

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

79TH Sitting

Monday & Tuesday, 11TH & 12TH December, 2017

Assembly convened at 10.12 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2018

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

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

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2018 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2017-11-27.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2018, of a total sum of two hundred and forty three billion, three hundred and seventy five million, two hundred and eighty eight thousand dollars (\$243,375,288,000), excluding twenty three billion, seven hundred and eighteen million, four hundred and eighty three thousand dollars (\$23,718,483,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to further provision in respect of finance. [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to begin consideration of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2018.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: I would simply remind Members that the Schedule, a copy of which every Member would have... I get the impression that a new Schedule was not issued. The one you have may have the description of “draft” on it. If that is so, the Schedule described as “draft” is the same as was approved by the House at our last Sitting. So, if you remove the word “draft” from it, it would be *clothed in new garment*.

We are in the Committee of Supply and we will proceed in accordance with the Schedule. I understand that the new copy of the Schedule is being circulated; I have just received mine. So, we will proceed in accordance with that Schedule. Members, kindly get Volume one of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and turn to pages 36 and 37.

Agency: 05 Ministry of the Presidency

Current Expenditure

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,200,812,000

Ms. Teixeira: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, under this head ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, forgive me, please retain your seat.

There is one bit of information I want to give to Members and that is that the Schedule sets out the times allotted for consideration of each Agency and Programme. The Chairman will maintain those times and I would ask the cooperation of Members to ensure that we stay within the times allotted. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Sir.

Line item 6284 – Other: The amount budgeted has increased from the revised amount for 2017, which we are not sure is correct because we have not completed the year, to 169,364,000. Could the Hon. Minister advise this House on what line item 6284 is used for and what is the reason or reasons for the increase?

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

This line item, 6284, is used for presidential and ministerial broadcast being aired on television stations, and printing of the *Official Gazette*.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member, I am just being facetious, state if this includes the cost of the makeup artist who is downstairs prepping all of the Ministers in the Department of Public Information's (DPI's) Office? Is this included in the cost to the taxpayers?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It is recognised that when Ministers, in particular the Prime Minister, appear on television, they represent all of Guyana. The images which are broadcast to the rest of the world are really what people see of Guyana. Therefore, the cost associated with preparing Ministers and preparing persons for television programmes is a cost which is, in fact, borne by the State. It is standard.

Ms. Teixeira: I, therefore, thank the Minister for admitting that the makeup artist is downstairs in the DPI's office. As my mother used to say, *a bit of paint and a pot of paint does not make you what you are*. Let me go to my next question.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Under line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), the amount has increased from \$22,278,000 to \$95,923,000. Could the Hon. Minister please advise us on what are the reasons for this very large increase, since under Public Service Management there is also an enormous increase in the amount allocated for training?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This has to do with the training which would be done in the Department of the Environment and in the Office of Climate Change (OCC). In fact, in particular, the outreaches, which will take place in the schools and all of the communities across Guyana, are to have persons understand what the Green State Development Strategy is all about and the issues of climate change and how they affect their communities. This is what is anticipated under this programme.

Ms. Teixeira: I would like to now go to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation: We note that there has been the removal of the presidential guards from under this head. Could the Hon. Minister please advise us on where in the Budget the presidential guard service is provided for?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The presidential guard service is provided for under the Ministry of Public Security.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I go back to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) and ask if the Minister would be willing to share with us some of the outreaches and some of the programmes that are planned for 2018, in terms of the Green State Development Strategy in particular? As I am on my feet, I would like to ask a question under line item 6294 – Other. There is \$100,300,000 allocated under that head. Could the Hon. Minister please advise what this would be used for?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: As I had indicated in my budget presentation, the outreaches would be done at all of the nursery, primary and secondary schools to indicate to the children how climate change affects them at various levels in society. The Green State Development Strategy would be done in schools and communities. In fact, I can give the Hon. Member a schedule of how it is going to be done. It is something that is now being rolled out but I can provide for the Hon. Member a framework of what will take place.

Ms. Teixeira: Minister, you had mentioned community outreaches and schools. Is it all schools or only some schools? Regarding the communities, could we be advised on what areas you are going to be looking at? It is because the Green State Development Strategy is a policy document and it is not just for school children.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is correct. I will provide the framework within which this will take place. Mr. Chairman, as you know, the number of schools in this country is so vast and widely spread all over the country. We may have to group some schools in order for us to be able to allow the project to be undertaken in a timely and cost efficient manner. As I said, I will provide to the Hon. Member the framework within which this will take place.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the size of the fleet that is to be maintained and what is responsible for the amount moving from \$55,968,000, in 2017, to \$71,540,000 in 2018?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The number of vehicles, which the Hon. Member asked about, is 149. The increase basically deals with the acquisition of eight new vehicles: two saloons and six regular cars. We have had, in 2017, a reduction in the cost of maintenance because some of the newer vehicles that we are using require less maintenance. What we are doing is basically phasing out some of the older vehicles to keep in tune with the Government's policy with respect to bringing in vehicles of a certain age only, and utilising those vehicles. We are also going to be purchasing new vehicles over the period.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Minister confirm whether PRR 7792, an ML350 Mercedes, is part of that fleet?

10.27 a.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I cannot be very precise about that but, if it is a bit of information which the Hon. Member requires then, certainly, he will get it.

Bishop Edghill: Then I will ask the Hon. Minister to supply, to this House, the list of the registration numbers of all vehicles in this fleet and the officers that they are assigned to.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I will provide for the Hon. Member the numbers of the vehicles that are assigned to the Ministry, but with respect to the actual allocation, personal allocation and

there about, I really do not see the necessity for it. These are vehicles that are owned by the State. I will provide the information of the list of vehicles that are assigned to the Ministry of the Presidency.

Ms. Chandarpal: Mr. Chairman, under line items 6223 and 6224, I have noticed a steep increase in Office Materials and Supplies as well as Print and Non-Print Materials. Could the Minister explain why there is a high cost in that section?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the increase is \$194,000 in total basically. This caters for the activities of the Department of Events and the effective and efficient system of the disseminating of information to the public. As you are aware, the Department of Events is the department that is responsible for all National Events and brings clarity and regularity to events that are of a national nature and national character.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you wish to ask another question?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Which one, line item 6222 or line item 6223?

Ms. Chandarpal: Yes, line item 6222 and line item 6224.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there is actually a reduction of \$500,000 in this line item, and this is because of the fact that there are several staff changes which have taken place. Staff members have moved from the Ministry of the Presidency, in some cases, to the Ministry of Public Security, so this is the reason why there is a reduction. I do not see an increase. Maybe, the Hon. Member can point me to where I am wrong.

Ms. Chandarpal: Mr. Chairman, line item 6223 and line item 6224 under Materials, Equipment and Supplies is where the Member should be looking.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: You told me line item 6222. Line item 6223: There is an increase of \$300,000 and this is basically catering for the increase in the provision of office supplies, ink, toners, *etcetera*. It is a projection for all of 2018.

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,200,812,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 052 - Defence and National Security - \$298,766,000.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Line item 6294 - Other - \$100,000,000: Last year when the Minister was asked about this question, he referred to the fact that this money was to be used for polygraph testing. Could the Hon. Minister advise whether this is the head still being used for polygraphing? Is polygraphing being continued, or is it being used for other things? Or is it used for polygraphing and other things? And could we be told what those other things are?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Polygraph testing is done under this head. Among other things, these are matters to do with national intelligence, national security and the question of the competence of the persons who have been employed by that agency to perform their functions in a certain way. Yes, it is part of the contemplation in this sum.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: The line item shows an increase from \$80,318,000 to \$86,269,000 while the staffing detail reflects a decrease in the number of persons. Could the Hon. Minister explain the increase in the amount of money being requested as well as the decrease in the number of contracted employees?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this amount caters for the wages and salary increases to Public Servants and the movement of one person out of this head.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6223 - Office Materials and Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister explain to the House how is it that \$6,123,000 is requested but only \$1.4 million is projected to be spent in 2018? This shows an increase of \$5,500,000.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: We have had to actually live with austerity and the fact that this is not what some of these entities really wanted, but this is what the State could afford. What we are seeing here is actually a reduction in what was requested, of what was spent last year. Basically, what we are seeing here is, as I said, a level of austerity, and we have asked the entities to learn to live within the limits of what the State could afford.

Ms. Teixeira: Under line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, there has been an increase in the allocation. Could the Hon. Minister advice what maintenance is being done in which building?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This sum covers the increase. It caters to the repairs to the ceilings of the Emergency Operation Centre of the Civil Defence Commission as well as the alternate

emergency centre which is part of our civil defense and our defense and disaster preparedness mechanism.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister provide the House with the details in respect of maintenance cost? For example, what was the cost, the detail of works, the method of procurement when advertised, the date awarded and how was the contractor selected?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I will have to undertake to provide that information to the Hon. Member. Maybe, I will ask for 48 hours to do so.

Ms. Teixeira: Just a clarification, to go back to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees - to follow up on my colleague's question. Last year you said that the increase in the staff at that time was to do with the fact that 22 members of staff at the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) were moved and put under this head. Could you say if the CDC staff is still 22 and are they still under this head? That is under Contracted Employees, line item 6116.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, please. They are still here and the numbers are the same.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister provide the details with respect to the maintenance works done here?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I can indicate what we have proposed doing with this to the Hon. Member. He can get that in writing, but it caters basically for the infrastructure maintenance of Castellani House and the infrastructure work to be done at the Timehri Civil Defence Commission Compound.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Minister indicate whether this head covers work done to the National Intelligence Centre (NIC) building.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, it does.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): Could you please say how many people will be benefitting from this training?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is a sum that caters for the training of personnel in the NIC. Usually, those training programmes as well as the names of the persons who go are classified.

What I can do is indicate to the Hon. Member, in writing, some of those programmes which will be catered for under this head.

10.42 a.m.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the country or countries where this training will be undertaken?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Hon. Member, as a former Minister of Home Affairs, is aware of these matters. There are training scholarships and training programmes with personnel in the region. The Hon. Member knows that Jamaica is a hub for the bulk of these training programmes. There are training programmes in Europe, North America and in the region. I would say that, based on our training arrangements and agreements with friendly countries, they provide scholarships and, in some cases, we pay part of the arrangements for the persons to go abroad.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister say specifically whether Israel, is one of the countries where training would be done?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, as I said, we have training opportunities all around the world. I cannot now specifically say whether Israel is one of those places. I said that, based on the relationship we have with foreign friendly countries, they provide training opportunities for us. I cannot at this point in time say that Israel is one of the countries that we get training from.

Programme: 052 - Defence and National Security - \$298,766,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 053 - Public Service Management - \$1,256,271,000

Ms. Chandarpal: Under the line item 6116 - Contracted Employees, I am looking at the staffing details. There is something that is not clear and I hope the Minister will be able to answer. We are seeing quite a huge increase but when we look at the staffing details there is a decrease in the amount of staff. I would like an explanation from the Minister, please.

Minister of Public Service [Dr. Roopnaraine]: We have 47 contracted employees, many of whom are over 45 years, and these are senior staff at the staff college.

Ms. Teixeira: On this side of the House we are in a bit of a quandary because I noticed the Hon. Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine answering. According to the Official Gazette of Guyana, he is still the Minister of Education. We are in a bit of a quandary as to whether we are asking the right Minister the right questions. Also, in Volume Two, Minister Roopnaraine is not listed as the Minister responsible for the Public Service, nor is he gazetted online or in the hard copies. We would like, under the Interpretation and General Clauses Act, the Minister who is responsible for the Public Service to please answer. This is no disrespect to my friend and colleague, Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There has been an Official Gazette of Guyana's publication indicating that Dr. Roopnaraine is the Minister responsible for the Public Service. The publication is dated the 31st August, 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: I find it very odd that it is not on the Official Gazette of Guyana's website. I remember that we brought an amendment to the Act to have all matters posted on the Official Gazette of Guyana's website. It is not there for 31st August or anytime in 2017 thus far, nor is there a hard copy to that effect, Sir. The Minister is not the Minister of Public Service; he is still the Minister of Education.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: We will get a copy of the Official Gazette for the Member.

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

Ms. Chandarpal: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am still not clear with respect to the staffing details because the Minister just said 47 contracted employees and here it is 41. Could he please explain that? The increase is too substantial for the answer that we have received.

Dr. Roopnaraine: The reason for the variation is the fact that 21 officers have been transferred from Programme 051 to Programme 053. We have five Coordinators being paid at \$330,750; four Administrative Assistants at \$202,248; three Directors at \$540,800; one Researcher at \$385,800; four Typist Clerks at \$71,280; and one Administrative Manager at \$385,875. These are at the staff college.

Mr. Neendkumar: For line item 6116, Contracted Employees, for 2017, there were 43 employees, and, for 2018, there were 41 employees. We see for line item 6116, Contracted

Employees, in 2017, \$71,444,000 was allocated and \$98,468,000 was spent. Now we see the budgeted sum is \$137,827,000. It is a total difference that we are talking about here.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Member, do you wish to repeat your question?

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: In 2017 there were 43 employees while 41 employees were projected for 2018. The budgeted sum for 2017, for line item 6116, Contracted Employees was \$71,444,000 but the actual money spent or what is projected to be spent for 2017, because 2017 has not passed, is \$98,468,000. For 2018 you are asking for \$137,827,000. Why is it that you are asking for so much money when you have projected for less than two persons? Something is definitely not going right.

Dr. Roopnaraine: As the Hon. Member knows there have been a staff and a salary increase. The reason for the variation is for the gratuity and vacation allowances, *et cetera*.

Bishop Edghill: Follow-up: The Minister just explained to us that the increase caters for gratuity and vacation allowance which would have been an increase of \$39,359,000 for 2018 with two less persons in the department. The first question is: Did the \$98,468,000, which is the revised sum, cater for gratuity and vacation allowances based upon the revised salaries that were granted in 2017? We do not know of any revised salaries for 2018, so what is this sum catering for?

Dr. Roopnaraine: The salary increase at that time was not catered for.

Bishop Edghill: The question is still not answered and I think my Hon. Friend probably does not understand us. Budgeted for 2017 there was \$71,444,000. There was a salary increase which would also affect vacation allowances and increases in gratuity; we acknowledged that and it was increased to \$98,468,000. There is no announced or known salary increase for 2018. Yet, with two less persons in this line item, the sum has gone up by \$39,359,000. Please explain the \$39,359,000. We would like to have a breakdown of how the difference of \$39,359,000 will be expended.

Dr. Roopnaraine: In our budget we are catering for the advance that was approved by the Ministry of Finance. I am advised that we are catering for the salary increases.

10.57 a.m.

Bishop Edghill: Just for clarity and, maybe, the Minister of Finance could help with this matter. Salary increases were granted in 2017 and the new increased salary took effect from the 1st December, 2017. The salary that was paid on the 1st December, 2017 is the same salary that will be paid on the 1st January, 2018. It was budgeted all the way to the 31st of December, 2018, according to the budgeting standards.

The salary that was paid from January to November, 2017, with the adjustments and the retroactive payment, would have taken care of the difference of the \$28 million that was catered for in the \$98 million revised. There is still an unexplained amount, because nothing has changed of the \$39 million in 2018. Could the Hon. Minister give us the breakdown of how this \$39 million will be expended? We would like to have it now, Sir, if it could be given for clarity. The figures are there.

Dr. Roopnaraine: I would just like to assure the Hon. Member that we would provide the information that was requested.

Ms. Teixeira: It is rather odd to anticipate an increase which comes through the Ministry of Finance. In fact, it cannot be done. So we are finding these answers very problematical, just like the Hon. Member whose position is not gazetted and who does not have a portfolio other than the Minister of Education. We have been forced to ask questions to a Minister who is the unauthorised Minister of Public Service. Mr. Chairman, the law states, not Ms. Teixeira, that Ministers' portfolios must be gazetted.

Line item 6302 – Training - \$910,000,000: The last time Hon. Minister Harmon, who had reported on this, said that this was for scholarships. He also made some kind of commitment to give some statistics. He gave some in 2016 but not in 2017. Could we ask for a breakdown of the number of persons who benefitted from the scholarships, the regions that they are from, their gender and if they are benefitting from local scholarships or from scholarships that are external to Guyana? I assume that this is still for scholarships.

Dr. Roopnaraine: The information is available for the Hon. Member. There were 24 countries that were involved and a total of 1,173 persons. The scholarships ranged from Certificates to Doctors of Philosophy (PhDs).

Ms. Teixeira: Nine hundred and ten million was budgeted for in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister state, for 2017, how many scholarships were issued or given to Guyanese, how many were PhDs and how many were Master's Degree and were they given in or outside of Guyana?

Dr. Roopnaraine: We issued 944 to 14 institutions and 791 to the University of Guyana as at 5th December, 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: I would like to know their gender, age *etcetera*. You said 944 were offered in 2017. Where was the balance? We would appreciate having the breakdown for the 2017 beneficiaries and what they were offered – Certificate, Diploma, Degree or Post Graduate - and what is the anticipation for 2018.

Dr. Roopnaraine: Very well. This would be supplied.

Programme: 053 - Public Service Management - \$1,256,271,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 055 - Citizenship and Immigration Services - \$574,928,000

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Contracted workers' expenditure has increased from \$89,039,000 in 2017 to \$120,689,000 in 2018 while the Staffing Details showed a decline from 114 persons to 40 persons. Could the Hon. Minister of Citizenship under the Ministry of the Presidency explain or justify and provide a breakdown, by departments, of the designations, salaries, benefits and allowances of this allocation?

Minister of Citizenship [Mr. Felix]: Line item 6116 which is under query, the Estimates had only covered up to October, 2017. We have made up for that in the Estimates and we also have increases in salaries and the related benefits.

Bishop Edghill: I am very intrigued by the answer. I would ask the Hon. Minister to follow me. With 114 staff members you budgeted \$139,292,000. You expended, even with the salary increase, \$89,039,000. You have moved your staff under this line item from 114 to 40, a reduction of 74, but your budgetary expectation for 2018 has moved to \$120,689,000. Could you please give us a breakdown of the expenditure of 2017 and the proposed expenditure for 2018? We would like to have that in documented form, but you could offer an explanation now.

Mr. Felix: The breakdown would be supplied.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: You said that the revised figure goes up to October, 2017. Is it, therefore, that we are in a budget which does not have complete figures for the year? What is your anticipated cost or expenditure for this head by the end of 2017, putting aside your revised budget which you said is up to October, 2017?

Mr. Felix: The figures are here. Sixty-eight persons were moved to line item 6114, three persons were moved to line item 6113, one person was moved to line item 6112 and two persons were moved to line item 6115. That explains the increase. We have been transitioning from contracted employees to the pensionable establishment.

Ms. Teixeira: That makes it much clearer. Could we go to line item 6284 – Other? There is an increase from the \$194,000,000 that was budgeted for last year. You have revised expenditure of \$194,000,000 and you are budgeting for \$218,000,000. What does that include and why the increase?

Mr. Felix: You will recall and this House will recall that, during my budget presentation, I alluded to the digitisation of the records of the General Register's Office. This amount caters for the on-going computerisation of the department.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister please advise us, he spoke about it in his Budget presentation, and I am pleased to hear about that. Could he state which company is doing that and if it was publicly tendered for? Is it a roll-over contract and how long would it be for? What is the total cost of the contract?

Mr. Felix: The activity is in-house. Last year I did indicate that it was not contracted out. I indicated in this year's budget presentation that we have 80 employees working two shifts.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could you indicate whether the 114 contracted employees were employees that were involved in the digitisation that you spoke about?

Mr. Felix: The answer is no.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you indicate if the 74 employees that are no longer contracted are still employed by your department?

Mr. Felix: The answer is yes.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you indicate how many of the 114 employees are still involved in the digitisation exercise?

Mr. Felix: None of them.

Mr. Hamilton: As I heard you, the 74 employees went into the fixed establishment and they were involved in the digitisation exercise. I asked specifically, if the 114 contracted employees in 2017 were involved in the digitisation exercise.

Mr. Felix: The answer again is in the negative.

11.12 a.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you indicate where those employees are employed?

Mr. Felix: There are clerical and office support staff, Data Processing Clerks, Clerk II (Generals), Confidential Secretaries and a number of Transcribers, which is a necessary function of the General Register Office (GRO). There are Clerk of Marriages, Office Assistants and others. There is a whole range of them.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, could you indicate where could I locate, from line items 6111 – Administrative to 6117 – Temporary Employees, the employees that are involved in digitisation?

Mr. Felix: They are a separate grouping employed specifically for data processing. When the data processing is completed, they are gone.

Mr. Hamilton: Okay, I heard you Mr. Minister. Could you indicate to this National ...

Mr. Felix: They are reflected under line item 6284 – Other.

Mr. Hamilton: For the record, Mr. Minister, you are indicating to us that staffing details for...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

You are indicating to this House that the employees that are engaged in digitisation are placed under line item 6284 - Other.

Secondly, could you indicate how many employees are there? Could you indicate how long they were employed? Could you indicate when this project is likely to conclude? Then I will follow-up with two other questions when you answer those questions?

Mr. Felix: There are three questions. First of all, in my budget speech and earlier today I said that there were 80 employees who were divided into two shifts. In my budget presentation I said that this project was expected to run for approximately two years. I did not say that it would run up to 2020. They started working in February of 2017; calculate two years from that.

Ms. Teixeira: Let us go back to this issue of line item 6284 – Other. The contracted employees have declined from 114 to 40. You had reported to this House that 80 employees are dealing with the digitalisation. My earlier question was whether this was a contracted company or whether it was tendered *et cetera* and you said “no, 80 people have been employed”. If you had employed 80 people, Sir, with due respect, these people have to be reflected under the staffing details and, therefore, Sir, the 80 people that you are talking about... and I do not doubt that you have employed 80 people. I am glad that you found work for 80 people.

However, the issue is that, under the staffing details on page 45, you have answered the questions we give but you have not reflected where the 80 people are. You cannot hire 80 people under line item 6284 – Other for an amount of \$218 million. Therefore, you must either have a contract with a company or you have created some other kind of financial arrangement which is not authorised, Sir. We are not asking about the veracity of the 80 people. We are asking about the procedural issue, an authority under which you are hiring people. I just want you to clarify that.

Mr. Felix: I did not mention anything about a specialised company having anything to do with the digitalisation. I said that it was being done in-house and an in-house project...

Ms. Teixeira: Therefore, your staff should be reflected.

Mr. Felix: That is correct, but they are paid under line item 6234 – Other because it is a project.

Ms. Teixeira: That is a breach.

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel*]

Bishop Edghill: I would like to thank the Hon. Member for that clarification. But the Hon. Member is indicating that there are 80 members of staff who are paid under two different arrangements, which is an illegality. The Minister is indicating that he has 80 members of staff who are already on his payroll...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you going to ask a question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, I am going to ask a question, Sir, but it is important for me to clarify what the Minister is saying. There are 141 employees in 2018, who are going to be paid a total wage of \$200,197,000, and he is saying that, from among that 141 staff members, there is a specialised group of another 80 persons who are providing a service of digitalising the records and they are going to be paid \$218 million. There are 141 persons who are already on the payroll who are being paid \$200 million, and then 80 from that 141 are being paid an additional \$218 million. This is an illegality because if they are paid overtime...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, no, please. Let us not...

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, this is scrutiny.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please have a seat.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, would I not be allowed to continue my question?

Mr. Chairman: Please have your seat, Hon. Member. Hon. Members I do not know that we need to be shouting and accusing without the benefit of the answer from the particular person to whom the question is addressed. If there are additional questions, there is room for additional questions. It does not require accusations. It does not require conclusions.

Bishop Edghill: I did not make an accusation.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, you will address the Speaker properly at all times. Now, Hon. Members, we will proceed in the way that I am suggesting that we proceed. You ask questions, you ask additional questions, and you ask further questions. Do not draw conclusions without the facts before you. It does not help when we shout. We do not get

anywhere because other persons shout and then we have a bedlam in the House. We would not have that today, so please. You have the floor Bishop Edghill and you will speak.

Bishop Edghill: Let me just give you the assurance, Sir, that I did not make an accusation and I am not shouting. This is my tone of voice. I am going back to the question, under the rules of engagement; if overtime is to be paid for extra work done then it is to be paid on the salary roll of the employee engaged. Why is it that these 80 persons are not being paid on the regular salary roll and deductions made? Could the Minister explain that to this House?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister there is a question addressed to you.

Mr. Felix: Yes, thank you. Apparently we have some fundamental differences as to how this line item 6284 - Other is to be administered. I understand the Opposition's side but our side is saying that line item 6284 – Other, also caters for consultancies. We had published... **[Bishop**

Edghill: Inaudible] Man, listen when I am speaking because I listened to you.

Bishop Edghill: You do not shout at me.

Mr. Felix: I want to show you that I have a bigger voice than you.

Bishop Edghill: You would not shout at me.

Mr. Felix: I could deal with you. *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, are we going to start again or is it possible that you would want to continue?

Mr. Felix: I could continue, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Very good. Let us not be disrespectful to one another.

Mr. Felix: We had advertised this project three times. The persons who tendered for the project were all found unsuited; therefore, we employed 80 young people. We provided employment for them so that they could be part of this project and because we did not want this project to drag on indefinitely, we placed timing on it - from February, 2017 for two years. They are being aid a

stipends. We are accounting for the cost under line item 6284 – Other. The Opposition could differ with that but that is our position, full stop.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member advise us on the two year project by saying what is the total cost for digitalising the records?

Secondly, in this very technical area of digitalising, have you hired technical competent people to do the digitalising at the highest level because this is software programmes and software design? This is not just Data Entry Clerks, Sir, so could you please advise. It is true that line item 6284 - Other allows for consultancies but what you are describing is not consultancy, Sir.

Mr. Felix: When we took over office, we took over four qualified persons who are providing that service until now.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6284 – Other: Mr. Minister you have indicated that \$218 million is to be sent on staffing who were digitalising the records. My first question is this: how many Data Entry Clerks do you have?

Mr. Felix: Again, there are 80 Data Entry Clerks.

Mr. Hamilton: Of the 80 members of staff, how many are programmers and Systems Analysts?

Secondly, are the senior technical persons on contract or are they on the fixed establishment and could you indicate their salaries?

You would have indicated that this is a two year programme and I recall that you had indicated, during the last Budget, that there are about 3.5 million records to digitise. Could you indicate to this House how many records, thus far, have been digitalised - how many births and how many deaths?

11.27 a.m.

Mr. Felix: Let me make one piece of clarity here. Under line item 6284, Other, it does not cater, exclusively, for the digitalisation. Other areas are also under ‘Other’. This \$218 million cannot be fixed, exclusively, onto the digitalisation process.

Secondly, so far we have inputted 1.5 million records. We had divided the period into two, from June 1987 to present, and so far we have inputted birth – 372,252 records; death - 95,032 records; marriages - 91, 358 records, making a total of 558,642 records.

In the other period, from July 1987 going back to 1869, we have inputted 657,220 records; death - 113,725 records and marriage - 97,206 records, making a total of 868,151 records; adoption - 906 records, immigration marriages - 22, death overseas - seven, and birth overseas -18. On this project, at this point in time, we are up to the year 1940.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the very first question I asked on this head was what were the issues that were under this heading and what were the reasons for the increase. The Hon. Member talked about digitising and that is why the conversation went in that direction and he still has not said what else comes under that head. However, I want to ask the Minister for clarification, from the way he is describing the inputting, *et cetera*, it sounds as if data is just being inputted. Have you created a digitalised system that is accessible? Therefore, could new entrances such as new births, new deaths and new marriages be inputted within a day or a two day, *et cetera*, of having the documents reach the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA)? If we are talking about data entry alone, all that you are doing is entering what is there. But, are you creating a data system that is accessible so that if someone comes to search for their mother's birth certificate, because they need it for whatever reason, it is there? Is the system of digitalisation been created for that? Could you then, therefore, please lay over the information that you just read in the House for us?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, I will lay that over and secondly, the data that we are recording, as you recognised, are backward and forward which came up from 1987 to now. The intention is that when the system is digitised, the questions asked by the Hon. Member would be realised. That is what we are working towards; we are working to achieve that. At this point in time, the 1987 records, as we come forward, would include records from the time we took office and those records would also be inputted.

Mr. Hamilton: I have three questions and I will take my seat. The Minister indicated that the members of staff are receiving stipends, could you indicate the stipend for us?

Secondly, could you say whether that stipend allows for over time to be added? You indicated, further, that of the \$218 million to be spent and of the \$194 million that you are going to spend, all is not for staffing. Could you indicate to this House how much of this money is for staffing, how much is for other activities - whether there are six or seven activities - and give us the number.

Finally, are you digitising records or are you just doing data encoding? Because, while you say “digitising”, Sir, every time you speak you are indicating to me that the only thing the staff are doing is encoding records. Could you clarify? **[Mr. Greenidge: *Inaudible*]**

There are different things Mr. Greenidge, you know that.

Mr. Felix: The items requested to be laid over will be laid over. The stipend given is \$55,000 per month. The staff work on two eight hours shifts so there is no question of overtime.

Let me explain this one for you, we input records and we have a scanning system and a microfiche system. So, whatever is inputted can be compared with the actual record which has been either scanned or microfiched to ensure accuracy. Once we ensure that that record is accurate, the digitisation process, when it comes properly on stream, would guarantee the accuracy of those records which were inputted earlier.

Now, this question about line item 6284 – Other, also includes outreaches, television programmes and advertisements and, as it states, O-T-H-E-R.

Mr. Rohee: There is what appears to be an astronomical increase under line item 6271 - Telephone Charges. It appears to have skyrocketed from \$1.5 million in 2017 to \$5.5 million in 2018, which is quite a large increase. Could the Hon. Minister, in the department under the Ministry of the Presidency, explain this astronomical increase and, apart from the explanation in terms of figures, could the Hon. Minister say whether this increase has to do with eavesdropping as well?

Mr. Felix: The Hon. Member is correct in terms of the variations observed but this variation is as a result of the fact that, in 2018, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services, which is now a tenant of the Department of Public Service, would go on its own. So, we will have to pay our own telephone charges and, in addition to that, we are also absorbing the

Remigration Unit from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will require its own telephone services as well. As a result of that, we have catered for the telephone charges at this indicated cost.

Mr. Rohee: I gather from the Hon. Minister, in the department under the Ministry of the Presidency, that his Office has no fixed place of abode. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House whether he has located a specific place and say where it is likely to be?

Mr. Chairman: His Excellency, the President, in his address here, on that faithful day, did make the announcement of where the Department of Citizenship would be located but some people could not hear. We are going to the Stephen Campbell Building. We will be moving, not from no place of abode but from a place of abode within the Department of the Public Service, in Waterloo Street, and would now be relocated, sometime in the new year, to Shiv Chanderpaul Drive and Charlotte Street. We are going from Waterloo Street, which is our current abode, to Bourda.

Mr. Rohee: Electricity charges have also skyrocketed, am I to understand that the reason for the increase in electricity charges is similar to the explanation which was given, with respect to the increase in telephone charges?

Mr. Felix: The answer, Hon. Member, is in the affirmative.

