

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

81ST Sitting

Thursday, 14TH December, 2017

Assembly convened at 10.32 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

The Constitutional Offices (Remuneration of Holders) Order 2017 – No. 41 of 2017.
[Minister of Finance]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

Payment made to the Government of Guyana by ExxonMobil Corporation in 2016

Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mr. Greenidge]: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, I would like to make a statement in connection with the issue of a payment made to the Government of Guyana by ExxonMobil Corporation in 2016, in connection with what has been dubbed “a scandal – a scandal surrounding a signing bonus”. The story, as told by a section of Guyana’s media, alleges deception on the part of the Government of Guyana, illegal actions by Ministers and the threat of investigation of the Government by the, normally taciturn, Auditor

General, as well as civil prosecution by Mr. Christopher Ram, who is a private citizen. [Mr. G. Persaud: *[Inaudible]*] Many Guyanese...

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is customary that we maintain silence when someone is on the floor. I will expect that you respect that custom.

Mr. G. Persaud: I will respect it if all of us respect it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon Member, let us stay within the bounds.

Mr. Greenidge: Many Guyanese would have been reading, with growing unease, the sensational headlines which were first inspired by Mr. Christopher Ram. As I read these supposed *exposés*, I was reminded of the term “herd mentality”, under which each comment is followed by a more outrageous claim as commentators try to outdo each other.

The facts, in fact, are quite straightforward. Guyana negotiated and received US \$18 million in connection with the signing of a contract for the renewal of a petroleum license. The sum, in question, was not US\$20 million or US\$25 million but it was US\$18 million. Whether or not a contract was necessary is a matter of opinion on which I will waste no further time. Suffice it to say; whilst such payments are not unusual, there is no standard arrangement or formula concerning either the quantum or the procedures for signing bonuses. Governments have pressed or negotiated with petroleum companies to be paid various amounts in the light of the evolving prospects of the sector or industry. I shall return to this.

During the course of 2015 and 2016, after discussions with ExxonMobil Corporation, the Minister of Natural Resources proposed to the Cabinet that the payment of a bonus, on the extension of an agreement by the company, be undertaken. Cabinet agreed and, on 27th June, 2016, the Minister duly reported that the negotiations had been completed. The full Cabinet approved the terms negotiated and the arrangements to receive the funds on that date. Nothing about this impost was either, particularly, secret or illegal. Many agreements are approved, during the course of any year, without being announced. The intended use of funds received by a Government usually determines how they are passed through the government accounts. That aspect does not normally attract the attention of the Cabinet, and this was no exception.

The background against which this decision was taken was instructive. As we all know, since we have been in Office, the Government of Guyana has found itself in a very tight fiscal situation, in that its needs for funding far exceeds the total cost of goods and services for which it would have to be paid. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was participating, and indeed still is, in discussions under the aegis of the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) personal representative in relation to the resolution of the territorial controversy. There have been times, in 2016 and 2017, when we were unable to make timely payments to the legal team advising the Government. This is an undesirable situation. It is the responsibility of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to make sure that those payments for services contracted by the Ministry are made according to the terms of the contract. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs therefore had an eye on the events due in 2018 and, in particular, the need for funds to pay the large team of lawyers that would be required if the UNSG honours his commitment to refer the Guyana case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) without further procrastination after December, 2017. I understand that the cost of a similar United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) case involving Suriname was over US\$10 million. Faced by the existential importance of the ICJ case, and given that the case had not yet been referred to the Secretary General (SG), the Ministry of Finance advised that moneys be held separately and securely until such time as the Government is clear as to when those funds would be needed. Out of concern, that when it was time to pay for these critical services, the Minister of Foreign Affairs advised the President that arrangements be made to set aside sufficient funds to make the payments. More specifically, he asked that \$50 million of the sum received by the Government from the ExxonMobil Corporation be earmarked for that purpose. It was also agreed that US\$3 million be set aside for the funding of urgent training of Guyanese in needed skills such as engineering and petroleum geology.

The earmarking of funds is not unusual in Westminster type systems. The moneys collected by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) and the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), for example, are earmarked. This means that they do not go directly to the Consolidated Fund, in the first instance, if at all. This process is also in keeping with that use for other moneys received from external sources such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), especially where oversees contractors may have to be reimbursed. Moneys so received are sent to the Central Bank, the Central Government's Banker, and they are located in accounts which are held

there. Those accounts can be kept separate, can be separately managed and be separately audited in keeping with the rules of these agencies which member states embrace, either when they join the agency or when they sign the loan agreements. By contrast, moneys deposited in that way will be converted into Guyana dollars and transferred into the Consolidated Fund at an appropriate time. I believe the Minister of Finance has made a statement in this regard, in relation to the processing and the legality of the holding of these funds by himself, either last evening or last night.

In pursuit of the decision of Cabinet, the Secretary to the Treasury gave instructions about the placement of the funds. The Central Bank, as I say the Government's Banker, was directed to not utilise the funds to meet any, if you like, ongoing or ordinary Government expenses without written instructions from a named set of persons - the most senior public, financial officers in the country. It is therefore inconceivable that, in such circumstances, Cabinet Ministers – Minister Trotman or Minister Jordan, in particular, were supposed to be, or could be, the beneficiaries of the funds and that such an arrangement could be expected to be secret. I address this because there is a lot of inference in some of these reports or supposed *exposés*.

Mr. Christopher Ram, a current affairs commentator, has suggested that paying such funds into the Bank of Guyana (BoG) is a flagrant breach of article 216 of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. That bold statement flies in the face of the practice everywhere. In any case, the article in question does not require the payment to be deposited in the Consolidated Fund immediately. Members are free to have a look at the provisions of section 37 (2) of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA), which governs the handling of public funds – the topic of this issue. The section provides for public moneys to be held in extra budgetary funds, deposit funds, *et cetera*, until they are credited to the Consolidated Fund.

If the manner of raising the funds was not illegal and their placement in the deposit fund at the Bank of Guyana was not illegal either, what then is the *song and dance* about? Perhaps, it was based on the erroneous belief, peddled by one commentator, that there was an agreement negotiated overseas with ulterior motives. That *song and dance*, I think, arose from an assumption, often explicit on the part of commentators, that the intention was to utilise the funds for the benefit of the Ministers directly involved. Just as it is imprudent and not permissible, during the debates in this House, to attribute motive, so is it in general life. Such behavior may

have been the experience of some of these commentators with other Governments or in private practice. If that were the intention in this case, however, it would have been quite unwise for us to invite scrutiny by requiring the authorisation of the country's most senior financial officers to permit withdrawal of the funds from the Bank of Guyana. The very manner of disclosure of the information also demonstrates just how porous our system is regarding confidentiality.

Given the importance for which the funds were to be used, and its implications for national security, neither the President nor the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saw any merit in advertising the matter. In fact, so great was the concern that only those that needed to know were informed as to the purpose of the deposit. I repeat this for emphasis, only those that needed to know were informed as to the purpose of the deposit. They all, of course, were aware of the process by which the moneys were obtained. Consequently, only those members of the Cabinet directly involved and the relevant technicians were informed. The fact that those who were investigating this matter, or supposedly investigating this matter, could have stumbled on the reason for the holding of the funds and still feel it necessary to make it both public and use it for sensational headlines is testimony to just how responsible our media is.

Guyana recently won a case at the ICJ, in which they found it necessary to retain no less than 48 international specialist lawyers. They never broadcast how they were handling the funding of those services. Today, some on the Ivory Coast, the country against which the case was being fought, rue the fact they had not realised the scale of the *Ghanaian* mobilisation for the ICJ.

10.47 a.m.

Obviously, if forewarned, they would have taken this into account in their strategy in the ICJ. Let there be no doubt, therefore, that those who will challenge us in the Court would have been very pleased at the airing of this controversy by Guyana and by Guyanese themselves. More disturbingly, the sensational *exposés* being passed off as being in the public interest follow closely on a number of attacks on international companies operating here. Some of these companies have broken no laws here; they owe us no taxes or imposts. They are operating in neighbouring States where they are welcomed, but in Guyana some sections of the media demonise them.

Given the potential importance of petroleum production to the wellbeing of all Guyanese, it can only be assumed that these commentators believe that it is harmless fun. The saying goes *what is fun for lil boys, is dead for cockroach*, and that ExxonMobil Corporation, for example, if seriously damaged, would leave to be replaced by one of the long line of companies hammering on our doors to undertake or replace the US\$4 billion investment required to bring the discovery to the production stage.

On the other hand, we see neither the Suriname nor Brazil Medias carrying such demonisation of the very company from which Sunday's newspapers suggest that we should have extracted a US\$700 million as a signing bonus. Only from our neighbours to the west can such attacks be found.

Whilst I am on the signing bonus, please permit me to say that, unlike Guyana, ExxonMobil Corporation's submission of such a large signing bonus, which incidentally was ExxonMobil Corporation as well as Petrobras, took place after the 14th round of auctions in a country which discovered oil and began production some seven years ago; we have yet to pump a barrel. That is, seven years after the discovery of what has been described as a monstrous field of light petroleum. Although Brazil is not yet the world's largest source of proven petroleum reserves, it is already the 15th in world rankings and was consequently able to attract over 132 firms in the round of bids. There are three to six hammering on our doors. Most significantly, the obvious difference between that neighbour and Guyana is the absence of the shadow of a neighbour claiming, practically, all of their waters offshore in which their enormous reserves have been located.

