: Again, on a commitment of President Ali to institutionalise the employment arrangements of our sweeper/cleaners, they are now being employed under line item 6116, Contracted Employees. So, 420 sweeper/cleaners and two Labourers are added to this contract list. That is how we ended up at 425.

Ms. Philadelphia: I am happy that after so many years of us advocating for our sweeper/cleaners to be treated differently, they are now being given different salary sums. However, I was recently informed, on Monday, that sweeper/cleaners will be going back to recent days where they will be paid bi-monthly. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us if that is so or not?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, bi-monthly.

Mr. Dharamlall: We run a serious Government and I, as Minister, do not operate on hearsay. As a matter of fact, the Hon. Member was also the Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) Chairperson of Haslington/Grove, where Nabaclis is, for many years and never got the Nabaclis roads fixed, never got the Victoria roads fixed and never fixed the Golden Grove road, where I went to school. I went to Golden Grove to help fix the roads under Irfaan Ali's Government. I went to Lowlands and they did not fix the road; I went to Nooten Zuil and they did not fix the road; and I went to Clonbrook and they did not fix the roads. That Hon. Member served for many years as a Councillor and as the Chairperson of the NDC of that area. How can we countenance now when after so many years, President Ali made a commitment to these poor people, and he is honouring that commitment? How, suddenly, do you have a problem with him paying sweeper/cleaner as contracted employees?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Philadelphia.

Ms. Philadelphia: I think the Hon. Member has a problem with comprehending. What I said was that I was recently informed that, while the President would have placed them on this establishment, they have now gone back to being paid bi-monthly. I subsequently asked if the Hon. Member can say to us if that is true or not. I will move on.

Mr. Chairman: You have asked a question pertinent to the Head.

Ms. Philadelphia: He has a difficulty understanding.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, will the payment...

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, if I may.

Mr. Chairman: The Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance will help clarify the policy issues.

Dr. Singh: As indicated by my distinguished colleague, the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, pursuant to a commitment given by His Excellency the President upon assuming Office, the vexing issue of payment of sweeper/cleaners was finally addressed, an issue which incidentally eluded the attention of the APNU/AFC Government for five years. [Ms. Philadelphia: That is not true.] It is a matter of historic fact that the APNU/AFC spent five years in Government and did not resolve this matter. That is an indisputable historic fact. Upon assuming Office, President Ali said that we will resolve this issue, which we did. We have, therefore, issued the necessary instructions for sweeper/cleaners to be brought up to the public service minimum wage. Sir, they had five years in Government and did nothing at all. They spent five years in Government and did nothing at all, including failing to address this matter.

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: This cannot be a clarification. This is a speech now.

Dr. Singh: May I, Sir, continue to say ...

Mr. Jones: Do not continue. Make your point.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Chief Whip, are you standing on a point of order?

Mr. Jones: Yes, I am, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Tell me what it is.

Mr. Jones: The Hon. Minister is supposed to be providing clarity. He is doing a political speech now.

Mr. Chairman: That is what he is doing.

Mr. Jones: He is doing a political speech.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please go ahead.

Dr. Singh: Yes, Sir, happily so. We have issued the necessary instructions for all schools' sweeper/cleaners, subject to the guidelines regarding the number of sweeper/cleaners per school, depending on the size of the school, *et cetera*, be brought up to the public service minimum wage and to be added to the Government payroll. That process is currently being implemented. That instruction has been issued and it is being implemented. It has in fact come to my attention that there are some cases where, apparently, that process has not been completed for some sweeper/cleaners, including for reasons... **[An. Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]** Sir, I am offering a clarification. If the Members are interested in hearing...

Mr. Chairman: I am. Speak to me.

Dr. Singh: Very good, Sir. It has recently brought to my attention and the attention of the Cabinet that there are instances where sweeper/cleaners might not have previously been registered for National Insurance Scheme (NIS) or they do not have an NIS number, or they do not have a Tax Identification Number (TIN). Those administrative details have to be addressed, in order to bring them properly on the payroll. The Government's instruction is that they all be brought on the payroll and be paid no less than the minimum wage that is currently applicable to public servants. Any rumour to the contrary, I would venture to speculate, must be a rumour being circulated at the behest of perhaps a wicked APNU informant.

Mr. Chairman: The word 'wicked' is unparliamentary.

Dr. Singh: I withdraw that Sir. Mischievous ...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Dr. Singh: Very well Sir.

Mr. Chairman: This process of bringing them in line may have missed a few of them, based on some administrative issues. The work continues to bring everyone in line.

Dr. Singh: Sir, I would not say that we have missed a few of them. I would say that while they regularise issues like getting their NIS number or TIN number, *et cetera*, in those instances they might not have been completed as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for that policy clarification and the issues with respect to implementation of the policy.

Ms. Philadelphia: Sweeper/cleaners were being paid, prior to 2015, \$22,000 per month. Under the APNU/AFC, their salaries went all the way up \$58,000 and more. They received bonus at the end of December, under the APNU/AFC. When the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stand there and say that the APNU/AFC did nothing, '*oh my gosh*'. I now turn my attention to line item 6284, ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, normally, when there is an issue which adversely affects a government, then a government person can invoke a certain standing order for right of reply, but not to carry this on with both sides, I will now allow you to proceed to your next question, rather than invite a comment on your comment.

Ms. Philadelphia: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6284, [An Hon. Member: *(Inaudible)*] You need a rest. Line item 6284: in 2022, there was an allotted sum of \$236,957,000. In 2023, it is now an allotted sum of \$134,923,000. Could the Hon. Minister to explain to us what may have given cause to this drastic decrease?

Mr. Dharamlall: Again, last year, the sweeper/cleaners were paid from this head and so a lot of the resources have now gone to contracted employees. That is why there is such a significant decrease.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery - \$7,073,433,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery - \$439,000,000

Ms. Philadelphia: Project code 1203300 states:

“provision for schools, educational facilities and payment retention.”

Those are basically three areas. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown as to what will be happening under each of these areas and the schools that will be benefitting thereof?

Mr. Dharamlall: I have to stand for this one. The new wing at Diamond Secondary school is a roll-over. I wish to announce that we will be constructing a new school at Swan, a nursery school this time. We did a primary school. The children of Swan along the Linden/Soesdyke Highway will get a new nursery school. We will do general rehabilitation of Covent Garden Primary; reconstruction of Providence Nursery school – a two-flat concrete building; reconstruction of Annandale North Nursery School, a flat concrete building; reconstruction of Diamond Special Needs School, a flat concrete building; general rehabilitation to Lusignan Primary; general rehabilitation of Kuru Kururu Primary Annexe and main building. That school has right now 1,242 learners. There would be general rehabilitation of Covent Garden Secondary, extension of the Swan Primary school already. Since we built the school, more children are now coming to the school. We have to extend the school. The school we had built before catered for 90 learners. There are now 169 pupils, and we have to do an extension to the primary school.

We are also constructing a bridge and the Hon. Member would like to hear this – the eastern entrance along Victoria Sideline Dam to the Swami Primary school. Some of them do not know where this is on the East Coast of Demerara. I know the East Coast very well. Again, there would be the construction of a new school; the Non Pareil nursery school. The children will have a new school. There would be the general rehabilitation of Grove Primary and the construction of a trestle at Diamond/Grove Primary as well. Those are the buildings that are catered for in this line item.

Ms. Philadelphia: I am happy for the information provided by the Minister. I want to ask, once there are savings, if Strathspey Nursery School could be given some attention. That school was provided with a new building. However, the learners from that institution gain access through the Primary school compound and sometimes it can be really disgusting.

5.02 p.m.

Could that school be provided with their own walkway? In addition, there needs to be lifting in some areas because there is flooding. As I am on my feet, there seems to be some amount of electrical issues at the Triumph Nursery School. I see my REdO is here, and I trust that some attention can be given to these two institutions.

Mr. Chairman: If there are savings, as you said. Hon. Minister, could you?

Mr. Dharamlall: The REdO is currently doing a fantastic job in Region 4. If there are savings, we will do many things. There are a number of things that the Hon. Member also raised that are currently covered under the current programme of the region. Some of those things will be looked at under the current programme as well.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery - \$439,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$1,903,672,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: I notice in the staffing details that there are four less employees. I would like the Hon. Minister to say what skillset we have lost from the four persons who are not there anymore.

Mr. Dharamlall: We have two Midwives, a medical Laboratory Technician and a Community Health Worker (CHW).

Ms. Flue-Bess: Were these employees attached to a specific health institution in the region? If so, kindly name the institutions to which they were attached.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the CHW is from Plaisance, the medical Laboratory Technician is from Diamond, and the Midwives are from Timehri and Soesdyke.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could the Hon. Minister say how the institutions are currently functioning without these skillsets? Do you have plans in place to replace these skills?

Mr. Dharamlall: We have made tremendous strides in the health sector in the last two and a half years. From a point of massive shortage of drugs and medical supplies to practically every institution in every part of the country with adequate drugs and medical supplies at any given time. The issue of professional, skilled staff is always a concern. We have embarked on a number of training programmes across all 10 regions to ensure that we are able to have optimum services provided. Again, as I said earlier, if you know people who would like to get trained in health, kindly bring them to our attention and we will facilitate their training.

In Region 4, there are some massive hospitals that are currently being pursued. One at Diamond – the Minister of Health spoke about it – one at Enmore, two regional hospitals, and the maternity and paediatric hospital which will basically be a five-star hospital of international standards. We will need a lot more trained medical professionals and I encourage you to nominate some of these people so we can train them.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Minister. I surely will recommend persons to you. Moving on to line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: I notice that we have lost 12 employees under this programme. I would like to know what skillsets would we have lost there?

Mr. Dharamlall: We have had three Pharmacy Assistants, two Environmental Health Assistants, three Porters, two Health Centre Attendants and one vehicle Driver.

Ms. Flue-Bess: From line item 6112 – Senior Technical, we have one less. From line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled, we have four less. From line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support, we have seven less. From line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, we have 12 less. From line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, we have a minus of five. From line item 6117 – Temporary Employees, we have a minus of five. Could the Hon. Minister say how this decrease in staff is impacting the healthcare services offered to the residents of Region 4?

Mr. Dharamlall: As I said earlier in response to the earlier question, we are working assiduously to make sure that all of our facilities have the full staff strength. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The current staff that we have on roll, on behalf of the Government, I would like to commend them for the tremendous work they are currently doing, the sacrifices that they are making on behalf of their families to get to work and to make sure that all of us are safe and healthy. Also, I would like to state that we have done some administrative manoeuvrings to ensure that none of the facilities

that we have are understaffed or at any point in time there is no staff. We are trying under these circumstances. As we intensify the training programmes, we are looking forward to more professionals onboard to join the health sector.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you for that update, Minister. I would like you to know that I usually use the services to see what is being offered, and I can tell you, I have visited several health centres and sometimes the drug that I required, I did not get. I will seize the opportunity...

Mr. Dharamlall: I hope it is not pethidine...

Ms. Flue-Bess: Wait, wait, wait. I am coming back to you. Allow me to speak. You will speak after. I will use the opportunity that you have offered to keep you updated on what is happening in that sector as I travel along the East Bank corridor. Since you have said nicely that you really appreciate the staff – which we do, I really appreciate the services offered by the healthcare providers. They try their best – I would like to turn your attention to line item 6292 – Dietary. I looked at the increase given and when I checked all the regions, some regions got an increase for as much as \$9 million, \$2 million, \$15 million, coming down under that line item. I have checked all of them. When I came to Region 4, sadly, Minister, I see there is a meagre increase of \$27,000 for dietary for our healthcare providers who we love so much. Could the Hon. Minister state what this \$27,000 that is allotted here will cover?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, in the case of the Hon. Member, could I ask... The Hon. Member said that the drug that she required was not provided. Other than pethidine or prescription drugs, what other drug is it that you are referring to so I can help you to secure the drugs that you are so desirous of receiving? That is one. **[An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]** The Hon. Member said, as though *casting shadow* on the health sector in Region 4, that the drug that she required, she did not receive.

Secondly, we are providing meals to the maternity waiting home in Long Creek. These are meals for the mothers. We are providing in-patient meals at the East Bank Demerara Regional Hospital, and at the Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) isolation unit. We are also providing drinking water for 180,000 patients who visit all of the 33 facilities within Region 4 and we are also providing dietary support to 490 health staff working across the facilities of Region 4. Mr. Chairman, it is not true that it is only \$27,000 in the sense that it is \$27,000 Guyana dollars. What

the Hon. Member has failed to realise is that in the last Government, their focus was on dietary. They killed a sugar industry because of dietary. The money they spent on food per year between 2015 to 2020 could have saved the Wales Sugar Estate five times and saved thousands of jobs.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please. Let us stick to the head before us.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Minister, for attempting to answer my question. It is very direct. You could take a calculator for me and minus \$13,973,000 from \$14 million and tell me what the difference is you get. If you get more then I accept that I am wrong. That is the calculation I did. I do not know if you did a different calculation to mine. Minister, based on your answer, was there a new area added that will be receiving these dietary supplements? I was listening to the list that you gave, and I was wondering if there is a new area added to that list from last year.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I do not understand why we are quibbling over... I do not understand the question. If there is a new area added... We have a budget of \$14 million and these are the areas where the moneys will be spent – for pregnant mothers at Long Creek, and for patients at the East Bank Demerara Regional Hospital, and the COVID-19 isolation unit. I have been very clear. It is for patients as well as staff, in some instances. May I hasten to add that it was President Ali who, again, a commitment he made to the health professionals, readjusted their salaries and they are now earning much more than they were earning last year but especially during 2015 to 2020. It was President Ali who readjusted their salaries – an upward readjustment across all the salary scales.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I did not receive a substantial answer, so I will move on. When I look at line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance, if my calculation is correct, I see there is an increase of \$1,000.

5.17 p.m.

Cleaning and Extermination Services, I see there is an increase of \$1,000; and under Other, I see there is an increase \$32,000. I do not know if my Mathematics is correct, but I will allow the Hon. Minister to do his calculations and just tell me if I am correct. Based on my investigations on the other regions and the increases I have seen across, I would like to know why this minimal increase is given for this area. Are you saying that all the equipment in Region 4 is functioning efficiently, and it does not require any extra moneys and all of that? Just those two.

Mr. Dharamlall: All that being said, this is the biggest budget that Region 4 ever received since it is receiving budgets. Last year was bigger than 2021, 2021 was bigger than 2020, and 2020 was... The PPP/C has always been providing greater support to all of the regions, including Region 5 as well, which we will find out about just now.