Mr. Neendkumar: Under staffing details, Line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support, in 2017, 20 persons were budgeted for and I noticed that the budget has a mere \$15 million but they spent \$51.5 million. In 2018, they are now budgeting for 88 persons, an additional 68 persons, and \$65.8 million is budgeted. I would like to know why only \$14 million will be paying 68 workers. Can we have an explanation about this?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, the difference is catered for as a result of the movement of 68 staff from contract to pensionable service.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister lay over to us the 68 positions and the salary for each position?

Mr. Felix: I think this document is available to be laid over; the document which contains the answer to the Hon. Member's questions.

Mr. Chairman: Would you make the document available?

Mr. Felix: Yes, Sir.

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services - \$574,928,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 056 - Social Cohesion - \$390,044,000

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: The staffing details indicate that there is an increase of 58 persons. Could we be provided with the categories of staff and where these persons are located, please?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I respectfully ask that the Hon. Minister be given an opportunity to have his staff present and for the relocation.

11.42 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Oh yes, indeed. Please. Hon. Members, we will allow a minute while the changeover takes place.

Hon. Minister, the minute is fast receding. I wonder if the Hon. Ms. Chandarpal, will repeat her question so that the Minister, who is now in position with his advisors, can feel the question.

Ms. Chandarpal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is an increase of 58 persons for 2018. We would like to be provided with the categories as well as where the persons are employed and their remuneration.

Minister of Social Cohesion [Dr. Norton]: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have all the information listed here and I could hand it over. Also, I could read it out at the same time but it is quite a large number.

Mr. Chairman: No, we would not advise you to read it out if you have it in written form and could make it available. Unless the Hon. Members are insisting that we spend the next half an hour dealing with this item alone.

Ms. Chandarpal: No, let the Minister lay it over, please.

Mr. Chairman: It could be laid over. I thank you.

Ms. Chandarpal: Today.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, I have the document here.

Mr. Chairman: That means it could be laid over...

Dr. Norton: Today.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, we are in the same quandary as earlier. Minister George Norton is the Minister of Public Health according to the *Official Gazette*. As of the 6th June, 2015, *Official Gazette* 1313, he was the Minister and is the Minister of Public Health. There is no record on the website or in hard copy, other than Mr. Harmon's pronouncement at a press conference, which states that Minister Norton has moved from the Ministry of Public Health to the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Culture, Youth and Sport. Mr. Chairman, again, I am raising this with you that the Minister's portfolios have to be gazetted by law and, therefore, the Minister who should be answering for this Ministry is Minister Amna Ally, who is still listed as the Minister of Social Cohesion.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, just permit the Chairman a moment. I am in possession of an *Official Gazette* dated the 31st August, 2017 which lists the new appointments. I do not know whether that is what Minister Harmon was going to speak about.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is what I was going to speak about. I did, in fact, state here, earlier, that the *Official Gazette* of the 31st August, 2017 stipulates the changes

that have been made and this one here...

[**Ms. Teixeira:** It is not on the website.]

It is here in hard copy. [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel*]

So, Mr. Chairman, I believe that a copy has been lodged with the Clerk of the National Assembly and I am, respectfully, asking that this matter be withdrawn because both statements are here - the statement about Dr. Roopnaraine and the statement about Dr. Norton. It is numbered 209 of 2017, *Official Gazette* of that date. All of the ministerial changes that have been made are here.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I would be very pleased to see a copy of that *Official Gazette* and ask that it be circulated in the House. There were six ministerial changes in 2017, three in January and two in the rest of the year. I have gone over the website and the hardcopy hundreds of times and it is not posted. Therefore, I would appreciate to receive a hardcopy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira, I know that you want to speak about this but we understand that copies of the *Official Gazette* are available and that the changes have been printed. Would you still maintain the position that it does not exist? But you would see a copy of it.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I did not say that it did not exist. Mr. Chairman, could you allow me. I said that it was not published on the website or in the hardcopy. I did not say that it did not exist. It is not on the website or in hardcopy, and I searched up to 2 0'clock this morning. We would love to see it to make sure that it covers all of those Ministers because I do not know which Ministers it cover. [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I bring to your attention, the fact that we have 30 minutes more to complete this particular agency. Now, we can spend our time arguing backward and forward or we can focus on the issues here. I would suggest that we try the latter. We are on pages 46 and 47.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, under line item 6291, National and Other Events, there is a movement from \$1.5 million to \$23 million. Could the Minister explain what the additional \$20 million would be used for under National and Other Events?

Dr. Norton: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This caters for the Ministry's participation in Mashramani, Independence, Phagwah, Diwali, Youman Nabi, Easter, Emancipation and other national events. The Ministry's Mashramani activity entails the Ministry's float parade and production for the Ministry's band et *cetera*, and is now catered for in this line item. I can also supply, if the Member so need, the actual amount for each of these activity.

Bishop Edghill: We would be happy for the Minister to lay over the document. But, could he confirm that, in 2017, all of the activities listed were catered for?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, Mashramani was not catered for by this Ministry, under this line item.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, so we are confirming that the only activity that was not catered for in 2017, which is being catered for in 2018, is Mashramani, which caters for the additional \$20 million.

Dr. Norton: It in only for the Ministry's participation in that activity.

Mr. Bharat: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister, say which building(s) will benefit from this allocation and whether this programme head is housed at the main office on Shiv Chanderpaul Drive?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, this caters for the replacement of windows and doors at the main building on Main and Quamina Streets.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could we confirm that the Ministry of Social Cohesion has been removed from the Ministry of the Presidency and is now at the Department of Youth and Sport that we are catering for expenditure under this line item?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, that happened since the 1st of September, 2017.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please state why the complement of contracted employees has increased from 10 to 68 in 2018?

Secondly, what public recruitment procedures would be engaged to hire those employees?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, this is as a result of the merger of the staff from the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport and that of the Ministry of Social Cohesion.

Programme: 056 – Social Cohesion - \$390,044,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 057 – Environmental Management and Compliance - \$897,947,000

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, could I beg for some time again?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you wish to switch over again?

Dr. Norton: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Minister you have a minute, please proceed.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the item “Environmental Management and Compliance” falls under my responsibility, so I would deal with this now.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister Harmon, would you be treating with this matter?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, please, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Would you do that now?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, I notice that there is \$1 million budgeted there. Could the Hon. Minister detail which building(s) are to be maintained by the amount in 2018 and its use, since I noted that the programme lists zero employees?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this is a sum allocated to the building which houses the department of the Environment and the allocation is to provide for routine maintenance, including carpentry, electrical work and plumbing.

11.57 a.m.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: What other travels are planned under this line item? Also, enlighten the Committee about what postage would be taking place and to where.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Is it line item 6265 that the Hon. Member is talking about? Line item 6263 deals with postage also.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: It is line item 6265

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6265 deals with an increase of \$800,000 and that caters for additional travelling activities, which are scheduled for 2018, including meeting with key stakeholders in the promotion of environmental conservation and this would take place all across the country.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Follow-up: If the Minister is scheduled to travel all across the country, is the amount adequate? Line 6265, indeed, addresses other transport, travel and postage.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is not really for the Minister to travel. It is for the Department of the Environment. As I have said, we are dealing with an austerity Budget and, once we recognise, at a certain point in the year, that this is not sufficient, we may have to make other arrangements. As of now, this is what the State could afford to the Department and we will try to work with it, within that fiscal space which was provided by the Minister of Finance.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am still not satisfied with the answer because this programme speaks about environmental management and compliance. I still need clarity as to whether \$1 million is going to take the Department across this country to deal with compliance matters. How many compliance matters will be addressed in 2018?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is just for the Department of the Environment. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the other agencies, which have to do environmental compliance, have sums allocated to them.

When we come to the consideration of the EPA, there are sums allocated for that purpose.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I see that there is a total of \$887,352,000 budgeted; could we get a layover of what this amount caters for?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The allocations are in the documents which were provided by the Ministry and they cater for subsidies to the EPA, the National Parks Commission (NPC), the Protected Areas Commission (PAC) and the Wildlife Management Authority.

Programme: 057 - Environmental Management and Compliance - \$897,947,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 058 – Cultural Preservation and Conservation - \$702,088,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Some \$235,088,000 has been budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister say who the recipients of this money are? The legend points out Castellani House, National Trust of Guyana, Theatre Guild of Guyana, Decade of the People of African Descent and the Linden Museum of Industrial Heritage. I have noticed that a number of other museums are not included. There is the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology. I see the fence is going down between State House and the Museum and it is now surrounded by construction material. The Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology is not on the list, nor is the Museum of African Heritage or the Guyana National Museum. Could there be an explanation? Why are these museums not included under Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations?

Dr. Norton: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The reason is because both the Guyana National Museum and the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology are sub-programmes.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Member say where they are catered for? I listed three museums - the Museum of African Heritage, the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology and the Guyana National Museum. Where are their budgetary allocations located? You referred to a sub-programme. Could you please advise us?

Dr. Norton: The programme for culture includes 16 departments, among them are three museums.

Ms. Teixeira: Under which head are they catered for?

Dr. Norton: They come under “Other” charges.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister define for us what category of expenditure comes under “Other” charges? These are specific entities. How could they be budgeted for under “Other” charges?

Dr. Norton: The Department of Culture, Youth and Sport is made up of the Department of Culture Administration, the Guyana National Museum, the Museum of African Heritage, the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology, the National Achieves of Guyana, the National Commemorative Commission (NCC), the National Trust of Guyana, the National Gallery of Arts, the National Cultural Centre (NCC), the National Dance Company and the Institute of Creative Arts. All are under the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport. The sum would be divided amongst these different organisations.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, could you please help us along? The Minister earlier answered that the allocations for these are under “Other” charges. That is what the Minister said. We then asked the Minister to define for us what constitutes “other charges” and then point us to the other charges under which it is allocated. What the Minister has just told us is something completely different from the answer he gave earlier. We really need to have clarity on exactly where these moneys are allocated.

Dr. Norton: The Hon. Member is perfectly correct when he referred to the answer of “Other” charges that I gave. That was not accurate.

Mr. Ali: Now that the Hon. Minister has agreed that he was inaccurate in the first place, could the Hon. Minister tell us now, accurately, where in the Budget it is located and what are the sums allocated for these agencies?

Dr. Norton: I read out the list of organisations before. I could read it out again, if you so desire. The sum has been divided among those different organisations.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I believe it is helpful, in answering the question, even though you may have mentioned an answer before, to perhaps not only remind the person that you did it

before, but to also offer information a second time. It might prolong things, but it certainly would help the questioner understand what it is that you are saying.

Ms. Teixeira stood.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, do you wish to have the floor?

Ms. Teixeira: We are looking at budget documents to see how much money is allocated. I do not need to know programme heads. What I need to know is: if the museums are not catered for under line item 6321, where are they catered for? Line item 6284 – Other has \$18,000,000 budgeted and the Minister has admitted that the museums are not catered for under that. Line item 6294 is the other “Other”, which has an allocation of \$10,000,000. It cannot be under that. Where is the money for the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology, the Museum of African Heritage, the National Museum of Guyana, the National Cultural Centre, *et cetera*, which fall under the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport?

Dr. Norton: I am informed that sums are allocated to each department from line items 6221 to 6302; those line items are where those museums would be catered for.

Mr. Ali: One final question. The Hon. Minister has evaded the question at best. What we need is the allocations for these museums. You could not have come up with a budget if you did not have a specific allocation. What is the specific allocation for each of these agencies? It is a very simple question.

Dr. Norton: We could give them the allocations by line item. We could list all that the line item includes and the amounts.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Minister is saying that he could provide that information. Is that what you are saying?

Dr. Norton: Yes, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, could the Hon. Minister provide for this Committee the breakdown of how the \$68,438,000, which is a new allocation, would be expended under Decade of People of African Descent?

Dr. Norton: Thank you very much for the question. We promise the Hon. Member that we will provide that breakdown for him at a later date.

12.12 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I was not going to ask a question but am listening to the Minister and it is not satisfactory that we are not getting answers. It states: Decade for People of African Descent, \$68 million and \$438 million.

Could the Hon. Minister say if this is to an organisation or an entity? What is the name of the entity? What programme would amount to \$68 million and for what period of time? We want to know who the moneys are going to, if we could help you a bit. Who is the money going to and what is the programme?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, this is a new organisation that was mandated by the United Nations (UN). This organisation is as a result of the United Nations' Declaration of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister said this was an organisation that was mandated by the United Nations. Could the Minister do the following?

Firstly, provide us with a mandate by the United Nations.

Secondly, could he name the organisation? Could he say how the organisation was selected? Could he say who heads the organisation? Could he say how long the organisation has been in existence and if any other organisation was considered? Those are specifically the questions.

Dr. Norton: We can provide that information for the Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I beg your indulgence. This is the Budget Estimates which we are examining. The Minister is asking for \$68 million to be allocated to a body which nobody has ever heard of, Sir. We are asking: what is this body? How were the members selected? Who heads it? Is it a registered organisation of this country and what is its programme? The Minister cannot just dole out money and say that he is going to provide the information. Mr. Chairman, you know that you have had to remind Ministers in this same House of how many times they

have promised to layover information and nine out of ten do not. This is making a joke of the consideration of the Budget Estimates.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, I did promise that I would layover the document.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I find this very unacceptable. The Minister is saying that there is a \$68 million allocation. He said it is for “an organisation”. All we are asking for is the name of this organisation, which he has referred to, the head of that organisation and how the organisation was selected. If the Minister cannot provide this, then we are traversing on the border of transparency and accountability. I do not need direction from someone else about questions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there any additional information you can provide at this time?

Dr. Norton: As I said before, Mr. Chairman, I will hand over the document.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will put the question.

Programme: 058 - Cultural Preservation and Conservation - \$702,088,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 059 – Youth – \$784,248,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, after our treatment of this one, I shall put the question.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6301 – Education Subventions and Grants - \$205 million: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what, where and how the allocation would be spent?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, there might be some mistake. Line item 6301 has an allocation of zero.

Mr. Neendkumar: It is line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships). I am sorry.

Dr. Norton: The training entails technical and vocational training at three centres. Those are the Kuru Kuru Training Centre, the Sophia Training Centre and the Vryman’s Erven Training

Centre. The training includes the areas of driving skills development, mentorship, crime prevention workshop, edutainment workshop, youth exchange, literacy and numeracy, needs training, job readiness training, career guidance sessions, entrepreneurial development, communicable and non-communicable sensitisation, substance and drug abuse, road safety sessions, mental health sessions, importance of physical recreation, environmental awareness and adolescent health and well-being, family life education workshops, parenting skills training, domestic violence abuse, life planning sessions, leadership and capacity building training, club management workshops, camp leaders' training, recreational camps, sessions on human rights, civil education and good governance sessions and others.

Mr. Neendkumar stood.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Neendkumar, I thank you. Please take your seat.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, these are part of the curricula. How have they been budgeted for like this?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar, I am putting the question. I have indicated to Members that, at a given time, I will put the question if we exceed the time allotted. The time allotted ended at 12.17 p.m.

Programme: 059 - Youth - \$784,248,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 05A – Sport – \$519,527,000

Programme: 05A - Sport - \$519,527,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration – \$456,417,000

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration - \$456,417,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I noticed that you have...

12.27 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, when the question is put, we are allowed, for each agency, a specific time. What that means is that when that time reaches, as I did indicate to this Committee, I will put the question. We cannot have it both ways. We cannot make an agreement, accept a set of time and then we gaily ignore it. We cannot do that. The Hon. Member who spoke just now is placing himself out of order.

I will say this to the Committee: The time allotted for treatment of the Ministry of the Presidency was two hours. The two hours expired at 17 minutes after 12 'o' clock. Right now we are on other time. We, as an Assembly, will ensure that we keep ourselves within the time allotted for each agency. We cannot do it otherwise. At the beginning of this morning's sitting, I said that to Members. It cannot be that Members expect it to be otherwise. That is what I am doing, Hon. Member Bishop Edghill. So, please take your seat. I am continuing with this.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, could I be heard for one moment?

Mr. Chairman: Please sit, Mr. Edghill. I am not entertaining questions. So, anything else that you are seeking to do is not within our...

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am just seeking to indicate to you that there are four additional programmes under the Ministry of the Presidency.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Edghill, please take your seat.

Bishop Edghill: There are four additional programmes.

Mr. Chairman: Are you going to sit or you are not going to sit?

Bishop Edghill: Are we not going to be allowed scrutiny in the House, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, will you have a seat?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would like to have a response to this.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Edghill, you are out of order.

Bishop Edghill: I do not mind being out of order on a matter of principle, Sir. On a matter of principle, I stand up to be out of order, Sir.

If four additional programmes have been added to the Ministry of the Presidency and the same two hours that were given last year are being given this year, it means that the Government does not want scrutiny of this Budget. That is what it means and I will stand up and be out of order, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member is out of order and I must order you to leave this Chamber and take no further part in the business of this matter.

Bishop Edghill: I will not leave the Chamber. I am an elected Member of this House to scrutinise this Budget on behalf of the people of Guyana

Mr. Chairman: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will take steps to enforce the Chairman's direction. If you need assistance, then you will have to get it.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, please take your seat. I am not entertaining comments at this stage. When we are through with this matter, then we will proceed.

The Sitting is suspended until the Chairman's order is enforced.

Sitting suspended at 12.32 p.m. on Monday, December 11, 2017

Sitting resumed at 10.42 a.m. on Tuesday, December 12, 2017

Assembly resumed.

MOTION TO SUSPEND BISHOP EDGHILL FROM THE SERVICE OF THE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you would recall that yesterday the Committee was suspended and so we resumed this morning in Committee and the Assembly is now in session. The Assembly is in session because there is a procedure which I propose to follow. You would recall that yesterday I drew to your attention the fact that the Hon. Member, Bishop Juan Edghill, behaved in an extraordinarily unacceptable manner, disregarding the directions of the Speaker and making it clear that he will follow his own determinant under the Speaker's direction.

The consequence of that conduct meant that no work took place yesterday afternoon. The result is that all the hours of work, which were set out and agreed to by Members, still remain to be attended to this morning. The conduct of Hon. Member Juan Edghill is unprecedented in the annals of this House and I call on a Minister of Government to move a motion in that regard.

Minister of Social Protection and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Ally]: Mr. Speaker, following the gross disorderly conduct of Hon. Member Juan Edghill at the 79th Sitting of the National Assembly, I wish to refer this National Assembly to Standing Order No. 47 (3). I wish to move that this Member be suspended from the service of the Assembly for the next four sittings of this Assembly, which is 15th December, 2017. I thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for her statement. The Hon. Member, Bishop Juan Edghill, remains suspended. That Standing Order to which reference was made is a Standing Order... [*Leader of the Opposition stood.*] Hon. Member, please take your seat. It is a Standing Order which authorises penalty that goes to the end of the Session. So grave was that conduct that allowing the person the benefit of four additional days of suspension is the most lenient it can be treated. I thank you.

Hon. Member Mr. Jagdeo, do you wish the floor on a point of order?

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Jagdeo]: I am standing, Mr. Speaker; that is an indication.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Jagdeo, do you wish the floor on a point of order?

Mr. Jagdeo: Mr. Speaker, we just heard a motion...

Mr. Speaker: I will tell you, Hon. Member, that there is no provision in the Standing Orders... That motion is put forthwith and dealt with without that.

Mr. Jagdeo: Mr. Speaker, I just wish to record our significant dissatisfaction with what you just said in this Chamber. You spoke about the unprecedented nature of the behaviour of Mr. Juan Edghill, but you did not speak about the unprecedented presence of Police in this House...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Jagdeo, you have to take your seat now.

Mr. Jagdeo: Police, who you said in an interview that you did not invite into this House, assaulted people. How did they get into the House?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Jagdeo, you will take your seat.

Mr. Jagdeo: We believe that this it is an attempt to muzzle Bishop Juan Edghill because of the nature of the Budget.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you may take your seat.

Hon. Members, you heard the motion by the Hon. Member Minister of Government. It is that the Hon. Juan Edghill be suspended from further service in this House for the next four Sittings of the National Assembly.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion Carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Bishop Juan Edghill is suspended from the service of this House until *[inaudible]*.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think we need to be very careful in what we say; that is all I will say. We will now consider the Estimates at the point where we left off yesterday. Yesterday, we suspended the Sitting when we were considering Capital Expenditure.

10.52 a.m.

What I propose to do is to put these matters *seriatim* the Capital Expenditure of the Ministry of the Presidency then the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Business, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Natural Resources. When we are through

considering these we then would have finished the work for Monday and would immediately turn to the work for Tuesday. I propose to put these points of expenditure for these agencies without debate. *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Agency: 05 Ministry of the Presidency

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration – \$456,417,000

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration – \$456,417,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 052 – Defence and National Security – \$82,719,000

Programme: 052 Defence and National Security – \$82,719,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 053 – Public Service Management – \$113,850,000

Programme: 053 Public Service Management – \$113,850,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Ms. Teixeira: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I did not hear you.

Ms. Teixeira: I am asking to ask a question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am not entertaining questions until we get to Tuesday. On Tuesday's agencies, when we consider them, Members are free to ask questions.

Ms. Teixeira: I would like to seek clarification. Are you saying that none of the agencies would be debated today except what starts on Tuesday?

Mr. Chairman: What I am saying, Hon. Member, is that I propose to treat with all the agencies that were untreated yesterday without debate.

Ms. Teixeira: That is for the Guyana Defence Force, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Natural Resources there would be no questions. Is that what you are saying? Do I understand you correctly, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am sure you understand me correctly.

[Members of the Opposition withdrew from the Chamber.]

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services – \$67,100,000

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services – \$67,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 056 – Social Cohesion – \$3,500,000

Programme: 056 – Social Cohesion – \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 057 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$237,900,000

Programme: 057 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$237,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 058 – Cultural Preservation and Conservation – \$250,224,000

Programme: 058 – Cultural Preservation and Conservation – \$250,224,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 059 – Youth – \$320,000,000

Programme: 059 – Youth – \$320,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 05A – Sport – \$304,949,000

Programme: 05A – Sport – \$304,949,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force

Current Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$11,512,948,000

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$11,512,948,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$539,910,000

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$539,910,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 02 Office of the Prime Minister

Current Expenditure

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$694,819,000

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$694,819,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 25 Ministry of Business

Current Expenditure

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration – \$256,921,000

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration – \$256,921,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.07 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it was just pointed out to me that I have overlooked programme 021, Capital expenditure, Prime Minister’s Secretariat.

Agency: 02 Office of the Prime Minister

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$145,000,000

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$145,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 25 Ministry of Business

Current Expenditure

Programme: 252 - Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$640,842,000

Programme: 252 - Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$640,842,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 253 - Consumer Protection - \$90,923,000

Programme: 253 - Consumer Protection - \$90,923,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 254 - Tourism Develop and Promotion – \$377, 348,000

Programme: 254 - Tourism Develop and Promotion - \$377,348,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration – \$89,550,000

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration – \$89,550,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 252 - Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$709,328,000

Programme: 252 - Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$709,328,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 254 - Tourism Development and Promotion - \$500,000,000

Programme: 254 - Tourism Development and Promotion - \$500,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 21 Ministry of Agriculture

Current Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$11,549,918,000

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$11,549,918,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 213 - Fisheries – \$146,773,000

Programme: 213 - Fisheries – \$146,773,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services- \$514, 345,000

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services- \$514,345,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$2,454,670,000

Programme: 211 - Ministry Administration - \$2,454,670,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 212 - Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$2,071,230,000

Programme: 212 - Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$2,071,230,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 213 - Fisheries - \$55,500,000

Programme: 213 - Fisheries - \$55,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services - \$21,217,000

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services - \$21,217,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 26 Ministry of Natural Resources

Current Expenditure

Programme: 261 - Policy Development and Administration - \$318,310,000

Programme: 261 - Policy Development and Administration - \$318,310,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 262 - Natural Resources Management- \$334,394,000

Programme: 262 - Natural Resources Management - \$334,394,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 264 - Petroleum Management - \$178,226,000

Programme: 264 - Petroleum Management - \$178,226,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.22 a.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration - \$279,100,000

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration - \$279,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, if you would turn to Page 5 of the Schedule, we are now at Tuesday 12th of December, pages 98 and 99.

[Members of the Opposition returned to the Chamber.]

Agency: 17 Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 171 – Policy Development and Administration - \$1,036,686,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will allow a minute while the Minister gets his people together. Hon. Minister, are you ready?

Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs [Mr. Allicock]: Mr. Chairman, since we have two Ministers within the Ministry, I would like to ask that Minister Garrido-Lowe do Current Expenditure while I do the Capital Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. That is permissible.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, could the Hon. Minister share with this House the list of contracted positions and their salary scales. Secondly, under the same line item, could the Minister also explain to this House the increase in the amount for the line item?

Minister within the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs [Ms. Garrido-Lowe]: Thank you Mr. Chairman. For line item 6116, Contracted Employees, first of all the allocation is for 46 contracted employees. Mr. Chairman, instead of reading out the list could we furnish the Hon. Member with a copy that we have here? Or, I can read it out. The positions are, Senior Social Worker...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if reading will take another half an hour, time is very precious. Hon. Member, may I enquire if you are willing to accept the suggestion that was made by the Hon. Minister as the answer to your question?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am willing to accept the list of the positions for the contracted employees and their salaries, not the persons' name.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Okay.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I would like to have also the second part of my question responded to.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, there is no increase in salaries for the line item 6116.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am not having any clarity on the second part of my question. For 2017, there was a revised figure of \$87,125,000 and in Budget 2018 we have \$101,248,000, so there is an increase.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, are we talking about line item 6116, Contracted Employees?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Yes.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: There is still no increase; there is a revised sum and now it stands at \$101,248,000. In 2017 it was \$110,912,000.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I still do not understand. If there is an upward revision I believe it is an increase.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Mr. Chairman, there is an increase and it caters for the 8%, 6% and 4% salary increase. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: It was budget for at \$210,000,000 in 2017 and revised for the same amount and, now, for 2018, it is \$203,000,000. However, when the question, of what the money would cover, was asked last year for the same line item, the answer was, to hold consultations and terms of reference on the Amerindian Act, in order to guide the revision of the Act. We are not aware of the kind of consultations that would cost this amount of moneys for the Amerindian Act for 2017. Could the Hon. Minister please clarify if it was correct as reported last December, 2017 that this was to contribute towards the consultation on the Amerindian Act? What is the status in relation to 2017? And in relation to 2018, what is the allocation under this heading for the revision of the Amerindian Act?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6291 - National Events: This allocation does not cater for the consultation of the Amerindian Act. It is does not constitute that.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member please advise us then on what is covered under this rather large amount of \$210,000,000?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you Hon. Member. The allocation caters for support to the Rupununi Exposition, which is \$1,500,000; the Moruca Exposition, \$1,500,000; the Pakaraima Exposition, \$8,000,000; the Rupununi Rodeo \$1,000,000; Rupununi Music and Arts Festival \$5,000,000; the Upper Mazaruni District Games, \$1,500,000; Pakaraima Foot Power, \$1,000,000; Deep South August Games \$1,000,000; North Rupununi Games, \$1,000,000; assistance to villages, sports activities and expositions, \$2,500,000; for Heritage, which includes assistance for the host village, \$92,200,000; Mashramani and National Activities for the head office and the dormitories, \$17, 800,000; and the National Toshias Conference, \$66,000,000.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister explain to this House line item 6115, Semi-skilled Operators and Unskilled? I noticed listed for 2018 there would be 25 persons. In 2017, there were 13 persons, yet in the allocation for 2017 there was \$20,008,000

and, in 2018, when there would be more staff, a request is made for \$18,879,000. When there is more staff there is less money and when there is less staff there is more money. Could the Hon. Minister explain this?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The increase caters for 12 staff and 5 vacant positions being filled. There is one cook, an assistant cook, a maid, a kitchen assistant, a driver and a cleaner. Additionally, seven contracted staff are being transferred to the pensionable establishment, and it also caters for an 8% increase in salaries. Thank you.

11.37 a.m.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: I noticed for 2018 there would be 25 members of staff. I am not asking about their positions but there is less allocation so there would be no increase in wages and salaries. When there were 13 members of staff, there was an allocation of \$20 million. I am asking the Hon. Minister to explain what is happening here?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The revised allocation caters for contracted workers who were transferred to the pensionable status.

Ms. Teixeira: My Colleague has been, as far as I am concerned, quite straight forward in her question. Under line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, \$9.2 million is budgeted in 2017 and the revised allocation is \$20 million, which means that it was used, according to the statistics provided here in the document from the Ministry of Finance. You asked for \$9.2 million and you used \$20 million, which is reflected and you are going down to \$18 million for 2018 but the number of staff would be increased from 13 to 25. The year 2017 revised figures mean that you used that money. We have not finished 2017 as yet, the books are not closed as yet but you are going down to \$18 million for next year and you are telling us that the contracted employees are going over to the pensionable scheme. Hon. Minister, it does not make sense and, therefore, we are very clear about what we are asking. You used \$20 million, you are hiring more people, according to the Payroll – Staffing Details, and the money has reduced.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The increase caters for 12 staff and for the 8% increase.

Ms. Teixeira: The normal procedure is that the salaries reflected in the budget are current; that is, as of the day when the books are prepared for budget. If there are any increases, subsequently,

the Ministry of Finance would cater for that under their wages bill to pay the members of staff that are on your establishment. There is no permission, as far as I know, to anticipate an increase that does not exist and include it in your budget. Could the Minister please say if there has been an increase and could we see the Circular that gives the increase of 8% to public servants?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The revised figures, as I said, catered for an increase but now it is regularised for 2018.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, what you said cannot be accurate. You cannot have 13 people in 2017 costing \$20 million and in 2018 you anticipate that you are going up to 25 people, therefore those persons are not in your Ministry right now. You have 13 people that you are accounting for and you are budgeting to hire more people in 2018. We have not reached 2018 as yet; therefore, how could you be regularising people who do not exist and are not on your establishment, Madam?

To help the Hon. Minister more, could she say, if, in fact I am wrong, these 25 people are actually in the Ministry, hired already, and that now the moneys are being put for 2018?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: In 2017, it moved from 13 employees to 25 employees. That is why there was a revised figure. Now, for 2018, there would be the full 25 employees.

Ms. Teixeira: How could the Minister or the Ministry have people on the payroll that is not appropriated for? There is no budget and there is no money. There was no Supplementary Financial Paper that the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs came to this House with to increase their employment cost to hire more people in 2017. Mr. Chairman, this is a breach of the financial regulations. It could have been done by a Supplementary Financial Paper. There was none from the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs to address this issue. In other words, to make it simpler, the Hon. Minister has been spending money with no appropriation and no authority.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The money was allowed for under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, in 2017 for the transfer of the contracted workers to the pensionable establishment.

