

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2017) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

67TH Sitting

Friday, 7TH July, 2017

The Assembly convened at 2.27 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave granted to Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the Hon. Mr. Mohabir Nandlall up to the 15th July, 2017 to be absent, and the Hon. Mr. Vickram Bharat from today's Sitting.

Supply of Meals and Snacks for Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff

Mr. Speaker: I must tell you, Hon. Members, that the contracts for the supply of meals and snacks for Members of Parliament (MPs) and staff during sittings of the National Assembly and meetings of Parliamentary Committees were awarded by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) to Maggie's Snackette and Catering Service for the period July, 2017 to June, 2018.

The new caterer has commenced supply of meals and snacks for Committee meetings yesterday, 6th July, 2017, and will supply for Sittings of the National Assembly from today, 7th July, 2017.

Welcome

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I welcome you to this the 67th Sitting of our National Assembly. You would know that, very soon, we will be proceeding on our recess and you would, no doubt, wish that we complete all of our work allotted for this period before that time.

Workshop on Suicide for Parliamentarians and the Parliament Office

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members would note too that the National Assembly, acting through the Sectoral Committee on Social Services, in collaboration with the United Nations System, held a workshop on suicide. The workshop for the Parliamentarians and the Parliament Office was very useful and informative and the National Assembly would have benefited from the discussions. It is intended that these conversations will continue in the search for solutions.

Conduct of Members in the National Assembly

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we enter upon our work for this Sitting, I am obliged to make reference to our last two Sittings where unprecedented scenes occurred in this Chamber, none of which did credit to our institution or to ourselves as Members of Parliament. All of them were avoidable and none of them excusable.

In acting as they did, Hon. Members appeared to show little regard for the honour of this noble institution. By our conduct, we gave to the public, on whose behalf we claim to act, at best, a poor lesson in parliamentary decorum. Even with our conduct which we sometimes display within the Chamber and, in some instances, our conduct outside of it, over the period of this Parliament, we have left our citizens to form other than the highest regard for our parliamentary conduct.

Very early in our Sitting, shortly after this House was fully constituted, then most Junior Member of the House took to social media to make uninformed comments in reference to the Speaker. I am not aware that the Hon. Member has even been called to account for his conduct. In fact, not long afterwards, Senior Members of this House chose to conduct themselves in similar fashion, making criticisms which involved the Speaker, as head of this institution, recklessly careless as to the truth or otherwise of their utterances. That practice has continued whenever some Hon. Members are displeased with a ruling of the Speaker.

The Speaker accepts communication directly either by voice or by writing from Hon. Members and he holds such communication both useful and valuable. However, when Hon. Members make reference to those communications in public print in an effort to make political points, as has been the practice by some Hon. Members, Hon. Members must know that their conduct could affect that ease of ready communication which the Speaker values and would wish to continue to have exist between the Speaker and all Hon. Members. I believe that, if it is felt necessary, there is room for informing the public about any ruling made by the Speaker without drawing the Speaker into any political contention.

Disregard for our House is taking new forms. Recently, the Assembly formed the backdrop for a parody on what is known as Facebook. It was drawn to my attention by a member of the public. An Hon. Member took the Assembly viral, if I may copy the word used. Our predecessors left us a legacy of decorum and good practice for this House. I ask, what shall we leave our successors?

Some Hon. Members have spoken about a verbal attack by one Hon. Member against another which allegedly took place during the 65th Sitting without the intervention of the Speaker. That is not a view which the Speaker shares unless it is accepted that the preceding Speaker, by his statement, also attacked another Hon. Member. I have examined all the available records and that is the conclusion which I have reached. It is possible for one Hon. Member, through his statement, however mildly presented, to provoke, incite and to elicit from another Member, a similar response, even if delivered in robust fashion, without constituting an attack or being seen as an attack on the other.

I am not called upon to speak on this matter but I do so to clear the air. In our statements in this House, many Hon. Members demonstrate an absence of civility and would select words which border on disregard, if not disrespect, for their fellow Hon. Members. It seems, as one member of the public has put it to me, that Hon. Members have “private scores” to settle and that they do so when they speak in Parliament. The result is a never-ending circle of answers or responses in similar tones.

I put it to Hon. Members that they have a duty to venerate our institution – this noble House – and to give evidence of that veneration through their conduct as Members of Parliament. It is good for Hon. Members to know and, knowing, to act accordingly. The Speaker must discharge

the duty of maintaining order in the Assembly. He determines the order of speakers and gives directions to all Hon. Members when directions must be obeyed. An Hon. Member, be one of senior or junior rank within this House, serves his position ill and this House poorly when he attempts to encourage disobedience by any other Hon. Member to the directions of the Speaker.

By way of reminder, I have directed that copies of the relevant provisions of the Standing Orders be placed on the desk of every Hon. Member.

Passing of Ms. Eleanor Coddett, Secretary to the Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is my sad duty to inform you that one of our members of the Parliament Office, a very long-standing officer for several years, Ms. Eleanor Coddett, died on the 2nd July, 2017. At the time of her death, she was the Secretary to the Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly.

Visit by Representatives from the Queen's Young Leaders Programme

Mr. Speaker: There is one other pleasurable duty which I must bring to your attention. We have within our midst three representatives from the Queen's Young Leaders Programme. This is a programme which discovers, celebrates and supports exceptional young people from across the Commonwealth. Three such representatives are here with us today. They are Ms. Audrey Leek, Cooper Knoe of the Seychelles, Mr. Vishal H. Joseph of Guyana and Mr. Leroy Phillips of Guyana.

I will ask the three representatives of the Queen's Young Leaders Programme to rise and to be recognised. [*Applause*]

We welcome you to our Assembly and we would be happy to have you remain with us.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers and Report were laid:

- (i) Annual Report of the Police Complaints Authority for the year 2016. [*Vice-President and Minister of Public Security*]

- (ii) Loan Agreement No. 19/SFR-GY dated May 23, 2017 between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for US\$11,700,000.00 to finance expenditures related to the Skills Development and Employability Project.
- (iii) Financing Agreement No. 5966-GY dated June 22, 2017 between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the International Development Association for SDR 4,500,000.00 to finance expenditures related to the Guyana Payment System Project.
- (iv) Finance agreement No. 6009 – GY dated June 22, 2017 between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the International Development Association for SDR 9,900,000.00 to finance expenditures related to the Guyana Education Sector Improvement Project. [*The Minister of Finance*]
- (v) Minutes of Proceedings of the 9th Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on Friday, 16th June, 2017. [*Speaker of the National Assembly – Chairman of the Committee*]

2.42 p.m.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE

The following Report was laid:

The Sixth Report of the Committee on Appointments in relation to the Appointment of Members to the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Authority. [*The Minister of Social Cohesion - Chairman of the Committee*]

ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, Hon. David Patterson, provide this National Assembly with what measures he has put in place to immediately address the plight of the truckers who are moving goods and services from Georgetown to Lethem and other interior locations where these critical interior road links are now impassable?

Could the Minister say what specific measures have been taken to remedy the inaccessible Puruni Landing, Olive Creek, Parishara, Pappishou Landing, Mabura, Kurupukari, Annai and Annai Lethem roads in order to ensure that travellers and truckers can do their businesses with as little stress and cost to them and their families?

Could the Minister say what specific measures are being taken to remedy the dangerous Kwakwani/Ituni/Linden Road link, which is affecting the residents of Region 10? Does the Minister recognise that these vital key road links are the lifeline to many communities along these routes?

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I rise, let me take the opportunity to welcome the young leaders. I think, in your honour, I do promise that the Members of the National Assembly will behave today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing the question without notice. Normally, I would have been given this on entrance here. Fortunately, the Citizens' Report Inc., this morning at 9.48 a.m., stated that you approved them. You probably have to debug your office. With that in mind, I was given adequate notice by the Citizens' Report Inc., and I do thank them publicly for that.

In response to the very valid questions by the Hon. Member, I would like to say, in relation to question one, on the Budget of 2017, we have been allocated the sum of \$2.3 billion. Out of that \$2.3 billion, I am pleased to say that 83% of it has already been committed in contract. We have disbursed already for the year approximately 40%. The other 43% would be disbursed as the work progresses because we pay as the work occurs. Seventeen per cent is unallocated.

We do recognise the importance of all these interior road links and that is why we have made adequate provisions in our 2017 Budget. The Hon. Member has opened the door for me by saying "other interior locations". I know he has some specific locations which I will address going down. In the rubric of other interior locations, he would be pleased to know that, in Region 1, there are contracts out for Barabina Swamp Road, rehabilitation of the Kumaka Warf Road to the old junction, Port Kaituma... These are contracts already awarded and they are in progress. Central Kumaka Catwalk to Orinduik, Port Kaituma Road Airstrip to Fitchburg Housing Scheme, Kumaka Junction to the Water Front Market Road... If you visit the area, there is much need. And, of course, we have the Mabaruma main Township junction to the Airport/airstrip

road. Those came up to \$350 million. In addition to that for Region 1, Mabaruma is now a Township. We also have one of the urban roads, an additional \$300 million, which has already been awarded and is already being executed.

The Hon. Member mentioned Region 7. This is for 2017. If you like, I can go back as far as 2016, but I am sticking to 2017. In recognition for the importance we hold for the connectivity of these links... In Region 7, there is Karau to Buckhall Road, an important mining district, Phase 1, which goes up to Blue Mountain. There are the Bartica-Potaro Road and the Saint Marys Creek Phase 1. There are also the Issano Road and the Bartica-Potaro Road up to the Sherima Bypass. There is the Cassandra Crossing. In Region 7, if the Hon. Member is not aware, there is a Town, Bartica. All the contracts for all the road works in Bartica have been awarded already.

In the Hon. Member's question, he probably wanted us to capture Region 8. Eagle Mountain to Konawaruk junction that is [*inaudible*] junction to Mahdia and rehabilitation roads and bridges in Karasabai and Monkey Mountain. Those contracts have been let and awarded. You also know, Sir, since 2016, we have been spending almost \$1 billion in the township of Mahdia to ensure that the road network there is brought up to speed.

I know other interior location will include Region 9. We do have Craudar to Pirara and Karasabai, Aishalton Junction to Shea, Lethem to Aishalton, Kurupukari to Tabachinga Bridge in Lot 3. You also know that urban roads in Lethem are being done, which is all a new feature.

In all these interior roads, except the specific roads, there is an issue. The issue is the question of overweight trucks. They have been wreaking havoc on the roads, as you would know. To give you an example, on the same roads which the Hon. Member mentioned, there is a pontoon in Puruni. Any of the miners would know that a truck recently broke that pontoon. The limit of one of these Bedford TM trucks - and I know my Hon. Friend, Nigel Dharamlall, will know this well, having been in the trucking business himself... The limit for a drum of diesel is 50. A truck with 130 drums of diesel went onto the pontoon and broke it. This month alone, three bridges on the Linden to Lethem bridges were broken by overweight trucks. That is still a tremendous problem for us. However, we do have a solution. This is a global solution and I will address it now so I do not have to address it when I go specifically to the areas mentioned.

We have procured three scales with the automated scales which are in the country and we are about to deploy them into the areas. We are going to impose weight control. The Bill is at the Auditor General's (AG) Chambers. The Guyana Gold and Diamond Mines Association (GGDMA) and the Forestry Commission both have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry, agreeing to adhere to the weight limits. They have placed the question of deplorable roads and the breakage of bridges squarely on the indiscriminate usage of our roads by truck drivers, primarily driven by profit, with scant disregard to what happens to residents when these roads are broken. The scales are here with the Ministry of Public Security and then I will be coming with the amended Road Act; thereafter, we will be imposing it so we will have better management of the road very shortly. We do have a solution.

Specifically, with regard to Puruni/Pappishou, we acknowledge the road is in bad condition. It is the rainy season; it is an annual feature that happens when one runs overweight trucks on the road. However, the Hon. Member would be please to know that there are actually two contracts that were awarded: one for \$3 million to JR Ranch to fix all the bridges and the other for \$90 million to MMC Inc. to fix the entire road. The road works are awaiting the improvement in the weather. That should answer the Hon. Member's second question with the combination, the weight limits, the improved road works and bridges. We do expect that persons would be able to traverse that particular route very safely.

Linden/Kwakwani: I read the question and I thought the Hon. Member just slipped it in because he was trying to pad the length of questions.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister is imputing improper motive. I would like to bring that to your attention.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, you have heard. You will withdraw and proceed.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw. I was a bit surprised to see the inclusion of the Linden/Kwakwani Road. Based on the state in which I met it, I would not have thought that it would have been here. I thought that because it was something persons have left, they would have stayed far away. When we met it, tractors and trailers could not have passed it. That was why I was surprised. I thought maybe it was one of those things that I was...to enhance the number of questions in the areas he wanted to ask.

For my people in Region 10, I would like to tell them this: we know the issues on the Ituni/Kwakwani Road. It is one of the manual problems. It is a fair-weather road and, obviously, the weather has a problem. We have spent already for this year \$150 million. This money is not only to grade it; we have also stockpiled the materials in appropriate places. We have 13 contracts leading up to \$100 million. We stockpile the materials, obviously knowing that as soon as the weather breaks, it would be readily at hand for us to address it.

2.57 p.m.

I have also passed instructions to the Hinterland Unit that we should start exploring the uses of different stabilisation materials, given that everyone says there is a great product that can work on these roads. Sir, we have already decided that, in the dry weather, we are going to give every different product, let us say, a quarter mile each to see which stands up best and then we will continue that around the rest of the country. So we do have a solution and we have it under the maintenance budget. As soon as the weather breaks, there is \$40 million to look after that road.

Finally, Linden/Lethem Road Project, so far \$100 million has been expended and there is a \$160 million to be expended. It starts in August, next month, which is the commencement of the dry season. But as I said, for 2017 alone, between May and June, three bridges. It cost the Ministry \$25 million in emergency works for overloaded trucks. There was one truck that was so overloaded that it could have been a boat and that is what we have to contend with. I know the Hon. Members from Region 9 will know this situation quite well.

Sir, all in all, we do recognise the importance of the interior road links. I would like to thank the Member for giving me the opportunity to tell everyone in all those regions that we do recognise their plight and that we do recognise that we have to provide them with a vital service and we will be doing that. But, as you know Sir, one could only build as fast as from what one started with. If one started from minus one, one has to get to zero to get to one. So we are making our move. I would like to thank the Hon. Member and, once again, offer him the opportunity to join me in moving this particularly vital road link forward. Thank you very much Sir.

