

# 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*

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72<sup>ND</sup> Sitting

Friday, 17<sup>TH</sup> November, 2017

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*Assembly convened at 2.00 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

### **Welcoming of Members**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I welcome you to this 72<sup>nd</sup> Sitting of the National Assembly. We will now be entering, if I may say so, the financial phase of our work and I hope that by working together we will achieve our objective within the time allotted. There are two announcements which I must make. Both are related to the Rights of the Child Commission.

### **Special statement to be presented by the Youth Ambassadors of the Rights of the Child Commission at today's sitting**

**Mr. Speaker:** At today's sitting, at an appropriate time, the Assembly will be suspended to enable the Youth Ambassadors of the Rights of the Child Commission to present a special statement to the National Assembly in commemoration of the anniversary.

### **Children's Conference to be held at the Ramada Princess Hotel**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Ministry of Social Protection in collaboration with the Ministry of Education has organised a children's conference which will take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2017. The conference has been planned in keeping with article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Guyana is a party. The conference commences at 9.00 a.m. at the Ramada Princess Hotel, Providence, East Bank Demerara. Hon. Members are invited to attend. Letters of invitation, concerning additional information on the conference, have been circulated for the consideration of Hon. Members.

### **Address to the conduct in relation to the business of the House**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the National Assembly is now being faced with attempts at introducing a new paradigm for conducting the business of this House. This National Assembly allows for views and competing views to be expressed vigorously, even passionately by all Hon. Members. The rules of the National Assembly protect the rights of all Hon. Members to speak, to hear and to be heard. It seems from recent events that the virtues we uphold in undertaking our business here are under attack.

Hon. Members, at the 71<sup>st</sup> Sitting of our National Assembly and on the occasion of the visit of His Excellency the President of the National Assembly, Your Speaker observed that some Members held pamphlets, placards and other bits of paper bearing slogans, some of them with poor spelling and even poor grammar. Behind those articles, the Speaker observed that the faces of some Hon. Members indulging this unusual conduct were barely visible.

I must tell you too, Hon. Members, that one placard spoke in support of democracy and another in support of free speech. It seemed to the Speaker then and it does so now that such calls in the context, in which they were made, were antithetical, supremely ironic. Those Hon. Members were not satisfied with that breach of the rules of this House. They descended into creating a din most suitable for a place other than the National Assembly. It did not seem to those Hon. Members, for that they continued to be, were in any way embarrassed to be part of that performance from their seats, while maintaining their places of honour derived from being Members of the House.

Do I hear a whisper in the chamber? It is the practice that when the Speaker is addressing this chamber there is silence. I ask Hon. Members to remember that.

I repeat it did not seem that those Hon. Members, for that they continue to be, were in anyway embarrassed to be part of that performance from their seats in the House, while maintaining their places of honour derived from being Members of the House. Their performance, unworthy of this House, demonstrates how Hon. Members can heap disrespect on the House while at the same time continuing to claim the honour which being a part of this House confers on all Members.

It is the rules, Hon. Members, which hold sway in this National Assembly, permit the exercise by and protect the rights of all Hon. Members, including those who were part of the exceptional parliamentary misconduct at the 71<sup>st</sup> Sitting of the National Assembly. There can be nothing in the display, not in any calls to be urged in this House that warranted the inexcusable and irredeemable performance of those Hon. Members. I recall some rules which direct conduct in this House. The relevant Standing Orders require Hon. Members to maintain silence when another Member is addressing the House.

As regards Hon. Members bringing pamphlets or placards or any other material for display in the House, this can only be done with the permission of the Speaker who may set such terms and conditions which appear to him appropriate. I will tell you that at the 71<sup>st</sup> Sitting, the Speaker was neither requested to grant nor did he grant permission for placards or pamphlets, whether with poor spelling or poor grammar, or otherwise, to be brought into this House. It seems as though those Members were by their conduct inviting the intervention of the Speaker in order, no doubt, to acquire for themselves a new opportunity at bedlam. Your Speaker, Hon. Members, remained oblivious to the invitation.

If the intention was to prevent the delivery by His Excellency the President of his message to the Parliament, then I must say to all Hon. Members that the purpose for which the 71<sup>st</sup> Sitting of our National Assembly was called was fulfilled. *Hansard* provides, in fullness, the text of the message from His Excellency, and all Hon. Members may have sight of it.

The presence of His Excellency the President, Hon. Members, in the National Assembly, is an occasion for signally remarking the event of his presence in the House. It is an occasion on which Guyanese, who are Members of the National Assembly, should gather to demonstrate respect to the state of Guyana and the personification of the state through the presence of His

Excellency the President. Guyanese are proud of the event so much so, that they invite others not of this House, and not all Guyanese, to share with them the signal event. It is a time for demonstration by Hon. Members and their invitees of all that is good and wholesome within this honourable House - attentiveness and fine manners.

I must tell you, Hon. Members, that I estimate that the proceedings of the 71<sup>st</sup> Sitting were viewed by persons in several jurisdictions. The stark fact is, however, that some Hon. Members, while taking the benefit which flows from the rules of the House, appear to want to hold themselves free to disregard the very rules of the very House from which they hold benefit, whenever observance of the rules does not accord with whatever action they wish to undertake. Yet, the very rules, which they had disregarded, are the very rules under whose protection they came to sit and to speak in the National Assembly.

It ought to be a source of deep contemplation and introspection, concerning the official conduct for those Members, who by their misconduct at the 71<sup>st</sup> Sitting of our National Assembly, fell so far short of acceptable parliamentary conduct in the display which they projected to such far-flung places as our broadcast was seen. The display shown by some Hon. Members of this House was both intemperate and misguided at the 71<sup>st</sup> Sitting.

Let it be recorded that this House strongly deprecates the conduct shown by some Hon. Members on that occasion. I have in the past reminded Members that they are called upon by their conduct to show veneration to this House. I repeat that call. Differences of views or philosophy or a particular matter may be always prosecuted in this House by Hon. Members, but that should be with decorum and respect, always remembering that some forms of behaviour should not be visited upon the National Assembly. The root of decorum and respect for one another, and for our institutions, exists for us all to travel. Let us all try to travel on it, notwithstanding our differences.

### **Leave to Members**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, leave from today's sitting has been granted to the Hon. Member Dr. Jennifer Westford, Hon. Member Bishop Juan Edghill, Hon. Member Odinga Lumumba, Hon. Member Irfaan Ali and Hon. Member Joseph Hamilton.

## **Death of a former Member of Parliament**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I was informed of the death of Mrs. Philomena Ameena Rayman, a former Member of Parliament who died on 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 at the West Demerara Regional Hospital after prolonged illness.

*2.15 p.m.*

She was 79 years old, having been born on 6<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1938. Ms. Rayman came from the People's National Congress (PNC). Following the elections which were held on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1973 under the system of proportional representation, the Third Parliament of Guyana commenced when the National Assembly first met on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1973. Ms. Rayman first became an ordinary Member of the National Assembly on that date. The Third Parliament was dissolved on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1980. Elections were held on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1980 under the system of proportional representation. The Fourth Parliament commenced when the National Assembly first met on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1981. Ms. Rayman was appointed a Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1981 until 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1981. Ms. Rayman again became an ordinary Member of the National Assembly from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1982 until the Fourth Parliament was dissolved on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1985. Elections were held on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1985. The Fifth Parliament commenced and the National Assembly first met on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1986. During the latter part of the Fifth Parliament, Ms. Rayman returned as an ordinary Member of the National Assembly from 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1989 and worked continuously until the Fifth Parliament, which life was extended from time to time, from 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1986 to 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1992, was dissolved on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1992. Ms. Rayman ceased to be a Member of the National Assembly on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1992.

Hon. Members, kindly stand with me and let us observe one minute silence as a mark of respect for the late Ms. Philomena Ameena Rayman.

*A minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect for the late Ms. Philomena Ameena Rayman.*

## **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Reports were laid:

(i) Annual Report of the Guyana Public Debt for the year 2016.

(ii) Annual Report of the Guyana Revenue Authority for the year 2011.

[*Minister of Finance*]

(iii) Annual Report of the Guyana Forestry Commission for the year 2016. [*Minister of Natural Resources*]

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **[Written Replies]**

## **COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA**

**Ms. Teixeira:** Could the Minister of State inform this House as to:-

(i) The status of each of the commission of inquiry (COI) listed below, and, whether preliminary and final reports have been submitted and when were they submitted?

(ii) The costs which have been, or, are expected to be incurred with each of the listed Commission of Inquiry including those that are not complete, or, those about to commence?

(iii) The moneys paid to each Commissioner on each of the listed Commission thus far?

(iv) When those, which have been completed, will be made public and brought to this House?

1. Commission of Inquiry into GUYSUICO – 2015;
2. Commission of Inquiry on the public Service – 2016
3. Commission of Inquiry into the disturbances and resultant deaths at Camp Street Prison – March 8, 2016;
4. Commission of Inquiry on Education – 2016;
5. Commission of Inquiry into the fire at the Drop-In Centre that led to 2 children's death – July 16, 2016;

6. Commission of Inquiry into conditions and benefits of Veterans – November 4, 2016;
7. Commission of Inquiry to investigate, examine, probe and report on the circumstances which led to the collapse of the mining pit and death of Keon Wilson – October 2016 to November 15, 2016;
8. Commission of Inquiry into allegations made by Dataram against CANU *et al* – 2016;
9. Commission of Inquiry into conflicts at the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority – 2016;
10. Commission of Inquiry into allegation of procurement at the Ministry of Public Health – November 3, 2016;
11. Commission of Inquiry into the discovery of a foreign aircraft from Colombia near the village of Yupukaru, Region 9 – November 16, 2016;
12. Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service Commission – 2017;
13. Commission of Inquiry into the interception and subsequent release of an unnamed private marine vessel in the sea space of Guyana between February 11 and 14, 2017;
14. Commission of Inquiry into Lands - March 11, 2017;
15. Commission of Inquiry into the attempted assassination of the President – July, 2017.

**Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd):**

1. Completed and final report submitted on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to Permanent Secretary of the Minister of Agriculture. Total expenditure \$51,844,239.00, The Chairman - \$1,980,000.00. Members - \$2,400,00.00 (One member) \$1,800,000.00. Comment: Professor Thomas was not paid since he worked gratis.

The final report was presented and laid in the National Assembly on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2015.

2. Completed and final report submitted on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016 to His Excellency the President. Total expenditure \$40,173,981.00, \$550,000.00 - Chairman, \$500,000.00 – Member. The report was presented to the Speaker of the National Assembly on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2016.
3. Completed. The final report was submitted on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016 to His Excellency the President. Total expenditure \$12,299,087.00, Chairman - \$500,000.00, Member - \$350,000.00. The report was submitted to the National Assembly on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
4. A preliminary report was submitted to Hon. Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine in May of 2017. The Ministry is awaiting the submission of the final report. Total expenditure \$26,743,300.00, Chairman - \$4,800,000.00 (total sum paid), Member - \$2,400,000.00 (total sum paid). Awaiting the submission of the final report to determine the date when this report will be laid in the National Assembly and its findings made public.
5. Completed. The final report was submitted on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 to the Minister of State. Total expenditure \$1,358,062.00, Chairman - \$350,000.00. The report was submitted to the National Assembly on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
6. Completed. The final report was submitted on 3<sup>rd</sup> March to the Minister of State. Total expenditure \$14,831,520.00, \$750,000.00 – Chairman. The report was submitted to the National Assembly on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
7. Completed. The final report was submitted on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016 to the Minister of State. Total expenditure \$5,196,912.00, \$750,000.00 – Chairman. The report was submitted to the National Assembly on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
8. Completed. The final report was submitted. Total expenditure \$1,091,674.00, \$500,000.00. This is a national security matter.

9. Not a Commission of Inquiry.
10. Not a Commission on Inquiry
11. Completed - Final Report was submitted on 25<sup>th</sup> November to the Minister of State. Total Expenditure \$8,355,114.00, Chairman - \$0.00. The report was submitted to the National Assembly.
12. High Court action has been filed in this matter.
13. Completed. The final report was submitted on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2017 to the Minister of State. Total Expenditure - \$8,262,179.00, Chairman - \$550,000.00, Member - \$500,000.00. This is a national security matter.
14. On Going.
15. Completed. The final report was submitted on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 to His Excellency the President. Total Expenditure \$5,403,737.00, \$500,000.00. The report was submitted to the National Assembly on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

## **2. BENEFITS GUYANA STANDS TO GAIN FROM OVERSEAS TRIPS UNDERTAKEN BY THE HONOURABLE FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER AND DELEGATIONS**

**Ms. Teixeira:** Would the First Vice-President and Prime Minister tell this House:-

- (i) The immediate and medium term benefits to Guyana associated with each of the overseas trips undertaken by the First Vice-President and Prime Minister and his delegations since taking office in May 6, 2015 to July 1, 2017?
- (ii) What actual benefits has Guyana gained in 2017 from each of the overseas trips undertaken by the First Vice-President and Prime Minister and his delegations from the time of taking office to July 1, 2017?
- (iii) What are the costs associated with each overseas trip, including size and members of the delegations, including spouses, undertaken by the First Vice-President and Prime Minister and his delegations for the same period?

## **First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]:**

### **October, 2015**

*Summit of Open Governance Partnership (OGP), Mexico City, Mexico during October 25-29, 2015*

The Government of Mexico invited the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (CRG) to send a high level delegation to the Summit.

Cabinet approved the attendance by the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Governance Hon. Raphael Trotman and Co-ordinator of the Department of Governance, Mrs. Tamara Evelyn Khan.

The Government of Mexico provided partial funding for airfares and the Government of Guyana paid for accommodation and meals, amounting to US\$3,225.00 for the Honourable Prime Minister and other two representatives.

The Honourable Prime Minister addressed the opening ceremony which was attended by high officials from 66 countries. More importantly, he exposed Venezuela for imposing then a trade embargo against Guyana in furtherance of a false claim to Guyana's territory.

The Prime Minister was cordially received by H.E. Enrique Pena Nieto, President of Mexico, who initiated talks for purchase of Guyana's paddy by Mexican importers. To date some 70,000 tons of paddy have been shipped to Mexico, representing one-tenth of Guyana's total production.

While in Mexico, the Prime Minister concluded important arrangements, as follows:-

- (a) National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) for scholarships to Guyanese in petroleum engineering. IPN committed to a monthly stipend of US\$1,000.00 for each Guyanese student who would take it up.

Admittedly, the return fares were too costly and the Prime Minister has requested an inquiry as well as for bookings for alternative, cheaper flights in the future.

### **December, 2015**

*Mercosur Summit, Asuncion, Paraguay during December 19-21, 2015*

Cabinet approved attendance at the Mercosur Summit of Prime Minister and Her Excellency Audrey Waddell, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Government of Guyana paid all expenses associated with attendance at the Summit, in the amount of US\$3,900.00 (of which US\$2,000 were for contingencies) plus G\$699,603.00 for airfares.

The benefits for Guyana, as member of Mercosur, are self-evident.

### **January 2016**

*Launch of Golden Jubilee Independence Anniversary of Guyana, Queens, New York.*

Cabinet approved the attendance by the Honourable Prime Minister as keynote speaker and guest of honour of the Government of Guyana at the event during January 15-18, 2016.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by his spouse, Mrs. Sita Nagamootoo.

The Hon. Prime Minister was accompanied by security/protocol officer Val Barnwell.

The Government of Guyana paid all expenses amounting to US\$2,400.00 plus G\$982,675.00

The Government of Guyana met miscellaneous costs for accommodation meals and out of pocket expenses in the amount of US\$4,200 of which US\$1,000 was a contingency allowance, for in transit accommodation.

Cabinet approved the travel from New York to India of Mr. Omarnauth Bissoon, Adviser and Aide to the Prime Minister and paid for his airfare and accommodation.

At all functions, including a meeting with the New Delhi Rotary Club where he was accompanied by the newly appointed High Commissioner to India, Dr. Andrew Pollard, the Prime Minister described the strategic location of Guyana as a Caribbean and South American state, and outlined business opportunities and incentives available for investors in the sub-region: Guyana, Trinidad and Suriname.

Guyana has since received expressions of interest from Indian investors in the sugar industry, aquaculture, agro-processing and granite production.

### **November, 2016**

*Attendance at 17<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Judges, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2016.*

His Excellency President David Granger was invited to attend as chief guest but due to his busy Estimates His Excellency nominated the Hon. Prime Minister to represent him.

The Hon. Prime Minister was accompanied by his spouse, Mrs. Sita Nagamootoo, and Mrs. Deann Ali, Personal Assistant/Confidential Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister.

#### **The organisers provided funds for accommodation and return airfares.**

The Government of Guyana paid for in transit accommodation and meals. Costs US\$5,600 plus G\$54,000 for gifts.

The Honourable Prime Minister was chief guest at the Conference, and was invited to make several addresses. He spoke to the issue of the rule of law and respect for international law and placed therein, the need for a judicial settlement of Venezuela's contention that the 1899 Arbitral Award is void.

### **May, 2017**

*100th Anniversary Festival to mark end to Indian indentureship, Capesterre Belle-Eau, Guadeloupe 19<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2017*

#### **Airfares and accommodation provided by sponsors**

The Honourable Prime Minister was accompanied by his spouse, Mrs Sita Nagamootoo. There were no security or protocol details.

The Government of Guyana paid for meals and out of pocket allowance in the amount of US\$1,250.

The event was organised by the Guadeloupe Chapter of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO).

Event shared multi-cultural heritage of Guadeloupe and the French West Indies.

Guyana was given greater exposure in the French West Indies, where there are many buyers who are interested in Guyanese handicrafts, and in promoting of tourism.

### **June 2017**

*Convention of the Federation of Tamil Organisations of North America, Minneapolis Minnesota, USA, during June to 3 July, 2017*

#### **Airfares and accommodation provided by sponsors**

The Prime Minister was invited as special guest to this business convention which attracted some 3,000 business executives, artists, eminent scholars, legislators from Canada and USA.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Special Assistant and Aide, Wallace Ng-See-Quan

The Government of Guyana paid miscellaneous costs in the sum of US\$1,000 for both the Prime Minister and his Aide.

#### **[Oral Replies]**

### **3. EXPENDITURE OF \$605 MILLION FOR DRUGS AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO ANSA MCAL**

**Ms. Teixeira:** On behalf of Member Bishop Juan Edghill, who is at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Training Programme, and who has asked me to represent him and to raise his question, I beg to ask the Minister of Finance Question No. 3 standing in his name:

The Minister of Finance, Hon. Winston Jordan, M.P., in his response to Notice Paper No. 101, tabled in the House on July 7, 2017, advised the House in writing that the request, by the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation for a waiver of the Procurement Act (S 28C) in order to purchase G\$605,962,200.00 of “emergency pharmaceutical supplies” from Ansa McAL, was not approved.

- (i) Can the Hon. Minister explain how, following the denial of the request for this waiver, was the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation able to proceed to award the tender to Ansa McAL and to proceed to make payments in violation of the Procurement Act and the financial rules?
- (ii) Can the Hon. Minister say what action, if any, has been taken by himself, or the NPTAB, with regard to this matter?
- (iii) Can the Minister say whether this violation has been referred to the attention of the Public Procurement Commission?

As you can see, the question was put on 24<sup>th</sup> July and at the last sitting of the National Assembly, we received an investigation report of the Public Procurement Commission (PPC) dated August 2017. However, we have noted in that report that there are a number of recommendations but no disciplinary action being recommended.

**Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]:** In relation to the first question asked, the answer is that there was no involvement of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) up to the time the Guyana Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) engaged ANSA McAL to supply the requested drugs and medical supplies. The NPTAB only received a request for single sourcing on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2017, by which time ANSA McAL was already engaged. The NPTAB never gave subsequent covering approval for this engagement, so I cannot say on what authority the GPHC was able to make payments.

In relation to question two, the answer is none for the time being, since the matter is engaging the attention of the Auditor General and the PPC. That was the answer at that time. Subsequent action by relevant Ministers, NPTAB, will be based on the finance recommendations of these two bodies.

In relation to number three, as indicated by the Hon. Member, NPTAB did not refer the matter to PPC, but NPTAB met with representatives from the PPC on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2017.

**Ms. Teixeira:** A supplementary question, Hon. Member. Question one actually has to do with the release of money. There is a corporation, a statutory body that has violated the Procurement Act but nevertheless commences payment to the company. We are aware that of the \$605

million, which was awarded, over \$100 million was already paid to the company. How could a Ministry release funds of that quantum without the Ministry of Finance's Budget Office and others, who monitor expenditures, be unaware of such an expenditure?

**Mr. Jordan:** The GPHC is an autonomous body, actually it is a corporation. It receives a subvention from the Government via the Consolidated Fund. These funds ought to be spent in accordance with the existing rules. The question was asked and I cannot indicate how the \$100 million was spent without actually getting the approval. I can only provide the answer in relation to this question. In relation to the supplementary question asked, I can do some research to see if there is an answer to that, but, as of now, I cannot give an answer to it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you wish a second supplementary question and it is one other after that.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Hon. Minister, you have me terribly worried with your answer. As the Minister of Finance, we have this view of you as knowing where everything is and where everything is going and now you disappoint me terribly, Sir, because you do not know where \$100 million has gone.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, I must ask you to stick closely to the purpose to which you are standing.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Minister, are you saying to this House that a state entity such as the GPHC could spend large quantities of money, beyond the threshold, without any alert system going off in the Integrated Financial Management and Accountability System (IFMAS) or the Ministry of Finance?

**Mr. Jordan:** I am saying the answer that I gave to the first question and the answer I gave to the supplementary question are the answers I am giving to the House at this time.

#### **4. RENTAL OF RESIDENCES FOR MINISTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT**

**Mr. Nandlall:** I beg to ask the Minister of Finance Question No. 4 standing in my name:

- (i) Would the Minister of Finance, Hon. Winston Jordan, inform this National Assembly which, if any, of the rental contracts for Ministers were considered, or, approved by the

Ministry of Finance, and, or the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board and, to provide the National Assembly with the relevant documentation of the approvals of the Ministry of Finance or the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board on these matters?

- (ii) Could the Hon. Minister inform this National Assembly as to whether the Government's policy on the rental and rates of accommodations for Ministers was/is guided by fiscal availability and budgetary considerations?
- (iii) Would the Minister identify which agencies' budgets in the 2015, 2016 and 2017 budgets made provisions for these expenditures and under which head/sub heads?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is aware, I think, after asking several questions in this House during the previous budget debates, that the Government indicated that all emoluments of Ministers are handled by the Parliament Office. Their salaries, their allowances and everything, even for their drivers, are handled by the Parliament Office.