Mr. Charlie: I now move to line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. We have seen a decrease in the budgetary allocation for 2018. Could the Hon. Minister explain the drastic

decrease? Has the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs underperformed under this line item? Would the allocation for 2018 take care of for the sundried tomato project and the semi-precious stone project that the Hon. Minister spoke about, earlier, in her budget speech?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The decrease is due to major works done at the Indigenous Hostel in 2017. The allocation caters for parapet modification at the head office and weeding of the Indigenous village at the cost of \$1 million, maintenance of guard huts, fence, gates and weeding of compound of the dormitory at the cost of \$600,000.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence, I noticed that the 2017 revised figures are \$17 million and for 2018, there is a \$33.1 million allocated. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House why there is close to 100% increase?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The increase caters for meals and accommodation for the consultation process on the Amerindian Act, which \$15 million is allocated. It is also for the staff who have to travel to conduct the National Toshias Council (NTC) elections in 2018.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The last time I heard the Hon. Minister Allicock, in this honourable House, note that \$10 million was allocated for the support for revision of the Amerindian Act. I am now hearing that it is \$15 million. Are we to understand that the \$15 million is for food that would actually be utilising for these sessions?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The \$15 million would be for travelling to mobilise and for subsistence. The consultation is an on-going process.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am not satisfied with that answer because that was not the question which I asked. I am curious to understand whether \$10 million was allocated for consultations or \$15 million was allocated for eating at the consultation.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, at least \$25 million is allocated for the consultation process but it has been divided into different line items. For example, the \$15 million is for local travel and subsistence.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: In 2017 the sum of \$210 million is utilised and for 2018, a request is now being made for \$203 million. For the sum

requested, would that be adequate, since the sum of \$210 million was spent in 2017 and we know that, for a fact, some persons are still waiting for their payments for services rendered for the Amerindian heritage celebration?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the decrease is because there would be no heritage pageant for 2018. There would be no Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) Conference to cater for in 2018 as well, so the allocation would be adequate.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: What is budgeted in 2017 is \$70 million and the revised figure was \$70 million. It has gone up to \$101 million, which is \$31 million more. Could the Hon. Member say what is this catering for? Is this for more air flights and special charters because we have noticed that the Ministry is using a lot of those including, to go to birthday parties in the Rupununi for personal reasons? Could someone please advise whether the \$13 million would be catering for air travel and other travels and could we please have an idea of the programme that would cover this travel?

11.52 a.m.

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the increase caters for the flights for persons involved in the consultation process on the Amerindian Act, which is \$7 million and trips to conduct village council elections. We have several field trips and if you need the list, we could supply you with it to, at least, give you an approximation.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, we would appreciate that. As I am on the floor, could I also go to line item 6302 -Training (including Scholarships) - \$125,700,000? Could the Hon. Minister please advise us on the training programmes, their locations and the number of beneficiaries? Could she also state whether the persons who had been owed moneys for stipends under the Hinterland Employment and Youth Service (HEYS) Programme are covered under this head and if they would be paid?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: First of all, the HEYS Programme is not covered under this line item. This allocation caters for the hinterland scholarship student's present enrolment of 566. Details include payment of pocket allowances, uniform allowances, guardian allowances and dorm allowances, annual vacation for continuing students, examination fees, purchasing of textbooks

for continuing students, assistance for School Based Assessments (SBAs) projects at the President's College, the Government Technical Institution (GTI) and Carnegie School Home economics. It was also for capacity building for staff, training of Community Development Officers (CDOs), governance training in the interior locations and stipend for six teachers at Baramita at a cost of \$20,000 per person.

Ms. Fredrick-Pearson: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister tell us who would be the recipient of the \$70,502,000, what are the local organisations and to what amount?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The increase caters for one additional subvention agency which is the Kanuku Mountain Community Representative Group (KMCRG) and that subvention would be \$4,502,000. This subvention also caters for the National Toshias Executive Council, which is \$16 million and Bina Hill - \$50 million.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister explain the increase under this line item and say what the additional increase would be expended towards?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: The increase caters for consultation on the Amerindian Act - the note takers fees, the rapporteurs and the legal fees.

Mr. Charlie: Follow-up: The increase is \$2 million. Hon. Minister, would this increase be adequate for items you just mentioned?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Yes, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: I know that we have run out of time so we are using up our time, as you said, and hopefully, it is being used productively. Under line item 6301, Education Subventions and Grants, the subvention is \$89,479,000. Mdm. Minister, we have been looking under the training programmes, and you have provided answers, and I noticed in the documents school uniform assistance is stated, but does this heading include the HEYS Programme? We are not finding where the HEYS Programme is. It seems to be *heysing*, so we have asked under training - line items 6301, 6302, 6321 and now we are coming to line item 6301, with a subvention of \$89 million, to ask whether HEYS Programme a part of this?

Ms. Garrido- Lowe: Hon. Member, the HEYS Programme is not included in this line item. This allocation caters for the procurement of uniform materials, sewing, packaging and transportation for the distribution to the hinterland students.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6292 – Dietary: could you say if the HEYS Programme is under this head?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: No, we will come to the HEYS Programme later, soon enough, but it is not under this line item.

Ms. Teixeira: Well, Mdm. Minister, I will be asking you on every line item until I find the HEYS Programme. It is a programme that is in the budget speech by the Minister and Mr. Allicock in his speech made much of it.

If you would forgive me and since you would not enlighten me, I would now ask; for line item 6291 - National and Other Events, is the HEYS Programme under there? Line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals: is the HETS Programme under there? Line item 6294 – Other: is the HEYS Programme under there?

Ms. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Member, the HEYS Programme is under the capital project. You would come to that soon enough.

Programme: 171 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,036,686,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 171 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,183,274,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under project code 1214500, Buildings, could the Hon. Minister explain the high increase in the sum allocated as compared to 2017? I notice that it is for the completion of the dormitory and extension of buildings so could those fingers be disaggregated also?

Vice President and Minister of Indigenous People’s Affairs [Mr. Allicock]: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, this is a rollover from this year’s activity; that is, the new dormitory which is being constructed at Liliendaal and that is to house the hinterland

students above 18 years old, who are attending the Cyril Potter College (CPC), GTI and other tertiary institutions.

There are three phases of this project. The first phase of this project was the provision of the consultancy services, the design, and the bill of quantities for the construction.

The second phase is the foundation and the additional works. The total amount is \$186,390,040.

We have the extension of the head office at a cost \$25,159,000 so as to add five office spaces for the planning, financing and auditing areas. There is the extension of the hostel which would cost \$20 million. The extension is to accommodate approximately a 170 persons who have no accommodation when they come out into the city. And to add, also, the accommodation for storage and an isolation room for affected persons with serious diseases. That is the answer that I could give.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am still not clear about the reason for the increase. I did ask for the sums to be disaggregated against the different infrastructure or buildings that would be supported. I heard \$20 million for the extension of hostels, I heard about five office spaces being constructed but no amount being put to it, and I also heard that phase 1, 2, 3 and designed phase of the tertiary level hostel, but no amounts attached to it. Instead, I heard much more information, and I appreciate that, but I would really like my question to be answered.

Mr. Allicock: The amount that was spent in this year was \$90 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1214500 – Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister and Vice President advise us if a supplementary was granted for the increase in the budgetary allocation for 2017, from \$61.5 million to \$85.78 million, under this particular project code? The answer from that would then influence my next question on the same item.

Mr. Allicock: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member say which of the three supplementary financial papers for 2017 this is in?

Mr. Allicock: This is inclusion from saving from the Bina Hill capital project.

Ms. Teixeira: In other words, there was no supplementary, because if you are saving then you are not using supplementary. Supplementary comes to this House for approval.

The second issue is where did the additional \$24 million come from? Was it vire from within capital or vire between current and capital? Where did you - either take money from and, therefore, reduced a programme - under capital or are you saying that it is new money? Where the \$24 million come from since there was no supplementary? You are saying it came from savings. Could you say where did you have savings in your budget for capital, Sir?

12.07 p.m.

Mr. Allicock: We did have savings from the HEYS, where we had \$16 million.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member said that there were savings of \$16,000,000 from the HEYS Programme. The HEYS Programme is a different item under Amerindian Development Projects. So, where did the balance come from? What is the difference? Is the sum of \$24 million additional moneys which were expended? So, if you did take \$16 million, which I am not sure how you did, where did the rest of the money come from?

Mr. Allicock: I would just like to correct that it is not the HEYS Programme; I meant to say that it was the savings from the Bina Hill Institute - the roll-over project where we have the two dorms at a cost of \$16,834,000 and \$18,505,000.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Campbell-Sukhai, you have the floor.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I concede to my Colleague, Hon. Ali.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Campbell-Sukhai, you have the floor.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I just heard the Hon. Minister said that the additional sums were taken from savings from the Bina Hill Institute. Every year, it amazes me that the Bina Hill Institute gets an allocation larger than the National Toshaos Council (NTC). How could have Bina Hill Institute not spend their money and why is it that the NTC was not provided with that saving so they could work with the indigenous leaders and provide the level of leadership and the performance of all of the functions, which they ought to be able to resourcefully do?

Secondly, I would wish that the Hon. Minister lay over or explain, to this House, what process was used to take the money from the savings of the Bina Hill Institute to be used under this line item, if that is indeed so. If it was by any process that is financially proper, then I would like to see the documentation of that.

Mr. Allicock: This is capital expenditure and not current expenditure. I would just like to make a further correction. It is not savings, it is the budget...

Mr. Ali: You said that.

Mr. Allicock: I did say that, but I would like to correct it. We had two capital projects - two dormitories – one male and one female at a cost of \$33,662,490 and \$36,108,014. What would be spent from that amount, this year, is \$16,834,000 and \$18,505,000, respectively. These are not savings; they are moneys that were rolled over to this year.

Mr. Ali: The issue in relation to the increase seems to be a virement of variations, so the Hon. Member could just lay over that document.

The Hon. Member spoke about of a dormitory at Liliendaal, could he state when this contract was signed and the duration of the contract? Then I will have a follow up question.

Mr. Allicock: The contract was signed in July for duration of 12 months. I could get that document, as well, which would show the duration and everything.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, if the project was signed in July for 12 months, then, in the Legend, it is supposed to be reflected as a multiyear project. Could the Hon. Minister say when he received approval for this project to be a multi-year project?

Mr. Allicock: On the budget submission it was approved and that is why it is here.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister said earlier that the dormitory project would be completed next year. This meant that he would have had to have a multi-year approval for that to occur. Could the Hon. Minister give the date when he received the multiyear approval?

Mr. Allicock: I promise to furnish that information later to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ali: Let me ask another question; is there a multiyear approval?

Mr. Allicock: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ali: If there is a multiyear approval, which is just one letter from the Ministry of Finance, can I ask the Hon. Minister if we can have a copy of that letter, this morning? He said that the multiyear approval is there and we would like to have a copy of that.

Mr. Allicock: It is a 12 months project and after that 12 months, we would be able to have the...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Allicock: It is a 12 months project and the 12 months are not up as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you through with the answer to the question? Mr. Ali, please take your seat. Hon. Minister, is there another answer you wish to give or are you through with the answer?

Mr. Allicock: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am being advised that it is a roll over project for one year.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister said, earlier, that the project is for a duration of 12 months, so that is why I asked that question. The contract was signed in July. It is obvious that if the contract was signed in July then 12 months would take you into the next year. The financial year ends at December, so at the time of signing, and at the preparation of the Budget, the Accounting Officer at the Ministry had a responsibility to write to the Ministry of Finance seeking approval for the project to be a multiyear project, because we do not know if the Minister of Finance would have the resources to continue. The Minister then said “yes, he has in the Ministry’s possession, the approval for the multiyear contract”, and we just ask for a copy of that. Then, the Minister came back just now and said something completely different - that the 12 months have not elapsed as yet so he did not apply for it. There are two different things. The responsibility is that you have to apply for it, once the project is going to be rolled over into the next year; that is the rule.

Mr. Chairman: I now put the question...

Ms. Teixeira: We are not finished.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it would be helpful if I can get an indication. I looked around first before...

Ms. Teixeira: Would you like us to put up our hands so that you can see us? We are trying to listen to the Minister and trying to get up at the same time. I will cede to my Colleague and then I will ask my question after.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Under Project Code 1214500, Buildings, could the Hon. Minister lay over, to this House, all the buildings, including the dorms, head office, *et cetera*, that would be paid from this sum, and the sum which is allocated for each activity because there seems to be some confusion under this line item?

Mr. Allicock: I would like to go this over again. It is the construction of the new dormitories at Liliendaal, the extension of the head office at Thomas and Quamina Streets and the extension of the hostel. Those would be the three extensions.

Ms. Teixeira: [*Inaudible*] but we wanted the breakdown of the \$140,007,000 in *Budget 2018*, under the project code, 1405400. I wish to ask a question under project code 1405400, Amerindian Development Projects. Last year, I noticed, in the Legend, in the Project Profile, you have:

“1. Completion of male and female dormitories - Bina Hill Institute.

Provision for Hinterland and Youth Service Project, presidential grants and support to eco-tourism and cultural projects.

Provision for ground coffee production, lapidary workshop and tractors...”

I noticed that Minister Garrido-Lowe spoke about the lapidary workshop, agro processing, construction of the Green Enterprise Development Centre and construction of benab and upgrading of trails. We did not get an idea of the breakdown of these projects. We would like to have, and I am sure that you have it with you, the breakdown for each one of these items that are listed and any others that are not listed in the Legend. In that way we would know what is in *Budget 2018* so that we can tell the people in the villages that this is what you are going to do for them.

12.22 p.m.

Also, this was a project where money was put in the amount of \$1.3 billion in 2016; it was reduced to \$1.2 billion in 2016 revised and \$1.3 billion in 2017; again, the revised amount is \$1.1 billion as the latest estimate. You had reported, on the last occasion, that a number of these projects were going to take place. Could you give us a status report of what the \$1.17 billion was used for under this project, in 2017, and the breakdown of each one of those areas for the 2018 Budget?

Mr. Allicock: Let me just clear the first part which is the estimated amount under “Buildings”. We have budgeted for the new dormitory, \$94,848,000; for the extension of the head office, \$25,159,000; and for the extension of the hostel, \$20,000,000. For the Member Teixeira, I could release the breakdown of all the activities that are listed here so that she would be able to follow.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, I would appreciate it if you would provide the breakdown. Maybe you could answer one of the questions that I have on this in the interim. It is stated that it caters for the Hinterland Employment Youth Service (HEYS) Project, Presidential Grants and support to ecotourism and cultural projects. Could you give us, for the moment, the breakdown of the allocation for those projects, particularly the HEYS Project? How many would be the beneficiary? What is the breakdown of the Presidential Grants? To whom would the grants be allocated? Which bodies or villages would get eco-tourist projects and which would get cultural projects? That is just one sub-head I chose.

Mr. Allicock: Let us begin with the Hinterland Employment and Youth Services Project. The allocation caters for: five Programme Monitors - \$6,750,000; one Project Coordinator - \$2,358,000; Assistant Project Coordinator - \$1,980,000; Administrative Assistant - \$1,350,000; 10 Workshop Facilitators - \$9,800,000; 200 Facilitators - \$39,000,000; travelling, transportation and meals - \$15,000,000; and 2000 youths to the tune of \$420,000,000.

We also have \$16,834,000 and \$18,505,000 for the completion of the male and female dorms at the Bina Hill Institute. We have grants to the tune of \$224,200,000 and these are for 215 communities that will benefit from varying amounts. We also have the development of farms, roads, purchasing All-Terrain Vehicles (of ATV’s), cattle rearing, village shops, snackettes, fuel depot, community buildings, community-based tourism and other projects. Every community has its own projects that it would be managing. We also have the Baramita road development project

in lower Aranka and this is three miles off central Baramita. It is a road that is badly needed to accommodate safe trips for the school children, patients and also for our regular road users. Aranka is the second largest community and there is need for this trail; there was never a road or trail. This \$10 million would assist them.

The Green Enterprise Development Centre at Bina Hill has a budget of \$80 million. There would be the construction of a classroom and lecture hall, which would be accommodating 120 students from across the country. We would also equip this institution at a cost of \$5 million. The Budget caters for the purchasing of tools and other equipment to furnish the mechanic shop.

There are grants to support the establishment of four communities in the area of community-based tourism. We are saying that, in the framework for the Guyana Green State Development Strategy, considerable emphasis would be placed on tourism and this has direct links to hinterland development, where nature-based and community-based tourism have great potential.

We are already working with the Ministries of Business, Social Cohesion, *et cetera* because, in this tourism venture, all of the Ministries are important. We have allocated \$8 million to Maraikobai. The residents are very enthusiastic and they already have activities. All that they need is the support and guidance. We have been engaging the tourism operators from the Ministry of Tourism. We have also allocated \$2.5 million to Great Falls and this is to support what they have already started.

There is Assakata which would also be supported with \$5 million. That is really a good destination. There is Karasabai, which is also another great destination for tourism, especially as a birding destination and a destination for wildlife, hiking, horse riding, *et cetera*. Karasabai would be given \$5 million.

Benabs would be built at Warapoka Village at a cost of \$5 million. Warapoka is also into the development of tourism and benabs would be a very significant feature in their development. It is to maintain the heritage or contribute to its cultural development. It would also be used to house other activities, which is a norm in these communities, and this community has just about 502 residents.

Also, there would be the purchase of tractors to facilitate the communities in agricultural development and other support would also be given to communities. We have Sawariwau, Aranaputa and Monkey Mountain.

There would be the upgrade of trails and farm to market roads. This approach is to have zero hunger and to promote sustainable agriculture to achieve food security; the production of appropriate technology and strong infrastructure to improve the transportation; and materials to provide safety and protection to the farmers in securing their farms from various animals, especially cattle which destroy their farms.

For Masakenari, \$5 million has been budgeted. This is to continue the trail that they have started because their aim is to eventually have a road in their community. We also have Maruranau to which another \$5 million was allocated. This is from Maruranau to Kwitaro. Kwitaro is the farming area in which most villages do farming but, due to the tractor trail, it is difficult to transport produce. It is just about 18 miles away and they have been seeking support to help in the clearing of a proper trail that would be accessible and help them get their produce out of the farming areas to market.

For Kariako to Kokerite, another \$5 million has been allocated to help in the construction of a road, which is necessary, especially during the rainy season when the Barama River becomes difficult to travel. Some \$3 million has been allocated for the upgrade of roads from Kororia to Mora.

12.37 p.m.

We have the Karasabai/Tiger Pond/Paipang Road to which \$5 million has been allocated. This is a main road that leads to several villages. This trail needs upgrading, especially for the rainy season. It is almost impossible to cross during the rainy season. That allocation will give them great support.

Annai/Ruperti Backdam: Some \$5 million has been allocated. The trail is used by three communities – Ruperti, Kwatamang and Annai and it is a 12-mile stretch. It had been worked upon before but it needs upgrading continuously.

At Monkey Mountain, lapidary would be done. Some \$10 million is going to be spent on this village, but other communities would benefit from the processing of semi-precious stones, which could bring great economic benefits to these communities in Region 8. There are a number of various kinds of semi-precious stones, the gathering of which could be used to help in job creation for many of our people in the highlands of Region 8.

The lapidary workshop would produce semi-precious jewels and craft items. Initially, the lapidary workshop will create employment for a number of persons. Marketing of items would be done both locally and internationally. The knowledge gained by teaching villagers how to gather different types of quality semi-precious stones, along with the history of the stones...it is all about understanding what we have in the hinterland which could become useful in the strengthening of the economy of our community. We have had them there all the time. They have just been laying there. Now is the time to take the opportunity. We have modern science; we have the opportunities; we have people who know what we need.

Kaibarupai: During the last flood, this was a village that was affected seriously by the damaging of a number of houses – 21 homes and the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is that an answer to a question or is it a report you are giving? *[Interruption]* Hon. Members, you will allow the Chairman to ask the questions. Hon. Minister, is that a report you are giving or a question you are answering?

Mr. Allicock: They asked for details.

Mr. Chairman: We must assist the process or else we could listen to one presenter all day. I know that the Hon. Minister is not intending that. I thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I asked about the Hinterland Employment and Youth Services programme. I thank the Hon. Minister for providing me with 100 other things, which I will note for the future. However, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Minister, HEYS is under capital expenditure and its employment cost is under capital expenditure. Why is HEYS not included under Current Expenditure, as are other youth programmes in the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport, such as the Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training (YEST) programme, *et cetera*? Why is HEYS project put under Capital Expenditure and not Current Expenditure when it

includes current and capital costs? We asked for the number of beneficiaries. I think you said 2,000, if I recorded you correctly. Could you say how many beneficiaries there were in 2017?

Mr. Allicock: This is a special project for a period of two years. We had the first cohort; we are now on the second cohort, which would bring the total to 3,000. Let me just be more specific. The first cohort was 1,976 and the second cohort is 2,000. So, that would be \$3,976 at the end of the term.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1405400 – Amerindian Development Projects: Could the Hon. Minister say whether travelling, transportation, meals and salary qualify as capital expenditure according to our financial regulations? I would just like to repeat the question for the Hon. Minister. Could the Hon. Minister say whether travelling, meals, salaries and subsistence qualify as capital expenditure in our financial system?

Mr. Allicock: The answer to that question is no. Again, I would like to say that HEYS was treated as a project for two years and that is why it is recorded like that.

Mr. Ali: This head covers a number of expenditure. The Hon. Minister said that travelling, subsistence, meals and salaries do not qualify under capital expenditure. If they do not qualify, how is it in his list of items, which he just elaborated on, for which resources were expended? That is the first question. The second question is: Under the programme, there is a local component in 2018. Could expenditure of this nature not have been rightfully accounted for as a local expenditure under the current programme?

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much. Again, it is a special project for two years. After that, we will determine whether it is sustainable.

Mr. Ali: The question was specific to the answer that the Hon. Minister gave. He said that those things do not qualify. We are asking: if they do not qualify, why are they there? The project has a local component and that local component in the Current Budget could account for expenditure such as these which are attributed to the project. That is why there are line items for other chargers, other expenditure and contracted employees.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there a comment or reply to the observation of Mr. Ali?

Mr. Allicock: Again, it is treated as a special project, as I have said.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say to us how many people are employed under his capital programme in projects that are treated as special projects? Could the Hon. Minister say how much resources in his capital programme are spent on meals and travelling for projects that are treated as special projects?

Mr. Allicock: Salaries, travelling and subsistence are catered for staff. I will read the list again. Programme Monitor – five; Programme Coordinator – three; Assistant Project Coordinator, Administrative Assistant – one; Workshop Facilitators – 10; Facilitators – 200; youths – 2000. Those would be the persons benefiting from travelling and subsistence.

Mr. Ali: Approximately, 2,212 persons would have been accounted for as receiving some form of monetary allowance from the capital programme of the Ministry. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the approximately 2,212 persons, which were referred to, have a contractual obligation to the Ministry and when did they enter into those contracts?

Mr. Allicock: The 2,000 youths are students who receive a stipend. The others are contracted service providers.

12.52 p.m.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister stepped into a new area. He said that there are 210 contracted service providers. Note the word “contracted.” Firstly, the Hon. Minister said that these were persons who were employed on contract. Now, the term has changed to “contracted service providers.” Now, that they have these 210 contracted service providers, could the Hon. Minister say whether the list of all the contracted service providers is available, whether copies of their contracts are available and when were the contracts entered into?

Mr. Allicock: For the continuing staff, they were contracted in 2016 and the new facilitators were employed in March, 2017. We do have the contracts which we could share, if you so wish.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister said earlier that this is a two-year programme for 2017 and 2018. It was budgeted for in 2017 and now it has been budgeted for in 2018. However, the Hon. Minister just told us that the staff, which he referred to, were contracted in 2016. How were they

contracted, under this programme, in 2016 when it is a 2017 and 2018 project, according to the Hon. Minister?

The second thing is that we started from contracted workers to contracted service providers and now the Hon. Minister has just changed the term again to “continuing staff.” Who exactly are these persons? Are they staff employed with the Ministry, staff employed on the project or contracted service provider or contracted employees? What is the proper definition?

Mr. Allicock: I am sorry to be confusing the Hon. Member on the other side. They are staff. The school year started in 2016 continued into 2017. That was when the first cohort started. The second cohort started in 2017 and would continue in 2018 and the second cohort started in March, 2017 and will continue until June or July of the next year.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under project code 2406700, Land and Water Transport, I noticed that \$40,360,000 is allocated to purchase vehicles, boats and engines. Could the Hon. Minister provide information on how many villages in Region 8 along with other villages in Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 would benefit from the proposed sum?

Mr. Allicock: I could provide the Hon. Member with a list of these communities so that she would be better informed.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Under project code 1405400, Amerindian Development Projects, could the Hon. Minister layover to this Committee the long list, which he just shared, of all the programmes and projects that are listed under this head and the sum allocated for each project? Sir, I would also like to remind the Hon. Minister that, under project code 1214500 – Buildings, I made a similar request.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister there is a request for you to layover information.

Mr. Allicock: Yes, Mr. Chairman. For the Hon. Member, that would be made available.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Charlie: Under this same project code 1405400, Amerindian Development Projects, I listened attentively to the Hon. Minister alluding to an allocation for the Annai/Rupert Road and Kwitaro and Maruranau Roads. If I am correct, the amount allotted is \$5 million each. Hon.

Minister, is that allocation adequate to undertake that road project? I also heard the Hon. Minister alluding to lapidary of semi-precious stones, which will create jobs for the people of Region 8. Hon. Minister, we on this side of the House would like to know: how many persons benefited, what was the allocation in 2017, what is the allocation in 2018 and how many more persons will benefit in, 2018, in Region 8 under this programme?

Mr. Allicock: Hon. Member Charlie, no amount of money is available when there is population growth and when there are natural disasters. We would love to have more funding, but, for now, this is what we can afford. We have been in discussions with the communities. They are happy that we could work together and give that sort of support. I know it is not adequate but this is what we have and they would be happy to have this to make the trails passable. With regard to the lapidary, this is a new initiative for Monkey Mountain in Region 8, so we would not be able to say to you how many people benefited. We would visit and hear from them within the next two years.

Mr. Charlie: I am really surprised by the answer that the Minister just gave the Committee. In 2017, this was a project that was undertaken. I asked the question: how many persons in Region 8 benefited and what was the amount expended under this project? I am talking about the project with the semi-precious stones. What is the projected sum for 2018 and how many more persons would be accommodated under this project? Those are the questions.

Mr. Allicock: To the Hon. Member, we had no project last year.

Ms. Teixeira: Let me help my Comrade. In the legend in the Budget document of 2018, the lapidary workshop is mentioned. Why are you telling this Committee that there is no money to do it? I do not understand. Is your profile wrong? The Member has asked a question. The Hon. Minister Garrido Lowe's speech had several paragraphs about this workshop. You spoke about it last year. First of all, this was referred to last year and it has nil allocation for 2018. How could you say there is no money for it?

Mr. Allicock: It is a 2018 project. We did not have any project in 2016 or 2017.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister explain to this Committee why, in 2018, the Amerindian Development Projects, under project code 1405400, has a decreased amount? I am

asking this because when one looks from 2016 to 2017 and what is projected for 2018, there seems to be a constant decrease. I am getting worried because the proposed Capital Expenditure for 2018 is \$1,183,274,000 while the Current Expenditure is \$1,036,686,000. What this is telling me, Mr. Chairman, is that the Government is spending on the Current Expenditure almost as equal as it is spending on the Capital Expenditure. It is either the Government is not implementing the programme or there is some problem and that is why the amount is decreasing. In fact, in 2018, the Amerindian Development Projects, which provide direct support to villages, have an allocation of less than \$1 billion. I need an explanation. Why?

Mr. Allcock: I would like the Hon. Member to understand that, since we took office, our communities have taken on a different approach towards their own future and development. We are working in partnership, rather than taking things and giving people. We are *teaching them how to fish*. It is a wonderful feeling. Some communities are more advanced than some and we are very happy that this is happening. They have ownership. It is not that they are saying it is the Government's; it is theirs. That is what we have been working for.

1.07 p.m.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai-Campbell: I am not totally happy with the answer but I will move on to ask one other question as a supplemental to that question. Is the Minister telling this House that only those villages that are weak or need support are going to get the support under the capital expenditure? Could he explain why an increased amount is going to the Bina Hill Institute? Is that institution weak? Is that area or location weak and that is why they are getting so much? I do not believe the answer which was provided and that is why I am trying to make a comparison.

Mr. Allcock: I would like to say that, in the plan for a good life and for the inclusion of the hinterland, we have the road to be completed between the coast and, especially, Region 9. If my Hon. Friends do not know, this is the last part of the road link throughout South America. We have this duty to give to our hinterland people, including my good friend, Hon. Member Charlie, a better road to travel on. That is why it is important to understand that, in preparation for the good life, in preparation for the expected outcome of the oil moneys, this is not to reinvent the wheel, but to get in readiness; we need a workforce in the hinterland. At the moment we are not there. The previous government just left the communities divided. We are now bringing people

back together; we need to unify this nation. The unity in diversity is our belief. This road to the hinterland institution, which is the Bina Hill Institute, needs to be there. We do not have to go to the University of Guyana to get ourselves educated. We need such institutions in the hinterland, for the hinterland is the heartland for all of us Guyanese; and we need to know more about Guyana. Here is where this institution will be able to give that opportunity to our people to unify it.

We have a beautiful country, we are on the Guyana shield, we are a part of the Amazon basin, but a lot of us below the sea level do not understand that. We need to be able to have such an institution. We joined with the University of Guyana and we will be able to have more persons in connection. The pressure of development would be through that corridor. So we need our people to be properly positioned to help in the development of this country.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1405400 - Amerindians Development Projects: I have noticed, despite his very flowery language, that this head has been reduced by \$366 million for 2018. So you are talking grandness then you are cutting the budget of the Amerindian people.

In fact, I have a photograph of the Hon. Minister and Vice President receiving the Department of Public Information's (DPI's) report of 22nd September, 2017 on the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) study on the status of Amerindian people in Guyana. I would like to know, from him, in what way the study has been translated into recommendations to do with this particular head on Amerindian development? And, why was it cut by \$366 million?

In addition, the Hon. Member spoke about the Bina Hill Institute. The Bina Hill Institute at a certain point lost the grant it was getting, not from the Government but from another international agency. It is the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) Government that came in and gave it a grant every year. In fact, the Bina Hill Institute is headed by a board, and that was part of the arrangement to ensure that the Government's funds and taxpayers' money would be accounted for.

There is this division issue that the Minister is talking about amongst the Amerindian villages. In fact, right now, the Government is sowing it more because there are workshops and those workshops are held with members of its party and not anybody else in a particular village. We have proof of that over and over again. There would be women's meetings in Lethem,

supposedly to train for business projects, and, in fact, the only people who have been brought to those villages are members of your political party, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU). When it is the Hinterland Employment and Youth Service (HEYS) you have been selective of the youths who get access to the training. Mr. Chairman, he spoke politics and I can start with politics too.

The issue is with the projects that have been put forward. We did not get to question the Ministry of Presidency where the money for the Amerindian Development Programme and the Amerindian Land Titling Project is secluded. We could not get the answers to those questions because they are under capital, but we will ask under this heading. There is \$981 million dropped by \$336 million last year and, really, the projects that you have put in are not going to fundamentally make a difference in the quality of life of the people in the interior.