Finally, please permit me to say a word on the commentators' asymmetrical treatment of the law and the Constitution. We have noted the strictures of Mr. Ram, the media and what one paper referred to as the transparency agency regarding the funding of State activities without reference to the Constitution or the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act of 2003. But, so shallow has been their analysis that the Leader of the Opposition can have the gall to announce that, in the period June 2000 to the decision of the ICJ on the 17th September, 2007 when the maritime case against Suriname was referred to the UNCLOS Tribunal and decided, the Government of Guyana contracted and benefitted from services without either paying for them or passing the matter through the Consolidated Fund. Not a single cent can be found referred to in either the

Estimates or in the Bank of Guyana's accounts. That story of the State contracting services and being proud to say that those services were in the interest of a private company, presumably, and not the interest of the State was relayed without comment from the Auditor General, Mr. Ram or any threat of legal action or opprobrium. Unbelievable, I agree with you; only Guyana.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Minister.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S 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, we would now return to the consideration of the Estimates. The Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply.

Agency 80: Region 10: Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$205,867,000

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: Mr. Chairman, Minister Valerie Patterson–Yearwood, Minister within the Ministry will take the questions for this agency.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much and good morning. Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: Firstly, Hon. Minister, could you indicate what is the purpose for the increase? Secondly, in addition to the increase, could you give, on the total allocation of the \$43.9 million, a summarised breakdown of this expense?

Minister within the Ministry of Communities [Ms. Patterson-Yearwood]: There are two additional activities; the Regional Agricultural Commercial Exhibition (RACE) and the Regional Development Consultative Committee (RDCC) meeting which would be held twice per year from 2018. One million five hundred thousand is budgeted for each. What was the other part of the question?

Mr. Croal: Minister, just for you to provide a summarised breakdown for the total because I know there is stipend for RDCs *et cetera*.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Stipend to RDC councillors; Amerindian councils; Toshaos - \$30,000; Deputy Toshaos - \$15,000; that gives a total of 20 Toshaos and Deputy Toshaos. Then travelling and field visits to the RDC and other locations are catered for here as well.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, could you indicate what is the stipend for the RDC councillors?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There are 18 councillors at \$10,000 each.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, could you, therefore, layover the entire document? The reason I am asking is because line item 6211 under this region is the largest of all the 10 regions. I am just trying to do a comparison.

Having said that, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is a 100% decrease but your contracted employees only decreased by three. Could you indicate who are the contracted employees currently on the system and state the emoluments for the three that were lost?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: We have lost three employees to the pensionable establishment and the three positions are the Adjustor of Skills and Weight, Accounts Clerk II and a General Clerk II. The other part of the question is about emoluments will be laid over.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: I notice that for the expenses of the agency there is \$43.9 million for Region 10 and there are 18 councillors. For Region 6, there are almost about 30 councillors, which is almost double that of Region 10, only \$19 million is allocated to it. For Region 3, where there are 27 councillors, there is a meagre \$21 million allocated. Could the Minister tell us why there is this inconsistency? Is it an anomaly or is it discrimination in the People's Progressive Party (PPP) controlled regions?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am not here to compare regions. I am here to deal with Region 10's allocation.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281- Security Services: Hon. Minister, could you indicate who the security provider is and when the current security provider commenced service?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The security provider is still Home Safe Security that has been there over a number of years.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Could the Minister indicate when this current contract would end and say what the hourly rate is that is being paid?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: This is a month –to-month contract and, even though, there have been tenders out, we have not yet received the award. As soon as that award is made that security contract will come to an end. It is \$300 per hour.

11.02 a.m.

Mr. Croal: Thank you. Follow up: Hon. Minister, you did indicate its monthly but could you indicate when a likely evaluation or an award would be done? You indicated that it is in the system so I am just trying to get some timeline.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am informed that the evaluation report should be returned by tomorrow.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure and line item 6242 – Maintenance of Bridges: Could you layover that information to the House, please?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Line item 6242 only has two items which is the guest house at Ituni \$3 million and the Linden Amerindian Hostel for \$1 million. For line item 6255, there are six facilities in Linden and I will layover that.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6312 – Subventions to Local Authorities: Nine million, nine hundred thousand is budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister tell us which are the local authorities that will be benefiting and how much they will be benefiting?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is wages and salaries for the Overseer; Typist Clerk Librarian II - \$2.832 million; drainage development works in Potville, Kwakwani - \$2 million; street lights - \$1.802 million; bleachers for the basketball court opposite independence square - \$1.766 Million; and training for Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) Counsellors - \$1.5 million. These moneys would be given to the Kwakwani NDC.

Mr. Neendkumar: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister tell us if there is any money here for the Amerindian villages? The Minister only spoke about what is to be given to

one local authority; the Kwakwani NDC. I am asking what is there for the Amerindian local authorities; nothing?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Let me help you. The answer is no.

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$205,867,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 802 – Public Infrastructure - \$218,250,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could you give the designations and the emoluments of the three current contracted employees?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: There are two engineers; one at \$212,891 and the other at 197,477

Mr. Croal: Follow up: Hon. Minister, you indicated that there are two employees under this line item but the Legend states three.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Sorry. There is a handyman who receives an emolument of \$60,000.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line items 6242, 6251 to 6253, as well as 6255, could you layover those over to the House?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The information is here and it will be laid over.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: I see that \$70 million is budgeted. Could the Minister layover to us the roads, the schedule and how much will be spent on each specific road?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Being that it is a short list I will read it so that it could be in the records. Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Police Station Street in Wisroc Housing Scheme - \$6.9 million, 320 feet by 24 feet; Thomas Street, Karakara - \$10.5 million, 1000 feet by 15 feet; Fraser Road, Karakara - \$10.6 million, 986 feet by 14 feet; River Side Drive, Watooka - \$9.6 million, 980 feet by 14 feet; First Street - four corner, One Mile - \$7 million, 800 feet by 14 feet; Potville, Kwakwani - \$12 million, 1200 feet by 200 feet; Main Street, Amelia's

Ward - \$10 million, 950 feet by 14 feet; and Toucan Drive, Amelia's Ward - \$9.3 million, 600 feet by 16.

Mr. Neendkumar: I am asking in the interest of the people of Region 10 because I noticed that there is no provision here for agriculture in this budget. I am asking, under line item 6252, Maintenance of Bridges, and line item 6253, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works, if the Minister could layover to us where the moneys will be spent and a schedule for completion. I see nothing for agriculture in Region 10.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you have any additional comment to make?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: In the interest of the people of Region 10, there are only three items under bridges and five under the other. I would like the people of Region 10 to hear. Bridges to be repaired under line item 6252, Maintenance of Bridges, are the bridge in Silvertown - \$3 million; Sunflower Street Hill Foot - \$2.5 million; and Second Street Rainbow City - \$6 million.

Under drainage and irrigation, which I suppose is to enhance agriculture - First Alley drain and culvert - \$11.5 million; Second Alley drain and culvert - \$11.5 million; One Mile drain - \$3 million; Potville drains in Kwakwani - \$7 million; and repairs to damage culverts on Republic Avenue - \$7 million.

Programme: 802 – Public Infrastructure – \$218,250,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery - \$1,969,031,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before we continue, following from a request made by the Hon. Member Mr. Neendkumar, and the expressed desire of the Minister to provide some of the information in oral form, I was taken somewhat yesterday and the day before by the huge volume of documents to be handed over and I wondered whether it is not a good thing to have the benefit of an oral presentation, where that is possible, and a handing over of documents where oral presentations would prove unnecessarily lengthy. It seems to me that that is a system which we could employ and I hope that proper tracking of the commitments are taking place. Because the volume of documents to be handed over seems to me, right now, as a great deal. The

officers of Parliament Office who are keeping track of this, I hope that they are following it. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Due to the time limit and the brief time we have to deal, especially, with the regions and other heads, we have used the tactic of asking for layover to allow us to ask pertinent questions on all the heads we have to examine. Therefore, we need to have the documents laid over and shared in the House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I thank you. The point I was making, simply, was to, if you like, facilitate a realistic handing over of documents. It seems to me that, what I have expressed there is, if a question is asked and a document is going to be handed over, whether that is considered doing justice to the question. As I said, the Members will decide. If part of the question is answered and the other part is handed over, it certainly gives some information in oral form within the House and the rest is handed over as required. I am saying, at the end of the day, the Hon. Members would decide. But that is a thinking that I have and I would like to share it with you. Thank you.

11.17 a.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, are you asking for a response?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am not asking for a response. Members will do what they want, at the end of the day, where this is concerned. Asking questions and getting answers is for the Members and not for the Chairman.

Ms. Teixeira: I appreciate that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Chairman simply shared with Members a thought which he had. If it is useful, use it; if it is not useful, then discard it. Please proceed.

Ms. Teixeira: Because of the timeframe, where necessary and where we would lose time by long details, we would appreciate the documents being handed over and shared in the House, as is the norm.

Minister of Public Health [Ms. Lawrence]: Mr. Chairman, on this side of the House, we would like to, at least, note a few of those items in response to the questions. It is so that it can be

recorded in the *Hansard* that we did give answers since those documents do not become part of the *Hansard*.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Croal, I thought this is not one you wish to speak on.

Mr. Croal: I thought you are continuing the questioning under the programme.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Mr. Croal.

Mr. Croal: We are at Programme 803 – Education Delivery.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Mr. Croal.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister indicate who the top five contracted employees are and what are their emoluments?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Did you say line item 6116 – Contracted Employees? We have the transitioning of clerical staff from contract service to the pensionable establishment. There was a question about the top five contracted employees.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there any difficulty?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Mr. Chairman, the information would be laid over.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6284 – Other: Firstly, could you indicate what the intention is for the additional \$15 million? Secondly, in a summarised form, what is the entire \$60 million budgeted for?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I missed the line item, Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Would you kindly repeat the line item please?

Mr. Croal: Sure. Hon. Minister, line item 6284 – Other: the provision increased from \$45 million to \$60 million.

Mr. Chairman: It is line item 6284.