*2.30 p.m.*

I think that the Hon. Member's questions were ill-directed to the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Ms. Teixeira, you are standing...

**Ms. Teixeira:** Supplementary question.

**Mr. Speaker:** You cannot ask a supplementary question on behalf of Mr. Nandlall.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am unaware of that.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes Sir, we could.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. Maybe you need to direct the Hon. Member. We cannot ask the Clerk to account and we cannot ask you. We must ask the Minister of Finance. This is a

budgetary matter. Therefore it is the Minister of Finance who answers for all. I do not comprehend the Hon. Member's answer to the question that he was asked.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, did you ask a question or was it a comment that you made?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes Sir. The Hon. Minister said...

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you asking a question?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Hon. Minister, are you saying to this House that you cannot answer to this issue of the allocation of funds for rental of Ministers' residences? As the Minister of Finance, you are responsible for all expenditures and you are answerable. The Parliament Office falls under you, Sir. You would be coming in a little while to answer for the constitutional budget of the Parliament Office. You would be answering, Sir.

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

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am asking the Hon. Minister to answer the question. It is not correct to say that it is not his responsibility. He cannot say that it is not his responsibility. It is his responsibility by the constitutional laws of this country.

**Mr. Speaker:** I would say to Hon. Members, if you are dealing with questions, let us do it the way we know it should be done. We should not stretch the opportunity given.

Is there an answer that you may have to the question that the Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira put, Hon. Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Jordan:** You would appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Member knows that I am not responsible for constitutional agencies. When the budgets are approved by the honourable House they are approved in lump sums. It is for the constitutional agencies to determine how they spend their budgets. I cannot be responsible for the budgets. The constitutional agencies are implemented under law.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, you have exhausted your questions.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am seeking your guidance, Sir. I am not asking a question. If the Hon. Minister or no Minister answered the question, is this House being told that nobody is accountable for the expenditure of moneys by Parliament Office?

**Mr. Speaker:** Was this the guidance that you need from the Speaker?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. I need your guidance. Who is going to answer a question of expenditure of the Parliament Office which houses Ministers and Members of Parliament?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. Mr. Isaac please proceed.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, I ask a question, can you assist me on this? I am asking you, as the speaker's assistance, on this matter of transparency and accountability, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, you asked the Speaker who would answer the question.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. I need guidance from you.

**Mr. Speaker:** You would get guidance in due course. The Speaker cannot offer you guidance if you address your question to the Minister of Finance or to a Minister in this House and that Minister gives you an answer. It must be that answer that lives until such time as another answer is provided. It cannot be otherwise.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I predict that in this House... Is this going to be a habit where Ministers do not answer and, therefore, as a people, we have no answers to accountability and transparency?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira... Hon. Member, do you have a question?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Yes Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** You have used the question already. Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, there is time for this in due course.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Sir...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, we would proceed as I have indicated. Please take your seat.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I have a fundamental question, Sir. The microphones are not working. I am assuming that it is for the whole House and it is not for the Opposition benches. When Ms. Teixeira did her presentation she was without a microphone, as for me, right now. I would want ... that when the Government get up to speak their microphones will be on. I am trying to clarify why this is so.

## **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READINGS**

The following Bills were introduced and read for the first time:

### **PROTECTED DISCLOSURES BILL 2017 – BILL NO. 12/2017**

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to combat corruption and other wrongdoings by encouraging and facilitating disclosures of improper conduct in the public and private sectors, to protect persons making those disclosures from detrimental action, to establish the Protected Disclosures Commission to receive, investigate or otherwise deal with disclosures of improper conduct and to provide for other related matters.”

### **WITNESS PROTECTION BILL 2017 – BILL NO. 13/2017**

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the establishment of a Programme for the protection of certain witnesses and other persons; and to provide for related matters.”

*[Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, at this time, before we proceed any further with our business, we would give an opportunity to the youth ambassadors of the Rights of the Child Commission (RCC) to present to the House the statement which they propose to present to the House. We would take a short suspension to allow this to happen. Members would retain their seats so that the statement could be heard by all.

*Sitting suspended at 2.42 p.m. for the presentation of the youth ambassadors of the Rights of the Child Commission.*

*3.02 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 3.03 p.m.*

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **MOTIONS**

#### **APPROVAL OF THE 2018 CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES OF CONSTITUTIONAL AGENCIES**

In accordance with Article 222A of the Constitution, the Assembly to resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of Expenditure of the Constitutional Agencies for the year 2018.

The Speaker to propose that the Estimates of the following Constitutional Agencies form part of the Estimates of the Public Sector for 2018.

- (i) Parliament Office – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1,739,832,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (ii) Office of the Auditor General – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$844,422,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (iii) Public and Police Service Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$158,709,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (iv) Teaching Service Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$125,158,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (v) Guyana Elections Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$3,715,210,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.

- (vi) Supreme Court – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,753,863,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (vii) Public Prosecutions – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$223,882,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (viii) Office of the Ombudsman – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$64,098,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (ix) Public Service Appellate Tribunal – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$105,550,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (x) Ethnic Relations Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$142,269,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (xi) Judicial Service Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$10,020,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (xii) Indigenous People’s Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$27,372,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (xiii) Human Rights Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$31,113,000 for the period 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (xiv) Rights of the Child Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$53,805,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (xv) Women and Gender Equality Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$45,997,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.
- (xvi) Public Procurement Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$251,912,000 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.*

*In Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I wish to report that the Business Subcommittee of the Committee of Supply met on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2017, and recommended the following for the consideration of the 2018 Budget proposals of the Constitutional Agencies, and passed a resolution on the matter.

The following are the matters agreed on:

1. That the time allotted for the consideration of the Budget proposals for the Constitutional Agencies would be five hours;
2. That the discussion would be based, strictly, on the response, recommendations of the Hon. Minister of Finance on each Agency during the consideration of the 2018 Budget proposals; and
3. That all Members would avoid repetitions on discussions and questions during the consideration of the Budget proposals for the Constitutional Agencies.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I now move that this Committee doth agree with the Business Subcommittee in the said resolution.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Copies of the Subcommittee's Minutes, Resolutions and Estimates have been circulated to Members at today's Sitting. I propose that the Estimates for the following Constitutional Agencies form part of the Estimates for the Public Sector for 2018.

You would have received, among your documents, a listing of the Agencies and I would, with your agreement, be moved to consider them in the order in which we have them listed in our Order Paper. Members would have received a document which has a summarised version of the Agencies and the sums involved for questioning. Perhaps you would find it more convenient to work with that.

## **CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

**Parliament Office – \$1,739,832,000**

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, could you say which figure you are giving? According to the Business Subcommittee of October, 2016, you have to present the figure for the Agency and then the Minister of Finance would put his figure and then we would have a discussion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I am getting to that.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** The sum proposed for the Parliament Office, Current and Capital Estimates, totalling \$1,739,832,000, I propose that that sum stands part of the Estimates 2018.

**Mr. Jordan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I propose a lump sum allocation for the Parliament Office in total of \$1,578,100,000, comprising Current - \$1,482,100 and Capital - \$96,000,000. The basis of this recommendation, first of all, is that, given our macro-economic outlook for 2018, given our projections for revenue, given our projections for borrowing and given the sustainability of all of those, and the fact that, in all cases, not only Constitutional Agencies, there was an abject failure to recognise these constraints and to submit budgets in line with the Budget Circular of July, this recommendation for this allocation is made.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I believe that this Parliament might have to recognise that there is a mistake. When the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) was amended in 2015 and we started this process of having the Constitutional Bodies dealt with separately, we did this before the Minister's Budget presentation. It was not as clear last year as it is now in the sense that the Minister has written in the legend and as he just said that the macro-economic outlook, projections for revenues and borrowing and sustainability of these have led to the cuts. But, the problem is that we do not know what his macro-economic outlook is. We do not know what the projections for revenues are. We do not know what the projections for borrowing are. We have a media report of July, which was circulated in the House and the Minister is not saying it, but I would say it for him, the performance is abysmally bad. It is dismal. But the Minister has not said that; the outlook for 2018 is absolutely dismal.

I appreciate the problems that the Minister is having. However, in the July, 2017 mid-year report... But when we come to 2018, and in order to look at all the Budgets, including the Constitutional Bodies, we must have a fiscal framework within which the Minister is deciding

who gets what. Otherwise, it becomes capricious and, when we begin to look at the Constitutional Agencies, there is definite indication of capriciousness in the allocation of money for Constitutional Bodies. Therefore, I am recommending to this House that: one, in future, the presentation of the annual Budget for the following year must precede any discussion on any Agency that is getting money for that year, inclusive of the Constitutional Bodies.

*3.17 p.m.*

Two, since the Minister has said on the floor here that the macro-economic outlook - he is not giving any adjectives - projections for revenue, borrowing and sustainability of these, in all cases, abject failure to recognise these and to submit budgets in accordance.... Before I ask about the issues in relation to the Parliament Office, could the Minister indicate to this House, at this point, at the first Budget Agency we are dealing with, both constitutional bodies that we are dealing with, what are the projections for revenue, for borrowing, what is the outlook, what is his outlook and his Government's macro-economic outlook so that we can adjudicate whether the cut for the Parliament Office for almost \$200 million is justified? The Parliament Office is the highest forum for lawmaking in this country. Unless the Minister is going to say that the cuts are going to deal with the Minister's rental of buildings, rental of accommodations and other accouchements that the Ministers are able to access through the Parliament Office... Could the Minister say, for the benefit of this House, in his cut of almost \$200 million for the Parliament Office, what are the macro-economic factors? What is the fiscal framework under which he is operating to guide us on why these cuts are, the first cut being Parliament Office?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, the budget is 10 days away and all the mysteries, so to speak, will be known by then but I just want to draw Hon. Members' attention to Act No. 4 of 2015, Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Act 2015, which was signed by His Excellency on 5<sup>th</sup> August. Section 3 (b) (2) on page 3 states:

“The Minister of Finance shall submit to the National Assembly the Minister's comments on the annual budget of a Constitutional Agency, including recommendations in sufficient time to enable consideration by the Assembly and those recommendations shall be limited to the overall request rather than line items.”

Mr. Chairman, I believe that, in submitting my recommendations, I have fulfilled both the letter and spirit of Act No. 4 of 2015.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The constitutional bodies fall under the Constitution. I think it is Article 228. The Act brought them into consonance with the Constitution. The Hon. Minister saying that the budget is 10 days away is of no consequence. It is 17<sup>th</sup> November and you have brought the Budgets of the Constitutional Bodies to this House today. Therefore, Sir, the debate on the 2018 Budget actually begins today. Telling us 10 days' time when you are cutting Constitutional Bodies that have asked for almost \$10 billion and you cut them by \$2 billion, you cannot really expect to say to this House that it is too bad; you will have to wait until the next 10 days when I come and make my speech. Sir, if that is the position of the Hon. Minister, I propose that we postpone the discussion on the constitutional bodies until the 27<sup>th</sup> November presentation of the Minister's Budget to this House. This is capriciousness on the part of the Minister and it is not acceptable.

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank the Hon. Member.

Are there any other questions?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, since the Hon. Minister has no answer and therefore believes that this approach of bullyism...

**Hon. Members:** What?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I said "approach". I did not say that he is a bully. I said "approach of bullyism". Mr. Attorney General, you must listen.

Mr. Chairman, the Parliament Office has asked for the budget of \$1.6 billion for 2018 and \$139.655 million for capital, totalling, \$1,739,832,000. When one looks at the budget of the agency, one recognises that it has a lot of work to do.

Last Thursday, when we met, over \$2 million was frittered away by having a Sitting in which we had piles of information and items to be dealt with which were not dealt with in this House. We have 13 Committee Reports sitting in this House from last year's November that cannot be debated. Yet, this Hon. Minister comes to this House and says, "I cannot give you the reason

why I do not have fiscal space. I cannot give you the reason why I do not know what the macro-economic outlook is.” This is top secret until the next 10 days’ time. Mr. Chairman, this is unacceptable and I am now putting to the House that we support the budget request of the Parliament Office of \$1,739,832,000. And I am asking for it to be seconded.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I rise to second the motion proposed by Mdm. Teixeira.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, do you have a comment that you would wish to make?

**Mr. Jordan:** No, Sir; I have no comments.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Sir, I would like to remind this House, particularly my Friend, Minister Greenidge, because Minister Greenidge was passionate in the Tenth Parliament about these Constitutional Bodies and Mr. Greenidge, in particular, led the way of the Opposition then to amend the Fiscal (Amendment) Act and to uphold the Constitution, Article 222. He led the way and he said, and it was recorded in this House, that the Government, by having these bodies as Statutory Bodies where the budget went to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Finance cut these budgets, was unconstitutional and that these bodies were independent and they deserved to get the money that they had asked for. Therefore, the fact that this Government over there brought an amendment to live up to their own points they made in the Tenth Parliament and now we have the Minister here undermining the very tenet and arguments presented by their own person, Minister Greenidge, in the Tenth Parliament... You are talking through two sides of your mouth all the time. The Parliament Office of this country deserves \$1.7 billion and it should not be cut unless the Minister is able to say what the macro-economic outlook is. Why is the economic outlook so dismal? You are not admitting that, Mr. Minister. The outlook is dismal. The economy is sliding down the hill. Admit it here and then we can talk about cutting.

*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, there is a motion before the House, proposed by Ms. Teixeira and seconded by Mr. Nandlall, that the sum proposed for the Parliament Office - \$1,739,832,000 - stand part...

*[Mr. Chairman in aside with Clerk.]*

Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, would you repeat the substance of your Motion?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. I propose that the budget request of the Parliament Office for year 2018, \$1.6 billion current and \$ 139,655,000, totalling \$1,739,832,000 be put to the House and voted on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Hon. Members, please bear with me for one moment.

*3.32 p.m.*

Hon. Members, thank you for your forbearance. The position, as I will state it now, is that there are two amendments on the floor. One issued by the Minister of Finance to this figure of \$1.7 billion, which is the total for the Parliament Office; and there is another amendment by Ms. Teixeira which is saying let this stand. The Minister of Finance's proposal is an amendment to that.

The way we will proceed is that we will take the first amendment first, which is the amendment that the Minister has proposed. Hon. Members, let me ask for your forbearance for a couple of minutes.

Ms. Teixeira, do you wish the floor?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Just one thing Mr. Chairman, the approved Business Sub-Committee's Report of 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 - where the resolution may help that, the National Assembly resolve into committee, the Speaker will propose the amounts, that is the total current and capital amount for each agency. The Minister of Finance will give his comments, Members will ask questions. And, thereafter, the Speaker will propose that the sum, current and capital, as recommended by the Minister of Finance, be approved for the agency. That is the resolution of the committee.

However, in between these, I put a motion that the Parliament Office be now put. Although you have read the Parliament Office's submission of 2018, I have put a motion calling for the vote on the actual submission by the Parliament Office. Therefore, that would precede what the resolution states - that you would then propose the sum recommended by the Minister of Finance. The Minister does not make the proposal, you do Sir.

*Question put.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** Division!

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Teixeira, do you maintain your call for a division?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes Sir. I want it on the record who is voting against the Parliament Office. I thought you would like me supporting you, Mr. Chairman. I am supporting your budget Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Chairman would not form the view that you are abusing the opportunity for a division, but we will have a division.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I want you to know that we are in full support that the Parliament Office of Guyana deserves \$1.7 billion.

Division

*The Assembly divided, Noes 25, Ayes 33, as follows:*

**Noes**

Mr. Bharrat

Ms. Veerasammy

Mr. Gill

Mr. Anamayah

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Charlie

Mr. Damon

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Chand

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Mustapha

Ms. Selman

Dr. Ramsaran

Ms. G. Burton-Persaud

Mr. Croal

Ms. Chandarpal

Dr. V. Persaud

Mr. Seeraj

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Nandlall

Ms. Manickchand

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Rohee

**Ayes**

Mr. Rutherford

Mr. Rajkumar

Mr. C. Persaud

Mr. Figueira

Mr. Carrington

Mr. Allen

Mr. Adams

Ms. Bancroft

Ms. Wade

Ms. Patterson

Ms. Henry

Ms. Charles-Broomes

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Sharma

Ms. Garrido-Lowe

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Hastings-Williams

Mr. Holder

Mr. Gaskin

Ms. Hughes

Mr. Patterson

Ms. Lawrence

Mr. Trotman

Mr. Jordan

Dr. Norton

Mr. Bulkan

Dr. Roopnaraine

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Ms. Ally

Mr. Williams

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. Nagamootoo

*Motion carried.*

*Parliament Office – \$1,739,832,000, as amended to \$1,578,100,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Office of the Auditor General – \$844,422,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I propose a lump sum for the Office of the Auditor General of \$783,876,000, comprising current expenditure \$766,357,000 and capital expenditure \$17,519,000. This recommendation is based on what I said before, but I can repeat. It is based on our economic outlook for 2018 for revenue, the macroeconomic picture, growth and challenges experienced in 2017 in many areas, and also the fact that none of these agencies responded to the circular in the manner prescribed.

**Mr. Dharamlall:** I present on behalf of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) the Budget 2018 proposals of the Office of the Auditor General current and capital estimates totalling \$844,422,000, for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018, specifically current budget \$826,903,000 and capital \$17,518,152.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I would wish you to respond as you did earlier in relation to this allocation.

Hon. Minister of Finance I would wish you to respond again.

3.47 p.m.

**Mr. Jordan:** Sir, before I respond, I seek some clarification from you. I proposed a lump sum of \$783,876,000 to this honourable House. I want to just seek whether this Standing Order is relevant, in light of the proposal to increase my proposal - Standing Order 76(2).

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, let me interrupt you. I understand from what transpired that the Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, is speaking on behalf of Mr. Irfaan Ali. What the Chairman did, in presenting as he did, should have been presented by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. The Chairman is absent and he has requested Mr. Dharamlall to speak, so to speak, on his behalf. After Mr. Dharamlall spoke, I requested that you simply repeat what you had said earlier.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I proposed a lump sum for the Office of the Auditor General of \$783,876,000 comprising current expenditure of \$766,357,000 and capital expenditure of \$17,519,000. My comments are more or less the same, which is, it takes account of the macroeconomic outlook and our projections for revenue, expenditure, growth in the economy, the challenges experienced in 2017 in many of these programmes to implement them and, generally, our outlook. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Hon. Member, gave us the same line again and that is that we are expected to somehow assume that he has in his head what that macroeconomic outlook is and we are expected to just go along, *mosey on down the line*, with Mr. Jordan. However, the Minister needs to define for this House, what was the fiscal framework within which the constitutional bodies and their budgets were constructed.

The Legend states and keeps referring to, one after the other, all 16, that the budget agencies - these agencies - did not fulfil the requirement of the 2018 Budget Circular, paragraph 4.4 - that is, no procurement plan is to be submitted for Budget 2018. Could the Hon. Member read for the House what is circular 4.4. This is because, certainly, he cannot give us the macroeconomic figures; he cannot give us what is the fiscal framework; he cannot give us what is the borrowing issue and the revenue issue; and he cannot tell us what is sustainable and what is not, but could

he read a circular that is referred to 16 times on this paper and tell us because I am sure that the circular came from the Ministry of Finance? What were the constitutional bodies supposed to comply with, which he said to this House, in a public document, and they fail to do so? Therefore, Sir, if we cannot get the data that we need, at least could he read for us the budget circular, paragraph 4.4. What is it that these agencies failed in doing that led to your scissor Sir, cutting them in such a capricious manner?

**Mr. Jordan:** I do not have the circular, but I will speak to what that particular aspect of the circular states. It talks about procurement planning. I will indicate to you, Sir, that, especially under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), we have not hidden anything, unlike certain situations in the past. We came out frontally and said the problems that were being experienced in the implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme. Our diagnosis: One of the problems that we really realise is that there was no procurement planning taking place in almost all of the agencies, if not all of them, whether they are constitutional or otherwise. As a result, we were given budgets more on *a hope and a prayer*, to be quite honest, that whatever people were telling us that it would come through and so on.

The realities of 2017 and, in many respect, even 2016 suggested that the budgets that we were giving to several agencies, most of the agencies quite frankly, would not have been able to be implemented because of a range of problems. One - problems to do with human resources in some of the agencies; two - problems to do with capacity in the private sector to execute; three - problems to do with understanding and an awareness of procurement matters; and so forth. There are a number and a range of problems and we are working with several of the agencies to try to iron out some of these problems. We admit that these problems, which we have inherited for the most part, during the last two and half years, will take some time before we get to the stage that we would want.

For this particular budget, we emphasise the need for agencies to show us their ability to spend sums of money that would have been allocated to them. This is because if they could not, then, in essence, if we are giving moneys to the agencies, even though they may need it, even though we could have provided it, if we are giving them resources that they cannot, given their capacity, spend, then it is essentially robbing another agency, area or sector, which could use those moneys, pending the improvement in the capacity of the existing agencies.

That is just one area, but there are a number of other areas of the circular where, generally, agencies failed, such that collectively putting all the agencies' requests together we were asked for requests in excess of \$600 billion. Our budget in 2017 was just about \$250 billion. It would not be much more than that in 2018, so you could see our difficulties in trying to look at a \$600 plus billion dollar request when resources are not even at \$300 billion. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Sir, I know that the Minister may have spoken generally just now, but the constitutional agency under review is the Office of the Auditor General. Is the Minister telling the House that the Auditor General... First of all, we seem to be operating in opposite spheres. It is the Auditor General that has the constitutional responsibility of reviewing the Ministry of Finance, not the other way around.

The Minister of Finance gave us a lecture just now about reviewing the regulations and procurement practices at the Auditor General's agency, so one is confused. Which body is overseeing which? The *Constitution* states that the Auditor General must oversight the Central Government. Here we have the Minister of Finance essentially exercising oversight over the Office of the Auditor General.

The specific question that I want to ask Mr. Chairman is whether the Minister of Finance is saying that the Auditor General's Office did not fulfil the requirements of the 2018 Budget Circular, paragraph 4.4 and did not produce a procurement plan as is required? I just want him to confirm that to me. I find it very difficult, and most people in Guyana would find it very difficult to appreciate that the Office of the Auditor General has a difficulty in complying with a simple budget circular. Could the Minister of Finance confirm that for me?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I think that you have before this honourable House a paper that is part of the House and has the comment there. I do not think that it bears repeating, it is exactly what it states in each case that no procurement plan was presented.