You are putting in the construction for a Green Enterprise Development Centre. I did ask to be provided with the details and you said you would, but at this point it is located at the Bina Hill Institute. I have no issue with the Bina Hill Institute. It is a good institution and lovely, trained young people come out of there. It is not the only part of Guyana. In fact, we have no idea what your Green Enterprise Development Centre means. There was nothing in your budget speech about this to enlighten us and you have not told us how much money is going to be spent on this. The Bina Hill Institute is getting \$50 million under line item 6302 - Training. Then you reported that the dormitories would be built, for which you said, when questioned earlier, that you took the savings out of those dormitories to increase your 2017 Budget by \$24 million and then you are putting it back in the 2018 Budget. I am wondering now whether you have taken money that was meant for the Bina Hill Institute in 2017, side tracked it to another project, and are now putting it back in 2018. Mr. Chairman, the Minister has talked about all sorts of things that he is totally off the record on, irrelevant.

The issue is, if you have a study which you and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) commissioned, the study of Vulnerable Indigenous Groups which was handed over on 22nd September... I am not using any other newspaper except that of the Department of Public Information (DPI), the Prime Minister Mr. Nagamootoo's outfit. I heard specifically from Minister Nagamootoo and no one else about the vulnerability and the poverty of the Amerindian people. The biggest head that you have in your budget is this \$981 million and very little in that

budget is going to make a major difference in the quality of life of the Indigenous people of this country. The school uniform project you hived off somewhere else and you cannot answer why in September of this year children had not gotten their fabrics in many parts of the country to make their uniforms.

Mr. Chairman, if the Minister wishes to go on a political track we have no problem in going there. We welcome that, because we know these areas. We go into these areas at our own cost. The Member cannot talk about poverty and allow the Government to cut the agency by \$366 million and then blame the PPP for his ineptitude and his inability to perform in Government.

Programme: 171- Policy Development and Administration - \$1,183,274,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Sitting suspended at 1.18 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 2.20 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now resume consideration of the Estimates. You will turn to page 250.

Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office- \$295,789,000

Mr. Nandlall: I saw that in 2014 this same programme spent \$20,981,000 and in 2018 we are budgeting \$295,789, 000, which is an increase of 1,400%, to do the same work that we did in 2014. But I will proceed.

Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister explain, how is it we have had a decrease in the number of contract employees from two to one but we have an increase in moneys budgeted for this item, from \$4,232,000 to \$6,015,000? And, apparently, this money is being paid to one person. I would like the Hon. Member to explain to us why there is an increase, what is the portfolio, the salary and the functions of the person.

2.30 p.m.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: The answer is that the increase caters for the Permanent Secretary (PS) who would have been employed from March, with a salary of over \$623,314. Thus, the further increase in 2018 caters for her salary for the entire year.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I enquire, the office holder who is no longer there and who was there in 2017... What happened here was that we had two in 2017 and now we have one person. My learned Friend says that it is the PS. I would like to know who the officer was that is no longer there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking for the position?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, the position.

Mr. Chairman: You are not asking for the name.

Mr. Nandlall: No, not the name.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Williams: Thank you for that question. The Confidential Secretary was moved from line item 6116 – Contracted Employees – to line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support.

Mr. Nandlall: One last follow-up question. That Confidential Secretary seemed to have functioned effectively from 2015 to 2017, as a contracted employee. Might I enquire, respectfully, why the *status quo* was changed?

Mr. Williams: As I indicated, they were removed from contracted employee stage to the line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: In 2014, this line item attracted the expenditure of \$84,000, and in 2018 we will be spending \$1.3 million, an increase by over 1,400%. I am respectfully asking if the Hon. Minister would assist us with an explanation for such an astronomical increase of 1,400%.

Mr. Williams: This is an ongoing effort to update the Library of the Attorney General's Chambers with the relevant law books, law reports, and law text. Given the fact that there will be new Bills drafted in 2018, the increase also caters for purchasing of new resource materials.

Mr. Nandlall: Is the Hon. Member informing this House that this is the line item from which the Ministry is purchasing law books? I would be most grateful for that clarification.

Mr. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: In 2014, we expended \$800,000 under this line item. In 2018, we are budgeting \$2,242,000, an increase by 300%. Could the Hon. Member explain to us why this huge increase in expenditure for fuel and lubricants? If there are additional vehicles at the Ministry, he could hopefully inform us and tell us when they were acquired.

Mr. Williams: This caters for three existing vehicles and an expected new vehicle.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I enquire whether that new vehicle to which my learned Friend refers has been budgeted for in this year's Budget?

Mr. Williams: I assume that by this year, you mean 2017?

Mr. Nandlall: We are talking about 2018 Budget.

Mr. Williams: No.

Mr. Nandlall: My distinguished Friend just informed us that we are having this increase in expenditure under this line item because of the anticipated purchase and, I hope, acquisition of a new vehicle. That vehicle has to come through the budgetary process, all things being equal, and should have been provided for in the capital part of this Budget. I am asking my Friend, again, if it may have escaped him, whether that vehicle is in these budgetary estimates. If not, could he assist us with an explanation from whence this vehicle will come, and from where or how it will be financed?

Mr. Williams: Thank you for the question; there is a simple answer. The vehicle is expected anytime this week so it would have been budgeted for in the past Budget, 2017.

Mr. Nandlall: Is my Friend saying that a vehicle has been bought from the proceeds of the 2017 Budget? I have the Estimates here and I cannot recall that a vehicle was provided for, but he can clarify it for us.

Mr. Williams: I am sorry if it is escaping my Hon. Friend, but I will repeat; the vehicle is expected anytime this week and it would have been budgeted for in the 2017 Budget.

Mr. Nandlall: Rental of Buildings – line item 6241: This is a new expenditure being created after many years. I see \$8,640,000 being budgeted for the rental of a building. I would be most grateful if the Hon. Member could explain to us, what the monthly rent is of the building, where the building is located, and for what purpose the building would be rented?

Mr. Williams: This is the rental of a building at Lot 61 Hadfield and Cross Streets, at a monthly rental of \$720,000.

Mr. Nandlall: My learned Friend omitted one segment of my question relating to the purpose for which the building is being rented.

Mr. Williams: The building is to house the Justice Sector Improvement Programme and the various units.

Mr. Nandlall: With the risk of appearing to be nit-picking, I will ask this question in relation to line item 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies. It is because these expenditures are exponential. In 2014, we spent \$40,000 for janitorial and cleaning expenses and in 2018 we are spending \$288,000, an increase by 620%, and it is the same building. The Attorney General's Main Office has not changed its architecture and its physical space. So I am respectfully asking, since I am a little acquainted with the price of soap powder, why there is a 620% increase in cleaning supplies for this line item.

Mr. Williams: This item, the increase caters for the purchase of industrial paper rolls as well as more hand washing liquids.

Mr. Nandlall: I did not get the adjectival description of the first item. I heard something about “industrial”. Could the Hon. Member be patient enough to repeat what cleaning material that is?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you assist?

Mr. Williams: I will try, Sir. I understand that they are buying these ‘Bounty rolls’ *et cetera*, to improve the cleaning in the Ministry, to ensure that we have clean surroundings and not surroundings that we know had existed some years ago in the city. So it is for cleanliness. That is the most I could contribute.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Services: In 2014, we spent \$239,000 under this line item, and in 2018 we are spending \$2,450,000, an increase by 925%. I am sure that my learned Friend would be able to help me understand these dramatic increases in expenditures. This is vehicles and spares.

Mr. Williams: This caters for repairs to three vehicles including the vehicle that was inherited from the former Attorney General, that was supposed to be brand new but was breaking down frequently and it also had accidents *et cetera*. For that particular year, a lot of those vehicles were involved in accidents and so they had to be... [Mr. Nandlall: We are talking about 2018.] There was insufficient allocation in 2017. [Interruption] You went back to 2014, so we are trying to show what happened and that is why we have to now cater, in 2018, for additional vehicle repairs. We have some old vehicles.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: The vehicle was not a new vehicle. It was a reconditioned vehicle, still in good condition and being driven by my learned Friend. Let us move to another one.

Line item 6271 – Telephone Charges: Let us hear this explanation now. In 2014 we spent \$668,000 in telephone charges. We now have an increase to \$1.2 Million, an increase by nearly 100%. We know that telephone bills have not been raised in this country. How is it that we are having this increase by 100%?

Mr. Williams: First of all, there is no increase because the amount in 2017 was \$1.2 million and the budgeted amount for 2018 is the same \$1.2 Million. I do not have any particulars reflecting 2014 as is being referred to by the Hon. Member. What I wish to say is that this caters for expenses for the officers and of the secretariat of the Permanent Secretary, the Minister and also for the new Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project.

Mr. Nandlall: The year 2014 is being used as a measuring rod, because 2014 is the year that the People's Progressive Party (PPP) spent money to do the same thing. People must understand how the cost of Government has increased. That is the important thing.

For example, line item 6273 deals with water, since it is one building which accommodates that Ministry water was not normally paid under this head. It was paid under a different account. Now we have \$500,000 being budgeted for water when for all the years, including the last two years, while my learned Friend was there it was zero, because water was budgeted for in other accounts in the Ministry. How many times are we paying for water? I am going to ask my learning friend to explain why in 2014, 2016 and 2017 there was zero for water and now we have \$500,000.

Mr. Williams: Sir, this is in relation with the new building for the IDB Project. The staff will be there for the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic and also for the general administration of the project.

Mr. Nandlall: I am edified by that answer; I did not know. I hope Hon. Member has the patience to entertain me here. He used the broad rubric of the Justice Sector Improvement Programme to tell us what that building will do. Now I am hearing components of the program. I asked his permission for him to explain what the components of the programme are that will be done in the building. I just heard that Guyana Legal Aid Clinic would be one of the programmes. I am sure that the legal fraternity would like to know what else they can access in that building.

Mr. Williams: I am very willing to do that as soon as that particular item approaches us under the capital expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you saying that you are going to answer the question?

Mr. Williams: Yes, sir, that particular matter is dealt with under capital expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6281, this deals with the provision of security. Traditionally, we have always had the Guyana Police Force Special Constabulary offering security services at the Ministry at a nominal fee, in 2014, at \$90,000 annually. That sum has increased to \$3,066,000, an increase by over 3,000%. So I am respectfully asking if the Minister can explain, because I

am aware that Guyana Police Force Special Constabulary still continues to provide services at that location. I will be much edified to understand why there is this huge expenditure of over 3,000%.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, this service will be provided by the Guyana Police Force's Special Constabulary and it is a relation to the said Justice Sector Improvement Programme building in Hadfield Street and the average per month is \$255,000.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you very much, sir. The rates at the Guyana Police Force Special Constabulary have gone up significantly.

Subsides and Contributions to Local Organisations - line item 6321: There is a massive increase \$260 million being budgeted here. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the local organisation to which these contributions are going to be made and where is this organisation located?

Mr. Williams: This agency would be the State Assets Recovery Agency, popularly called SARA and it is largely in relation to staffing.

Programme: 521 - Main Office– \$295,789,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration – \$63,941,000

Programme: 522 - Ministry Administration –\$63,941,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General's Chambers - \$493,847,000

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, again, in 2014, we spent \$150,247,000 and now we are budgeting \$493,847,000, a 229% increase. I would like to go straight to contract employees. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us the staffing details for the 15 contract employees that are being paid for under this heading?

Mr. Williams: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: We have the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, \$850,000; Solicitor General, \$1,191,000; Administrative Assistant to the Solicitor General, \$150,000; Personal Assistant to the Minister, \$80,000; Administrative Assistant to the

Attorney General, \$200,000; Principal Legal Advisor, \$714,000; Personal Assistant to the Minister, \$265,000; Drafting Consultant, \$1,139,000; State Counsel, \$254,280; Parliamentary Counsel, \$254,280; and Special Advisor to the Attorney General on Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) matters, \$714,000.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, may I inquire whether the five distinguished jurists who complemented the advisory team of the Attorney General are catered for under this line item.

Mr. Williams: They are not employees.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6241- Rental of Buildings: We are seeing \$10,200,000 being budgeted for. Last year \$8,440,000 was budgeted for, the previous year \$5,000,000 was budgeted for, in 2014 zero was budgeted for. So we have had a progressive increase. We are now at \$10,200,000. Firstly, I would like to ask where this building is and why or for what purpose it is being rented. I am going to ask a few follow up questions after that.

Mr. Williams: The building is situated at Lot 59 Robb Street and it is to house the Law Reform Commission.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, a follow up, please. We had budgeted \$5,000,000 in 2017 then we revised it to \$8,400,000 and now you are taking it to \$10,200,000. What is the rent for this building? When was it actually rented? From when did we begin to pay rent and what is the monthly or annual rent?

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Williams: That \$5 million would have been spent on the building for the project in 2017.

Mr. Nandlall: I am no better off with that answer, I am sorry. I will repeat, we seem to have rented this building in 2017 because that is what it states, “rental of building”. For 2017, we budgeted \$5 million and then we revised that upwards to \$84 million. We are renting, we are not in the real estate business. I am simply asking the Minister, what were those moneys spent for? What is the rent for the building? When did we pay rent for the first time?

Mr. Williams: I understand that, in 2017, there was one project building and \$5 million was spent towards that. Now, there will be two separate buildings and that is the reason there are two

separate amounts. This \$5 million would have been spent on the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Project building. Now that we have the rental for the Law Reform Commission building, there is separate budgeting for both buildings.

Mr. Nandlall: We have not heard what the monthly rent for the building is and when the tendency began.

Mr. Williams: If we are talking about the \$5 million then that would have been the \$720,000 per month.

Mr. Nandlall: I am confused. We rented a building in 2017 and we paid \$720,000 and that would equal to \$5 million, according to my Friend. That is not right \$720,000 multiply 10 equals to \$7.2 million and that is only for 10 months. The Hon. Minister has to clarify it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I believe that you could have asked a supplementary question so that you could solicit the answer from it.

Mr. Williams: I understand that the \$5 million was equivalent to six months of payment. That is why the figure for the new year is so much more.

Mr. Nandlall: In one of your many explanations you spoke of two buildings. How many buildings are we renting and what is the rent for each building?

Mr. Williams: We are renting two buildings, the building for \$720,000 is the project building and the building on Robb Street, which is for the Law Reform Commission, is rented for \$850,000 per month.

Mr. Nandlall: My Friend is confusing me. The Law Reform Commission building was provided for in Programme 521. It was the building on Hadfield Street that \$8,640,000 was budgeted for. That is separate. We are dealing with Programme 523. We cannot lean these things because they have been budgeted for, separately. They are two different programmes and two different agencies but under one Ministry. My learned Friend would have to do some clarifications.

I gathered, so far, that we are dealing with two buildings, one at Hadfield Street and one at Robb Street. The one at Hadfield Street is doing a justice improvement programme and the one at Robb Street seem to be a little amphibious. He is speaking about Law Reform Commission and

he is speaking about some other projects so, Sir, some clarity would be greatly appreciated. First of all, how is it that we are budgeting in two agencies and then paying rent out of a different agency? I need some clarification.

Mr. Williams: Let us see if I could further simplify this matter. In relation to the very first question you had asked about the \$5 million, under Programme 521, that was spent for six months in relation to the IDB building. If you look right now under Programme 523, you will see that there was no provision, whatsoever, in 2016 or 2017. Do you follow me?

Mr. Nandlall: Under Programme 521...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, have you completed your explanation?

Mr. Williams: Yes, I am saying that there is no provision under this line item for the rental of buildings in 2016 or 2017. The money for the project building was paid out of Programme 521. That is what I am trying to simplify. For 2018, the sum that is budgeted is \$8 million and that sum is now provided for.

Mr. Ali: Is it for one building?

Mr. Williams: It is still one.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I solicit your sagacious intervention, Sir? I am looking at Programme 523 and my Learned Friend is saying that, for 2017, he did not budget anything, but I am seeing that \$5 million is there. For 2017 the \$5 million was revised to \$8.4 million and then revised again, for 2018, to \$10,200,000. There is a history of it here. I do not know how he is looking at these figures and seeing blank.

I understand that there is another building rented which that has nothing to do with this. The building, to which he made reference, in the other programme, is a building on Hadfield Street which is out of this equation. Apparently, we are now dealing with a building which is located at 59 Robb Street; and that should be the only building or, if there are two of them, the two buildings which should occupy our attention. To bring in another programme, is to obfuscate the issue. I am asking, respectfully, Comrade Attorney General, could you please clarify for us how is it that, in 2017, you budgeted \$5 million and then it was increased to \$8.4 million and now it is

\$10.2 million? What is really being done in that building and what is the rent per month for that building?

Mr. Williams: Under Programme 521, there was no money. Under Programme 523, the \$5 million was spent to pay for the IDB project building.

Mr. Nandlall: Where is that building?

Mr. Williams: It located is on Hadfield and Cross Streets.

Mr. Nandlall: Would the rent be increased next year?

Mr. Williams: We said that what was paid was for six months, only. Now, we are budgeting for the entire 12 months and that is why it would be doubled for 2018.

Mr. Nandlall: My Friend is saying that for 2017, the six months rental is, apparently, equal to \$5 million, which was then revised to \$8.4 million for the entire year. Now, he is budgeting for another year at a cost of \$10,200,000. The explanations are not in sync; they are not consistent. What is the duration of the contract? I am asking how long it commenced and that is a part of the problem.

Mr. Williams: Under Programme 523, the sum budgeted for the Rental of Buildings for 2018 would be \$10,200,000, and this is the first time that this sum is being spent for the Law Reform Commission building in Robb Street.

Mr. Nandlall: Alright, if he can assist us with the rental of the building because we are still not sure. What is the rent of the building? Is it two buildings that are being rented? I know that it is the Law Reform Commission because he said that, finally. What is the rent and the length of the contract, so for next year, we will know whether to expect such expenditure?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, is there an explanation?

Mr. Williams: Yes, Mr. Chairman, as always I try to be helpful. We are dealing with Programme 523. The proposal for 2018 is \$10.2 million. This is the first time we would be paying for the Law Reform Commission building in Robb Street. There is no other building

provided for under Programme 523. Under Programme 521, there was a provision for \$8,440,000 for the project building in Hadfield and Cross Streets.

Mr. Nandlall: What is the rent of the building?

Mr. Williams: Which building is it?

Mr. Nandlall: You said that we are only dealing with the Robb Street building and I want to know what are the rental and the length of the contract.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I had indicated earlier that it was \$850,000 per month and there was an exclamation from my Hon. Friend. I do so again. This is for 12 months.

Mr. Nandlall: Is it a fixed term or an annual contract?

Mr. Williams: It is annual.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6284 - Other: there is a humongous chunk of \$305 million. It is very nebulous and uninformative. Could I ask my Learned Friend to educate us about this \$305 million? I am totally at lost as to why we are budgeting for that, Sir.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I did not get the question which was asked by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Nandlall, would you repeat the question please?

Mr. Nandlall: We are being asked to approve \$305 million, under a heading that states O-T-H-E-R. I would like some edification as to the purposes for which \$305 million of taxpayers' moneys would be spent.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Williams: The purposes to which this line item refer include payment for the economic costs for law students at the Hugh Wooding Law School, consultation and sensitisation programmes, legal fees and others, Council of Legal Education Conference, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) secretariat and other related matters such as Guyana assuming the chairmanship of CFATF, assessors and other related training and staffing of the local secretariat.

Mr. Nandlall: I thank the Hon. Minister for those global heads. Unfortunately, I would ask for a breakdown. If I am to deal with the economic cost for law students, how much are we spending on that and are all of our students in the programme catered for? What is the methodology that is being used to select students to assist them with the laudable economic cost initiative?

Mr. Williams: There was no discrimination in relation to the students in the Hugh Wooding Law School programme. Because of hardships that are being experienced by our students to exist in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to further their legal studies, the Government has tried to contribute to some part of the economic costs and, that is, the \$18 million which is shared *pari passu*, with the paltry number of 25 students who would have graduated for both first and second year. It means that if someone graduated this year, the 25 that are identified would benefit. It means that if someone had left the programme and is now re-entering the programme he/she would not benefit because it would be more than 25. We are talking about the current 25 and those who are continuing in their second year.

Mr. Nandlall: Would I capture you correctly if I say that the \$18 million would be distributed equally or evenly among 50 students?

Mr. Williams: Fifty students, for both first and second year.

Mr. Nandlall: Then Mr. Minister, you spoke about legal fees and others. Could you explain to us what those legal fees are in relation to?

Mr. Williams: Legal fees are inclusive of direct pure legal fees that are paid to Attorneys on retainer. For example, the special prosecutor fees, fees for the ministerial “wise men” or advisors, fees for retaining Lawyers out of Guyana, and those kinds of things.

Mr. Nandlall: I am happy because there was some ambiguity in this Parliament as it related to special prosecutors. My Learned Friend seemed to have suffered from an aberration and said, a few days ago, that special prosecutors are not funded from the Attorney General’s budget.

Mr. Williams: Did I say that?

Mr. Nandlall: We have some kind of condition. I am happy that we are having confirmation from the Attorney General.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I stand on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40(a), unless my Learned Friend, the Hon. Member sources this contention... I mean we were all here. Where did he get that from that I said that they are not funded?

Mr. Chairman: Are you saying that the Hon. Member expressed a point of you which you take objection to?

Mr. Williams: Yes, please, Sir. He is suggesting that I said that the special prosecutors were not paid by my Ministry.

Mr. Nandlall: I am absolutely happy that he is confirming that they are being paid by his Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Let us move on. We are moving to the end of the second half hour.

Mr. Nandlall: Those who heard when he denied it, they heard it; I do not have to repeat that. Could you tell us, Mr. Minister, how much are you paying for special prosecutors and how much are you paying for overseas Lawyers? I am anticipating that you are not paying for border dispute matters. What cases are we retaining overseas Lawyers to defend and to prosecute? Could you give us a breakdown of these legal fees in terms of the categories of Lawyers that are retained? One category being special Prosecutors, I will dichotomise one category as being local and one being foreign because you introduced a foreign element.

Mr. Williams: The special prosecutors have been paid.

Mr. Nandlall: You are budgeting for them to be paid.

Mr. Williams: Do you mean to be paid?

Mr. Nandlall: We are dealing with 2018.

Mr. Williams: We cannot determine what would be paid in 2018. We are making provision...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman, I am trying to answer the question. We are making provisions to retain Lawyers, to continue to pay the special prosecutors, the “wise men”, if necessary, and all other related matters that would come under this rubric.

Mr. Nandlall: I am asking if you could assist me with a projection because that is what a budget is about. You are estimating how much you would be paying.

Mr. Williams: Okay, you are making yourself clear.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you.

Mr. Williams: Thank you for that question. I do not wish to frighten my Friend but when retaining foreign Lawyers legal fees are quite... My learned Friend would be familiar with that. I promised this country that I would go nowhere close to what was paid to the participants in the Rodney’s Commission of Inquiry. I would say that, maybe, \$50 million. When you bring them in they have to have accommodation and so on. My Learned Friend knows and he could elaborate.

Mr. Nandlall: I presume that my Friend is putting aside \$50 million for foreign Lawyers. There is some clarity there. Could he tell us how much he is estimating for local prosecutors? I have not reached the “wise men” as yet.

Mr. Williams: There are two aspects to that. We could retain, just like my Learned Friend and Hon. Friend did during his tenure, local Lawyers. That category, which the Hon. Member is familiar with, could be even more than \$50 million. We are projecting to retain local Lawyers which are distinct from the special prosecutors. That figure could be about \$50 million and upwards, following the trend that I inherited.

Mr. Nandlall: That is another \$50 million.

Mr. Williams: I am saying that it could trend upwards.

Mr. Nandlall: Ok, but more.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, one Member is asking and one Member is answering. Who would be answering?

Mr. Nandlall: I am getting some clarity, Sir, and I am very happy.

Mr. Chairman: I see how anxious you are getting and how excited you are getting at the question.

Mr. Nandlall: We are now at \$100 million and we have not reached the special prosecutors as yet. I am asking, respectfully, and my Friend has been very helpful this afternoon. I have to keep the *Stabroek News* newspaper away from him today. Could you help us, Sir, with the special prosecutors category now?

Mr. Williams: The special prosecutors, as you know, their remit is a very strenuous one. In fact, we would have to add to that component. It is a lot of work and that could be very high too. We are hoping that it does not but that could also trend towards that figure. How they do their work and the amount of financial crimes that they have to take to the Court from those forensic audits, it would take a lot of money.

Mr. Nandlall: Would it be above \$100 million?

Mr. Williams: No, not above \$100 million. It could trend between \$40 million and \$50 million. There is a lot more work coming up.

Mr. Nandlall: Could my Friend help us now with what he describes as the five “wise” Ministerial Advisors? He also has the infamous others. Could he bring us some clarity?

Mr. Williams: As is known, nationally, they get a small stipend. A member gets \$20,000 and the Chairman gets, maybe, \$5,000 more than a member.

Hon. Member: Is it per meeting?

Mr. Williams: Per month.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I enquire, respectfully, whether retired Justice Patterson is still part of that?

Mr. Chairman: You know that you should not ask that; I would not permit it. We are not having names mentioned in this House.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I ask if the Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) is still part of that esteemed and very decorated team?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Williams: It is a good question, Mr. Chairman. Having embarked on his Office as GECOM's Chairman, I doubt whether the Chairman would have any time for that particular arrangement. We have not addressed our minds to that as yet. We are coming to the end of the year. I expect that the Chairman would have time to continue to function in that role.

Mr. Nandlall: Would I be correct to infer that, as I stand here and as we stand here, he is still part of that team? He may not have the time to discharge the onerous responsibilities which flow therefrom but he is still part of the team?

Mr. Rohee: Beyond reasonable doubt.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not think that my Friend wants to rebut that.

Mr. Williams: I am not sure what the issue is. It is the end of the year.

Mr. Chairman: I wonder if I could ask the two gentlemen, the two Hon. Members, who are having a very leisurely conversation or appear to be doing that...

Mr. Williams: My humble apology, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: ...if I could inform them that we have completed our second half hour and that there is one other half hour left? I would suggest that we quicken the pace somewhat, please.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General's Chambers - \$493,847,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$13,519,000

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$13,519,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.30 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office – \$195,000,000

Mr. Nandlall: Project code 1501500 – Justice Sector Programme: Sir, could the Hon. Minister tell us what it is that we are funding under this Project code. It states;

“Provision for institutional strengthening, justice reform and purchase of equipment-IDB.”

What aspect of justice reform reference is being made to and what type of equipment are we speaking about and what type of institutional strengthening we are contributing this money towards?

Mr. Williams: This is support for the justice sector justice system. It is designed and intended to reduce the overcrowding in prisons. To achieve this, there are two main components: one is to address the amount of pre-trial detainees in the prison and the other is alternative sentencing.

Under the first heading of pre-trial detention, it is the intention to create a pilot legal aid programme and that programme will develop quality standards for legal aid and provide capacity building for the attorneys and the paralegals recruited as well as other service providers in the sector. The proposal now is to pay salaries to two attorneys-at-law at US\$3,000 each per month, and four paralegals at US\$740 each per month.

Also, there would be an assessment of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) capable of executing legal aid services and capacity building of NGOs currently working in the justice sector will also be conducted. This whole idea is to reduce pre-trial detention. Also, to effect that, we would have to strengthen the probation services and, of course, alternative sentencing where assistance to the Law Form Commission comes in, for the drafting of new legislation for alternative sentencing.

There is also the restorative justice component, which is really to provide alternative to trials so that the victim and the perpetrator could work out their solutions supervised by the State. Broadly, there is also provision for enhancing the capacity of the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the provision services, as I said, and the magistracy.

Mr. Nandlall: I echo those sentiments of gratitude. Mr. Attorney General, reference is being made continuously about a pilot legal aid programme. I know that you are aware that we have an extant legal aid programme. Is this programme, to which you are making reference, a separate

and different programme from the existing programme? Is there some connectivity between the two? Are they going to work together? Or is this a different programme that is going to be run separate and apart from that which exists?

Mr. Williams: Thanks for the question. In the first instance, yes, it is separate from the other NGOs that are performing legal aid functions. The contemplation is that people should not be going before the courts for non-violent and minor offences unassisted by counsel. They are developing capacity in this project to zero in on the whole question of pre-trial detention because the detainees are overcrowding the prison. It is separate and distinct but, at the same time, they would also conduct a study to do an assessment of the existing NGOs that are performing or purporting to perform legal aid functions.

Mr. Nandlall: We have an organisation called the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic, which was funded by the Government and it had branches or tributaries, if you wish, in other regions. We had taken it out and I spoke about that in my budget presentation. This programme that we are reviewing would it fund the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic; if not, where is the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic getting funding from and where would this be located, since my Friend is creating the impression that this is a separate capacity building organisation? We do not have building provided for anywhere for its accommodation *et cetera*. I need some clarity, please, on those issues.

Mr. Williams: Thank you for the question. Just let me say *ab initio*, from the beginning, that we have been talking most of the afternoon about that building on Hadfield Street and the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic would be located there.

Secondly, you are speaking about NGOs that I know nothing about. They are independent bodies; they have nothing to do with Government. I am not even sure if they are getting subventions from Government.

[**Ms. Ally:** They would get from the Ministry of Social Protection.]

Okay, they would be getting subventions from the Ministry of Protection so that does not come under the remit of the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

As I said this is an Inter- Development Bank (IDB) project geared towards overcrowding of the prison and to achieve a reduction of that by targeting pre-trial detention. One would not just go to the court and be remanded to the prison when it is a minor offence or a nonviolent offence *et cetera*. This is geared towards that and not the wider legal aid. What they are doing, at the same

time, is trying to assess the capacity of the NGOs that exist. Perhaps, this is a five year programme and at the end of the five years they will develop capacity and they could, more or less, be assimilated.

Mr. Nandlall: Nothing that my Learned Friend has said creates the impression that this programme will expand or extend outside of Georgetown. Mr. Attorney General, could you tell us whether this programme is confined to Georgetown or it is going to be countrywide? I know that you appreciate that, especially in the hinterland areas, legal aid is, perhaps, needed there as much as anywhere else in the country. What provisions are there to take this programme outside of Hadfield and Cross Street?

Mr. Williams: As I said, it is a pilot project with a specific purpose. The question of whether it would move out of Georgetown, I suppose is something that could be addressed depending on the amount of funding that is left. It is a pilot project to see whether it would work in the capital city, Region 4, where there is the largest population. It is a proper place to do the pilot, as I said. It is not like a policy decision has been made.

Mr. Nandlall: I am not sure why we are doing a pilot project on an initiative that is 30 years old and very institutionalise in the country. [Mr. Williams: *Inaudible*] Legal aid goes across the board. Sir, reference was made to the Office of the DPP, an Office which its budget has been severely chopped by my distinguished Finance Minister. How the office of the DPP would benefit from this programme Mr. Attorney General (AG)?

Mr. Williams: The whole idea is to develop the capacity in the Chambers of the DPP and that they would weave into the intention of the programme; that is, that prosecutors should not turn up and ask for people to be remanded for certain offences and clog up the prison waiting for them to be heard. What is intended under this project is that this project would provide the information, technology, infrastructure needed to expedite cases, develop standard for applying appropriate alternative sentencing measures, and that is where the DPP Chambers comes in, and to provide capacity building to improve the consistency with which cases are handled.