Equipment maintenance is an ongoing thing. If the region budgets this amount and it is comfortable using this amount... I know when I took over as Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, I inherited a regional system where every week I was being called to find out if the region could proceed to spend \$600,000 on electrical repairs at health centres and health posts. We are not wasting money anymore. The taxpayers' money is shrewdly spent, transparently, and in an accountable way.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Hon. Minister, thank you for trying to find an answer which did not give clarity to my question that I asked. I would also like the Hon. Minister to note what he said in his statement, which is, all the other regions got added money except Region 4 which got \$1,000 for equipment maintenance and that is wasting money. I am taking note of that. That is it. I will move on.

Mr. Chairman: Should I give the Hon. Minister the right to reply? Hon. Minister, I will give you a few seconds.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Because Region 4 is almost contiguous to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) and to the head office of the Ministry of Health, they are also contributing to a lot of the equipment maintenance – economies of scale – so we do not have to be spending money wantonly doing the same thing/paying for the same thing more than once, as used to happen between 2015 to 2020. We have also constructed many of our own buildings; we have done a lot of repair works in the last two and half years, so we would not find the need to expend so much that used to be done before.

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$1,903,672,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$208,500,000

Ms. Flu-Bess: Project code 1203500 – Buildings – Health: The provision is for health facilities. I noted in Volume III there are a number of health centres listed:

“Construction of health centres at Mon Repos and Swan.

Rehabilitation of living quarters at Long Creek Health Centre.

Extension of Diamond Diagnostic Hospital.

...upgrading of the electrical system at the Hararuni Health Post.”

And health centres at a number of places. Could I ask the Hon. Minister, what will be the cost for the provision of health centres at these different locations: Cane Grove, St. Cuthbert’s Mission and Kuru Kururu?

Mr. Dharamlall: For the purposes of the public, I would like to announce that we are going to be building a new health centre in Mon Repos. We will also be constructing a new health post in Swan on the Soesdyke Linden Highway. We will be constructing a culvert, shed, and concreting the yard at the Diamond Smart Diagnostic Centre to make the amenities more pristine. We will be rehabilitating the living quarters for staff at the Long Creek Health Centre. We will be extending and enclosing the East Demerara Regional Hospital’s patient waiting area, again, to improve the triage services and accommodate more people. We will be upgrading the electrical wiring at the Herstelling Health Centre. We will be remodelling the lower flat of the Golden Grove Health Centre. We will be enclosing the Grove Health Centre waiting area. We will extend and upgrade the pharmacy at Timehri Health Centre. There will be the construction of an annexe room for dental services at Kuru Kururu and Melanie. There will be an upgrade of solar power wiring to accommodate the Guyana and Power Light (GPL) at Hararuni. We will be remodelling the living quarters at Cane Grove and the front of St. Cuthbert’s Mission Health Centre.

Ms. Flu-Bess: Project code 2503700 – Furniture and Equipment – Health: All I see in the description is “furniture and equipment”. It did not state where or which facility will be benefiting from this. Could the Hon. Minister state which health facility or facilities will be benefiting from this?

Mr. Dharamlall: As part of our commitment to, again, make sure that our health services are provided and accessible to every single Guyanese in Region 4, we are making the effort to make sure that all of our health facilities have some basic equipment, at the least. So a lot of the equipment that will be procured will be distributed across different health centres or health facilities in Region 4.

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$208,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister and the staff of Region 4, for taking us through Agency 74. At this time, we are going to ask for the staff of Region 5 to get in place. The Hon. Minister is going to be back temporarily. It gives me the chance to switch the chair with the Hon. Member who will be here on my behalf.

[Mr. Chairman left the Chair.]

[Mr. Seeraj assumed the Chair.]

Mr. Seeraj: Hon. Minister, could we proceed?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Chairman. It is kind of getting cold in here.

Mr. Seeraj: We will adjust accordingly. Hon. Members, let me direct your attention to pages 380 and 381.

Agency: 75 Region 5: Mahaica/Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$273,014,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister state what is the total number of vehicles attached to the fleet at the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Administration?

Mr. Dharamlall: Could you permit me to sit, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Seeraj: Go ahead. It is a long day.

Mr. Dharamlall: There are seven vehicles attached to the RDC.

Mr. Jordan: I am just confirming that the Hon. Minister said seven.

Mr. Seeraj: That is correct.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister state how many of these vehicles were involved in an accident during the year 2022 and the current year, 2023?

5.32 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: I am here to respond to 2023. I am not here to respond to which vehicles... if the Hon. Member would like to know by registration number which vehicles were involved in an accident, then the Hon. Member knows the process – write to the National Assembly and we will have the answer provided.

Mr. Jordan: Am I to understand that according to the revised sum of 2022, questions cannot or should not be asked based on the revised sum?

Mr. Seeraj: Questions can be asked based on the line item.

Mr. Jordan: The line item on the revised sum. That is the question to the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Seeraj: The Minister has given an answer. Sometimes we might not like the answer, but we can only ask the Minister to provide an answer.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, let us move on. Could the Hon. Minister say whether any of these vehicles are presently inoperable?

Mr. Dharamlall: There is currently one vehicle which is inoperable.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister state that vehicle number and the period or the duration it has been inoperable for?

Mr. Dharamlall: I do not have the vehicle number that was involved in the accident or, as the Hon. Member is saying, has been inoperable and for how long. I do not have that at this point and time.

Mr. Jordan: I just want it to be clarified that I never stated that the vehicle was inoperable due to an accident. I asked; I never stated that. Let me move on. Could the Hon. Member state whether vehicle number PRR 7765 is attached to the Region 5 administration?

Mr. Dharamlall: I do not have the numbers of the vehicles in front of me. If the Hon. Member would be desirous, I could make it available.

Mr. Jordan: Line item 6311: Could the Hon. Minister state whether payments were made last year for rates and taxes? If not, what is the arrears for rates and taxes to our Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), throughout the region, for the regional administration buildings?

Mr. Dharamlall: In response to the question raised by the Hon. Member, there are no arrears of rates and taxes. I would venture to think that the Hon. Member probably has information that I do not have. What I could tell you is that the NDC area that this Hon. Member populates, creates a lot of controversy in many of the NDC areas by misinformation; and even right here the debate speech in this National Assembly – misinformation, disbelieving information. One time he even mentioned that a school compound was not weeded for a long time. The head teacher had to take a picture and send it to us that there is no such truth to what the Hon. Member said. [An Hon. Member: *(Inaudible)*] I cannot be all right if an Hon. Member in the House, though representing APNU/AFC, provides misleading information to the public that creates mischief in many of the NDCs in public buildings in Region 5. No. That is not how we govern. That is not how a country is run.

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – 273,014,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$5,500,000

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$5,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$236,116,000

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$236,116,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$100,780,000

Mr. Jordan: Project code 342: reference there for “Construction of farm to market access roads at Dundee, Blairmont and No. 12 Village”. I just want to ask one question here. Could the Hon. Minister state whether the farm-to-market road, Golden Grove Sideline dam, will be completed under this programme?

Mr. Dharamlall: We are going to be doing a number of farm-to-market roads. In some cases, other agencies are also pursuing them. Some of these roads will also be converted or upgraded to asphalted concrete in some areas. So, the Hon. Member could drive his vehicle on any one of these roads.

I wonder, as I answer the question about vehicles and roads, whether the Hon. Member is jealous that his colleague from Region 10 collected a vehicle... [**An Hon. Member:** *(inaudible)*] It is not Hon. Member Sears. ...collected a vehicle belonging to the Office of the Prime Minister, PMM 9775, that was transferred from the last Government to a Member of the Opposition, a Member of Parliament of the Opposition, from Region 10. It is not the Hon. Devin Sears.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$100,780,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$201,604,000

Mr. Jordan: Line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences: Could the Hon. Minister kindly provide the nation with information as to whether the sluice at Blairmont, No. 1 Settlement or the koker rather, and that at Ithaca will be rehabilitated during this?

Mr. Dharamlall: Recapping of sea dam Blairmont, No. 1 Settlement to Ithaca, the drainage sluice, and repairs to section of the revetment at Biaboo. They are covered under this line item.

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$201,604,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$144,900,000

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$144,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$2,863,418,000

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the current state of the cold storage transport truck that was purchased for the education department?

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

Mr. Jordan: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Services. My apologies.

Mr. Dharamlall: I am advised that the RDC did not procure a cold storage truck.

Mr. Jordan: To be a bit specific: Could the Hon. Minister state whether vehicle number GAC 5975 truck was procured and is in current possession of the RDC education department?

Mr. Dharamlall: I have been advised, yes.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the present condition of this vehicle and when it was purchased, whether it was a new vehicle or a used vehicle?

Mr. Dharamlall: I am not aware of the current condition of the vehicle at this point and time, and I would be unable to update or inform the Hon. Member on the current condition of the vehicle.

5.47 p.m.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister help me to understand if vehicle numbers PVV 1228 and PPP 7882 belong to the RDC, Region 5, education department?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I can endeavour to research and to give the Hon. Member an answer at some point in time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member state, on the school buses that we have for transport purposes in Region 5, whether vehicle number PVV 1228 is one of those school buses and if it is in operation?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have been advised that the region, in the inventory of vehicles under Education, that it does not have a vehicle PVV 1228.

Mr. Jordan: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. He did not answer PVV 7882.

Mr. Dharamlall: I have been advised that there is a minibus with that registration number.

Mr. Jordan: Just a follow-up Hon. Chairman. Is the vehicle in a working condition?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, while I was doing work-study at the Blairmont Estate I was an Agriculture Mechanic, but I did not proceed to train as an Auto Mechanic. So, I did not do an inspection of the vehicle to know its present mechanical condition. Sorry.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state how many school buses does the region have and what are the areas of service for these buses and the time of pickup?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Chairman, Ithaca to... and I have had the honour of meeting the staff who work in the Regional Administration, including the education department, and they indicated to me that there is a bus that works from Ithaca to Bush Lot, a bus that works from beyond Bush Lot to Belladrum, towards the Abary River, and from Mahaicony to Bygeval.

Mr. Jordan: Am I to conclude that the region presently has three school buses?

Mr. Seeraj: You might conclude that Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am a Minister of Government, I do not make the same conclusions as the Opposition.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$2,863,418,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$178,500,000

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$178,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$1,253,339,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state what is the present condition of vehicle number PWW 4348, which was purchased only a few years ago?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Hon. Member is a vehicle, because the Hon. Member is so concerned about the vehicles of Region 5, and we have such a massive budget. The Hon. Member did not ask a question on public works and on agriculture, not even the capital programme of education, where we deal with our school children. I shudder to think what quality of service this Hon. Member provides to the people of Region 5 or, perhaps, indeed, the Hon. Member has vested interest in the repairs of these vehicles. But I do not know what line item the Hon. Member is referring to.

Mr. Seeraj: Hon. Member Mr. Jordan, would you like to quote a line item to support the question you asked?

Mr. Jordan: Hon. Chairman, line item 6264 is common among all the programmes. And whilst I am on my feet, Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that is my final question and more will be in the ring.

Mr. Seeraj: I suspect the Hon. Minister does not wish to answer that.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$1,253,339,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

[*Mr. Chairman resumed the Chair.*]

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$236,500,000

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

Mr. Chairman: When we do not have an opposition to fight, we fight among ourselves.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$236,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Regional Administration of Region 5 for taking us through that agency in such an efficient manner. Hon. Members, before we take Region 6. Let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: We will not take Region 6 now. Please bear with me and come back in half an hour. We will take a break and we will be back in half an hour.

Sitting suspended at 5.56 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.38 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please be seated; the House will resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: I invite the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development and his team from Region 6. Thank you, Hon. Members. I invite you to turn to pages 394 and 395.

Agency: 76 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne

Current Expenditure

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$240,791,000.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Through the Chair...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Good afternoon, colleagues. Line item 6116, Contracted Employee: Is it under this head the contracted sweeper/cleaners remove [*inaudible*]. Could the Hon. Minister outline the increase from \$10,777,000 to \$14,215,000 on that end?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, which line item? Sorry.

Mr. Jaiprashad: It is line item 6116, Contracted Employees.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, there is not an increase in the number of contracted employees, except that... Sorry, there is one, Mr. Joel Thom – Sorry. Why did I mention the name? – an engineer, who was appointed; and it also takes account of the annualisation of the 8%.

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$240,791,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$42,500,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Through the Chair...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1208100 – Building – Administration: There is a figure here of \$30 million for the “Construction of living quarters”. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House the design and location for this building? Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I do not have the architectural drawings of the building, but I can say that the building will be constructed in New Amsterdam, and it is the living quarters of the REO; those quarters were destroyed by fire last year.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you very much, Cde. Minister. Project code 2402000, Land and Water Transport: There is a total of \$9,500,000 for the “Purchase of boat and engine”. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the size or capacity of the engine and the boat and the purpose that it will be purchased for?

Mr. Dharamlall: This is a commitment President Ali made on his visit to Orealla/Siparuta – a boat and a 150 horsepower (hp) engine. The boat will also have a freezer and it will aid the fishermen of Orealla/Siparuta in the transport of their fish catch to the marketplace.

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$42,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.43 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$1,443,916,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: There is an increase of almost \$88 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the usage and the details for the increase?

Mr. Dharamlall: So, the additional fuel will cater for three new excavators; one grader; and the mobile pumps that are set up at Port Mourant, Whim, Belvidere, Letter Kenny, Wellington Park, Number 51 Village, and other areas across the region.

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$1,443,916,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$79,500,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1301000 – Drainage and Irrigation: There is \$71.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the number of Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDC) that would have work done for 2023?

Mr. Dharamlall: The works we do in the region are complementary to what other agencies of Government are doing. So, this project code caters specifically for the rehabilitation of revetment at Razack Dam in Vryheid; the rehabilitation of revetment at Moleson Creek; and the rehabilitation of a heavy timber bridge at Rotterdam, this is on the East Bank of Berbice. There will be similar rehabilitation of a heavy-duty bridge at 62/63 Façade. We will also be procuring High-Density

Polyethylene (HDPE) tubes which will serve the entire region. There will be the rehabilitation of a heavy-duty bridge at 53/54 Façade Canal.

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$79,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$588,618,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: There is an increase of \$58 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, in terms of NDCs, the number of roads being done? What are the rehabilitation and maintenance work being done according to the NDCs – the figures?

Mr. Dharamlall: There are many roads in Region 6 that have to be done. We have begun the construction of new roads during last year. There are 502 roads that are currently being constructed in Region 6. We still have a far way to go to make sure that we are able to alleviate those issues in the region. Under the maintenance programme, that will be done through reconnaissance. The scope for maintenance will be drawn up but, in the meantime, we are looking at a minimum of 17 different roads across many NDC areas in the region, including Gibraltar/Fyrish which is an A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) led area.

Mr. Chairman: It is a very familiar area to the Chairman too.