Mr. Chairman, while I have the floor, may I crave your indulgence. It is the impression that is being given over the last weeks and every time we come around to constitutional agencies. The impression is being given somehow that there is an independence, as it relates to the final determination of the budgets for these agencies... [*Interruption*] Do I have the floor?

In other words, if a constitutional agency X states that it would like to have \$2 billion next year, where before it was accustomed to getting \$200 million, the impression is being given that the \$2 billion is a done deal. In no budget in the world, none, could this ever take place. There is no such independence anywhere in the world.

All budgets are circumscribed by the availability of revenues, projected or otherwise. The borrowing would be sustainable, not allow inflation and would not put an unbearable burden on future generations to repay it. We have indicated, quite clearly, that the constitutional agencies have had an opportunity to present their budgets without any discussion by the Executive - presented directly to the legislature, through the National Assembly. The law only states to me to not even go into their line items and to just make a recommendation on a lump sum. This House, as it is doing so today, has the opportunity to reject or accept the Minister's recommendation. The House, having recommended or agreed on a budget for the constitutional agencies, then and only then, the Minister cannot intervene anymore. Unlike the other agencies, where, if next year at the mid-year, my projections for revenues do not come through, I have to go back to the other agencies and begin to talk cuts to their budget. I cannot do that to the constitutional agencies. Were I that desperate, I would have to come back to the National Assembly and crave your indulgence to do such cuts. I do not have to do so to cut the Ministry of Communities or the Ministry of Natural Resources or any one of those. Budgets are circumscribed by the availability of resources, those that are projected and the borrowing that would be consistent with a framework of low inflation and not putting undue burden on future generations. No one could expect a budget, as presented, unless it coincides with the framework. Three of those budgets, I believe on those proposals here, have remained unaltered, so to speak.

Keep in mind the figure I just mentioned. There was a request for in excess of \$600 billion for 2018. I only have the resources that are close to \$270 to \$280 billion. I have to make a determination and the *Constitution* gives me the authority as the Minister of Finance to bring budgets to this House and to have them debated and approved by this National Assembly. There were three by the way.

4.02 p.m.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Before I get to my question, permit me Sir to briefly reply to what the Minister of Finance said. Mr. Chairman, Article 222A (a) of the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*, that you invoked at the beginning of this exercise, sets out why these agencies were put there and why they are treated in this different manner. “To assure their independence”, that is what the Article states.

“the expenditure of each of the entities shall be financed as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund, determined as a lump sum by the way of an annual subvention approved by the National Assembly...”

One of the first legislative acts of this Administration was to pass the Bill which the Hon. Minister referred to - the Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Act of 2015. By this act, they outlined the procedure; they excised the Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Finance from the budgetary process and directed the constitutional agencies to bring their budgets directly here with a copy sent to the Ministry of Finance. The purpose of which was to insulate these budgets from the Minister of Finance in order to preserve the integrities, autonomies and the independence of these agencies. What the Minister of Finance is doing is defeating the entirety of the process, instead of cutting at Leopold Street; he is cutting now at Hadfield Street. Why did we pass this? Why did we bring in a new regime to which the President himself alluded to in his speech last week, when he was here? He Invoked Article 222A and said that constitutional agencies now enjoyed. The Caribbean Court of Justice’s (CCJ’s) President, at a dinner in Guyana recently, spoke knowingly of Article 12.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, you are not going to take us on that excursion. I would not allow it.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I said all of that in my perambulatory remarks to come to the question, in light of the Government’s public commitment to combat corruption and to improve transparency and accountability. Would the reduction of the Auditor General’s budget proposal by over \$60 million not affect the Government’s ability to discharge that public commitment to the people of this country?

**Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]:** Sir, if I may rise?

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. Hon. Minister, Mr. Ramjattan, you have the floor.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** This is an important point and I was there also in the 2001 period when we did what we did here and it is in accordance with Article 222A of the Constitution.

“In order to assure the independence of the entities listed in the Third Estimates-

- (a) the expenditure of each of the entities shall be financed as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund, determined as a lump sum by way of an annual subvention approved by the National Assembly after a review and approval of the entity’s annual budget as part of the process of the determination of the national budget.”

My learned Friend over there is giving the impression that, indeed, because the request is made for \$1.7 billion, they must get \$1.7 billion. No. It has to be brought here and the National Assembly will decide on it. That is the conditionality. Each entity shall manage its subvention in accordance with certain financial regulations and practices, approved by the National Assembly. I was here and I do not think my learned Friend was here when we were drafting all of these and putting them in the *Constitution*, so he would not be in a position to be aware that it was subject to the conditionality of approval by the National Assembly. That is what we are here for, not that which was requested necessarily will be automatically granted.

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gravel.*]

**Mr. Chairman:** An Hon. Member to my left is seeking to replace the speaker on the floor. That Member knows who he is and I am saying to the Member you should desist from interrupting the speaker.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, Mr. Ramjattan, have you completed your presentation?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I have completed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Ms. Manickchand you have the floor.

**Ms. Manickchand:** If all that Mr. Ramjattan said were true and if we are to believe everything that Mr. Ramjattan says, then we still have gaps left in what is happening here this afternoon. Mr. Ramjattan, the Hon. Member, says it is in this House that we must come, decide and approve on these budget requests. I think it would be foolhardy for anyone to think that just because a request is made, it must be given. Even Ministries will make requests that are denied because of the fiscal realities of the country. What we are engaged in this afternoon, is for us to do exactly what Mr. Ramjattan read just now - that he spent how many years drafting. He said that we must come to this House, pass this and decide what must be passed. What is the definition of this House? It is Government Members and Opposition Members. It does not comprise of Government Members alone who will come and railroad through their cuts in this House.

They must come here and answer the questions of the people of Guyana, which are asked through the Opposition Members of this House, before we can all determine that, yes Minister of Finance, you were asked for \$300 million, you have given only \$100 million because of these answers that you have given in relation to the questions we have.

Sir that would be Mr. Ramjattan screaming and shouting from the other side and the gravel did not go down I see.

Mr. Chairman, it is important, based on what the Government is saying, the constitutional provisions they are reading, that the Minister comes here and answers the questions of the people of this country. He has to come here and not say, repeatedly, no comments. He cannot come here and say, when we ask: Mr. Minister, we understand that you are cutting, could you tell us why you are cutting the Parliamentary budget as opposed to cutting the purchase....?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, one Member is on the floor, just allow that Member to explain and complete her statement.

**Ms. Manickchand:** It would be what we would expect in this House or what would be a reasonable interpretation of both that constitutional provision, as well as the Act that was passed here in 2015. What we would expect is that the Minister would submit himself to questions as to why he believes these agencies should be cut. My learned Friend over there got up very early and said that he cannot answer about how the people are going to spend their moneys. For example, the Clerk, the Clerk must say how he will spend his money. I am giving you a lump sum. We on

this side of the House have questions about how you arrived at that lump sum and the only response we have been getting has been a very opaque and bullish response that says no comment.

That sounds very much like the Regional Executive Officer (REO) in Region No. 2, who is reported to have said, “*ah could do wah ah want, yuh could tell whoever yuh want to, but I runnin things hey, ah could do wah ah want*”. That is not for this House. In this House, you come here, you bring it, you ask for our support and you have to subject yourself to the scrutiny of the people of this country, through the questions that we have on this side of the House. That is the way I anticipated this exercise going. If it were not for that, the Minister may as well make this somewhere else and pass it secretly because we are not getting any answers to the any of the questions we are asking here right now. That we find as unacceptable and we call on the Minister of Finance and the entire Government to subject themselves to the scrutiny anticipated by the *Constitution* and the Act passed in 2015. I thank you Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank the Hon. Member for her statement. Hon. Prime Minister, you have the floor.

**Prime Minister and First Vice-President [Mr. Nagamootoo]:** Earlier in the day, we approved a resolution, setting out the timeframe within which each of the constitutional agencies would be considered. It was the Business Sub-Committee, of the Committee of Supply, of the National Assembly that brought the resolution and concurred on both sides of this honourable House. What we have here, in all five hours, if you permit me Sir, is an attempt of procrastination to defeat the resolution of the National Assembly, to which the rules, the Standing Orders, of the House, does not entertain in terms of any dilatory motion or attempt at motions. We have seen motions from the floor and we have another mechanism, by another ruse, to frustrate the work of this National Assembly.

First of all, Standing Order 76 states that if you were to move an amendment when a matter is before the Committee of Supply, it needs a notice to be given of the motion of amendment. We have heard from the noisy Opposition’s side, that being vociferous and destabilising, they could move a motion, to put the Opposition to move a motion to say that the submission by the constitutional agencies shall be put to a vote. What is the practice here?

If you allow me, it was this side of the House, the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Coalition Government that moved these agencies from statutory agencies into constitutional agencies against the persistent opposition of that side of the House. Why? It was because we want to honour the provision of the *Constitution*. Article 222 of the *Constitution* has an over- arching protection for constitutional agencies - to protect their independence. When they were in the Government, these Hon. Members refused to guarantee the independence of this National Assembly. They refused to guarantee the independence of the Judiciary. They refuse to guarantee the independence of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) so that they could manipulate them using finance as a weapon of control and manipulation. They must speak, the Hon. Member, beseeching with forked tongues here today in this honourable House, when they come here to defend the constitutional agencies. What a day of shame that those people who stabbed the constitutional agencies in the back and cut their throats, could set themselves up here today.

*4.17 p.m.*

Sir, I speak passionately on this issue because I have seen the various attempts by Hon. Members of this House to frustrate the consideration of these Estimates. The law, the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act and its amendments, provides for the Minister of Finance to issue a budget circular. Within the budget circular, section 7 of the Act, states that the Minister shall give the guidance as to state the considerations that have to be taken in agencies submitting their proposals. It cannot be an open-ended proposal; it cannot be a fiscal irresponsibility in making these proposals. It must be within the framework of national affordability. That was what was guiding the other side when it was here and prorogued the National Assembly to destroy parliamentary democracy. That is what they were talking about, that we cannot afford and the nation's workers have to be contending with 5% wage increases, and no more in one year.

Sir, I say this today that this National Assembly should move on the recommendations made by the Minister of Finance and that the question be put, because you cannot interrogate the constitutional agencies. They are a lump sum which is presented here. Today, I want this dilatory tactic to be put to an end because it violates the Standing Orders of this House. [*Applause*]

**Ms. Manickchand:** Thank you very much Sir. Your Honour, I understand the emotion and the lengthiness of the Prime Minister's speech. He does not get to speak anywhere else, so this is his forum, and so that is why he stands here and gets all ruddy and red.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Ms. Manickchand, are you speaking on the matter before us?

[**Mr. Nandlall:** What did the Prime Minister speak on?] I address my question to Ms. Manickchand. You will confine your remarks to that.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Sir, we are debating in this Assembly a particular issue. I am responding to a presentation made just now and I am saying that I understand why Mr. Nagamootoo, who is now wiping the sweat off his face,...and I was explaining that he does not get to speak anywhere else and he has no position anywhere else. If the entire process...because the only thing that the Prime Minister said that made any sense was that all of this was done to give independence to these constitutional bodies. That is what we are fighting for. If they are independent, then we must be able to say or the Minister must be able to say why he is cutting their budget. He had said no comment.

For example, let us take the Audit Office of Guyana, a constitutional agency that is expected to scrutinise the spending of the Government's Ministers, Government's offices and the 'Government's relatives'. That is what it is supposed to do. If you are cutting a constitutional agency called the Audit Office of Guyana, the very least we can do is hear from the Minister. Why is it he is doing that? Why is it that he believes he should cut the Audit Office of Guyana? We should be entitled to ask those questions. Why are you cutting the Audit Office of Guyana? Why are you cutting the Supreme Court? Why are you cutting these bodies that are supposed to look out for, safeguard and protect our democratic gains? Why are you cutting them as opposed to cutting other Ministries perhaps? These questions have not been answered. We have been told that we cannot even ask them. The answers, which we are getting, are "no comment" and "I refuse to answer. That is not an answer from someone who submits himself to scrutiny.

That cannot be good governance and that cannot be the independence that the Prime Minister spoke about, just now, that was intended to be given to these bodies. It is not independence. When they say to you that "I want 'x' amount" and you say "No. You are scrutinising us too much. Take quarter of that." Is that making them independent? The Prime Minister fails, it

appears, to appreciate that very basic concept and in his response attempted to distract from that fact by making noise. That noise does not take away from the fact that we are in this Assembly, this afternoon, asking questions on behalf of the people of Guyana, questions that have gone and continue to go unanswered.

I would take my seat with this. We have questions, based on the submissions made by the Hon. Minister of Finance in this House. We demand that they be answered so that we could be properly informed about how we should vote on these issues. If those questions cannot be answered, or if the Minister is refusing to answer the questions, then the nation would judge you. The lack of answers would speak and the nation will judge you. You are opaque; you are failing in transparency. You refused to be partners in good governance or persons who subscribes to good governance and effectively you are saying that you have no role here, this afternoon. We demand answers to the questions we have on these papers that we are expected to vote on this afternoon. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Chairman:** I believe we would put the question after your comment, Ms. Teixeira.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, we have asked, from the very first constitutional body we looked at, and that is the Parliament Office, could the Minister tell us what the fiscal framework is, the macro-economic outlook? What are the issues that he has raised that led to the cutting of revenues and borrowing, and other? No question has been answered. I went further to propose to this Assembly - because there is a mistake being made, and we made mistake, and I am not blaming the Government, but it is an oversight - that the Minister of Finance's budget speech should come prior to any budget agency and, therefore, should come prior to the constitutional bodies. Therefore if the Minister has not done that and he wants to deal with the outlook, and the reasons for the cut is the outlook, he should then have the decency to say to this Assembly, a preview of the ten-day notice, when we would hear his *magnum opus*, is that the reason why I am cutting back is because the statistics show the following.

Now, the Minister had said that he has a request of \$600 billion for 2018. Wow, you have my sympathy. The problem, Sir, which you are dealing with, is that we are dealing with 16 constitutional agencies which have requested \$10 billion. I do not know which requested the rest of \$590 billion, but I assume it is your Ministries and therefore that is where the cut should take

place. The constitutional bodies asked for \$10.3 billion in total and they have been cut to \$8 billion. You knock out \$2 billion. You still have \$590 billion to deal with elsewhere. Therefore, Sir, there is something wrong with your mathematics, because, in my view, you are cutting your nose to spite your face, because in this case constitutional bodies are the agencies that uphold good governance, rule of law, transparency and accountability. By these capricious - and I keep repeating the word “capricious” - cuts with no foundation and no explanation, you cannot tell us as the legend which you have dutifully repeated. I assume that you would repeat for the next 14 heads that your recommendation takes account of the economic outlook for 2018.

Sir, when I listened to the speech, last week, in the National Assembly, November 2, when I listened to the speech at Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) meeting, when I listened to your speech, Minister Harmon’s speech and the Attorney General’s speech, all of it is that the outlook is good. Everything is good. Why is it, if everything is good, you are cutting the constitutional bodies by \$2 billion? It is because you know, Sir, that the real truth of it is that the economy is in a tailspin, and he cannot answer in this Assembly.

I am appealing that the Auditor General’s office...In fact, this Government went and spent almost a \$118 million between 2015 and 2016 on forensic audits. The constitutional law makes it very clear that any audit in Guyana must have the approval of the Auditor General of Guyana. However, those audits did not take place with the Auditor General. However, a \$150 million was spent on private auditors, but here it is the Auditor General’s office which is asking for \$844,422,000, which is \$60 million more than what the Minister wishes to give. Again, Sir, you have cut your nose to spite your face, because I am sure with the level of scandals, corruption and the investigations, there will have to be more audits and the hiring of more people, privately, and more commissions of inquiries.

It is one last comment. This Assembly seems to have forgotten the Public Accounts Committee of this Assembly, made up both Government and Opposition and is chaired by the Opposition, scrutinises and approves the budget of the Audit Office of Guyana, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and onwards. Its budget comes to the Public Accounts Committee. I am speaking as a former Member of the Public Accounts Committee. I remember when the Auditor General would have brought his half year report for us to see his performance on whether the office was up to standard and where it was slipping, in terms of the execution and implementation of its budget,

current and capital, and then it would have come back again for us to discuss and approve the Audit Office of Guyana's budget. The 2018 budget of the Audit Office of Guyana went through the Public Accounts Committee and was scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee Members and the Government. I believe that there are a couple of Ministers on that Public Accounts Committee who are not supposed to be there in the first place, but they are who would have reviewed that, unless they were travelling and so, maybe, they missed the meeting.

However, the point is that this budget of the Audit Office of Guyana has had the approval of both sides of the Public Accounts Committee of Guyana. Certainly I would assume that the Government Members would have asked advice of the Minister of Finance, that were the economic outlook good or not, could they support the \$60 million more that the Audit Office of Guyana wants? Clearly, it is not only the Constitution that is being undermined, but it is a parliamentary committee that has its powers under the Constitution to deal and approve with the budget of the Audit Office of Guyana. Therefore we do not accept the cut that is being proposed by Minister Jordan. We believe that it is capricious; it is mean-spirited; it is unconstitutional. We believe that the Audit Office of Guyana should have full support.

**Mr. Chairman:** I would remind Members that they are not to impute improper motives to Hon. Members.

*Office of the Auditor General – \$844,422,000, as amended to \$783,876,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

4.32 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we would take the suspension now, but before we do, I would bring this to your attention. I will bring to your attention the fact that we have approved five hours for consideration of these Estimates - I think it is polite if the Hon. Member awaits the end of the Speaker's statement before he withdraws from this chamber - that we have allowed for each item a certain amount of time. The two items, which we just considered and which were allocated twenty minutes each, together, have exceeded an hour.

The third point I want to make is that we are to be discussing the cuts or the proposals made by the Minister. The other matters, which would form part of the discussion here this afternoon,

did not contribute much to that. Hon. Members, we must decide whether we are going to be able to look at each item or what we are going to do is to have a quick treatment of each, because at the end of the five hours we will finish this work. We will now have the suspension.

*Assembly resumed.*

*Sitting suspended at 4.34 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 5.41 p.m.*

*In Committee of Supply*

### **Public and Police Service Commission - \$158,709,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** I recommend the lump sum of \$95,140,000 for the Public and Police Service Commission comprising a current expenditure of \$92,140,000 and capital expenditure of \$3 million. My comments are there, further on the right hand, and remain the same, in terms of these proposals being made in the context of the economic and financial projected situations for 2018.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** The agency requested a total of \$158,709,000. The Hon. Minister is proposing, as he stated, \$95,140,000, which is 40.1% less than what was requested by the agency. My question therefore, Mr. Chairman, specific to the Public and Police Service Commission, would the Hon. Minister say to us what he took into consideration to reduce the request by 40% and how assured he is that this sum provided will adequately cause the Public and Police Service Commission to be able to complete its work for 2018? That is my first question.

**Mr. Jordan:** The subjective question of how comfortable I am with the recommendation I have made, I merely say that no agency will feel not aggrieved if it put a certain budget and it did not get it. As I have been explaining, *ad nauseam*, these lump sum recommendations are made within a certain framework. I have repeated it on several occasions, and it is at the further right of the columns. All I will say, and I will indicate again, that the explanations have been given in each case why the recommended amount is being made at this time.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** Mr. Chairman, I must thank the Minister for his very objective response to my subjective question. I need to follow up that with a more subjective question. The Hon. Minister

has recommended that \$3 million be provided to the Police and Public Service Commission for its capital allocation year 2018, when that agency got \$4,226,000 for the year 2017. From the documents presented, it is shown here that that sum of money was not reduced in any way during the year, so it means that agency had the capacity to spend. The agency, Sir...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I interrupt you to enquire. Is this part of the figures that you are mentioning?

**Mr. G. Persaud:** That is the capital Estimates, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am afraid I am not seeing them.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** Yes Sir. It is under the capital Estimate of \$3 million. In 2017 it is \$4,226,000. There are all right there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you using this document?

**Mr. G. Persaud:** Yes Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** My first question is that there is a reduction from the allocation of 2017 what prompted that. Two, the agency requested \$20 million and it is getting \$17 million less, which is 85.2% less. All of this objective response that the Hon. Minister is giving us, still I am dealing with an agency specific, the Public and Police Service Commission. I would be very grateful if the Minister can give us specific information with regard to this commission because it is an independent agency.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, to answer the question, it is only to remind the Hon. Member that I am restricted in my response to lump sum over all the request, rather than line items. The Hon. Member is pushing the envelope here in trying to go into details. I am only restricted to the lump sum and I have given an explanation for the recommendation that I have made.

**Mr. Rohee:** These two commissions have been in the public profile within recent times. A lot has been spoken about the efficacy of these two commissions. They have attracted public attention, one being the case of blood on the carpet, the other one being the question of

promotions being held up and the commission of inquiry, that we all know. I am situating my question in the context of recent disclosures, in respect to these two commissions. In addition to that, the Hon. Minister of Finance mentioned four constraining criteria for allocating resources. He mentioned, for example, the human resource capacity, understanding of procurement planning, capacity to implement and inability to spend.

My question to the Hon. Minister is in light of the public statements and disclosures, with respect to these two commissions, on the point of view of the impact of the work of these two commissions and the body politic as well as the four criteria mentioned. Do you consider the 40% cut in the allocation or the request that was made by these commissions be sufficient for these two commissions to fulfil the responsibilities which they have recently been called upon to fulfil, in the light of the policy statements that have been emanating from the Government?

**Mr. Jordan:** I cannot speak to some of the issues that the Hon. Member has mentioned. All I would indicate that I do not consider my recommendation as any cut. I consider my recommendation in the context of the global budget for the economy for 2018 and the number of other explanations that I have given. If you check the spending of this particular agency, it has been comfortable at the figures indicated here. What is not mentioned here is that you do not necessarily have an idea of where these agencies were at, say October month end. You may have an idea from their Estimates of the numbers presented here and of what we are projecting to end of the year, but you did not have an idea of they were at October. We are just assuming that the budgets, which we gave them, that they would eventually spend it by the end of the year. Perhaps, if I had let you had an insight into where each one was at October, you might have had a better appreciation while some of these totals might have... I would not go there. I will stick with what the law requires and it requires me just to speak to the lump sum total, which I have done.