To that end, they would procure 10 heavy duty photocopiers valued at \$1 million each for police prosecutors and these would be distributed to various offices to help them expedite the process of

preparing case files. As I said each photocopier would cause approximately GUY\$1 million plus transportation to the various locations.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, are you putting the question on this entire programme or just project code 1501500 because I have other questions to ask on other project codes?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I would ask you to seek by your questions to encourage your responses in quick a time as you would raise your questions. We have less than half of an hour remaining for this programme.

Mr. Nandlall: Project code 2501600 – Furniture and equipment: \$15 million was budgeted for the purchase of equipment and furniture, could the Hon. Minister explain to us what are the furniture and equipment that they intend to acquire and where in the justice system or in the Ministry this would be allocated?

Mr. Williams: This item deal with the Ministry of Legal Affairs, main office and State Assets Recovery Agency (SARA). For the main office there is one microwave - \$50,000; one storage cabinet - \$80,000; two shredders - \$20,000; three desktop computers - \$490,000; three printers- \$360,000.

3.45 p.m.

For the State Assets Recovery Agency (SARA): four office desks- \$360,000; four office chairs- \$160,000; three microwaves- \$105,000; 15 computers- \$1,500,000; four large refrigerators- \$600,000; two small refrigerators- \$180,000; two water dispensers-\$70,000; three printers- \$960,000; two safes- \$400,000; air conditioned units- \$665,000; private branch exchange (PBX) system- \$2,000,000; server infrastructure- \$2,000,000; security infrastructure - \$2,000,000; biometric clocking system- \$1,000,000; and cubicle partitions- \$2,000,000.

Programme: 521 - Main Office - \$195,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 - Ministry Administration - \$719,000

Programme: 522 - Ministry Administration - \$719,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 523 - Attorney General's Chambers - \$4,000,000

Programme: 523 - Attorney General's Chambers - \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 - State Solicitor- \$494,000

Programme: 524 - State Solicitor- \$494,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency 32: Ministry of Public Infrastructure

Current Expenditure

Programme: 321- Policy Development and Administration- \$4,008,354,000

Mr. Ali: Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister turn his attention to page 440 which lists the agencies that would benefit? For the Guyana Energy Authority (GEA), there is a 250% increase in allocation for this agency. Could the Minister say what necessitated this 250% increase? What are the new plans and programmes that would be financed under this programme and who are the potential beneficiaries?

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: The reasons for the Guyana Energy Authority's increase in 2018 are: there is an increased amount allocated for stationery, about \$693,000; and there is an increase to cater for fuel for the entire fleet of the GEA's equipment. There are additional amounts of moneys for some capital works, such as maintenance, repairs to washrooms and additional repairs to the building. There is an increase in the amount for equipment maintenance, which is \$5 million. We do the injector maintenance for fuel marking. There is increase in the amount for security- \$5.6 million – for the Bartica Base. That is based on increased rates based on the increase which was given by the Ministry of Finance. There is \$6.7 million for audit fees and there is an allocation of \$2.7 million for legal fees. There is \$2 million for staffing. There is Value Added Tax (VAT) for \$3.4 million and there is additional expenditure for sensitisation advertisements, energy week activities, maintenance of standalone systems, an increased amount for capacity building management training and training seminars and workshops. The residents in the regions, which we are targeting, would be the beneficiaries.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, though the Hon. Minister did not give us expenditure for each of the items he outlined, those that he outlined would add up to less than \$40 million. The increase is \$164 million. So, we need much more clarity on this. I would also like to turn the Minister's attention to the Kwakwani Utilities Inc. and LINMINE (Community Power), for which there are substantial increases as well. What are the number of households which would benefit from this and the amount of subsidy per household for this electricity?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, let me just deal with the very first question that the Hon. Member asked. For the GEA, since the Hon. Member wants specific numbers, for employment costs, we are budgeting for: an electrical engineer, a senior electrical engineer, an intelligence officer, an internal audit clerk, two marking officers and one inspector at a cost of \$39,850,000. There is a \$17,130,000 increase for equipment maintenance, bulk marking injectors, as I mentioned before. There is an allocation of \$58,477,000, which is for information awareness, brochures, advertisements, topographical surveys, environmental/ social impact assessment associated with the development of wind, hydro, and solar energy project and maintenance of solar photovoltaic (pv) systems that were installed in 2017.

Mr. Ali: How much?

Mr. Patterson: It is \$58,477,000

Mr. Ali: What about the second part of the question?

Mr. Patterson: The increase for Kwakwani Utilities Inc. is for the retention and hiring of electrical engineers and two mechanics, since they will be acquiring two new generator sets, which are about to be installed in Kwakwani.

Mr. Ali: That is not the question. The question was about the number of households that will benefit and the amount of subsidy per household. In the LINMINE (Community Power) and the Kwakwani Utilities Inc., how much subsidy per household does it work out to?

Mr. Patterson: We will provide the number of households that this utility serves.

Mr. Ali: And the amount of subsidy per household.

Mr. Patterson: Obviously, when I give you the number of households, you can simply do a quick division and you will know what it is because it is a lump sum that is given.

Mr. Chairman: Is it the understanding that the Minister will be supplying some information to you, Mr. Ali?

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I would like the Minister to supply the number of households and his calculations of the subsidy per household.

Under the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD), could the Hon. Minister say whether ...?

Mr. Patterson: Which line item?

Mr. Ali: It is the same line item - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. On page 440, there is a list of the organisations. The Transport and Harbours Department had \$430 million in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister say whether this entire amount has been utilised by the Transport and Harbours Department?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, with your leave, Minister Ferguson will take care of matters on the Transport and Harbours Department.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Hon. Minister, that is entirely possible.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure [Ms. Ferguson]: Hon. Member, thank you for your question. I have been advised that the full sum will be utilised by 31st December, 2017.

Mr. Ali: The question is: how much has been spent? How much has been spent, to date, by the Transport and Harbour Department?

Ms. Ferguson: To date, approximately \$400 million has been spent.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6321, what processes and parameters were used to determine the \$2.16 billion subsidy to LINMINE (Community Power)?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the same processes that have been in place for eons. It is the cost of fuel and the transporting of the fuel to the location in Linden.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state what the effective rate per kilowatt per hour in Linden is versus that in Moruca, Matthew's Ridge, Port Kaituma, Kwakwani, Lethem and the Coast is?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Dharamlall, the Chairman is at a disadvantage because he did not hear the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you please provide the effective rate per kilowatt per hour of electricity in Linden versus that in Moruca, Matthew's Ridge, Port Kaituma, Mabaruma, Lethem and on the Coast?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the outlying regions are billed at approximately \$100 per kilowatt per hour but they get the first 15 kilowatts free; on the coast, we know it is about 48 cents. In Linden, the residential rates range between \$7 and \$15 per kilowatt per hour.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please state whether, in the subsidised organisations, Value Added Tax (VAT) is charged on electricity provided to consumers in those areas?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, VAT is not charged in the outlying regions.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I note the Hon. Minister's answer in relation to the rates. However, having regard for areas like Mahdia, Moruca, Matthew's Ridge, Port Kaituma and other regions falling under similar conditions such as LINMINE and which enjoy a higher rate of subsidy, could the Hon. Minister say what policy guides the decision on how rates are established in the different areas?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, as a Government we know that the cost of electricity is a cost to the consumers. That is why we have embarked on several projects to assist in defraying the cost in the outlying regions. For example, for Mabaruma, we have invested, in 2017, \$264 million to do a solar farm; for Mahdia, we are engaged in a public/private partnership to get the Tumatumari hydropower in place; for Lethem, in the 2018 Budget, there is a sum of money for

studies at Mocomoco. The policy is to do whatever it is that we can do reduce the cost to all of our residents in all of our outlying regions.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the question is: what is the policy that guides the decision? Could Government not afford places like Mabaruma and Mahdia the same effective rate as the areas with the lower rate? Regarding the decision to not apply VAT on electricity for these areas, why is it not a decision across the board, if Government really wants to help consumers and businesses all across the country? You have recognised that this is a burden on consumers in these areas, which I agree with. Why does Government not extend the lower rates to the wider population as a matter of policy?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, our policy is to try to even better the rates than are available on the coast or elsewhere. That is why I mentioned the initiatives, which we have already embarked on. It is to have even better reduced rates. Obviously, charging VAT is a decision which we have made to try to assist other areas. Sir, we have looked at this matter holistically and we will get there incrementally - piece by piece. We started in 2016, continued in 2017 and, in our 2018 Budget, we do have initiatives to defray some cost.

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration - \$4,008,354,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 322 – Public Works - \$3,784,339,000

Mr. Ali: Thank you, Sir. Line item 6116 – Contacted Employees: Hon. Minister, in 2017, the budgeted amount is \$545,377,000. The revised budgeted amount for 2017 is \$513,509,000; it trended downwards. However, the budgeted amount for 2018 goes back to \$540,414,000. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, at the time of the revised budget, the increases were already catered for because they had already been announced. So, there is an increase in your 2018 Budget to \$540,414,000 and there is a reduction in the number of contracted employees from 231 to 213 employees. Could you please explain this?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the reason for the decrease in the number of employees from 231 to 213 is because 15 of the employees were transferred to the pensionable establishment and

three persons resigned. The marginal increase is 5% and it has to do with the increases which were granted by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Hon. Minister, the first question is: Out of the \$1,336,129,000 for 2017, what percentage of these resources have been utilised to date?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, we have utilised approximately 90 or 92%; by 31st December, 2017, we will utilise 100%.

Mr. Ali: As there is no legend that accompanies this Current Expenditure – line item 625 – Maintenance of Roads, first of all, could the Hon. Minister say what method of procurement was used? When were these advertisements aired? Who were the selected contractors or suppliers? When were these contracts signed with contractors and/or suppliers?

Mr. Patterson: Majority of the work was done by the Special Projects Unit within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. As you would know, in 2015, 2016 and 2017, I came to the National Assembly for equipment and finances, which was gratefully approved, for me to improve that Unit. The Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation is the custodian of our asphalt plant and we buy directly from them. For crusher run or stone, we go out to public tenders. The primary suppliers are Toolsie Persaud Limited, BK International, Barakara and Metallica and that is the primary material we would use in our maintenance of roads.

Mr. Ali: Did I hear the Hon. Minister to have said that (1) these projects are all executed by the Ministry, (2) the procurement is done by the Ministry, (3) the supervision is done by the Ministry, (4) the supply of one of the important material, the bitumen, is done by the Ministry, (5) the payment is done by the Ministry, (6) the certification of the payment and the invoices are done by the Ministry and (7) the approval is done by the Ministry? If this is the case, would the Hon. Minister not agree with me that this is a web of confusion that could lead to many leakages?

Mr. Patterson: The answer to the first question is yes and the answer to the second question is no.

Mr. Ali: Would the Hon. Minister, who is a well-known quantity surveyor, agree with me that it would not be the professionally acceptable standard for one to be designing, supervising and paying one's self?

Mr. Patterson: The answer to that question is: I do not know which line item the Member is referring to. Secondly, in my Ministry, auditors from the Auditor General's Office are there permanently. Also, we have our internal auditors. Just for the Member's notification and edification, all the roads that we do, we design ourselves, except for foreign-funded roads, and it has been like that, traditionally, since the Public Service was established. Therefore, we have been designing and supervising our own roads from time immemorial.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. Ali: This is not a case of designing and supervising your own roads. This is a case of designing, supervising, paying yourself and determining how much pay you get for what measured work. Hon. Minister, let me move on a bit.

Under line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads, how many suppliers of bitumen are there in the country? Secondly, if you are only purchasing from one supplier, is this not unfair competition and putting other suppliers at a disadvantage?

Mr. Patterson: I cannot give a definitive number of suppliers, but I can say this: the Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation supplies 75% of the asphaltic concrete in the country; it is not only for my Ministry, but for contractors countrywide. I do not know what you are saying. Are you saying that we should disband...? I do not know how many. Obviously, I would not even have the information of how many, because it is privately-owned asphaltting. We do supply 75% of the asphalt in the country and the reason why we do that is because we are most efficient and the cheapest.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister advise us whether he is in possession of an approval from the National Procurement & Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) to sole-source the bitumen? Secondly, what is the cost per ton?

Mr. Patterson: I am advised that NPTAB gives us the clearance for the base materials. Of course, bitumen is a composite product so we get clearance for those and that is actually just batched and sold to us.

Mr. Ali: My question was specifically about whether there was approval for sole-sourcing for the bitumen. I heard the Hon. Minister say yes. Could the Hon. Minister say on what date NPTAB gave the approval for the sole-sourcing of bitumen for the year 2017?

Mr. Patterson: These are bulk purchases; NPTAB approves a quantity. We ask for approval for 'x' number of tons. Obviously, it is for the entire year and so we take it in bulk.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister said the Ministry gets bulk quantity. Could the Hon. Minister say on what date the approval was given for the bulk quantity and how much was the bulk quantity? I am not asking when it was supplied. It could be supplied throughout the year. On what date was the approval given for the bulk quantity of asphalt and how much was that quantity?

Mr. Patterson: Maybe the Hon. Member did not understand the process. Bitumen is a component of the asphalted concrete. The Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation gets the bitumen and those things and we take the asphalted concrete from them. We buy from the lowest supplier in the market and that is the Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation's Asphalt Plant and it is a part of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

Mr. Ali: First of all, the Hon. Minister cannot determine that he is buying for the lowest price because there was no public bid.

Secondly, the Hon. Minister agreed that he is sole-sourcing asphalt from one entity.

[**Mr. Adams:** Government [*inaudible*]] It could be Government or a privately-owned company; the Ministry is sole-sourcing asphalt from one entity. In order to do that, the Ministry must be cleared by the NPTAB; there must be an approval for such a sole-sourcing. All I am asking for is the date of such approval. The Hon. Minister went on, further, to say that the Ministry buys it in bulk from a sole entity and that it is used throughout the year. All I am asking for are the date of the approval from the NPTAB for that sole-sourcing and the quantity.

Mr. Patterson: Like all other agencies in the Government, we procure from our sister agency. When we print our Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, we go to the Guyana National

Printers Limited because it is a Government agency. We do not print elsewhere. What we would like to do and what this Government has been doing, since 2015, is giving the people in Guyana maximum value for money. The amount of work that we have executed is a testimony to the prudent way in which we do our procurement. That is my response.

Mr. Ali: The question has nothing to do with all of that. It is a very simple question. The Ministry is sole-sourcing from an entity; it needs approval from the NPTAB. I am going to ask a direct question. Is there an approval from the NPTAB for the sole-sourcing of asphalt by this Ministry? It is either yes or no.

Mr. Patterson: As I have said before, this is an inter-agency procurement that has been ongoing for years.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister point me to the section of the Procurement Act that deals with inter-agency procurement? No part of the Procurement Act speaks about inter-agency procurement; there is nothing like this. Could the Hon. Minister guide me as to which section of the Act is informing him in relation to what he termed “inter-agency procurement”?

Mr. Patterson: Unfortunately, I cannot guide him. He has eminent lawyers on his side who could assist him. I, unfortunately or fortunately, am not allowed.

Mr. Ali: We are not getting far on this.

Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister say how many bridges were maintained in 2017 and how many bridges are projected to be maintained in 2018?

Mr. Patterson: I will give you the list of bridges that were maintained for 2017. We did aesthetic repairs to public bridges in Ogle, Better Hope, Bel Field, Mahaica, West Coast Berbice, Ithaca, Eteringbang, Moleson Creek and East Berbice. We also did aesthetic repairs to the Kurupukari and Annai bridges, all of the bridges from Annai to Lethem and all the bridges from Soesdyke to Linden. We did maintenance on the acrow panel bridges in Region 4. We repaired the Anns Grove access bridge and we did emergency works to the bridges at Ogle and at Ithaca. We repaired these culverts – Savage Street, Cool Square; Cemetery Road bridges one and two. All of that was done in 2017.

Programme for 2018: Aesthetic repairs to bridges in 11 lots. Lot 1 is Georgetown Battery Road, Waterloo Street, East Coast and East Bank Public Roads, the bridges on the West Bank Demerara Public Road, West Coast Berbice Public Road, East Berbice Corentyne Road, Essequibo Coast Road, Soesdyke/Linden; Linden/Lethem, Mahdia/Mabura and Bartica/Potaro. We are repairing, again, the Cemetery Road Bridges. We would be doing some further repairs to some acrow panel bridges and then we would be doing some repairs to community bridges, particularly in Regions 2, 3, 4 and 5. There is also the summer programme for emergency works, should they arise.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether these bridges are also maintained by the Special Projects Unit – in-house? Secondly, for 2017, what is the cost of the lowest cost...?

Mr. Patterson: Did you say 2017?

Mr. Ali: Yes. In 2017, since that is the figure that is available to you right now, what is the lowest cost for any of the bridges, the highest cost and what method of procurement was utilised?

Mr. Patterson: They are all publicly tendered. The lowest cost that we have is \$1,416,160 and the highest cost that we have is \$43,842,188.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, with your vast experience, do you consider an expenditure of approximately \$40 million on a bridge as maintenance or is it a capital cost?

Mr. Patterson: It is maintenance. I just give an example for the Hon. Member because I think he is trying to...if the Ministry does maintenance on the Demerara Harbour Bridge, which is a bridge, it costs hundreds of millions of dollars, and that is not capital work. If the Ministry does regular maintenance on one of those very long bridges that we have, that is tens of millions of dollars. I do not know where the Member is going with this; there is no upper or lower limit for maintenance.

Mr. Ali: I am hearing the Hon. Minister to be saying that an expenditure of approximately \$40 million on a singular project could be considered as maintenance and not as a capital expenditure.

Mr. Patterson: Yes.

Mr. Ali: We will have the debate on that and you will hear it. Could the Hon. Minister say how many of these projects will go beyond 2017?

Mr. Patterson: We do not have any rollover projects; we may have retention. The projects are finished but the retention will have to be paid next year.

Mr. Ali: Just for clarity, Hon. Minister, you are saying that, save and except for retention, there would be no other payments in relations to the maintenance of bridges, in 2018, for the 2017 programme.

Mr. Patterson: Yes.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister Patterson, could you advise us of the \$1.336 billion...?

Mr. Patterson: Which line item?

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Sorry. Line item 6251- Maintenance of Roads: Could you advise us of the \$1.336 billion that was spent? You indicated to the Committee that, primarily this money bought asphalt and crusher run. Could you indicate to us how much of this sum was spent on asphalt and crusher run? And if, perhaps, there is some other item or items that were purchased under this line item, what is the sum expended?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I could layover that information. What I have is the full list of roads we would have completed, and as you could see, it is quite extensive, but we can disaggregate that and get the actual cost of the asphalt and the crusher run for the amount of roads we have done. I will get it to the Hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, I heard you indicating, not so long ago, to my Colleague, that the procurement of asphalt is done by bulk *via* commission; that is still questionable. In my humble opinion, that information should be readily available. It does not have to be disaggregated. If I am buying a car it is \$15 million. You indicated that the \$1,336,129,000 primarily has nothing to do with how many roads and how they were done. You indicated that this money bought asphalt

and crusher run at the Demerara Harbour Bridge. Could you tell us how much of the \$1,336,129,000 went to purchase this bulk of asphalt and how much went to purchase crusher run?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, as I said, I can lay that over for the Hon. Member.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, I noticed that you have increased the sum to \$1,578,000,000. Could you indicate to us the expected amount of asphalt and crusher run to be bought from this money in 2018?

Mr. Patterson: I will lay over that information regarding the amount of asphalt.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, through you, could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House when this information is likely to be laid out?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I might formally do that by next week.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, next week runs from, I think, Sunday to Saturday. It might be a little helpful if there is more specificity, by next Friday or whatever time the Minister may choose.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I am advised by 22nd December, 2017.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, are we doing justice to what we are attempting do here? After the Appropriation Bill is passed then this document will come to the House, because next week will be after the Appropriation Bill. The fact that you have a summary of numbers you had to have calculated something to get to a number. A number just does not appear out of thin air. You ended up with \$1.5 billion because you added some numbers. For the benefit of this House and the people of Guyana all I am attempting to ask is: How did you end up there? What are the two or three or four numbers that caused you to reach \$1.5 billion? How is that difficult?

Mr. Chairman, line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: The sum that was allocated was \$90,500,000, while the revised sum up to this date is \$116,605,000. Firstly, what was responsible for the additional \$26 million? Secondly, is the \$116,605,000 the final amount of moneys to be spent in this line item for 2017?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, as I said earlier, the increase was due to several emergencies. We would normally just place a block number for emergency, if a bridge breaks, which is unforeseen. For 2018 the sum is \$8 million. We had several emergencies. There was virement in one of our programmes to cater for an emergency because, as you know, the bridges are vital in nature. So, that would give you the extra amount, and the final amount to be spent is \$116,605,000.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, I have not heard answers to the questions I asked. You budgeted \$90,500,000 but you spent \$116,605,000 up to this date, which means you spent \$26 million more than you budgeted. I asked specifically what was responsible. Whether it was one issue, two issues or three issues, could you indicate to us for each issue what the cost was? As you said earlier, if there were three emergencies or four emergencies and an additional \$16 million was for emergency, what did this cost us?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, yes, there were emergencies by nature, so I do not need to explain that to the Hon. Member. We had five emergencies over and above what we anticipated. There were two bridges on the Annai to Lethem corridor at a sum of \$9,765,400 and then there was the Savage Street culvert at a sum of \$4,191,000. I said earlier that we did two bridges at Cemetery Road which, as you know, were unavailable for quite a while. One was \$3,075,580 and the other was \$4,616,780.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, I heard you said that the \$26 million was allotted to this line item because it was a virement. Could you indicate to us where the \$26 million was vired from?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, it was vired from Programmes 2 and 3, under line item 6255, Other Infrastructure. Both line items had savings.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, this could not be the case. If you look at line item 6255, there were no savings. For this programme along with line item 6255, the saving is just \$9 million but \$26 million has to be accounted for. The maximum amount you could get from the two line items is \$9 million. You have to account for \$26 million.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I am quite a bit confused because if you look at line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, \$9 million was vired.

Mr. Ali: If we take the Minister's further clarification, when you add all three of the line items you would get a reduced sum of \$11 million.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I said line item 6255, Other Infrastructure, Programme 2 and Programme 3 and then I said Buildings. If you go to Programme 3, line item 6255, it was reduced by \$11,704,560.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, even if we go there and add another line item we would still not get \$21 million and we would still be short of \$5 million. We are adding all the time and I do not know why it is coming gradually. Mr. Chairman, if there was a virement the Hon. Minister is supposed to know exactly where that virement came from and the total at his disposal. Every time he gets up it is a different line item.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you clarify for Mr. Ali.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, just give me a minute. We are adding them up. I think there is a mathematical problem.

Mr. Ali: He is using up our time.

Mr. Chairman: He is trying to answer the question you raised.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I think the Hon. Members have a difficulty with mathematics here. Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Six million dollars was transferred. Stay with me here Members. Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: This is regarding Programme 2 where a sum of \$8.4 million was transferred which totals \$14.4 million. Then I said Programme 3, Transport, \$11.7 million. So when you add that up it gives you the amount of \$26 million.

4.45 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would like to turn your attention to page 668. Programme: 322 Public Works, Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation; this is the substantial spent on asphalted concrete bought from the Demerara Harbour Bridge. The sale of goods and services, fees and fines from the operation of the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation in 2017...

Mr. Patterson: Which line item are you on Sir?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is under line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads. I am going back to the Hon. Minister's procurement of asphalt from the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation. The Hon. Minister could not say what the cost was for the asphalted concrete that was procured. I went to page 668, Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation, Details of Revenue and Expenditure. The sale of goods and services from the Demerara Harbour Bridge for the year 2017, revised, is \$798,789,000. Could the Hon. Minister state how much of this sale of goods and services by the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation is for asphalted concrete to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the numbers that the Hon. Member is reading from was for the operation of the Demerara Harbour Bridge itself. None of this has to do with the sale of asphalt. This is for the Demerara Harbour Bridge's maintenance operation.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: Hon. Minister, on the Details on Revenue and Expenditure on the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation, Programme: 322 Public Works, are you saying that it is not the sale of asphalted concrete to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure or to wherever else the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation sells, that it is not recorded as part of their revenue?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, page 668 refers to the sale of goods which are for the bridge and that is it.

Mr. Ali: I am coming back to the virement of \$26 million. I am perplexed; let me go back. Hon. Minister, if you may bear with me, Policy Development and Administration, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure is zero; Public Works, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure is \$8.4 million; the savings on line item 6242, Maintenance of Building is \$4 million; \$120 million was the budget and the revised was \$116 million. I know both of us are wearing spectacles but one must be wrong.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, may I inquire, is there a question that the House is waiting to hear?

Mr. Ali: I am adding up Mr. Chairman. Under line item 6242, Maintenance of Building, the savings is \$4 million; the budget is \$120 million, and the revised amount is \$116 million, which is a difference of \$4 million. Under Transport, line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure is a savings of \$6,705,000. The three savings which you directed us would be

\$6,705,000, \$8,400,000 and \$4,000,000 which accounts for \$19,105,000. Could you direct me to which additional head I am missing since the variance is \$26 million?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, what I am reporting is the actual figures that we have. The Ministry of Finance, when they have done their thing, they would make a projection. This is the actual spending; we know it and we have closed off the programme already.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, unfortunately we are examining the budget Estimates and we are speaking from what is in the budget Estimates. The Minister has the responsibility to answer based on the numbers in the Estimates. Of course, we trust the Minister of Finance numbers in the Estimates; we have to. Based on those numbers the Minister informed the House that there was a virement of \$26 million, and when asked to account for the \$26 million he cannot do so. He is adding head after head and still he cannot do so. We would not go further on this, and I would not take up much more time, but the facts are already out there.

Mr. Dharamlall: For want of belabouring this issue; Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister said that the Ministry spends hundreds of millions of dollars to procure asphalted concrete from the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation. The Hon. Minister also said that the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation has not recorded in the Estimates, under its revenue, how much was paid by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. Could the Hon. Minister, who also has responsibility for the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation, please direct us to where the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation has the savings of hundreds of millions of dollars for asphalted concrete, paid for by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I have already undertaken to provide to this House, by a date, which I can recall is 22nd December, 2017, all of the moneys that were expended on asphalted concrete from the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation and crusher run from independent supplies as requested by the Members.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: I would like to reemphasise the question: Where is the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation, under its revenues, storing hundreds of millions of dollars? Or, were the hundreds of millions of dollars actually paid to a sister agency of the Demerara Harbour Bridge Cooperation?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, my response remains the same. I said I will provide the information. You can guide me further, Sir.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): You budgeted \$27 million and there is a revised sum of \$22.5 million. Could you indicate to us whether the \$22.5 million revised speaks to at the time the Budget was presented or up to the 31st December 2017?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the latter is the latest possible projection.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, if I take the answer it means that Training (including Scholarships) did not and will not expend the sum \$4.5 million in 2017.

Mr. Patterson: No, sir, that is not accurate.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, the Minister indicated that the revised is projected to take us to the 31st December 2017. When we look at line item 6302, the number is \$22.5 million. The amount budgeted for 2017 was \$27 million, which suggested that \$4.5 million would not be spent. Could the Minister indicate how many scholarships are we talking about? Does it include local and overseas? How many persons are we talking about? What areas of discipline are they doing their studies in?

Mr. Patterson: On the first section we will be expending our entire budgetary allocation on Training (including Scholarships). Just for clarity, are you asking on the persons for 2017 or 2018?

Mr. Hamilton: I am speaking on 2017.

Mr. Patterson: The bulk of the training is local and that is 706 persons. The disciplines being trained varies, but the primary focus would be engineering and engineering related studies.

Programme: 322 - Public Works - \$3,784,339 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 323 - Transport - \$86,361,000

Programme: 323 - Transport - \$86,361,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

5.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have capital expenditure to do and then we will take the break; unless Members feel that we must take the break now, in which case we lose the momentum on this particular agency. If you agree, I will continue.

Hon. Members: The Minister is on a roll; continue, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration - \$2,702,934,000

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ali, what do you wish to speak to?

Mr. Ali: Policy Development and Administration.

Mr. Chairman: Is that capital expenditure?

Mr. Ali: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Project code 1214800 – Government Buildings: There is an expenditure of \$111,671,000 budgeted for 2018. The latest Estimate for 2017 is \$190 million, which is the full amount of the budgeted amount of \$190 million. In the legend it states:

“Completion and rehabilitation of buildings and payment of retention.”

By completion, Hon. Minister, it would have meant that there is some building that is ongoing to be completed. Could you point to us, under this head, which are those buildings, when were they awarded, and the dates that you would have received the multiyear approvals for these projects?

Mr. Patterson: The completion of the building is the document centre at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, rehabilitation of the Work Services Group Building, rehabilitation of the De

Winkle Building, the Public Service Commission building. Are you asking for the ones that rolled over in 2016 and 2017?

Mr. Ali: No, it is for 2017; those that will be completed in 2018.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, Mr. Ali says that you are on a roll and he is very optimistic about what you will say to him.

Mr. Patterson: The De Winkle Accounts Building, Boskalis, Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) Sports Club, the bond at Paradise, the bond at Den Amstel, Anna Regina's District Office, the Ministry's laboratory and the relocation of the Ministry's workshop in Coldingen. Those total \$96,671,000. Just to complete the answer there is \$15 million in new building works.

Mr. Ali: For the buildings to be completed in 2018, I am asking the Hon. Minister to give us the dates of those multiyear approvals – 2017 and 2018.

Mr. Patterson: That has been submitted to the Ministry of Finance and the Finance Secretary, and we are awaiting a response.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister introduced 2016. So could the Hon. Minister say what dates these contracts that are going onto 2018 were entered into?

Mr. Patterson: It is only one, the document centre, and that was in 2016; all the others are in December, 2017.

Mr. Ali: If I have heard the Hon. Minister correctly, in terms of new works – new projects for 2018 – of the \$111 million, will \$11 million be for new projects? How much of this will be for new projects?

Mr. Patterson: Fifteen million.

Mr. Ali: And will the rest be for retention and completion?

Mr. Patterson: Yes.

Mr. Ali: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say where this \$15 million will be spent?

Mr. Patterson: Yes. It is the rehabilitation of flats 1, 5 and 14 in Echilibar Villas.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, project code 2606500 – Electrification Programme: I think this \$200 million is probably the final expenditure on this project. Noting that one of the benefits of the project is to improve living conditions, could you please state or describe how living conditions have improved or will be improved?

Mr. Patterson: Living conditions will improve. So, yes, there will be the provision of electricity as well as a 5% reduction in our technical and commercial losses which reduces the cost of electricity to consumers.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: The Hon. Minister said that there will be a reduced cost of electricity. Did I hear that correctly?

Mr. Patterson: It is on completion.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state, because this is the last payment, if the project will be completed at the end of 2018? And what will be the cost of electricity at that time?

Mr. Patterson: As far as I know, the project ends in 2019. So I do not know where the Member got the last payment from; and, obviously, 2019 is two years away.