Mr. Dharamlall: That is correct, Mr. Chairman and you have lobbied for its people as well.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Through the Chair, is there any road listed for Lancaster/ Hogstye?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as I said, we are doing the construction of 502 roads in all 18 NDC areas and the three municipalities. We are actually constructing roads at this point in time. This programme is for maintenance. As I said, as we do the reconnaissance, in terms of what needs to be done on some of these roads, we are going to be doing those works. So far, we have been able to identify 17 roads that require substantial maintenance.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Through the Chair, I think the question was a direct one in terms of Lancaster/Hogstye. I want to add too, is there anything slated for the Chesney's main road?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, just to inform the Hon. Member, in the Lancaster/ Hogstye area we have Manchester as one of the villages where we are going to be doing roads. The Vice-President had quite a massive meeting in Manchester when he was there a few months ago. As a matter of fact, one of the biggest meetings ever held in Manchester was held by the Vice-President, Dr. Jagdeo.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member had asked about Chesney's main road. Hon. Member Ms. Chandan-Edmond and I are very very willing to know.

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much. On that same mission that the Vice-President conducted to Region 6, Chesney was one of the areas visited. The Ministry of Public Works embarked on quite an extensive road construction and even a rehabilitation programme in the Chesney area. The region also did some work, so we are complementing each other to make sure that all of the roads are fixed in Region 6.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Ms. Chandan-Edmond and I will certainly go and inspect.

Ms. Flue-Bess: On the same line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads, I heard the Minister say, there were 17 roads highlighted to be done. I went to Volume 2 and on page 361 the Indicator at number four states: "Km of roads maintained" and he has 45. Is that the same for the 17 roads? Are you speaking about the same set of roads that will be maintained?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, when the Budget is crafted, for that Volume the Hon. Member is referring to, there are targets that are set for the purposes of the Budget process. Now that we have resources earmarked, we will then have to allocate the resources under the maintenance programme. The overall target would have been more than 45 kilometres. A budget is now earmarked and the allocation of this will now take place as a result. This is standard and that usually occurs. Even when the APNU/AFC was in power that is how the budget was prepared –the projections are set and then one works according to what resources are earmarked.

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$588,618,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$359,800,000

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$359,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$5,724,980,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is an increase there from \$60 million to \$314 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate why there are so many contracted employees?

Mr. Dharamlall: Again, for the purposes of the record and for the Sweepers/Cleaners of Region 6, this is the commitment that President Ali made. He is upholding this commitment where services have been regularised and are all now contracted employees of the Government of Guyana. There are 215 contracted Sweepers/Cleaners under this line item.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: There is a sum there of \$280 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the Committee, in terms of needs, the buildings that will be undertaken in 2023?

Mr. Dharamlall: There are 129 school buildings in Region 6 and it is our intention... Again, President Dr. Ali has committed and he is going to be in Region 6 tomorrow and Friday, so I want to encourage as many persons as possible to reach out. The Office of the President is now in the regions. We are not an Office of the President at Pearl or one just at the State House. Our President is out and this is part of his commitment as well, which is to make sure that every school has an opportunity to benefit from upgraded services.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to encourage this Committee. The Hon. Member, Mr. Jaiprashad, is also my staff who is paid under this Budget. There are many school welfare issues across the country. Hon. Member Mr. Jaiprashad is one of those officers responsible for the welfare of our children in Region 6. I would like to encourage him to get out into the communities. There are only three officers, so we expect him to spend more time in the 129 schools to address many of

these issues. Also, I would encourage politics not to be spoken to these children as part of the welfare support that they are provided.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Will this cater for security guards at all the schools across the region, day and night?

6.58 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, yes. It will cater for all of the schools for day and night. It may also possibly cater for the offices under Education of which your office maybe one of them. Our Government is taking good care of you.

Mr. Jaiprashad: It is because of the complimentary words; I have no further questions.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$5,724,980,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$289,800,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1203900 – Buildings – Education: There is huge figure of \$206 million. It states:

“Provision for schools and educational facilities.”

Will this take into consideration the building at Orealla and works at Port Mourant Secondary School? Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Again, His Excellency was in Orealla/Siparuta spending an extensive amount of time with the residents of Orealla/Siparuta. One of the things that they brought to his attention is the need for enhance services in terms of schools in both of the communities. We are going to be doing schools in both Orealla and the extension of the Siparuta Primary School as well. I would like to encourage you, Mr. Jaiprashad Hon. Member, as a state official and a government officer that you join us in making sure that these projects are implemented and you visit them.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 2402000 – Land and Water Transport: There is a sum of \$33.6 million and it states: “purchase of buses”. We know that it was the initiative of the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change Government to provide free transportation for the schoolchildren in Region 6. I am happy that the current Administration is enhancing the services to the people in Region 6. I would be very much happy if the Cde. Minister would be able to tell us the sort of bus that they will purchase, the capacity and the route.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, there are 23,000 schoolchildren in Region 6, East Berbice Corentyne. There is no joy in proclaiming that four buses were given in the pass Administration, because there is absolutely no way that four buses would be able to transport 23,000 schoolchildren. Whilst that had happened, four secondhanded buses were given, but only one is working and the school grant was taken away from the schoolchildren. The political fantasies of the APNU/AFC will not deter us from continuing to expand our support for schoolchildren. We are going to be buying more land and water transport. There will be an addition of three 30-seater buses that will be provided. There is one of the four buses from the APNU/AFC that is working but these will be new buses.

Mr. Jaiprashad: According to the Hon. Minister, in 2023, would we be seeing three new buses for Region 6?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Hon. Member.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you very much. We, in Region 6, are very much grateful for the continuous support.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$289,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$2,914,691,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Under staffing we see here, from the line item 6112 right down to line item 6116, there is a decline of about 30 individuals. Are these individuals reassigned, retired or out of the system?

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6111, Administrative: takes account of the annualisation of the eight per cent salary increase.

Line item 6112, Senior Technical: A Senior Pharmacist died, a Ward Sister retired, a Ward Sister left and the annualisation of the salaries.

Line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled: two Staff Nurse Midwives resigned, a Medical Laboratory Technician resigned, a Staff Nurse resigned, two Midwives retired, one Midwife resigned and a Plumber also resigned.

Line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support: one Accounts Clerk II left and a Statistical Clerk.

Line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: a Head Cook retired, one Cook retired, a Nurse Aid retired, a Vehicle Driver retired – Hon. Member Mr. Vinceroy Jordan–, a Laundress retired, a Ward Maid retired, a Nursing Assistant left, a Vehicle Driver servicewas terminated, another Vehicle Driver resigned and the annualisation of their salaries;

Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: one Medical Registrar did not request a renewal of contract, a Nurse Aid did not renew his/her contract, one Nursing Assistant is awaiting contract renewal, one Ward Maid is awaiting contract renewal and the annualisation of their salaries.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you very much, Cde. Minister. Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: There is a sum of \$38 million allotted. Will this take into consideration replacing some of the equipment at the New Amsterdam Hospital? Based on the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) report, it has indicated that there is need for a replacement. Will the \$30 million take that into consideration?

Mr. Dharamlall: The replacement of equipment is a capital endeavour; this is maintenance which means equipment is repaired and serviced as part of the Operations and Maintenance (OandM). New Amsterdam Hospital has been receiving quite a lot of support. When we took Government, the electromagnetic radiation (x-ray) machine in New Amsterdam Hospital, where I was born, was not working. As a matter of fact, I think it was one that was there since I was born. The last Government did absolutely nothing to enhance the delivery of health services in Region 6. As a matter of fact, they put a Clerk from a bank as the Regional Health Officer in Region 6. Some of the most egregious attempts to mishandle the resources of the region occur during that period. We

are also as you are aware Hon. Member, led by His Excellency, the President, resources have been garnered for the construction of two new hospitals in Region 6. There would be one at the Number 75 Village and one at New Amsterdam.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$2,914,691,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$294,890,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1204000 – Buildings-Health: Will this take into consideration the construction of the new health facility in the Number 75 Village?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, that is a massive undertaking. I believe it will be in the tune of billions of dollars. Those contracts have already been signed. The proprietary works have already begun. Unfortunately, to answer you in that way, it would not be funded by the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) but it will be funded centrally by the Government.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$294,890,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let me thank the Hon. Member, Mr. Jaiprashad and the Hon. Minister, for efficiently dealing with the region's estimates and I thank the Minister and staff for taking us through that agency. Thank you, Minister and staff. Let us invite now the staff of Region 7 to join their Minister as we consider the estimates for Region 7.

Mr. Mahipaul: Do we have savings on the time?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We do have savings. We have 38 minutes on Region 5 and now we have 29 minutes on Region 6.

Agency: 77 Region 7: Cuyuni/Mazaruni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$378,437,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: This is to the tune of \$46.8 million. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us which buildings would benefit from this allocated sum?

Mr. Dharamlall: As I indicated in the other regions, the circumstances of our Amerindian people are paramount, regarding this Government, and a lot of the facilities that they have been housed in have deteriorated. President Ali has instructed that we have to make sure they have the best facilities.

7.13 p.m.

We will be maintaining the Amerindian hostel at Bartica, the EPMA living quarters in Bartica, the administrative office and the administrative office in Kamarang also. It has been left unattended for a while. We have to make sure that better services are provided from that location. We are also doing a lot of work, in terms of health and education, in the Upper Mazaruni. For the regional sub-office, we are spending resources to make sure these services are optimised. The regional guest house at Bartica as well will be maintained. If any paying guest from the Opposition would like to be in Region 7 and uses the facility, you are welcome to use it. At the Bartica day-care, we have to do some substantial repair work. The Child Advocacy Centre, again, substantial repairs. Those are the critical administrative buildings that we are maintaining during the course of 2023.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: The sum of \$40,500,000 is allotted. Could the Minister say to this Committee what specific infrastructure is targeted to benefit from this sum?

Mr. Dharamlall: We will conduct maintenance of the solar units in different areas of the Mazaruni – Lower Mazaruni, Upper Mazaruni as well as Middle Mazaruni. We will be doing some work at the mooring facility at Kamarang. We will also be doing the water system in Waiarima. Again, we would like the Regional Chairman of Region 7 to be very comfortable, because he spends not much time outside of the office. We will landscape the regional administration and do some recapping of the walkway.

Finally, we will do maintenance work on the Mongrippa Hill community ground, which has been one of the areas requested. We will also be enhancing the aesthetics of all the Government's

compounds because some have been overtaken by weed. Mr. Chairman, a few years ago, I was in a village in the Upper Mazaruni, and I found out from the Toshao and residents why it is that they are complaining about the water system. I had the distinction of actually sleeping in their guest house. I was one in the first set of paying customers at the guest house. They told me that there was a Minister of Government – this was in the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change time – who originates from the village but does not visit. At one point in time that Member held the portfolio of Minister with responsibility for water working in the Ministry of Communities. There is not much that was done in terms of the water system at Kako village, so this People’s Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/C) Government will do substantial repairs to the water distribution system of the Kako Amerindian village, from which the Hon. Member, Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams, originates. We will also be doing maintenance work at the Karrau Community Centre Ground. This is one of the commitments President Ali made during his visit to the Mazaruni as well. Those are the areas that we will be working on.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Minister, for making the Regional Chairman more comfortable. I hope the Regional Education Officers (REdO), the Regional Health Officers (RHO), the Regional Chairman and the Vice Chairman can pay more visits to the villages in the Middle and Upper Mazaruni, which will be welcomed by those residents. Thank you very much. That is it for public works.

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$378,437,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$16,000,000

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$16,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Estimates

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$224,099,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say to this House which specific roads are targeted under this line item and what scope of works will be undertaken?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I was hoping to save the Opposition further embarrassment. We will be doing maintenance work on the Kamarang to Waramadong farm-to-market road that was never done by the last Government, maintenance work to Kako to Waramadong farm-to-market road. It is this Government that began the construction. Hon. Member Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams can ride an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and possibly in the next two to three years drive from Kamarang to Kako. We finished all 19 bridges in that area. At some point in time when the road is finished, then Hon. Member Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams and many members of the public would be able to use that area. The Westerbeck to Kartabu road, Bidrabu back road, Benji Street, the Hostel Road at 7th Avenue, Caribisi Hill, the old scheme road in Bartica, the Bartica to Potaro Road, the Mora Point Road... This area has support for the PPP/C. The last Government paid no attention to those poor people and they are practically all Amerindians. The last Government had no interest in providing any type of infrastructure support to them. ...maintenance of sections of roads in central Bartica, Eight Street, Second Avenue and Third Avenues, and maintenance of First Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue. Of course, we are also doing capital works on the roads, which we will get to in a short moment. I can tell you that this is the most the people of Bartica have ever seen from a government, including the township of Bartica and including Region 7.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Minister. I am very happy to hear that you are continuing the works of the APNU/AFC on the Kako to Waramadong road. It was delayed for almost two years. Minister, please visit; an ATV cannot pass on the bridges that are being built now because it is just a walkway bridge. You need to do corrections so that I can jump on my ATV to ride. Hopefully, could you tell us when that will be? Thank you very much, for your answer.

Mr. Dharamlall: I think Hon. Member Ms. Hastings-Williams is operating in a vicarious way. There is a lot of imagination through the work of the PPP/C, especially Cde. Gail Teixeira, who has done tremendous work in all subregions of Region 7. I can tell you that Hon. Member Ms. Hastings-Williams did not walk that road between Waramadong and Kako. I can tell you that this has been on the agenda of the PPP/C prior to us leaving Government in 2015. Nothing was done from 2015 to 2020, but we have started the work and we will get to Kako.

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$224,099,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Estimates

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$113,500,000

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$113,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Estimates

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$1,818,572,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: This line item is to the tune of \$89 million. Could the Hon. Minister say which specific infrastructure will benefit from this allocated sum? Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: We will do general repairs to the teachers' quarters at Kamarang, washing and cleaning of water tanks and reservoirs in all three subregions of the Mazaruni, work on the Bartica Secondary School dormitory, Two Miles Primary School, Jawalla Nursery School... Mr. Chairman, you will recall that, at one point in time, Hon. Member Ms. Hastings-Williams was a teacher at Jawalla Nursery School while serving as a Minister of Government. I think Minister Teixeira had a massive meeting in Jawalla and the teachers were complaining that they could not get promoted because the Hon. Minister at that time, Ms. Hastings-Williams, was blocking the space for those teachers to have upward mobility. ...Kamarang Nursery you will also see work done, Beach View Nursery School, Hill View Nursery School, the Future Builders Nursery School – some of these are commitments President Ali made whilst he visited the area – St. Anthony's Primary School, Potaro Primary School, St. John's the Baptist Primary School, Agatash Primary School, Two Miles Primary School, Kaikan Primary School, Batavia Primary School, Itabali Primary School, Karrau Primary School, Kartabu Primary School, Kangaruma Primary School, , 72 Miles Primary, Isseneru Primary, St. Martin Primary in Issano and Phillipai Primary.