**Mr. Rohee:** The life of these two bodies has expired. I read somewhere, quote and unquote, talks are taking place with respect to ensuring that these two bodies are put in place, sometime of this year. They expired in September. Talks are taking place with a view to having these two bodies being put in place sometime later this year. The money that is to be allocated, which is being sought after through this honourable Assembly, with respect to these two bodies, could the Hon.

Minister give us an idea how it is intended to have these moneys spent by two bodies which are virtually non-existent at this point in time?

5.54 p.m.

**Mr. Jordan:** The bodies are not existent, yet we are suggesting that they can get more at this time. I am not sure of the position I am in, betwixt and between. Again, let me suggest that I will speak only to the lump sum of \$95,140, 000 and, at this stage, I would like to ask if we can put this to the Assembly.

*Public and Police Service Commission - \$158,709,000, as amended to \$95,140,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Teaching Service Commission - \$125,158,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** I am happy to recommend the budget request of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), a lump sum of \$125,158,000 comprising current expenditure of \$114,742, 000 and capital of \$10, 416, 000.

**Ms. Persaud:** Of the 16 agencies we have before us, on my quick run through, that only two were given their full amounts, the Teaching Service Commission being one. I heard earlier the Hon. Minister of Finance saying, in his comments, and it is listed here, that the agencies that were cut did not fulfil their requirements of the circular and there was an absence of the procurement plan. It is also listed next to the Teaching Service Commission. For clarity, could the Hon. Minister say what differs or what activated his reasoning to approve the requested sum?

**Mr. Jordan:** Just when you thought that it was safe to move on, since the requested sum was the same as the recommended, you made your error. We examined this request and we thought that we could accommodate it in the context of the explanations given, notwithstanding that the procurement plan was not presented. We are not letting the cat out of the bag. This is one commission that has worked closely with the Ministry and we feel confident that it will be able to spend \$125 million, having been given \$123 million in this year.

*Teaching Service Commission - \$125,158,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Guyana Elections Commission - \$3,715,210,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** I propose the lump sum of \$2,900,000,000 for the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), comprising \$2,739,910,000 current expenditure and \$160,90,000 capital expenditure for the reason stated in the last row.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Hon. Member, I am sure you are aware, according to an announcement by the Minister of Communities, that there will be local government elections next year, December. In fact the Minister of Communities actually gave a date, 7<sup>th</sup> December. Why would the Government cut the budget of GECOM, the proposal of \$3.7 billion to \$2.9 billion, which is less than what it got in 2016, which was the year for local government election year? Why would the Government cut the proposal by \$800 million when it is expected to have local government elections in a year's time? The point that is most worrying is that the Government has consistently reduced GECOM's budget. In 2017, during the budget debate, we went through this exercise. GECOM asked for \$5.8 billion, part of which was to have the new house-to-house registration that should have started July this year. However, this Assembly, under the recommendations of the same Minister of Finance, cut it to \$3 billion. In fact, what it is showing is that it spent about \$2 billion, but there were no continuous registration exercises in 2017, whatsoever. There have been no by-elections at the local government level because there are a number of vacancies of some persons who were not sworn in, who have emigrated and who have died, and issue such as those. There should have been a by-election of constituency candidates and, as I said, there has not been one continuous registration in 2017. However, in 2018, there is supposed to be local government elections.

Before I get in to the actual GECOM issues, I am trying to comprehend why this Government would cut its election machinery by \$800 million when there is a local government election planned for a year from now. I would like an explanation on that first.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, you will recall that we have had back-to-back elections hosted by GECOM in 2015 and in 2016 when the local government elections were held after two decades. In those two back-to-back elections, GECOM would have acquired significant hardware and software for which it does not have to duplicate in the 2018 Elections. The GECOM did not have any responsibility to come to the Ministry, but on its own volition, not invited, it came and

requested explanations, and so forth. After going backwards and forward, and with some use of some moneys it has in 2017, which it would have otherwise had to send back, it feels reasonably confident that this lump sum could be used to finance local government elections. Local government election in 2018 is a certainty. This Assembly knows and appreciates that because it is a certainty, that has to be held. If per chance the GECOM falls short of resources, it knows it will be able to come back to the Assembly to get those resources to ensure that the democratic return of local government elections in 2016 will continue.

**Ms. Teixeira:** For the local government elections of 2016, the figure, which was presented, was \$3.7 billion. There were no local government elections this year and there was no continuous registration this year, in which there is supposed to be one every six months. There was none done this year and therefore no identification cards were issued for this year. No registration of people and no biometric scans of people were done this year, therefore you can have savings. That is not the point we are making. There is a local government elections in which there will have to be continuous registration, there now will have to be a preliminary voters' list, there will have to be a voters list, there have to be several ballots...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Ms. Teixeira, you are asking questions and you are making speeches. Kindly stay within the confines of our agreement, ask the question.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, I wish you would put that stress on the Minister, because I am asking for them to explain to me how a Government cut could a budget for local government elections and you are asking me to explain. Ask him to explain, Sir. Put the pressure on him to be accountable, not me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Teixeira...

**M. Teixeira:** I am telling you, Sir, this is serious business. The GECOM is the life of this country. Mr. Chairman, I would not be rude to you. This budget, by the way, is not even a commission's budget. This is a budget of the Chief Elections Officer because the commission has not functioned for over a year. It is the commission which has to approve this budget. Mr. Chairman, you are asking me to ask a question. Ask him to be accountable to this Assembly. Why are they cutting the budget by \$700 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Teixeira, take your seat. Is there any other question? Hon. Members, will address questions based on the recommendations made by the Minister. We have to save the speeches. We have to do that.

**Ms. Teixeira:** What about when Mr. Nagamootoo spoke for half an hour?

**Mr. Chairman:** I would charge, Hon. Members, to be careful with their asides, the Speaker might just hear. Is there another question to be addressed on this item?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, we are calling for the budget of the...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Ms. Teixeira, someone else is on the floor. Would you take your seat, please?

**Mr. Neendkumar:** I yield to her.

**Mr. Chairman:** You do not yield. I give the floor. If you do not wish the floor, then you say so. Do you wish the floor?

**Mr. Neendkumar:** I yield to Ms. Teixeira first.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you do not yield here. Either you wish the floor and you have it or you do not have the floor.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Not now. I will write.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is there another question on this point?

*6.09 p.m.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Standing Orders of this country on the financial expenditure and estimates. Standing Orders 75 and 76 allow us to debate matters of finances. Therefore, Sir, whether you do or do not like my questioning of the Minister, I have a right as a Member of Parliament (MP) to ask the Minister to provide the information for this House. I am not breaking any rule, Sir.

I am a Member of Parliament asking a Minister to provide the reasons for the cut and what was the rationale behind all the cuts. You know there is Local Government Elections and you appointed a Chairman. The Commission has not functioned for a whole year.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Twenty-two years we did not have local government [*inaudible*].

**Ms. Teixeira:** Be quiet. Go stamp yourself.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is there another question, Hon. Member?

Hon. Minister, did you hear the comments? Do you have an answer to the question? Is the Hon. Minister answering the Chairman?

**Mr. Jordan:** There was no question to me. I thought that there was back and forward play. If you ask me, I would like to put the question to the House.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Thank you, Sir. Hon. Minister, I did find it odd that every explanation has the same reasoning, one of which is...

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Manickchand, you should be addressing the Chairman, even if you are speaking about the Minister.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I was not speaking about the Minister. My understanding of this process is that we are questioning the Minister. If Your Honour wants me to direct my question to the Minister through you, I would be happy to do that.

**Mr. Chairman:** That, Hon. Member, is how it should be conducted in this House.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I am so guided. Through the Chairman, I am asking the Minister, given the fact that every agency that was brought to this House has a very broad-brush, identical explanation as to why they are being cut or reduced from what was being asked for, in this case the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) by almost \$ 1 billion, more than \$815 million...

One of the reasons advanced by the Minister was that the agency was unable, last year, to spend its allocation. Last year, this particular agency had a very different circumstance. There was no Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission. Many of the activities that are statutory and should have happened did not happen. There were no Commission meetings which means less electricity was used, less food, less staff, *et cetera*. We have since had a unilateral appointment of a Chairman for GECOM.

[**Ms. Charles-Broomes:** Fit and proper.] If, indeed, the gentleman is fit and proper, then there should be a full, functioning Commission and it would be expected that that Commission would be able to spend what my Friend, the Minister, is saying that it was unable to spend last year. It is very odd and frightening that you would now cut from the budget of the Guyana Elections Commission when we are closer to an election than we were last year and when we are certainly closer to a Local Government Election for which we already have a date; almost \$1 billion would be cut from the budget of the Guyana Elections Commission.

Could the Hon. Minister kindly provide an explanation for that reduction, given that the explanation given in the comments cannot stand up, that is, it was not spending last year and it now has reasons to spend this year?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I gave, in the opening when you asked me to put the recommendation, an explanation. I do not believe that I need to go over that explanation because it is already in the records for the lump sum of \$2.9 billion.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, there was no procurement plan submitted for Budget 2018 from the Guyana Elections Commission. I would like to ask whether all the revelation that we had in the newspapers about the Auditor General's investigation that there were no procurements, whether the Minister is cutting to save \$250 million because of that.

Secondly, I would like to ask whether there would be any house-to-house campaign for the Local Government 2018 Elections. We would definitely need a new Registrant.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, again, I repeat that I gave the explanation as to how we came up with the lump sum. The GECOM is a Constitutional Agency and I cannot speak about any activities in GECOM as to whether there would be house-to-house campaign or whatever. I assume that that is matter within GECOM's domain and not mine.

**Mr. Rohee:** Even though the question that I would pose to the Hon. Minister does not fall within the ambit of those which he identified here, could the Hon. Minister say, when we heard from the President that "We have to do better this time," whether he is sure that that figure would be able to deliver or would be able to do better this time?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, projections are based on available information and how you see the future, basically. To ask me whether I am sure, I believe it is only the Lord Almighty who is sure about anything. We are mere mortals. We have projections here based on what we perceive would happen. If all were to go as planned, that is a reasonable expectation that this amount, together with the amount that GECOM may be able to garner from friendly donors, would see the Elections, in 2018, being held. I think that that is the end game that the elections must be held in 2018.

*Guyana Elections Commission – \$3,715,210,000, as amended to \$2,900,000,000, agreed to and ordered to start part of the Estimates*

**Supreme Court - \$2,753,863,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I recommend the sum of \$1,874,730,000 for the Supreme Court, comprising Current Expenditure of \$1,564,354,000 and Capital Expenditure of \$310,376,000. I propose this lump sum for the reasons stated therein.

**Mr. Nandlall:** The rubric of the Supreme Court does not accurately capture the magnitude of this agency. The rubric of the Supreme Court really covers the entire Judicial Branch of Government. We are not speaking here about a constitutional agency, proper; we are speaking about an entire Branch of Government. We have already seen the Parliament Office's budget cut by \$200 million – the Legislative Branch of Government. We are moving to another branch of government.

I have seen, after having examined the budget of the Supreme Court, plans to build a new Magistrates' Court that is so needed at Golden Grove, East Bank Demerara, to take off the workload from Providence Magistrates' Court.

There are plans to build a new Magistrates' Court at Kamarang. The current Court is located in a nursery school at Kamarang after school is finished.

There are plans to extend the Court of Appeal building to accommodate new Judges who are appointed and to accommodate a new secretariat that would house the Judicial Service Commission. Those are only some of the capital projects that are listed in the budget of the Judiciary.

The Minister of Finance is reducing that budget by nearly 50%. The total budget that is being asked for is being reduced by \$879,133,000. Almost 50% of the budget of the Judiciary is being cut. If I break it down to Capital Expenditures, the capital budget that the Judiciary requested was \$927,276,000 and what is being proposed by the Minister is \$310,376; only one-third of the capital budget of the Judiciary is being proposed. The capital programme of the Judiciary will be crippled because it is being cut by two-thirds.

The Current expenditure is being cut by \$262,233,000. These are massive cuts. They total about 50% of the Judiciary's budget. The Judiciary must be recognised for what it is. It is, perhaps, the most important institution in this country for the maintenance of the society as a civilised society.

Sir, my question to the Hon. Minister of Finance is: how does he expect the Judiciary to discharge its important constitutional functions with these massive cuts to its budget?

The Judiciary is not known for capricious and arbitrary compilation of a projection or its budgetary past. These massive cuts, I dare say, would create serious problems in the Judiciary's ability to discharge its constitutional mandate.

*6.24 p.m.*

I ask the Hon. Minister of Finance to tell us what impact assessment, if any, he has done in relation to the consequences of the reduction that he is proposing...will have on the programme, capital as well as current, on the Judiciary. What impact assessment has he done to see what consequences will flow in terms of the Judiciary being able to discharge its constitutional functions?

Thirdly, what principles did the Minister use to inform himself to arrive at these sums that he is excising from the budgetary proposals? There must be some principles, and whether he had any discussion, at all, with the Judiciary to understand the implications.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, the allocation to the Supreme Court, in 2016, the actual expenditure was \$1,712,827. Relative to my recommendation for 2018, that will be a \$162 million increase, relative to and consistent with its pattern of spending, and also consistent with resources I believe that I can garner at the national level for next year. Unlike the Hon. Member, I cannot speak to the line items of any one of the Constitutional Agencies. The law only allows speaking to a lump

sum, and I have made my comments on the lump sum of the Supreme Court, and I, like the Hon. Member, believe that the Judiciary has a critical role to play in our society and this role it has been doing. I believe that it will continue to do so in 2018 and the years to come. This sum will help the Judiciary to do a little bit more than it did in 2017.

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

**Mr. Nandlall:** Yes, specifically to the Capital Programme of the Ministry. The Minister of Finance is proposing that we cut the Capital Programme of the Supreme Court by two-thirds. Does he recognise or would he concede that, if we are to accept and vote on his motion to cut the Capital Programme by two-thirds, the Judiciary would not be able to carry out its Capital Programme at all?

**Mr. Jordan:** I believe that, if we look at any trend in expenditure, we would not be speaking about cuts here; we would be looking at increases. The capital for the Supreme Court - I do not have the 2016 number broken down... But, at least in 2017, it was roughly \$248 million and we are proposing an increase in Capital Expenditure for 2018 to \$310 million. I do not see where the cut is where this is concerned.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now put the question for the Supreme Court...

Hon. Members, as soon as Mr. Nandlall is finished speaking, I will speak.

**Mr. Nandlall:** A Minister asked me a question, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, if I were to follow you, I would say that you ought not to be having a question asked of you at this time which you must feel obliged to answer when the Chairman is addressing the Chamber.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I hope that Minister Patterson is guided.

*Supreme Court – \$2,753,863,000, as amended to \$1,874,730,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions - \$223,882,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I recommend a lump sum of \$174,290,000 for Public Prosecutions, comprising current expenditure of \$160,290,000 and capital expenditure of \$14,000,000 and I do so given my comments stated therein.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I rise again to say that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) is the constitutional office responsible for prosecution of all offences in this country – very important function for law and order and for public peace and order. This is a relatively small budgetary proposal coming from the agency. The agency is asking for \$223,882,000, and that has been cut by \$50 million, when the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, in his Budget, pays special prosecutors \$100 million; six prosecutors are being paid \$100 million and here the DPP's Office, a constitutional office, is...

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]:** If it pleases you, Mr. Chairman, I think, already, we have an Hon. Member before the Committee of Privileges, in respect of figures.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I only wish to remind you that, on a Point of Order, you state the Point of Order and then you resume your seat.

**Mr. Williams:** Standing Order 40 (a), Sir. The statement that the special prosecutors are being paid \$100 million is erroneous and I ask the Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, to withdraw that statement.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you have said that it is erroneous and Mr. Nandlall will so be guided and we will make no further reference to that, unless he can prove otherwise. Please proceed.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I am reflecting on what was told to this House, during the last budget debate, Sir; \$100 million was allocated for special prosecutors. Sir, am I allowed to speak and present my...

**Mr. Williams:** I am objecting on Standing Order 40 (a). Again, the Hon. Member is disrespecting this honourable House.

**Ms. Teixeira:** He is disrespecting you.

**Mr. Williams:** He cannot disrespect me. It is a clear...

*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*

**Mr. Williams:** I am not the House.

Sir, it is clear, again, that Mr. Nandlall is bent on misleading this honourable House. It is not the first time; Mr. Nandlall is on record in the court.

*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Attorney General, we cannot proceed in this way. If we are talking about a particular Point of Order, let it remain there. You have made the point.

**Mr. Williams:** As it pleases you, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. I will be giving directions to Mr. Nandlall that he will not make reference to the \$100 million that you have alleged and the Attorney General disputes. You will proceed otherwise.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Having regard to budgetary allocations made in last year's Budget, in relation to prosecutions, in relation to an agency outside of the DPP's Office, I am asking now, how can this House approve a \$50 million reduction of that important agency that is charged with the responsibility of prosecuting crime in Guyana in a crime ridden society? I would have thought that the Minister of Finance would have persuaded the DPP's Office to increase its budgetary proposals and here it is the budget of the DPP is being reduced by \$50 million.

In terms of capital budget, \$19,980,000 is what the DPP's Office is asking for – \$19 million. Certain people rack that up in travelling overseas. Nineteen million dollars is being asked for and only \$14 million is granted for the DPP's Office. Six million dollars is being cut from a budget of \$19 million. Are we serious about crime in this country?

And then there is current: the DPP's Office is asking for \$203 million and \$160 million is being proposed, a cut by \$43,612,000, and we are telling the people of this country that we are serious about crime fighting and about putting criminals behind bars.

Mr. Minister, I, again, first of all, ask you to justify to us, in this House, these cuts of what are comparatively small sums of money, and, yet, you seek to reduce it. We are respectfully asking

you to provide us with reasons so that we can support your cuts. Alternatively, we are respectfully asking you to withdraw your proposal to further reduce what we consider to be a deficient budgetary proposal.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, again, to the Hon. Member, where he sees cuts, I see increases, and it is right before the Hon. Member's eyes. In 2016, the DPP's Office spent, roughly, \$152 million. In 2017, it is likely to spend \$168 million, and, in 2018, we are recommending \$174 million as a lump sum. We feel secure that this sum is adequate and, despite all the *sky is going to fall in*, we had this debate last year, earlier this year, and so on, none of these constitutional agencies have fallen apart and none have suggested to any one of us that they have been constrained in executing their duties because of budgets that they have been given.

*6.39 p.m.*

I think everyone recognises that these budgets that are submitted not only by the Constitutional Agencies, but, as I said, by all other Agencies, are budgets I would love, had we the resources. But we do not have the resources. There is a reality before us and each Agency has been given an increase. No Agency has been given any reduction; each Agency has been given an increase in the context of the likely resources to become available during 2018. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

*Public Prosecutions – \$223,882,000, as amended to \$174,290,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Office of the Ombudsman – \$64,098,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I propose the lump sum of \$57,813,000 for the Office of the Ombudsman, comprising of Current Expenditure of \$56,144,000 and Capital Expenditure of \$1,669,000 and I do so for the reasons stated therein.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Sir, I stand with deep sympathy for the Ombudsman. I have read his budget. The gentleman is asking for an executive desk and chair, and they cut the budget. Apparently, there is no desk and chair for the former judge.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Nandlall, your question...

**Mr. Nandlall:** My question, Sir: I am questioning the discretion and calling upon the conscience of the Hon. Minister to withdraw the cuts. The Budget of the Ombudsman is only \$64,098,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Nandlall, what is the question?

**Mr. Nandlall:** I am asking the Minister, having regard... You see, Sir, the Minister of Finance is not telling us whether... In fact, he said that he has no business in looking at the line items and, perhaps, that is why his proposal appears to be insensitive to the budgetary requests. If one is to examine the budgets...

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Nandlall, for the third time, what is the question, please?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Mr. Finance Minister, have you looked at the budget proposals of the Ombudsman? Have you looked at what the moneys he is requesting are to be used for? There is a request for a desk, a chair and a coffee maker and these are being rejected. I am asking the Minister of Finance... This is an important Office. It is a former judge and the judge is asking for a desk and a chair. I am asking you to withdraw your proposal to reduce the budgetary request which could possibly deprive the Ombudsman of this country of an executive desk and chair.

*Office of the Ombudsman – \$64,098,000, as amended to \$57,813,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$105,550,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I recommend the sum of \$51,884,000 for the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, comprising Current Expenditure of \$46,884,000 and Capital Expenditure of \$5,000,000. I base these recommendations on the comments I provided therein.

*Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$105,550,000, as amended to \$51,884,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Ethnic Relations Commission – \$142,269,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I propose a lump sum of \$86,534,000 for the Ethnic Relations Commission, comprising solely of Current Expenditure of \$86,534,000 and I do so on the comments considered therein.

I just want to say, at this stage, that this amount does not take into account the establishment of this Commission because there is a bit of uncertainty as to when this would happen. But, as in the case of the Public Procurement Commission earlier this year, I believe, or late last year when we were doing the Budget for 2017, should this Commission be established, then we would come back to this honourable House for a supplementary provision to make certain that its work would continue.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister's comments are rather interesting because, on the Order Paper, since 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2017, has been the Report to the Committee on Appointments and the nomination for the Ethnic Relations Commission. So, when the Minister says that he does not know when this body is going to be created, maybe he is right; he really does not know because it has sat on this Order Paper from April. Attempts to get these 13 Reports dealt with have been totally unsuccessful. The Ethnic Relations Commission is sitting, waiting to be approved by this House or thrown out, whatever you want to do with it, since 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2017. Therefore, as a constitutional body that should have been appointed and has not been appointed yet...

The Minister said that he is not making a massive cut. He did cut, actually, from \$142 million to \$86 million. The fact is that the Commission could have been appointed, has not been appointed and, if we are going at this rate in this House, we may not reach the Ethnic Relations Commission until sometime next year February or March, after Budget.

*Ethnic Relations Commission – \$142,269,000, as amended to \$86,534,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Judicial Service Commission – \$10,020,000**

**Mr. Jordon:** Mr. Chairman, I recommend the lump sum of \$10,020,000 for the JSC, comprising solely of Current Expenditure of \$10,020,000. Happily, again, this coincides with the request made by the JSC.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Mr. Chairman, I wish to seek some clarifications from the Minister. When budget proposals are reduced or a reduction is proposed by the Minister, we are told that the recommended allocation takes into account the economic outlook, *et cetera*. Now, there is no

reduction and we are told the same thing. We are told that this Agency did not comply with the procurement plan and all the things that are...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, could you ask the question?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Yes, but, Mr. Chairman, you have to allow me to ask the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** I want you ask the question and not to perform.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Minister, you have given us here, a couple of reasons in the Ministry of Finance (MOF) comments of this document, as to why you have reduced or you are proposing a reduction of budgetary proposals presented to you by the Constitutional Agency. Here, you are not proposing any reductions, but the same remarks are made. So, the economy is dim; we have challenges...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall...