Mr. Croal: It is on page 425.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There are increases in rates for supervisors and invigilators who conduct the Grades 2, 4, 6 and 9 Examinations, the Caribbean Examination Council (CSEC) examinations, the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), the Guyana Technical Examination Council (GTEC) examinations and the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) examinations. There is an additional janitorial staff, who is a prerequisite for the maintenance of a healthy learning environment, and that person will be paid \$312 per hour for four hours per day.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings and line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Hon. Minister, could you layover the relevant information to the Committee? Hon. Minister, all I asked is for you to lay it over to the Committee. I see the delay in the confirmation.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Mr. Croal, I was just observing protocol. The information will be laid over.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery - \$1,969,031,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 804 – Health Services - \$564,630,000

Dr. Ramsaran: Under line item 6133, Benefits & Allowances, Hon. Minister, did you note that there is a modest but significant increase? Could you tell us if this is where the gratuity for the doctors would be paid? If not, what other reason is there for this increase?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: For clarification, is it line item 6113 or 6133?

Dr. Ramsaran: It is line item 6133 – Benefits & Allowances.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: You said that there is an increase and that is why I am clarifying. The decrease is due to the reduction in emoluments which were paid. Persons retired and some were re-employed under line item 6117.

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: We see a sum of \$141.535 million budgeted. Could you please tell us what is the breakdown? How much will be retained in the region and how much will be warranted back to the central Ministry?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: An approximate amount of \$132 million would be warranted to the Ministry of Public Health and approximately \$10 million would be retained.

Dr. Ramsaran: Hon. Minister, could you give us a breakdown as to how the \$10 million would be spent? Could you give us a list of items and their costs? Could you also give us, for the previous year, similar information since it is in the Budget? That would be list of what was done with this year's provision that was kept in the region and the costs. Secondly, could you give us documentation of the agencies, contractors or the firms which supplied those medications for the moneys that were kept back in the region? *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Ramsaran, do you have more to say?

Dr. Ramsaran: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Well, then, please proceed.

Dr. Ramsaran: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I will look forward to those answers and, at the same time, I would like to remind the Minister to supply to us the documentation for the credibility of those firms that supplied the medication and the cost. Could the Hon. Minister indicate when she would do this? The exchange might have detracted from the question I had asked. Last year, 2016, is already more than a year away. Has the reconciliation been done?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, when you ask a question, do you not rely on your words to have the desired effect? Do not let us add more to it so that we have an argument. I thank you.

Dr. Ramsaran: I recognise your indulgence. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: I rise on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40 (a). I know that a number of things have been said that you are not hearing, but we are being constantly abused on this side and we are being heckled in an abusive way. There is a difference between heckling on the matters and

abuses that are personal to Members. I am asking you to please guide the other side. We have a responsibility to keep our comments in check here. I advise the Chief Whip on that side, who is the chief accuser right now, to also restrain herself. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, I believe I must tell you that that is good advice for this House. The Speaker has emphasised this on a number of times. I think it ought to have been unnecessary to do so. There is a complaint now and there was a complaint before and then there is comment and then there is not any comment, and the Speaker is called upon to police this particular activity. The Chairman is not cut out to be a policeman. What I am saying to Hon. Members of this House is that we know the rules and we know what causes upset to us. Should we visit that on someone else? Thank you.

Programme: 804 – Health Services - \$564,630,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.32 a.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 801 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$96,100,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1205100 – Buildings - Administration: Could you provide a little more information of the intention of this allocation? I see that the Legend states that it is for the regional administration building.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: As was said in the Budget speech, the current regional administration building is too small to house all of the offices and, currently, they are separated at different locations. So, the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) feels that bringing everybody under one roof would add to efficiency and better service delivery. So, a new location was identified and construction would start in 2018 and roll over to 2019.

Mr. Croal: Because of the nature of the building, I note that you mentioned that the project would roll over to 2019. So, the \$94 million would represent 2018's projected expenses. Could you, therefore, indicate what the projected total budget is for the construction of the building?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It is approximately \$267 million.

Mr. Croal: Project code 2505500 – Furniture and Equipment – Administration: I note that there would be procurement of computers. Could you say how many and to which department they would it be assigned?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It is two computers for the Accounts Department and the Planning and Monitoring Unit.

Programme: 801 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$96,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 802 - Public Infrastructure - \$104,300,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1401400 – Roads: Volume 3 indicates the projects, so I do not need you to repeat the project. Could you indicate the budgeted sum for each of the project?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I find that amusing. How can I give the cost without saying to which project the cost is attached? So, I have to say what the projects are, which are only four in number: upgrading of Stanley Road, \$22 million; upgrading of Wismar Hill Primary School Road; \$14.5 million, rehabilitation of Ball Field Road, \$16.8 million; and upgrading of Teachers Compound Access Road, \$15.2 million.

Mr. Croal: Project code 190700 – Infrastructural Development: What is the budgeted sum for each of the drainage system identified?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: For the record, the project code is 1901700. The provision includes the upgrading of drainage system at Sandy Road, \$13.5 million; upgrading of drainage system at Dacama Circle, \$4.4 million; and upgrading of sections of drainage system at Determa Street, \$3 million.

Programme: 802 - Public Infrastructure - \$104,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 803 - Education Delivery- \$162,000,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 2404300 – Land and Water Transport: Could you provide a little information on the bus that is intended to be purchased?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I think all Guyana would know that, a couple of years ago, there was a problem that led to the closure of the Christianburg Primary School and those students, which is about 150, had to be transferred to St. Aidan's Primary School,. St. Aidan's Primary is about 10 miles away from the Christianburg Primary School. So, you can understand the stress of additional transportation cost to the parents. So, the Department of Education thought it prudent and wise – and if we are as caring as we say we are – to buy a bus to transport those children.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Where would the bus be assigned?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It would be assigned to the Department of Education.

Mr. Croal: In the initial explanation, I did not get the type or size of the intended bus. I saw that it would cost \$14 million.

Ms. Patterson: It is a 32-seater bus.

Programme: 803 - Education Delivery - \$162,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 804 - Health Services - \$98,400,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 2403500 - Land and Water Transport – Health: Hon. Minister, how many river ambulances do you expect to procure?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It would be two river ambulances.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Could you say where the ambulances are expected to service?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Without discrimination, one would be assigned to Malali in the Demerara River and the other to Biruni in the Berbice River.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: There are a number of communities in the Demerara River, other than Malali and Motaria, as you know, which have difficulties being serviced. Will the river ambulance service areas such as Johanna, Sanjan or Endeavour or would it just stop at the boarder of Region 3 and Region 10 on the river? It is because it is State property and, therefore, it is best to serve all the people. Timehri docks having moved up, there are very few facilities to

assist those people who have difficulties coming out. Would the river ambulance work the river up to Timehri docks or is there a territorial boundary between Region 10 and Regions 4 and 3?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: As I understand it, Timehri is not a part of Region 10 and these boats would be purchased to service Region 10. We must understand and believe that our decision-makers know what they are doing. Malali was chosen because it is the furthest up the Demerara River and Biruni was chosen because that is centre and can serve both sides of the Berbice River.

Ms. Teixeira: It is regrettable, Hon. Minister, that with limited resources...I am sure that Regions 3 and 4 could coordinate with Region 10 to share the resource. There are Great Falls, Endeavour and Susannah. All of these areas, in addition to Sanjan, are very poor and need access to services. Is there any possibility for you as a Minister to encourage the three RDCs to have a shared mechanism for the river ambulances for those areas in Guyana?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I want to thank the Hon. Member for the recommendation. I would take it forward, but it is for the authorities to decide how they would use their resources and not for the Minister to say.

Programme: 804 - Health Services - \$98,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.47 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have now completed the consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the regions.

Agency: 04 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$1,686,251,000

Mr. Greenidge: Please be so good as to give me two minutes, Mr. Chairman, as the staff change around.

Mr. Chairman: Certainly, Minister. We will allow a few minutes. I am a little generous this morning. I will allow two minutes instead of the one of yesterday, so that the Minister could put himself in sync with his staff.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6284 – Other: I noticed that, in the 2017 Budget, \$200 million was allocated and the spent amount – revised 2017 – is \$340 million. Therefore, it is \$140 million more than what was appropriated. Could you say if there was a Supplementary Financial Paper? If there was, which one was it? It is because there were three in 2017.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Teixeira, the answer is that there was a Supplementary Paper amounting to \$100 million, which was submitted and approved in 2017, and it was for the payment of consultancy services, together with payment of bank charges, remittances, and customs brokerage fees.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you say where the other \$40 million came from? It was \$200 million budgeted; \$100 million for Supplementary, but what was spent, according to this, was \$340 million under line item 6284.

Mr. Greenidge: The \$40 million came from savings against other line items and we vired that amount in order to meet the consultancy and other charges.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6284 – Other: \$300 million has been budgeted for 2018. In the last Budget, we asked about what the \$300 million would have been used for and you spoke about consultancies that would be assisting Guyana at the United Nations (UN) on the Guyana border issue. It catered for the hiring of the consultants, advisers, *et cetera*, as well as persons to assist the Ministry with Guyana's reports to the UN Convention Treaty bodies - Organization of American States (OAS), *et cetera*. That was what you had reported in the 2017 Budget debate. The amount has gone up to \$300 million. Could you say what this money would be used for?

Mr. Greenidge: The explanation provided for 2017 remains valid now, except that we anticipate that, in relation to consultancies in particular, there would be an additional demand for services.

Ms. Teixeira: Is this \$300 million to pay Guyana's legal team which is in discussions with the UN in regards to the Guyana border issue? If it is not in relation to that, is it in anticipation that this will be used if the matter is taken to the International Court of Justice (ICJ)?

Mr. Greenidge: The answer to the question is that the moneys are used largely for what we call an advisory team. These are experts, former members of staff and so forth in the area associated with the services that were correctly mentioned by the Hon. Member. In 2018, those services will continue. Some of them, as I said, would be enhanced. But the funds to pay what we may call the enlarged legal team, largely a team of foreign lawyers, will not come from this source.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Minister state what would happen to this \$300 million in his Ministry’s Budget if Guyana were not to succeed in getting the UN to take the matter to the ICJ?