Bishop Edghill: A supplementary question: Sir, first let me thank the Hon. Minister for his exposition and to say that the advocacy of the various Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) is paying off, but I have some follow-up questions. The Hon. Minister indicated that \$43 million

was awarded for the works on bridges and that \$92 million was awarded for works on the roads in the Puruni area. Could the Hon. Minister say if these were publicly advertised and when they were awarded? Sir, bearing in mind that he indicated that 83% of the \$2.3 billion has already been disbursed.

Mr. Patterson: The answer to both of the questions is yes. It was publicly awarded and yes, it went through the procurement process. When? I would be hesitant to say that it had to be in May/June. I cannot tell the House the exact date because I do not have that information here with me, but if the Hon. Member would bear with me for one second, he would have the information. Sir, the contract was awarded in June.

Bishop Edghill: What date?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, from this document here the date seems to be the 16th June. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I said for Ituni, and I repeat, for Puruni/Pappishou, contracts had been awarded for \$43 million and \$90 million. I also said that they are waiting on the dry season to start. Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat myself. Sir, the committed amount of the Ministry's entire budget for the hinterland, which is one component, is 83%. The entire budget for the Hinterland, of \$2.3 billion, exactly 43% has been disbursed. There are contracts for my young friends from here. When a contract is awarded to do 10 miles, the Ministry pays after the contractor would have completed one mile and then the second mile. The contract is awarded, so, therefore, the moneys that have been spent already means that that only equates to the work that has been completed and certified. Thank you very much Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you wish another question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir, a second supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, bearing in fact that the cost to transport goods to the Pappishou Landing averages about \$12 and if one has to use an aircraft, it is about a \$150 per pound. Could

the Hon. Minister say what alternative arrangements have been put in place since this road is presently inaccessible?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I do hope that the Hon. Member knows that the road is only one of three options. One could either go by road, boat or by aircraft. Obviously, with the waters being high, traversing by water is very eminently dangerous. Sir, I just want to repeat because persons are saying that \$1 billion was spent in one week. I have said and have repeated it, that the entire hinterland budget was \$2.3 billion dollars. Eighty three per cent of the that budget has been committed, which means the Ministry has gone out to public tender, it has awarded public tenders and so, therefore, that money has been committed. The Ministry has said 43% of it and that starts from January 2017, to present date. So I would just like to be pellucid clear and I am being clear because I know the mischief that could happen when persons misunderstand and they go to the public and social media and say incorrect things. Thank you very much Sir.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

For Written Replies

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there are four questions on the Order Paper and these are for written replies. Questions one – three are in the name of the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill and are for the Minister of Finance. Question 4 is in the name of the Hon. Member Mr. Croal and is for the Minister of Finance. These answers have been received and are, therefore, in accordance with our Standing Orders, being circulated. Thank you.

Granting of waivers by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister inform the National Assembly of the grounds on which the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board grants waivers of the Tender Board procedures for emergency purchased of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies?

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]:

- (1) The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board's procedures are not waived;

(2) The Board would take into account the most appropriate method of procurement as prescribed under the Procurement Act 2003, applying/ recommending, in the first instance Open Tendering which is mandatory. The other methods are used when the appropriate conditions apply. Examples are, as follows:

a) In the case of Restricted Tendering, where the goods are of a highly complex nature and available from a limited number of suppliers, those suppliers are invited to submit tenders; or if the estimated cost is within the threshold allowed under the Regulations (G\$3,000,000.00 in the case of goods and services, and G\$10,000,000.00, in the case of works);

b) Request for Quotations if the procurement does not exceed the allowable limit of G\$1,500,000.00;

c) In the case of an emergency or in order to avoid a catastrophic event, where there is an urgent need for the goods and services and it is impractical to use methods of procurement such as Open Tendering and Restricted Tendering, because of the time involved in using those methods, a request for Single Sourcing may be granted, subject to a case being made, with the endorsement of the competent authority e.g. the Head of the Budget Agency or the Board, as in the case of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board only grants approval to use an appropriate method of procurement and does not grant waivers.

Granting of waiver to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister state if any requests were made by the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for the period 1st January, 2016 to 30th April, 2017?

Mr. Jordan: Yes.

Bishop Edghill: If any requests were made, could the Hon. Minister provide the National Assembly with the lists of such requests made and the grounds for each request?

Mr. Jordan: Attached is a list of requests made by the GPHC for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for the period 1st January, 2016 to 30th April, 2017 and the grounds for such requests.

See appendix.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister inform the National Assembly whether the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board granted these requests by the GPHC for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies?

Mr. Jordan: The following should be noted:

(1) The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board's procedures are not waived;

(2) The Board would take into account the most appropriate method of procurement as prescribed under the Procurement Act 2003, applying/ recommending, in the first instance Open Tendering which is mandatory. The other methods are used when the appropriate conditions apply. Examples are, as follows:

a) In the case of Restricted Tendering, where the goods are of a highly complex nature and available from a limited number of suppliers, those suppliers are invited to submit tenders; or if the estimated cost is within the threshold allowed under the Regulations (G\$3,000,000.00 in the case of goods and services, and G\$10,000,000.00, in the case of works);

b) Request for Quotations if the procurement does not exceed the allowable limit of G\$1,500,000.00;

c) In the case of an emergency or in order to avoid a catastrophic event, where there is an urgent need for the goods and services and it is impractical to use methods of procurement such as Open Tendering and Restricted Tendering,

because of the time involved in using those methods, a request for Single Sourcing may be granted, subject to a case being made, with the endorsement of the competent authority e.g. the Head of the Budget Agency or the Board, as in the case of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board only grants approval to use an appropriate method of procurement and does not grant waivers.

Granting of waiver to the Ministry of Public Health for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister state if any requests were made by the Ministry of Public Health for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for the period 1st January, 2016 to 30th April, 2017?

Mr. Jordan: Yes.

Bishop Edghill: If any requests were made, could the Hon. Minister provide the National Assembly with the lists of such requests made and the grounds for each request?

Mr. Jordan: Attached is a list of requests made by the GPHC for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for the period 1st January, 2016 to 30th April, 2017 and the grounds for such requests.

See appendix.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister, inform the National Assembly whether the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board granted these requests by the GPHC for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies?

Mr. Jordan: The following should be noted:

- (1) The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board's procedures are not waived;

(2) The Board would take into account the most appropriate method of procurement as prescribed under the Procurement Act 2003, applying/ recommending, in the first instance Open Tendering which is mandatory. The other methods are used when the appropriate conditions apply. Examples are, as follows:

a) In the case of Restricted Tendering, where the goods are of a highly complex nature and available from a limited number of suppliers, those suppliers are invited to submit tenders; or if the estimated cost is within the threshold allowed under the Regulations (G\$3,000,000.00 in the case of goods and services, and G\$10,000,000.00, in the case of works);

b) Request for Quotations if the procurement does not exceed the allowable limit of G\$1,500,000.00;

c) In the case of an emergency or in order to avoid a catastrophic event, where there is an urgent need for the goods and services and it is impractical to use methods of procurement such as Open Tendering and Restricted Tendering, because of the time involved in using those methods, a request for Single Sourcing may be granted, subject to a case being made, with the endorsement of the competent authority e.g. the Head of the Budget Agency or the Board, as in the case of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board only grants approval to use an appropriate method of procurement and does not grant waivers.

Granting of waiver to the Ten Administrative Regions for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister state if any requests were made by the Ten Administrative Regions for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for the period January 1, 2016 to April 30, 2017?

Mr. Jordan: No request was made by the Ten Administrative Regions for the waiver of Tender Board procedures for the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for the period 1st January, 2016 to 30th April, 2017?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the first time:

MOTOR VEHICLES INSURANCE (THIRD PARTY RISKS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2017 – No.7/2017

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Act.” [*Vice-President and Minister of Public Security*]

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING AND COUNTERING THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM (AMMENDMENT) BILL 2017 – No.8/2017

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act. [*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

MOTION

CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 1/2017 – CURRENT AND CAPTIAL ESTIMATES

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly Financial approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1/2017 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) - totalling \$6,395,918,860 for the period 1st January, 2017 to 31st December, 2017.”

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we would consider Financial Paper No. 1 of 2017. Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, in accordance with Article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly, the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1/ 2017 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$6,395, 918,860 for the period 1st January, 2017 to 31st December, 2017 and I now move the motion.

Mr. Chairman: The motion is proposed. We would consider the paper as usual. The items would be taken from both Current and Capital Estimates in the order for which the Ministers are responsible.

3.12 p.m.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 1 05-051 Ministry of the Presidency – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,066,000, \$6,315,000, \$2,250,000, \$42,924, \$200,000, \$300,000, \$350,000, \$120,000, \$500,000, \$200,000, \$200,000 & \$50,000

Clerical and Office Support

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister state the number of staff and the senior positions that will incur the cost of \$3,066,000?

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: Mr. Chairman, it is the estimated salaries of three Technical Employees, an Early Primary and Secondary Childhood Education Specialist, one Technical Research Assistant and one Administrative Assistant from August to December, 2017.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under the same Chart of Account, line item 6114, could the Hon. Minister state what are the emoluments for those positions?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The emoluments are \$122,640.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, this is new to the country and the remarks are rather curious. I am not sure how the Ministry of Finance arrived at this because, under this heading, all the remarks state the exact same thing and that is very vague:

“To provide for the establishment of a Department of Innovation and Education Reform”

Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us: What is the expected outcome from this department that we are being asked to invest money in, when we have already invested a large sum of money in the Ministry of Education, with several advisors and at least two Ministers, up to a few weeks ago?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the Department of Innovation and Education Reform, which is being referred to, is a new department under the purview of the President and is located within the Ministry of the Presidency. It is being created to drive innovation and education reform. The aim of the new department will be to contribute to the improvement of education and learning outcomes and improving livelihood through innovation and univation and adaptation.

Key areas of focus include, but are not limited to, capitalising on new innovative trends in personalised learning that rely on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and increasing its impact on the economy and society.

Secondly, increasing preparedness to reap benefits from emerging technologies and capitalise on opportunities presented by the digital revolution.

Thirdly, addressing the parallel challenge of promoting learning in an equitable way, as well as the potential for modern approaches to providing quality education, both to reach underserved populations and to create more demand for education among those who are out of school.

Fourthly, strengthening and building the accountability of the Central Government's education system through advance management and governance tools.

Fifthly, improving and highlighting the importance of standards for learning and assessment so that public and private stakeholders can measure the impact of policies and programmes on learning outcomes. Categorising and increasing community engagement and parental engagement through ICT which are critical factors in improving children's learning outcomes, that is to say, the hurdle of getting good information to parents, to inform decisions based on learning outcomes.

Finally, the leveraging of global innovation to avoid low economic growth scenarios through entrepreneurship, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) development and youth innovation initiatives.

Ms. Manickchand: Minister those are a lot of things we are getting for \$3 million. Would you say that the Ministry of Education, as presently extant, is incapable of delivering the aims of the new Department of Innovation and Education Reform?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this decision arose out of an analysis which was made from a Commission of Inquiry (CoI) which was conducted into the education system and proposals that were made to the Cabinet. Based on those proposals, this was one of the decisions made with respect to education, that is to say, to separate the innovation and reform element in the school's education system.

Ms. Manickchand: Minister we are being asked to support a request for a sum of money for a department that you stated arises or was borne out of recommendations out of a Commission of Inquiry. Does the Government plan, at any time, to make that public and/or to lay it in this National Assembly so that we could all be apprised of what the plan is for education?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, like all Commissions of Inquires that are held by the State or the Government, we will in fact make it public and at the appropriate time it will be laid in the National Assembly. I can assure you that the Opposition would be one of the first groups in this country to receive the report, once it is finalised.

Ms. Manickchand: Would it not have been more prudent Minister to allow us to peruse that, whether we were first or not in line to receive it before you ask us to support a request for funds from a country that you stated is starved of funds. For a new department that we may very well hold the view as being served at another very staffed Ministry with professionals and a Ministry that is receiving over \$30 billion in our National Budget, which we voted for last November.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this is the assessment of the Government at this point in time; it is a requirement now and an urgent matter, which is why it has been dealt with in this way.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand you wish the floor? We would have to take it step by step.

Ms. Manickchand: We are not questioning the Government's decision to do it. I am saying that something as important as education, where all of our children, who are going to benefit from this and indeed the country as a whole, could benefit more from a collaborative effort. So, my question, if I could be candid: When is this going to stop being a secret? Could we get the document? Are you going to lay it in the National Assembly? Can we look at it? You said that you would let us have it first. When will that be? You are asking us to vote for something that I think I can lend my support to given that I do not feel that the Ministry, as it is presently being managed, is being done competently. I could lend my support to this, but I would like to know what is giving birth to this department? When is the document going to be released to the nation, to the public and to the people it intends to serve?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I did indicate that as soon as the document is available. In fact, it is the responsibility of the Government to have the first look at it, analyse it and then have it circulated. It is not a matter of if it is going to be, it is just a matter of when. As soon as it is ready, we will circulate that document.

Ms. Manickchand: Perhaps then Sir, we should postpone this exercise because we are being asked to give money to something that we do not know about. We are being asked to give to something that remains a secret, to not even 27 Ministers, because all of you do not sit at Cabinet. Fifteen of you sat down and decided you needed this department.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member is that the question you are asking, when you could get... because I do not know where we are going. You are asking the same question and you are getting the same answer. Well please ask it again if you wish.

Ms. Manickchand: The question is Hon. Member, Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon, this has been a question that has been in the public domain for a long time and I know, Hon. Minister, you are very aware of what happens in the public domain. Usually, you are quite prompt with your answers, even if they are not as forthcoming as everybody would like. When are we going to get the document? This is because I am asking here if we should postpone this exercise that we are being asked to vote for. We are being asked to persuade the people who listen to us that this is a

good investment, but we cannot tell them what we are investing in because it is a secret to 15 persons in the Cabinet right now. Nobody else has access to this document. We have questions. Is this going to be the last investment? Is this the only investment? Will we want more when you finalise the document? Those are the type of questions. So it is a question. Is this prudent to come to this House now and to ask the nation for money for something that the nation cannot be properly told about as yet?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I think that I have given an expansive explanation of the need for this department. It is in the contemplations, in the concern of the Government, that this needs to be done now and this is why it is being done now. This is what we have been elected to do, to make decisions as a Government. I have told the House everything about it, it has nothing to do about the document.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6114, could the Hon. Minister state whether the entire plan has been costed? What are the other components of the plan, what is the cost of each component and what is the timeframe for the implementation of the other components of this plan?