**Mr. Nandlall:** I am getting there, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Nandlall Mr. Nandlall, please get there now.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Yes, Sir. And the JSC is guilty of violating your budget circular and yet you do not offer any reduction or prose any reduction. Could you explain this inconsistency, sir?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, the reason stated there stands. This is clearly in the discretionary powers of the Minister that he allowed the request. It is small and inconsequential and we have no problem in giving the JSC, in this case, what has been requested.

*Judicial Service Commission – \$10,020,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*6.54 p.m.*

### **Indigenous Peoples' Commissions - \$27,372,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I recommend the lump sum of \$25,683,000 for the Indigenous Peoples' Commissions (IPC), comprising solely of current expenditure of \$25,683,000, for the reasons stated there. Thank you.

**Ms. Pearson-Fredericks:** Mr. Chairman, I have listened to the Hon. Minister who said that we should not look at cuts and that we should look at what is given. The Indigenous Peoples' Commission has requested \$27,372, 000 - Guyanese dollars. This Commission, in order to fulfil its mandate, in 2014, its budget was \$24,424,000. The Indigenous Peoples' Commission has just asked for an increase. Since the Hon. Member is saying "let us look at the increase" the Commission asked for an increase of \$2,948,000. That is what was requested, which brings it to the \$27,372,000 - an increase of \$2,948,000 and this is being denied - a small increase. The Indigenous Peoples' Commission has to service the rural areas and where ever. Yes, there is working being done. Mr. Chairman, you spoke about listening, why is it that persons are not allowed to speak fairly, fluently...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you must ask your question now. Thank You.

**Ms. Pearson-Fredericks:** My question is, since we are talking about the increase, this little increase that was requested by the IPC, why is it, what reason - give us a reason why the \$2,948,000 was not granted to the IPC? Thank you.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, again, I would like to assure the Hon. Member that I do not deal in cuts here. If you look at the Indigenous Peoples' Commission, it has been steadily increasing from \$21.2 million in 2016 to \$25.7 million in 2018, as recommended by me. I do not see any cuts there and I believe that the Commission is doing good work and it will continue to do good work in 2018 with this lump sum. Thank you.

**Mr. Charlie:** Mr. Chairman, I heard the Hon. Minister alluding that the budget was not cut, but clearly we can see that approximately \$2 million was deducted. Mr. Chairman, why is it that the Hon. Minister of Finance could not use his good judgment to give an increase to the Indigenous Peoples' Commission, bearing the fact the many issues plaguing the Amerindians in this country? Why could the Minister not give an increase or just leave it at that sum?

Mr. Chairman, another question to that: Does the Hon. Minister and the Government particularly, know that with the slash of \$2 million it is a breach of the Indigenous peoples rights under the United Nations declaration?

Mr. Chairman, I think the Indigenous Peoples' Commission deserves its full quota and I am asking that the \$2 million be reinstated for the Indigenous Peoples' Commission's work.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I do not really have much to add. I have indicated and explained twice on this already so, Sir, I do not really have much more to add.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Sir, at the beginning of this session, we listened to the speech by the Youth Ambassadors who spoke about hinterland development and Amerindian rights, health and education, *et cetera*. Here is the Indigenous Peoples' Commission, which is a constitutional body, mandated by the *Constitution* to advance and protect the rights of Indigenous peoples, that the budget which it proposed, the Minister is trying to be ingenious about increases. We are dealing with the proposal by a constitutional agency and a recommendation of a Minister. His attempt to fudge the issue is not of any importance.

The Commission has asked for \$27.3 million and it is being given \$25 million. I am asking the Minister, did he hear the Youth Ambassadors? If he did he would be very supportive of what my Colleague, Mr. Charlie, is proposing which is this miniscule amount, which would have been the same or less than what was spent last Thursday to have a Sitting when no item was dealt with. Sir, I am, therefore, asking for you to reinstate the money for the Indigenous Peoples' Commission, as requested. It is a miserly amount of money.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, I believe a question was addressed.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, unfortunately, I do not have any comments because the same explanation will hold and perhaps the Hon. Member will get more questions on the same explanation. As I said, I am not dealing in cuts here. I saw progressive increases in the budget of the Indigenous Peoples' Commission and I beg to ask if you can now put the question. Thank you, Sir.

*Indigenous Peoples' Commission - \$27,372,000, as amended to \$25,683,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Human Rights Commission - \$31,113,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I propose the lump sum of \$31,113,000 for the Human Rights Commission, comprising solely of current expenditure of \$31,113,000. I am happy to note that this is the same as the request by the Commission.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say when will the Human Rights Commission be set up? According to the *Constitution*, the President has to indicate to the Leader of the Opposition to provide six names from which the Chairman will be chosen. It is now two and a half years since the Government has taken over. When can it be anticipated? You have a budget here and no Commission and each year you are increasing the budget as you said, but there is still no Commission two and a half years later.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, you will appreciate that that is a difficult one for me to answer. The request that was made by the Human Rights Commission suggests that they are actually bodies in there, but the Commission itself may not be in existence. It does not mean that people are not there and that they do not have to be paid.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister has me titivated. If in fact Minister, there is no Commission in existence, who is asking you for the money?

**Mr. Jordan:** The people who are there.

**Ms. Teixeira:** If there is no Commission who is asking for money for the Human Rights Commission? No. Do not mix up the stories. You do not know.

**Ms. Chandarpal:** Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence to just say that the Human Rights Commission shall be responsible for the efficient functioning of the Secretariat. That is for all the Human Rights bodies which are supposed to be made up of the Ethnic Relations Commission, Indigenous Peoples' Commission, Rights of the Child Commission and the Women and Gender Equality Commission. By not having the Ethnic Relations Commission in place, it is preventing the work of the Commission from being done.

However, what exists at the present moment - there are a few junior officers who are being paid as contract workers to do the work. It does not auger well for the functioning of these commissions because there are junior staffs who are taking on responsibilities. Minister, you had me worried when you said that you do not know the fate of the Ethnic Relations Commission. If the Ethnic Relations Commission does not function and is not constituted, then we will have a problem with the Human Rights Commission. Mr. Chairman, having said that, what we have in the Staffing Details...

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you going to ask your question now?

**Ms. Chandarpal:** Yes, the Staffing Details we have, under Contracted Employees, there is \$18 million that has been allocated, but there are no indications of the number of staff. I think that is missing from the Staffing Details - line item 6116.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Ms. Chandarpal, line items are the very nature of what takes place here.

**Ms. Chandarpal:** No Sir, there are no Staffing Details. I am bringing that to the attention of the Minister. It is because every...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you must ask a question now. I have been indulgent. You must ask a question now. If it is a question you want to address to the Minister, do that now please.

**Ms. Chandarpal:** Minister, could you please provide us with the amount of people who are presently working at the Human Rights Commission?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I am a bit surprised here because, as you well know, I cannot interrogate the line items of a constitutional agency. I could only speak to the lump sum. I think I will be in violation of the Law if I were to go down that road - asking me how many staff and so on. Sir, I could only speak to the \$31 million.

*Human Rights Commission - \$31,113,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*7.09 p.m.*

### **Rights of the Child Commission – 53,805,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I propose a lump sum of \$42,695,000 for the Rights of the Child Commission, comprising \$42,365,000 current expenditure and \$330,000 for capital expenditure. I do so in the context of the comments stated there.

**Dr. Persaud:** Just today, in the National Assembly, we listened to Youth Ambassadors clearly and comprehensively asking for many things from us. Today, we saw the Prime Minister had a lengthy tirade about the righteousness of what they presented.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Dr. Persaud.

**Dr. V. Persaud:** If I be allowed to speak I will get to it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Dr. Persaud, you cannot proceed the way in which you started. What we are doing here is affording everyone an opportunity to ask question. What is happening is Members are interpreting that opportunity in their own way to the detriment of the work here. Please proceed, but I will not allow you to cast aspersions on anyone in the course of what you are doing.

**Dr. Persaud:** Mr. Chairman, young people, through the Rights of the Child Commission, expects many things to happen. I have seen that \$11,110,000 have been cut from the requested budget, from \$53,475,000, which is \$805,000 that is requested and is now down to \$42,695,000. What is interesting Mr. Chairman, and I would like the Minister to tell me, there are only three members of staff on the Rights of the Child Commission and the Commission is responsible for all the work for the entire country. If there is expansion of the programming and there are requests in terms of human resources, seeing that there is one clerical staff, one technical staff, and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), will the Hon. Minister be coming back to us for more money for this agency, which is clearly starved of much needed resources?

**Mr. Jordan:** I think that we all heard the children earlier this afternoon and we are all committed to do more for our children and our youth. The Rights of the Child Commission is only one of several bodies that we have looking into the welfare of children. I am sure all of them are working assiduously to enhance the welfare of those citizens of our country.

As I said Mr. Chairman, sometimes, when we look at the glass as being half empty, we look at it in a very negative sense. If we look at this glass as being half full, then we will see that the Rights of the Child Commission has been progressively increasing its budget from approximately \$33 million in 2016, to a recommended \$42.69 million in 2018, roughly an almost \$10 million increase in a short space of time for a small entity. This cannot be a scenario where we are unsympathetic to our children.

You asked the question whether they can come back. I say to you that these lump sum resources are within the purview of the constitutional agencies, once they have been approved by this House they can be used flexibly by the constitutional agency. I would advise not to come back because, based on the projections that we have, these resources that we cannot cut, if we do not get the projected resources, will not be available. Thank you Sir.

**Dr. Persaud:** Mr. Chairman, I am a little worried when the Minister said, “they cannot come back”. I am assuming that, when this sum was requested, there must have been some thought as for the programming that is planned; as to what needs to be done with regard to children who have been enduring much in this country, in known cases of abuse; and so many other issues that affect children. Minister are you saying, through the Chair, that the Rights of the Child Commission will not be seeing any major increase even going forward and it is just totally up to your discretion to give it a paltry increase here as seen?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I thought the Hon. Member made a commentary, which I am happy to digest and take under advisement.

*Rights of the Child Commission \$53,805,000, as amended to \$42,695,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Women and Gender Equality Commission - 45,997,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** I propose a lump sum of \$43,135,000 for the Women and Gender Equality Commission comprising \$42,435,000 current expenditure and \$700,000 capital expenditure. I do so given the comments made there.

**Ms. Veerasammy:** Mr. Chairman, last year it was fiscal space and this year it is non-provision of a procurement plan. When this constitutional agency was guided to not increase its budget by more than 10%, I would like the Hon. Minister to guide as to why would he then go and cut the request which was made by this constitutional body.

I have two more questions that I would like to ask the Hon. Minister. One - is this a way of curtailing women’s work and empowerment work in this country? Is this a way of not accommodating the promotion of women’s empowerment in Guyana? Could he explain to us why the Women and Gender Equality Commission was not granted the request when it went to such a length to ensure that its budget, from before, did not increase by more than 10%?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, if nothing else, these comments have given one a chance to smile. It is because when we go down to the lengths to which we are now going - if this is a way of curtailing women’s rights and so forth, I do not think that is necessary to be quite honest. We are

all friends on both sides of this House and we love our women folks. We will do nothing to abuse or disabuse them. At least I hope no one in this House would. [*Interruption*]

It has nothing to do with attempting to curtail women's rights and women's advancements. It has more to do with what we have been indicating for the entire evening and into the night at the moment. Mr. Chairman, I feel at this stage that the lump sum that we have proposed is adequate for the Women and Gender Equality Commission to do its work that it has been doing admirably and will continue to do during next year, essentially.

**Ms. Veerasammy:** If we really do mean what we say, that we believe in Women's empowerment; we believe that this country has more than 50% of its population as women; and we do really want to promote women's empowerment... When I speak about women's empowerment, I am not speaking about Georgetown alone, Sir, I am speaking about hinterland women; I am speaking about rural women that each and every community has its unique needs. I know because I have work very closely with the Ministry that promotes women empowerment. This is a very meagre sum to ask for.

I am kindly asking the Minister, if he so believes in the words which he just used - that we love our women of this country - to reinstate the budget that was requested.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, is there a comment that you wish to make?

**Mr. Jordan:** No Sir. I think the Hon. Member made a comment as opposed to a question.

*Women and Gender Equality Commission – \$45,997,000, as amended to \$43,135,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Public Procurement Commission - \$251,912,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** I recommend the lump sum of \$177,666,000 for the Public Procurement Commission comprising of \$169,786,000 current expenditure and \$7,880,000 capital expenditure. I do so bearing in mind the comments made therein.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Public Procurement Commission (PPC) is a new constitutional body and thank goodness for the People's Progressive Party (PPP) which gave its two-thirds majority support so that the Government could set it up. That was something we were denied for all those years. I am just commenting to Mr. Ramjattan.

Hon. Minister, could you say – the PPC requested \$251,912,000, this is an agency, when one reads the constitutional requirements and what it is responsible for, that has quite an onerous task, including investigations of complaints. I am aware, at least from our end, that there are at least four requests with the PPC that would take it quite some time to get through.

Hon. Minister, by cutting the agency's budget - because you keep semantically trying to show that there is an increase - this is a brand new body that started out with \$62.1 million as a supplementary voted provision in 2017, when it was set up. It also had a supplementary Financial Paper the other day. I think it was to cover accommodation, rental and all of those things, which was quite expensive actually.

The Commission is asking for \$251,912,000 now that it has a full 12 months of work in front of it. Would it not have been a better idea to have let the Commission have the money so that it could then be the watch dog for this Government to ensure that some of the corruption, which we are hearing and seeing about, could be properly investigated?

*7.24 p.m.*

By denying the Commission this money, you may be restricting it because I have written to it based on its work programme and available resources. I hope that would not be the case because it has a constitutional mandate to investigate. It is important that the PPC be given the financial and technical resources to be able to do the constitutional requirements. Why would you want to cut the Commission so radically in its first year?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member is, perhaps, the longest, if not one of the longest serving Member of the House, very verse in these matters. I think that she is attempting to goad me into the word 'cuts', but I continue to see progress being made. We gave this institution, I believe, \$76 million in the budget and we did promise that because it was not set up and so on we would come back. We did come back with a \$62 million supplementary, which we gave it and I think it is well on its way. It has made several reports, I believe, already and I believe it has some more.

The question is: The \$177 million lump sum has been provided for it to continue its work next year. As it progresses, I am sure that we will have the benefits of this spending. We are not curtailing any of the constitutional agencies' oversight or other responsibilities. We provide the

resources as best as we could so that they can continue doing the admirable work they are doing. The good thing is that it is a lump sum and the Commission could move moneys unlike their sister organisation, to meet any priority requirements which it may have.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The constitutional bodies had been cut by \$2 billion; the Minister could argue that there is an increase. The point is: The Law talks about what the agency asks for and what the Minister recommends. It does not talk about progression. The agency is asking for X and the Minister gives Y. My concern is with the PPC, in particular; my Colleagues have spoken on the judiciary and Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). This body I am particular concern about that it would get all the resources it requires because it has an onerous task and it cannot take forever to investigate matters. There was one case with the PPC - the Ansa Mcal case with \$605 and it took quite a long time. If the Commission had all the resources, I am sure that it could have done the case more expeditiously. In anti-corruption, it is not only about investigating; it is being able to take swift and decisive actions.

This money, when one goes to the 'Description' is mainly for staff and not for investigation. I would like to ask that the PPC be given the entire amount that it has asked for with no cuts.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I do not have any further comments at this stage. To suggest, I have already made the comment as it relates to this. Thank you, Sir.

*Public Procurement Commission – \$251,912,000, as amended to \$177,666,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we have dealt with all the agencies. I would again propose that:

Question:

“That the sums approved for these constitutional agencies stated form part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Public Sector for 2018.”

*put and agreed to.*

*Assembly resumed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I thank you for your cooperation on this matter. We would now take the suspension for half of an hour and then we will return.

*Sitting was suspended at 7.30 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 8.07 p.m.*

## **CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 3/2017 – CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 3/2017 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$2,976,237,426 for the period 2017-01-01 to 2017-12-31.”

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, in accordance 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. 3/2017 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$2,976,237,426 for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017 and I now move the motion.

**Mr. Chairman:** The motion is proposed. We will consider the paper as usual, that is, the items will be taken from both current and capital estimates in the order in which the Minister is responsible. Hon. Members, would all have a copy of the Financial Paper. We are looking at current estimates, Estimates of supplementary provision 2017.

### **CURRENT ESTIMATES**

#### **Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - \$118,000,000**

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister advise us on the \$118 million which is now being asked for.

“To cater for additional employment in 2017 by the Guyana Revenue Authority.”

Could the Minister give us some ideas of the numbers on who are being employed, in terms of the technical qualifications, not the individual names, obviously, to cover the \$118 million? Have these people been hired already or are they going to be hired, it is already November?

**Mr. Jordan:** They are hired.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Could you give us an idea on the numbers and qualifications please, Sir?

**Mr. Jordan:** Thank you Hon. Member. Yes, people have been hired throughout the year and more will be hired soon at the highest level - the Comptroller of Customs, the Commissioner of Internal Taxes and so on, those high level positions. They have been advertised in newspapers, as you would have seen over the last month or six weeks. There is a total of 61 new persons who are being hired over the course of 2017. The amount also caters for promotions and various other adjustments. The total that they asked us for was really in excess of \$380 million, but we are looking for savings, both in their accounts and under our line item 6141, which is the global sum for salary increases. This \$118 million is really the difference between the required amount and the areas that we are looking for savings - under line item 6141. It will be 61 new persons, most of them at the highest level and moneys to do with promotion and so.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you very much Minister. Does this money cover any of the travel, almost weekly, by a top member of the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) to the United States of America (USA)?

**Mr. Jordan:** I would, personally, like to thank the individual who is the Commissioner-General. At great sacrifice he came home. He is getting the same salary as the previous Commissioner-General. Whatever travels he is doing, he is doing with his own moneys and he is using up his own annual vacation leave. It is difficult to get people to come home; they promise you all the time, but they cannot, they make different excuses. He has his family in Miami. This route has been quite successful so far and we are trying to see whether we could get more people from the diaspora to use up this route, where they do not have to come continuous, but that they would be flexible coming between Guyana and so on. Of course, if they could pay, like in the case of the Commissioner-General we would be very happy.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am really pleased and thank you for clarifying that because I have been trying to calculate the cost of his airfare and it appears to be higher than his monthly salary. I thank you for clarifying that.

**Mr. Chand:** Could the Minister advise on the sum of \$118 million to be expended in two areas. Could he provide us with what sum would be expended to the Guyana Revenue Authority and

what sum would be allocated to the Special Purposes Unit? I understand that sum covers for both, if I am right.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, could you repeat the question and clearly, please.

**Mr. Chand:** I saw here Mr. Chairman that \$118 million is being allocated to the Guyana Revenue Authority...

*8.16 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairman:** It is now being sought, Hon. Member. It is not allocated as yet.

**Mr. Chand:** For the Special Purposes Unit, could we have the breakdown?

**Mr. Jordan:** You would appreciate that the Hon. Member is a bit confused. The \$118,000,000 is being sought for the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) only. And we were advising that the previous supplementary of \$130,000,000 was sought for the Special Purpose Unit.

*Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance - \$118,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

## **CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

### **Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance - \$301,946,072, \$67,756,946**

**Ms. Teixeira:** Minister, could you just clarify something for me? I have read in the papers, under the Statistical Bureau inflows of \$67,756,946, and I believe, that the Minister of Business is having a labour survey done by the University of Guyana (UG). Is this another one or is it different? The two are totally unconnected. Is this a duplication of Government agencies or are you familiar with the other survey? The other one states a labour survey by, maybe, the Minister of Business. I just want a clarification. You are saying that it is not the same.

**Mr. Jordan:** I am happy to clarify. Ever since the Government came into office in 2015, we had indicated clearly that we need to stop guessing about things, such as the unemployment rate, and so on, and, therefore, we were going to embark on a labour force survey for the first time in many decades. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) gave assistance since November 24, 2015, with three technical cooperations (TCs), but because the labour survey ended up

causing more than was anticipated we had to reduce those to two TCs. We had several hiccups during 2016, in getting the project started. It is now on the way and, as you can see, there were lots of advertisements in the newspapers - I do not know what you call them - for scrutineers, the people who go around and fill up these questionnaires, and so forth. They are enumerators. That is correct. The project is on the way now being financed by the IDB. This request is to facilitate additional inflows coming in for this project.

If I may just give you a quick synopsis of the project, Guyana's labour force survey is a continuous quarterly survey that will provide a picture of the situation of the country's workers at the end of every quarter, starting with the third quarter of 2017. The main objectives of the labour force survey are to collect accurate and updated data on unemployment levels of the economically active population in Guyana, factors supporting job creation and job destruction and the composition of the labour force, in terms of education, gender and other demographic characteristics of interest. Field enumeration for the labour force survey started on the 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2017 and data collection for the first quarter, in 2017, that is July to September, has already been completed. The survey is being carried out with the assistance of Sistemas Integrales which has been contracted to oversee the first two quarters, July to September and October to December, of the survey. It is being executed by the Bureau of Statistics.

*Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance - \$301,946,072, \$67,756,946 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

## **CURRENT ESTIMATES**

### **Item 2 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs - \$100,000,000**

*Item 2 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs - \$100,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

### **Item 3 33-332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications - \$95,362,557**

*Item 3 33-332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications - \$95,362,557 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

## **CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

**Item 3 33-332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications - \$19,536,774**

*Item 3 33-332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications - \$19,536,774 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**CURRENT ESTIMATES**

**Item 4 53-531 Guyana Defence Force - \$13,553,572, \$35,450,524, \$46,471,563, \$36,947,174, \$21,379,904, \$/17,370,842**

*8.31 p.m.*

**Mr. Rohee:** There is a matter of great interest to me here with respect to this supplementary provision that is being sought for \$13,500,000 which has to do with the purchase of office materials and supplies, such as ink, markers, pens and maps. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us whether these items were purchased in bulk, from whom were they purchased and whether they were singled sourced and from where?

**Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]:** The items were purchased *en bloc*. They were brought from entities that have been pre-qualified to supply these items to the Guyana Defence Force (GDF). I have a list of the cost for each item which I could supply to the Hon. Member if he so desires and the name of the entity from which they were purchased.

**Mr. Rohee:** These items were purchased in relation to Operations CLEANSWEEP and SAFEGUARD. Were these two separations or were they operations that were running concurrently?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** They ran consecutively. The operation SAFEGUARD was in relation to the prison break and the necessity to satisfy the requirements of moving prisoners from Camp Street to other locations. This was an operation in support of the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Prison Service and the Guyana Fire Service. Operation SAFEGUARD was basically securing the prison and putting the prisoners into a safe place while Operation CLEANSWEEP was the operation which went after the dangerous escapees, and that involved operations with surveillance, operations in the *backlands* and all parts of the country. That is why I said that they

were consecutive. One was restoring normalcy in the prison and in the prison system and the other was going after those hardened criminals who had escaped.

**Mr. Rohee:** I think sometime last year there was an operation called Operation Dragnet. The items that appear in relation to Operation Dragnet are the same in relation to Operations CLEANSWEEP and SAFEGUARD, that is to do with ink, markers, pens and maps. Thousands of these markers, ink and maps are in relation these operations. Why within less than a year, having purchased under Operation Dragnet, this huge amount of items, we find that for Operations CLEANSWEEP and SAFEGUARD there is a deficit in relation to the same item? Could the Minister explain this apparent over indulgence in the purchasing of these particular items?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mr. Chairman, the bulk of these items are expendables. They are not items which are purchased and kept. Toners, ink, markers and so on are used on an operation. The Operation SAFEGUARD, is not the type of operation for which the GDF had actually prepared a specific plan, because it was something that had just happened, and so it was a response to that. All of the other operations that were done before were planned operations. This was not planned and, as I said, these were expendables that are used in an operation and at the end of the operation that is it. Toners, ink cartages and markers are used by the military men on operation.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, \$48,500,000 was expended under Operations Dragnet, CLEANSWEEP and SAFEGUARD which is a lot of money. Are there any of these items left over?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Yes. There would be some items. I think it is a small price that we pay for the peace and tranquillity of our society and, therefore, I do not believe that these are sums that are excessive. There are specific items which are purchased. I believe that the peace and tranquillity of the citizens of this country is important enough for us to have actually engaged in this expenditure.

**Mr. Rohee:** Additional vehicle spares and maintenance, are these vehicles that belong to the Guyana Defence Force or are these vehicles outside of the Guyana Defence Force? If they are vehicles at the property of the Guyana Defence Force, in terms of maintenance and spares, does

the Guyana Defence Force have an ongoing preventative maintenance activities going on in order to ensure that at any given point in time should an operation be called immediately by the Commander-in-Chief, the vehicles are ready to go into operation rather than in a situation such as this, in which it would have to go to the Office of the President or the Ministry of the Presidency requesting money?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** The Hon. Member is quite right. There is a maintenance and inspection regime in the force, with respect to vehicles for the force. These are the vehicles for the force and the expenses here had to do with damages which occur to the vehicles while they were on operations and the repairs which had to be done to them. These were not routine maintenance and the force does, in fact, have a stock of fast moving spares but some of those were damages to grills, bumpers, fenders and things such as those.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, the answer given by the Hon. Minister raises another question, which is in relation to the drivers of these vehicles. The extent to which the drivers of the vehicles are trained regularly to ensure that the vehicles, in the possession of the army, are properly used, there will be an avoidance in getting in regular accidents. If the drivers are not trained properly, then there would constantly be this problem of millions of dollars being spent for spares and the maintenance of these vehicles.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Sir, I thank the Hon. Member for his advice. I would say that the force has various levels of training. At the entry level, there is the basic driver's course and then there are the next levels which are the grades three, two and one. At each succeeding level, the skill and competence of the drivers are tested at a higher level. Yes, these vehicles are required to be driving in very rough terrain and in many cases because of the operations, which they were involved, they were mostly driving at night and under other conditions. Yes. I do accept that we need to ensure that our drivers are properly trained and this is not only for the GDF but this goes for all of the drivers across the Government services, that they are properly trained and that they learn how to handle these vehicles in various types of terrain.

**Mr. Rohee:** It is just one last question. The vehicles which were recently handed over to the Guyana Police Force by the Chinese Government, at which you were present and the honourable subject Minister was absent, is there any consideration of the vehicles from the Chinese being

gifted to the Guyana Defence Force in order to assist it in its operation? I notice they are quite a number of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and other vehicles.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** These vehicles are for the Guyana Police Force. The Guyana Police Force has extensive use for those vehicles. I believe it has a very clear plan as to what it is going to do with them. I think it has a clear plan of inspections, a clear plan for dealing with the spares, and all of these different things.

8.46 p.m.

There is, in fact, that all of these things are done. They are police vehicles; they are not the army's. The army has its own fleet. [*Loud converse of Members*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, as the time wears on, if Members feel that they must converse loudly they are free to leave the chamber, but we cannot have that continuing while we are trying to complete the paper we have. Hon. Members, on both sides of the Assembly, may wish to consider that.

**Mr. Rohee:** I assume that we are speaking here about air transport. Some time ago, before the change of Government in 2015, His Excellency the President spoke about the need to procure a Fixed-wing aircraft for the Guyana Defence Force. This has been an item that has been around for quite some time. Rather than constantly hiring aircraft and accruing these heavy expenditures, when is the GDF actually contemplating...? There are actually four aircrafts now in the possession of the state. I do not want to go into details as to how those aircrafts were in the possession of the state but they are there. Is there any intention of the Guyana Defence Force and the Ministry of the Presidency to utilise those aircrafts or to procure an aircraft for the Guyana Defence Force in order to reduce its dependence on private aircraft for operational activities?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** I want to thank the Hon. Member for his support. Again, Mr. Rohee is right. We are looking at the purchase of a Fixed-wing aircraft and the purchase of at least two Skyvans and some Highlanders. We trust that once the funds are available we will be able to at least purchase them, if not all at the same time, at least in some way. We are looking at reducing the requirements for hire, because there are two issues here. One has to do with the heavy troop lift, that is to say, the requirement for changeover of troops on the border and a heavy troop lift

capacity. The other has to do with surveillance of our exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and our borders. These are two specific types of aircraft and we are looking very carefully at the acquisition of those. The President did in fact say in 2015 that we would be looking at that, but the funds, right now, do not allow us to actually make the purchases, but I am sure we will get there.

The hiring of aircraft is something that we were trying to minimise. We have tried extensively to service those aircrafts which we have but the challenge, of course, is the cost of the spares and the availability of them. We have to look at newer type of aircrafts, but with a short take-off and a heavy lift capacity.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, I am a bit - I do not want to say - confused, because they usually say we are always confused on this side, but I would like to know for clarification. Are the SGPs for the GDF or are they for the Guyana Prison Service (GPS)?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I must come to my own aid, if it is no one else in this room, but please let us have it in English. The code that passes between Ministers who had responsibility to those who have now...

**Mr. Rohee:** I can assure you...

**Mr. Chairman:** I would like you to tell Members of this Assembly what SGP and QRS mean. Please tell us.

**Mr. Rohee:** Sir, I can assure you that I am not a member of the P15 or the Masonic Lodge.

**Mr. Chairman:** We just want to know what we are agreeing to or not agreeing to. Please tell us.

**Mr. Rohee:** The SGP is for stoves, generators and pumps. I am trying to figure out whether these are equipment for the Guyana Defence Force or for the Guyana Police Service because I know the GDF has a very excellent bakery. For the pumping aspect, I am trying to figure out whether that is for the GDF or the Ministry of Public Security.

**Mr. Chairman:** Before the Hon. Minister answers, I thank you. SGP is certainly more romantic than stoves, generators and pumps, but please let us always know what we are talking about.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Sir, I want to thank the Hon. Member for the clarification of that SGP because that also had me..., the stoves, generators and pumps. These are for the GDF and not for the Guyana Prison Service. You would recognise that there are many bases where the GDF has these equipment. It is not just for Camp Ayanganna or Camp Stephenson, but the bases at which they are at. During these operations, the troops are deployed and therefore they have to set up at various localities and so this is what is necessary.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what landing charges are and what type of certification fees are being referred to here and if we could be told the amount or the sum of money spent on these two items?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** these are payments to the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority for an airworthy certificate for the aircraft in the sum of \$695,000, landing charges to the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority, this is for the aircraft to land at the airstrips that are under the control of it, \$25,600 and in one other case \$22,150.

**Mr. Rohee:** I was tempted to, again, refer to FPTS which is foil pans, towels and straw, but what tickled my interest in this particular one is the item straw. I was wondering what the straw was for, whether there were straw men that made use of the straws or were there straw mattresses that were utilised by whoever. Could we get an explanation with respect to this particular item named "straw"? Was it a question of going to open tender for these items?

*9.01 p.m.*

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mr. Chairman, the purchases were made from the contractors that were prequalified. In this case, DDA Enterprises Inc. was the supplier of the foil pans, the straws and the toothpicks. I think these are basically drinking straws because of the amount we are paying for it. These were prequalified contractors and, in cases of the other items, they were credible and reputable entities such as Massy Industries, Modern Industries Limited and so on. As I said, again, Mr. Chairman, if it is necessary, I can provide the Hon. Member with a detailed list of the expenses and the attached costs to them.

*Item 4 53-531 Guyana Defence Force - \$13,553,572, \$35,450,524, \$46,471,563, \$36,947,174, \$21,379,904, \$17,370,842 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 5 79-791 Region 9 – Expenses Specific to the Agency - \$5,000,000**

*Item 5 79-791 Region 9 - Expenses Specific to the Agency - \$5,000,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**CONSTITUTIONAL AGENCIES**

**Item 1 55-551 Supreme Court – Constitutional Agencies - \$30,399,122**

**Mr. Nandlall:** Sir, my question is twofold; one is procedural and one is substantive. Not so long ago, during this very Sitting of the National Assembly, we elaborately considered the budget proposals of constitutional agencies and we had this long exchange which concluded with the Minister of Finance advising us that the constitutional agencies are to be treated differently and separately. But here I see them lumped with the ordinary or the non-constitutional agencies. My question is, why is that so? Why is it not treated separately?

My other question is: I see that we have hired eight magistrates sometime in the last month and this month. I see the requests for salaries in the months of November and December of 2017 as a result of hiring eight magistrates. This is news to me so I am unaware, and I am sure most people are also unaware, of the hiring of eight magistrates over the last month or so. Might I enquire when these magistrates were sworn in and the names of the magistrates, if that is possible? That should be public information anyhow.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I am sure that you will, at the moment, be satisfied with the dates of their swearing in.

**Mr. Nandlall:** At least when they were sworn in and to which courts they are assigned, if that is possible.

**Mr. Jordan:** First of all, the legend does not state anything about the magistrates being hired over the last two months. It states that it is to cater for shortfalls. The magistrates were hired during the year. I think there were four temporary magistrates for the night court and I think there were four new magistrates who were sworn in and so they were paid from the vote that was given to the constitutional agency, Supreme Court, with the understanding that the Supreme Court will get the money back *via* supplementary that we so brought today. The \$30 million here

is, really and truly, to pay the shortfall that would arise in the constitutional agency' budget. In addition to the regular staff quota that will have to be met, there are four other magistrates that will be new to the establishment. My Friend indicated, "How does that factor into 2018?" I can assure you that it has been factored into 2018's proposal for the Supreme Court.

Hon. Members are asking why we are dealing with the constitutional agencies here. As you can see, the constitutional agency is divorced from the regular executive agency. It is the head by itself and we are essentially dealing with it by itself. This is a supplementary request; this is not a lump sum request for them. This is at the discretion of the Minister.

**Mr. Nandlall:** The Hon. Minister spoke about the hiring of four magistrates.

**Mr. Jordan:** Temporary night court.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Four temporary magistrates, but the legend clearly states "8 magistrates".

**Mr. Jordan:** Four and four – four substantive and four night court for three months.

**Mr. Nandlall:** As a result of hiring eight magistrates... So, I am told that there were four magistrates who were hired substantively, permanently, and four who were hired for night court. But, even for the four magistrates, I am still asking for the dates because I am unaware that we had four magistrates hired recently. Can that information be provided, Sir? When were the four permanent magistrates appointed and when were the four night court magistrates appointed?

**Mr. Jordan:** I think that is information we can provide, either personally or to the House, as you see fit. We can provide that to him.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, you said that you can provide the information. Is there a time by which you can provide it? I am sure the questioner and the House would wish to know that.

**Mr. Jordan:** Unless it is urgently needed, I think we can bring it back in time when we are coming back here on the 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017. We could provide it to the House on the 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017, but we can have the information to him by early next week. We have the information because the Supreme Court has provided it to us, so it is not a problem.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Nandlall, the information will be provided to you.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I appreciate that, Sir. I am grateful to the Minister of Finance and to Your Honour.

*Item 1 55-551 Supreme Court - Constitutional Agencies - \$30,399,122 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, that exhausts our attention to current estimates. We now turn to consider the capital estimates. We have already dealt with the capital estimates for the Ministry of Finance.

### **CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

**Item 2 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure - \$286,500,000, \$130,000,000, \$101,000,000 - \$193,212,171, \$377,250,100**

#### **Dredging**

**Mr. Seeraj:** There is a voted provision of \$295 million, as you said, but I have noticed that the amount now being sought is almost 100% of what was voted for. Can the Hon. Minister explain to this House why is it that such a huge amount, almost 100% of what was voted for, is now being sought?

**Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]:** I was hoping to get an easy run like Minister Hughes. The amount is to procure spares for the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD). Some funds were available and we are actually going to be procuring spares for MARAD. We requested it and were granted moneys to buy spares.

*9.16 p.m.*

We would not be coming in 2018 to buy additional spares. We would do that now.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Like I said, the amount voted for... A budget is prepared based on assessment of what is needed. The Minister of Finance, in his presentation of the Budget, would have taken all those factors into consideration.

My question is, having asked for this amount, you are now asking for almost 100% of what was voted for... All of us could understand and appreciate if you are asking for 10% or 20% more but what is clearly showing up here is improper preparation or the persons involved do not have an appreciation of what is needed to begin with.

Could the Minister say whether this is the case, if they do not have any proper person to do assessments? Why is it that you have to come here for almost 100% more for what was already voted for? It does not make sense to me, Sir. If proper planning and assessment are done of what is needed, you would understand a little cost increase but not almost 100% more. Is there any deficiency in staff resources to do assessments? The Minister cannot stand and say that he needs additional spares and is here for that. You prepared a budget; it is presented and then you come for almost 100% more and deal with it in a casual manner. It is not supposed to be, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** The MARAD has several vessels in its fleet and, every year, the MARAD procures spares and other needed necessities to keep those vessels running efficiently to do MARAD's mandate. We have procured all the materials for 2017 already and that is the vote which the Hon. Member is talking about. We are at a stage where we could pre-order and procure materials for 2018 because their availability is more efficient. This is what we are doing now, Sir. You would not see this line item of procurement in the 2018 budget because we are getting them now. Obviously, our work has expanded. We are trying to... I reject, out of hand, the suggestion that the staff were inefficient in preparing the estimates. It is due to the efficiency that we could actually hit 2018 running.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I have listened to what the Hon. Minister said. Are you saying to this House that the tendering process – ordering and so on - would be completed before 31<sup>st</sup> December? This was supposed to be by public tender, I assume. This is 17<sup>th</sup> November and you are bringing a budget request that is 99.9% of what you took all year to spend.

**Mr. Patterson:** We have proposed procurement mechanism. It is supposed to be restrictive tendering. We would apply to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) at a particular time as soon as you approve this. We would go to tender and have it back. We would be able to procure between now and the end of the year.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Hon. Minister said that these are purchases for 2018. The point is that you are now talking about restrictive tender. Why does it have to be restrictive tender? Is it because that there are only six weeks left in the year or is it because this is a speed up to get stuff in without going through an open public tender?

**Mr. Patterson:** These are specialised spares.

**Ms. Teixeira:** That is not restrictive; that is sole sourcing, a big difference.

**Mr. Patterson:** That is not sole sourcing. I heard someone mention that the spares are for 2018. We do not buy spares every year for the 10 vessels that are under MARAD. They would be installed sequentially in 2018.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The Hon. Minister said something that is fundamentally worrying and that is that these are purchases that are being made now for 2018. We would be considering, as the many billboards advise us, Budget 2018 on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017. This is a Supplementary Paper that is before us, asking for money in 2017 that is needed in 2017. To be told in this House that you are asking for this because you want to spend it in 2018 is highly irregular. I believe that that is more than irregular. Could the Minister kindly explain that?

**Mr. Jordan:** My Hon. Friend and Colleague, Ms. Manickchand, I do not think, was honest in her assertions. I believe, as a former Minister...

**Mr. Nandlall:** She may have misheard but she is not dishonest.

**Mr. Jordan:** The Hon. Member would have been...

**Mr. Chairman:** You must try to...

**Mr. Jordan:** I withdraw.

**Mr. Chairman:** More than that, it would be a helpful thing if we pause before we throw comments around which cannot help the debate. Please proceed.

**Mr. Jordan:** I was not casting any aspersions on the character of the Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member, being a former Minister, would know that you procure items that could last for this year and go over to the next year.

Part of proper budgeting could suggest that, if the room is there in one year and you could procure items for the next year so as to relieve the budget for the next year and create space for other items, then that is legitimate and eligible. When you do early procurement, as we indeed had problems with the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) this year and in 2016, and we have the space to do it this year, you could guarantee that the vessels would be serviced on time and would be running. They are very old vessels and could break down at any moment. You must have the spares ready. They have to go and find all the different places to go and get these spares. These are not new boats; they are very old, 30-year old plus boats for which you have to go and look for spares. You must have the lead time and you must have a stock, an inventory, of spares ready when these boats, which you may well know...when you put in the spares, the boats literally...

I commend the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for this particular route in helping to alleviate some of the problems that we are having in implementing the Public Sector Investment Programme.

**Ms. Manickchand:** In 2017, in Guyana, we have this amazing feature called *Hansard* which is recorded as we speak. This means that if I quote from the Minister who previously spoke, it is very easy for us to go back and see if he said that or if I misquoted him. I am happy and I accept the apology from the Minister of Finance for misrepresenting what I said.

The way we do budgets in Guyana is that we come here and we say that, in 2017, we are going to need a certain amount of dollars to spend in a certain Ministry. We cannot come here and say...because, if we do that, it would become chaotic and lawless and we would not have guidance as to how we should question. We cannot come here and say that we would run out of pencils next year at the Ministry of Education so we are asking for money in advance. We are asking for money in 2017. I am not suggesting at all that, if what we buy in 2017 is left over that we would not use them in 2018... The Hon. Minister said specifically that we are here shopping for 2018 goods.

**Mr. Jordan:** That is correct.

**Ms. Manickchand:** We were told not less than an hour ago that there is no fiscal space to give the Ombudsman a desk.

**Mr. Jordan:** That is next year.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Why are we pre planning for a Ministry that we could cater for next year? In 10 days, we could cater for that Ministry in a budget that we get to examine and we could give the Ombudsman his desk in the budget that we actually just debated.

**Mr. Jordan:** There was space in 2017 and not 2018.

**Mr. Manickchand:** It cannot be, sir. I am saying that it is irregular to come here in 2017 and ask for money to purchase goods that you would need in 2018, especially when you are 10 days away from presenting Budget 2018.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance or Minister of Public Infrastructure...?

**Mr. Patterson:** There was no question in the Hon. Member's presentation. I do not share her statements; I do not agree with them. There was no question in that ramble, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister must feel free to make any other comment that he wishes on the matter.

**Mr. Patterson:** Between the Minister of Finance and I, we have answered all the issues on what this submission is for.

**Mr. Seeraj:** The Hon. Minister of Finance said that... We know that a lot of the vessels are old, some being 20 years or 30 years old. We budgeted \$295 million for spares. We are here now for \$286 million. Like our Colleague mentioned earlier, budget is 10 days away. The Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure clearly said that it would not be there in 2018.

I want to ask if it is because of underperformance in other sections or sectors that there are a lot of moneys available and that is why the Government is using this opportunity to utilise the moneys that are available to purchase. The question is, is the Government now using the moneys that are available and that were not spent under other sectors because of poor performance and

non-performance to purchase the spares now listed. Clearly, this is not an emergency. We have a budget in 10 days to cater for 2018.

**Mr. Patterson:** It is absolutely not. It is prudent budgeting and prudent planning. I am trying to be extremely efficient. That is why we are here at the moment. As the Hon. Minister of Finance said, we are trying to free up space for 2018.

For all the questions that the Hon. Member asked, he would hear the answers in 10 days' time. Patience, Sir, would be a great virtue. I am representing this chart of account.

*9.31 p.m.*

**Mr. Seeraj:** Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Just to make this point, prudent budgeting will not see a Ministry coming back for supplementary that is almost 100% of that which was sought. I just wanted to make that comment for the record, Sir.

### **Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara**

**Mr. Seeraj:** Cde. Chairman, we might be told here that we will have another case of prudent budgeting; \$1.4 billion voted for, almost double that was the previous supplementary, and now we are asking for another \$130 million. Sir, if the first case could have been explained in a way as being efficient and prudent budgeting, I wonder if the same explanation will be given here. It is stated here in the remarks column that they are providing for additional funds to cater for cost escalation. My little understanding of budgeting is that cost escalation is catered for in budgeting, and here we are asking for another... This is the second supplementary provision that we are looking for and it is a substantial amount. My question to the Minister is: did cost escalation not form part of their budgeting tool when they were providing for this particular project, taking into consideration that there was already a supplementary provision for almost double that which was sought for initially?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, either the Minister of Public Infrastructure or the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Patterson:** This is well within my domain, Sir.

Cost escalation, in this particular case, was a unique aspect and it was not catered for in the previous supplementary. So, that is why it is not there. This is a cost escalation which has to be borne by the Government of Guyana. That is why it is here; it is local and it covers the cost escalation until the 31<sup>st</sup> December.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, the \$1.4 billion and the \$2.4 billion that are provided for in the voted provisions, including supplementary: my understanding is that this Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara was a fully funded project by the Chinese by a Chinese loan. So, could you tell me what is the \$130 million covering because this is a Chinese loan? Is the \$130 million a cost overrun or is it to cover other costs involved? These are local funds now; the \$130 million that you have come for is local funds. Could you please explain what are the cost overruns over what was, I believe, funded under the loan?