Mr. Greenidge: It will still be spent and probably we will need more because this is the internal team that is working, and we fund the preparation of papers, and some lawyers, but not the international team that would confront the ICJ. There are also internal litigation issues.

Ms. Teixeira: I do not have a personal explanation but I am a part of that advisory team from time to time. I would just like to clarify for this House that I am not paid. I do it *pro bono* on behalf of Guyana as a good patriot. My Minister will not counteract that. I know.

Hon. Minister, you just made a statement, in the Committee, that it was difficult to pay the legal team representing us at the UN. But there was a Supplementary Paper for \$140 million more in 2017 to bring you up to \$340 million. Did that not help to cover some of your cost?

Mr. Greenidge: Well, the Hon. Member’s observations regarding her membership and the value of the contribution, not least the payment for the contribution, are quite correct. But there are a number of supporting services which are provided by way of an input to that exercise. What I wish to say is that the exercise that we are currently undertaking, without having to go to the ICJ, does also involve lawyers and we have to also pay them. I draw a distinction between the ICJ team, which has not yet been contracted, and the advisory team and appendages which are currently engaging us. Does that help?

Ms. Teixeira: Let us go to line item 6294 – Other: The allocation in 2017 was \$100 million. It was underspent; only \$58.206 million was spent and now the allocation is \$90 million. If my notes from the last Budget are correct, line item 6294 was to be used for a number of issues, including the hosting of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government

conference and a number of other CARICOM meetings. Could the Hon. Minister explain why the head was underspent and what, for 2018, accounts for the increase in light of the under-spending?

Mr. Greenidge: I always get discommoded and disoriented when there is mention of under-spending as regard the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So, forgive me for that. The reason for the under-spending was that the expenditure for the Heads of Government conference was borne by the Ministry of Finance. So, that was met from its expenses.

Ms. Teixeira: We will look for that in the Ministry of Finance's Budget for 2017.

Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations: Normally, I would not raise issues with this head. But I noticed some issues on which I need to ask questions. Pages 444 and 445 list the organisations: There is a concern - and no one has raised this with me; I just noticed this - that the United Nations Local Office cost, which was \$65.847 million, in 2017, has been reduced to \$19.758 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain this, particularly when there is a new office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which has just been opened here and that is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Office?

Mr. Greenidge: The payments in 2017 and I think in 2016 were the subject of some exchanges between myself and the distinguished Member and that exchange turned upon, you might recall, the desirability of clearing arrears. So, the reduction as regard the UN payments had to do with the fact that we cleared arrears amounting to approximately \$246 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Under the Organisation Islamic Conference, you had explained, on the last occasion, that Guyana had paid a rather large amount because of the linkage with the Islamic Development Bank. The amount is dropped now to \$78.718 million. Have we succeeding in getting support from the Islamic Development Bank as a result of our very healthy and significant contribution?

Mr. Greenidge: Sorry. I misunderstood the question. Are you asking whether we received any assistance in the paying off of the arrears? The answer is yes. We did receive assistance in the clearance of those arrears.

Ms. Teixeira: I am still on the same line item. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA): In the light of statements made in the Budget document and Budget presentation by different Members on both sides of the House to do with natural disasters and seeing what the hurricanes did in this season, I am a little bit concerned about the drop to \$9.027 million. Is this because of arrears or is it because of some other reason?

Mr. Greenidge: The Hon. Member is quite correct. The decrease is due to the payment of arrears. We paid approximately \$30,569,000 in 2017 which brought down the arrears from 2012, and that is the reason for the decrease in 2018.

12.02 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: We are finished with line item 6322. I want to go back to line item 6284 - Other: The \$300,000,000. Based on your statement this morning, would the money in the account that is being debated all over the country be extracted from that account to come into your Ministry's account, in order to pay your legal team on the Guyana/Venezuela border issue? You have reported to this House that it was put into an account if you need... You said it publicly that it is for the Guyana-Venezuela border issue. How will the money be moved from that account into your account?

Mr. Greenidge: Let me hazard a guess. Normally, what happens here... If I may, the Minister of Finance will speak.

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: The money will be moved from the special account into the Consolidated Fund. The foreign currency will be sold to the Bank of Guyana to increase their reserves and they will credit the Consolidated Fund with the equivalent in Guyana dollars. At the same time, we will come back to the National Assembly for a supplementary Budget - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under consultancy. The exact amount will be passed out through the Budget and repurchase the foreign currency from the Bank of Guyana (BOG) to pay the lawyers. That is the process; that is the legal and lawful process.

Ms. Teixeira: We will be monitoring that to make sure that it is done. **[Mr. Jordan:** I am sure you will.] I am glad that you trust us on that. **[Interruption]** We will discuss that. That is not a line item here I am advised. It is not a line item here so I will obey the rules of the House. There is no line item so I cannot raise it. We will be monitoring the issue and I thank you.

However, I am trying to make sure that our Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is dealing with a very delicate national matter of sovereignty and territorial integrity, which is the concern of all of us as Guyanese, in no way finds himself cash trapped. We understand that US\$18 million is available, although I know that there is US\$20 million. Because I am part of the advisory team I am little concerned that my Colleague on the other side may need money rapidly. I want to know who signs off and who gives the approval for the extraction of the X dollars from the account so that the money comes on the supplementary financial paper to National Assembly and then the money is given to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am concerned. Suppose some of your signatories do not want to give the money to the Minister? Or is he a signatory? Is he a signatory on this special group of people he referred to who will sign off on the account? **[Interruption]** The Hon. Member said that there is a group of persons, a special group, highly trusted, with the authority to extract money from the account. Did I understand you correctly? I tried to take notes as fast as I could, and I do hope that we will see your loving speech. I want to ensure whether the Minister is one of the signatories since this account, according to the Government's report, is for the Guyana-Venezuela border issue? I want assurance. I want Minister Greenidge to give us assurance. Are you a signatory on the special account to make sure that when the designated reason for this account is required that you will face no obstacles in ensuring that the legal team of Guyana is the best and the most powerful that we can muster? Could you answer since Mr. Jordan is afraid to answer?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, this is essentially your Ministry and I would look to you, and Hon. Members are right to look to you for answers to the questions.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I hope you will forgive us. I do not mind. The Minister of Finance answered the first set of questions that were put very clearly. As regards the persons authorised by the Minister through the Secretary to the Treasury, no Minister is on that list. I made reference to that in relation to my statement; that the financial technicians will deal with the movement of the funds from the deposit account.

Ms. Teixeira: When I looked at you Mr. Chairman, I just remembered that you are a member of the advisory team too. Are you working *pro bono* like me?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if I were a member of the advisory team that it would be other than *pro bono*.

Ms. Teixeira: Are you not sure?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know that it can be other than that.

Ms. Teixeira: It is the same here; it is now that I am hearing about all of this money.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, we should speak to the Minister but at a different time.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, I will, but it is okay. *Pro bono* is fine with me.

Minister, in the last Budget, I was trying to represent the trade and policy programme and you advised that the Director of Trade was paid under Programme 41, which is the one that we are on now. Does that remain the same? That is why I am asking under line item 6116, Contracted Employees. Is the Director of Trade still paid under Programme 41 or has he been moved into the proper programme?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, the Director of Trade is paid under Programme 1, Administration.

Ms. Teixeira: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I noticed that the staffing under that head has increased from 34 to 49. You seem to have a lot of administrators at a high level. Do the figures for line item 6111, Administrative, include the embassies or are these 49 people that you anticipate for 2018 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here in Guyana?

Mr. Greenidge: The staff in question here contains none of the staff members of the Embassy. It is just the head office staff.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you. Line item 6261- Local Travel and Subsistence: The \$35 million seems to be an awful lot of money being spent by our Ministry for local travel. What accounts for the \$35 million budgeted for 2018? Is everyone flying around Guyana or checking the borders? It is \$35 million. Yesterday I witnessed all the Regions and they do not have anything. The Ministries do not have this except for the Ministry of the Presidency, of course. What about your Ministry? You are not so local. You are mostly flying overseas. Why is the figure so high at \$35 million?

Mr. Greenidge: This item always causes a problem. Not for the reason that I think Colleagues normally anticipate. The head caters for postings, reposting, and cross postings of the home based staff to missions; outreach programmes where we undertake those which involves sensitisation of the public as regards the Venezuela border controversy and so forth; then there

are also the usual administrative visits by the administrative staff to other missions; and any official travel, cost for transportation, baggage and so forth that may be involved in the normal movements.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6294 – Other: I am going back to that one. You had reported in the last Budget debate that some of the support is given to the Diaspora Unit, I believe, and a number of consultants *et cetera*. You also reported, under questioning, that there was a paper being prepared on the Diaspora and it will be taken to Cabinet and then made public. Could you advise if that is so? Is there a Diaspora paper or a policy paper on the Diaspora? I did see one on your website but I am not sure if that is the official one. Could you say if there is a Cabinet position on the Diaspora and when will it be brought to the National Assembly?

Mr. Greenidge: The Hon. Member is correct. We are in the process of working on a Diaspora paper. The first draft of the paper was prepared by the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM's) expert that was contracted for that purpose, and Cabinet had a preliminary discussion of that paper. The IOM then received those comments and was in the process of finalising a draft to come back to us, which is normal. But as a result of their reaction to some of the comments made by representatives of the Diaspora - New York being the most vociferous, as usual - and some exchanges, it was agreed by the IOM to provide additional funding for another round by the team, which would include a round to gauge the responses in New York and Toronto amongst others. Those are the two that I could remember. I do not think that work has been completed as yet, so it has not yet gone back to the Cabinet. What you would have seen on the website would have been an early draft which was being used to invite additional comments. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6294 - Other, where we are right now. There was an IOM project which, I think, was under line item 6294, pre-2015, where we were trying to create a database of migrants. Is that still operational and could you give us an idea of what has been the level of response? Has the Diaspora been logging on and how is that being managed? Am I correct that line item 6294 is the place where some of this support comes from?