3.27p.m

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I am answering under line item 6114 and I believe that I have given the answers for this line item. I am not prepared or in a position to answer the breadth of that question which the Hon. Member has asked.

Ms Teixeira: Under the Standing Order 75(2), on the Standing Orders to do with Financial Papers and I will go to the third line in Standing Order 75(2)

“Any such debate shall be confined to the policy of the service for which the money is to be provided and shall not deal with the details of any item or Sub-Head but may refer to the details of revenues or funds for which that service is responsible.”

In other words, the Hon. Members on this side are absolutely in order for asking policy questions to do with the release of the money that is being requested by the Government.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I thought that was a statement and did not require an answer.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Ali, you had the floor, do you wish to speak again?

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister did not provide the answer for my question. I do not have an issue with this. However, could the Hon. Minister, at least, undertake to provide the information requested in a timely manner? If the Hon. Minister is not equipped to answer the question now, then it is for public transparency and accountability my friend that the Hon. Minister undertakes to provide this information on a timely basis. This is an issue that the public is concerned about and the least the Hon. Minister could do is to undertake to provide this information to this House and to the public in a timely manner. Thank you. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I believe that I have answered this question and I did also indicated to the Hon. Member, Mdm. Manickchand, that, at the appropriate time, all of the documents will be laid in the National Assembly, so that is the commitment.

Bishop Edghill: Under same line item 6114, the Minister indicated that the sum is providing for three technical persons. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether these persons have been identified already?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, these persons have not been identified. This is an estimate of what we perceived their emoluments would be and based on the qualifications that we are looking at - they have not been identified.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, these positions are going to be hired on the establishment. These are not contracted employees but these are people on the establishment. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what process of recruitment would be used?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the process of employment is as that provided for by the Government of Guyana. That is to say that there are two types of employment that one could have. There is the fixed establishment and there are contracted employees. We are not using too many contracted employees now, but we are trying to put people on the fixed establishment. What I am saying is that both categories are available to us to deal with this matter as it stands. Thank you. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the question that I asked the Hon. Minister was about the process for recruitment. Would this be publically advertised; would this be a Public Service Commission (PSC) Appointment? Those are the questions that I would like to have answers to, not whether they would be on contract or on the fixed establishment. What process would be used?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I can assure the Hon. Member that there is a process of advertisement and that these are Public Service Commission employees. The positions will be advertised firstly within the Government and if the facilities cannot be provided, it will be advertised outside of it.

Contracted Employees

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister state, under this line item, how many persons would be employed as contracted employees?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you for the question Hon. Member. There would be two persons employed under this heading: a Director and Deputy Director. The proposed salary for the Director is \$700,000 and for the Deputy Director it is \$500,000, which will include allowances, National Insurance Scheme (NIS), telephone, duty and travelling.

Mr. Chairman: Any other comments on the matter?

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if these two persons have already been identified - the Director and the Deputy Director?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, they have not been identified as yet.

Bishop Edghill: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if these positions will be publically advertised and if they will be Public Service Commission appointees? *[Interruption]*
Sir, am I Out of Order with the questions that I have asked?

Mr. Chairman: Please take your seat Hon. Member.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These will be public advertisement, but, of course, we will also look within the Public Service to find out whether there are persons who fit the bill and if there are persons within the Public Service, then they will have to be given first choice, but there would be public advertisements.

Ms. Manickchand: Minister, the Chief Education Officer (CEO), whose mandate is to overlook, create and establish policy for all 300,000 children in our nursery, primary and secondary schools; for the 10,000 teachers in our schools; and for all the administrative staff at the Ministry. Do you know what salary that post attracts? Could I advise you that it is less than \$700,000? Do you believe that it is going to cause problems that you have a little department with a clerical support staff of two being paid \$700,000 and just under \$700,000, respectively and the persons who are being asked to manage your system daily will be paid far less?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I do not see this as a problem.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, since the Hon. Minister has indicated that this will be a Public Service appointment, could he advise the House what salary scale in the Public Service attracts \$750,000?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr Chairman, I am not in a position to answer that question now.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister tell us whether any of these two persons or both of them will be people from the army or former army people?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I consider that to be a very inappropriate question. It has nothing to do with army or not. It has to do with contracted employees for a department. I would not answer this question.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, we must appreciate the fact that there is a big perception out there in the public that there are a lot of army people and former army people being employed. I am quite certain that the people, who are listening to me out there, have asked me to ask this question. So I would like to know if it will be an army person or a former army person because these things are causing a lot of problems out there. The young people are passing their exams and cannot get any jobs.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, thank you. Hon. Minister?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I have nothing further to add to the question.

3.42 p.m.

National Insurance Scheme

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Minister, ordinarily I would not ask you anything about this because it is \$42,000, but something does not add up. You are increasing the salary of this department by \$12 million, but you are only asking for \$42,000 more for National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and a person who works for \$700,000 would pay at least \$25,000 per month. Is it that you anticipate the persons who would be working here will be persons who are not required to contribute to the National Insurance Scheme because of their age expiration?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is for a very short period, about three months. It is to cater for the NIS of the employees of that entity.

Field Materials and Supplies

Mr. Ali: At line item 6222, Field Materials and Supplies: Hon. Minister there was a transfer of a staff from the Ministry of Education to the Department of Public Service which that staff would have responsibility for this education reform innovation too, which would have meant, with one less Minister in the Ministry of Education, that there should have some savings in relation to the budget that is applied to the work of that Minister. Could you vire some of that savings to cover this expense here for the new department? How much savings would you have derived from one less Minister for six months in the Ministry of Education and how do you plan to utilise that savings or would the other Minister be utilising that too?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Hon. Member is the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and would be aware that you cannot vire from one Ministry to the next. This is the department in the Ministry of the Presidency and not a department in the Ministry of Education. These are sums being allocated for the new department in the Ministry of the Presidency.

Mr. Ali: What about the savings.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I do not know about that.

Bishop Edghill: Under this line item 6222, \$8 million has already been voted for in the budget and we are asking for an additional \$200,000. Could the Hon. Minister give us an idea of what is the anticipated expenditure? What are the items he proposed?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is to purchase field material and supplies. This includes items such as umbrellas, long boots, torchlights, hammocks and raincoat for the staff when they go out to work in the fields.

Local Travel and Subsistence

Ms. Manickchand: Minister Harmon when we asked questions earlier it seems as though we were just catering for two to three months more in this year, yet you have \$500,000 for travel and subsistence more than you expect to print, write and pay NIS for. Why is there this considerably much larger sum when we are comparatively speaking?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This has to do with the cost of subsistence, transportation and accommodation in outlying areas, the hinterland regions in particular, while conducting field visits and site visits. That is the reason for this.

Telephone Charges

Ms. Teixeira: Minister Harmon, I would be pleased if you could clarify something for me. We have \$40 million that was voted provision for telephone and you are coming now for \$200,000, additional. Could you state if this \$40 million has been expended or is it that you have some part of the \$40 million and you are now adding on \$200,000? I am just trying to have clarity. It is because it appears as if you have money in your budget that could accommodate some of the cost of the new department and you are just coming for what you think might be a shortfall.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: We are making provision for a new department. We anticipate that during this period that this is going to be a shortfall for the \$200,000 and that is why we are budgeting for it here.

Ms. Teixeira: Therefore whatever you have unused in the \$40 million budgeted provision for 2017 will be used, in addition to the \$200,000, if needed for this department.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is the anticipation of this.

3.57 p.m.

Refreshments and Meals

Ms. Teixeira: This heading, in the Ministry of Presidency, deals with Policy Development Administration, so of the \$28 million, which seems to be a rather large amount for refreshments and meals, how much of that is being used as of the end of June, 2017? What is the balance that would be used towards the rest of the service in this department?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: We anticipate that the sums in this line item will not be sufficient to deal with the demands of this new department and that \$50,000 is what we anticipate will be required.

Item 1 05-051 Ministry of the Presidency – Policy Development and Administration - \$3,066,000, \$6,315,000, \$2,250,000, \$42,924, \$2000,000, \$300,000, \$350,000, \$120,000, \$500,000, \$2000,000, \$2000,000 and \$50,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Assembly resumed

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I see we have reached the four o' clock hour and it would be an appropriate time for us to take the suspension. We will return at 5.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 4.00 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.14 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: We will now resume our consideration of the financial paper. Hon. Members, are we together on this matter?

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 1 05-051 Ministry of the Presidency – Policy Development and Administration - \$3,010,000

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister please tell us what is to be purchased and at what cost?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The furniture and equipment are as follows;

- (i) Six computers at \$175,000 each, totalling \$1.050 million.
- (ii) Three Multipurpose printers at \$75,000 each, totalling \$225,000.
- (iii) One canon photocopier at \$700,000.
- (iv) Six desks at \$75,000 each, totalling \$450,000.
- (v) Six chairs at \$65,000 each, totalling \$390,000.
- (vi) One projector and accessories at \$225,000.
- (vii) Three filing cabinets at \$15,000 each, totalling \$45,000.
- (viii) Two dual record Cam recorders, camera and tripods, totalling \$670,000.

Those are the items and the price for each item, sir.

Item 01 05-051 Ministry of the Presidency – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,010,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

05-057 Ministry of the Presidency – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$84,294,139

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what is it that he is requesting the \$84,294,139 for, with respect to construction? What section of the construction of the building is being funded by this?

I notice that we have provided a voted provision in Budget 2017 of \$150 million and in less than four months it was expended. Could the Minister also say at what rate the \$84 million-plus is expected to be expended?

Thirdly, how many staff will be housed in this head office, noting that we are spending \$234,294,139 on a head office?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you to the Hon. Member for the question. The answer is that a contract to construct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) new head office at Ganges Street, Sophia was awarded in the sum of \$235,417,000. In 2016, approximately \$27 million was allocated and in 2017 \$100 million was allocated. However, this allocation will be expended by the end of July, 2017. Given the nature of the project, it is not recommended that construction be halted and, therefore, a supplementary sum which really represents the remaining contract sum is being requested to complete the construction. The construction, we anticipated to complete in November, the latest December of 2017. There are about 200 staff members who are going to be accommodated in the building.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, a \$150 million was voted in the Budget 2017 for this project. The Minister just told us that \$27 million was voted and provided for in 2016 and an additional \$84 million is being sought now, then he would be paying above the contracted sum. Could he explain that?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: In fact, \$127 million was for the project. The \$50 million had to do with construction in two outlying regions.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what is the \$50 million being spent on as it relates to the EPA in the two outlying areas, where and at what cost in each region?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The sums are, at Lethem, \$30 million and, at Whim, \$20 million.

Bishop Edghill: It is the final question, Sir. Could the Minister indicate to us by way of interim certificates, how much have been paid to date on this project?

5.26 p.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Mr. Harmon: The expenditure to date is \$74,982,842.

05-057 Ministry of the Presidency – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$84,294,139 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 2 03-031 Ministry of Finance - Policy Development and Administration - \$130,000,000

Mr. Chand: Would the Hon. Minister of Finance advise us as to what will be the functions of this unit?

Mr. Jordan: This unit, the Special Purpose Unit (SPU), will be housed in the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) office. It comes under the rubric of NICIL. It will be specifically responsible for the divestment to come, privatisation of certain parts of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) assets. Its principal function in the early stage is leading the privatisation process for the Skeldon Sugar Factory. Some other things it will be doing are to hire an established accounting firm to undertake the preparation for the privatisation, being involved in things such as valuation, preparing prospectors request for proposals and associate documents, marketing and advertising, developing the legal framework for transactions, assessment and evaluation of proposals and recommendations to the SPU for the preferred investor. There are a range of things it will be doing. As I said, the initial focus is on the Skeldon Sugar Factory, but it will also be involved with the privatisations of other identified holdings, in respect to GuySuCo.

Mr. Chand: Could the Hon. Minister say what role GuySuCo will play with respect to this unit, taking into account the diversification he spoke about and the divestment of Skeldon Sugar Factory?

Mr. Jordan: It is clear that GuySuCo will play a major role. This is a Special Purpose Unit which was essentially designed purely for what I indicated. There are a number of things that GuySuCo itself has to do and it will continue doing that, interfacing with the workers, and so on. The focus of this particular unit is really for when the privatisation comes, the divestiture of identified assets, one of which is the Skeldon Sugar Factory. Essentially, as I said, that it is the top priority to divest GuySuCo of the Skeldon Sugar Factory. There are other identified properties of GuySuCo that will come under the microscope and it is for this unit with the assistance of GuySuCo to identify these properties and get involved. If there are lands, which are identified for sale, so as to bring in revenues to GuySuCo, then this unit will be responsible after the lands would have been identified by it. It is also responsible for putting out the

advertisements, the different things and to get the land sold under whatever competitive bidding and other bidding that will be undertaken. In other words, we are pulling out this whole exercise from GuySuCo and putting it in a specialised unit, so that GuySuCo could concentrate on its continuing operations.

Mr. Chand: Who will have a role to play in this unit? By extension, would the workers and the unions be taken on board? Will they be consulted? Will there be discussions? Will there be the sharing of information? Could the Minister clarify this matter?

Secondly, how would the moneys, which were allocated, be spent? Could a breakdown be provided?

Mr. Jordan: GuySuCo will continue its functions. It has to continue interfacing with the workers. This is a special unit responsible for the diversification and divestment. First thing, as I said, Skeldon has been identified. Now it is for GuySuCo to be speaking to the workers as it relates to moneys owed to them and what they will be doing next. This is not the purpose of the Special Purpose Unit. GuySuCo will continue with that function. This unit is purely identified essentially to divest itself. It has to get the entire legal process going, the valuation and the marketing and finding buyers. That is the purpose of the unit. In terms of the breakdown, I could give you ballpark figures for the half year. Essentially, there are about \$30 million roughly for employment cost, about \$60 million for professional and legal fees and another \$20 million thereabout for motor vehicles and furniture. That will give you about \$150 million. The rest is for other operating expenses.

Mr. Chand: Since the Government has identified its diversification arrangement, does the Government have a full feasibility study for each of the ventures identified, those of which addresses matters such as revenue potential cost and markets employment requirement? We are talking about the unit and the functions and we want to know whether from a policy point of view, if these matters have been clarified or have been walked out for us to follow. What is the Government doing?