7.28 p.m.

The few visits I have made since I became Minister and my Colleague, Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira... The A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) left this village in its five years. It did absolutely nothing for these people because that village supports the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). Children were left unattended. Kako Primary school – and Kako is the village of Hon. Member, Ms. Hastings-Williams who has not visited there for a long time. Kamarang Primary School – Kamarang is the village where our Colleague has massive investments. Paruima Primary... **[Ms. Hastings-Williams: Which massive investments?]** ...I do not know, maybe a guest house. A hotel is a massive investment, Mr. Chairman. Some people are still struggling to get a house lot whilst the Opposition Member of Parliament is building hotel. Wyaling Primary, Chinoweng Primary, it did not visit Chinoweng for all these years, and Arrau Primary. Again, if you go through the visitor's book, you would not find their names. Kurutuku Primary, they have never been there. Imbaimadai Primary and Quivanang Primary, they do not even stop because it is a small area. Waramadong Primary and St. Mary's Primary, this is by the quarry, Winiperu Primary and Wax Creek Primary – all of these areas.

Dr. Desrey Fox Dormitory will have work again. As I said Bartica Secondary and Three Miles Secondary, are the areas in the Mazaruni that will benefit from this maintenance programme. Of course, as we proceed through the course of the year, as maintenance needs arise, we will also be working. I want to also indicate to you, Mr. Chairman, that these are not massive works. They are very small contracts – \$2 million or \$3 million and they will all be given to Amerindian people in the Amerindian villages and to people of Bartica and the other areas. This is also part of the position of our Government. In the Manifesto, we are going to create wealth in some of these areas. We are going to provide more opportunities. We are going to create more employment. As a matter of fact, as I have the floor, in 2019 there were 10,099 staff working in the 10 regions. Since we got into Government, we are now at 17,000 plus, more employment opportunities created for our people in the regions. I can also tell you, Mr. Chairman, in the last Government, I went through the list of all of the contractors in the 10 regions and there were only 97 female contractors. We have a 181% increase in female contractors. We now have 273 female contractors in this country and counting. I would like to commend my Colleagues as well. Those are my contributions to that question.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery - \$1,818,572,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$278,500,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Project code 2504400 - Furniture and Equipment: Could the Hon. Minister say of any allocation is being to service the laboratory of Dr. Desrey Fox Secondary School which has not been in operation for the longest while? If so, what equipment you plan to do for that specific school?

Mr. Dharamlall: That will be catered for under another line item. The maintenance and laboratory needs of the Dr. Desrey Fox Secondary School.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$278,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$1,088,269

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Which health facilities targeted in the Lower Mazaruni, Middle Mazaruni and Upper Mazaruni would benefit from this allocation?

Mr. Dharamlall: The nursing charge quarters are Kamarang, the Medex quarters at Kamarang, the health post at Kurupung, the Bartica Hospital, the Kamarang Hospital, the kitchen at Kamarang, the Community Health Workers (CHW) quarters at Karau, the hospital kitchen at Bartica, the nurses' hostel at Bartica, Chinoweng Health Post, the Phillipai doctors' quarters and the Kako doctors quarters.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say when these doctors' quarters will be filled because many of them there but there is no resident doctor?

Mr. Dharamlall: As we indicated, we are going to do repair works and maintenance works on these facilities so that our doctors will be provided with much better conditions. These facilities

have been left to rot for a long time. Even while we are maintaining and building new health quarters and making sure that more doctors get out into the villages, His Excellency has previously announced that Bartica will receive a new hospital. The health services in Bartica will be massively transformed with the new hospital and with all of the attendant works that we are doing currently.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, for those welcoming remarks, Minister. I must say thank you for what you are undertaking. I know that there is going to be improvement on the Kamarang Health post. I am told they are soon to do surgeries but we have to fix the electricity down there. Please take into consideration to have the power that is being use, so that the machines can work properly. The residents would very much welcome that, Cde. Minister. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: As we are building in Region 7, I would like to report to you that, in addition to all these women that we have as contractors, we also have a wider array of contractors across the demographic divide. For example, in Region 7, during the period of APNU there were 30 Afro-Guyanese contractors, 23 mixed race contractors and 13 Amerindian contractors. In 2022, there are 18 new Amerindian contractors in Region 7. There are now from 30 to 49 Afro-Guyanese contractors in Region 7 and there are 52 Mixed race contractors in Region 7. Just to let you know, this Government practice the *One Guyana* platform and everyone who is desirous of having a contract will be given an opportunity to be a contractor or businessperson in this country.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$1,088,269 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$229,600,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, very much, for your answers, Cde. Minister. Project code 2402100 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say, when I look at the project profile it states purchases of an ambulance, boats and engines, how many boats and engines does he plan to purchase and which health facilities will benefit?

Mr. Dharamlall: In addition to a new hospital for the residents of Bartica and more particularly the residents of Region 7, we will have a new river ambulance, we will also be buying outboard engines for Bartica, Issano, Imbaimadai and these will be 200 and 240 horse power (HP). We will

also be procuring boats for Issano and Imbaimadai health posts. Those are covered here. May I hasten to add, we were able to budget for these based on missions that the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira conducted in the Upper Mazaruni.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Project Code 2601800, the allocated sum there is \$90 million, and the project profile states that it is to purchase furniture and equipment. What furniture and equipment he intends to purchase, and which hospitals or health centres are identified to benefit? Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: I do not know why the APNU/AFC keeps asking this question to embarrass itself. When we took over the health sector in August, 2020, it is practically a different health centre now, how it has transformed from no drugs, people unable to get an x-ray done, or no doctors available. Even when you go to some of these facilities, they are unable to do certain practical work. We would be buying x-ray machines, patient beds, cupboards, patient monitors, scales both infant and adult. For the first time the Kamarang Hospital will have an ultrasound machine. Thank you very much, People's Progressive Party/Civic, dental x-ray (x-radiation) machine at Bartica and a diagnostic audiometer. For the first time the people of Upper Mazaruni, electrocardiography (ECG) machines at Imbaimadai, Kaikan, Jawalla and Eteringbang. There is a host of other pieces of equipment. If you desire, I could proceed to provide those as well.

7.43 p.m.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: That ends my questions for Region 7. However, I must ask Cde. Minister to stop telling untruths in this House. I was in Kako and I was in Waramadong just before I came. I have been living there. You need to stop telling untruths to the House. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member of Parliament (MP), I will have to ask you to withdraw. I do not know. You are imputing. Hon. Minister, I will give you a chance to respond.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am not imputing. I usually check the village registers, and I do not know that the Hon. Member Dawn Hastings-Williams lives in Kako village. I do not know that. I have also visited very recently, the Upper Mazaruni, and I visited Kamarang as well. I did not see the Hon. Dawn Hastings-Williams. As a matter of fact, the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water and I were both in Kako, as we were in Jawalla, Kwebenang, and some other areas, and the Hon. Dawn Hastings-Williams was not present.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$229,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$29,700,000

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$29,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$30,000,000

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$30,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us thank the Hon. Minister and his staff for taking us through Agency 77, Region 7. Let us invite the Hon. Minister to bring in the staff for Region 8 as we consider Agency 78. Let us give the staff an opportunity to get in place. I see some familiar faces in this region.

Agency: 78 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$198,853,000

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I notice there is a massive increase in funding there. Could the Hon. Member state to this honourable House what this fund entails?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, we have two Clerk IIs appointed, additionally. One Expeditor appointed. The increase also caters for their salaries which is a commitment by President Ali to increase the salaries of our public servants.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Chairman, one further question. Could the Hon. Minister kindly layover to the House, the emoluments of the highest paid employee and the lowest paid employee?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, if this National Assembly knows me very well by now, they will know that I am always prepared. Fully prepared, too. I am not prepared to handover. I am prepared to publicise at this moment. We have \$340,000...

Mr. Chairman: I am prepared to ask you to layover.

Mr. Sinclair: The highest and the lowest, please.

Mr. Dharamlall: The highest under this line item is \$340,244 and the lowest is \$80,892.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$198,853,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$15,700,000

Ms. Philadelphia: Project code 1209100 – Furniture and Equipment - Staff Quarters: Could the Hon. Minister say to us the department? It states the staff quarters will be benefitting from this line item.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as part of making sure that our staff are comfortable in our regions, we will be buying complete bed sets, refrigerators, dining sets, living room suites, stoves, for only \$1.2 million. It is not an enormous amount.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$15,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$202,679,000

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads, and line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: There is \$50 million allocated for roads and \$45 million allocated for bridges. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House where these roads and bridges are located?

Mr. Dharamlall: We have begun an extensive road programme in Region 8 because of the terrain and because of the logistics of the area. I have to repeat myself on this issue. When we left Government...

Mr. Chairman: There is a Standing Order in respect of repetition, too.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, before 2015, we built a road from Region 9 into Region 8. One could have taken about an hour and a half from Karasabai to get into Monkey Mountain, and maybe just another hour or hour and a half to get to Paramakatoi. The last Government did absolutely... As a matter of fact, on the road to Region 9, and I will speak about it when we get to Region 9... This is the road that leads into Region 8. Hundreds of millions of dollars were paid by the last Government in contracts. Hundreds of millions. Hundreds of millions given to contractors who were close to a certain Minister who was responsible for the natural resources sector at that time. No work was done.

This \$50 million is coming on the backs of another \$300 million we spent last year and more will be spent this year because Amerindian people live here. I know the last Regime had no regard or concern for the welfare of the Amerindian people. We will be doing maintenance work at Maikwak to Chenapau, Paramakatoi to Karisparu, Kopinang to Kamana, Monkey Mountain to Taruka, Taruka to Yawong, Kurukabaru to Itabac, Tuseneng to Bamboo Creek, Kato to Kawa bridge – the short cut, Kurukabaru to Kamana. We will be doing bridge maintenance in Tuseneng and Itabac. There are two bridges in Tuseneng that we will work on. In Bamboo Creek, Taruka, Chenapau and Paramakatoi.

Mr. Sinclair: Could the Hon. Minister state if there is any consideration for internal roads in Campbelltown?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill had indicated, the Ministry of Public Works does most of the heavy lifting in the Mahdia subregion. Also, to inform you Mr. Chairman, we began work last year in Campbelltown and we are going to do more work in Campbelltown this year.

Mr. Sinclair: I want to ask the Hon. Member about the half road that the Minister of Public Works alluded to in a public meeting... My apologies. [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I did not get the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you kindly respond? I think too many advisors may be around you. Hon. Members, kindly allow the Hon. Member Mr. Sinclair. He and I, and Mr. Ramjattan, are in the same cohort. Kindly proceed, Hon. Member.

Mr. Sinclair: I am just finding out from the Hon. Minister, what is the state of the road from Wrong Turn to the airstrip and when will that road be completed?

Mr. Chairman: Wrong Turn to the airstrip. If you make a right answer...

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I think that the last Government made a wrong turn in 2018, when it had a contract to construct the same the same road that the Hon. Member, Mr. Sinclair asked about.

7.58 p.m.

Secondly, Mr. Sinclair is supposed to live in Mahdia and to get to Georgetown one has to use that road to get to Georgetown. I am surprised that the Hon. Member, Mr. Sinclair, has no knowledge of that airstrip road in Mahdia. Just so that you know, Mr. Chairman, the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) will complete the road despite all the challenges the last Government placed the people of Mahdia. When I was there the entire place was flooded by any easy rain. We, the PPP/C, will complete the road. The A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) signed a contract in 2018 and was unable to start the construction.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, thank you for the right turn on the wrong turn road. Hon. Member, Mr. Sinclair, do you have any other questions?

Mr. Sinclair: No. I have no other questions.

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$202,679,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$94,445,000

Mr. Sinclair: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much, for staying on the right turn.

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$94,445,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$1,398,346,000

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister state to this honourable House what are the things entailed in that line item?

Mr. Dharamlall: This will take account of the participation of our children in national activities including Mashramani, national sports championships, STEM Guyana fairs, education month activities, visual arts activities, music and dance activities, physical education and other sports activities. I could assure you that none of this allocation will go towards any activities that will include the viewing of the phallus in Region 8 that the last Government built in Mahdia that Mr. Sinclair himself expressed consternation about when I first met him.

Mr. Chairman: I will have the Hon. Member, Ms. Nima Flue-Bess and then the Hon. Member, Mr. Shurwayne Holder.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I notice at line item 6284, Other, there was a decline in the sum. Could the Hon. Minister state what caused this decline?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is not high science as we stated that sweeper/cleaners have been paid from this line item for a long time. The sweeper cleaners have now gotten contracts. Under line item 6284 – Other: One will see a reduction because the stipend at that time for sweeper cleaners has been removed. They are now contracted employees of the Government.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Does this cost cover the feeding programme for the schools?

Mr. Dharamlall: For this line item, one will see an increase as well. We are providing meals at the three dormitories in Mahdia, Kato and Paramakatoi, so those children are receiving meals from this line item.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I have one follow-up question to that. For line item 6291, National and Other Events, I heard the Hon. Minister earlier that it caters for the children coming to participate in the national school's championships. Could the Hon. Minister state if gears such as running shoes and other equipment needed for them to participate in sports are provided for from this line item?

Mr. Dharamlall: I have been advised, very emphatically, that we will provide as we have been providing previously.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: In 2021, the actual spending was \$6,300,000. In 2022, it was \$14 million budgeted, but the revised amount is \$36,286,000 for 2023. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, how is it that a combination of so many events put together in this sum would be identical to the revised sum of 2022? In 2023, it is identical to the dollar, so I just want to know how did the Ministry arrive at that given that it is a combination of a number of events, obviously, bearing different costs or different provisions put together for those events.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would beg your indulgence, if you could turn the air conditioner (AC) off, I will be very happy. Thank you. I would not question the veracity of these figures. I would not question the competence of the Regional Education Officer (REO). I would not question the activities that our Amerindian school children in Region 8 are participating in. There are at least 4,000 school children in Region 8. A lot of the programming in national and other events are not extra figures in the sense that it could change during the course of the year as well. The Hon. Member knows that too. It is not cast in stone.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$1,398,346,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$325,500,000

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$325,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$496,482,000

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I see here a whopping sum of \$45 million. Could the Hon. Minister state to this honourable House on which building/buildings the maintenance work will be done?

Mr. Dharamlall: The most difficult part of work in this country is in the North Pakaraimas. We intend to do maintenance work at the Taruka Health Post, the Kopinang Health Centre, Maikwak Health Post, Monkey Mountain Health Centre, staff quarters at Kanapang, staff quarters within the Mahdia District hospital compound, the Regional Health Office (RHO) staff quarters, staff quarters at Paramakatoi for the doctors, Kato staff quarters and Chiung Mouth health post.