Mr. Greenidge: The last element of the question that was raised as to whether the expenses are still reflected here, the answer is yes. As regards the progress with the database, I can say that the database has been populated; the response of the public has been reasonably good. I can provide

some information if the Hon. Member needs. As regards to numbers, I am not able to give you that offhand, but the database is in train and there has been a reasonably good response.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6294 – Other: You had reported last year that there were consultants to assist the rationalisation of the functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Citizenship. I heard from Minister Felix that the Re-Migrant Unit has moved to his Ministry. Has that been completed? Is it so that all re-migrant issues are now dealt with by Minister Felix and not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at all?

12.17 p.m.

Mr. Greenidge: The process has not yet been completed. The situation is this, at this point in time the relevant staff members, the staff members who were identified by the Ministry of Citizenship are working on the exercise. They form a team with staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They are now awaiting arrangements for the Ministry to be moved to new premises. When that is done we will be able to complete the hand over.

Ms. Teixeira: Are you saying for the next six months that re-migrants would continue to come to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until this is all regularised?

Mr. Greenidge: The location and the overseeing of this exercise will continue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the time being. I am not sure how long it will take but work is being done on the building into which the Ministry of Citizenship will be moved.

Programme: 041 - Development of Foreign Policy - \$1,686,251,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion - \$3,379,713,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: If I am correct, I believe this is the particular line item under which we pay Ambassadors and High Commissioners *et cetera*. I noticed the increase of \$99,677,000. The sum of \$368,440,000 was budgeted in 2017 but \$397,620,000 was spent and it is now going up to \$497,297,000 for 2018. In fact, the numbers in the staffing column have gone from 18 to 23. In December, 2016, when we were speaking, I believe a number of Ambassadors had not been accredited. I believe you provided a breakdown of staff in the Missions at that time. You said that the Ambassadors and High Commissioners

negotiated individual contracts and that is why, in the circular you sent out in response to my question, there were differences between salaries and benefits for different Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Counsel Generals. Could you say what accounts for the \$99,677,000 increase? Are we planning to have more High Commissioners and Ambassadors in 2018 or are there new benefits the present ones are getting that is causing this big increase?

Mr. Greenidge: The main reason for the difference here is due to a shortfall in 2017 of \$83,700,000 under this vote. The Ministry of Finance assisted us with that shortfall. That amount was received from the Ministry of Finance. You need to take that into account because it is almost \$100,000,000 for the difference or what appears to be an increase in 2018. In regard to the Ambassadors and so forth, what I can say is that there have been a few changes, not so much by way of new appointees in 2018 but there were some who were posted late in 2017, such as the Ambassador in Geneva, Mr. Neville Totaram. He has now been posted to Geneva.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: It was budgeted for \$921,566,000; an appropriated \$874,800,000 was spent. It has increased to \$910,755,000 for 2018. You said that people were in the process of getting settled *et cetera*. Could we have an idea of what buildings are being rented and for whom?

Mr. Greenidge: I can go through the list. In the case of Canada, the Counsel General in Toronto has an office and the rental of that office has not changed from 2017. In relation to accommodation for the officers there is an increase in the rent as per contract, for example, an increase from \$440,062 to nearly \$500,000. In the case of the Deputy Counsel General, the amount has actually gone down because they were able to negotiate a smaller amount than anticipated for the rental.

Regarding the others, for example in Havana, there have been increases as per contract. They are not massive but I can go through those if you wish. The accommodations would be embassy office, residences, counsels' apartments, student affairs apartments and the apartment for the accountant.

In the case of India, the cost for the accommodations for home-based staff has decreased, and some are quite substantial, as in the case of one of the officers. The cost of housing for the

chancellery has gone the other way; it has significantly increased. The accommodation for the High Commissioner has not changed.

In relation to London, the cost of rental for the High Commissioner has not changed but for others there have been some increases as per contracts, for example, from \$19,824,000 to \$21,000,000 per annum. In Nickerie, the rental for residences and offices has not changed but in New York, the cost for the public relations (PR) office and residence has increased as per contract. For the others in Washington, all the increases are as per contracts and there is nothing dramatic there. The Barbados Chancellery has been re-located. This has resulted in a reduction of rental cost and there is an official residence for an officer now posted from the head office.

In the case of Kuwait, you know that we have assistance from the Government of Kuwait in relation to the payment for the chancellery and residence. Sorry to jump like this but this is how it is listed.

In Paramaribo, the exchange rate differences have given rise to some of the changes that you have seen. The cost for the Chancellery in Beijing has not increased but the staff postings have; an accountant, in particular, has resulted in a substantial increase in rental cost. In New York, the new contract for the Counsel General's residence has meant an increase in the payments between April and the end of the year. The cost of rental in Brussels has gone down from \$73,000,000 to \$50,000,000. For our High Commissioner and Chancellery *et cetera* to Switzerland, we are assisted by the Swiss Government and there are no major changes in the cost of rentals.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the increase budgeted for 2018 will be in keeping with the contract which was only signed this year, if I remember correctly. The exchange rate differences in Caracas, Venezuela, and new residence for the Secretary in South Africa has meant an increase in the cost for rental, but in Boa Vista, Brazil, there is no change. In Ottawa there are increases as per contracts and additional amounts associated with insurance as well as exchange rate differences. Those are all the items but these are the reasons for some of the changes you have seen.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6331 – Refunds of Revenues: I have raised this during the 2016 and 2017 Budget. It is my concern that the moneys for passports and visas issued along with other revenue generated activities of our Missions overseas, is traditionally putting \$500,000. Last

year, when I asked the question, where were the passport funds going, I believe you said that it may probably go to the Ministry of Citizenship and the Central Immigration and Passport Office. At that point I checked the details in the *Estimates of the Public Sector* for the Ministry of Citizenship and there was zero there for revenue. I did that again this year and there is zero balance. I am concerned. I know that we issue passports, notaries, visas and offer services. Where does the money go which the Missions collect? This \$500,000 cannot be reflective of the work that is being done by our Missions.

Mr. Greenidge: We did have that exchange last year and I invited the Hon. Member to have a look at the *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume I*, page 10, Details of Revenue Estimates, Table 6. Under that head, you will find an item under the Ministry of Public Security, 5338 Police. In that item the revenues associated with passports will be captured.

Ms. Teixeira: The revenue is accounted for under different sub-heads; 5333 Consular Services, 5334 Citizen Registration Fees *et cetera*, 5335 Registration of Births *et cetera*, 5336 Foreign Affairs-Other and 5337 Foreign Affairs-Affidavit Fee, which is not in your programme. What is the \$500,000 that you are collecting under line item 6331 – Refunds of Revenues?

Mr. Greenidge: The \$500,000 shown under Budget 2018 is associated with refunds. Persons may have paid for passports and for some reason have been unable to receive or collect those passports. For example, they may die or for other reasons be unable to collect.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion - \$3,379,713,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

12.32 p.m.

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$23,476,000

Ms. Teixeira: For Staffing Details, I noticed that under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, you have removed all contracted employees. My greater concern, which I raised last year, was that this programme deals with the African/Caribbean/Pacific (ACP), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Market and Economy, bilateral trade, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Mexico and Cuba when we are looking for rice markets.

Why has the budget increased from \$16,958,000 to \$23,476,000 in total? Worse yet, when we get to Contracted Employees there is zero and when we get to line item 6111 there is one person; under line item 6112, Senior Technical, there is one person and one person under line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support. From seven persons last year we have gone down to three persons. As a country how would we be able, with only three persons, to do the work relating to treaty, bilateral and promote our country through trade? This is worse than last year. As usual, I am always trying to represent the Hon. Minister under Programme 043 to get the Minister of Finance to listen. It seems as if I did more damage because the figure has decreased. I have to be very careful when I am showing support because it might backfire. I am very concerned that the Programme is now under-supported and under-staffed than last year. Could you please advise?

Mr. Greenidge: I would be happy for our distinguished Colleague to continue to weigh in on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unfortunately, in this particular case, there is no need to trouble the Minister of Finance because the problem lies elsewhere. First of all, the work in this arena is also serviced from other sections of the Ministry. It is not only serviced by the staff that is shown here. As regards that section, the posting of the most senior officer to Geneva is reflected there. There was one resignation and one person was transferred to Administrative with effect from April, 2017. The figures therefore reflect those changes.

I should add that we are in the process of some form of dialogue between ourselves, the Public Service Ministry and the Public Service Commission. We found ourselves, perhaps, in a situation where the skills that are needed in relation to foreign affairs in general, and maybe in trade matters, are not fully reflected in the actions taken by the agencies as regards those persons coming into the Ministry. We are working on that. I hope for the moment that that could suffice. We do recognise and agree with what you said with regards to the need for skilled and experienced persons, who are qualified in trade, economic and legal areas, to handle foreign trade matters. That is something we are in dialogue over.

Ms. Teixeira: I cannot comprehend why when we are talking about searching for markets for rice and bilateral agreements that it is under this Programme. I appreciate that there may be money elsewhere but this Programme is designated to deal with foreign trade that is so underfunded and to always be so absorbed.

We then come to a funny one, line item 6293, Refreshments and Meals. There are three people who are working and they would be eating \$3,320,000 worth of food a year. I am sure that this is for occasional meetings, Hon. Minister. But it seems a bit odd. You have quite a good dietary budget too, but that is for a Ministry with 135 persons. You have \$9,200,000 which is budgeted for under Programme 041. You have \$11 million for Refreshments and Meals under Programme 042 for 217 persons, including guests and receptions. There seems to be a disproportion that three persons running a programme have such a sizeable budget of \$3,320,000. Could you advise?

Mr. Greenidge: Who is the mathematical genius behind there that suggested that it is \$1 million per person?