Mr. Jordan: I do not want to give an answer that is not backed by any facts. Quite frankly, I think this goes beyond the request for which is being made. I do not know if the Minister of Agriculture is in a position to answer this question that has clearly more to do with agriculture

than it is related to financing that I am requesting. I am going to ask the Minister of Agriculture if he has an answer. If he does not, then I cannot provide one.

Mr. Chand: How will this unit be different from GuySuCo's Other Crop Department which was disbanded in the early 1990s?

Mr. Jordan: I cannot pre-empt the work of this unit. As I said, I outlined the broad terms of reference of this unit. I indicated very clearly that its first order of business is the Skeldon Sugar Factory. We have already said that we are divesting ourselves of that estate. In terms of holdings, which are identified by GuySuCo for sale, this unit is the implementation unit. It is not going to go about saying what you must divest. It is GuySuCo's function to do that and it would pass over what it would have identified to the unit for it to be either divested or diversified. Whether it is that the other crops failed, I think all those are legitimate questions to be asked of another person at another time. I do not believe, as it relates to this Special Purpose Unit and the moneys, which we are asking for that, it is really germane.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say the amounts out of the \$130 million that will be used to assist those workers who will be losing their jobs as a result of the diversification, the closure of the estate? How much of that money will be used to train them to acquire new skills? I know that European Union (EU) has always been saying this, when it was looking at the transferral from cane sugar to beet sugar, that those countries engaged in cane sugar production, their workers should be trained to acquire new skills so that they can continue with their lives. Could the Hon. Minister give the answer?

Mr. Jordan: The answer is none, simply because this budget, as I identified, is for specific components of the Special Purpose Unit. I do not know that one of those is moneys to be paid to workers. This is not one of the functions of this unit. Again, that would be the remit of GuySuCo.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: The sum, which I am asking about, is not to pay off staff. I am asking if there are sums allotted in this money under this agency to train them in new skill sets so that they can go on with their lives.

Mr. Jordan: No. I had answered the question.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Minister indicated to the Assembly that this is a unit that will form part of NICIL. The first question to the Minister: What is the name of this unit? It is a subsidy to a local organisation.

Mr. Jordan: The unit forms part of NICIL.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Jordan, I believe that the Hon. Member is not through with his questions. We will allow him to finish the questions. Please.

5.41 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: If this transfer is going to be made to NICIL, which is an extra-budgetary agency, why are moneys being transferred to an extra-budgetary agency that has its own operating account in which its surplus is supposed to be transferred to the Consolidated Fund? Why is NICIL not using moneys from its operation account for this exercise?

Mr. Jordan: The reason is simple. NICIL does not have the money to pay for this unit. This unit has been established as part of NICIL, and it will go beyond GuySuCo. It is only being established specifically for GuySuCo now, but it will have a wider function when it is finished with its operation, as it relates to GuySuCo. NICIL does not have the moneys at this moment. Significant part of the moneys, which used to go to NICIL, is now going directly to the Consolidated Fund or it goes to NICIL and then is automatically transferred to the Consolidated Fund. The biggest part of the NICIL's money, at that time, was the dividends, which came from the Guyana Oil Company Limited (GUYOIL) of about \$1 billion or \$2 billion, which goes to the budget. It is not being kept by NICIL anymore. A number of funds, which went to NICIL prior, are now being transferred to the Consolidated Fund. Essentially, it does not have the moneys to finance such an operation.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, earlier this year we approved \$5.865 billion. NICIL was not an organisation that was listed as receiving a subsidy from the Ministry of Finance. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this Assembly as to what drove the shift in policy that NICIL now received moneys from the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Jordan: If the Hon. Member sets back a bit he would appreciate that NICIL is not receiving this money for the operations of NICIL *per se*. It is for the specific purpose of the establishment

of a Special Purpose Unit, a department within NICIL. None of the moneys is going to NICIL's other operations.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am just trying to understand, with some amount of clarity, and it is if the Minister could help us. This money is not going to NICIL and it is going to NICIL. It is a Special Purpose Unit. If it is a Special Purpose Unit, should it not be registered? Should it not take on a legal persona? Should it not have specific statements that when it is completed it could be wound up? Could we get some clarity on this?

Mr. Jordan: Once, again, I will repeat – call it whatever you want - that it is part of NICIL. The \$130 million is specifically for the unit that will deal specifically with the divestment, come privatisation, of assets which will be identified by GuySuCo.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Member indicate to this Assembly how much of the \$130 million would be paid towards agents that are seeking to engage prospective buyers of various assets of GuySuCo?

Mr. Jordan: It is none that is budgeted here. If the Hon. Member is referencing a contract that was being waived and meandering about by another Hon. Member that will be taken care of by another arrangement. I believe that its life has come to an end. What we are speaking about here, professional and legal fees, is for the hiring of a top international accounting firm that will be involved in putting the proposals, bids and valuation together. As you would note, this money is very small, but it is an indicative sum for the half year. We expect that in a full year the sum will be far larger than what is being put here. International firm is not hired for cheap rate.

Bishop Edghill: The paper, which we have in our hand, is a supplementary paper. The fact that no moneys were previously sought for the financing of any operations at NICIL, could the Hon. Minister say if this is correctly placed or it should be placed elsewhere?

Mr. Jordan: The fact that it is here and the fact that the executive saw it fits to put this department under NICIL, we believe that it is correctly placed.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, I have two questions to start with. Firstly, when did the board of GuySuCo approve of this transaction, that is, initiating the process of divestment or privatisation?

Secondly, what are the aspects of that decision?

Mr. Jordan: I am not sure what you meant by the second question when you asked about the aspect. I can tell you that this matter had the attention of Cabinet and it approved the creation of a Special Purpose Unit within the NICIL to undertake the terms of reference that I would I have given to you. I am not sure about the second part of the question.

Mr. Ali: Now, there has to a decision that would shape the way this Special Purpose Unit would operate. Who made the decision for privatisation and divestment? Was the board of GuySuCo involved in the process of making that decision?

Mr. Jordan: What I could tell the Hon. Member, within the confines of secrecy of Cabinet meeting, is that a substantial and substantive paper was brought to the Cabinet by GuySuCo's representative, it was discussed extensively and the result is partly what you are seeing today, which is the creation of this unit and it is being responsible for the divestment and diversification.

Mr. Ali: In that paper or that piece of recommendation that GuySuCo brought to Cabinet, was there ever any consideration given to securing the industry, protecting the industry and ensuring the sustainability and viability of the industry, *vis-a-vis* diversification and privatisation?

Mr. Jordan: I imagine that there is enough policy statements by the President, the Minister of Agriculture and other Ministers, the Minister of State included, on this matter. Of course, there is the White Paper on the future, which is before the Parliament, which, I believe, is up for discussion and debate and where those matters could rightly be raised and answered at the same time.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I just want to update the Hon. Member, through you, of course, that the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services has been trying to have the Commission of Inquiry (COI) and the White Paper debated for time now. Let me ask this...

[**Mr. Williams:** What is the line item?] Excuse me.

Mr. Williams: What is the line item?

Ms. Teixeira: We do not have to tell you what line item we are on.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, one Member is speaking and we should allow that Member to speak. Please go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. What is the projected inflow that this unit is expected to raise out of divestment or privatisation? What is the propose use of that fund?

Mr. Jordan: I cannot, at this stage, tell you what the projected income is. I know that there are a lot of works which have been done in this area. Do not forget that these are bids that will be going out for public tendering. We are not sure what prices will be set after the valuation because that is one critical thing in this exercise, the valuation of these assets. We may have an over inflated view of what these assets are worth, but when a top valuator does the valuation, that valuator may have a different picture and as a result that could determine what may be expected from the prospective investors. It also depends on what is intended to be done with the asset. I believe that there are works done in this area. Again, I would suggest that such questions be asked and answered in the context of the debate on the White Paper.

Mr. Ali: In the process that this unit would engage in the divesting assets, or the sale of assets, as the Hon. Minister is saying, could he identify for us which are the assets he is speaking of?

Mr. Jordan: I did say that we are starting with the Skeldon Sugar Factory - it is a big one as you know - and then it will move on to other assets identified by GuySuCo for sale. These would include lands and buildings.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, through you, you say to us that since Skeldon Sugar Factory would be the first to go on sale, what is the projected impact on the workers and their families? Was any social assessment done in relation to the impact it would have on the families? Was any economic feasibility assessment done to see the impact it would have on lives in the community? Finally, has any arrangement been made to compensate, to facilitate, to help the transition of tens of thousands of persons who would be affected in that area?

5.56 p.m.

Mr. Jordan: I believe that the Hon. Member is asking reasonable questions but I believe the timing and the place to ask these questions is at the time when we are discussing the white paper, when I believe all the information could come out. I do not want to give an answer that is not

backed by any evidence and knowledge that I am not aware of. He has gone fully into the realm of agriculture. I was merely trying to get this money for the Special Purpose Unit so that we could get this aspect going.

Mr. Ally: The Hon. Minister, whom I have a lot of respect for, is my friend. We worked together. He is an honourable man. I understand that he would not want to provide information which he does not have now. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us an idea as to when the information requested could be provided to this House?

Mr. Jordan: The questions that the Hon. Member asked are valid, indeed. I just think that, in terms of this particular exercise, that maybe he is asking the wrong Minister. As I said, the Ministry of Agriculture had done a significant amount of work where that is concerned. Perhaps, when the white paper comes up, he could ask the Hon. Minister Holder, who would be leading that debate, for those answers to those questions. The answers do not reside in the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Komal Chand, you have been trying to attract my attention. Please speak.

Mr. Chand: Could the Hon. Minister say if the proceeds of the “sell out” of Skeldon Sugar Estate and the sale of land which belongs to GuySuCo go to the sugar industry or would the proceeds go to the Government or to the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL)?

Mr. Jordan: The revenue emanated from the sale of these assets would go to GuySuCo to defray substantial debts that it has to help in financing the cost of divestment and to assist in the running operations. As you know, it is the Government that is literally paying for GuySuCo to stay afloat.

Bishop Edghill: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us an idea of how the Special Purpose Unit would be staffed, the positions and the remuneration package?

Mr. Jordan: I cannot give him all the staff of the Unit as such. Hopefully, if they could piggyback on some of the staff of NICIL, they would keep the cost down. That is part of our intention, anyhow.

There would be about three top staff. Somebody would head the Unit. There would be a deputy head and some senior legal officers. The big cost here would be the hiring of this international reputable firm that would assist in the actual privatisation of the Skeldon Sugar Estate.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up: since we are dealing with sums that have been grouped in various categories, could the Hon. Minister tell us how much he envisaged would be spent on the Director, the Deputy Director and the next technical staff and what are the skills that are being sought?

Mr. Jordan: The top two Officers - the head and the deputy - are expected to be highly skilled personnel who would have been involved in these areas, not necessarily in sugar, but in the area of working with ... [Mr. Mustapha: Are you sure that it is not the army?] Who knows? There is nothing wrong with the army.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Jordan: We had a shortlist of potential persons from both home and abroad. You would appreciate if we went for someone from abroad who had the appropriate skills, including international connections, it would cost us a bit more than those who are here.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, some conversations are making it difficult for the speaker to be heard.

Mr. Jordan: I would suggest that approximately 60% to 70% of the funds earmarked would go to the top three persons.

Bishop Edghill: The second piece of information that I am seeking is: since this would be a unit within NICIL, I have noted in the Remarks that it is for office space. Could you say which building has been identified to house this Special Purpose Unit and what is the cost for rental per month?

Mr. Jordan: My understanding is that GuySuCo would provide some facilities that it has somewhere in La Bonne Intention (LBI). Some repairs may be needed and, therefore, it is suggested that some of this money from out of the \$130,000,000 be used to rehabilitate this

facility. I do not expect them to charge us rent. If they do, then we would be able to provide from this \$130,000,000.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Minister identify for us, because office space is listed as one of the items that constituted the \$130,000,000, how much is budgeted for that exercise? You were able to tell us that \$20 million was for vehicles. We did not ask how many vehicles and so on. Tell us about office space.

Mr. Jordan: It is approximately \$2 million for furniture, equipment and office space but it is just a ballpark of \$2 million.

Mr. Chand: The Minister, in answer to my last question, explained that the moneys would go to GuySuCo. That was a clear answer but, in the end, he said “some”. Could he please clarify his answers?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you clarify?

Mr. Jordan: I do not know why he heard the last “some”. I kept saying “some”. I said that some moneys would go towards defraying the huge debt that they have. Some would be used for the running expenses because it is the Government that is keeping GuySuCo afloat so they would be able to use some of that money for that purpose. That is some of the sum. It is not the end of it. Obviously, there would be bills and workers’ severance or whatever the case maybe. This is where those moneys would be used.

Some would also be used for the diversification aspect of their programme. There are many “some” under that.

Bishop Edghill: Earlier, I asked the Minister how much moneys are allocated for staffing. He indicated that there would be three highly skilled staff. He also indicated that about 60% of this sum would be for the payment of the staff.

For the avoidance of any doubt, I would just like to have clarifications. You are telling this House that \$78 million would be spent during July or August and December on salaries of the three top staff of this Unit.

Mr. Jordan: I am not sure where the Hon. Member got the \$78 million from. I never mentioned any \$78 million. **[Bishop Edghill: Sixty per cent of the total amount.]** No. It is 60% of the sum earmarked under employment costs. That is what I said.

Item 2 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Policy Development and Administration - \$130,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Expenditure

Item 2 32-321 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,997,131,364

Bishop Edghill: I would like the Hon. Minister to indicate how much of the \$1.2 billion that was voted has already been expended and on what.

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: All of it: \$600 million was for rehabilitation of Lot A and \$600 million for the implementation of the social management programme. That gives us the \$1.2 billion.

Bishop Edghill: Was the \$600 million paid on the Lot A mobilisation?

Mr. Patterson: Correct.

Bishop Edghill: Now we are asking for over \$1.997 billion. Could you say what constitutes that amount and for what projects, naming the components and the exact cost for each component?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for the question. One is under the strengthening of the Guyana Power Light Inc.'s (GPL) management capacities. There is a consultancy firm implementing the management strengthening probe for GPL and the sum is \$433,466,000.

6.11 p.m.

Under that same programme is hiring a monitoring an evaluation specialist for the oversight and accountability mechanism - \$6,697,000.