Mr. Sinclair: Is there any provision for the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) house at the airstrip?

Mr. Dharamlall: In a maintenance programme, sometimes you are allowed some flexibility and if we have to do work at the COVID unit in Mahdia or the “COVID house” then we will find resources to do that. In the meantime, as I indicated, those are the areas we are focused on.

Mr. Sinclair: Hon. Minister, thank you for providing this honourable House with that piece of information. We will work on that.

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister, please outline to us where those maintenance will be done?

Mr. Dharamlall: Those maintenance works will be done both in the North Pakaraimas as well as in the Mahdia subregion, Chenapau health centre, Mahdia District Hospital; the Accident and Emergency (A&E) area, Monkey Mountain and additional works at the Mahdia District Hospital.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: There is an addition for 13 new... Cde. Chairman, could I be protected here? I cannot even hear my own voice.

Mr. Chairman: I am listening to you.

Mr. Holder: There are 13 new temporary employees catered for under line item 6117, Temporary Employees, could the Hon. Minister explain why there is this addition of 13 new employees, give their designations and scope of work that they will be doing in 2023?

Mr. Dharamlall: I am happy that the Hon. Member asked that question because the Hon. Member, at one time, was a health worker at the mortuary at the Suddie Public Hospital.

8.13 p.m.

There will be eight Ward Maids, one Audio Practitioner, one Pharmacy Assistant, two Dental Technicians and one Community Health Worker (CHW) to complement the delivery of services in Region 8.

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$496,482,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$196,500,000

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$196,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$52,476,000

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6302, I see there Training (including Scholarships). I guess the Hon. Minister could tell us what type of scholarships are going to be offered under Agriculture and the Region and, possibly, how could the area that the scholarship is offered impact the region and enhance food production?

Mr. Dharamlall: This line item is only \$1,000,000. It will cater for refresher trainer courses in pest control, handling of chemicals and in general agriculture.

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$52,476,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$12,000,000

Ms. Philadelphia: It says here,

“Provision for agricultural development initiatives.”

Could the Hon. Minister provide to us what those initiatives entail?

Mr. Dharamlall: We will establish apiaries pilot projects for the ‘Black Giant’ rearing in Paramakatoi. We will construct and equip a shade house at the Mahdia Secondary School. We will also be procuring swing fog machines and other agricultural equipment to help in the transformation of agriculture in Region 8.

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$12,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister, Hon. Members Mr. Sinclair and Ms. Philadelphia for taking us expeditiously through and... I would like to thank the Minister and staff of Region 8. Hon. Members we could turn to pages 436 and 437. Again, I thank the Hon. Minister and the staff from Region 8

Agency: 79 Region 9: Upper Takatu/Upper Essequibo

Current Expenditure

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$302,061,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, in 2022, we saw a figure of \$55,409,000. In 2023, we see a figure of \$47,000,964. It is a decrease in the allocation. In 2022, there were 47 Contracted Employees and in 2023 46 – one less. Could the Hon. Minister explain the decrease in this line item by over \$7 million, bearing in mind that there was a decrease by only one contracted worker in 2023?

Mr. Dharamlall: A Typist Clerk has resigned so that takes account for the one less Contracted Employee. We are catering for the salary increases and the gratuity increases for the other 46 staff.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency, in 2022 you had \$40 million. In 2023, \$46 million. Could the Hon. Minister say why the amount allocated was only \$6 million more in 2023, bearing in mind the increased Toshaos stipend, plus the increase cost of living and activities that this head covers, of course, it includes the Amerindian Heritage month, *et cetera*?

Mr. Dharamlall: This line item caters for the increase in rates paid to village leaders. It is now \$45,000 per month and this is a commitment that President Ali made. There are 34 Toshaos in Region 9, also, 34 Deputy Toshaos. They are now paid \$30,000 per month. There are 23 Senior Councillors paid \$25,000 per month. There are 13 Regional Councillors who are now paid \$30,000 per month. It also takes account of other costs related to the Office of the Regional Chairman and councillors.

Mr. Henry: I did not get the answer to my question.

Mr. Dharamlall: I answered the question.

Mr. Henry: The issue there is that this specific line item is one that caters for a lot of important stuff in the region, like I mentioned the Amerindian Heritage. Are we saying that those activities are not so important by only granting \$6 million which just covers basic expenses including the increase of the salaries, stipends of the Toshaos, *et cetera*?

Mr. Dharamlall: There was once a time in this country, not very long ago, just over two and a half years ago where every activity of the last Government was politicised. The celebration of the Amerindian Heritage is not a political activity, so one would not find the resources to host Amerindian Heritage in line item 6211. As a matter of fact, if the last Government used resources from line item 6211 to host the Amerindian village celebrations, then I would encourage the Auditor General to take a walk back in time and to investigate what happened during that time. Similarly, as the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, raised the issue of Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development. This is...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I did not hear that. We have to answer the question that was asked.

Mr. Dharamlall: The hosting of Amerindian Heritage celebrations would occur under other line items of other programmes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Henry, you have the floor. Those who want to whisper, please whisper softly.

Mr. Henry: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. The same line item 6211, how many RDC meetings are expected to be held in 2023?

Mr. Dharamlall: A minimum of six RDC meetings will be held. Naturally, our Government does not just work on holding meetings in house. We are actually out in the fields. A lot of the resources here are allocated to the councillors to get out into the communities and to visit with the Amerindian people of Region 9.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$302,061,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$16,800,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 1204900 – Building – Administration – \$12,000,000, could the Hon. Minister say which administrative building will be rehabilitated for this amount?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, Karasabai.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$16,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$99,564,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants, in 2022 it was \$6,750,000. In 2023, it is budgeted at \$6,750,000. Could the Minister explain why there was no increase for fuel and lubricants in 2023, bearing in mind the need for increased activities in agriculture due to an impending *El Nino* that will create problems for food security, *et cetera* in Region 9?

Mr. Dharamlall: The other agencies of Government in the agricultural sector have taken up some of these missions. That is why the regional administration did not budget more.

8.28 p.m.

The Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and other agencies of the Government in the agricultural sector, they are also populating Region 9 with a lot of work now. This is an issue that has been raised with His Excellency on the outreaches he conducted in Region 9, and we have quite a lot of investments now in Amerindian villages in Region 9.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences, revised 2022 is zero and in *Budget 2023* it is \$5,000,000. Mr. Speaker, could the Hon. Minister name the activity or activities that will be done utilising the \$5,000,000 allocated for the maintenance of sea and river defences in Region 9?

Mr. Dharamlall: The Tabatinga Creek has overtopped many times and so we are investing in repairs to the riverbank to prevent continual overtopping.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$99,564,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$42,350,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 1701400 – \$42,350,000, Mr. Chairman, there is a current shortage of cassava and its by-products in Region 9 due to climate change's negative effects. It must be noted that cassava is a staple food in Region 9. Could the Minister say if the allocated sum of \$42,350,000 million includes moneys to improve cassava production, inclusive of the Government providing cassava stems that can withstand the effects of climate change to the farmers of Region 9?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Agriculture has done extensive work in providing planting materials, including cassava, to the farmers of Region 9.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I did not get the answer. It was a specific question – if the farmers will be provided with cassava stems that can withstand the effects of climate change because that is the main problem now in the region.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, if you permit, I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture to answer this issue in my stead.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Agriculture, you may have the floor.

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Mustapha]: Mr. Chairman, I want to agree with my Colleague that all the villages in Region 9 will be provided with cassava planting materials in mid-February. We did an analysis and a survey, and all the areas will be given planting materials. As a matter of fact, I want to elaborate, also, what my Colleague has been saying for Region 9. That region has been having a lot of development in the agricultural sector. As a matter of fact, we have three agro-processing facilities to bring value to the farmers' crop in that Deep South Rupununi. In St. Ignatius, we have tractors, we have grass planters, we have harrows, we have ploughs to help those areas develop the agriculture sector. Region 9 is slated for massive development in the agriculture sector to make a contribution to food security in Guyana.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I still have not gotten an answer on behalf of the people of Region 9 on whether or not specific research will be done quickly and stems that can withstand the effects of high spells of heat and rain could be given to the communities. I have not heard the answer yet.

Mr. Chairman: I will ask the Minister of Agriculture to address, once again.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I have said we did an analysis and a survey in the entire Region 9, especially the riverine area and we will be providing all the planting materials, including cassava sticks to the farmers in Region 9. We have already met and communicated with the Toshao. I do not know if the Hon. Member is not going to these communities, but we have been visiting those communities on a regular basis and we are interacting with those villagers. Regularly, the Regional Executive Officer (REO), his team, has been working very closely with the teams from the Ministry of Agriculture, the various agencies.

Mr. Henry: I think we have a problem with comprehension. I mean, we ask a straightforward question. Just say that we have not done any research and we do not have those sticks, but the

people of Region 9 may go back to what they did about 15-20 years ago when we went to Manuwau and brought sticks although you are promised to be given some *licks* for doing that.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I think this Hon. Member wants to mislead this House. I am saying two weeks...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we cannot impute that.

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, the point is, I am saying Mr. Chairman, if he does not comprehend what I am saying and listen... I am saying that two weeks ago our teams were in Region 9 visiting different villages, looking at the areas that were affected by the flood and did soil analysis. In mid-February, when the crop starts, we will provide all the planting materials for these farmers. We did that, we did the analysis, we did all the research, and we will be providing these planting materials.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Henry, you may have the floor.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I understand that they cannot answer the question so we could move on.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you make a comment like that, I will just give the Minister a few seconds to respond. He has answered three times. Hon. Member Mr. Henry, please we can move on.

Mr. Henry: I will move on. The people of Region 9 have heard the answer.

Mr. Chairman: And they are expecting the distribution in February, thank you. Hon. Member Mr. Holder, you may have the floor.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, project code 1702000 – Agriculture Development, could the Minister say if this allocation would be, sorry.... I am looking at the wrong page. It is project code – 1701400, could the Minister say if the sums allocated there would be sufficient? Here is why I asked this question. Since the Indigenous people, and we understand Region 9 to be an Indigenous region, since they would have come to Guyana and occupied these lands, agriculture would have been at the heart of their existence. So, it is quite alarming, and I know the Minister will say that, from a regional level, they are providing support and there is the Ministry of Agriculture. But, I would say to the Minister that Public Works is given a hefty sum, the other programmes were all

given a hefty sum, while the RDC gives support, except in agriculture. Agriculture for Region 9 only has an allocation of 5% and we see the same trend in Region 1 with 3.1%, Region 7 with 4.5%, Region 8 with 1.9% and, of course, Region 9 only with 5%.

I am asking the Minister, why is it that they are budgeting so meagre amounts, in the context of a country that would have received billions and continue to receive billions upon billions, I state that again, from our newfound oil industry. Again, why is it that we are only budgeting the RDC? Under the RDC, only 5% of the budget goes towards agriculture?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is not true as the Hon. Member Mr. Shurwayne Holder has indicated, that it is 5% or less in terms of the budgetary allocation for agriculture in Region 9. As a matter of fact, the entire budget for Region 9, in current terms, has moved from \$256,104,000 to \$283,805,000 million, plus an additional \$42 million. My Colleague, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, has been at length moments ago to explain to you that we have agencies of Government that provide direct support and we have a lot more of the support that comes through those agencies. It is not true what the Hon. Member is saying that agriculture is not treated similar to the other programmes. We are building farm to market roads. This Government, Mr. Chairman, does not operate in silos, quite unlike what happened in the last Government. That is why there was so much financial mismanagement because everyone was a law unto themselves, and they were operating in silos. So, I would urge the Hon. Member to redo his calculations and to join the effort that we have been pursuing to transform agriculture in Region 9. Just a few years ago, two and a half plus years ago, in some areas, we had to fetch food in for some of these Amerindian people and they were in Government, Mr. Chairman, we were in Opposition.

We used to take food for the Amerindian people because of flooding many areas were cut off. The last Government, let them show the record in terms of what they have done for agriculture in Region 9. They have absolutely no record. The sum of \$165 million, like I said earlier, was expended through the hands of one person in Region 9, in the last Government. Given to farmers' groups, women's groups, youth groups and in different villages, including in one case, to a family member, millions of dollars. It is not imputing, there is evidence of that. In the village of...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we are going good so far and we have caught up with the time.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$42,350,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$283,805,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads \$74,000,000, could the Minister list the roads that will be maintained, inclusive of their location?

Mr. Dharamlall: Again, we are building roads where roads were never built before, and this is a hallmark of our Government. We are also repairing roads where roads were left dilapidated for many years. We are also working in villages where before 2020, it is very expensive to live and travel in the interior, including Region 9.

8.43 p.m.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the RDC can tell you that vehicles that the current Government – when we were in Government last – gave to these Amerindian villages were taken away, in some cases violently. This included a certain Hon. Member who worked as a Community Development Officer (CDO) in Region 9. We have a history of working for Amerindian development. The APNU/AFC has a legacy of disrespect for Amerindian people. I do not know if I can say the evocations of the ...I can say bloviate. The bloviations of the current Opposition would not deviate us from working in the Amerindian villages. We will repair the Rupanau road, which is a commitment of His Excellency the President. We will repair the road to Tiger Pond. We began last year, and we will expand to the mountain foot, possibly getting into the Taushida and Kakshibai areas which the last Government never visited. Mr. Chairman, you know those areas very well. There will be repairs to the road from Annai to the secondary school; the Shiriri road crossing on the other side of the creek, and repairs of three kilometres of Tabatinga farm to market road.

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$283,805,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$249,000,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 1100900, Bridges, there is \$62 million. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the bridges will be concrete or steel, if not, could the Minister say what type of bridges will be built?

Mr. Dharamlall: There will be a concrete bridge at Kaiman Creek, Wichabai – not very far from the Hon. Member. There will be a concrete bridge at Bibirukabra Creek, Parishara. There will be a concrete bridge at Makarapan and one in Aishalton along the farm road.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am not finished. There will be the construction of a concrete bridge at Dove Creek. Mr. Chairman, all these projects came out of a visit by His Excellency. Our President likes to travel and meet his people across different parts of the country, quite unlike what was obtained by the last Administration in 2015 to 2020.

Mr. Henry: In passing, I just want to say that the first steel and concrete bridges were built by the APNU/AFC in Region 9. It is good that you all are following. Thank you very much. Project code 1401300, Roads, \$95 million: could the Hon. Minister say if the roads will be bitumen or concrete? If not, then, could the Minister state what innovations are included to construct roads to Indigenous communities that would allow them to withstand the impending rainy season?