Ms. Teixeira: It is not me. It is a voice behind me.

Mr. Greenidge: I guessed that it was not you.

Ms. Teixeira: He is the Mathematics genius. I am not.

Mr. Greenidge: Line item 6293 – Refreshments and Meals, do not only cater for the needs of the three persons in the division. In fact, they deal with trade matters and the private sector in particular and when we have the National Advisory Committee on External Negotiations and other service agencies of the private sector visiting they are facilitated. The deliberations are facilitated by ensuring that all the sustenance that they need is provided in this way. It is not consumed by three persons but sometimes by 40 or more persons at a time. These are delegations that visit the Ministry. That is the reason.

Ms. Teixeira was asking a question about the work in relation to enhancement of trade and export and so forth. What has happened was that a number of the officers who actually handled trade promotion and the types of matters mentioned have now been moved to the Missions abroad. When you look at the work of the Ministry during the course of 2017 you would see Cuba looming quite large on the workings for markets for rice, the arrangements for cooperation between Nand Persaud and Company Limited, Corentyne, Berbice, and millers who are importing paddy and are interesting in processing, and the Dominican Republic and so forth. The main trade expertise normally lies in Brussels, our main trading partner. Most of their work

concerns trade, financial cooperation or development finance issues, as well as cultural and other cooperation.

Because Geneva is the main centre for trade policy and World Trade Organization (WTO) matters there is a movement of skills there. There are three officers there including the additional one who has been transferred there. In the first instance the officer went there for six months and was funded by the WTO. The term has been extended for an additional six months. We expect to see that officer back during the course of 2018. That is part of the reason for what appeared to be anomalous figures.

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$23,476 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, with your agreement we would continue and conclude considering the Capital Expenditure. In that way we could break for lunch after that. That would allow the officers to return to their respective responsibilities.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$212,000,000

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1200500 – Buildings: One hundred million dollars was budgeted in 2017. It sate that it has been expended. One hundred and fifty-seven million dollars has been budgeted for 2018. This is for Ramphal House which is now called the Foreign Service Institute. I passed there last night to make sure that work was going on so I would be able to say something on that. I would like clarification on whether this project was tendered for, what is the name of the contractor, what is the value of the contract and when the project would be completed. I saw in the Legend that it would be completed in 2018. The total amount budgeted for according to *Volume 3* is \$345 million. It looks like the works would be completed in 2019. I may be wrong so could you clarify those issues?

Mr. Greenidge: The plan is to complete the work during the course of 2018. There would be a balance left to be paid in 2019 which would be associated with defects and contracts, I believe. The overall value of the contract is \$316,065,000. The project was tendered for and the contractor is Courtney Benn Contracting Services Limited.

Ms. Teixeira: Three hundred and sixteen...?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, \$316,065,000.

Ms. Teixeira: I asked about the projected date of completion. Was the project advertised and publicly tendered and what was the name of the contractor?

12.47 p.m.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I indicated that the contractor is Courtney Benn Contracting Services Limited. We anticipate that the work would be completed sometime after April 2018 and before the end of April 2018, sometime in that period. Just out of abundant caution, I am putting it that way. So you are looking at that sort of period, but, hopefully, it could be sooner in the year.

Ms. Teixeira: The value of the contract is \$316 million. We have paid \$100 million upfront and we have \$157 budgeted for 2018 which gives a total of \$257 million. In other words, the balance that you are speaking of, would it be paid as a supplementary in 2018 because it does not add up or it is expected that you will go with a 2019 completion of the project?

Mr. Greenidge: The Hon. Member, overlooked the fact that \$50 million was paid in 2016. There was a sum of \$50 million paid in 2016 and there are issues pertaining to defects liability that needs to be taken into account. I think there is a \$15 million deduction and the provision for consultancy services of some \$6 million involved in that whole mixed up in 2018.

Ms. Teixeira: Just a suggestion Minister, under this project code 1200500 is that it would have been nice... foreign affairs is the image of Guyana, do not worry about Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon saying that, with the makeup artist, that is the image of Guyana. The image of Guyana is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in terms of you representing Guyana, its diversity, culture, religion and ethnicity. It is unfortunate that the building and the architectural design of the building, as far as I know, has not been made public. Is it not possible for the architectural designs, it was an old building and it has its own architectural interest, at least the front, of what it is going to look like... I did not realise it was going to be there floors, so it may match Takuba Lodge, which is the 1970's modern *bla*, but it is 1970's architect, if you are going to match that or you are going to try to recreate something more creative. I just made that suggestion.

I would hope that Minister, and I trust you more than some of your other Colleagues, would not paint these buildings green, [Ms. Manickchand: And Yellow], and yellow. I mean yellow ends up being a little trimmed, but we understand. Could you not, please, because my faith in you would decline totally?

Project code 2501100 – Office Equipment and Furniture – \$55 million: This is apparently, according to the Legend, for “Head Office”. That is awful lot of money. Am I correct in assuming that the \$55 million is not just for the head office but also to equip and furnish the new building when it is finished?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, Mdm. Teixeira has asked about what appears to be a large sum. Let me say that, as you know, the elevator in the building has not been functioning for the longest while. It has been a victim of water, believe it or not, in a place like Guyana, and we have been unable to replace the motherboard. That is all that is wrong with it. It has to be replaced and that will cost \$20 million and the generator for the elevator will be somewhere in the region of \$1.26 million. There are two major elements in there; one is the elevator and the other is a generator for the complex.

We would be happy to provide you with the design of the building under construction. I would also say to you, as regards the furnishing of the building, that there are a number of elements - workstations, executive chairs and so forth, public address system, projector and laptops for language and so forth, recorders, conference room tables and the like are catered for under this item. Is that good enough?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, thank you. I know the problem with the elevator. It is the same problem at the Ministry of the Presidency because we have to construct elevators much higher off the ground to prevent flooding. It destroys all the elevators at least in the Government. I do not know about outside. If that does not work, then you have to do some blue water and some praying and stuff like that to find if there is some Dutch tomb under there.

You are buying a generator and that is understood; unfortunately, we have also heard about the green state and solar energy and wind energy. Was there any consideration by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that instead of investing in a generator to invest in solar panels? We have heard from different Ministers how we would be using alternative energy in about 20 or more

Government agencies. I am wondering why the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not included in that list.

Mr. Greenidge: I am happy to say to our Hon. Colleague, on the other side, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to be the beneficiary of the programme to which she referred which is being managed overall by the Ministry of the Presidency. Having said that, the proposal is to have a dual system; both a generator and solar panels as part of the Ministry of the Presidency arrangement.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you Minister and I am glad to hear that. I know the difficulties. You are suffering, like all Guyanese, with the blackouts and the problem with the Guyana Power and Light (GPL). We would not make any comments to stop your generator being put on ... but we would hope that GPL would get their act together so that we could stop punishing with blackouts.

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$212,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$ 275,709,000

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2400300 – Land Transport: In 2016 it was reported that \$57.6 million that was spent was for vehicles for Trinidad and Tobago, Switzerland, Beijing, Boa Vista and South Africa. For 2017, the \$30.1 million was for the purchase of vehicles for Toronto, Delhi and Ottawa. Now, in the 2018 Budget, \$35.7 million is budgeted. Could you advise this House about which mission or the head office will benefit from this allocation?

Mr. Greenidge: The vehicles to be purchased in 2018 are for Barbados, where, at the moment, it only has one vehicle to move the Consul General to move mail, do services such as going to the banks and help visitors if they arrived. That situation is pretty chronic. The other is for London, where, although it initially started off with two vehicles, there has been an accident and, therefore, one has now to be replaced; and the other is for Switzerland, where a vehicle is now needed. There is one vehicle there but it is not adequate for the services to be undertaken as well as to move the two Ambassadors or Ambassador Equivalence that are there.

Ms. Teixeira: I am very ignorant about cars and types of cars and capacities and all of that, so I am not good at that. I would really appreciate you advising us on the type of cars that are being purchased for Barbados, London and Switzerland because, to me, \$35 million is an awful lot of money for three vehicles. As I said, I am ignorant on these issues, particularly to do with cars. I have no interest and I never pay attention but I would appreciate knowing that.

Before I sit down I just want to go to the next head so you would answer both together. Project code 1200500 – Buildings: \$200 million is budgeted for the Brazil Embassy. I am glad to learn that this will commence. This has been an issue for quite a long time and it has had quite a history. The total project cost for the Guyana Embassy in Brazil, according to this it is \$975 million, as stated in the Legend. In other words, this is a multiyear project and this is the first year of construction. Could you advise us, again, whether it was advertised and how long is it expected to take to construct and could you give us the contract sum, thank you?

Mr. Greenidge: The construction exercise and the tendering of the work to be done would be done in segments. It is true that the cost will be more than \$900 million as mentioned. It is an exercise that would take three years. It will finish in 2020. [Ms. Teixeira: *[inaudible]*]
Well, you could cancel it at that point but I do not think it will rise. There is the preparation of the site, the construction of the building, which is for the chancellery itself; then there is the residence for the ambassadors and an apartment for diplomats. It has several elements and they would be advertised and the bids for them will be done separately. The \$200 million, and what it contains, is in relation to the chancellery itself.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2501100 – Office Equipment and Furniture – \$40 million:

“Purchase of furniture and equipment for overseas missions.”

In 2016, it was \$24.998 million and in 2017 it was \$28 million. Could you advise why there is such sizable increase for furniture for the overseas missions?

1.02 p.m.

Mr. Greenidge: The increase is attributive to the fact that we are trying to deal with all of the missions, which would be New York and all the others. The problem is that, in some of the missions, all though you know that they have furniture and equipment, what has happened, I

think, is that those were not upgraded for some time. In visiting these missions, we found that there were a lot of complaints and low morale in the lots of them because they felt that we did not have the money. I think on some previous occasions when they, perhaps, should have been asking for more expenditure, as part of a routine maintenance and replacement, they did not do so. That is why there is a little bit of a hump. Please bear in mind, also, that there are the new missions in Geneva and in Trinidad and Tobago. Geneva, in particular, is a very expensive place. Again, if you wish, I could go through the elements.