Under Programme 2 is the operation efficiency consultancy firm for the system planning and design of Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) and that is \$35,000,072. Under

the same Programme, consultancy firm for demand forecasting, capacity building and recruitment of demand forecasting, economist and engineers - \$13,160,000.

Under the same Programme, consultancy for records of which customers are connected to respective transformers, field assistance to gather data, *et cetera* - \$9,680,000; another item is recruitment of SCADA manager - \$9,294,000; the recruitment of five systems planning and design engineers - \$12,096,000; and procurement inventory, implementation of oracle inventory module for the Guyana Power and Light Inc. for \$14,937,000.

Under Programme 3, Infrastructure Investment for Loss Reduction: Rehabilitation of low and medium voltage distribution network, Lot A - \$184,206,000; rehabilitation of low voltage distribution network, Lot B – provision for 30% mobilisation payment - \$1,53,478,000. The contract is expected to be signed in October, 2017. Field work for preparation and design of Lot C - \$1,620,000; consultancy for preparation design bid documents for Lot B, final payment - \$25,973,000; and implementation of a social management programme - \$24,211,000.

Auditing, Monitoring, Evaluation Administration: The financial and technical auditing team - \$1,766,000; the hiring of a consultant for a midterm evaluation - \$10,325,000; the hiring of a consultancy firm to evaluate and supervise works - \$81,832,000; the project unit staff salary and allowance - \$51,006,000; and acquisition of assets and office expenses for the project programme coordination unit (PCU) - \$24,314,000. And that brings us to a grand total of \$1,997,131,364.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Sir. I thank the Hon. Minister for the information provided. Could the Minister indicate to this House why at the time of the 2017 Budget the sums being sought now was not budgeted? This is additional inflows and we welcome that we are moving ahead. But why was it not sought at that time?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the short answer to that is accelerated performance. The short answer to that is that we have accelerated and consolidated several activities and procurements. I am pleased to say that it is an accelerated programme. So, we are now fully on track. From the meetings we recently had with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the European Union (EU), the project is no longer red flagged. We have consolidated and were able to achieve much more in a faster space of time.

Bishop Edghill: The Minister indicated that he expects a contract for \$1.53 billion to be signed in October. Could the Hon. Minister give us some details as to who the contractor is, when the evaluation was completed, and what the sum was that the contractor actually bid for?

Mr. Patterson: This is a provision that we are making. The tenders have not closed; they are closing on the 24th July, 2017. Obviously, it is prudent for us - there is an estimate - to make an allowance; the 30% of the engineer's estimate would be payable to the mobilisation advance. As I said, it is an accelerated programme and it is not in the Budget at the moment. This is a forecast based on our engineer's estimate. So no contractor has been identified. It is an open tender and October is our anticipated - all things being equal - award and payment of this mobilisation advance.

Bishop Edghill: So, the \$1.53 billion is 30% of the engineer's estimate for the total cost of the project. And at the signing of the contract, 30% mobilisation would be paid. Is that correct?

Mr. Patterson: That is correct. The mobilisation advance is 30%.

Item 2 32-321 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,997,131,364 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

**32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works – \$616,510,000,
\$530,296,046, \$57,077,500, \$2,253,000,000, \$172,424,028, \$160,000,000 &
\$75,032,626**

Miscellaneous Roads/Drainage

Bishop Edghill: Could the Minister tell this House what sums of the voted provision that was approved in the Appropriation Act of 2017 was allocated for the East Bank Berbice road?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, under this heading, there is no provisions for the East Bank Berbice road.

Bishop Edghill: Let me rephrase this by saying that we, on this side of the House, are very pleased that the East Bank Berbice road is going to be fixed. So, nothing in our questioning suggests that we are against the fixing of the road. I just thought that I needed to say that for clarity because my questions will be very incisive.

Since no provision was sought for the East Bank Berbice road at the time of the 2017 Budget, under this line item, is this provision that is now being sought of \$616,510,000 improperly placed?

Mr. Patterson: I will be very polite, Sir. Nothing was allocated under this. Two hundred and seventy million was included under the local provision, which is to do with rehabilitation under the Special Purpose Unit which is in that area.

Bishop Edghill: So, what happened to the \$70 million?

Mr. Patterson: That is under maintenance for the entire area. There is nothing specific for this. To be absolutely polite to the gentleman, the answer remains the same.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House who the contractor is and when the contract was awarded for this project?

Mr. Patterson: The contractor is the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. It is the Special Projects Unit. The commencement has been widely reported in the news. The commencement date was 4th June, 2017. The project period is eight months. Therefore, it is slated to be completed in February, 2018. This sum of money being requested for is for now until the end of the year and this has also been widely reported. In anticipation of questions as to why the Special Projects Unit, the original estimate, as I said, under the IDB was \$1.8 billion. We have now been able to bring it here at \$1.2 billion.

There were certain issues which the Hon. Members on that side would have known and would have previously told the persons on the East Bank Berbice about - the economic rate of return and the viability of doing this project - and that is why it was never done.

We think that every road needs to be done and, if we can do it, we will do it. So, we approached the Ministry of Finance and finance has been made available. As I am up and speaking, you can see the structures...

Bishop Edghill: He is answering questions that have not been asked.

Mr. Patterson: I know that it will be asked.

6.26 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Minister just indicated to us that the IDB project would have cost \$1.8 million and this project undertaken by the Force Account Unit will cost less, which is \$1.2 billion. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, under the IDB project, how far the road would have gone and, under this project, how far the road is going? While the Hon. Minister is up, could he indicate to us, with the Force Account Unit, what is the cost per mile or kilometre of road that he is constructing?

Mr. Patterson: I was actually about to give all that information and save the Hon. Member that question, but, obviously, he wanted to make it appear as if he is prying it out of me, which he is not. The road is the exact length, design, kilometre, mileage down to the last centimetre, 5.5 kilometres; it will be done as the IDB project. Phase I covers from Stanleytown to Everton. If we do simple division and divide \$1.2 billion by 5.5 kilometres, we will get the cost per kilometre for the Special Project Unit. It is approximately \$200 million per kilometre. I can continue but I know the gentleman would like the opportunity to ask.

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much, Sir. Could the Hon. Minister say what system of procurement is used to procure the materials that the Force Account Unit will be using for this project?

Mr. Patterson: Public procurement: I think the tenders were closed last Tuesday for the materials; it is there. It is a public procurement methodology through the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). I have said that there is a preference and I do hope that other persons in Region 6, being local, would actually be the winners. But, obviously, it is market forces; it is public procurement.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say who designed the project? Who prepared the tender document? Who evaluated the tender document? Who will implement the project and who will supervise the project?

Mr. Patterson: The design was funded by the IDB, as we started off saying. I think the consultancy was ASP associated with CEMCO Inc. The funding for that was under the IDB and the bid document is the exact document that we just blocked out their names from.

Mr. Ali: Who is implementing the project?

Mr. Patterson: The assessment will be done by NPTAB as for any other agency. Obviously, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure is the implementing Ministry or agency.

Mr. Ali: Who is supervising?

Mr. Patterson: As it relates to the supervising team, we have independent soil and quality control consultancy. They will be doing the quality control. The project engineers will be from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. We have independent lab testing persons from the Berbice Laboratory. We have an independent auditor, our in-house auditor; the rest of the staff will be in-house from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister pointed us to an independent quality controller and then said that there are engineers from the Ministry; then he said there are an independent lab and the Ministry; then he added that the work will be implemented by the Ministry. Here is a perfect example of what can result in severe breaches of transparency and accountability. You have an agency that will be implementing a project and supervising itself. He also pointed to the internal auditor from the same Ministry who would be involved in the management and supervision. There is a lot of conflict that would arise out of this situation. I am surprised and shocked that the Minister would not see this as a major hindrance to transparency and accountability.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my staff, I am somewhat annoyed and I would even say insulted. This project represents 2.55% of the budget of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. Under the hinterlands division, I am spending more money on the hinterland road internally and all the mechanisms are there. For the Member to impute that, because we are going to Region 6, into Berbice, to assist hardworking Berbicians...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I must ask you to remember that the Hon. Member did not impute any impropriety to your department. *[Applause]*

I am not quite clear why Hon. Members are thumping the desk. But let me say this: a question is asked and it is for you, Minister, to answer the question.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, my apologies. Under my Hinterland programme for 2017, as I just explained, I am doing \$2.3 billion. The Ministry has not been accused of any malfeasance or any suggestion of any unaccountability to provide a service to our brothers and sisters in the Indigenous communities. I am spending half of that money in Region 6 for a long overdue project; the residents in that area would have protested in 2009. They protested to me as well. I am not blaming anybody previously. I do think that we are quite capable of managing, with extreme transparency on behalf of the people in Region 6, that money. It is only a representative of 2.55% of the budget. On the sea defence, we have internally done far more work than this. Any suspicions that we cannot be transparent in this, I would say, is an absolute falsehood. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I am sure that virtue is still intact. Hon. Member, you have the floor.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, last year end, the Minister came to this House, seeking approval for several hundred millions of dollars to buy equipment for the Force Account Unit. Would the Minister indicate to us if these equipment that were procured - I hope delivered - will be used on this project?

Mr. Patterson: The answer to that is absolutely yes. Therein lies why we are \$600 million below what the IDB had. Also, the equipment are in the country, if that is what you are going to ask.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am asking the Minister if he agrees that, apart from the \$1.2 billion that will be spent on the procurement of materials and direct labour, the actual cost of this project has to include the use of the machinery that will be procured and the maintenance of them while they are being used, which would have been a cost passed on to a contractor had it been tendered out.

Mr. Patterson: I do not know what the question is. I made no secret. I will go on record again that one of the goals of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure is to strengthen the Special Projects Unit. That was not a secret last year; it is not a secret this year and will not be a secret next year. Obviously, in strengthening the roles and responsibilities of the Special Projects Unit, we will be doing work on our own. It will only add to the existing capacity and stocking in the country. If the Hon. Member is suggesting that the entire cost of this project will be left in East Berbice, the

answer is no. We already have plans on where they will be in March and the rest of the year. I will tell you of those in my budget speech for 2018. The money is spread around the entire country.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am sure that the Hon. Minister knows that every piece of equipment carries with it an hourly operating cost. Is the hourly operating cost of the equipment that is being acquired by the Force Account Unit included in this \$1.2 billion?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the answer to that is yes. I have added labour cost, maintenance, fuel, spray painting, washing, all of which are included in the project cost of \$1.2 billion.

Mr. Mustapha: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would like to clarify what the Hon. Minister said that the length of the road would be 5.5 kilometres. In the Remarks, it states 4.9 kilometres. Could the Minister clarify this?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the length is 5.5 kilometres. I would just assume that the other one is the *printer's devil*. I think you would probably say to me that the longer the better. No pun intended, Sir.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, if you read the legend, it also states that, due to the delay of the loan, it was reprogrammed. Could the Hon. Minister say what caused the loan to be delayed? What was the cause for the loan to be reprogrammed? Could the Hon. Minister explain if the delay was caused by the cutting of the Budget in the Tenth Parliament?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, we went out to tender and none of the tenders were responsive. I think that was in 2016. But it was part of a larger loan, which was reprogrammed. So, obviously, if you are going to reprogram the larger loans, then, all the smaller subsidiaries will get knocked off. The larger loan is being reprogrammed and that is a function of the Ministry of Finance. We also know that, forgetting all the technicalities, there is a promise, and a promise is a promise. We made a promise to East Bank Berbice and we are committed to complete it.

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the Remarks, it states construction of culverts and bridges. Could the Hon. Minister say how many bridges? What are the locations for these bridges? Will they be new concrete bridges?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, yes, they will be new and, yes, they will be concrete. There will be two culverts and two bridges.

6.41 p.m.

Dr. Mahadeo: [*Inaudible*].

Mr. Patterson: I can give you that because, being technical persons, we normally number rather than name them. It is structure one, two, four and six. I did not actually put the names, but I can provide the names before the end of this evening.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, this will be my final question: does the Government have plans to upgrade the road from Everton to Mara?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, when I got up and spoke, I said Phase I covers Stanleytown to Everton. Just by the mere fact that it is a phase indicates that the Government has intentions to proceed onwards.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say when Phase II will start and how long it will be? If there is a Phase I, I presume there will be a Phase II and maybe a Phase III.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, if everything was up to me, I would do Phases I, II and III, but it is all part of a major road building programme and, obviously, we will address it as soon as we can. If it is available immediately after, I will love to, but, as you and the Opposition would very well know, I am just *one cog in a large wheel*. We all compete for the funds. But it is my commitment to continue and to keep seeking funding to continue as soon as possible.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please state how Berbicians would be employed under this project? If you have a number in your mind, how many would be employed?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you. I always love the opportunity to restate something I stated publicly. I have said, at the launching on 4th June, 2017, that the Berbicians will be employed; and I do hope from the East Bank, Berbice. I cannot dictate among the construction crew. What I have is the skilled labourers and artisans like machine operators. I have said to the Region 6 persons that I was giving them early notice that there would be rental of equipment. It would be easier and cheaper. The asphalt would be from a Berbician contractor. We have already shortlisted the three

or four and provided them with the design mix; it would be done on a competitive basis. Every opportunity, the first, second and third preference, would be for the Berbicians.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, I had cause to visit this location recently. Could you please state what type of preparatory works have already begun?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, at the moment, it is maintenance works – cleaning the shoulders, drains and things like that. We are during the mobilisation period but everyone would know that, in February, 2017, the residents on the East Bank Berbice signalled very strongly to this Administration that they would go onto the streets to express their displeasure of the condition of the road. At that point, I dispatched the Special Projects Unit to bring some emergency intervention. That was also the time when I said to the Minister of Finance and to Cabinet that a promise is a promise. This project is a direct result of what we commenced in February, 2017. Right now, the road is being maintained, being kept passable with less disruption to the residents. Now that the tenders for the materials and structures were returned last Tuesday, we will kick into high gear going forward.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, I met with some Regional Democratic Council (RDC) officials. I was told that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure did not fully consult with the RDC. Could you please say why?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, before I answer that, just let me take the opportunity to follow-up on a question that the Hon. Dr. Mahadeo had raised. The bridges are at Gay Park and Edinburg and the two culverts are at the beginning of Glasgow and Baptiste Turn.