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, to explain that, one has to start at the beginning and I will. Maybe as I speak, the Hon. Member would recall what had transpired and maybe she would understand why we are where we are at. I was hoping for simply approving and moving on.

Sir, on the 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2014, there was a tender out which was closed in May, 2014. The engineer's estimate for this road at that point in time was US\$60.4 million. After going to tender, the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board recommended awarding the tender to a contractor, China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd. (CHEC), for US\$54 million. And as you, in those days, Sir, before the Public Procurement Commission (PPC) was in place, one had to go to Cabinet for its 'no objection'.

**Ms. Teixeira:** You still do, actually.

Yes. You asked, and I was just hoping to approve it. So, it was sent up to the Cabinet. Furthering no objection, the Cabinet, at that time, directed NPTAB to review its recommendation, since, in its opinion, the contractor that is there now, China Railway First Group Limited, was of a lower cost.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2014, Cabinet made a decision on its own to award this contract to China Railway First Group Limited, the contract for a sum of US\$46.9 million, and, therein, started the dilemma. They signed a contract on the 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2014. The Export-Import Bank of China

(EXIM), the fully funded persons that the Hon. Member mentioned there, was unconvinced that the contractor could have done the work at such a low price, at such a low cost way below the engineer's estimate and way below the recommended NPTAB's engineer's estimate, the evaluated recommended person. So, they asked and they insisted that the Government of Guyana should put aside, have a bond to take care of their concerns in price. A bond was asked to be in place to ensure that the contract would be economically feasible and that bond was for US\$6 million. Basically, the US\$6 million is the cost between the contractor recommended by the previous Cabinet and the recommended contractor by both the NPTAB and the EXIM Bank. This Government, when it came in, said no and that there is a contract and that has to be honoured. And that is why it has been stalled for so long.

On 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2017, an agreement was reached with the EXIM Bank. We signed off on the loan. EXIM Bank approved us going forward. There is now a question because of the delay in price escalation, which just means that the prices that were there mandated in June of 2014 are no longer the same prices in 2017. The agreement was that there would be an adjustment for the price escalation. That is in public knowledge and it is in the total of US\$3.2 million. It is price escalation on rates as work is being done. For example, as the excavation is done, if that component has a price increase, it is paid. This supplementary is to pay the price escalation from now until, as projected, the end of December, 2017.

All of this would have been totally unnecessary – prudent budgeting and those things like that – if the due process and the recommendation of the evaluators, the persons who NPTAB...were heeding to. But, as you know, Sir, we are a Government that wants to make sure that things run right and smoothly. So, we are coming here openly and transparently, asking for the additional moneys to carry us through until December, 2017. I thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** After all the storytelling, it is clear that the \$130 million that you are asking for under local is as a result of the delays of over two years under your Administration, and has nothing to do with the long rigmarole tale you told this House. You delayed it for two years and you now have to pay the escalation cost. And you were not as confident. This is only escalation cost for 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017. So, can I anticipate that, in the 2018 Budget, you will be coming for further escalation costs to cover further delays?

**Mr. Patterson:** No. Obviously and absolutely not does this have anything to do with this Government. We recognise the role of NPTAB and the PPC. We recognise that, when the independent evaluators make a recommendation, we do not meddle with that. There is additional... I think Minister Bulkan can probably elaborate on this. On top of this being a loan, on top of this contractor being awarded the price which was not recommended by anyone, save and except the previous Cabinet, they were given land, and that is another thing which the Central Housing & Planning Authority (CHPA) is addressing. That is why I said that Minister Bulkan can look at. On top of them not being recommended by anyone, they were given land as well. But that is another story. I am dealing with the China Railway First Group Limited.

*9.46 p.m.*

The cost is US\$3.2 million which is spread out over the life of the civil works. So, you will see that it will be included in 2018 and, if it goes into 2019, it will be included. It is Madam, at a fixed agreed figure, which is entirely due to the way in which the previous Administration handled this tender in the first place.

### **West Demerara Highway**

**Ms. Teixeira:** Could the Hon. Minister advise, as this particular heading has supplementary provisions now being sought for specific, that is from the loan – Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) - \$101,000,000 and \$193,212,171 from local resources. Could the Minister say, what are these additional counterpart resources needed? Is this an indication that the road has now been over extended in the cost overrun, in other words? Could you, please advise?

**Mr. Patterson:** I am now warming up. I thought I would have had a smooth sailing; an easy passage due to the lateness of the night. Once again, we have to start from the beginning. This contract is with a contractor... *[Interruption][Inaudible]* Yes, I am, after looking at all the mismanagement which was passed on to me. This contract was signed for the grand sum of US\$46 million. The previous Government signed a contract for US\$46 million, but, sadly, it only borrowed US\$30 million. It beholds me. I do not know which Minister of Finance would sign a contract for US\$46 million, when the CDB is only lending it US\$30 million. This Government, my Government, is saddled to find US\$14 million due to an error. I would like to say that it is an oversight, that somebody got their zeros wrong. Maybe they were thinking that they were signing

a contract for US\$50 million, but it was actually US\$30 million. Obviously, how these loans go is that the international firm plays a part and the Government of Guyana plays a part.

Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, no, there is no overpayment. The contract price is still the same; the scope of works is still the same. The Government of Guyana and our hard press resources, which we would have bought a chair for the Ombudsman with, we have to be paying because of some decisions, once again, made by the your Administration. There is no pricing increase, but, obviously, there is US\$14 million short, when you signed for the loan. That is what is being paid here. We have to contribute more to get the job completed. As always, we are trying to mop up and present this country with a clean swept. Mop up all the works that were done before. Thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Hon. Member seems to be in the habit of telling plenty stories. The issue is this, stories and tales and whatever, but a number of things have been said in this House that needs to be dealt with. First of all, we are dealing with a CDB loan of X dollars that is the counterpart resources that are being over extended. The Hon. Member has said a number of things about the EXIM Bank that are totally wrong too, but I would not get into that. We have passed that item.

The Caribbean Development Bank - the issue of the West Demerara Highway is that, in any country, Mr. Patterson's reckless painting brush, which is painting all over the place, may be of interest for someone who does not have any understanding of how international financial institutions work. I mean, seriously, you are at the House and you are reporting to the House. The issue is that, loan companies such as the CDB, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank do not give money for a loan when the cost of it is higher than what is being applied for, unless, there is a commitment by the Government to put the balance of the money.

The point that Mr. Patterson, the Minister, is making, is as if we recklessly went and got a loan, did not have any money to pay for it and now they, the Government of today, has to pay for it. That is absolutely *bunkum*. This Government released a voted provision of \$2.335 billion, it then got a release of \$100 million from the CDB and it is now coming for a \$193,212,171 from local resources. I could only look at the additional Legend - additional inflows of \$101,000,000, which is an inflow, so we would not question that, and the counterpart resources. When one signs for a

loan with the CDB or any bank, the Government is responsible for certain things that have to be done. That is your responsibility, not the loan agency.

Could the Minister say, without telling me one long story about 10 and five years ago, the loan of the CDB is a very recent loan and the Government of Guyana, whether of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU)/Alliance for Change (AFC) or Peoples Progress Party/Civic (PPP/C), committed that in building the West Demerara Highway. There was X amount of money for the loan and X amount of money was the Government's contribution. Could the Minister say, what are the additional counterpart resources needed? What are they for? This is so that we would have a clear idea of what is going on with the Highway.

**Mr. Patterson:** First, I want to address the very first statement and assumption. As I have said, we are here and we have to set the record straight. There is nothing Mdm. Teixeira could say that could rewrite the record. When I assumed this portfolio, no one, not even the Ministry of Finance knew where the other US\$14 million was coming from. The previous Administration was panhandling around to the CDB, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and all the bs, trying to find the additional US\$14 million. Unfortunately, that was never found. There was never a commitment on this Government's coffers to find it. They were hoping that some money would fall out of the sky and they would have been able to find the US\$14million. Unfortunately, moneys from the skies do not happen anymore.

Secondly, the road has several components, but this particular one that we are talking about is the civil works component. Civil works, as you would know - excavations, barriers, paving, street signs, shoulder works, *et cetera*. Now, if there is US\$30 million to be spent and when that US\$30 million is expended, the 31<sup>st</sup> million and subsequently have to come from somewhere. That, ladies and gentlemen... Counterpart funding, and there you go, once again, that is how they fooled the people.

For counterpart funding, generally, the *pari passu* is 8% or 5% and that is what counterpart funding is, as anybody would tell you. Not 35% of the loan. That is not counterpart funding; that is gouging. That is exactly what it is for. We are paying our share out of our hard earned revenues for a decision made by that Government - and we are paying it. We have to finish it on

the road. They cannot come here and talk about prudent management and about economic and fiscal arrangements and those things like that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, there is a proper form of address, even at this late hour; “they” does not exist here.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Members cannot come here and speak about those things, when they left us with this basket to fetch. I do hope that that clarifies why we are seeking the funds and I do hope that we would get the approval of this House to complete this project. Thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I, again, ask for the third time, in this House: Could the Minister say what the \$193,212,171 would be used for or is being used for? Could he give us a breakdown on what is this \$193,212,171 for? Simple, I have asked it three times and this is the third time.

**Mr. Patterson:** The exact nature of the works would be excavation and earth works, inclusive of the removal of concrete driveways, roadways, cleaning of existing ditches, sub-base and base, inclusive of white sand sub-base and aggregate base, pavements, inclusive of tack coat, asphalt concrete for both regulation and wearing coats, signs and road markings and these include broken and double centre line marking and edges. There you go.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Simple. He did not have to go all over the road.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members we are approaching the 10 o’ clock hour. I would request the Hon. Prime Minister to move the adjournment so that we could continue our work.

*Assembly resumed.*

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10(1)**

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, I move that we continue, uninterruptedly, until the conclusion of the Financial Paper that is before this House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. Members, here is on the floor a motion that we continue our consideration of the Financial Paper to conclusion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Standing Order suspended.*

*In Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** Please Hon. Minister, were you finished with your presentation?

**Mr. Patterson:** Yes Mr. Chairman.

*10.01 p.m.*

### **Reconditioning of Ferry Vessels**

**Mr. Croal:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate, for the M.V. Kimbia and the M.V. Sandaka, what is the nature of the repairs that require the huge amount that is being asked for additional resources? Secondly, when is the expected completion for these repairs? And finally, having done all of these repairs, where are the routes that they would be expected to ply?

I know you did some regularisation at the end of Region One end, and I just wanted some additional information.

**Mr. Patterson:** Just for the Members to note, this supplementary has nothing to do with the M.V. Sandaka. The M.V. Sandaka was the previous supplementary, but you asked a very good question, and I would like to say that the M.V. Sandaka was rehabilitated, as I did say, at the last supplementary. It was because the M.V. Canawaima had to be docked. As you know, the M.V. Canawaima is the ferry that goes between Guyana and Suriname and M.V. Sandaka is what we use as a replacement. It should be finished before the end of the year, when the M.V. Sandaka is finished. The engines for the M.V. Canawaima are here. We will, obviously, take the M.V. Canawaima down, repair it and the MV Sandaka will work that route. I hope that explains it, even though this supplementary has nothing to do with that.

For the M.V. Kimbia, the major works to be conducted are: sandblasting the hull and painting the zinc nodes. There are several works to the exterior frame, but the major work has to do with overhauling of the two main CAT engines. When we checked the engines, they required major overhauls which require this amount of money. As I know, the works, as I was told, would be about 90% completed by the end of the year. The previous sums that we had would have done

the outside work and those things, but before we can actually make that worthy, we have to get the engines, which are procured engines, and put them in to get it up. [An Hon. Member of the Opposition: [Inaudible]] Pardon? They are maintained on the same Kumaka route. I was just checking.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank the Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, we ought to allow Members to answer the questions that are asked. If it is the case that Members are satisfied with just the reading of the provision, I think we can succeed and complete our work faster. Some Members ask questions and do not listen for the answers.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Cde. Chairman, the voted provision is \$240 million. The two supplementary provisions add up over to \$550,000,000. Sir, the Minister has self-proclaimed to be a budget expert, yet I find great difficulty in understanding if there is so much efficiency that resides in the Minister. How is it that there was a voted provision of \$240 million and you are coming now for \$552 million? As it relates to this matter, my direct question is, if the Minister can provide us here with a schedule of how he intends to spend this supplementary now being sought - \$377,250,100, before 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017, given the fact that over the past 10.5 months, spending has only been for the amount of just the... They have spent \$415,000,000, just about that in 10.5 months and how is it that the Minister intends to spend \$377,250,100 within six weeks? How it is that he can give us a schedule; how does he intend to do that?

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, before I answer the last question, first, I should say to the House that the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) has not just the M.V. Kimbia. It has several vessels and it has to do this. The moneys provided for in 2017 were for other vessels.

Sir, on the Transport and Harbours Department fleet, we have the M.V. Northcote, which is 80 years old; we have the M.V. Barima, which is 78 years old; we have M.V. Maruca which is 58 years old, M.V. Malali is 55 years old, M.V. Kimbia is 36 years old, M.V. Sandaka is 11 years old; and we have the two Chinese Vessels, which are six years old. Sir, every year, we have to make provisions to keep these vessels afloat. That is what took care of our voted provision. Keeping that we docked several vessels, other than this vessel which we are seeking now, we did that in 2017.

M.V Kimbia has been down; is down and it went down to do exactly what I explained to Hon. Member, Mr. Croal - repairs to the hull and sandblasting. Obviously, it goes out in very rough waters to get to Kumaka and those places. Sir, while it is down, on the final inspection, the defects in the engine were discovered. This money being sought, as I explained to Mr. Croal, is for the replacement of two engines. Everything is there. This is the replacement to procure and replace engines and that will be done, Sir.

Sir, unfortunately, for the engines we do not go to open tenders. We will approach the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). The vessels are designed to take a particular engine and that is what we are replacing.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Cde. Chairman, in the interest of transparency, accountability and all of that – buzz words that this Government likes to use - I am asking the Minister if he could simply provide us with a schedule of how he intends to spend \$377,250,100 from today, which is already the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, to the 31<sup>st</sup> December. Sir, I heard the Minister said clearly, in his response to the Hon. Member, Mr. Collin Croal, that they will be rehabilitating engines. Now, I just heard him talking about the procurement of engines. Could he be clear as to whether they are going to repair these engines, or if they are going to purchase engines and what are the steps that they are going to take in completing the expenditure of this amount now being sought, today, at this hour, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2017.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, we can provide the schedule of what it is, but the entire work on an old 36 years old vessel, underneath there are engines, steerage mechanism, the entire works to ensure that we get there. When there is a vessel at that age and at that cost in dry dock and you find a major issue which you can address, which is doing it now, that is we what are doing, but I will give the Hon. Member a schedule of what is being done. I do have it here and you can read it.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Cde. Chairman, I do not really want to belabour the point, I am not so much interested in if you have to change the water pump or whether you have to change that. In the remarks column, what is being sought is \$377,250,100. This has to do with the purchasing, the replacement, procurement and so forth. Sir, I am simply asking the Minister for a schedule to make this a reality by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017. This is because, to my mind, it is very challenging

and it has taken over 10.5 months to expend \$415 million. I want, if it can be provided to us, a schedule to expend \$300. It has to do with procurement, whether they are Ministers; he has indicated or he hinted that he is going for, not the open tendering, but they are going for selective tendering. How is it going to be done? How many companies are going to be invited; how long is that process going to take, the evaluation? A schedule - that is what I need. A schedule of how you intend to spend \$377,250,100 by now and 31<sup>st</sup> December.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I said, when I rose previously, that I will provide the Member with that.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Cde. Chairman, we were regaled a lot by efficiency and budget planning and all of that. If this supplementary provision is being sought here, there has already been a plan on how to expend it at this late hour, from now to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. I fail to see why the Minister cannot provide us with that. If you do not have it now, then when are you going to start having those documents in place or a plan in place? You must have had a plan to expend this amount of money by 31<sup>st</sup> December. What is that plan? How is it that [*Inaudible*]? Why is it not available? If you are coming to answer for a supplementary provision that is being sought, at the half of November, to spend by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017, there must be a plan. If the Minister is saying that he does not have a plan, then I fail to see how is it that this amount can be expended by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017. Is either the Minister has a plan or he does not has a plan. We need the schedule and we need to be told clearly, what is the Minister's plan to spend \$377,250,100 by 31<sup>st</sup>, December, 2017. If the Minister has already spent it then, he should tell us that and then again, the Budget Presentation is 10 days away from now. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I was hoping to spare the House the long... but the Member insists, so I shall. Sir, I shall now go through it number by number.

*10.16 p.m.*

First and foremost, if you read the letter - I have it here that is why I said I can give it to him, but he is insisting and he is trying to insinuate that we are unprepared. I told him that I have it in my hand and I can give it to him. For the record, I have to read it into the record because the Hon. Member is insinuating that we do not have a plan. If the Member read the Legend correctly, he would have noticed that this is not only the \$377 million - \$177 million is to do the repairs on the M.V. Kimbia. The M.V. Kimbia is in dry dock at the moment. Therefore, what we will,

obviously, do is the procurement to get the engine, steering ends and those things to get it back out. The \$200 million is for procurement to spares with the same procurement method that was done before. That is how we are going to do it. It is the exact way as we would have done for the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD) beforehand. I do hope that the Hon. Member is satisfied.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Cde. Chairman, clearly our effort, on this side of the House, to get straight answers is failing us, this evening, at this late hour. I give up because I am asking for a schedule that involves procurement, whether we are going to go for not the open tender, but what they call the selective tendering, whether advertisement is going to be placed, when evaluation is going to... Those are the kinds of answers I was looking for, but obviously I have failed.

Sir, my last question on this head, I have notice a number of names for different vessels called here for repairs. I have not heard anything about M.V. Torani: Could the Minister give us an update on the M.V. Torani, whether any of these moneys allocated here is catered for the continuation of operation of the M.V. Torani. What is the faith of that vessel?

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, this supplementary has nothing to do with M.V. Torani. I smiled because I thought that is quite a clever question by the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member would know that my predecessor gutted the M.V. Torani. He contemplated that it was parked at the Stabroek. When I took over, they contemplated making it into a museum; they contemplated selling it as scrap metal. Where it was placed, we towed it to the Mazaruni... *[Interruption]* Yes, because it was a clever question...

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]*

**Mr. Patterson:** The M.V Torani is right now at the Mazaruni Dock Yard. We had to tow it because it was left by the market. It was becoming a hazard where it was, so we moved it. That is why it is a clever question Sir.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Agency code 32-322, I want to be simple for the Hon. Minister, Mr. Patterson. If \$177 million will be spent on the M.V Kimbia, I would like him to tell me, of the \$200 million to be spent on the purchase of air filters, injectors, auxiliary pumps and other

critical spare parts, which fleet will it be spent on – name the fleet? The Minister can tell us how much money would be spent specifically for the other fleet?

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, it is a long list, but I can name the vessels. The information is here so I can give it to him. The vessels would be from Alaiye and Makouria and there will be cylinder heads, cylinder blocks, gaskets, starting mova, air cleaners. Sir, with the Hon. Member's permission I would hand this over to you. If not, I can read it, if you so insist.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** You can hand it over.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I heard you said thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** The Hon. Member said that I can hand it over. So I will hand it over immediately.

**Mr. Chairman:** Would the Hon. Member receive from you information that pertains only to his question or the question is at large for the entire House?

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I will hand it over to the Clerk of the National Assembly and he would distribute it accordingly. **[Hon. Member of the Government:** I do not want it.] Sir, my Members are saying that they do not want it. Maybe it will be for the Members on that side of the House.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is clear Hon. Member. I thank you.

*Item 2 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – \$286,500,000, \$130,000,000, \$101,000,000, \$193,212,171 and \$377,250,100, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 4 40–403 Ministry of Education – Early Childhood Education Project \$36,168,000**

*Item 4 40–403 Ministry of Education – Early Childhood Education Project \$36,168,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**40–406 Ministry of Education – Institutional Strengthening - CTVET and NAC - \$9,350,690**

**Ms. Manickchand:** Hon. Minister, what is this consultancy that is anticipated?

**Minister of Education [Ms. Henry]:** The reason we are first of all requesting the inflow has to do with the fact that this 18-month project, which we were able to execute in the timeline, we had savings and, therefore, we are contemplating doing a consultancy related to guidelines for the recognition, in comparison of qualifications that are used in Guyana in order to standardise it. We had the savings and that is what the additional consultancy is expected to bring on board.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Is there a consultant identified for this?

**Ms. Henry:** There is no Consultant identified for that as yet.

**Ms. Manickchand:** How would the consultant be procured?

**Ms. Henry:** It would be done through the normal procedure, which requires advertising and, based on skill sets and other criteria they will be selected in keeping with what is the usual practice.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Do you anticipate that this is going to finish in 2017?

**Ms. Henry:** Yes. It is our expectation that it will be finished during the calendar year 2017.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The 15 persons that you anticipate training, are they being trained right now?

**Ms. Henry:** No. They have benefited from training during the 18 months, during which we executed the projects. There is the potential to continue to build their capacity in another area, as I pointed out, which has to do with guidelines and recognition, and comparison of qualifications. It is the strengthening of human capacity, which is much needed, as you are aware, in the Ministry of Education.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The 15 persons that are chosen and identified here, who will be these 15 persons?

**Ms. Henry:** I could provide you with a list of names of the 15 persons that will be trained. I do not have that list with me, but that can be made available first thing during the working week next week.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Well, I do not necessarily need names. I wanted to know who they were in terms of how they were chosen. That is perhaps the question: How were these 15 persons chosen for training?

**Ms. Henry:** They were chosen based on their job description. These 15 persons work with the National Accreditation Council (NAC) and their capacity is being built in that area, specific to NAC. They are staff of NAC and so that is how they were chosen.

*Item 4 40–406 Ministry of Education – Institutional Strengthening - CTNET and NAC - \$9,350,690 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

*10.31 p.m.*

**Item 5 42-422 Ministry of Communities - \$380,000,000, \$40,000,000**

**Mr. Croal:** I know it is inflows specific, but it is just some information, in terms of the meters, where are they intended for? Is it for any specific particular area or is it just for normal request around the central Georgetown, just some clarity, the 15, 000 meters?

**Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]:** The meters are specific for the three areas where the water treatment plants are being constructed; these being Uitvlugt, Diamond and Sheet Anchor. It is approximately one third in each area.

**Mr. Croal:** The remarks states; "...restructuring of the 2017 work programme..." Could the Minister say what this restructuring mean?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Yes, perhaps the mobilisation fee, the contract sum, was actually higher than what was initially envisaged. The additional sum required is to allow for a higher mobilisation fee. The initial provision was for the sum of \$700 million, but, as stated here, the mobilisation fee is closer to \$1.16 billion, and that accounts for the increase.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** I notice that the voted provision was \$1 billion and the mobilisation in advance was \$1.16 billion. Now the Minister is asking for \$380 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain and lay over to us an explanation of why is it that this yields more money that he is asking for to complete this and whether it would be completed before 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017?

**Mr. Bulkan:** No. As I said, that the mobilisation fee for the construction of three water treatment plants is 30% of US\$5.7 million which is approximately the \$1.16 billion. The construction period for the three plants is actually 24 months, so it is a multi-year project.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** I would like for the Minister to tell us if he is going to get 15,000 water meters more, the areas that these water meters will be going and whether he would be replacing established water meters that you have presently?

**Mr. Bulkan:** I think the intention is that these would be new installations in the three areas that I have already identified.

*Item 5 42-422 Ministry of Communities – \$380,000,000, \$40,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 6 43-432 Ministry of Public Health – \$200,000,000**

**Dr. Anthony:** Could the Hon. Minister tell us what the source of fund for this particular project?

**Minister of Public Health [Ms. Lawrence]:** To the Hon. Member, this would be from the Global Fund.

**Dr. Anthony:** Could the Minister say how much money would have been allocated for 2017 and how much would have been disbursed for 2017 from the Global Fund?

**Ms. Lawrence:** I can say how much money has been spent to date, but it is not at this time. I can have that provided during the course of next week to the National Assembly.

**Dr. Anthony:** Could the Minister say why this particular grant was downgraded from B1 to B2 by the Global Fund's rankings?

**Ms. Lawrence:** No Mr. Chairman.

**Dr. Anthony:** Mr. Chairman, I do not think I got an answer. This particular grant, according to the Global Fund, has been downgraded and it has been downgraded from B1 to B2. We want to know, why was it downgraded? Is that going to affect the disbursement for this year?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, is there an answer that you could offer again?

**Ms. Lawrence:** Sir, I was asked a question whether I know what were the reasons for the downgrading for the grant and I did answer that. I said no.

**Dr. Anthony:** Could the Minister say what type of hardware equipment would be bought for the Health Management Information System (HMIS) and, perhaps, what type of software equipment?

**Ms. Lawrence:** The list would be transformer with cables, online generator, uninterruptable power supply, power and battery modules, transient voltage surge suppressors, rack power distribution units, rack server, one router, hardware firewall, network area storage, laptop information System (a), laptop information system (b), desktop computers, photocopiers, 1,800 VA Stabiline conditioner, 1,200 VA Stabiline conditioner, 750 VA uninterruptible power supply, 7-port SurgeArrest and licences.

**Dr. Anthony:** Could the Minister say if this is the best way to utilise the Global Fund resources, given that these resources are normally utilised for antiretroviral (ARVs)? Why is it that we are using them to procure computers? Right now, as I understand it, there is a particular shortage for paediatric ARVs in the Ministry. Would it not be more useful to buy paediatric ARVs for the children who need it?

**Ms. Lawrence:** When this grant started off, it started off with three components, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), tuberculosis (TB) and the malaria programmes. We have now reprogrammed this portfolio to include equipment for our HMIS.

*10.46 p.m.*

**Dr. Ramsaran:** I notice that the Minister would have agreed there is a strong Health Management Information System already. What functions would this improvement bring? What does she envision, given this additional capacity? What is it exactly for the three programmes, malaria, (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and TB? What would be the additional investment? How would it strengthen us? Strengthen is a very broad term. Could she elaborate on what exactly we would be strengthening and what more we would get, in terms of systems and information?

**Ms. Lawrence:** To the Hon. Member, we are working to move towards a paperless system. This will help us to begin this implementation at the East La Penitence Health Clinic, the New Amsterdam Hospital and the Public Hospital Corporation.

**Dr. Ramsaran:** As Dr. Anthony noted, there is a shift from the procurement of medication for the paediatric section of the population with HIV/AIDS. Could the Minister say what is the expected impact and how would she mitigate against the impact of the removal of this resource? Does she, for example, envision, putting it in the budget that is coming up shortly? The main question being, what is the negative impact, if any in curtailing the procurement of the medication for the paediatric patients?

**Ms. Lawrence:** I know nothing of what the Hon. Member is speaking of. I said the programme started off with three areas, HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria. We have rescheduled the portfolio and we have now added equipment to it. We continue to utilise the funds for HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria and we are now adding the equipment to this.

**Dr. Mahadeo:** Could the Hon. Minister say whether we will be using electronic cribs?

**Ms. Lawrence:** To the Hon. Member, yes. That is a component of the HMIS that we are moving towards, but in this first phase, when we come to the GPHC, New Amsterdam Hospital and the East La Penitence Clinic, that will not be added at this time. The regions were written to and asked to purchase some equipment so that we can be able to add the Materials Management Unit (MMU) connection to the various outlets.

*Item 6 43-432 Ministry of Public Health - \$200,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 7 49-494 Ministry of Social Protection - \$23,308,794**

**Dr. Persaud:** Could the Hon. Minister say when it is envisioned that construction will begin? How long it is intended to take to be constructed? It is if the Ministry has gone to tender for the \$23,308,794 in addition to the \$40,869,000 asked for previously. If so, who is the contractor or which is the contracting firm?

**Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Ally]:** For 2017, \$20,000,000 was approved. After the estimates, bidding the total cost was \$181,238,785 and hence the additional mobilisation fee is required. Yes, in accordance with the Procurement Act of 2003, bids were advertised publically in the newspapers.

**Dr. Persaud:** There were two other parts to the question. The duration, when will construction commence? As you said, tendering has been done, has someone or a firm been identified? Could you give a further breakdown as to how the \$40,869,000 was spent?

**Ms. Ally:** This will have to go to the Cabinet first and the duration is anticipated for 12 months.

**Dr. Persaud:** Still some questions are unanswered, in terms of whom and a further breakdown of the \$40, 869,000, how it was spent. That was the previously broken down voted provision. Could you say if construction will commence before the end of the year and if this mobilisation figure could not have been placed in the upcoming budget for 2018?

**Ms. Ally:** In the budget it was given 20% as the mobilisation fee and that amounts to approximately \$20,000,000. Having the bids done and all of that, it is now \$46,000,000. For the \$20,000,000 nothing has been done yet with that. It is awaiting the additional sum to commence work for the mobilisation.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Dr. Persaud, are you through with your questions?

**Dr. Persaud:** I did ask who the contractor is and the company of the Hon. Member. I have not received those answers as yet, because moneys have been advanced, I am told.

**Ms. Ally:** PD Contracting Company is the firm that has been awarded the contract.

*Mr. Adams in the Chair.*

*Item 7 49-494 Ministry of Social Protection - \$23,308,794 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

*Mr. Chairman assumed Chair.*

**Item 8 54-541 Ministry of Public Security - \$121,334,708, \$147,328,235**

11.01p.m.

**Mr. Rohee:** It appears to be a discrepancy in the numbers stated because when the amount of \$67.3 million with \$32.5 million and \$18.6 million is added it is a \$118 million, but the amount of money being requested is a \$121.3 million. I would like to know if the Hon. Minister could explain the discrepancy in the numbers.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** In the remarks column it should have also included community needs assessment and community mobilisation works which would bring it up to the additional \$3 million. There are five items - the expansion of the reach of the Guyana Police Force management system, the rehabilitation of 12 police stations, remedial works. I could give the Hon. Member that... [Mr. Jordan: No. The word "included" means not all are there.]

That is right, because it does not have all five. It has the three main ones and the other two is community needs assessment for \$1.1 million and community mobilisation work which will bring it up to the extra \$3 million that the Hon. Member is talking about.

**Mr. Rohee:** Could the Hon. Minister inform the Assembly about the rehabilitation of the 12 police stations, the nature of the rehabilitation and the locations of the 12 stations?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The location of the 12 police stations are Mibicuri, Cane Grove, La Grange, Kwakwani, Mackenzie, Port Kaituma, Mabaruma, Annai, Aishalton, Issano and Suddie. I do not have the specifics for each of the 12 police stations but the general is the roof, some walls that have gotten steps and also the enquiry room to make a domestic violence room and to accommodate that for these police stations.

**Mr. Rohee:** The expansion of the reach of the Guyana Police Force management system, could the Hon. Minister explain to the Assembly what is meant by expanding the reach or expansion of the reach of the management system? What is this management system that we are referring to?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** This has to do with the implementation of what is called Phase I of the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS). [Mr. Rohee: That is what we have left behind.]

Yes. It is what you have left behind. It is an expansion from the current system that was left behind. This work includes the procurement of equipment mainly the online

uninterruptible power supply (UPS) system, a generator system and what is called an in-row cooling system. Those basically comprise what the reach is.

**Mr. Rohee:** The works to the forensic laboratory is to facilitate accreditation. Does this have to do with the accreditation *vis-a-vis* the ability of the forensic lab to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) compliance?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes. We have to get that high standard, but we need to put in what is called an HVAX system and that has to do with an airflow system and also a security system to take care of non-interference and the contamination of what is called the exhibits that would be in there.

**Mr. Rohee:** The rehabilitation works for the police stations, could the Hon. Minister inform the Assembly how many contractors have been given the job? It is whether they have been allotted out and the same with respect of the management system on whether there is a consultancy that is engaged in this project as well as the forensic laboratory accreditation. How is it being proceeded with?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** In relation to the police stations and the Guyana Police Forensic Laboratory, those were tendered out. Generally, I think the contractors, who are awarded, are from within these regions where these police stations are. I do not have the names of the contractors here but I could provide you with that.

**Mr. Rohee:** The total amount that is being requested here is GUY\$118 million. Well, you just gave a revised number in view of the deficit between \$121 million and \$118 million. Could you tell us, Hon. Member, the sum given, just now, what at will be the deduction from the overall loan from the IDB?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I do not understand the question.

**Mr. Rohee:** The sum provided by the IDB is US\$1.670 million. The counterpart funding is a US\$167,000. Could the Hon. Minister inform us of the total sum granted by the IDB of \$1.670 million and the counterpart funds of GUY\$167,000 when the cost of this first set of project is deducted from that total amount? That is to say the loan, grant aid as well as the counterpart fund, whether there would be sufficient money remaining for the other projects that are to come on stream.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Well, the other projects would be on other items. In relation to these projects here, we understand that the money will be sufficient to complete the 12 police stations, the forensic lab, the social mobilisation and the EDMS.

**Mr. Rohee:** Could the Hon. Minister inform the Assembly whether there is a strategic plan for the operationalisation of the forensic laboratory and to sell services by the forensic laboratory?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Presently, that is a decision that would have to be made as to the selling of services. What we had wanted laboratory for is primarily the purposes of the Government and not necessarily to start selling. Indeed that has been an idea that came up and we have not really done any standard operation procedures (SOPs) in relation to the sale of services from that laboratory. I rather suspect that might be something that we ought to get into.

**Mr. Rohee:** There is a huge gap in the numbers stated here, again, \$55 million is being requested, which includes the \$33 million, \$10 million and the \$12 million, which amounts to \$55 million, but there is a huge difference of approximately \$97 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain what is this huge gap about and what it is intended to fill?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes. As was explained just now it includes these three items among other things. I do have the 13 items which bring it up to the \$147 million. They include consultancy for the design and establishment of a monitoring and evaluating system which is \$9.8 million, consultancy for the implementation of a public relations (PR) strategy and training staff from the University of the West Indies (UWI) - \$11 million, youth build, another consultancy - \$32 million, consultancy for final evaluation of project from one Susan Greene - \$4 million, consultancy for the MR IV Programme, IDEA is the consultant - \$25 million. I could give the total of how it came up to a \$147 million. What was in the legend merely include a sample of that, but I could share that with you.

**Mr. Rohee:** I am not sure whether it is good practice for us to be provided with samplings of moneys that are to be disbursed from a loan as important as this. I would be happy if the Hon. Minister could provide the honourable Assembly with the two documents which he would have originally offered to provide the Assembly with. Moving on, could the Hon. Minister inform the Assembly, in respect of the training programme for the youth at risk, as to what is the geographic

spread in respect to these training programmes, as for regions, and the numbers as well that are being trained according to the regions?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** They extend to a very wide breadth of the country. Regions 2, 3, 4, 6, 10 and 5 were the regions where 20 communities were selected from those regions and from each community 40 at-risk youths were put to be trained at some technical institute or a mechanic shop and those are the areas in which... I can give you, specifically, the 20 communities at a later stage and the regions from which they came. I do not have that here.

*11.16 p.m.*

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister has thrown my Math completely out of order as a result of these numbers which he has suddenly sprung on us. But, for the purpose of seeking clarification on the matter, what I have found is that \$1.8 million, that is, including the sum from the loan and the sum from the counterpart funds, which is equivalent to \$385 million. When you add \$118 million from the first set of money being requested to \$55 million from the second set of money being requested, it would result in \$173 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us whether this \$173 million that has been used so far from the \$385 million of the total loan and counterpart funds... Could he give us an indication as to the remaining sum in Guyana dollars as well as in United States (US) dollars so that we could get a fairly good idea of what is to be expected with respect to the last period of disbursement with respect to the loan itself?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** As far as I am aware, the Citizen Security Programme, too, will be continuing for a four-year period and moneys for the at risk youths are going to be disbursed additionally by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) every year. To that extent, there are moneys that are going to be present. So, it is not as if we are going to be out of money when you do the additions here. It will be an annual programme for 20 communities doing their 40 at risk youths. What this provision is for is the major consultancies only to be paid off the \$147 million.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, I am seeking a very clear indication from the Minister in relation to numbers. We, on this side of the House, would like for the Minister to tell us, of the total sum that has been drawn down so far - I understand it is about \$69 million - and you are now seeking an additional sum of \$173 million... Could you give us an indication of exactly how much money is remaining from this loan, including the counterpart funds?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am unable to answer that question but I could provide the answer if there is anything remaining.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, with your permission, could the Hon. Minister give us an indication of what we are looking at in terms of the last period of disbursement?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I beg your pardon. Could you say that again?

**Mr. Rohee:** Could the Hon. Minister inform the House what period we are looking at in terms of the last period of disbursement?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Is that for the sum of \$147 million?

**Mr. Rohee:** It is for the entire project of \$1.8 million.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It will be when it ends in four years because it will be a continuation of that...

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, am I to understand from the Hon. Minister that...

**Hon. Member:** You are overdoing it.

**Mr. Rohee:** I am not overdoing anything. I am being accused of overdoing something, Mr. Chairman. I do not know what it is.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Rohee, we really must get on. Just ask the question.

**Mr. Rohee:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Because I imagine that you will run out of questions, shortly.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, that is precisely the question. You have a huge sum of money remaining. I think it would be even less now than \$43 million, having regard to the fact that you gave some additional numbers which are not in the ledger. My question is, of the sum remaining from the loan, what can we look at in terms of the period of last disbursement?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** In relation to the TC...

**Mr. Rohee:** Are you saying that we have four years of money left to be spent?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** When you were mentioning the loan, I thought that you were mentioning the US\$15 million Citizen Security Programme loan. That is a long-term, four-year programme. If it is the sum of \$1.6 million for the Technical Cooperation (TC) Agreement, that will be done with the payments off of these consultancies that now bring it to \$147 million.

**Mr. Rohee:** I was talking about the TC.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That will be the final disbursement on or around the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017.

**Mr. Rohee:** Okay; thank you.

*Item 8 54-541 Ministry of Public Security – \$121,334,708, \$147,328,235 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 9 73-735 Region 3 - Equipment - Health - \$5,380,000**

**Dr. Ramsaran:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence. Mr. Minister, how many theatres are you referring to?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Sir, the information I have is that it is one operating theatre that comprises two operating rooms.

**Dr. Ramsaran:** So, technically, you have two operating theatres at your hospital.

**Mr. Bulkan:** Yes.

**Dr. Ramsaran:** I just wanted to confirm because that has been so for the past five years. I congratulate you for keeping it like that.

*Item 9 73-735 Region 3 - Equipment - Health – \$5,380,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 10 75-755 Region 5 - Land and Water Transport - \$1,383,308**

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister say what the refrigerated vehicle is going to be used for and who it will be assigned to?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Mr. Chairman, it is for use by the Mahaica/Berbice Regional Democratic Council and it is one minibus and one refrigerated truck and the additional provision is to cater for the 14% Value Added Tax (VAT) payment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you have another question, Mr. Gill?

**Mr. Gill:** He did not answer my question, Mr. Chairman. What will the refrigerated truck be used for?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Mr. Chairman, that question would have been answered during the original Budget at the original provision.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, if a question is asked, it will be helpful to answer it.

**Mr. Bulkan:** I could provide that information subsequently to the Hon. Member, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Hon. Minister is saying that he is unable to provide that information at this time and will do so... Is there an undertaking, Hon. Minister, to provide the information at a subsequent time?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Yes, at the earliest opportunity, Sir.

**Mr. Gill:** When?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Early in the new week, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** I did not hear the Minister.

**Mr. Bulkan:** Sir, early in the new week.

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank you.

*11.31 p.m.*

*Item 10 75-755 Region 5 – Land and Water Transport - \$1,383,308 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 11 78-782 Region 8 – Bridges - \$14,846,370**

**Mr. Croal:** Hon. Minister, do these four bridges represent the full impact of the damages as a result of the flooding? Secondly, what is the nature of the works that will be entailed?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Mr. Chairman, these are the total number of bridges that have been destroyed in sub-region 1, in Region 8. The scope of the works is to entail the construction of new bridges at these four locations.

**Mr. Croal:** We need much more information in terms of the works for the bridge. I understand the reason for the bridge. Hon. Minister, can you provide - if you cannot provide it now then provide it to the House - what the works entail?

**Mr. Bulkan:** It is for the construction of four new bridges at these new locations at an estimated sum of approximately \$99 million.

**Mr. Croal:** Are we speaking about wooden bridges or concrete bridges? How big will they be? Minister, I am sure you have the information there.

**Mr. Bulkan:** These are timber bridges, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Croal:** Again, can you lay over to the House the information on each of the bridges? Secondly, for the road network that would have been damaged as a result of the flooding, I do not see any request for that. How is that being catered for?

**Mr. Bulkan:** Mr. Chairman, this supplementary being sought is for the four bridges, not for the roads.

*Item 11 78-782 Region 8 – Bridges - \$14,846,370 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** This completes, Hon. Members, consideration of all the items on Financial Paper No.3/2017.

*Question*

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set in Financial Paper No.3/2017 - Schedule of the Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,976,237,426 for the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> 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.3 of 2017 and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**Mr. Speaker:** This completes consideration of Financial Paper No. 3 of 2017. Hon. Members, we must now move to the next stage which is the consideration of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders No. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 3 for 2017) - Bill No. 14 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 of the Corporative Republic of Guyana*, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2017) - Bill No. 14 of 2017 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the National 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.3 FOR 2015) – BILL NO.14 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 for the first time.*

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2017) - Bill No. 14 of 2017 be read a second time.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS**

#### **BILL - SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

##### **SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 3 FOR 2017) - BILL NO. 14 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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. 3 for 2017) - Bill No. 14 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.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, this brings to an end our work for today for this Sitting.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, could I use this opportunity to just announce that the budget for 2018 will be presented on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017? Could I also use this opportunity to quickly provide the information that was requested by Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall in respect of the magistrates?

There were actually three permanent magistrates appointed as follows: Mr. Peter Hugh, on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2017; Ms. Wanda Fortune on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017; Ms. Esther Sam on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017; and Ms. Tiffany Hohenkirk is the Judicial Research Assistant/Legal Assistant who was appointed on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

The temporary magistrates were: Mr. Madan Kissoon, who worked from January to February, 2017; Lesley Benjamin, who worked from January to February, 2017; Brendan Glassford, who worked from January to February, 2017; Liza Honoman, who worked from January to February, 2017; and Ms. Beverley Bishop-Cheddie, who worked from January to February, 2017. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned until Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** The House stands adjourned...

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an amendment to the motion of the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, you are interrupting the Speaker.

*11.46 p.m.*

Could you not have moved this motion before now?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I beg your pardon. I did not hear you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed with the motion.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am guided by the Speakers' Rulings of the National Assembly of the Tenth Parliament of Guyana (2012-2015) by the then Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Raphael Trotman. I am moving an amendment to the Prime Minister's motion to adjourn to Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 to adjourn to Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 to allow for Private Member's Day. I do not have anything against 27<sup>th</sup> November. I am asking for a day prior to that for the next Sitting.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member.

Hon. Members, we have an amendment to the Prime Minister's motion. The motion moved by the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, is that... Is it instead of or is it in addition to, Ms. Teixeira? Is the amendment to the motion proposed instead of the date given by the Prime Minister or is it in addition to it?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. I would accept that correction. Maybe...

**Mr. Speaker:** I am asking what it is that you intended. I am not proposing.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am moving an amendment to the Prime Minister's motion for us to have a Sitting on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 and on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017. The 24<sup>th</sup> November Sitting would be a Private Member's Day and 27<sup>th</sup> November would be as the Prime Minister said, budget day.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, thank you.

Hon. Members, you have heard the explanation given by the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira. The amendment is that there be a Sitting on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 in addition to the Sitting on 27<sup>th</sup> November. *[Interruption]* There has to be someone controlling somewhere. The sound is emanating from your line of proposal. I am wondering if it is a case where I should try and go ahead or I should let you quell the rising tide before I continue.

The Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, has proposed an amendment to the Prime Minister's motion. I would put that amendment to the floor. The amendment is that there should be a Sitting of the National Assembly on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2017.

*Motion proposed.*

*Amendment put, and negatived.*

*[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member. The motion has been lost, Ms. Teixeira. The Prime Minister's motion that we meet on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 is carried.

Hon. Members, this concludes our business for today. The House stands adjourned to Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017.

*Adjourned accordingly at 11.51 p.m.*