Ms. Teixeira: I would appreciate to know the breakdown per mission because I am aware that one of your top people, in one of the missions, has a television in every room of his/her personal residence. We are told that it is paid for by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I recognised that some furniture were old in different places and had to be replaced, but I hope that there is not an open-ended extravagant spending by certain ambassadors and high commissioners of Guyana. We are still a people who are living on a 'beer bottle' pocket and not a Cadillac pocket or we should be, in other words. I hope that the Ministry is being very careful and frugal to make sure that the staff of the missions have the equipment that they need to do their work for the public – computers and all the technology, scanners and photocopiers – and is not spending large amounts of money in making ambassadors or high commissioners houses or residences pretty. It is an issue of priority, it is not an issue of whether they deserve it or not. That is not the area that I am going into.

I am concerned that \$40 million is going to be spent on, what you said, basically, Geneva and Barbados. I think that is what you said, I do not know if there are any others, but, to me, it seems to me that we have to be very careful. To me, it is extravagance.

Mr. Greenidge: I would just remind colleagues that GY\$40 million does not go very far outside of Guyana especially where one is buying things other than furniture; equipment in particular. Again, just to remind colleagues that we are not only looking at Geneva and Trinidad and Tobago, those are new and completely new furnishings that would be there.

As regards the likelihood of one of the ambassadors or consulates being in a position to have a television in each room, it would help, and I could perhaps get the information from our Hon. Colleague in private, but the thing is that I am not aware of anything like that. You may also

have to take into account that what may appear to be televisions may also be monitoring equipment. There is a major security concern and we have had to specifically attend to security in some areas like Trinidad, with Caracas being the most urgent of those.

As regards the individual missions for New York Consul General, we are looking at a digital receipt printing machine system, a multi-window number system, a public address (PA) system, a two-drawer cabinet, dining room set, retractable control barrier which is for control of entry, and some waiting room chairs.

For Trinidad and Tobago, you are looking at stacking chairs, fireproof cabinets, the purchase of two-drawer filing cabinets, some dining sets, coffee and tea sets, a projector, laptop computer, a carpet floor for the High Commissioner's residence, a podium and a banner, an end table, and a display cabinet.

For Switzerland, it is some desks and chairs.

For Barbados, we are looking at a laptop, projector, display cabinets, filing cabinets, a counterfeit detector machine and some chairs.

For Toronto, the telephone system needs to be replaced, purchase of a conference table and conference chairs, dining table and dining chair, a server, and a security system which I forgot to mention also needs attention.

In Ottawa, one has to attend to the bedroom, so there is a bedroom set there, there are desks for the office, a projector, and laptop.

In Washington, it is for a desk, dining set, a wireless printer, one smart television - I shall look at that one - a Xerox photocopier, a PowerEdge server, a bookcase, steel cabinets, an office suite and a conference table.

In India, it is for a refrigerator and air purifiers.

For Paramaribo, it is for a computer, filing cabinets, a scanner, office desks and chairs for a renovated office and a printer-scanner.

In Brazil, it is for a refrigerator, filing cabinets, a computer and a desk.

In Caracas, it is for air conditioning units, filing cabinets, a computer desk, a bed and mattress and some computers.

For Havana, it caters for chair, computers, an air conditioning unit, a washing machine, a dining room set and a cabinet.

In London there is a photocopier, meeting chairs, printer, computer, PA system, desks, laptop, cabinets, executive chairs, security camera and microwave.

In Nickerie, it is for a pressure washer, coffee table and a refrigerator.

In Kuwait, IT is for Executive chairs, washer dryer, monitor screen, paper shredder, computer printer and a filing cabinet.

In Beijing, it is for a laptop, printer, fax machine and shredder.

In Brussels, it is for one television, floor lamp, washing machine dryer and a sofa set.

In Boa Vista, it is for a lawn mower.

In South Africa, it for is a television, speaker microphones, washer dryer, microwave, patio furniture and living room furniture.

In New York, it is for a computer, office desks, visitor chairs, cupboards, filing cabinets, printers, shredders and a vacuum cleaner.

Ms. Teixeira: I have no issue with the office furniture and office equipment. However, maybe I am under the misconception that when we rented properties for mission staff, they were mostly furnished and that is why they are so expensive. There are differences, in different countries, in the cost so I find it a little bit difficult when I see furniture that may be or what I would have assumed to part of the rental agreement.

Secondly, in Washington, we own the property. The ambassador's residence is owned by the Government of Guyana. It is an extraordinarily valuable property that was bought, I think long years ago, for US\$70,000,000. It is now worth millions of dollars and so I am surprised to hear that furniture is being brought for that or, maybe, I am misconstruing it. Am I on the wrong track that the contracts for rental of residences do not include basic furniture? Usually, now, in modern

times, washing machines and so on are automatically included in rental agreements. I would just like that clarification.

Mr. Greenidge: The situation is this: Much of the equipment and furniture that are mentioned here are for the offices rather than the residences. Bear in mind that, in the case of furniture for the residences, we are speaking not only of the High Commissioners Residences. So, that needs to be borne in mind. We are not speaking about 15 Heads of Missions. We are talking about the Heads of Missions as well as others. We try to be as careful as we can. As regards the High Commissioners residences, we do own those residences but, as a consequence, they have to be furnished. The beds and so forth would eventually need replacing, so that is the reason.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion - \$275,709,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: This brings to an end, the consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would like to thank you for your assistance and support. Hon. Minister, I thank you and your staff.

We will take the suspension, at this time, and we will return one hour later at 2.15 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 1.15 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 2.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: We will resume consideration of the Estimates. The Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply.

Agency 33: Ministry of Public Telecommunications

Current Expenditure

Programme: 331 – Policy Development and Administration – \$224,882,000

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116- Contracted Employees: Could you indicate to us the reason for the decrease of contracted employees from 45 to 31?

Minister of Public Telecommunications [Ms. Hughes]: Those employees were transferred to the permanent establishment.

2.42 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: If we look at lines items 6111 to 6117, we would also see that there is a decrease of six employees of the total staffing details. Could you advise us why that is so?

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, under line item 6117, there is zero in the estimates. I do not know if you could clarify?

Mr. Hamilton: No. I am saying, if you look at the total staffing details, there is a decrease of six employees. Could you indicate why the decrease and secondly, whilst I am on my feet, could you indicate what were the positions of the six persons within the Ministry who might have resigned or otherwise?

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, the six persons would have resigned.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6284 – Other: This has been increased from \$14,911,000 in 2017 to \$17,500,000 for 2018. Could you indicate why the necessary increase?

Ms. Hughes: The increase allocation actually caters for marketing initiatives, the stipends for the Ministerial tender board members, advertising and human resource systems. Under that line item, we are actually purchasing a timekeeper and the development of an intranet with the Ministry and the human resource management system.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6281 – Security Services: We note that the budgeted sum in 2017 was \$49,910,000 and I see the Revised is \$37.7 million. The Ministry is asking for \$42,200,000 in 2018. Whilst I am on my feet, line item 6272, Electricity Charges, has increase to \$3.5 million. Could you indicate why that is so?

Ms. Hughes: The charges for the security services, we paid up to October but when the centre actually becomes operational we expect that we would have to have increased security given the equipment and everything that would be there.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, could you indicate, other than the centre that you mentioned, which other facility the security service is protecting and, at the same time, could you indicate whether this is an ongoing contract or a new security company? Thirdly, could you supply the name of the security company that is protecting the property?

Ms. Hughes: The Company is Brans Security and the security services are for the head office, for the residence Permanent Secretary (PS) and for the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC).

Mr. Hamilton: Would the centre be added?

Ms. Hughes: Yes.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6241- Rental of Buildings: Could you indicate which building we are speaking of regarding this specific rental of \$2.2 million?

Ms. Hughes: We are actually talking about the Dependent Pension Fund (DPF) building which is opposite the Ministry of Public Telecommunications on Camp Street. The Ministry of Public Telecommunications occupies part of a floor in that building.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: There is an increase of \$4.7 million. Could you say whether we are catering for new events in 2018? If so, what are these events?

Ms. Hughes: Thank you Hon. Member. The national events include our growth in Information Communication Technology (ICT). I could give you the breakdown. The first event I mentioned is \$800,000; then there is the Robotic Olympics, 700,000; the Women in Business, 500,000; and the Caribbean and Telecommunication Union's ICT awareness week. The allocation also provides for funding for a couple of agencies which the Ministry work with, mainly the non-governmental organization (NGO) Animation Group; the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Guyana; and a couple of local NGO that the Ministry supported.

Mr. Bharrat: Follow-up: Would this cater for the Mashramani celebrations as well?

Ms. Hughes: No. It would not.

Programme: 331 – Policy Development and Administration – \$224,882,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications -\$ 1,837,568,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is an amount of \$307,559,000 in 2017. However, for 2018 there is no amount allocated. I am asking the Hon. Minister if she could say what would have happened because they are no employees in 2018. Could she say if they were transferred to another Ministry?

Ms. Hughes: Cabinet approved that the employees in that category be brought under the National Data Management Authority (NDMA) Department within the Ministry.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, is it right for me to say that somewhere in another programme in the Ministry we could locate these 82 members of staff who were transferred?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, Hon. Member. If you look in the appendix it is under the NDMA.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, I have two questions. Line item 6241: Rental of Building: I note that for the rental of buildings in 2016 the sum expended was \$41.9 million. In 2017, we budgeted \$52.8 million and, as of to date, we utilised \$48.5 million. I note that, in 2018, there is no proposed sum for the rental of buildings.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, What is the question?

Mr. Hamilton: What is the reason we are seeing zero for this line item?