I do not know which officials the Hon. Member spoke to but I know the Regional Chairman, the Regional Executive Officer (REO) and everyone else were consulted and know about the project. I am even informed that we stayed at the Regional Guest House. The region is assisting us and we are grateful for the cooperation. If the region does not want to divulge or speak with the Hon. Member, I am willing to go with him and we could speak with them together. Maybe we can get to the bottom of the matter.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, since these consultations have to be formal, because we are doing \$1.2 billion worth of works, could you please layover the documents that the verification and validations of the consultation were done?

Mr. Patterson: What consultation?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, just to clarify for you, I came off the telephone a few minutes ago with the Regional Chairman (ag.) who said that no consultation was done.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I will start from the beginning. The loan to design this bridge started in 2014, and not under my watch. There was widespread consultation which was approved. There were the social impact study and the environmental study. The same Regional Chairman who was there in 2014 is there now, if I am not mistaken. *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Chairman hits the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am not sure we will hear the Hon. Minister if what we do interrupts his flow. Please proceed, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, after the consultations, the Regional Chairman has been on record several times, calling and demanding, on behalf of the people of the East Bank Berbice, that we start this road. He has written me. I simply responded to that demand.

Mr. Dharamlall: Finally, Hon. Minister, would you make the bill of quantities for the road works available to residents of the area and to the RDC?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I did more than that. At the opening, I asked the communities where the road will pass, between Stanleytown and Everton, to name one representative for each community along with one representative from the region and one from the Township because it borders the Township, and to form a committee through which all documents would pass. The committee is to be an additional oversight body for us. The committee will get the bills of quantities and everything else and sign off on the project. I made it public. They have already started internal consultations along the East Bank Berbice. Yes, we have nothing to hide. What we have done is far more than what you are suggesting.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, could the Hon. Minister tell this House the size of the IDB funding that was available for this project that is being reprogrammed?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. I think I mentioned \$1.8 billion. That is what went back to be reprogrammed. The amount has not changed.

Road Improvement and Rehabilitation Programme

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Member tell us how much of the moneys being sought will be used for the construction of the pedestrian overpasses?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Hon. Member, for that question. The moneys to be spent on the five overpasses will be \$217,208,534 for Houston, Eccles and Peter's Hall. There will be a sum of \$97,055,870 which will go to the supervision for those pedestrian overpasses. The sum of \$75,034,882 will be for the overpass at Providence. The sum of \$75,133,762 will be for the overpass at Diamond.

6.56 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Sir. Could the Hon. Member indicate if contracts have been awarded and to whom those contracts have been awarded?

Mr. Patterson: Yes. Contracts have been awarded and yes, they went to the open procurement system. The contracts were awarded under the Inter-Development Bank (IDB) specific funding with local counterpart. The contracts for the overpasses at Huston, Eccles and Peters Hall have been awarded to B&J Civil Works for the sum of \$217 million. Sir, the contract for the supervision of the vehicle and pedestrian overpass was awarded to R&M Engineering Limited which is a Trinidadian company. The contracts for the overpasses at Providence and Diamond were awarded to S. Jagmohan Hardware Supplies and Construction Services in the amount stated earlier.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would need some clarification from the Minister because I have in my possession two documents, one of which I would share with the Clerk of the National Assembly because I know the rules of the House. A document dated 20th March, 2017, signed by the Permanent Secretary (PS) of Ministry of Public Infrastructure awarding a contract of US \$1,

034,326.35 to B&J Civil Works. This letter is dated the 20th March, 2017, under loan “2215 BLGY: Road Improvement Rehabilitation Programme, Construction of Pedestrian Overhead Crossing Civil Works”. Sir, but I also have in my possession a letter dated 23rd March, 2017, same loan, “2215 BLGY Road Improvement and Rehabilitation Programme, Prioritise Intervention, East Bank Demerara Construction of Pedestrian Overhead Crossings” – three. This letter, signed by the same Permanent Secretary, advised all prospective bidders that the executing agency has annulled the bid process. If the bid process had been annulled, could the Minister explain to this House how these contracts were awarded?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I would attempt an answer without looking at the document. The very first letter the Member read is absolutely correct. The sum that I quoted of \$217,208,534 is the Guyana equivalent to the United States (US) dollar contract which the Member mentioned. Sir, the second annulment, which I do not know if it is clear in the letter, but we are doing pedestrians overpasses and we annulled the vehicular overpass. They are two different overpasses; one the cars travel on and the other one pedestrians travel on.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, for the sake of clarity, I will read the entire rubric of the heading of the correspondence.

“Loan No. 2215: BL-GY Road Improvement and Rehabilitation Programme Prioritise Intervention East Bank Demerara, Construction of Pedestrian Overhead Crossings.”

Three in all, locations Providence, Diamond and Friendship – those are what were annulled. What were awarded:

“Loan 2215 BL-GY Road Improvement and Rehabilitation Programme, Construction of Pedestrian Overhead Crossings”

Both had to do with pedestrian overhead crossings, none to do with vehicles. This is official documentation coming out of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. One annulled to all bidders and the other awarded.

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

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. I am asking the Minister to explain how could a project be annulled and then awarded?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I explained what was annulled, which was the vehicular overpass. We were never doing any in Diamond or we were never doing any pedestrian crossing in Friendship. I do not know where the Hon. Member got his source of information, but I am telling the House what was annulled and the persons who received it would be different, I assumed. The contracts for \$217 million for the three pedestrian overpasses were awarded to B&J Civil Works. Maybe the date he has is correct. The contracts for the vehicle overpasses were annulled and for the full sake of clarity, those were annulled because there were issues with land ownership and several social constraints, so we had to seek an addition alternative. So that tender for the specific area had to be annulled. That is the annulment letter which the Hon. Member is referring to.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would request that these documents be circulated to Members. This is because the documents that I have submitted to the Clerk speak specifically to pedestrian overpasses and none to vehicular overpasses, as being explained in this House by the Hon. Minister. My contention is that if you informed bidders that a process which they had bid for is annulled and then you serve to a contractor a notice that they have received the award. The Minister must explain to this House how on the same project, for the same pedestrian overpasses, bidders received a document stating the process has been annulled and *low and behold* a contractor was awarded.

Mr. Patterson: Maybe this may assist the Hon. Member. Sir, the loan is one residual amount as the rubric stated. I would not say the amount of money because I cannot recall it and I do not want to mislead the House. In that residual amount of the loan, we had programmed to utilise that residual amount to do overpasses, both pedestrian and vehicular. Hence, the name of the loan number and those things like that, which would be the same because it is same IDB loan that we were going to use. There were two separate tenders for the pedestrian overpasses. We initially went for three, as the House would know. That is why the first contract was for \$1million.

Sir, on annulling the process for the vehicle overpasses, we did some additional things and that is why we have an additional two, not only an additional two, but we also have some additional

items. That was the funding that was set aside and re-programmed by the IDB for the vehicle overpasses. Sir, the *smoking gun* smokes no more.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Member, tell the House what procurement process was used in awarding this contract to B&J Civil Works?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I am pleased to tell the Hon. Member that it was international procurement tendering done under the rubric of the IDB. So not only in Guyana, but it goes on their website and wherever they advertise. It was an International bid which was won by B&J Civil Works.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether on 22nd February, 2017 the Ministry of Public Infrastructure wrote to B&J Civil Works inviting it to bid for the above project that we are talking about. I have a document that states:

“Reference is made to our letter dated 22nd, February, 2017 inviting you to bid for the captioned works.”

Was B&J Civil Works, by way of a letter from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, invited to bid for this project?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, once again the *smoking gun* has been revealed. The procedure went like this and I want to refer all Members to the Legend which has some dates - 31st March, 2017, we had to expend and tendered out these sums of money before the 31st March, 2017. I cannot recall the exact date, but we went to tender in October 2016 for three overpasses and a vehicular overpass. When they returned back 42 or 45 days later, we encountered the problems as I said, hence, the cancellation of the vehicular overpass. So we have the three pedestrian overpasses. What was agreed was that when we cancel the vehicular overpass we had ask the same tenderers, who would have tendered for the IDB job for the pedestrian overpasses to tender for two more pedestrian overpasses for Diamond and Providence. There will be a letter going out stating that a bid was submitted for three and that the Ministry is re-evaluating the bids, but that in the interim a bid be submitted for the two additional ones. The second set was won by S. Jagmohan and Sons. Thus, no *smoking gun*.

When the assessment was done, B&J Civil Works won the first three and they did not bid for the second four or was not allowed to bid for the second two and that was won by S. Jagmohan and Sons.

Bishop Edghill: I am going to seek clarity. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House the locations of three pedestrian overpasses that have been awarded to B&J Civil Works?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, once again, Huston, Eccles and Peters Hall, all on the East Bank of Demerara. Those are the three areas.

Bishop Edghill: Could you tell the House when the bids were closed and when the contracts were awarded?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the bids were closed on the 10th January, 2017; it went out in October. Sir, according to the IDB rules, it has to be advertised for 45 days and so one could calculate it. The Hon. Member just read the letter stating the date for the award of B&J Civil Works for \$217 million, which was in March, I think.

7.11 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Member tell this Assembly who are the principals of B&J Civil Works?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I am advised that the principal is Ms. Beverley Tapp, a female engineer and the owner of a construction company.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I rely on the documents that I have before me and which I have placed before the House. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us if there was any intention for a pedestrian overpass at Providence on the East Bank Demerara?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, let me start from the beginning because I have to say what is going around again. There are five pedestrian overpasses which have been awarded. The initial tenders were for three areas, Houston, Eccles and Peters Hall. After the cancellation of the vehicular overpass, the Ministry used the residual money and awarded two additional overpasses, one in Providence and one in Diamond. There are contracts awarded for Providence and Diamond. Sir, could I state that there are several other areas along the East Bank Demerara, as

well as the East Coast Demerara, as well as in Berbice that we identified along with the Road Safety Council, where we should have pedestrian overpasses. We just simply went according to priority on the East Bank Demerara Road. So, there are other areas in the country that require pedestrian overpasses.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, by way of an award from the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB), No. 4495 of 2016/32: The three overpasses were awarded to B&J Civil Works. On 22nd February, bidders were invited to bid for three other pedestrian overpasses at Providence, Diamond and Friendship. These persons submitted bids. Could the Hon. Minister tell us if the evaluation has been completed and why notice has not been made as to the awards and why the Friendship area, which was part of the same lot, was not awarded?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, let me start once again because maybe I was not clear. The vehicular overpass cost “x” amount of dollars. We stated that with the residual loan we would do “x plus y” and that was the amount for the residual loan. When the vehicular overpass was cancelled, we said *fair enough* we have “x” amount of dollars remaining and we would try to do as many overpasses as possible. We would have done them, but we only had “x” amount of dollars. We would have gone out to tender for as I said “x, 4, 5” pedestrian overpasses, but the money remaining, in all honesty, could have only funded two. We had asked for tenders to go out for three or four and how much they would cost here and how much would they cost there. The moneys remaining could have only funded two and that is what we did. We awarded contracts for two. There is no award to be made for one at Friendship, unless we do it on a local budget, we re-programme it next year or we find money to do it. There is no more money remaining.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us how many contractors were invited by way of this letter dated 22nd February, to bid for the pedestrian overpasses at Providence, Diamond and Friendship?

Mr. Patterson: Only the prequalified persons on the Inter-American Development Bank’s list would have been invited from the previous tender submitted for the three. That was the timeframe and allowance that was dictated to us by the funding agency, which we followed.

Bishop Edghill: I would just like the Minister to clarify that an international financial agency dictated to the Government of Guyana a process to be used. He stated that it was dictated to us. Could I have clarification on that?

Mr. Patterson: Sir the word “dictate” maybe used or I would say advised. But I want to remind the Hon. Member who was once the junior Minister of Finance that these international funding agencies have procurement laws which supersede ours. So, sometimes, we may not want to use the word “dictate”; we would use “advise”. But we have signed loans and this particular loan, I think was signed by your Colleague, when you all were in Office. The word may be inappropriate so I withdraw it and I would say “advise”.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you. You are speaking about a sovereign State.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I would like to state that the Councillors from the Eccles/Ramsburg Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) are very concerned that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure will be *breaking up* or removing the fence. The Ministry had promised that it would replace the fence. Will the Ministry be keeping to its word that it would do it?

Mr. Patterson: I give the Hon. Member my undertaking and assurance that it is a temporary relocation because the Ministry is obviously doing some piling work. It is in writing and I would give it to you once again, that on the completion of the foundation work, the Ministry would replace the fence where it was. So, you have my undertaking and my commitment.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the overpasses at Providence, Eccles and Peters Hall, could we get the amounts that would be spent on each overpass. Could the Minister tell us how much money have already been spent on each one of them?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the exact amount for Providence is \$75,034,882. Regarding, Eccles and Peters Hall, they have been tendered for along with the other three. The total amount is \$217 million. If that is divided by 3, as an approximation for Eccles and Peters Hall, it would be \$71 million for each and we have only paid the mobilisation advance so far, which is 20% of the contract to date.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I would like to know whether there will be any clashes in the construction of the new Demerara Harbour Bridge at Houston with respect to the construction of this overpass.

Mr. Patterson: No, Mr. Chairman. The primary use of the Houston pedestrian overpass will be for the Huston Primary School which is located at Houston. Any proposed alignment would be before the dam, more to the northern side, which is quite a way from the school. I would mention this to you Hon. Member because I know you would ask about it. We have made provisions for the disabled in the overpass because I think that it is something that you would raise. There would be lifts and stairs in it so that persons in the Houston area can use it. It would be totally far and apart.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister with respect to the safety, particularly, with the overpasses at Eccles and Bagotstown, would there be any security for people when they would be walking across? I hope that the Minister who is asking for the height is not asking now for a quarter.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister I await your comment.

Mr. Patterson: A very good question. I am glad to respond. The overpasses, as we know Sir, are enclosed but one can see, so, therefore, nothing can go in or out. It would be well lit with LED lights, the stairs as well as the overpass so that persons on the ground would see when people are crossing. Persons from above, when they are crossing, could see down. The elevator will be half glass at the top, so, therefore, one would be able to see persons from the waist down and they will all be well lit. So, therefore, persons would be crossing in safety during the day and at nights.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I know for a fact that many stakeholders were told, but I must be fair that people did not attend those meetings and at the last meeting there was only one person. The Chairman of the Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) had told the Minister clearly about the concern. We in this area are concerned, particularly, about the security of the overpass at Eccles. We know that the Minister would normally visit there and when he is there, there would be a lot of security, *et cetera* **[Hon. Member: Eccles?]** Yes, at the Flat Shop. You and I went there after cricket the last time. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

The ordinary people who live in that area are very concerned that they are not fortunate like when the Hon. Minister goes there with his music and all his security and then when persons would complain he would say, “*tek off the top, tek off the sirens.*” I am hoping that the Hon. Minister, Mr. Patterson, would work with the Hon. Minister Mr. Ramjattan to ensure that we have security there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister is there an addition you could make to this statement.