Mr. Dharamlall: We will be upgrading a section of the road from Fly Hill to the Katoka Landing. It is about five kilometres. We will also be upgrading the Ruperti Farm Road. There will be upgrades to sections of the Anaraputa central and, also, sections of the road leading to Fly Hill. As I indicated, we will maintain from Karasabai to Tiger Pond. We will also, under this capital programme, do five miles of road in the North Pakaraimas towards Taushida and Kakshibai.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I asked what are the types of roads and if they are not made of bitumen or concrete, what innovations will be included to ensure that those roads stand up? The reason I asked that is that if one travels from Lethem, Saint Ignatius to Shulinab and downwards one would find very big craters and the road is only repaired before the rainy season starts. That is why I asked what innovations will be put there.

Mr. Dharamlall: We will be doing extensive maintenance from Lethem towards Deep South as soon as this budget is passed tomorrow. So, you are going to see a lot of maintenance work. We have procured some equipment for Region 9 and they will do a lot of the in-house maintenance. A lot of these villages require access and the budget for roads is only \$95 million. We took a decision to ensure that as many communities as possible have an opportunity to benefit from the budget. This is quite unlike when two pieces of roads were done under the last Government. There was a good diversion to the Pirara Bridge and a part going towards Lethem where they also built a concrete bridge. Where is the evidence that they have built many more bridges? One of the bridges built going towards Yupukari was burnt and rebuilt. When we came into Government, it was burnt again, and we had to rebuild it in concrete. I shudder to think that the Opposition claims so much that they know this country, but they do not understand the dynamics of the country. It is quite unfortunate for the people of the Rupununi, that the Opposition will go and spread a lot of propaganda without seeing the need to get these things done.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I guess this word innovation is causing another problem, so I will pass.

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$249,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery – \$2,221,396,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister explain the increase in Contracted Employees from 43 in 2022 to 161 in 2023 and say whether this amount includes psychosocial personnel who would help to conquer the strange behavioural phenomenon that is seriously affecting our female students in secondary schools?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, this line item caters for 113 Sweepers/Cleaners, one House Supervisor, two Cooks, two Typist Clerks and one House Father. I would like to report as well that a lot of the spiritual people in Region 9 have been visiting these schools to pray with the children. Whilst it seems to be an annual phenomenon, relief is also being provided to those children.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6292, Dietary, \$221,444,000: Could the Hon. Minister say if the sum of \$221,444,000 allocated for Dietary, includes a snack or a meal daily for secondary school students

who leave home early in the morning for school and return home after 3.00 p.m. on an average school day in Saint Ignatius.

Mr. Dharamlall: Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks will be provided to 353 students at the Annai Dormitory. Similar will be provided to 219 students of the Saint Ignatius Secondary School Dormitory. Similar will be provided to 120 students of the Karasabai Primary Top. Of course, when the secondary school is finished, then Karasabai will also have its own secondary school. Similar will be done at the Sand Creek Secondary School for 292 students; Aishalton Secondary School, 161 students; and Nappi Primary Top, 70 students.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery – \$2,221,396,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery – \$263,000,000

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, for project code 2402300, Land and Water Transport, there is \$6 million. Could the Minister say whether this vehicle will be purchased to transport students of the Saint Ignatius Secondary School in Lethem to school and back?

[Mr. Chairman left the Chair.]

[Mr. Seeraj assumed the Chair.]

Mr. Dharamlall: When we procure resources for the different programmes, we tend to consolidate the use of those resources, including transportation. So, if the need arises that we will have to help those children... We have built an asphaltic concrete road now in Saint Ignatius which was never before done. We will also be procuring bikes for those children who will be participating in cycling at the National Schools' Championship.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery – \$263,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme 795: Health Services – \$1,171,271,000

Programme 795: Health Services – \$1,171,271,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 795: Health Services – \$243,000,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 2402300, Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister say where in Region 9 the ambulances and the vehicles will be stationed?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, two ambulances will be procured for the Lethem Regional Hospital and for the Aishalton District Hospital. We will also be procuring a lorry to help in the distribution of drugs and medical supplies across the Rupununi.

Programme: 795 – Health Services – \$243,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

8.58 p.m.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you, Hon. Members. Thank you, Minister and team. This brings us to the end of Agency 79. Hon. Members, we will now move onto Programme 80, Region 10, Upper Demerara/ Upper Berbice. We will allow the Minister and his team to get in place.

Mr. Mahipaul: How much time do we have, sir?

Mr. Seeraj: You have a saving of 17 minutes.

Mr. Mahipaul: *(Inaudible)*.

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Clerk, I will have to sanction the Hon. Member.

Agency: 80 Region 10: Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$297,181,000

Mr. Sears: Looking at line item 6111, Administrative, I observe there is a reduction in the staff complement by two. What positions do these represent?

Mr. Dharamlall: The retirement of a Principal Assistant Secretary (PAS) Finance and one Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO).

Mr. Sears: Could the Hon. Member state if these positions have been made vacant publicly?

Mr. Dharamlall: Two persons retired but we did not publicise the retirement of those two persons.

Mr. Sears: Let me readjust the question. Knowing that there are two vacancies, have those vacancies been made public?

Mr. Dharamlall: Insofar as I am aware, not at this point in time.

Mr. Sears: Let us turn our attention to line item 6117, Temporary Employees. We noticed that there are some additional allocations for temporary employees. I would like to be made aware of their emoluments and where these positions would be filled.

Mr. Dharamlall: It caters for a Vehicle Driver, Checkers and Caretakers.

Mr. Sears: Just to confirm, how many days will they be working?

Mr. Dharamlall: They will be working a minimum of eight hours per day across their contract period. For the knowledge of the Hon. Member, Mr. Sears, these are not part time workers. They are granted temporary contracts for 365 days.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman. I turn your attention to line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency. This is third region that is suffering a reduction in the availability of the sums for the chairman and councillors to effectively execute their function. When we look at the allocation in the line item, at face value, it is showing an increase by \$6.5 million. But this line item caters for the increased sum towards the stipend for councillors, Toshaos and Deputy Toshaos along with the senior councillors. When the calculation is done, like Region 4 and Region 7, this line item will give the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Chairman and Councillors a sum of \$32 million to execute their functions. Last year, they had a sum of \$34 million to do their projects. This is a reduction of \$2 million. All other regions received an increase, and a significant increase too. Could the Hon. Minister explain, in this context of 'One Guyana', in this context of nation building and in this context of us lifting Guyana together, why is it that Region 10 is suffering the same fate as Region 4 and Region 7?

Mr. Dharamlall: That sounds like a rendition of singing for my super. The Hon. Member said earlier that in one of the other regions the budget available for the RDC was less than that for 2022. Now, the Hon. Member is saying that this is the only region where the line item 6211, regarding budgetary resources, was reduced. So, the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, needs to make up his mind, once again, about what exactly he is trying to achieve. What I can tell you, as I did for Region 4 and all other regions, is that the Regional Chairman, the Vice Chairman and councillors went through this budget and signed onto the budget. I cannot account for what they want to do and how much they intend to spend on what they want to do. What I can account for is that when the budget resources are allocated to them, they spend it in a transparent way, they spend it in a non-discriminatory way, and they spend it in a way that does not devalue and bring the regional administration into disrepute.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I do not understand why they Hon. Minister is trying to mislead this Committee. In all fairness to the submissions that were made from these regions, Region 4 submitted a request for \$36 million and there is the evidence for that, which I am sure his able and capable Permanent Secretary (PS) can lay over to him. I am also sure that she is in receipt of the submissions of Region 7 and Region 10, which are sums that are larger than what is catered for here. There is clearly an attempt to not satisfy the request of Regions 4, 7 and 10, primarily because they are afraid of the work of these councillors in their attempt to expose what is happening under their regime. Again, I ask the question, what is the reason behind having an increase in budgetary allocation for chairpersons and councillors in Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 and a decrease in Regions 4, 7 and 10?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the Government of President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali granted stipend increases and, in some cases, salary increases to all the Chairpersons and all the Regional Vice Chairpersons of Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) in Guyana. That is an undisputable, historical fact. [A. Hon. Member: *(inaudible)*.] I am not finished answering. This never occurred in the five years of A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC). The Regional Chairpersons did not get any increases. These increases go towards their personal embellishment. These increases were all lobbied for by all 10 Regional Chairpersons and all 10 Regional Vice Chairpersons. Again, for the record, in 2022, the budgetary allocation for line item

6211 was \$40.5 million. In 2023, it has increased to \$47 million, an increase of \$6.5 million – almost one-sixth of the previous year’s budget.

Mr. Mahipaul: What should guide us when the Hon. Minister speaks about an increase is the fact that there was the increase to the councillors, the Toshaos, the Deputy Toshaos and senior councillors within these Amerindian communities and that caters for more than \$6.5 million. So, the fact of the matter is that there is a decrease in the amount of moneys that is allocated to the Chairman and Councillors for the execution of their functions. I do not know if perhaps the Hon. Minister is tired after answering all of these questions. Maybe we should consider taking a break and return.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you very much, Hon. Mr. Mahipaul. Hon. Minister, that does not require a response.

Mr. Sears: With regards to line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants, could the Hon. Minister answer if this reflects any increase in the fleet of vehicle?

Mr. Dharamlall: In 2022, \$5.4 million were allocated. In 2023, it is \$5.6 million. So, naturally, it would not cater for any additional new vehicles.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Hon. Minister indicated that Region 10’s Chairman signed onto this budget. I would like for him to provide the evidence of such because I am guided by the Regional Chairman of Region 10 that he has never placed his signature on this budget. I would be happy if honesty can prevail in this House and the Hon. Minister provides that evidence to show that the Region 10 Chairman signed on to this budget.

9.13 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, over the years I have known the Region 10 Chairman, including the time when he was a member of staff earning over \$300,000 from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, at that time the Ministry of Communities, the Regional Chairman has come to my office more than once, actually, many times. We have spoken times on the phone and the Regional Chairman has never expressed any proclivity as Mr. Mahipaul is imputing on the character of the Regional Chairman of Region 10.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the question stands, because the Regional Chairman is indicating to me here that he has never signed on to that budget. The Minister, in his defence of this decrease to the RDC, claimed that the Regional Chairman signed on to the budget. All I am asking for is the truth. Just provide to this Committee the evidence that you have as Minister to show that the Regional Chairman signed on to it. You, Sir, in your capacity as advisor to the Hon. Minister, I am sure can also assist him in finding that signature to lay it over.

Mr. Seeraj: Hon. Member, I am Chairman of the Committee of Supply right now. I think the Hon. Minister provided an answer before, Hon. Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, are you saying that you will not ask the Hon. Minister to provide the evidence on something that he said? Just for clarity, Mr. Chairman, are you saying to me, an Hon. Member of this House and representing this side, that you are not going to ask the Minister to provide the evidence to substantiate what he said and claimed? Or are you going to uphold the fact the Minister is imputing against the Chairman of Region 10?

Mr. Seeraj: I asked the Hon. Minister to respond to your question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, Region 10 has billions of dollars more than it has ever had, whether under the PPP/C or the APNU/AFC. I am not going to be quibbling and holding back the work of the Regional Administration by quibbling over \$6.5 million. I have already answered that question. Mr. Mahipaul has a proclivity to expose information on social media, including that famous leaked tape on which they were confabulating and were trying to unseat the elected Leader of the Opposition of the People's National Congress (PNC).

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, on a Point of Order, the Hon. Member is imputing my name, claiming that I released some tape *via* social media. That is totally untrue, and I am asking that the Hon. Minister withdraws it. There is no evidence to such, and if the Hon. Minister has, he can tender it over, but I have never released any tape on social media. I have never released any tape on social media, and I am requesting the Hon. Minister to withdraw that, Sir.

Mr. Seeraj: Hon. Minister, I think it is a fair proposition. We know that there is a tape; you said that there is a tape. The Hon. Member is claiming that he did not release the tape.

Mr. Dharamlall: Okay, Mr. Chairman. In the three-way conversation, the Hon. Member's name and the type of work that he had to do in trying to besmirch and unseat the Leader of the Opposition has been recorded. If it is the Hon. Member believes I said that he released the tape, then I withdraw.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, the PPP/C constantly *pampazettes* itself in Region 10. I want to ask the Hon. Minister if he is aware that the Regional Democratic Council 10 had submitted a budget estimate of \$9.2 billion, of which \$3.3 billion was totally cut out, further depriving the Region 10 residents of further development. [Mr. McCoy: What is your question?] The question is: is the Minister aware that the Regional Democratic Council 10 submitted a budget estimate of \$9.2 billion, which the PPP/C Government slashed by \$3.3 billion?

Mr. Seeraj: Hon. Member, I would like to remind you that in going through the estimates, we want to cite the line items so we can guide the Minister and his team in offering proper responses.

Mr. Dharamlall: This budget of Region 10, in excess of \$5.9 billion, is the most that Region 10 has received through the RDC since the establishment of the Regional Democratic Council. I can only account for what is in the budget. I do not go back in time. We are doing a tremendous lot of work. Just a few days ago, His Excellency was in Christianburg, and the support and the manifestations of the people were enormous. We believe that this Government is doing quite a lot for the development of Region 10. We have also employed over 1,000 persons in the part time programme, which is more than \$40 million per month in the regional economy. This budget is not just about one programme or one item in a programme. This budget is part of a national development budget, which is \$781.9 billion.

Mr. Sears: Just a quick question on line item 6291, which deals with National and Other Events. Could the Hon. Minister share what is the budgetary allocation for Mashramani out of this allocated sum?

Mr. Dharamlall: These are indicative figures. As the expenditures become necessary, the region will pay for those expenses under this line item.

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$297,181,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$3,000,000

Mr. Figueira: The region has been making requests for the building of the RDC for the staff since 2020, 2021, 2022, and even in 2023. This request was made by the elected councillors, and they had provided suitable rationale with regard to why there is need for this new building. We have not seen any allocation in 2023 from the country's largest budgetary allocation. Could you say why the people of Region 10, the staff and the councillors, are not given the comfort to execute their mandate on behalf of the people of Region 10? There is dire need for such a building.

Mr. Dharamlall: This project on the regional administration building began in 2017. Hundreds of millions of dollars were budgeted for the construction of the administration office. When we took Government in August, 2020, and during the first few weeks of my appointment as Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, I had the honour of visiting Region 10 and visiting the site. The last Government, for three years, did not come off the ground. For three years they spent \$48 million plus and did not come off the ground. I believe that it was a cash cow – I hope I am not imputing – for some high officials, whether based in Region 10 or in the APNU/AFC Government. We met with the contractor, and we offered to go through the issues, but subsequent to that, the contract was terminated.