Mr. Dharamlall: The total project cost is \$1.25 billion. We have already expended \$824,541,000. We are left with \$200 million which is budgeted for 2018. Is the Hon. Minister saying that the project will have cost overruns into 2019?

Mr. Patterson: No. This is combined with the Power Utility Upgrade Programme. It is one component – it is a combined programme. The sector you are speaking of finishes earlier, but the whole programme ends 2019.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. Hon. Minister could you please then state what would be the projected reduction or reduced cost of electricity at the end of the combined project?

Mr. Patterson: That will be determined at the end. The initial projection is the 5% reduction. With our 5% reduction in losses, our hope is that with our local input we can even carry that further by the end of 2019. At that time we will be able to tell the Member that more accurately.

Mr. Ali: Project code 2606700 – Hinterland Electrification: We have an allocation of \$65.5 million for 2018. If we go to the legend, the total project cost is listed as \$435.1 million. Are you with me Minister?

Mr. Patterson: Minister Ferguson will take that question.

Mr. Ali: Okay.

Mr. Patterson: Just a clarification. You are referring to a wrong figure; \$436.365 million is for the Power Utility Upgrade Programme. It is a different project code than what you are referring to.

Mr. Ali: No. It is the Hinterland Electrification.

I wish to turn the Minister's attention to Reference 103 of the profile document. The total project cost is \$435.1 million. Are you with me Ma'am? And if we go to page 474 of the details of the capital expenditure, and we go to project code 2606700 – Hinterland Electrification, we will see in 2016 that the actual was \$109,130,000. In 2017, the latest Estimate would have been \$249,600,000; the budgeted was \$369,600,000. So we have \$65,500,000 in this Budget. Could the Hon. Minister say, first of all, what percentage of the budgeted amount of the works for 2017 have been completed? And could the Minister state whether the works not completed would be carried forward to 2018?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, if you could just give me one minute, we are trying to calculate the percentage of works completed to date. But if I may be permitted, I will answer the last part of the question.

Mr. Chairman: Please go ahead.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you. Hon. Member, thank you for your question. I have been advised that the project will be rolled over to 2018.

Mr. Ali: We would derive that when we know what percentage of the project would have been completed and that will lead to another set of questions. But in my quick mathematics here, I am taking two books: the legend – Reference 103 and the details of the capital expenditure. Now, if we look at the details of the capital expenditure, we have \$109,130,000, in 2016.

5.15 p.m.

In 2017, the latest estimate is \$249,600,000 and in 2018 it would be \$65,000,000. That adds up to \$ 624,230,000 and the total project cost, in the legend, is \$435,100,000. So, there is a difference in the two documents and this would lead me to ask the Hon. Minister what is the project cost and when is this project coming to an end? This question is in addition to the one that you did not answer before.

Ms. Ferguson: To answer the Hon. Member's question, let me just bring some clarity to the project. The project is being done in two components. As of to date, we would have completed 75% of the project which was done by us installing the 400 kW solar fan for the equipment. What is going to happen is that \$45.5 million will be rolled over from this year's allocation to 2018.

Mr. Ali: Hon Minister, I understand that \$40 billion and more of your \$65 billion would be roll over projects. I am not going to go to when those contracts were signed as yet but I want to turn your attention to the addition because we have to solve this first. I am trying to get a total project cost.

In 2016, your actual was \$109,130,000. In 2017, your latest estimate is \$249,600,000.

[**Mr. Patterson:** We would have spent all.] If you would have spent all, and your expenditure for 2018 is \$65 million, then it is a worse problem. If I add up all of that it adds up to \$424, 230,000. When I go to the reference 103 in the Legend, the project cost is different; it is \$ 435,100,000. I am just asking you to explain this difference. What is the total project cost?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I need my Colleague to follow me carefully. For 2017, we had a budgeted allocation of \$369 million. Out of this \$369 million, I will provide a break down: for construction and supply of network for a community, \$46,000,000 was expended.

Mr. Ali: No, I do not want that.

Ms. Ferguson: Do you not want that?

Mr. Ali: We want the total project cost.

Ms. Ferguson: The total project cost is \$369.6 million. From this total, the sum expended, to date, is \$112,308,277.

Mr. Ali: I am further confused here because in the documents provided by Ministry of Finance, in the Legend, the project cost is not \$300 plus million dollars. The total project cost is \$435,100,000. With full respect to the Hon. Minister, the expenditure could not have been \$112 million because the actual expenditure in 2016 alone on this project was \$109,000,000. The current expenditure as we speak now...

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

Mr. Ali: No, we have to do the mathematics.

Mr. Chairman: You are doing the preamble.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister said that on the total project she only spent \$112 million but in the actual expenditure of 2016, \$109 million was spent. To date, for 2017, \$249,600,000 was spent; those two alone are far pass the Minister's expenditure of \$112,000,000, which complicates the issues. In the earlier question, the Minister's answer to the total project cost is different from what is in the Legend so we need clarity on these.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, what I am going to do is that I am going to ask for some time to provide the accurate information to this House. Hon. Member, rest assured that I will get the correct information by tomorrow, God spars life.

Mr. Ali: I have absolutely no problem. There is only one concern here. The line of questioning on this head depends heavily on the project cost so I do not mind. If the technical staff is here they can get it up and we can suspend the question on this line item so that I can ask the questions later. The questions that we have to ask are based on the total project cost and the expenditure to date. I do not know if you are going to accommodate that request.

Mr. Chairman: Hon Member, as long as the question is going to be asked before we put the question on this matter I do not think it would be asked then. Once we are through with this, you will appreciate that we will not be able to go back to it. There will be no option to do that.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I heard you but it puts us in a difficult position on this side because of the lack of clarity in the numbers. I guess we have no other choice but to await, until tomorrow, for the clarification in the numbers.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2606700 - Hinterland Electrification: Could the Hon. Minister please state what type of procurement process was pursued in getting the solar farm constructed?

Ms. Ferguson: I have been advised that the procurement method which was used was that of international tender bidding.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could I, therefore, be advised by the Hon. Minister whether a local or a foreign registered company is the contractor for this project?

Ms. Ferguson: I have been advised that it is a foreign company that has been awarded the contract.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister please state whether the solar farm would provide electricity on the Mabaruma grid?

Ms. Ferguson: I have been advised in the affirmative.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state if there is a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) between the solar farm and the Mabaruma Power Company?

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Member, I have been advised, no. It is a Government programme and the Mabaruma Power Company will be managing the entire operation.

Mr. Hamilton: Project code 2606900- Sustainable Energy Programme: I have a couple of questions. Firstly, what does this project entail?

Secondly, the budgeted sum was \$145 million. The expenditure to date is \$25 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what was responsible for the inefficient expenditure of the sums budgeted for?

Thirdly, we note that, in 2018, the recommended sum is \$194 million. Could you indicate what will be so different that you could not have spent \$145 million in 2017, but you are indicating that you will be able to spend \$191 million in 2018?

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, the project entails public awareness campaign; procurement and instillation of photovoltaic system, this is within the Hinterland locations; hiring of consultant to conduct geo-technical survey of the Mocomoco; construction of 300 kW hydro power scale at Kato; and project administration. These are for 2018, which would give a sum total of \$194,163,000.

What would have caused the inefficiency of the project kicking off in in 2017 is as a result of the following: the bid for the solar grid tie PVC systems came in at a lower cost which was initially budgeted; the wind equipment, we had a few challenges in this area; and thirdly, there were some delays in selecting the communities to benefit from this particular project.

Mr. Hamilton: Finally, on this question, could you indicate the communities that benefitted in 2017 and the communities that are likely to benefit in 2018?

5.30 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: As I said before, the project had a few challenges so the communities that are expected to benefit from the project in 2018, are as follows: Region 1, there is Hotoquai and Yarikita, where 935 residents are expected to benefit.

In Region 2, there are Bethany, Akawini and Kabakaburi, of which 2075 residents are expected to benefit.

In Region 7, there are Chinowieng and Philippi, of which 1500 residents are expected to benefit.

In Region 8, there is Monkey Mountain and Kurukabaru, where 1220 residents are expected to benefit.

In Region 9, 670 residents of Achiwuib would be benefitting from this project.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would just like to follow up with the Hon. Minister. In 2015, we had paid in excess of \$250 million for solar systems for the Hinterland. Last year, we were told they were re-

diverted. Could the Hon. Minister please provide, or lay over to the House, a distribution list of those solar systems?

Ms. Ferguson: It would be difficult for me to respond to the Hon. Member's question since he did not refer to a particular line item in the Estimates that we are considering here this evening.

Mr. Ali: Project codes 2606700 - Hinterland Electrification, 2606800 - Power Utility Upgrade Programme, 2606900 - Sustainable Energy Programme, 26059500 - Renewable Energy improvement – Power System Project: Could the Hon. Minister undertake to provide the House, at a later stage, with the details of when the contracts were awarded, the duration of these contracts and the cost of each contract?

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Member, we will do so.

Mr. Ali: When will you do so?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there a time?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I would prefer to do so on the 22nd December, 2017.

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration –\$2,702,934,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 322- Public Works - \$14, 956, 603,000

Mr. Ali: Project code 1214900 – Infrastructural Development: Could the Hon. Minister say what percentage of works will be carried over to 2018?

Mr. Patterson: The amount that will be carried over to 2018 is \$36,341,000, which is about 6%.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say what amount of the \$ 113 million is for retention?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, \$36,341,000 will be carried over. There are new projects but you did not ask for that.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister give us the new projects and the projected expenditure for each?

Mr. Patterson: For project code 1214900, Infrastructural Development, the new projects are the Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights for the West Coast of Demerara Highway, \$20 million;

lighting for sections of the Corentyne Highway, \$36,659,000; and lighting for the Essequibo Coast, \$20,000,000. That will total \$76,659,000.

Mr. Ali: We have two problems here; the Hon. Minister, said earlier that \$36 million would be carried over into 2018 for the completion of works and when you add the moneys for the three lighting projects...

Mr. Patterson: It is two.

Mr. Ali: No, you said \$20 million, \$36 million and another \$20 million for the West Coast, Corentyne and Essequibo Highways, respectively, which all equal \$76 million. Therefore \$76 million and \$77...

Mr. Patterson: Where did you get \$77 from?

Mr. Ali: Minister, you said \$36 million was retention and that \$36 million were projects that would be rolled over to 2018.

Mr. Patterson: No.

Mr. Ali: Could I ask the question again? The first question I asked is how much of the \$113 million from 2017 would be carried over to 2018. Once the project continues in 2018, it has to come out of the allocation of 2018.

Mr. Patterson: That is correct.

Mr. Ali: You said that was \$36 million. The second question was how much retention and you said \$36 million. The third question was how many new projects and you said that adds up to \$73 million. When all of that is added, it does not add up to the \$113 million, that is the first point. The second point is whether the funding for the lights for the West Demerara Highway rehabilitation and upgrade project are included?

Mr. Patterson: To answer the second question, the West Demerara Highway project does not come under this project head. If you do not mind, it is here and you can ask under that project code.

The \$36,341,000 is a total which would be rolled over and is inclusive of whatever retention there was. The \$36 million and the \$76 million would be totaled to \$113 million. If you want

specifics I could break it down for you because you seem to have a Mathematics problem all the while. The completion of the pedestrian sidewalk is \$1 million; geometric improvement is \$31.1 million; installation of LED lights on the Essequibo Coast is \$1.5 million, which is an amount that is being rolled over; the lights from Letter T to Number 11 is \$1.5 million; from Lot 19 to Lot 111 is \$1,050,000, which all adds up to \$36,341,000.

Mr. Ali: The people out there will determine who has a Mathematics problem or who has a problem swaying away from the truth. Let me say to the Hon. Minister, that he just said that \$20 million will be spent on LED lights for the West Demerara Highway. The Hon. Minister made that clear, unless I have a hearing problem now. I am asking whether this was not already catered for in a contract that was awarded years ago for the upgrade and rehabilitation of the West Demerara Highway.

Mr. Patterson: The answer is no.

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much; I am very happy for that because the contract would have had to cater for the re-establishment of the lights that were already along the highway. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share a copy of that contract with the House?

Mr. Patterson: Of Course.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project 1403800 – East Bank- East Coast Demerara Road Linkage: Could the Hon. Minister, please state why, of this \$10.6 billion project, not a single cent has been spent to date?

Mr. Patterson: This is a loan from the Government of India and its procurement process has now been concluded but we follow its processes. Obviously, it took longer than we thought but we have no control over it and that is the reason why. Other than abiding with our sister nation's processes is the only reason we could offer you as to why it has not started as yet.

Mr. Dharamlall: Am I to understand that the Hon. Minister is saying that the National Procurement Act, in this case, has not been followed but that the procurement procedures of the Government of India were? The Hon. Minister did say there were procurement challenges presented by the procurement procedures of India.

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member was a Permanent Secretary and knows absolutely well that the international procurement agency's procurement process is what is used. I am not saying anything that he does not know but, for the record of the House, the procurement process followed was that of the Government of India. We went to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) for permission and we followed all of the procedures.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1101100 – Demerara Harbour Bridge: Could the Hon. Minister say whether this is an initial sum for the new bridge?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Member, no.

5.45p.m.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister direct me to where that new investment is catered for?

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, there is no provision in *Budget 2018* for the reconstruction or the rebuilding of the new Demerara Harbour Bridge.

Mr. Ali: Am I to understand, from the Hon. Minister, that there would be no Government of Guyana expenditure in relation to a new bridge from *Budget 2018*?

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Member, I think that I answered you before. I said that there is no provision in *Budget 2018* for the construction of a new Demerara river Bridge. There is no line item in the budget for that.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1404000 – Bridges: The Budget had \$220,050,000. The latest estimate was \$290,050,000. Could you say if a Supplementary Financial Paper was brought to the House for the additional \$70 million that was not appropriated for in 2017?

Secondly, could you say whether the \$117 million that was spent on the feasibility study for the new Demerara river bridge came out of this budget?

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Member, do you mind repeating the Project code that you were querying?

Ms. Teixeira: I said it but, maybe, you did not hear it. It is project code 1404000 on page 475.

Mr. Patterson: There is nothing here for a new bridge or did any payment come out for the feasibility study. These are the costs for bridges, nationally. We have a rollover of \$27,032,000

and two new bridges are catered for in 2018; the Moruka Bridge and a bridge in Puruni in Region 7. I hope I answered that fully.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you Minister, except that was not what I asked. I asked a question in relation to *Budget 2017* where \$220 million was budgeted and appropriated by the House. The latest Estimates of Expenditure stated that you spent \$290 million which is a difference of \$70 million. Did you bring a Supplementary Financial Paper to the House to cover the additional expenditure? If not, where did the additional funds come from? Did the money for a new Demerara Harbour Bridge feasibility study come out of this project code, which was, according to the newspapers, \$117 million?

Mr. Patterson: My apology if I did not answer the question. We had a Supplementary Financial Paper for emergency works to be carried out at Bagotville, which came to the House in June, 2017 and was approved. The feasibility study was not paid for from this project code or any of these project codes.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: In the budget documents, in the speeches made in this House and in the press, it is stated that the construction of a new Demerara Harbour Bridge would commence in 2018. Could the Hon. Minister say if that is any reality in the budget numbers? We cannot find it anywhere. We have searched so I am not being facetious in making your life difficult, Minister. The public expects that construction of the bridge would start in 2018. Could you advise us, not on behalf of Ms. Teixeira because I am nobody in here, and the people are listening? Let them know that you put 'x' million dollars for the new Demerara Harbour Bridge. It would be interested to know where the moneys came from for the feasibility because you did not have that planned either.

Mr. Patterson: At the end of the evaluation of our 11 publicly tendered contractors, and we have agreed on the way forward, we would be coming back to the National Assembly for a Supplementary provision to move forward. There is nothing contained here initially for the bridge but we will maintain our commitment.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1404000 – Bridges: The Hon. Minister referred to a feasibility study that was completed. Could the Hon. Minister say what form of procurement he undertook to select

the form? When was that project advertised? Who was it awarded to? What form of procurement or expression of interest will be utilised in relation to the new Demerara Harbour Bridge?

Mr. Patterson: Once again, project code 1404000, Bridges, have nothing to do with the new Demerara Harbour Bridge. I am unable to provide the Member with any additional information.

Ms. Teixeira: Do not worry. What we cannot find the Auditor General (AG) will find.

Mr. Ali: Under project code 1404000, Bridges, could the Hon. Minister say what is the completion year for this project?

Mr. Patterson: The two new bridges under project code 1404000 are Moruka as well Puruni. It is anticipated that both would go to tender in 2018 and be completed in 2018.

Mr. Ali: Again, we have a mathematical problem. At page 111 in the Legend the total project cost is \$717,073,000. When I checked the Details of Expenditure, the total expenditure reflected is \$700,325,000. Could you explain the difference, please?

Mr. Patterson: I would say that the Profile had some mistakes because we have our firm numbers.

Ms. Manickchand: Minister Jordan is to be blamed.

Mr. Patterson: I am not going to blame Minister Jordan. The Profile has mistakes and I think that it would show up in other Ministries as well.

Mr. Ali: I am happy. It is not a mathematical problem anymore; it is a mistake in the Profile. Project code 1404100 - Miscellaneous Roads/ Drainage - \$1,294,000,000: Again, there would be a problem with the Profile. I do not want to go through the mathematics with you again. Could the Hon. Minister say what amount of this is for the completion of projects, what amount is for retention and what amount is for new projects?

Mr. Patterson: The gross amount for roll over, inclusive of retention, is \$500,811,000. The new amount for road projects is \$793,189,000.

Mr. Ali: In the selection of these roads, were there any consultations with the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) and the Neighborhood Democratic Councils (NDCs)?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, we would have consulted with NDCs, RDCs, Municipalities, and all organisations and even villages and districts.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say under Project code 1404500, Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara, when was the project awarded, the duration of the project and what was the procurement mechanism utilised to select the contractor?

Mr. Patterson: The contract was awarded in December, 2014. I think I said that the last time I spoke. The Hon. Member knows about this because I think that he was in Cabinet at that time. The works on site commenced on 29th August, 2017. The last time I spoke I did give an exhaustive breakdown of why there was a delay. It is funding from the Export-Import Bank of China's and the Chinese company.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1404700 – Road Network and Expansion Project: Could you please state whether Canals Nos. One and Two were part of the original loan?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, it was in the original contract.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: Could you please state why the Canals Nos. One and Two Polders have now been excluded from the reformulation?

Mr. Patterson: Canals Nos. One and Two Polders have been under *Budget 2017* and are included now in *Budget 2018*. They have not been excluded; they are funded under different line items.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state whether low-cost housing was part of the original loan portfolio?

Mr. Patterson: No.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say what would have motivated the Ministry of Public Infrastructure to get into the business of low-cost housing?

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Nothing motivated us.

Mr. Ali: What is it?

Mr. Patterson: The answer is that nothing motivated us; we are not in the business of low-cost housing.

Mr. Dharamlall: The loan portfolio of this Ministry states that low-cost housing is one of its activities. Could the Hon. Minister please state: how many low cost houses would be built? Where would they be built? What would be the average price of a low-cost house?

Mr. Patterson: That is another component of this loan and it would be executed by the Ministry of Communities; it is not under this Ministry.

Mr. Ali: This item is followed by a Legend and the Legend is applicable to the Ministry that we are examining. If one looks at the description in the Legend, it states low-cost housing. The Ministry cannot say that low-cost housing is not part of its programme. It is included in the profile of this subhead. The Hon. Minister may say that it is now being withdrawn or the Minister has to answer as to where these low-cost houses are going to be built, the cost and the number of houses that would be built.

[**Mr. Williams:** You want the contract.]

That is no problem. I will take it.

[**Mr. Jordan:** A copy of the contract will come to

the National Assembly]

Mr. Patterson: The loan, of course, is one loan. The section which deals with low-cost housing would be executed by the Ministry of Communities. Through an inter-agency warrant, we will do that. So, I cannot answer that question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Please confirm this, Hon. Minister: Did I hear you say, correctly, that the portion allocated to low-cost housing would be warranted to the Ministry of Communities. Did you say that?

Mr. Patterson: No. It would be handled and executed by a different Ministry, which is the Ministry of Communities.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up question, if you do not mind. I have gone through the Ministry of Communities' capital programme and there is no project code that reflects resources allocated to low-cost housing, as they are reflected under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure; so, we need to ask this question under the consideration of Estimates for

the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. We need your guidance on how we would be able to ask this question.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, just to support my Colleague, I wish to turn your attention to Reference 115 of the profile documents. It states:

“Public Works

Road Network and Expansion Project

Ministry of Public Infrastructure

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The project includes provision for:

1. Rehabilitation of Sheriff Street - Mandela Avenue.
2. Neighbourhood infrastructure upgrading in Sophia and selected areas.
3. Low cost housing.
4. Consultancy services.”

Is the Minister saying that the profile is incorrect?

Mr. Patterson: I am saying, once again, that that component would be executed by the Ministry of Communities.

Mr. Ali: This is not acceptable. This is listed in the Hon. Minister’s budget; that is unless we are not to use these documents anymore. These are documents that inform us of where moneys would be expended. In the profile, “low cost housing” is clearly written, under the subhead in the Ministry, so I do not know why the Minister is unable to answer this. The Minister signed on to this profile; he approved it. We would really like some clarity on this because I think something is happening here. It does not smell well.

Mr. Chairman: Before you answer, Hon. Minister, I want to tell Hon. Members that we are on the final 15 minutes of our two and a half hour allocation.

Mr. Patterson: I want to reiterate that the low-cost housing component would be executed by the Ministry of Communities.

Mr. Dharamlall: This is my last question on this. On the advice of the Hon. Minister, Mr. Chairman, would you permit us to ask the same question, despite there is no project code reflecting this, under the consideration of the Ministry of Communities?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his question.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA), under the Ministry of Communities, would be the executing agency. [Mr.

Ali: It is wrongly placed.] It is not wrongly placed. It is a reformulated loan. The Hon. Member knows quite well because he was there before. [Mr. Jordan: We would bring

the documents to the House before the end of the week.] The Minister of Finance is saying that the loan contract would be laid here very shortly so that they could see how transparent we are. You could ask your question under the Ministry of Communities.

Mr. Neendkumar: I have one question only. Since the Minister said that it is not wrongly placed, I would like him to tell us how much money would be spent on the rehabilitation of Sheriff Street - Mandela Avenue, how much would be allocated for the Neighbourhood infrastructure upgrading in Sophia and selected areas, how much would be for low cost housing and how much would be for the consultancy services. Tell us how much would be allocated to each one.

Mr. Patterson: Some US\$31 million is for the rehabilitation of Sheriff Street - Mandela Avenue and US\$30 million is for the low-cost housing component executed by other.

Programme 322 – Public Works – \$14,956,603,000 agreed to and ordered to stand of the Estimates.

Programme 323 – Transport – \$6,526,569,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 2700600 – Ferry Vessel: I see that, in 2017, \$85 million was projected to be spent. Could the Minister tell us why moneys were not spent?

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, you are absolutely correct, no moneys were spent on this project. This was as a result of the bidding process being done in India. I have been advised that the bids would be opened sometime in January, 2018.

Mr. Neendkumar: The allocation is for ocean-going vessels. Could the Hon. Minister tell us where this vessel would be located upon its completion?

Ms. Ferguson: The vessel would be operating in the Region 1 area.

Mr. Neendkumar: Some \$3,744,000,000 is the total cost. Could the Minister give us a projection of when this vessel would start and how much time it would take to complete?

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Member, I just want to let you know that this is a design and build vessel. In actual fact, a vessel to be built would take approximately two years.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1601300 – CJIA Modernisation Project: Could the Hon. Minister please state if the project is behind schedule and what is the new end date for its completion and hand over?

Mr. Patterson: The answer to the first part of the question is affirmative; yes. In the first quarter of 2018, which is in the next three months, the new arrivals terminal building would be completed. This include the new arrival terminal generator building, five pump stations, water tank, boarding corridor and passenger boarding bridges and two stage checking and departure lounge. The remaining works on the departure terminal screening, the Very Important Persons (VIP) areas and the south west runway would be completed by December, 2018.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Minister indicated that the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) Modernisation Project is behind schedule. Could the Hon. Minister please state what are the cost implications, if there are overruns and how much are those overruns?

Mr. Patterson: I am happy to report that there are no cost implications. The same projected sums remain.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon Minister say what is the total project cost and what has been expended to date?

Mr. Patterson: The actual payments to date are \$5.1 billion, but there has been the processing of \$3.2 billion.

Mr. Ali: What is the total project cost?

Mr. Patterson: Some \$5.1 billion is the overall payment; \$5.1 billion has actually been paid to date, but they are processing \$3.2 billion.

Mr. Ali: What is the total project cost and expenditure?

Mr. Patterson: It is the same initial US\$138 million plus the US\$12 million from the Government. It is \$150 million overall.

Mr. Ali: Is the total project cost is \$30.9 billion?

Mr. Patterson: No. Let me get it for you. The total project cost is in United States (US) dollars.

Mr. Ali: What is it in Guyana dollars?

Mr. Patterson: We do not have it in Guyana dollars; you would do the conversion.

Mr. Ali: You have to give it to us; it is in the Budget.

Ms. Teixeira: It is in the Budget in Guyana Dollars and not in United States' Dollars.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are squandering the last few minutes of our two and half hours so please get it right.

Mr. Ali: This is an important question.

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, just a second. It is \$30 billion in Guyana dollars.

Mr. Ali: What is the expenditure to date?

Mr. Chairman: I shall now put the question.

Mr. Ali: No, Sir. The full question is: what are the total project cost and the expenditure to date? Then we will continue because I have a follow-up question.

Mr. Patterson: It is \$22 billion, Sir.

We have it in US dollars, which is why there is the delay.

Mr. Ali: I will have to trust the Minister of Finance's number instead. The total project cost, according to the Minister, is \$30.9 billion. Expenditure, to date, is \$24,146,553,000 and there is \$5 billion allocated in the 2018 Budget. Could the Hon. Minister say what the expected completion date of this project is and what the timeframe is for defects liability?

Mr. Patterson: The defects liability is one year and we will put the completion date for everything, which would be the southwest runway, at December, 2018.

Mr. Ali: When?

Mr. Patterson: It would be December, 2018.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Member said 28th December.

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: It is December, 2018.

Mr. Ali: Thank you, Minister of Finance. You are always kind to me. If we add the \$5 billion to the total expenditure, we will get the total cost of the project, which is the \$30.9 billion — that is in the 2018 Budget. Could the Hon. Minister then say how he is retaining money for the defects liability period if he is expending all of the project cost by the end of December, 2018, based on the Budget figures? How are you catering for the amount retained for the defects liability?

Mr. Patterson: I am a bit lost because I know that the defects liability period would expire in 2019 and I think that sum would be in the 2019 Budget.

Mr. Ali: No. The sum cannot be in the 2019 Budget, unless the Minister is saying to us that there is an increase in the sum somewhere along the line. The total project cost is \$30.9 billion. When one adds the expenditure, to date, and the budgetary provision in 2018, it amounts to the full project cost. If it amounts to the full project cost, then no allowance is made for defects liability. Something is not right.

Mr. Patterson: Time is limited so I want to be quick here. The original loan with the Exim Bank of China was signed with the Renminbi. I was not there. However, for some strange reason, the contract that was signed with the contractor was in US dollars. That gives the exchange rate differential.

Mr. Ali: There is no differential in exchange rate. This is pure, simple analysis. Some \$30.9 billion is the total project sum. Hon. Minister, what percentage of the project caters for defects liability? Is it 10%, 15%?

Mr. Patterson: It is 5%.

Mr. Ali: It can never be 5%. Is it 5% on this big project?

Mr. Patterson: Yes. It is US\$6.9 million. We came with the numbers but we did not do the percentage. It is US\$6.9 million. The total contract sum is \$138 million and that is between the contractor and China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd. (CHEC). The Government of Guyana, of course, would spend US\$12 million on other items.

Mr. Ali: Okay.

Mr. Patterson: That is it. So, therefore, the total expenditure, as at 31st December, 2017, would be US\$110 million.

Mr. Ali: I am working with the number in the Budget.

Mr. Patterson: Allow me to finish, if you do not mind. The expenditure catered for in 2018 is US\$21.1 million and the expenditure, in 2019, would be US\$6.9 million, which is the 5%.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, yours is the last question.

Mr. Ali: Sir, let me make this clear. It is Mathematics. Some \$5 billion is in the Budget for the completion of this project, which will amount to the total project cost. If one subtracts the US\$6.9 million, \$1.4 billion would have to be retained, in 2019 for the defects liability period.

Mr. Jordan: It is \$1.8 billion.

Mr. Ali: Thank you. I can always depend on the Minister of Finance. So, \$1.8 billion out of the \$5 billion has to be retained for 2019. So, the maximum amount that this contractor could be paid, in 2018, would be \$5 billion minus \$1.8 billion.

Mr. Patterson: No.

Mr. Ali: Yes. It is because some moneys have to be retained. He cannot be paid the full amount.

Mr. Jordan: Up to the end of 2017, we will spend US\$24.1 billion.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this seems to be becoming a private seminar; that seems to be the position right now. Could you round off your arguments?

Mr. Ali: I will round it off by saying this: I will not go to the Legend because my Colleague is correct, the Legend is different too. The conclusion is that no provision is made for the defect liability period. If a provision is going to be made, which can be corrected even now, the contractor would have to be paid \$5 billion minus \$1.8 billion.

Mr. Patterson: No, Sir. Under Profile Number 130, the total project cost is \$30.9 billion. At the end of 2017, \$24.14 billion would be expended. We are projected to spend \$5 billion in 2018. When \$5 billion is added to \$24.14 billion, it amounts to \$29,140,000,000; that leaves \$1.8 billion for retention in 2019. I gave it to you in US dollars, but I will now give you the exact computation in Guyana dollars. It is \$1.8 billion.

Programme: 323 – Transport - \$6,526,569,000 agreed to an ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you for the efforts you have made and for your co-operation and assistance in getting to where we are now. We will now have a suspension for one hour and we will resume at 7.25 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: When the Speaker rises, whoever is in the Chamber could at least wait until the Speaker goes through the door.

Sitting suspended at 6.25 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.33 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency 42: Ministry of Communities

Current Expenditure

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management - \$717,059,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: The Staffing Details indicate that there was no employee, yet there was an expenditure of \$2 million. It caters for 3 employees, in 2018, with an increased allocation of \$7,748,000. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: Mr. Chairman, there were three appointments under this line item, namely a Procurement Manager, a Procurement Officer and an Engineer. These appointments were made in 2017, so the expenditure, in 2017, reflects the salaries for a part of the year and the 2018 provision is for the entire year for these three employees.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, while your explanation addresses the three employees, it does not explain why the Legend indicates that, in 2017, there are zero employees.