7.26 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, not really, maybe only to suggest that the Hon. Member implores the NDC that the Ministry is willing to work with it, if it is so concerned. The Ministry is willing to work with all stakeholders because this is not for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, it is for the vulnerable - the young, the old and vulnerable in the community because they are the most at risk. So I am willing to speak to anyone else that can contribute to the success of this project that is for the security and safety of the project. That is the best that I can offer.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members we have a number of items still to consider, some seven items remain to be considered and we are past the seven o'clock hour. I would suggest that we take the suspension now for the half of an hour and we endeavour to return here by eight o'clock.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I would never try to question your decision, but I do have some hard working Public Servants here with me. With the leave of my Colleagues over there, if they are willing, can I propose that we dispense of this item and then allow my staff to go home? Sir, I am pleading, but if the House would like the suspension, it is just a plea.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, there is an appeal to enable the treatment of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure to be completed. If Hon. Members have objection to that suggestion then we will not proceed with it. If Hon. Members agree that we should complete the other two items remaining for Ministry of Public Infrastructure, it would be good.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, as the lead person on infrastructure on the Opposition side, I require the break.

Assembly resumed

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will return at 8.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 7.41 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.31p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Highway Improvement – East Coast Demerara

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, just to say, like I had mentioned about the East Bank Berbice Road Project, we welcome the East Coast upgrade and all that is taking place. So nothing in our questioning is because we are against this project. We are all for it; we want it to happen. Having said that Sir, could the Hon. Minister indicate if the \$1.4 billion that has been voted for 2017 has already been expended and if it has what for?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the complete amount has not been expended to date. As we speak, \$1,029,915,000 would have been expended for so far. Of that money, \$987,000,915 would have been paid for the civil works to the contractor and that was specific from the Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank). Forty Two million would be paid from our local counterpart funds. The amount requested is for the works to the end of the year.

Bishop Edghill: Mr Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell this House what works have been executed to date on the East Coast Highway?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, The contractor is mobilising and is negotiating the location with Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) for the establishment of the concrete and actual plans. We have already completed surveys for the entire stretch of the road, so obviously it is the period prior to the commencement of work.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what is the expected date for the actual road works to begin?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the actual physical work starts in one months' time.

Bishop Edghill: Mr Chairman, there is an additional \$2.253 billion that is being sought. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what is the anticipated expenditure for this amount?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, it is anticipated that there would be four interim payments of just over \$500 million each, which would carry us to the end of the year.

Bishop Edghill: These four interim payments that are anticipated would be based on measured works. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us, by December 31st, where we would be as it relates to this project and what would be done?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the contractors will be working on the structures first, which are the bridges and culverts and there are about 13 structures and two bridges. So that is what we anticipate would take us to the end of the year.

Bishop Edghill: Would the 13 structures, between Better Hope and Belfield, be worked on simultaneously? If they will be worked on simultaneously, what are the alternative routes commuters will be expected to use, if it is just the old Railway Embankment?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, It would be a combination of that. Obviously, when the structures are being worked on there will be traffic control – one lane. It will be managed, of course, with the Railway Embankment. It is a combination of both - traffic management on the existing road and the Railway Embankment.

Bishop Edghill: So will the Ministry be working simultaneously on all 13 structures?

Mr. Patterson: Not necessarily all 13 structures would be worked on at the same time. The Ministry anticipate a time period, sequentially, within which it would be finished by the end of the year.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister indicate to us if we are working on 13 structures, which would necessitate four interim payment certificates that will total about \$2 billion. Could he indicate to us what technology will be used on the bridges that would cause them to be completed by the end of December, if they are starting in August?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the technology is pre-stress concrete slabs for the bridges.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House the specific sums that are to be paid as result of increases in the cost of civil works as per contract.

8.42 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the specific sum for the increase is US\$3.2 million.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House the specifics that led to the renegotiated, and now additional, contract sum of US\$3.2 million. What were the rates that were used and what were the actual drivers?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, there was a lengthy delay in the commencement of the project. The delay, as the Hon. Member would know quite well, occurred with the Exim Bank questioning the award of the tender under the previous Administration. There was long delay and obviously prices would have escalated during those two years. The delay was actually for 30 months. The rates amounted to 6% to 7 % for the two years it was delayed.

The genesis of it - the Hon. Member knows fully well the reason for the delay.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Member indicate the increase in the supervisory consultancy contract sum?

Mr. Patterson: The increase is US\$312,000.

Rehabilitation of Public and Main Access Roads

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell this House, of the \$350,000,000 that was voted, how much has already been expended and what for? Since the project at Kitty was not included in the Legend provided, why is provision being sought under this specific provision and project line?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the amount expended under this line head is \$84,907,874. That amount of money represents the payment to the contractor for the rehabilitation of sink hole. The contractor is Mr. Colin Talbot. The contract was awarded on 14th March, 2017 and is expected to finish on 31st August, 2017. The \$350 million was inclusive of several items, which are the construction of a roundabout at Cheddi Jagan International Airport which has just been awarded;

the moneys also included the contracts for the rehabilitation of the Agriculture Road, Mon Repos and the rehabilitation of the Linden Soesdyke Highway, which have already been awarded; the rehabilitations of Canal Number One and Canal Number Two which are being done by the Special Project Unit and it has already procured the material, we are now waiting on good weather to rehabilitate the Canals. All of the other moneys are committed and we are now replenishing.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Minister has indicated to us that, out of the \$350,000,000 that was voted, \$84.9 million has been expended on the sink hole at Kitty. Could the Hon. Minister say why the commitment, “early budget, meaning early implementation”, was made and we are now in July and none of the projects in the Legend have actually come on stream, even though we have had an early budget?

Mr. Patterson: One of the main issues that we have is that the sink hole rehabilitation project was on programme as an emergency, so even though we had budgeted that amount of money to be used otherwise, it had to be used on the sink hole. Secondly, all of the designs were done and that is why all of the contracts have been awarded and are in the implementation stage. All are budgeted to be completed this year, so we are on target.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the Hon. Minister indicated that he expects, for the sink hole rehabilitation project, the remedies that are taking place and the roundabout, will be completed by August, in another month’s time?

Mr. Patterson: There are two separate projects in the Legend for which moneys are being requested. Project 1 is the sink hole rehabilitation project and drainage works, and I am using sink hole very generally here and then there is a cost of \$31.8 million for the roundabout. To finish the sink hole project, we have to dig up the entire road so, when we are reinstating it we will put in a roundabout.

Bishop Edghill: The contractor that is dealing with the sink hole project and roundabout, is he working under one contract or two contracts?

Mr. Patterson: There is only one contract and we are now seeking the money, that is why I am here hoping to get the leave of the House for the roundabout. It has not gone out to tender as yet,

so we are seeking the funding and, hopefully, with the leave of the Hon. Gentleman, it can be funded.

Mr. Patterson: Will the Hon. Minister tell us if the sum of \$31,899,000 is the engineer's estimate or if it is the sum that has been tendered?

Mr. Patterson: It is the engineer's estimate because we have not gone to tender as yet. We are seeking the supplementary funds to enable us to start that process. We have a design and everything, so we need the leave of this House to move ahead.

Bishop Edghill: Final question Sir. I would think the Minister would be willing to share with the National Assembly and the nation by extension, what was the cause of the situation at Kitty and whether this could be anticipated as a continuing phenomenon at different parts of our country, particularly the coast line?

Mr. Patterson: The culverts that carry the water to the Kitty pumps are a combination of wooden culverts and some have galvanised tubing. They have been placed there for over 40 years. The passage of time would have taken its toll on the culverts and when they collapsed, the sand above started seeping into the hole and when the pump was activated, it took out the sand and water and, hence, the culverts started to deteriorate. The Ministry is now going in to replace them with high density polyethylene pipe (HDPE) and concrete. So we anticipate that with the new installation it should last another 50 or more years.

Reconditioning of Ferry Vessels

[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members you have to allow your Colleagues to hear the provision to which I refer so that we could proceed with our work.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the Legend states that the allocation is for the docking of 3 vessels. The description for the supplementary is for \$75 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the total contracted sum for the rehabilitation of the MV Lady Northcote?

8.57 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: The sum is \$145,240 million which is for *MV Lady Northcote*.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister indicate therefore, on the voted provision of 240 million, what is the total percentage expended to date?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the 75million being sought now is for work completed on the *MV Lady Northcote*.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister indicate, for the *MV Lady Northcote*, which I think presently services the Mabaruma end, if the intention is for it to remain there or is it to remove it and to have another service allocation?

Mr. Patterson: The intention is for to continue its current schedule. It will be augmented by *MV Barima* which is working there. I am pleased to say that *MV Kimbia* will be refurbishing, so that would be back on stream shortly, within a month time. We will have all three of our complements, but we are not taking *Lady Northcote* off of the Mabaruma run.

Mr. Croal: It is my final question. Could the Hon. Minister provide a status on the *MV Malali* as well as the *Sandaka*, their works?

Mr. Patterson: The contract for *Sandaka* has been awarded already. The *MV Malali* is at the stage of the tender board. The Hon. Member knows quite well that we had to stagger it. Even though we have awarded the contract, we have to get one in and one out, because we have to maintain a service. You will see that even though the contract has been awarded the commence date is staggered to ensure that we have no disruption in service.

32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure - Public Works - \$616,510,000, \$530,296,046, \$57,077,500, \$2,253,000,000, \$172,424,028, \$160,000,000 and \$75,032,626 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

32-323 Ministry of Public Infrastructure - Transport - \$300,000,000

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister state what the new contract sum for this project is? What changes would have been made to the project? What is the new square footage of this project?

Mr. Patterson: The contract sum remains the same to date, that is, the original price of \$138 million, which is the contract sum to the contractor, China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC). The area of the terminal building is originally 13,737 square metres. The final size is 13,431 square metres. The number of boarding bridges in the original contract was eight bridges. There will be in the four places in which we have installed two bridges, that is, the boarding bridges. In the original contract the relocation for squatter was 505 houses. The final relocation of houses, there were nine houses. The original contract catered for checking counters, 20. The final number of checking counters would be 32 and finally the length of the runway in and the original scope would have been 1,066 metres. The final length of the runway would be 1,090 metres.

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Could you say what the *pari passu* of this loan was? Why is it you are asking for an increase in the local counterpart financing which would mean that there is an increase in the price or cost? What is it against the foreign financing?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the original total, which I have just mentioned, is \$138 million. It is \$130 million from the Export-Import Bank (EXIM) and US\$8 million was the *pari passu* which was the contribution and that is why the contract sum was \$138 million, as I mentioned.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, does this \$300 million represent the final amount from local for this project?

Mr. Patterson: No.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say what percentage of the loan has been disbursed as against what percentage of the local counterpart funding?

Mr. Patterson: The local expenditure date is US\$4,878,038. You can do a calculation if you wish. The balance is US\$3,121,962.

Mr. Ali: I had asked also, what is the percentage of the foreign loan was disbursed? As I am on my feet, I will also ask you to tell us what percentage of the project is completed at this stage?

Mr. Patterson: The foreign is US\$79,268,118. The project is approximately 65% completed.

Mr. Ali: The project is 65% completed. Taking out retention fees, there is approximately 67% of the loan was being disbursed. It is not the contract sum. Based on my calculation, which you just gave, could the Hon. Minister state whether he foresees any cost overrun in relation to this project?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I may have to question the Hon. Member's calculation, because it is actually 61% expended. I know that you have done that quickly. There is no anticipated cost overrun, but I can tell you there may be an issue with the exchange rate of fluctuation. The Hon. Member, and for the members of the public, would know that the loan was taken in special drawing rights (SDR) and the contract was signed in United States (US) dollars. During the period there continues to be a fluctuation between the SDR and the United States dollars.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Member say what the anticipated increase or decrease is in relation to the changes in rate of exchange? Secondly, has the Ministry or any other Government agency undertaken any component of the work in relation to this project, whether it is relocation expense, paving, roads and buildings?

9.12 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: I cannot tell you the fluctuation. Obviously, that is the Ministry of Finance area. It is no to the second part of your question.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask the Hon. Minister whether all the relevant bonds are in place and up to date at this moment.

Mr. Patterson: All the relevant bonds are in place and up to date.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would be happy if the Minister could clarify from the legend. He indicated that the local counterpart funding is US\$8 million, but the legend indicates that the amount spent before 2017 was \$2,221,000,000, in US, that is more than the US\$8 million that is part of the loan arrangement and we are adding to that now an additional \$300 million. Could you please explain that for me, Sir?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I have no such legend, so obviously I cannot answer.

Bishop Edghill: Reference 119 of Budget 2017.

Mr. Patterson: Obviously, Sir, I do not have that legend here with me, so I cannot answer.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would you wish some assistance by way of documentation?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I will most willingly lay that information over for the Hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. The point is taken.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I await the Minister laying over, but based upon this document that we have before us, we would have already spent US\$10 million in local funds and we are now seeking an additional US\$1.5 million, that would take the local funding from US\$8 million to US\$11.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this Assembly what the real situation is here?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, as indicated, I am very willing to lay over that information.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, could the Hon. Minister say to this Assembly, if these numbers have not been considered, why is it that he is seeking this \$300 million? If he is seeking \$300 million, all of these numbers he would have had to be familiar with them, because he would have known what is outstanding as local counterpart funds and he had to be advised if what he is requesting is more than what was the loan agreement. He had to be familiar with these funds, Sir. Could he say why he is seeking this \$300 million?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, as I said, I could lay it over, but I would like to remind the Hon. Member that the contracted sum is \$138 million, which is \$130 million and \$8 million. There is some digit, but, Sir, the information that the Hon. Member is referring to I would lay that over.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the document that the Minister of Finance gives to us said that the total project cost is \$30,900,000,000. The amount spent before 2017 has a total of \$16,498,512,000, from the China EXIM Bank - \$14,498,291,000, local, which is the Government of Guyana - \$2,221,000,000. In Budget 2017, we approved \$9,027,543,000 which the breakdown of that was \$8 billion that was coming from the China EXIM Bank and \$1,027,543,000 from local funds. What is the additional \$300 million for? Since it will surpass the total local expenditure, how could we insist that the \$8 million remain the same? The only figures that I am using are the Minister of Finance's figures in his book.