Mr. Figueira: All that the Minister just indicated is immaterial to the fact that this building is still of utmost importance to the staff and to the councillors of the RDC. With regard to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in 2020 and 2021, it showed even more the need for a new building. The country is moving forward with regard to development, and right now we are passing the country's largest budgetary allocation. We continue to say that the RDC's building in Region 10 is grossly inadequate. There are electrical issues, decay of the building, and sewage issues affect the staff at the RDC. The Regional Executive Officer (REO), who is next to you, has probably the smallest office for an REO in the entire country, and it is very ugly. The need for a new building is of utmost importance for your work and the work on behalf of the people of Region 10. It is highly needed. I suggest that greater consideration should be given in this regard.

Mr. Seeraj: Minister, do you care to respond? Go ahead, please.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the last government did not think that schools or hospitals were important, but it was spending over \$256 million on an administrative office. The administrative office ought to have been finished long before 2020. They did not complete the building. The contractor, I guess, breached conditions of the contract and the contract was terminated.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the preamble was to benefit the Minister and his own political agenda but the current state of affairs is important. We have public servants who are working under conditions that are not safe. It is inhumane. The Ministry of Labour and the Hon. Joseph Hamilton can take a walk into Region 10 and see the conditions that these public servants, who are giving their all to the public service in Region 10, are going through. The REO himself, I know, expressed to me before how uncomfortable he is in the situation at that Regional Democratic Council. It is only fair that we show some vested interest, as politicians and leaders of this country, and concern for the public servants of Region 10 who are delivering a service. Could I ask the Hon. Minister when he foresees the beginning of the construction of a proper RDC building for Region 10 where he can take into account the safety and comfort of public servants in Region 10? Also, when does he foresee moneys coming into the budget for such a programme?

9.28 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: The priority of this Government is not the fancy offices of Regional Chairpersons. The priority of this Government is to make sure that our children go to school, that they are provided with the best education delivery services and schools, health care... [An Hon. Member: Water.] Water, indeed, and a wide array of interventions. At some point, the head office of Region 10 will be constructed. It will be constructed by the PPP/C Government because we will be in power for a very long time.

Mr. Figueira: The Minister, by his own words, has shown and made it very pellucid how much they care about public servants. Imagine that is his Comrade sitting next to him and he is saying they are not concerned about the comfort of public servants, who are working on behalf of the people of this country. We maintain that the people of Region 10, the workers and the councillors are most deserving, given the country's largest budget, of a building in which they can be safe, a

building in which they can be comfortable executing their work and their mandate on behalf of the people of this country.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you Hon. Member. The Minister had responded to this issue. I heard the Minister say that sometime in the future, a head office will be constructed. Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, do you want to follow up on the same issue?

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, is there any consideration here, given the state of the building and the vulnerability of our public servants, in terms of their safety and other measures, to compensate public servants should they suffer and continue to suffer under this current state that they are working?

Mr. Dharamlall: When I joined the Public Service, salaries were very meagre. When my grandfather was in the Public Service, salaries under the PNC was very meagre. We were in Government from 1992 to 2015. We are in Government from August, 2020 to now. The most increases ever given to public servants, the most comfort ever provided to public servants, the most buildings built for the comfort of public servants, the most schools ever built in the history of this country, the most hospitals and health centres and health posts ever built in the history of this country, including in Region 10, especially Linden, the most moneys to transform regional economies came from the auspices of the leadership of a People's Progressive Party/Civic Government. One of the most egregious acts the last government did to the people of Region 10 was to fast-track the closure of the call centre. When we came into Office, we were the Government that initiated its re-opening. The last Government did not cater for public servants. The President, just a few weeks ago, readjusted salaries of public servants for their own good. The President made a commitment to the soldiers and other members of the Joint Services that he will restore the one-month salary bonus which was taken away by the APNU/AFC.

We made a commitment that we will restore the cash grant for our school children, which was taken away from the APNU/AFC. Now, children are earning millions of dollars across the country. We also embarked on a massive employment programme, to make sure that more people get opportunities for employment, that more moneys go into the regional economies, and that farmers, fishermen, all of those people receive benefits. We have also increased the stipend of the Regional Chairpersons.

[Mr. Chairman assumed the Chair]

There are Members of the last government who sit currently on the Opposition side, who were earning salaries from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, including the Hon. Member, Mr. Sears, and including other Members. They did not have the care to address the concerns of public servants. What they were more concerned about was their political aggrandisement. We will not countenance that kind of politics. Everyone has an opportunity now to be part of the largesse of this country. We will not discriminate against any employee. We have actually increased the employees' strength in the regions from 10,000 plus to over 17,000. We have also increased the support to public servants and the regional structures by more than 11,000 part-time workers. Tell me, Mr. Chairman, who has the interest of public servants and public officials in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana?

Mr. Sears: Adding to this conversation, a follow-up question to the Minister. Is the Minister aware of the current situation in Kwakwani with regard to the RDC building? The RDC building in Kwakwani, currently....again, I do not know. Maybe, the current Government is condoning faeces. With regard to flushing the toilets upstairs, the faeces come downstairs.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Sears, point me to the line item and then let us ...

Mr. Sears: It is the same line item. Are there any provisions for repairs to the Kwakwani RDC building?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, we are going to do maintenance and repair works to the Kwakwani RDC building, which the last Government left unattended too. As we are on that issue, I would like to ask the Regional Executive Officer, whether the Hon. Member, Mr. Sears, paid his bills when he stayed at the guest house in Kwakwani?

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 802 – Public Works - \$230,800,000

Mr. Sears: Looking at line item 6222, Field Materials and Supplies, the question to the Hon. Minister is, with the heightened work in Linden, which the Minister is boasting that the Government is doing, would the Minister consider an increase in this line item's allocation to better allow for performance monitoring and evaluation?

Mr. Dharamlall: This Government buys very durable field materials. We would not be buying every year the same amount, for the same sets of people who already would have had months before. Does that answer the question of the Hon. Member, Mr. Sears?

Mr. Chairman: The amount is adequate.

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, thanks.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, I always pay my bills. To ask a specific question as it relates to line item 6264, is there any allocation being made to any of the Regional Chairman's vehicles or allocated to his office or his purview?

Mr. Dharamlall: If the Regional Chairman of Region 10 desires for his vehicles to be fixed, I am sure there is adequate funds available to fix the vehicle.

Programme: 802 – Public Works - \$230,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 802 – Public Works - \$141,790,000

Mr. Figueira: Project Code 1401400 – Roads: We have seen an allocation of \$93 million plus for roads. The Regional Councillors would have provided a number of roads, surpassing 20, that are in dire need of repairs in the community. Based on this allocation, there is an approximation of five roads to be done. Given that it is five roads, would these roads be bordering with drainage? What would be the size of these roads? What we have observed in several communities, for example, Silver Town, the recapping of the roads, we have seen those roads reduced in size. Two vehicles passing had to go off the road to pass, even though there was sufficient space to

accommodate a larger road to accommodate the passing of two vehicles. Could you say to us if those roads would be bordered with proper drainage and what is actually the size of these roads that would be done?

Mr. Dharamlall: I am happy that the Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira of Region 10 raised the issue of roads and the width of roads. I saw on social media, Mr. Chairman, which I can share with you, a registration of a pick-up that moved from the Office of the Prime Minister to a certain Figueira in Region 10.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, please. The Hon. Minister is on the floor and if you want to interject, you stand on a point of order.

Mr. Figueira: That is what I am quoting. It is Standing Order 41 (6).

Mr. Chairman: I did not hear, so I did not understand about his imputing at that time. Allow him to finish and then I will rule.

Mr. Dharamlall: I am very happy that the Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, has decided to raise the issue of roads. Through the visit of our Hon. Prime Minister... [Mr. Mahipaul: Moses Nagamootoo.] The real Brigadier, Mr. Mark Phillips, a lot of work has begun in the Christianburg area – the construction of roads and footpaths. During a visit of His Excellency, more roads will be done. As a matter of fact, the technical team are currently picking up information on the roads that need to be done. The Ministry of Public Works is also doing 30 roads in Region 10, most of which, if not all, will be in the town of Linden.

9.43 p.m.

This has never happened before. This has never happened before. A lot of these projects are built by the community; people are employed. So, I do not understand why the APNU/AFC are against the construction of roads in Region 10. During the course of this year...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are we at Region 9 or Region 10?

Mr. Dharamlall: We are at Region 10.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, in addition to more than 30 roads that the Ministry of Public Works will be doing, in addition to the roads that His Excellency committed to last week, we will also be working on south Amelia's Ward access, Moraballi Street in Retrieve, Well Road in south Amelia's Ward, internal road in Kumaka – this is an area that supports the PPP/C and the last Government did absolutely nothing for the Amerindian and hinterland people in Kumaka; the upgrading of a fair-weather carriageway in Nottinghamshire – this is also an area where we have PPP/C meetings, and their infrastructure was deliberately left out for five years. We are working to complete the development of Region 10. Our track record in Region 10 is proud, in terms of the development of the people of Region 10.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, kindly give me a moment. Hon. Minister, I heard you say you do not know why the APNU/AFC is against the development of the roads. I do not know about the APNU/AFC members outside of the House, but I did not hear any one of the APNU/AFC Hon. Members saying they were against that. I think you may be imputing at that stage. Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, you have the floor.

Mr. Mahipaul: Withdraw. Withdraw.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, you have the floor.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you for bringing that view to the Minister. The question that I asked, specifically, I think it was a very simple question. The Minister, I believe, is relatively a bright guy. The question was very simple. One, would the roads that will be built be bordered with drains, and what would be the size of those roads? That was the question. I would like to add to it, to ask, what type of road would be built? Would it be concrete roads or bitumen?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, concrete roads, plus, do you have reinforced drainage?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, development also takes account of resources. Our development pathway is premised on different phases. We will build the roads; we will also build the drains.

The priority now is to build the roads. In south Amelia's Ward, First Street will be 1,400 square metres; in Moraballi, it will be 1,393 square metres; on Well Road, it will be 1,408 square metres; at Kumaka, it will be 2,548 square metres; at Nottinghamshire, it will be 2,580 square metres. These roadways and carriageways will be constructed, for the first time, using asphaltic concrete.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up question. Thank you for the specifications of what the length of the road will be. What I would like to know, as it is a concern for a lot of the road users, especially passing another vehicle coming in the opposite direction, one has to come off of the road. For greater clarity, could the Minister say what the width of the road will be?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, First Street road in south Amelia's Ward will be approximately 6.09 metres wide, which is about 3.3 feet per metre; so it will be close to 20 feet wide. The road in Retrieve, Moraballi Street, will be 4.87 metres wide, which will be between 15 to 16 feet. The street in Well Road, south Amelia's Ward, will be 5.5 metres wide; again, almost 18 feet. The road in Kumaka will be 7 metres wide, in excess of 21 feet. The road in Nottinghamshire will be five metres wide; in excess, again, of almost 18 feet. The width of the roads is adequate and many vehicles can pass, including vehicles probably driven by Hon. Members of the Opposition, including a certain pickup.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up to this...

Mr. Chairman: To the width of the road?

Mr. Sears: ...specific line item here.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, earlier, the Minister mentioned that particularly Kumaka and Nottinghamshire support the PPP/C. He also alluded that the APNU/AFC ignored them, possibly because the areas support the PPP/C. The question to the Minister, is the Minister saying that the Government focuses infrastructural work and development in areas where they are heavily supported?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what is the relevance to the line item?

Mr. Sears: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Chairman: What is the relevance to the line item?

Mr. Sears: The relevance is this: I am trying to determine the mechanisms used to determine where roads go. I am fully aware that the Regional Democratic Council had submitted 20 roads for consideration and five were selected. The Hon. Minister mentioned that in Kumaka and Nottinghamshire those roads are being done, and he also stated that they support the PPP/C. I want to know what mechanism is being used?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think you also mentioned where support did not come from, but you can answer.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, if I were the Hon. Member, I would have been quiet. I just said at length, we are doing 30 additional roads – thirty additional roads. With a visit by the Prime Minister late last year, more roads were also done, more footpaths were created. Never has this happened before in Region 10, and especially in Linden. Never before.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you for the emphasis, Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Most of the roads, actually, will be done in APNU/AFC strongholds. Most of the roads.

Programme: 802 – Public Works - \$141,790,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$3,463,612,000

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Mr. Minister, we have seen a very significant increase in contracted employees here. Could you give an explanation for this increase?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, it takes account of 156 sweeper/cleaners that were regularised by His Excellency the President, Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali.

Mr. Figueira: I am happy about that. Are those sweeper/cleaners permanent staff?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, they are currently...

Mr. Figueira: My apologies. Would they eventually be on the permanent establishment, given the fact that they are contracted employees?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, they are currently on contract. It means that they will get a gratuity, as well. Quite unlike what happened in the last Government, they forced people out of contracts into the permanent establishment. In a democracy, we give people choices. Those sweeper/cleaners will make those choices when they desire.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: There is also a significant increase here. Could we have an idea of what the technical skills of the top five senior technical officers and where are they placed?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am happy that the Hon. Member has raised this issue in the education budget because the Hon. Member, in addition to being your staff, is also the staff of the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development. In answer to my staff, there are three education officers, one non-grad, one system development officer, two temporary qualified misses, 283 trained graduate teachers – class 1, four untrained, one Regional Education Officer (REdO), regional administrative officer, 19 trained graduate teachers, five untrained graduate teachers, and 11 assistant teachers. A total of 330.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, you have the floor.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you...

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I was not finished.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you may proceed.

Mr. Dharamlall: If you would allow me, I would like to ask the Hon. Jermaine Figueira, staff, under which line item is he being paid as a teacher of one of the secondary schools?

Mr. Chairman: Unfortunately, Hon. Minister, it is questions to you.

Mr. Figueira: I ask the questions, not you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, you have the floor.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Line item 6133, Benefits and Allowances: Could the Minister give a synopsis of this more than \$139 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have been advised that under line item 6111, Administrative, that is where the super salaries are paid. That is where the Hon. Member, in addition to his stipend or salary from the Parliament Office, is also receiving quite a substantial..., more than \$200,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think it was line item 6113.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, in addition, for clarity, there are two temporary qualified class teachers, 68 temporary qualified class teachers – class 3, one trained graduate – class 1, three temporary qualified, four temporary unqualified, two Welfare Officers, one temporary qualified, five Librarians, seventeen temporary unqualified and two unqualified. A total of 105.