7.37 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: I think it was explained earlier today that a provision cannot be made where there is a vacancy. There were no staff at the time of the preparation of the 2017 Budget. These appointments were made during the year and this is why the salaries were paid during the year and the allocation for 2018 is for the entire 12 months.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, there is a contradiction. Firstly, you said that there was a provision for three new employees. Therefore, if you are closing 2017, when you are doing the latest estimate for the numbers, the staffing details should reflect the latest estimated number of employees.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am not too sure how to answer that question. When the 2017 Budget was prepared...well these appointments were made during the year. So, at the beginning of the year, the staffing details was zero and, as I said, they relate to the procurement department. Two of the appointments were for a Manager and a Procurement Officer. This is why there was zero in 2017 but three in 2018.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, I would move on, but I repeat for the Hon. Minister of Finance that there is a committed amount of \$2 million, in 2017, for the payment to three employees but the legend does not confirm any employment; it has zero under employment. Having said that, Hon. Minister could you kindly confirm that those persons are on the fixed establishment? I know that they are not contracted but I just want your confirmation.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. These three appointments are on the pensionable establishment.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: The number of contracted employees decreased from 48 to 36 but yet there is an increased allocation, based on the revised amount, from \$96 million to \$107 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Mr. Bulkan: The observation is indeed a correct one, but the reduction of the number of employees was at the lower end of the scale and the 36 that remain are at the upper end of the scale. So, the annualised benefits and increases are responsible for the increased provision in 2018.

Mr. Croal: Continuing with line item 6116, could the Hon. Minister confirm the reason for the reduction in the number of contracted employees? Secondly, could he provide to the Committee the top five emoluments and the designations of the top five contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to the second part of the question is: the top five employees are the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, an approximate sum of \$664,000; a Special Projects Officer - \$420,000; a Community Development Officer - \$386,000; Legal Officer - \$366,000; and a Ministerial Adviser - \$350,000. The next part of the question deals with the persons who were transferred.

Mr. Croal: I just need the reason for the decrease, just for confirmation.

Mr. Bulkan: These were accounts clerks, drivers, typists, office assistants and data entry clerks.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency: Firstly, could the Hon. Minister indicate what the reason for the major increase is?

Mr. Bulkan: There are several reasons, among them are provision for increased allowances to the Regional Chairpersons (RCs) as well as Regional Vice-Chairpersons (RVCs). In the case of the Regional Chairpersons, the allowance is moving from the current sum of \$16,000 monthly to \$60,000; for the RVCs, it is moving from \$15,600 to \$40,000. Regarding the annualised increases, as the Hon. Member is aware, this line item caters for emoluments for the Regional Executive Officers (REOs) and there is also provision for the National Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC). A sum of \$6 million is budgeted for the NRDCC and the sum of \$7 million is budgeted for a regional conference during 2018.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister indicate when this regional conference is planned for? Secondly, who are the expected participants of the regional conference? What would be the level of participants? I understand that it would cater for the Chairman, *et cetera*, but how far down? Thirdly, could you confirm the salary of the REOs?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the Hon. Member, is aware that the NRDCC is scheduled to be held on the 19th January, 2017 and that brings together all of the regional leadership as well as other key stakeholders and ministries. It is at that forum that the planning for the regional conferences would take place. That date is not yet known but it would be determined in collaboration with RDCs and the regional leadership. The current salary for the REOs is \$333,900.

Mr. Croal: Before I move on from this line item, I omitted to ask about the benefits for the REOs.

Mr. Bulkan: There is an annual vacation allowance, which is equal to the salary, gratuity, duty allowance, telephone allowance and provision for the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) contribution.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, would you be willing to share that document, which deals with the allocation for line item 6211, with the Committee?

Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Could you explain what the reason for the increase of just under \$3 million is?

Mr. Bulkan: Provision is made for more field visits, countrywide, and this includes the Ministers as well as senior staff, it caters for increased community consultations. It would also cater for the Engineers and transportation by air, boats and over land.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: \$30 million was budgeted in 2017; the amount revised and spent was \$30 million; and now \$100 million has been budgeted. According to page 441, which deals with the details, \$90 million has been allocated to the Local Government Commission (LGE). My question, Minister, is: The Local Government Commission was only sworn in in October of this year. Could you say what the \$30 million, which was spent in 2017, was used for when there was no Commission in place?

Mr. Bulkan: The Local Government Commission is in place. Of the \$30 million, the sum of \$20 million was transferred to the Local Government Commission and it is available for its use.

Ms. Teixeira: This is a very odd arrangement, I must say. Was \$20 million of the \$30 million, which was allocated in 2017, put into a bank account to be held for the Local Government Commission? This is rather unusual, to say the least. The Local Government Commission was sworn in late October, 2017. Assuming what you have done is correct – I would challenge it in terms of financial regulations – what happened to the other \$10 million?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$20 million was transferred to a bank account that is controlled by the Local Government Commission. The remaining sum of \$10 million was made available by virement to the Guyana Association of Municipalities.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much. The Guyana Association of Municipalities had no allocation whatsoever in 2017. Did you get any approval to vire to an agency that had an allocation of zero to it in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: There was one head for the sum of \$30 million and it was apportioned, as I have related, \$20 million and \$10 million in the manner which was described.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, again, with your indulgence, there is a reason why the Budget has details, line items and subheads. It is so that the documents and numbers are available to everybody. Secondly, it allows the Auditor and Accountant General to do their work. Thirdly, it allows people like us and you on this side and that side of the House to know where the money is going. So the local organisations, which are detailed under line item 6321, are: the Local Government Commission, which, in 2017, was allocated \$30 million and the Guyana Association of Municipalities, which was allocated \$0. No one can, in a fickle or facetious manner, decide that he or she could parcel out the \$30 million in a different way. Sir, I ask you again: the \$10 million which was allocated to the Guyana Association of Municipalities, did you have approval from the Secretary of the Treasury, in writing, or from the Minister, in writing, to take money from one organisation and give it to another? Where is the proof of the movement that you did so with authority?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I can assure the Hon. Member and other Members of this honourable House that the transaction to apportion the sum of \$10 million to the Guyana Association of Municipalities was neither fickle nor facetious. It complied with the financial regulations and the necessary approvals were sought and are available in writing.

7.52 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister say when or what day the \$20 million was transferred to a bank account for the Local Government Commission? A bank account has signatures, is that not so, sir? Could we have the date or day on what month this bank account was opened for the

Mr. Bulkan: To return to the previous question, given that the Local Government Commission became operational very late in the year, as the Hon. Member has said, it did not require the full provision that was available and, hence, the sum of \$20 million was considered to be sufficient. With regards to the actual date of the opening of the account, this information could be provided for the Hon. Member subsequently.

Ms. Teixeira: I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, the Minister has often promised to lay over documents many times in the 2015, 2016 and 2017 Budgets. This Minister is probably the most delinquent of the Ministers in sharing the documents we ask for. I am very reluctant this time around - this is the fourth budget - to depend on the Minister to provide information because he just does not. I

am asking a very specific question; your PS is next to you. When was the bank account opened where \$20 million was put in it for the Local Government Commission? It is very simple.

Mr. Bulkan: Ever since my entry into this honourable House, in January 2012, I have always held the opinion that there is a reason why Members are referred to as ‘honourable’, because it presupposes that is in place. What the Hon. Member is saying, she is impugning my integrity and my character. I challenge the veracity... [Bishop Edghill: Who is she?] The

Hon. Member I said... with regards to not providing information that is being sought. I would ask the Hon. Member to respectfully withdraw that accusation.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I must say that there have been words of concern expressed by Members in this House about Members giving undertakings to provide information and not keeping them. I am not saying that the issue about the bank account is an issue here. That is not what the Chairman is speaking to. What I will say is that we cannot give undertakings and then forget to fulfil them. I had asked Members to let the House know about undertakings given and not fulfilled by any Hon. Members. In fact, on more than one occasion I have reported to the House as to the number of undertakings given and the number fulfilled. The problem here is, of course, that Hon. Members must also make that information known to the Clerk or to the Speaker.

I could tell you, from my own knowledge, that the Clerk has instituted a system of keeping a record of all the undertakings given by Hon. Members. But, unless the Clerk receives from the Hon. Member giving the undertaking a copy of the document which was undertaken to be submitted, he does not know whether or not the particular undertaking has been fulfilled. There is a space there for Hon. Members to provide information to the Clerk, so he could then write the ‘delinquent’ Hon. Member and state that he/she has forgotten to send the information to Hon. Member X, Y or Z. There is that provision. I think it must have been at least two budgets ago that, after a conversation, the Clerk told me that he has instituted that system.

I do not think, perhaps, the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, spoke it in a way which may have conveyed an impression different from the one that she intended. I do not now, but she could speak for herself. I do not think that questions of impugning the good name of a Member should

be considered as part of a discussion here, if we are simply asking for information. I would suggest, Hon. Minister, that you see it in the most favourable light and let us proceed.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to, if you will, correct the information I just provided. I am informed the Local Government Commission has been informed and advised that the sum of \$20 million is available as a free balance and they have approached the Bank of Guyana for the establishment of the Bank account. They have been informed that the sum of \$20 million is available under line 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations as a free balance.

Ms. Teixeira: The reason I asked the question about when is very critical. I am sure the Permanent Secretary (PS) and the Minister of Finance know that it is critical. In other words, the Ministry parked money in an account, knowing that the Local Government Commission was not established as yet; pending its establishment. Once established you could say, ‘hey guys, we have \$20 million for you in this account.’ The account is not for the Local Government Commission. The Ministry has the \$20 million. It is 12th December, 2017 and the books are supposed to close 31st December, 2017. Therefore, the moneys have been parked and you now have to get the Local Government Commission to open a bank account and transfer the money into it. What you said originally, Minister, was that a bank account had been opened for the Local Government Commission. You cannot do that because it did not have signatures. It was a Ministry account - whatever name you called it, that is what it was.

It is very important in this House; sometimes we could be very difficult. But we have some inkling on what is going on. The reason for the date was so critical. I would sincerely hope that the Minister of Finance is taking note of this: That a bank account was opened where money was parked in it for a body that did not exist as yet, which body required and was allocated a budgetary amount by this House. It is a very serious issue, Minister. You may think I am being rude or I am not deferring to you, but the point is that this is an irregularity and it should be treated and taken seriously.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could I take you back to line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency? Hon. Minister, could you confirm whether the \$4.4 million paid to the former

Chairman of the Interim Management Committee (IMC) of Linden came from line item 6211 in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is yes.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow up: Hon. Minister, why an honorarium of similar sort was not paid to other heads of municipalities? I could give you examples; Anna Regina, Rose Hall and Corriverton.

Mr. Bulkan: The specific instance that the Hon. Member is referring to relates to an individual who served, for an unbroken period of 15 years, as the Chairman of an IMC and he was denied the benefits that were paid to other persons acting in a similar capacity. If you will, it was an anomaly that was finally corrected, and one that this Administration was pleased to be associated with.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow up: Could the Hon. Minister please confirm whether the Regional Executive Officer (REO) of Region 10 is stationed at the Ministry of Communities and not at the office of the REO in Region 10?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that question is no. The REO (Ag.) of Region 10 is stationed at the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) in the Region.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, line item 6111 – Administrative, I saw you have four new persons employed here. Line item 6112 – Senior Technical, you have three persons employed there. Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support, you have 10 persons employed there and at line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, you reduced it to 12 persons. Hon. Minister, were these vacancies advertised? If so, could you say when they were advertised?

Mr. Bulkan: There are two answers to the question posed. The majority of the increases to the staff would have been for persons who were transitioned from line item 6116 to the other categories. In the cases where there was new hiring, new employees, for example, I believe the positions of Principle Assistant Secretary (Finance) and the Deputy Permanent Secretary would have been publicly advertised.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, pardon my belabouring this point. Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to Agency: Hon. Minister, from my recollection - and you could correct me if I am wrong - there was a confirmed REO in Region 10. Are you saying that that confirmed REO is not there anymore and that an acting REO is in the position instead?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer is yes.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. Hon. Minister, could you please state why the administration dispensed with the services of the confirmed REO of Region 10 and what is the current status of the former REO of Region 10?

Mr. Bulkan: With all due respect, I do not consider that to be a valid question. But, it was not a question of dispensing from the previous question asked by the Hon. Member. I think it could be discerned that there is a lateral movement of the officer in question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Is the Hon. Minister saying that the REO is no longer employed by the Ministry of Communities?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that is no, Mr. Chairman. Let me explain. The question is that the individual is not employed by the Ministry. The answer to the question is no; the person is employed by the Ministry.

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, permit me please to go back to line item 6112 – Senior Technical: From the explanation previously given by the Hon. Minister, it could be understood that two of these persons are already employed. Could the Hon. Minister say if these vacancies were advertised? Kindly give us the date of appointment for the two persons.

8.07 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, these are all persons moving up, being transitioned from line item 6116, Contracted Employees to the fixed establishment.

Mr. Bharrat: A follow-up on the same line item. Could the Hon. Minister please provide us with the designations and the emoluments for the two individuals who are already employed and the one proposed position?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman. All three of these positions are filled; there are no vacancies. I did relate earlier that there is a Procurement Manager and the emolument is \$254,600; there is a Procurement Officer, \$110,000; and there is a bonded Engineer, \$195,000.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister tell us where the office of the Local Government Commission is?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that currently the Local Government Commission is using the facilities here at the Parliament Building. They are in the process of identifying the offices they would eventually occupy.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is on record as saying, a very long time ago, that he was procuring a place as the office for the Local Government Commission. Could you tell us how early they would move from the office of the National Assembly and acquire their own place?

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member is indeed correct. I myself have no recollection of actually saying that, but, I would not challenge it because the Ministry did make efforts earlier and had looked at a number of locations to house the Commission. Given the fact that it took a while for the Commission to be operationalised and for the Commencement Order, the locations that had been earlier identified were no longer available.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister tell us if the Commission's members have started to receive their salaries, and from whose office are they being paid?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, their operating expenses will be paid out of the provision that has been made available to them, that is, the sum which has been announced here. That will determine the levels of remuneration with the endorsement of the Administration. In fact, I believe the legislation states "a Budget that is approved by the Minister of Finance."

Mr. Neendkumar: We were told that this is an autonomous body and that the body was supposed to have an office, staff and everything else. I would like to know when it will be autonomous because the Local Government Commission has responsibility to all the local government associations; they need to get their autonomy. Could you tell us when the body

would become fully autonomous to function properly? And you did not answer my question as to where they are being paid from at present.

Mr. Bulkan: It is certainly my belief, that I did answer the question, how and where they will be paid. With regard to autonomy, that Commission is governed by the Local Government Commission Act, which specifies all of the details relating to their operation. I do not think there is any possibility that they could be denied whatever authority is provided for them under the legislation. This is not an administration that disrespects the provisions in our Constitution and legislation.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, before we drift too far from the last point, if you would allow me, regarding Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations; \$90 million has been allocated for the Local Government Commission for 2018. Having heard what the Minister said about the rental, the stipends and the hiring of staff, I now believe that the \$90 million that has been allocated for this Commission will be insufficient since it is basically the public service of the local authorities. That is their function, if I would have summarised it in law. Therefore, the \$90 million looks like a very small sum now if they have to rent their own buildings using that subvention. Is that correct? Am I understanding you correctly that the Local Government Commission will pay its rental, water, electricity, hire staff and pay its own stipends *et cetera* out of this \$90 million? I have heard the rates or what will be the amount of money that the commission would pay the members. If you add on top of that rent, electricity, water, telephone plus staff, it just cannot be enough. If that were to happen, would you prepare to come back with a supplementary? This is a very important body that is now being set up for the first time. Would you be prepared to do that in early in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member is indeed correct, it is contemplated that the sum being sought here may very well prove to be insufficient to fund the work of the Commission for the entire 2018. It is contemplated that once that need arises a supplementary provision will be sought.

The Hon. Member seems to have some information that I am not privy to with regards to what are the actual salaries of the Members. To the best of my knowledge, under the terms of the legislation which requires a Budget to be approved by the Minister of Finance, I am yet to be so

advised that the Ministry of Finance has actually approved of such a Budget. Perhaps, the Hon. Member could educate me.

Mr. Damon: Line item 6284 – Other: We have a sum here of \$9,500,000. Could the Hon. Minister say what ‘Other’ is? We would not know unless he tells us.

Mr. Bulkan: This provision is to allow for the operation of the Ministry’s website, as well as provisions for small consultancy services engaged by the Ministry.

Mr. Croal: This is the last question under this Programme from us. Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: Firstly, could the Hon. Minister confirm whether the previous REO for Region 9 is being paid under this line item? Secondly, if he is, could you confirm what benefits or salaries he is getting? Thirdly, could you confirm whether you will be laying over, as previously asked, the breakdown for this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer to the first part of the question is, yes. It is just the basic salary being paid without, of course, any benefits; and I can commit to laying over the details for this particular line item, 6211, perhaps by Friday, to all Members of the House so desirous of a copy.

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management - \$717,059,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 422 – Sustainable Communities Development - \$1,047,275,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Contracted Employees increased by one, but, yet there was an increased allocation of close to \$22 million. Could you explain this?

Mr. Bulkan: It is a provision for the increases in salaries for the officers under this programme and the annualised benefits. There is one additional officer under this line item.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, allow me to explain a little on this line item. There were 35 employees for which \$85 million was paid in 2017. So that would be the latest estimate for 2017 which includes any increases *et cetera*, but the budgetary allocation for 2018 is \$117,586,000 with one additional employee.

Mr. Bulkan: The salary increases in 2017 was very late in the year. I believe it was for the last two months. The increase in the 2018 provision would be for the 36 employees for the entire year.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, with all due respect, regarding this line item it would mean that all other Ministries would have the same scenario because everyone received an increase. So I will conclude by saying that the explanation for this line item does not hold.

Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: There was a decrease of \$100 million for the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI). Could you explain that?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is that there was a reduced provision, the sum of \$400 million, allocated by the Ministry of Finance this year as opposed to what the Hon. Member has correctly observed. There was a greater allocation in 2017.

8.22 p.m.

Mr. Croal: I know you said the Ministry of Finance decreased, but, can you can you explain the reason for there being a decrease?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe, as with all items under the budget, this is at the discretion of the Ministry of Finance. This is the sum that is being provided for as the subvention in 2018 for this agency.

Mr. Croal: My last question on this line item: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the effects are of there being a decrease of works by \$100 million for the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI)?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this provision caters for the electricity charges consumed by the GWI. So, they are enjoying a reduced subvention in 2018 for electricity charges.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6264 - Vehicles Spares and Services: You would have had close to a 400% increase in the allocation. Could you indicate what the reason is for this? Is it for additional vehicles? I do not see any.

Mr. Bulkan: I do not want to dispute the percentage of increase that the Hon. Member has proffered but, I think, it could be a lower figure. In any event the answer is, yes, there is a bigger fleet. Vehicles have been reassigned from what used to be the Community Road Improvement Project (CRIP) and the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP) to the Ministry's fleet and are being charged under this particular head. The answer is, yes, the fleet is bigger.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281- Security Services to line item 6284 - Other and line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) and some others: There were no previous allocations but there is now an allocation in 2018. Could you indicate what the reason is?

Mr. Bulkan: Formerly, these were catered for under projects which were the CIIP, CRIP, and a part of the sanitation project under Programme 1 and they have been transferred or transitioned to Programme 2.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6294 - Other: First of all, there was a decrease under Other. What is the explanation for the decrease and can the Hon. Minister give a breakdown of this \$413 million allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the allocation in 2017 had catered for the final payment of the Haags Bosch settlement. The total settlement was \$1.17 billion, as the Hon. Member would refer. The sum of \$328 million was paid under that line item in 2017 as the final payment towards that settlement, so that figure does not recur in the 2018 allocations. The 2018 allocations are to provide for the three roll-over payments which are for the operations at Lusignan and at Haags Bosch. It caters for the operations, in 2018, at Haags Bosch, Lusignan, Bartica, Mabaruma, Lethem and Rose Hall. These are all landfill sites. There is a \$4-million provision for institutional strengthening and capacity building. There is a public awareness and community engagement component for which the sum of \$13 million is provided. And there is a sum of \$5.7 million provided for under this heading for overall supervision for regional landfills.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: While the Lusignan and the Haags Bosch landfills are recurring I have heard you mention some of the new sites. Just for clarification, can you give the breakdown for the allocations for Mabaruma and the others that you have mentioned? Have those services been advertised already? If they have been, when was it done?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sums for the new landfill sites, pertaining to the question, would be for Bartica, \$19 million; Mabaruma, \$43 million; Lethem, \$36 million; and Rose Hall, \$17 million. These have not yet been advertised but would be advertised prior to the entering of a contract.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: For the Mabaruma site, you would have heard me mention the Khan's Hill location. Does that mean that the Ministry is going ahead with that site? What is the current position?

Mr. Bulkan: It is anticipated that the operation will be at the Khan's Hill location.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Is this the exact location where the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) for Region 1 objected? I just want clarity.

Mr. Bulkan: I think some further investigations would have to be conducted with regards to this.

Mr. Croal: I just want to remind the Minister that in my budget speech I read from a document that came out of your office which would have responded to the Regional Chairman on the very matter. You said you have to follow up, but I am sure this is a matter you are very much aware of.

Mr. Bulkan: The site that has been identified and was mentioned was identified following consultations and with the approval of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as well as officials at the Ministry. However, I would like to assure the Hon. Member that it is not the Ministry's intention to disregard the views and the position of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC). I can commit to the Hon. Member that the RDC's position would be fully taken into account and no unilateral decision would be made without the full concurrence of the RDC.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: On the same line item, can the Minister tell us, with the \$43 million earmarked for the Khan's Hill dumpsite, is there any amount in this total amount to relocate the Khan's Hill residents? That is if you are going to proceed with the project.

Mr. Bulkan: Based on the answer that I have just given, I think it suggests that that decision is not cast in stone. The sum that is budgeted is for the operations of a sanitary landfill and not a dump site. It does not contemplate the relocation of any residents.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Follow-up: Is the Minister aware that there are indigenous families located in that area and that it would definitely have a negative impact on the families whether it is landfill or a dumpsite?

Mr. Bulkan: The Ministry or the administration is not unmindful of the issues associated with landfill sites. But, I think, like the Hon. Member, I also live close to one of the largest landfill sites in Guyana. So, it is the case that persons do live in close proximity to these landfill sites, and it is the question of proper and effective management and operations of these sites.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say under which line item there is compensation for relocation or any form of support for indigenous residents who do not have glass windows to close their homes to the emissions from the landfill site?

Mr. Bulkan: I think that particular question has been answered already. It is not cast in stone.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I would still like to know under which line item is the support for the indigenous people who live in the location of Khan's Hill where the landfill site will be located.

Mr. Bulkan: I regret, Mr. Chairman, but I am unable to be any more helpful with the answer that is being sought. It is my belief that what I said provides a satisfactory answer to the question being put.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): There is \$5 million for training. Could the Minister advise whether this training is for support to train the REO's, because we have been having difficulty with the way they are performing? Or is it training to understand the green state economy?

Mr. Bulkan: This provision does not cater for training for the REOs. They are catered for under Programme 1. This provision caters for training in issues relating to waste management principally.

Mr. Dharamlall: Programme: 422 Sustainable Communities Development: Could I turn your attention to page 685 of Volume 1, Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA). Hon. Minister, CHPA budgeted \$7.341 billion in 2017 and was expected to spend 68% of that sum, \$4.97 billion. Hon. Minister could you state why there is a 38% reduction in the actual expenditure of the CHPA? Is that as a result of the contraction in the housing programme or any other issues?

8.37 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that the Hon. Member is aware that there is no line item and there is no provision, so the rules of this debate and this exercise does not allow for a question being sought for which an allocation is being provided.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Minister of Finance has been stating, practically, every year, that programme budgeting can be questioned and that we can question using programme budgeting. That is why I quoted Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development. The Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA) is under programme 2 as a statutory body. And I am asking the Hon. Minister, for the 32% reduction in the expenditure of 2017 for CHPA, what resulted in such a large deficiency in expenditure?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member could refer me to a line item, perhaps, I could be able to provide an answer.

Mr. Dharamlall: Earlier today we heard, from the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, that CHPA will receive resources for low-cost housing, and I noticed that nowhere in this budget, whether in capital or in current, speaks to the CHPA executing a low-cost housing project. I suspect that it is now on page 685 - details of revenue and expenditure of the CHPA - under Programme: 422, that the CHPA, in 2018, is expected to expend \$7,762,089,000. Hon. Minister, could you now confirm whether the low-cost housing loan is going towards the expenditure of CHPA?

Mr. Chairman, I did ask this and it was clarified to us that it will be answered when we question the Ministry of Communities, and that it would be raised under issues relating to the CHPA,

because the CHPA is expending resources of more than \$7 billion of taxpayers' moneys. Are you saying, Hon. Minister, that I have no right to ask you any questions about it?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if Hon. Members, in this Chamber, remember a similar exchange, two budgets ago, between the same two Hon. Members who are now receiving and answering questions. I hope there is some other way of resolving this, apart from going backwards and forwards. I do not recall the outcome of it on the last two occasions but I do not think that we got very far. Please.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am in a similar position. I was hoping that you would be able to refresh my memory. Indeed, I do recall the exchange but I think we ended up in the same situation, that in the absence of a line item there can be no question and hence no answer. So, what we are looking at is line items 6011 to 6351, and I would be more than happy to answer any questions from any of these line items from the Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I seek your guidance. There is Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development, of which CHPA is part. The CHPA has a budget of more than \$7.7 billion in 2018. Based on the responses of the Hon. Minister, how are we going to be able to discuss housing?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not know whether you are asking the question in the wrong way.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. I read this entire document more than once, all three volumes and there is nowhere, even in capital, where housing is being dealt with. Housing is being dealt with under the statutory body called the Central Planning and Housing Authority. The Hon. Minister, by refusing to answer us, is denying us an opportunity to question the \$7.7 billion expenditure of CHPA, regarding housing in Guyana. The Hon. Minister is also denying us the opportunity to question the more than \$7 billion that was budgeted in 2017 for CHPA,

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are indulging in polemics.

Mr. Dharamlall: I need your guidance, Sir, but I need to ask questions on housing.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know whether you ask a question and say that it is unfair for you not to be able to ask the question. You are asking the question even as you are saying that you are denied the chance to ask the question. So, let us try to find some other way. If you cannot, well the Chairman could not be the one to suggest.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, if the Minister of Finance could help us because he did say that we could ask questions based on programme budgeting and this is programme 422. It includes a number of line items and CHPA, so I seek your guidance towards the Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, if you have ran out of questions, perhaps we can give someone else a chance.

Mr. Dharamlall: Okay. I will give someone else a chance.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, line item...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: You made mention about the Community Roads Improvement Programme (CRIP) workers. Can you say how many CRIP workers are in each of the 10 regions and could you please layover that document to this Office, if you do not have the information? Further, could you say why the CRIP workers' moneys are always late by two months?

Mr. Bulkan: The CRIP has been closed; it has come to an end. Perhaps, the Hon. Member might be referring to the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP). The answer that I gave was in relation to ...

Mr. Damon: You mentioned it, so I am going after you.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Bulkan: I am flattered, Sir. It was in relation to the vehicles and those vehicles have been reassigned to the Ministry from that project. The provisions here are not for salaries under that programme.

Mr. Damon: Follow-up: Let me just repeat. Hon. Minister, are you prepared to handover a list with the names of these workers of each region?

Mr. Bulkan: If the Hon. Member could direct me to a line item, I might be able to provide an answer.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development - \$1,047,275,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management – \$1,052,320,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1902900 – Project Development and Assistance: The subvention for the municipalities and neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs). Firstly, can the Hon. Minister confirm that he is applying the fiscal transfer for the allocation to the local authorities?

And secondly, notwithstanding that it is a lump sum and then you allocate, what is the amount for the municipalities and is the amount for the NDCs?

Mr. Bulkan: In accordance with the Fiscal Transfers Act, once the Appropriation Bill is in place it allows for 50% of the allocation to be made available to the respective councils and that would be the *modus operandi* (MO) that would be followed or adhered to; a 50% immediate disbursement. With regard to the allocations of the budgeted sums, \$146 million are for the municipalities and \$264 million are for the NDCs.

Mr. Croal: Can the Hon. Minister indicate what are the other expenses under this project code?

Mr. Bulkan: There is a provision of \$560 million for 1400 community enhancement workers across the municipalities. They are to provide for maintenance – the aesthetics of community facilities. There is a budgeted sum of \$20 million for small community social and economic initiatives and there is a provision of \$30 million set aside to support proprietary activities for Mahdia in preparation for township.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Can the Hon. Minister say how much of that amount will go to the economic initiatives and which communities or municipalities will benefit?

Mr. Bulkan: As I said, it is the sum of \$20 million and the details have not been identified as yet, but it is for support to any of the NDCs for small community and economic initiative.

Mr. Croal: The same project code: The \$30 million for Mahdia preparation, could you give an idea of what this entails?

Mr. Bulkan: It will be, primarily, for demarcation of the jurisdiction as well as the internal constituency boundaries. The bulk of the allocation would be to support that activity.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister say whether he will go ahead in including Campbelltown in this demarcation?

8.52 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, to the best of my understanding, the legislation does not preclude what the Hon. Member is inferring, which the incorporation of that particular community within a township, but these decisions have not been made as yet.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, am I to believe that, from the response the Minister just provide, he is willing to breach the Amerindian Act whereby Amerindian Communities are separate and apart from municipalities or NDC's?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, of course I am not a lawyer neither do I have legal training, but I think that the advice that has been proffered is that it is not the legislation that allows for any location belonging to two different jurisdictions. It happens in many other areas. One location can be part of two different jurisdictions so my understanding differs from what is being offered by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1902900- Project Development and Assistance: In breach of the Fiscal Transfer Act, can the Hon. Minister say what system or what mechanism was used in 2017 to allocate subvention to the NDC's and whether that same system will be used in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: If I heard him correctly, the Hon. Member refers to a breach and I am unaware that the provisions of that Act were breached but I have explained what will be the approach with regards to the 2018 allocations.

Mr. Bharrat: Can we take it that the Hon. Minister is saying that the Fiscal Transfer Act was followed in 2017 in allocating subvention to the NDC's across the countries?

Mr. Bulkan: The Central Government is making financial resources available to support the work of our local democratic organs, municipalities and or NDC's, and I think that it is no secret to Members of this honourable House that the capacity of those organs were severely damaged and degraded over an extended period of time. The process of rebuilding and rehabilitating requires considerable support. Again, I will repeat what I said earlier, it is not his Administration's predilection to be breaching any legislation and that is certainly not the intention with regards to the use of this provision. I will repeat that what we have here is support that is being provided by the Central Government to our Local Democratic Organs so as to assist them with discharging their responsibilities, but where necessary, inconformity with any relevant legislation.

Mr. Bharrat: Could the Hon. Minister say to the House how much in subvention was received by Macedonia/Joppa NDC in comparison to Eccles/Ramsburg NDC in Region 4 for 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I regret that I cannot provide an answer to a question that specific but the allocations and the provisions in 2018 would be as it was in 2017. The sum of \$4 million would be made available to each of the 62 NDC's.

Mr. Damon: Project Code 1903300- Georgetown Restoration Programme: I can see that you have here \$200 million for a restoration programme for Georgetown. Would these moneys be given to the Georgetown Mayor and City Council or would they be expedited by the Minister of Communities?