Mr. Patterson: The contract is this: It is \$130 million that is the contract from the China EXIM Bank and there is US\$8 million, in which the Hon. Member Ifraan Ali said was *pari passu*. That was the contract to China's EXIM Bank. The Government of Guyana has to pay for the supervision and there was an additional \$12 million, which was to do the exact thing, which is for the procurement of equipment and those things. The entire project all the years was a \$150 million. I was trying to follow the direction of the Vice-President Carl Greenidge. There is nothing that is even hidden. The Vice-President was trying to get me to shorten my response and I was trying to. I cannot because the Hon. Member... This is a contract that we inherited. It was always a \$150 million. We always said that we would never exceed it. We always said that we would do better. It is to finish a greater and better project within the \$150 million.

The contract to China Harbour Engineering Company is \$138 million. There is a contract for supervision, Caribbean Engineering & Management Consultant Inc. (CEMO). That is the contract that the Government of Guyana has to pay. All these contracts were penned by my predecessor, so do not leave anything at my doorstep here. That contract is \$5,973,752. I was trying not to go into it. I was going to hand it over to the Hon. Member, but he persisted.

The Hon. Member has looked into the bottle and decided that we are overpaying, and so forth. We had to pay the consultancy fee. We also had to pay the local *pari passu* and that comes out as one line item. There is no line item for the airport contract. There is one line item which total is \$150 million, which the Hon. Member knows extremely well, because he was partied to the signature of this contract.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say to this Assembly that the figure of \$150 million, which was put to him, which he said it was not, he is now admitting to it, that the project costs a \$150 million? He denied that in the Assembly before.

Mr. Patterson: I never said that. I said that I would have handed over the information to the Hon. Member. I am still willing to. I was trying, as the Vice-President advised me. It is to bring it to a reasonable conclusion. I never even said anything such as that sir.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I would like a follow-up question to the Minister who advised on what are the changes to contracts, in terms of the sizes, square metres, the reduction in the number of bridges and the change in the size of the runway. Also I notice, and I hope I heard him

correctly, that there is a reduction in the number of squatter houses that had to be removed, from 505 to nine. Now, I find this a bit odd because when the British West Indies Airway (BWI) jet crashed, there was a big story about all the houses that were nearby. They were extraordinarily vulnerable and at the same time a lot of the safety analysis that was on the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) demanded that that area be clear for the safety of citizens and the safety of the aviators also. I would like to know, in this sudden reversal from removing 505 houses to only nine houses, how was this miracle done or is a sacrifice being made of human lives that if the planes do escape the runway or do miscalculate they are going to land on people's houses nearby? Are there still within the airport boundaries or had the airport boundaries being redrawn so that the squatters are not in the boundaries, therefore, you do not have to deal with it but you still appear to be ignoring the safety issues and human lives?

Mr. Patterson: The removal of the 505 houses had nothing to do with the airport safety area and we have - I would say it now on the *Hansard* - met all the safety requirements for the length of the airport and that runway. The removal had absolutely nothing to do with the safety for the squatters. It is zero.

32-323 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Transport – \$300,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members this concludes our consideration of supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. I think it would be appropriate for us to express appreciation for the team which accompanied the Minister on this matter and offered us such worthy help and support. It is our thanks and appreciation, and the Opposition for asking such searching questions.

9.27 p.m.

Item 3 49-491 Ministry of Social Protection - Policy Development and Administration - \$1,574,113

Dr. Persaud: We voted for \$12 million in the last budget and now \$1,574,113 is being requested, in addition to that. Could you say if the model of vehicle has changed or is it because

of new provisions where vehicles have to be less than eight years old, thus increasing the burden on taxpayers?

Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Ally]: When this sum of money was budgeted for, 14% value added tax (VAT) was not considered and this money is really to pay the VAT. It has nothing to do with model, change of vehicle or the eight years.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say what vehicle is being bought and where will it be utilised?

Ms. Ally: It is a Land Cruiser and it is a vehicle for the Minister's use.

Ms. Veerasammy: Could the Hon. Minister explain to the Assembly why is there a need for an additional sum of \$1,574,113 for land transport when in the budget \$7.5 million dollars was already asked for?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, I think I provided that answer a short while ago.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you can provide it again so that the Member, who has asked the question, could be satisfied. May I suggest that you answer the question please?

Ms. Ally: It is to cover 14% VAT which was not budgeted for.

Ms. Veerasammy: Could the Hon. Minister explain to this Assembly what this vehicle is going to be used for and the model of this vehicle?

Ms. Ally: Here, again, I think I answered that question. It is for the Minister's use.

Bishop Edghill: If I may be of some help, my colleague went on to ask the question on item 3 49-492, which is a different vehicle, as it relates to the question which was asked by my colleague Dr. Persaud on the first vehicle. I guess she went ahead of you putting the question, that Minister Ally's answer would be for the first question and not the second one.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is getting late and you may feel a bit jaded, but I think that if a question is asked a second time it would save a lot of discussion, if the answer is given a second time. I want to suggest to Members that if a Member asked the same question a second

time then let us give the answer. Even if we end by saying, "I did answer this question before." Is there a question you would like to raise again, Hon. Member Ms. Veerasammy?

Ms. Veerasammy: Hon. Member Dr. Persaud asked about item 3 49-491. I am questioning as it relates to item 3 49-492 which is the second vehicle.

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached there as yet. As we get there I will make certain that it is done.

Item 3 49-491 Ministry of Social Protection - Policy Development and Administration - \$1,574,113 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

49-492 Ministry of Social Protection - Social Services - \$1,050,000

Ms. Veerasammy: Since I already asked the question, could the Hon. Minister please answer? Or should I ask again?

Mr. Chairman: I would suggest that you ask the question again.

Ms. Veerasammy: Could the Minister please explain to the Assembly the necessity for an additional sum of \$1,050,000 on top of the \$7.5 million that was asked for in Budget 2017? Secondly, what is the model of the vehicle and what will it be used for, in which department?

Ms. Ally: They are three all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and they will be used to service Regions 1, 8 and 9. The additional sum of money requested is to cover the 14% VAT.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister just clarify for me whether they do attract VAT and if it is only at this Ministry where the VAT was not included on the vehicles? I am just curious, because I did not see that it was being asked of by any other Ministry.

Ms. Ally: I can only answer for the Ministry of Social Protection. I am asking for the money to cover VAT for these vehicles. Yes, the ATVs attract VAT.

49-492 Ministry of Social Protection - Social Services - \$1,050,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

49-493 Ministry of Social Protection - Labour Administration - \$925,120

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the reason for the increase and how many vehicles will be purchased with this additional sum of money?

Ms. Ally: One vehicle will be purchased and there is 14% VAT.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: What will this vehicle be used for?

Ms. Ally: It is to be used for operations in the Labour Department.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say if, by the purchase of this vehicle, there is an increase in the cost for fuel and lubricants?

Ms. Ally: I am sure it would, Sir.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: As it relates to the increase in cost for fuel and lubricants, it is if they were catered for in the original sum.

Ms. Ally: I am not asking for money for fuel. According to this, I am only asking for the money to pay the VAT so that we can get the vehicle. Obviously fuel was budgeted for when we were purchasing the vehicles, initially.

Bishop Edghill: The question that I am asking relates to all three of the vehicles sought by the Ministry of Social Protection. Have these vehicles already been tendered for? What was the process that was used to tender for these vehicles? I will ask those two questions for now.

Ms. Ally: Dealing with item 3 49-493, I would like to inform the Hon. Member that the purchase of this vehicle was done at Car Care Enterprise Auto Sales.

9.42 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: The next question, which I propose to ask the Hon. Minister, is if the finite sum has been voted, were there any bids submitted for a vehicle that could have been acquired for the amount that would not have necessitated us having to come for VAT? It is if there was a bid, which was VAT inclusive, that came in under the stated amount.

Ms. Ally: I cannot answer whether a bid was made and all of that. All that I can say is where the vehicle was bought from and that of all the transactions were done during time that the budget

was debated and the estimates were being presented. All that is being asked for now is the payment for the 14% VAT.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ali, you have the floor.

Minister of Public Health [Ms. Lawrence]: I wonder if the Hon. Member Mr. Ali would give way because I would like to provide the other part of the answer since, at that time, I was the Minister of Social Protection.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I am sure that the Assembly is interested in the answer so you may provide it.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you Mr. Chairman. At the time of budgeting for 2017 for these vehicles, when the tender was put out the cost that came back was exclusive of VAT. After the passing of the budget, these items attracted VAT and hence the Minister is before the Assembly asking for that additional sum so that we can pay for those vehicles. It was done through open tender, through the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB).

Mr. Ali: Was the tendering for this vehicle done whilst the budget was being debated, because you said that it was done before the budget was approved and measures were in place? Could the Hon. Minister say when was the award made?

Ms. Ally: Unfortunately, I will have to ask to submit that at a later date.

Bishop Edghill: Could I ask the Hon. Minister to state if the vehicle for operations for the Labour Department, the vehicle for the use of the Minister and the three ATVs are already in the possession of the Ministry of Social Protection?

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking a question or you are making a statement?

Bishop Edghill: I could repeat it for emphasis.

Mr. Chairman: Yes please.

Ms. Ally: There is no need to, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please give way Hon. Minister. Please repeat your question Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: I am asking, Sir, if the vehicle, at item 49-493 for the Department of Labour, the three ATVs, at item 49-492 and the vehicle which is to be used by the Minister, at item 49-491, are already in the possession of the Ministry.

Ms. Ally: The ATVs and the vehicle for the department of labour are not in the possession of the Ministry. They are at the Car Care Enterprise Auto Sales. The vehicle for the Minister is in the possession of the Minister, but VAT still had to be paid for it.

Bishop Edghill: Could I ask if it is one award for all three vehicles or whether it was three different awards?

Ms. Ally: I would not be able to answer that, Sir, but I can supply the answer later.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, is the Hon. Minister telling this Assembly and the people of Guyana that the Government of Guyana took credit from supplier of \$1.574 million and that a vehicle that has not been paid for in full is being used?

Ms. Ally: Yes.

Bishop Edghill: I would like the Hon. Minister to tell this National Assembly under which financial regulation the Government is allowed to take credit?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, I am the Minister of Social Protection. I am not a lawyer, so I cannot interpret the law.

Bishop Edghill: This is what must go to the Committee of Privileges. The public saw that.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps the Minister might undertake to provide the information since this is a question germane to the estimates that we are seeking from this Assembly for approval to engage. Perhaps the Minister might undertake, at some future date, to provide that information. It is a question that the Minister must, at least, attempt to answer.

Hon. Member, we await your assistance in this matter.

Ms. Ally: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I will comply.

Mr. Chairman: I understand the Hon. Minister to say that she will endeavour to provide the information at a later date, as an answer to the question which was raised by the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill. Would that be correct, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Ally: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member advise the Assembly whether an exception was made for the vehicle to be used by the Minister to be released without VAT being paid? As I understand, the Guyana Revenue Authority is behind everybody to pay VAT before a vehicle is released. Do you have a special exception, Minister, because it is a Minister's vehicle?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, that might be so.

49-493 Ministry of Social Protection – Labour Administration - \$925,120 agreed to ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this completes the consideration of all the items.

Question:

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2017 - Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$6,395,918,860 for the period 1st January, 2017 to 31st December, 2017.”

put, and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2017 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totaling \$6,395,918,860, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NO. 13 (N) & 54

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) & 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 of 2017) – Bill No. 6 of 2017 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph (2), of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended a Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 for 2017) - Bill No. 6 of 2017 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read for the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL AND FIRST READING

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

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 1 FOR 2017) – BILL NO. 6 OF 2017

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2017, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Question put, and carried.

Bill read for the first time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 for 2017) - Bill No. 6 of 2017 be read a second time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 1 FOR 2017) – BILL NO. 6 OF 2017

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2017, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 for 2017) - Bill No. 6 of 2017 be read the third time and passed as printed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the third time and passed as printed.

9.57 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I thank Hon. Members for their assistance in completing this matter.

Hon. Members, we will now commence consideration of the Tobacco Control Bill 2017 - Bill No. 5 of 2017, published on 16th May, 2017. Before we do so, Hon. Members, I would invite the Hon. Prime Minister to move the motion for the continuation of our consideration beyond the 10 o'clock hour.

Hon. Minister Ms. Ally, I see that you are standing. You have the floor.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, the Tobacco Control Bill 2017 – Bill No. 5 of 2017 has 12 speakers.

The Opposition Chief Whip and I discussed it and we have agreed that, although the next sitting would be Opposition day, we...

Mr. Speaker: It is Private Members' Day, Hon. Member. That is the correct expression. Let us try to maintain it.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Opposition Chief Whip and I discussed it and we have agreed that the Government's business, especially the Tobacco Control Bill 2017 – Bill No. 5 of 2017, would be dealt with at the next sitting of the National Assembly, which is 27th July, 2017, and that the following date in August would be utilised as Private Members' Day. [**Hon. Member:** What date?] The 3rd August, 2017 but I would leave that for the Prime Minister to name.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, I think that the House would be interested in hearing you after Minister Ally has spoken.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Sir. We did agree that we would not be opposed to the Government using the next sitting on 27th July, 2017 to discuss the Tobacco Control Bill 2017 – Bill No. 5 of 2017 and other matters of the Committees. The date for Private Members' Day would be shifted to 3rd August, 2017. In other words, the Government gets an extra day and we would have our day on 3rd August, 2017. That is the understanding that I have and what we agreed to. I believe that both sides of the House are in support of that.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you have heard the agreement which has been reached between the Government Chief Whip and the Opposition Chief Whip, which affects us all in the context of our work here. Our work for this evening is over and, in the circumstances, I would invite the Prime Minister to move the adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, before I move the adjournment, I recognised that the Hon. Minister of Social Protection said that she is not a lawyer but, certainly, I would like to say that what she is as a woman. I wish to congratulate her on being elevated to the position of General Secretary of the People's National Congress (PNC) which is a partner in this coalition. This must

be significant as one of the rare occasions when a woman accedes to the position of General Secretary of a political party.

In saying that, I move that this House be adjourned to 27th July, 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Congratulations to the Hon. Minister, Ms. Ally, Government's Chief Whip.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.03 p.m.