Mr. Figueira: It baffled me when the Minister said, ‘super salary’. Yes, I am a graduate trained teacher serving for more than 21 years and I am saddened that teachers are given such a meagre salary for the very important role they are playing in this country’s development. Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could the Minister indicate which building in the region is being rented and where it is located?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Figueira may not be a super-salaried employee, but he is a super earner. Kwakwani Park and Pottsville, Kwakwani: There are three buildings in Kwakwani Park, and one in Pottsville.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Minister. Line item 6291, National and Other Events: There is an allocation of over \$24 million. Could the Minister shed some light in regard to this allocation for the region?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member did not say that this line item was increased for Region 10. However, there are a number of events that are catered for including Autism Awareness Month, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Signing Bee Competition for deaf learners, the Special Educational Needs (SEN) health fair, International Women’s Day activities, International Men’s Day activities, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day activities, Easter activities, cancer awareness activities, the participation in regional awards ceremonies, World

AIDS Day, Caricom Day, cultural days, Regional And National Science Fairs, the National Schools' Athletic Championships, the debating competition in Region 10.

9.58 p.m.

The Joseph Oscar Fitzclarence (JOF) Haynes Debating Competition, the Signing Bee Competition, participation in the national clean-up activities in Region 10, the Emancipation Day activities, Arrival Day activities, Amerindian Heritage Month activities for the education programme, the Mashramani activities, Agricultural Month activities, nursery schools funday activities and a host of other national and regional celebrations.

Mr. Figueira: The Hon. Minister said Agriculture Month. Could you give an indication of how much of that allocation will be going to that programme?

Mr. Dharamlall: How this line item was constructed, there are indicative figures. As the activities are budgeted or costed, then we would be able to determine what are their figures.

Mr. Sears: Just going back a little bit to line item 6272, Electricity Charges: Hon. Minister, I have observed over 200% increase in the electricity charges. The question to you is, what warrants this increase?

Mr. Dharamlall: The electricity charges take the account of some staff of the Department of Education. Some of the schools are: Republic Avenue, Blueberry Hill, Retrieve, Pine Street, South Amelia's Ward, Watooka, Wisroc, Canvas City, Wisma Hill, Half Mile, Burnham Drive, Christiansburg, Middle Street, One Mile, West Watooka, Amelia's Ward, Bamia Nursery School when it is completed, Wisroc Phase B Nursery School, McKenzie Primary School, Watooka Day, Wismar Hill, St. Aidan's, Christiansburg... [**Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] Okay.

Mr. Sears: Just a quick question, are there any electricity charges for Kwakwani?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sears: Did I hear right, that the Hon. Minister said yes? Maybe I was somewhat misled, but are the electricity charges not...

Mr. Chairman: Who misled you? I will correct it now.

Mr. Sears: Sorry. Forgive me, Mr. Chairman. If I heard correctly, the Hon. Minister said yes, that the Ministry is paying electricity charges.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, he did.

Mr. Sears: I am fully aware that the residents in Kwakwani enjoy free electricity.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do the residents of Kwakwani enjoy free electricity?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, despite the residents getting free electricity or in spite of them getting free electricity, the bills have to be paid. This Government is paying its bills. For the secondary school in Kwakwani, the electricity bill still has to be paid.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Sears: Turning to line item 6292, Dietary: Could the Hon. Minister share if this line item caters for the hot meals programme and, if so, by comparison, how many schools in subregion two are benefiting from this provision?

Mr. Dharamlall: This is for the dorm children.

Mr. Sears: With regard to line item 6302, Training (Including Scholarships), I would like to direct this question to the Hon. Minister: How many teachers are projected to benefit from this training in this fiscal year and what are the areas of focus?

Mr. Dharamlall: This takes account of the education programme. If the Hon. Member do the Mathematics (Maths) with me, the newly appointed managers is 40, introduction to mentorship and novice teachers is 136, supervision and invigilation is 140, combined headteachers meeting with a professional development component, *et cetera*, is 70, and the professional development sessions for primary headteachers is 30.

Programme: 803: Education Delivery – \$3,463,612,000 agreed to ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Just before we proceed, we have exhausted the hour. I am just double-checking with the Chief Whip for the Opposition and staff on how much time remains from the preceding heads that we saved. So, if we can coordinate... Hon. Members, turn to page 547.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 803: Education Delivery – \$456,200,000

Mr. Figueira: Project code 1205200 – Buildings – Education: This allocation here is for a school. The contract was signed on the 8th November, 2021, approximately over 20 months, and the school is still in a comatic state. More so, it is scheduled to be completed in July of this year, 2023. The fact that it has been dormant for so long, could the Hon. Minister give us an update in regard to when the building of this school will start back and, more so, will it be satisfying the contractual arrangement that it signed for its completion in July this year, 2023.

Mr. Dharamlall: I have been advised by the regional engineers that construction never stopped; maybe the pace of construction was not as quick as the Hon. Member desired, but construction never stopped.

Mr. Chairman: Is it on schedule for completion when stated?

Mr. Dharamlall: There have been many meetings with the Regional Administration and the contractor, and the contractor indicated that he/she will intensify his/her construction to get the school completed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, directed to the Hon. Minister, at this current stage what percentage of completion is the school at now?

Mr. Dharamlall: I spoke earlier about... I do not subscribe to percentage complete. If the Hon. Member would like to know how much money was paid for works done, then I could make that available.

Mr. Figueira: Did I hear the Hon. Minister correctly say that the work never stopped? This work was dormant for some time.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Minister said that it might have slowed considerably. Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira...

Mr. Figueira: I am saying to you, as a resident who has visited the site on several occasions, that the work stopped for a number of months.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, we have a difference of opinion. I could stop for a long time, but I am still continuing on my journey. Hon. Minister do you want to make a comment on...

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have answered that question.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Hon. Minister give a percentage of the work that has been completed on this said project so far?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Minister said he could state how much money was spent but he does not have a guess on the...

Mr. Figueira: That is a different question. Based on the work that he said never stopped could he give us a percentage of the work that has been completed thus far?

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Member does not understand project management. I would like to offer the Hon. Member a trip to the location for him to measure the percentage of work that was completed. I could, again, offer to the Hon. Member the disbursements; so far we have disbursed \$129.639 million.

Mr. Figueira: As I had indicated, the contractual arrangement for the completion of this contract is July, 2023. Could the Hon. Minister give us any firm position on whether the contractual arrangement will be satisfied with regard to the present state of the school? Would it be completed?

Mr. Dharamlall: We would like the school to be completed on time. I could assure you, as we have been doing, that any contractor who has gone beyond the contract period, especially in these massive and sensitive projects, will have to pay liquidated damages, quite on like what happened in the last Government when hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts were tendered on New Year's Eve, right in Region 10. Up until this day, the last Government did not institute liquated damages. Our contract management and administration are far superior to what obtained between 2015 and 2020, so we will work with the contractor to get the school finished as quickly as possible.

Mr. Sears: Moving on, with regard to project code 2505400, Furniture and Equipment, Education, I observe that there is a \$55 million allocation to this particular project. My question to the Hon.

Minister is, what percentage of this allocation caters for the purchase of computers and multimedia equipment?

Mr. Dharamlall: We are buying 50 laptop computers. They will be provided to 20 primary schools and 18 nursery schools.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$456,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$1,119,161,000

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister indicate where is this building located and what is the purpose for the rental of this building?

Mr. Dharamlall: We are renting accommodation for medical practitioners at three different locations; Half Mile Wismar, Central Amelia's Ward and One Mile Wismar.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: I have seen a significant increase of an additional 31 more temporary employees. Where are these employees located?

Mr. Dharamlall: Naturally, it would be in Region 10: four health promotion assistants, three Electromagnetic Radiation (X-Ray) Technicians, one blood donor, six Field Assistants, one Telephonist, five Vehicle Drivers, one Environmental Assistant, one Dental Extender, one Medical Laboratory Technician, one Handyman, a Pharmacy Assistant, a Healthcare Attendant, two Ward Maids, one Store's Clerk and two Porters.

Mr. Figueira: Are they stationed right in Linden?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, thanks.

10.13 p.m.

Mr. Sears: On the same line item. We would like to know, like my Colleague has asked, just to reiterate the question again, to re-emphasise it, where are these temporary employees located? Are

they shared between various communities, villages? How many in Kwakwani? How many in Ituni? How many in Rockstone? How many at 58 Miles, if any?

Mr. Dharamlall: There is a misnomer in the temporary employees. These are people who are actually on an extended employment period in Region 10, and they are augmenting the services that we are providing for health in Region 10. Many of them are placed at the offices of the regional health officer and in different installations in Region 10.

Mr. Sears: Just turning my attention to line item 6221, and this is kind of infringing on line item 6241, Rental of Buildings. Could the Hon. Minister share if there is a bond in Linden and its location?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes. We have, so far, adequate storage for drugs and medical supplies in Region 10, quite unlike the famous bond that the last Government gifted to one of their supporters in excess of \$13.5 million per month. We have adequate storage, so far, in Region 10 for drugs and medical supplies.

Mr. Sears: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Building: Could the Hon. Member share with this honourable House if there is maintenance and the amount that is being allocated for Kwakwani, Linden Hospital, Upper Demerara-Berbice Hospital? How much is allocated to those three hospitals under this line item?

Mr. Dharamlall: For the purposes of the Hon. Member's education, the Mackenzie or the Linden Hospital Complex, as well as the Kwakwani Hospital are catered for directly by the Ministry of Health. In the maintenance of buildings, we would be doing maintenance work at Berbice River, Demerara River, Wismar, Mackenzie, on health posts, on staff quarters, and different other areas.

Mr. Sears: I turn our attention to line item 6281, Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister share with this honourable House who the contractors are, particularly for some health centres in Linden, not all of them? Just name about two.

Mr. Dharamlall: I stand guided whether I should call the name of the contractor. This is 2023; we will have to tender for the work.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$1,119,161,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, just give me one second to check on how much time we have remaining on the time saved. Hon. Members, there is a small discrepancy. The Hon. Chief Whip and our timekeeper, if we use the larger amount, it is about 38 minutes we saved; if we use the Chief Whip for the Opposition, it is 28. I am not going to quibble over 10 minutes, but inform you that we started at 9.02 p.m. on this head; we have exhausted an hour and we are now at 10.18 p.m. We just have about 22 minutes remaining at this time.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$194,200,000

Mr. Sears: Project code 1205300 – Buildings – Health: I would just like to know if any provisions were made for the completion of the Blueberry Hill Health Centre in this allocation.

Mr. Dharamlall: It is already [*inaudible*].

Mr. Sears: Project code 2403500 – Land and Water Transport – Health: I would like to know where this ambulance will be placed or which area or community it will service?

Mr. Dharamlall: We would be buying quite a number of engines. We would be buying an aluminium boat and we would be buying an ambulance for the Upper Demerara Hospital.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$194,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$43,127,000

Mr. Sears: With regard to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I noticed, Mr. Chairman, and if I may crave your indulgence just for a second, the APNU/AFC during its tenure or leadership of the RDC created or gave birth to the agriculture department, because we see it as important for the region, especially when it comes to food security. I notice a clear decrease in the contracted employees, a reduction by 1. The question to the Hon. Minister is, what position that person held?

Mr. Dharamlall: The book I am reading, line item 6116...

Mr. Chairman: It has a clear increase by one.

Mr. Dharamlall: ...it actually increased from zero to one.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Sears, just double check. I am sure you would not make such an incorrect statement. He stands corrected.

Mr. Sears: Just to add. What position is that?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is a crop extension assistant.

Mr. Sears: I observed an allocation here under line item 6264, Vehicles Spares and Services. I would just like to know how many vehicles this particular line item caters for? How many vehicles under the agriculture department?

Mr. Dharamlall: Without fear of contradiction, I could say that it does not include that certain pick up and the BMW. It includes: two all-terrain vehicles (ATVs); one outboard engine; a 4x4 pick up that the department uses; a 4x4 pick up that National Agricultural Research and Extension institute (NAREI) uses; a 4x4 that Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) uses; and a motorcycle that GLDA uses.

Mr. Sears: I turn our attention to line item 6291, National and Other events. I noticed a \$5 million, which is clearly an increase. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister, how much is allocated towards agriculture awareness month?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, any specific allocations?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, yes. The allocation would go towards regional agricultural activities: the agri-health fair, market days, agri-month activities, World Food Day, the different expos that the region may pursue, the Linden Business Expo, and also other activities that this programme will cater for.

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$43,127,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That disposes of the penultimate item for today. Now for the final item.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$40,200,000

Mr. Sears: With regard to project code 1902200, Agricultural Development: Could the Hon. Minister state if in this provision the Millie’s Hideout to Sand Hill Road is catered for?

Mr. Dharamlall: I do not know if the Hon. Member is asking this because of vested interest where a notorious, I cannot say notorious but someone, who was publicly involved in the rigging of elections for APNU/AFC in 2020, owns a lot of land in this area, where more than 1,000 house lots could be demarcated and constructed. This line item...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are all getting on with the hour. Did I hear you impute about rigging. I think something is in the court, so you have to withdraw that...

Mr. Dharamlall Mr. Chairman, I...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please withdraw that.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, are you asking me to withdraw the attempts that APNU/AFC tried to rig the elections of 2020?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Something is in the court, and we have been consistent with respect to matters in the House. Hon. Minister, please.

Mr. Dharamlall: All right, Mr. Chairman. I will withdraw the comment that I made that APNU/AFC tried to rig the 2020 Elections. But in my personal belief, I have evidence of a spreadsheet, and these figures do not reconcile with the Statement of Polls (SOPs). We would be upgrading farm-to-market road in West Watooka; shade houses in Ituni, Kawkwani and Rockstone; the construction of pens for the establishment of egg production at Ituni – not pig, as the Hon. Member had taken millions of dollars to create a pig pen; the construction of pens for breathing sow unit in Speightland – sows are pigs; the construction of aquaponic farms in Linden and in Kwakwani; the rural agriculture relief initiatives in Rockstone, Hururu, Nottinghamshire,

Speightland; and the acquiring of agricultural tools to foster the development of agriculture in Region 10.

Mr. Sears: On the same line item, these projects while commendable, the question to the Minister, would he consider having an allocation made for the purchase of a vehicle which could service all those areas by...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have to ask him if that item is included in the...

Mr. Sears: I am just asking if he could consider it, because he just listed them and it is not included.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We had the general debate last week.

Mr. Sears: All right, Sir. I am so guided.

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$40,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

10.28 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this concludes our consideration for Region 10 and all the agencies under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development – all. A very special thanks to the Hon. Minister for taking us through all those agencies and, in particulars, at this hour of the evening, the staff of the Regional Administration for taking us through their agency.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: The House is now in Assembly. Hon. Prime Minister, you may have the floor.

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do now adjourn to 10.00 a.m. on 02nd February, 2023.”

Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]: Mr. Speaker with your permission, I ask that we adjourn the House until 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 2nd February, 2023.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members the House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.00 a.m.
Have a good night.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.29 p.m.