Mr. Bulkan: I do not know that the Hon. Member had during the break but he is getting ahead of the House. We are still at Programme 421. The question is for the subsequent.

Mr. Croal: I am just requesting the Hon. Minister to lay over to the House the break down for Project Code 1902900.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would be only too pleased to accede to the request.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Campbell-Sukhai, you will have the last question. Please go ahead.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Thank You Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman under Project Code 2802100, Hinterland Water Supply, I would like to ask the Minister whether included in this amount is an allocation for Kurukabaru, Itabac and Chieung Mouth - in the first two instances, Kurukabaru and Itabac improvement and expansion, and in the case of Chieung Mouth a system because Chieung Mouth system is about three miles away at the school.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to provide an answer to the questions being sought when we get to that programme.

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management - \$1,052,320,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development – \$3,699,000,000

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Project Code- 1302200 – Community Infrastructure Improvement Projects: Could the Hon. Minister indicate for us what are those allocations and for where?

Mr. Bulkan: There are four main components relating to this allocation or provision. It provides for infrastructure development, institutional development, community participation and public awareness and administration. I believe that the question relates, principally, to the first of these - the infrastructure development - and there are seven main activities which provides for the construction of a town hall for Lethem at a budgeted sum of \$45 million; the development of a green or sentential park in Linden at phase two, \$40 million; construction on a sanitary block at the Mon Repos Market at the new location, \$3 million; development of a tarmac to be used for the Annandale Market, to allow for the relocation of the vendors at Lusignan so as to make way for the widening of the East Coast Highway, at a sum to \$35 million. There is a provision for the development of the Aranaputa sports ground, \$30 million; construction of 10 Wi-Fi bus stops, one in reach of the regions; and provision of \$60 million for community development centres that are being taken over from GuySuCo. I think they are six such community centres which would be rehabilitated under this particular programme.

Mr. Croal: I have a number of follow-up questions. The Annandale Tarmac, you would have had a previous project and I do not know if it still exists, that catered for some expenditure for a tarmac at Annandale. Could you kindly explain?

Mr. Bulkan: The works had started and the tarmac is considered to be inadequate and the provision entails and allows for an increased tarmac size for vending at that particular location.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much. What does this entail which are to be done on the Aranaputa ground for \$30 million, because it is a lot of allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the complete rehabilitation of the ground. It provides for the construction of a pavilion, fencing and the filling and levelling of the ground. It would have a direct impact on the residence of Aranaputa as well as its surrounding communities by providing major benefits for that area.

Mr. Croal: Hon Minister, how would the locations for the bus stops, for each region, be determined?

Mr. Bulkan: It will be in consultation with the local organs. It is mainly targeted with municipalities' so it will be in consultation with the nine municipalities.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, we have gotten the break down for the infrastructure aspect. Can you move on to the second aspect of this allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$30 million is provided for as a provision for the modernisation of the Property Evaluation System, which was announced both in the Minister of Finance's speech as well as in my own presentation. A sum of \$10 million is allocated for work on the Regional Development Plans, I guess that we can call them the green development plans. A sum of \$5 million is provided for support to municipalities, in particular for the preparation of management manuals and an equal sum of \$5 million for disaster risk management capacity building in our municipalities.

9.07 p.m.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, for the property evaluation which was allocated \$30 million, could you indicate how it is intended to be done? Would a consultancy be recruited?

Mr. Bulkan: It is a provision for, eventually, engaging a suitable consultant. I think that it is recognised that this sum would be insufficient or inadequate but it still allows for a start-up of activities relating to this particular area.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Where do you intend to have this start-up?

Mr. Bulkan: It would be to generally support the Valuation Division. These activities would be done in conjunction with the Valuation Division.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Could we move on to the third aspect of the project code?

Mr. Bulkan: They are the Regional Commercial and Agricultural Exhibitions (RACE) that, I believe, were announced here by His Excellency. I also did announce it in my budget presentation of which the sum of \$10 million is allocated towards. There is a tree planting initiative that is been launched by the Ministry across all of our local organs and the sum of \$20 million is budgeted for that. Finally, under the administration, there is a sum of \$12 million provided for project supervision and the sum of \$2 million, as equipment supplies, for the community enhancement workers.

Mr. Croal: Could you further explain the project support of \$12 million?

Mr. Bulkan: It is for project supervision; it is to provide support to the projects that have been identified. It is for the Clerk of Works and supervision of the seven projects that I had first identified.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: These are some massive projects and you are recruiting staff to do supervision, and that is welcome. I am concerned as to where the allocation is coming from. Would these be temporary contracted persons or are they a part of the Ministry? I am just trying to get some clarification?

Mr. Bulkan: The supervision will be at two levels; there would be engineers from the Ministry who would provide oversight but there will be project specific personnel attached to each project. The sum of \$12 million is for the ongoing supervision at each of the locations, as I said, at a minimum of Clerk of Works.

Mr. Croal: As a follow up on that explanation, could you say how those persons will be recruited?

Mr. Bulkan: It is my belief and understanding that recruitment of the particular personnel would be done within the community itself and it would be done in conjunction with the local organ and open advertisements.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, I understand that it must be done in conjunction with the local authority. Could we get a commitment that, while it is in conjunction with the local authority, there be a public recruitment process for these persons?

Mr. Bulkan: While I see no difficulty in offering such a commitment, I would just like to clarify, for the benefit of the Hon. Member, that those advertisements are normally done within the community, by the respective organs, but not nationally.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you explain further what the \$20 million allocation for tree planting entails?

Mr. Bulkan: It caters for the purchase or acquisition of the planting materials, the trees, as well as the planting, the protective material and the maintenance for a specified period until they are old enough to stand on their own.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Where are the trees intended to be planted?

Mr. Bulkan: I have actually written every council and sent individual letters to each of the approximately 585 constituency councillors suggesting to them they can craft a tree plan for their respective constituency and once it receives the support of their council the Ministry would be pleased to consider offering support towards the execution of that particular plan and exercise.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, you would have referred to councils, which set are we referring to?

Mr. Bulkan: The specific figure of 585 is for constituency councillors. This refers to the 1170 councillors for our nine Municipalities and 62 Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs).

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1302200 – Community Infrastructure Improvement Project: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the specific allocation for the six grounds which were previously maintained by the GuySuCo (Guyana Sugar Corporation)?

Mr. Bulkan: Obviously, I do not think it could be expected that I could have that figure. I believe that the conditions of those particular grounds are in a less than desirable state and, therefore, this provision is expected and anticipated to rehabilitate those particular locations.

Mr. Bharrat: Follow-up: Could the Minister kindly send it over to us at the earliest?

Mr. Bulkan: This information would be laid over.

Mr. Charlie: Project code – 2802100 - Hinterland Water Supply: Could the Hon. Minister relate to this side of the House which communities in the hinterland benefitted from the 2017 allocation, the amount which was allocated to each community, who were the contractors who undertook this project and how many communities are projected to benefit under the 2018 allocation?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Charlie, it may be good for all of us to remember that when we give answers we give answers to the House, and not Members on one side or the other.

Mr. Charlie: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I just used this opportunity to make that comment.

Mr. Bulkan: I will answer the second part of the question first in relation to the 2018 proposals. The sum of \$ 30 million is allocated for roll-over projects in several communities in four regions - these being Oronoque, Koko, Kamwatta, Kobarimo, Chenapau, Campbelltown and Paramakatoi. Roll-over retention would be the sum of \$20 million for the procurement of Photovoltaic (PV) systems and other spares including pumps, motors and filters in all four of the Hinterland regions. A sum of \$20 million is budgeted for the installation of a water supply system in Chinowieng and the sum of \$40 million is budgeted for the upgrade of the water supply systems in Mabaruma and Port Kaituma. In Moruka, the sum of \$20 million is provided for installation and extension of the water distribution system in Lethem and there is a provision of \$20 million for supervision for all the activities and interventions.

The first part of the question, these are the 2017 activities and there are several of them. They would have been roll-over projects in Port Kaituma, Oronoque, Tasserine, Karau, Ruperti, Aranaputa and Silver Hill in the Upper Demerara Berbice Region. These were new projects which were for the improvement at schools, health facilities and other government buildings in several locations, among these being Koko, Kamwatta, Kobarimo, Chenapau, Campbelltown *et cetera*.

Mr. Charlie: The Minister was very pellucid. Could the Hon. Minister humbly relate the document to the House?

9.22 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Would this be 2017 or 2018?

Mr. Charlie: Both.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is yes.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under the same project code, 2802100, would the Minister agree that he has not catered for the improvement of the Itabac water system, which has not been working for more than two years? Especially with the flood situation that that village experienced, I believe that that should have been a priority. Kurukabaru has an issue and it was not featured in the list that was provided to this House. Also, in Cheung Mouth, there is no system close to households.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the provision for upgrading of the water supply in those communities, which were identified by the Hon. Member, is being considered and contemplated under the Guyana Water Incorporated's (GWI's) ongoing programme.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2802700 – Water Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Programme: I am happy to see that the Hope Canal is featured and is of use to the Government. Could you please confirm whether surface water from the Hope Canal would be converted into potable water?

Mr. Bulkan: Could you repeat the project code?

Mr. Dharamlall: It is project code 2802700 - Water Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Programme.

Mr. Bulkan: Under that particular project code, no provision was made for the activity which the Hon. Member referred to.

Mr. Dharamlall: Read the Legend.

Mr. Bulkan: It states provision for water supply system, sanitation and institutional strengthening in Reference number 181. If you go to Reference number 181, Hon. Member, there is no reference there.

Mr. Dharamlall: It is Reference number 175, *Volume 3 of the Capital Project Profiles*.

Mr. Bulkan: You would have to come back with that question.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2802200 – Coastal Water Supply: Six hundred million dollars were budgeted in 2017. According to this report, only \$400 million was expended. Could the Minister advise us of what problems were encountered or what were the reasons for the inability of the Ministry to expend the moneys which were allocated in 2017? This is not foreign funding. This is local funding. I would ask a follow-up question after he has answered that.

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$400 million, as stated, is the projection of what would be expended at the end of the year. I believe that there were procurement challenges which were responsible for the full allocation not being expended in 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: Regarding the Minister's response of procurement challenges, I am not sure what that means because *Budget 2017* was passed on 22nd December, 2016. There was a full year to complete the programmes that were in the Budget. If we look at *Budget 2018*, which has \$218 million allocated for the completion of wells at Port Mourant, Bartica, Sophia, Sparendaaam, Vergenoegen, Pouderoyen and Westminster and completion of the water supply distribution main for Eversham to Phillipai, could the Minister state, as these appear to be rollover projects, what is the status of the work on those Wells at this point, December, 2017? What are the projections for the completion of these projects in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: As the Project Profile states, all of these wells and projects are ongoing and the budgeted sum of \$218 million is for the completion of the wells in all of these locations in 2018.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: I asked specifically, based on the Legend, what was the status of the construction work on these two items listed as of December, 2017. It is so that we could really have an idea or whether the construction would be completed in 2018. There was \$600 million budgeted in 2017 and you also promised us and projected that much of it would have been completed in 2017. Some \$200 million have not been spent. We are asking for a status report of the works as of December, 2017. In *Budget 2018*, the Ministry would be completing and not commencing construction. At some point in December, 2017, your Ministry spent \$400 million on these projects. What is the status of the projects? Are they 30%, 40% or 70% completed?

Mr. Bulkan: There are seven locations, namely Bartica, Sophia, Sparendaaam, Vergenoegen, Pouderoyen and Westminster. These are areas where wells are being drilled. Secondly, there is the installation of water supply distribution mains between Eversham to Phillipai. The projected status, at the end of the year, of the distribution mains is 60%. The well at Sparendaaam is completed and the well at Sophia is 40% completed. The mobilisation fee for the well at Port Maurant was paid but 10% of the work has been completed and the well at Phillipai is 40% completed.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: Thank you for sharing that information. You did not mention Pouderoyen, Westminster, Vergenoegen or Bartica. Have the wells at those locations not commenced at all? Secondly, could you say when in 2017 the contracts were awarded for the ones that have already commenced?

Mr. Bulkan: The well at Vergenoegen is 80% completed. The wells at Pouderoyen and Westminster are at the mobilisation stage.

Ms. Teixeira: I hate to belabour the point but Bartica has been omitted. I am not aware that work has started there.

Mr. Bulkan: The well at Bartica is 10% completed.

Ms. Teixeira: My last question, hopefully, is regarding when the contracts were awarded for those works. If there are a number of them that are only at mobilisation stage with 10%, one

would assume, maybe incorrectly, that they only started recently. I do not want to go down the wrong track. I would, therefore, appreciate knowing when, in 2017, those contracts were awarded. I am assuming, of course, that they were publicly tendered.

Mr. Bulkan: All of these contracts were via open tender. The dates of the awards of the contracts would be laid over subsequently.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2802800 - Hinterland Sustainable Housing Programme: Hon. Minister, could you please state whether this programme is executed by the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA) or any other department of the Ministry of Communities? I also have a follow-up question.

Mr. Bulkan: This programme is being administered by the CH&PA.

Ms. Teixeira: The Minister just said, in response to Mr. Dharamlall's question, that the CH&PA would be executing this programme. However, there is nothing in the documentation to show that the CH&PA would be doing so. It goes back to the issue that was raised earlier about a statutory organisation not being in the Budget. Therefore, one cannot ask questions of it. Yet, the capital assignment under the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan is put into the Budget. Now, we are being told that it would be executed by the CH&PA. The Legend puts it under the Ministry of Communities' Hinterland Sustainable Housing Programme. There is nothing to tell us that it would be executed by the CH&PA. Is it the fault of the staff at the Ministry of Finance that it was not included? We do not want to come next year and ask questions to be told that it was executed by the CH&PA and we cannot ask questions. There is nothing here to indicate that it would be executed by the CH&PA. This is a loan between the Government of Guyana and the IDB.

Mr. Bulkan: Regrettably, I have heard the use of the word "fault." It seems to me that blame is being apportioned. There is a project code here; the project is stated; the project sums are stated; and the activities are stated under the Legend. If there are any questions pertaining to this particular project code, I would be more than pleased to proffer an answer.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development – \$3,699,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

9.37 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, at this time, there is provision in our schedule for a half an hour break. I believe I reflect your thinking correctly when I say that you wish us to continue in order to complete today's work. I would suggest that we forgo the half an hour break and continue.

Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Agency 71: Region 1: Barima/Waini

Current Expenditure

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$ 186,752,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: The region has spent close to half of the allocation in 2017, but yet we see that, for 2018, similar amount, as that for 2017, has been requested. Could we, therefore, firstly have an explanation for the request of the similar amount as in 2017 when the amount that was budgeted for 2017 was not spent?

Mr. Bulkan: It has been correctly observed that the sum budgeted in 2017 was not exhausted and that the sum expended was less than the budgeted allocation. However, the provision in 2018 amounts to a similar sum that was originally budgeted in 2017. The expectation is that it would be needed in 2018, even though it was not spent in 2017.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, I have a follow-up question. Is the region getting additional vehicles since you mentioned that there is an expectation that the region would spend double that amount?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that a few of the vehicles, under this programme, were not serviceable, they were “down” for a period of time in 2017 and it is not expected that that situation will obtain in 2018; they are now back in working order.

Mr. Croal: On this same line item, could the Hon. Minister, therefore, indicate how many vehicles are utilising fuel under Regional Administration and Finance and to whom they have been allotted?

Mr. Bulkan: There is a vehicle for the use by the Regional Executive Officer (REO). There is provision for a 200 horsepower outboard engine to be used in Mabaruma. There is provision for an All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) which caters for medevac. ATVs would also be purchased for Mabaruma, Matakai and Moruca. In addition, there is provision for a 75 horsepower outboard engine for Moruca.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether this increased allocation, from \$31 million to \$37 million, would now allow the region to have the rotational statutory meetings? It is because, in the latter quarter, the region has been unable to do rotation simply because there have not been enough resources. Would this now be done with the increased allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to the question is yes. The sum of approximately \$5.28 million is budgeted for bi-monthly meetings alternating in the sub regions of the region.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, I notice that for 2017 and 2018 the allocations are the same and that is \$50 million. From the drug supply situation over the last year, may I ask the Minister if he is satisfied that this amount is adequate, taking into account the experiences the region had over the last two years with respect to shortages, and whether he is satisfied that, when the moneys are warranted to the procuring Ministry, the region has adequate record and documentation that they are getting value for money?

Mr. Bulkan: We are dealing with Programme 711, which is Regional Administration and Finance, and this provision is just for first aid kits at the office. The bulk of the drug supplies, as the Hon. Member is aware, would be under Programme 714, which we would get to shortly.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: My apologies; I am too passionate about this issue of the supply of drugs.

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$ 186,752,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 712 – Public Infrastructure – \$297,269,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There has been a decrease by five employees. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the five contracted employees who are left under this line item?

Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Services: As in Programme 711, the region utilised only \$13 million of the \$18 million which was allocated. There is even a greater increased request for 2018. Could the Hon. Minister explain this one?

Mr. Bulkan: The remaining employees, under line item 6116, are labourers. Regarding line item 6264, it is indeed the case that, of the \$18.5 million that was budgeted in 2017, only the sum of \$13 million was spent, but the request, to this House, for 2018 is for an increased provision in the sum of \$20 million.

One of the reasons is that the generator at Mabaruma was out of commission for over six to seven weeks and a new generator has been sent there - a 750 KVA. The one that was down is in the process of being repaired and that is expected to go into service in 2018 and that will add to the capacity in Mabaruma.

Programme: 712 – Public Infrastructure – \$297,269,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 713 – Education Delivery – \$1,172,707,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister indicate who the remaining seven contracted employees are? Secondly, could you confirm the reason for the decrease from 16 to seven persons? Are the persons out of the system or have they been transferred to the fixed establishment?

9.52 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the nine employees have been transitioned to the fixed establishment and the seven remaining are mainly labourers. Those that were transitioned were cleaners and drivers.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): An increased expenditure, by \$10 million, is expected in 2018. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the reason?

Mr. Bulkan: It is indeed correct that the sum being sought is approximately 67% greater than the budgeted sum in 2017. It is to provide for increased professional development at all of the schools – nursery and primary – as well as for education officers; to hold cluster workshops and work study programmes and for the upgrading of teachers. It also provides for a six-year transitional curriculum for teachers and attendance at the National Subject Committee meetings. It provides for mathematics interventions, which are anticipated to be fortnightly, and cluster meetings in all three sub-regions. It caters for the professional development of teachers and officers as well as support staff and parents from time to time. It is also expected to fund training workshops in music, which will be done with teachers across the region, for a one week in-service or an early childhood education workshop, which was formerly done by the central Ministry. For the first time, it is now being catered for by the region. Also, there are emergency mathematics intervention cluster, which are now being done fortnightly, and these have added significantly to the cost for training in the region.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how much of this is budgeted for the holding of “nationals” at the regional level?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that is the sum of \$4 million.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether this amount is an increase over the amount which was allocated in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I beg to correct the information that was earlier offered. The allocation is actually \$4 million for “regionals and \$5 million for “nationals”, and it is an increase in 2018.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could the Minister explain the decrease? I noticed that there is a decrease in the allocation proposed for 2018.

Mr. Bulkan: The provision caters for dietary at the dormitories at Port Kaituma, Santa Rosa and North West Secondary schools. The marginal decrease, however, of approximately 3%, is due to increasing access to the secondary schools as a result of improved transportation facilities that are being offered. Hence, the need at the dormitories is reduced.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery - \$1,172,707,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10 (1)

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are approaching the 10 o' clock hour. I will invite the Prime Minister and Leader of the Government's Business to move the adjournment so that we can continue the completion of today's allocation of the schedule.

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: I would like to move that the session continues until we complete today's schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Programme: 714 – Health Services- \$640,027,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: The region has spent only \$38,558,000 of the \$65,532,000 allocation under Fuel and Lubricants. Firstly, could the Hon. Minister indicate why such a minimal amount was spent? Secondly, there was even an increased salary request. The region was unable to spend its allocation for 2017. How would the region do it in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is the case that the budgeted sum in 2017 was not utilised; it was underspent by a considerable sum, but the provision of 2018 has gone up with the sum of \$69,000,000 being requested. The expectation, in 2018, is that this provision would be necessary and this is why it has been sought and able to justify it are the officials at the Ministry of Finance, who have agreed to bring this request to this House.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up question: Could the Committee be provided an explanation as to why for fuel and lubricants, for an important programme as Health Services delivery, the region was only able to spend \$38,558,000 of \$65,532,000?

Mr. Bulkan: I will respectfully ask to provide this information, subsequently, to Hon. Members.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us how much money would be expended on drugs and how much would be expended on medical supplies?

Mr. Bulkan: The bulk of the provision is for the procurement of drugs and a smaller percentage would be for medical supplies. I do not have the exact figures at this stage, but I can undertake to provide it to the Hon. Member, subsequently.

Dr. Anthony: I will accept if the Minister can provide a more detailed answer to the Committee, which I can then receive. I have a second question. Under the same line item, 6221, moneys are provided to the region and then the region would send back some of those moneys to the Ministry of Public Health. Could the Minister state how much of this budget would remain in the region and how much would be sent to the Ministry of Public Health for the procurement of drugs and medical supplies?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe the anticipation is that the bulk – maybe as much as 90% of the sum – would be warranted to the central Ministry for central procurement and, perhaps 10% or 15% would be retained in the region for local purchases.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister, again, provide a more detailed answer, in written format, to the Committee? Having gone through the Estimates, these things tend to vary and sometimes I am not sure if it is 90% or 95%. That is why I want to get a sense of the rationale.

My third question is: for the portion of the moneys that would remain in the region, what method of procurement would the region be using? Would it be sole sourcing, competitive bidding or would the region be shortlisting a set of suppliers?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that, generally, the three quotation system is employed by the region for local purchases.

Dr. Anthony: Regarding the portion that is sent to the Ministry of Public Health, I saw, from the Report of the Auditor General, that there has been a problem of reconciling the value that the region receives. Could the Minister say what systems would be put in place for the 2018 Budget so that there is proper reconciliation so that we would know that the region is actually getting value for their money?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that what has been proffered is currently being examined by the Ministry of Public Health and it is anticipated that the shortcomings, which were identified by the Auditor General, would not become recurring features and that systems have been put in place to ensure proper reconciliation. There is a new Procurement Unit at the Ministry of Public Health.

10.07 p.m.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: I would be grateful if the Minister could lay over what equipment or vehicles would be using the \$69 million in fuel and lubricants and how much is expected for each piece of equipment or vehicle? Also for line items 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, and 6252, Maintenance of Bridges, I would like to ask if the Minister could lay over what buildings and bridges will be utilising \$55 million and \$5 million respectively.

The other question that I would like to ask the Minister goes on to line item 6282, Equipment Maintenance; \$8.6 million. Minister, if you are able to advise me, could you say how this money would be spent? Do we have bio-medical engineers there or are we going to out-source it or how would it be done?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member is desirous, I could read out the information here for the different programmes that he has asked under line items 6231, 6242...

Dr. Mahadeo: I asked for it to be laid over.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, that will be provided. On line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance, I am advised that similarly the three quotation system is being used, but this expertise is not available in the Region so it would have to be procured from the coastland, but *via* the three quotation method.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could you please lay over the training programmes that would be done to amount to \$12 million? Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is not much so I could relate it here. It is the continuation of training and collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and other bodies. The main activities are the training of 20 community health workers, microscopists ...

Dr. Mahadeo: Minister, could you please lay it over so that I could have a copy?

Mr. Bulkan: Okay.

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: There is an increase of \$2 million. Could the Hon. Minister say whether there would be an increase in the current rental contract or whether it involves the rental of new buildings for 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the provision caters for the rental of a new building during 2018 for an additional staff which is expected to be a specialist, for the new hospital at Mabaruma.

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up, line item 6272; there is an increase of almost five million dollars with one additional or new rental. Could the Hon. Minister explain the increase in the electricity charges?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, in 2017, the region was only billed and paying for electricity at Port Kaituma and Matthew's Ridge (Pakera District Hospital) and not Mabaruma. But in 2018, the region is expected to pay the tariffs that would be introduced at Mabaruma. So the provision caters for electricity charges also at Mabaruma.

Dr. Ramsaran: Mr. Chairman, under Staffing Details, the table given on page 305, I noted that there is a significant reduction from 192 to 179. Could the Hon. Minister indicate or lay over the specific categories of workers who have been omitted or who have been reduced and could he indicate what impact it would have on the delivery of health services?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Dr. Ramsaran, is there a line item that you wish to quote?

Dr. Ramsaran: I am speaking about Staffing Details, lines 6111 – 6117. There is the table on page 305.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is correct that the overall staffing has gone down from 192 to 179, an overall reduction of 13 and it varies under different programmes. This would have been as of a result of, I am advised, mainly resignations. The information as to the specific categories would have to be provided subsequently for the Hon. Member.

Programme: 714 – Health Services - \$640,027,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$14,500,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, project code 1208600 – Building Administration: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House which administrative building will be enclosed and its location? With respect to the liabilities payment, could the Minister also indicate which projects have outstanding liabilities that are now budgeted for?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the enclosure of a building would be the regional administration building at Mabaruma, in the budgeted sum of approximately \$10,389,000. For the retention, Hon. Member - I guess you can call it a liability - there are two projects. The first is an enclosure at the sub-regional administrative building in Port Kaituma at the original contract sum of \$8,886,000, and the retention amount of \$889,000. The second retention or roll-over project is the completion of the regional administration office building in Mabaruma at the original contract sum of \$7,221,000. I am sorry, that was in Port Kaituma. The second one is the completion of the regional administrative office in Port Kaituma at a contract sum of \$7,221,000 and the retention sum of \$722,000.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, a supplemental question. I am happy that the disaggregation for the two retention payments has been made. However, I still have some concerns with respect to the payments. Could the Minister assure this House that in paying the retention there is no overpayment on these projects? This has been a very difficult problem for us in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and so I am concern that we are on the right track.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the retention amount is 10% and these two projects that I have provided the information on are currently in the defects liability period, and the retention amount would not be paid unless the Region is satisfied that the works have been satisfactorily executed.

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$14,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 712 – Public Infrastructure - \$107,000,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1400400 - Roads: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether the region has resources available here for the Wanaina to the Kumaka junction?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this provision does not cater for that stretch of roadway that is being identified by the Hon. Member. But it is my understanding that the stretch is being addressed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

Mr. Coal: Just to re-confirm: Is the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, therefore, through the REO, doing from the Kumaka junction to Wanaina and then Wanaina to Yarakita in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, at this stage I cannot offer a definitive answer to that, but I can speak to the activities this allocation provides for, if the Member is so desirous.

Mr. Croal: I see the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure is here. But Mr. Chairman, just allow me, I am seeking confirmation because we are talking about a huge stretch. I know that the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure was there two weeks ago. And I can confirm, as of now, that they were looking at Yarakita to Wanaina. All I am asking about is the vacuum between Wanaina and the Kumaka junction.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this allocation does not cater for that stretch of roadway but for other activities.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister, lay over for us the breakdown of the works to be done on the roads as is stated in the Legend.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I could so commit.

Programme: 712 – Public Infrastructure - \$107,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

10.22 p.m.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery - \$118,200,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under project code 1202600, Buildings-Education, could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House, what new construction will be part of this allocation and the schools to be extended?

Mr. Bulkan: The new construction will be a nursery school at Kamwatta, Moruca, in the contract sum of \$10.3 million. It is a 50x70 feet building to accommodate the 42 nursery school children. I believe I did speak about this in my budget presentation. The extensions will be at Santa Rosa Nursery with the contract sum of \$13.3 million, again a 50x70 extension; at Sacred Heart Nursery, Mabaruma - \$16 million for the extension of a 60x70 building; extension of the Warapoka Primary School, 50x70 that is in Moruca - \$18 million; extension of Assakata Primary – 40x50 again at Moruca for \$12 million; extension of Port Kaituma Primary School, I believe Canal Bank, Matarkai, \$18 million.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery - \$118,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 714 – Health Services - \$110,300,000

Dr. Ramsaran: The construction of X-ray room and laboratory at Pakera District Hospital: I have seen no provision for staffing of these specific and very specialised additionalities? Could the Hon. Minister give us some indication of where we could find that information and what are his intentions?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision here is for capital works and it is for the construction of the X-ray room and the laboratory with a budgeted sum of \$16.2 million. I believe the staffing details are done in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Health.

Dr. Anthony: Under this same heading, could the Minister provide a disaggregation for the things that are listed here, payment of retention, construction of X-ray room *et cetera*? Could the Minister say what payment are we talking about here?

Mr. Bulkan: There are six retention payments: the construction of medics and midwife quarters at Manawarin, Moruca, with the contract sum of \$9.6 million and the retention of 10%, \$960,000; the construction of doctors quarters Kwebanna, with the retention amount of \$937,000, 10% of the original contract sum; upgrading of Baramita Health Post with the retention sum of \$3.4 million, 10% of the original contract sum of approximately \$34 million; construction of nurses quarters at Baramita with the retention sum of \$1.184 million; and the retention payment for the construction of incinerator at Pakera, \$1.192 million. All of those projects have been completed and are currently in the defects liability period.

Did you ask for the construction as well?

Dr. Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Bulkan: The construction would be, as earlier indicated: an X-ray room and laboratory at the Pakera District Hospital with the budgeted sum of \$16.2 million; mortuary building at Baramita with the budgeted sum of \$9.5 million; upgrading of staff quarters at Mabaruma Hospital with the budgeted sum of \$16.3 million; construction of doctors quarters at Waramuri, Moruca with the sum of \$10.8 million; construction of incinerator at Arakaka, Matarkai, with the budgeted sum of \$6 million to provide for a comprehensive disposal of hospital waste in a hygienic manner; the construction of a similar incinerator at Waramuri, Moruca, with the budgeted sum of \$6 million; and the installation of an oxygen distribution network at the Pakera District Hospital with the budgeted sum of \$4 million; a total allocation of \$80 million.

Dr. Mahadeo: Minister, if you could please advise me. I see the construction of X-ray room and that there is an X-ray unit that is being bought later on under Equipment. I see construction of a mortuary. Am I to take it that we already have a mortuary freezer there or would it just be a building without a mortuary freezer?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised it is a new construction, a complete building which will be a mortuary with cold storage to provide adequate storage of deceased persons.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Minister tell us what kind of tendering, what kind of process will be used to award these contracts? In particular, I am interested in the oxygen distribution network.

Mr. Bulkan: These will all be in conformity with the Procurement Act which is open competitive bidding.

Dr. Anthony: Minister, you mentioned the mortuary at Baramita but I did not get the sum of money.

Mr. Bulkan: The sum is \$9.5 million.

Dr. Anthony: What would be the capacity of the freezer? Because I know that there was a similar mortuary that was being constructed in that very region but the sum of money seems to be almost twice as much?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that it caters for one corpse.

Programme: 714 – Health Services - \$110,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you. With our combined efforts we have been able to conclude the work set for the second day of our consideration of the Estimates. I thank you very much for your assistance.

Assembly resumed

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House be adjourned to tomorrow, Wednesday, 13th December, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: The House stands adjourned to Wednesday, 13th December, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.32 p.m.