Ms. Hughes: As similarly, those costs are in appendix ‘T’ on page 673 because that was also moved under the NDMA. There is a list here that has the employment and other costs.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: In 2017, the sum budgeted was \$35.8 million and you have indicated that it would be utilised fully. In 2018, the proposed sum is \$1.837 billion. Could you inform us about the reason for this massive increase and about the activities that this sum will cover in 2018?

Ms. Hughes: That figure actually caters for all the operational costs associated with the NDMA.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: \$1,837,568,000 is budgeted. Hon. Minister, this is a large sum on the current expenditure. Could you give us the top five categories of expenditure and what would be the total for each category?

2.57 p.m.

Ms. Hughes: Again, the breakdown is in appendix ‘T’ on page 673. The employment costs are \$641.268 million. Of course, there are also costs for wages and salaries. Do you want me to read the entire thing? As I mentioned, the allocation for salaries is \$641 million.

There is an allocation of approximately \$31 million and that is for maintenance of infrastructure. The allocation for local travel and subsistence is another \$14 million. Some \$1 billion is the merged total for expenditure to cover the cost of the internet, network maintenance and strategic planning development. That, in fact, is the maintenance and the administration of the entire E-Government network.

Mr. Ali: Regarding the \$1 billion for administration for the E-Government system and for the internet, how was the provider of this service selected? Was there a public procurement system? What is the duration of the contract for the supplier?

In relation to the \$600-odd million in employment cost, could you say how many staff would be hired? Eighty-two were transferred. How many new staff will be hired under this department and what would be the salary of the top five posts, individually?

Ms. Hughes: The network, as you probably know, was installed by HUAWEI. It is proprietary equipment and, therefore, more or less, the most-cost effective way to continue to provide the services is to use the current network. On a yearly basis, we have a maintenance service agreement with HUAWEI. The Guyana Telephone Telegraph Company (GTT) is, of course, the only authorised internet provider in Guyana and, therefore, we purchase the internet from GTT for the network to use.

The top positions are: the Chairman, of course; the Chief Technical Officer; and Information Communication Technology (ICT) Engineers. Could I ask that we give you the specific salary scales, which you asked for, later? Thank you.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, I have two follow-up questions: You mentioned that you are securing the data service from one national provider. I recall, a year ago, that you had mentioned liberalisation. What is the status update on liberalisation? Secondly, are you satisfied with the service which is provided by HUAWEI?

Ms. Hughes: In terms of liberalisation, we are currently working, assiduously, to complete the negotiations with GTT. They are working closely with the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) in dealing with those financial and tax issues. As you could imagine, the Ministry of Public Telecommunications really does not have much input into that part of the negotiation. The Ministry of Finance and GRA are completing some tax issues, after which I think we are going to be able to finalise the process of ending the monopoly with GTT.

I do want to say, as you have asked me, that we continue to conduct these negotiations in a very cordial manner. In the meantime, the Ministry has actually started to develop and to map out the structure of the new telecommunications agency. We have actually completed the structures, job descriptions and organisational charts. As you know, agencies such as the National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU) are going to be moved under that new telecommunications agency. Although we are waiting on one aspect, we are progressing on the other aspect. It is almost like two parallel tracks.

On the question on HUAWEI, yes, we are happy with their service and the association we have to date.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say when Guyana entered into the agreement with HUAWEI, with which the Government is satisfied? Secondly, if there is a timetable for liberalisation, what is the Hon. Minister's end date? What is she projecting?

Ms. Hughes: The very first agreement was signed by the Hon. Member's party in the previous Administration. I do not have the exact date of that. But, certainly, there was no maintenance agreement and, therefore, in March, 2017, we entered into a maintenance agreement.

Regarding the question on the end date, I am always very hesitant to put a date, but I would say that we are working assiduously and I hope that it would be completed before March, 2018. I had hoped that we would have completed it before, but, as I mentioned, the issues with Ministry of Finance are progressing and I have to wait on those to be completed.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, you referred to the restructuring, which is occurring in parallel, and that some of the new staff and new department would be factored in. Could you say whether the Ministry has advertised for future positions or when is it you hope to advertise for these positions?

Ms. Hughes: We have not advertised for vacancies within the soon-to-be established telecommunications agency as yet. I do not think that we would start that process until maybe the end of January, 2018. But, I would reassure you that all the vacancies that the Ministry of Public Telecommunications have are always advertised on our website. That website, of course, has a special E-Government section and they are advertised there. Also, we have put advertisement in all the major dailies as a prompt to people that might be interested in going to the website for job descriptions and additional information.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, I am very happy, first of all, that you are satisfied with the contract with HUAWEI. We have to continue to build on the contract. That is why it is good that there is the maintenance aspect and so on.

In the original contract scope, there was provision for free Wi-Fi services for different areas - schools, other major hubs and centres around the city. Are those components still part of the project? If so, have you been able to expand it being given to other areas, including major centres in the hinterland?

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, just to bring some clarity to your question, the original contract, which we had access to, did not have a provision for free Wi-Fi and those components that we have put into the current contract. It is what we thought should be a focus of the work of the Ministry of Public Telecommunications and, in case you missed it, I am really very happy to give you a brief update on what we have done.

We have actually connected 98 Government agencies and Ministries as of today's date. Many people would have seen our work advertised and covered in all sections of the media. We have now connected 106 secondary schools and institutions with free Wi-Fi, starting off in their computer area and the school administration. These include schools in the Barima/Waini, Pomeroon, Essequibo/Islands and Demerara/Mahaica. As I have said, there are 106 secondary schools. I would be more than happy to give you this list.

We have connected, also, 34 Regional Education Officers (REDOs) and some of tertiary institutions, the three campuses of the University of Guyana (UG) and Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) institutions. Again, we have made a commitment to ensuring that we focus on the hinterland, poor and remote communities. Again, I have a list that will cover all the regions, save and except for Region 1. In the last year, that is what we have been doing.

I think that I have said quite a lot on the ICT hubs. An ICT hub is a little safe space in a community, usually at a Regional office, where we provide the computers and the free internet access. Special emphasis is placed on students and young people who go there to do their homework. As we know, Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) now requires School Based Assessments (SBAs) to be submitted online and we have now connected 79 ICT hubs across all the regions. I could mention some of the names, but instead of listing them, I would be happy to give you the list, unless, you want me to go through it; I can do either.

In terms of the Long Term Evolution (LTE) sites, there are 53 and a data centre.

3.12 p.m.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say, just yes or no, whether hubs, which were created by the previous Government in various areas in the hinterland, would also be incorporated into the programme or whether they have already been incorporated? Secondly, is there going to be integration, in relation to this programme and the Centre of Excellence, which is focused heavily on IT and which would be financed by the Indian grant?

Ms. Hughes: Forgive me, Hon. Member. Could you just repeat the question on the Centre of Excellence?

Mr. Ali: Was it integrated?

Ms. Hughes: The Centre of Excellence is integrated. It is going to provide all of the technical skills that we will require to run the network. Regarding the other question on the ICT hubs, we have deliberately focused on locations and areas where, for a start, there is a space, where there is a community spirit involvement and a location where people already go. That is why we have actually focused a lot on the regional offices.

Mr. Ali: The facilities for approximately 98 hubs were constructed. I do not know if the Hon. Minister would be willing to look at those areas where the infrastructure is already there because those facilities were already constructed, based on the information available, and whether those communities can also benefit. A lot of the communities are in Region 9 and other Amerindian villages.

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, I believe in building on what we already have. The Ministry is not going to deliberately not use a location. We have been able to cover and establish 96 hubs because if we found a Regional Democratic Council (RDC) office or a location that already had the computers but needed the internet or *vice versa*, we went into that area. At the end of the day, our commitment is to ensuring that more and more people in Guyana have access to the internet. We make a point of saying that we want this to be for the possibilities of better telemedicine and opportunities in the areas of health, education, online learning and entrepreneurial activities. So, we go to places where there may be some infrastructure in place, whether it be a building or computers.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, thank you very much for your answer and I agree with you. We all share that common vision for the people of this country and we also support, fully, utilising the technology for telemedicine and even educational services. That is why we started the e-learning station and so on.

Hon. Minister, maybe you and some one of the Colleagues in Parliament, on both sides, who are from these areas, could look at some of these areas such as Nappi and Aishalton. My Colleagues are calling a lot of names. So I am just going to ask if we can look, collectively, at those areas to see how those areas can be serviced also. In these cases that I have mentioned, the buildings for the hubs are already there. I am just putting that out there.

Ms. Hughes: Absolutely, Hon. Member. You mentioned a few places, but I want to reassure you that I have personally gone to many of them. You mentioned Nappi and Aishalton. There are Lethem, St. Ignatius and Annai. We have already incorporated some of the places to which you are referring and more. I will say that, last year, I made an offer and I know that the Hon. Member, Mr. Hamilton, and I had exchanged some information. I would like to say that if there is any Member of Parliament (MP) who would like some of this information or get an update on what we are doing, I would be more than happy to share it. Please just ask.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, the ICT project has several components. Some could be done simultaneously and some have to wait to move on. You indicated that integration is happening with Government agencies and Ministries. Could you put a timeline as to when citizens would be able to access information, via the internet, from Government agencies, whether it be online applications, passport and birth certificate forms, or medical information? Could you put a broad as ever timeline as to when we will be able to get there so that we do not have to continue, as we do, lining up at different locations to get service?

Ms. Hughes: I would like to say that we are laying a very important foundation right now, but by mid-2018, I think Guyana and Guyanese citizens would be able to see and access a range of online services. So to answer your question, it would be by mid-2018.

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications - \$1,837,568,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 334 – Industry Innovations - \$69,405,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is a budgeted sum of \$4.481 million in 2017, but under that line item there are no contracted employees. However, for 2018, there is a budgeted sum of \$9.805 million with three such persons assigned. Could the Hon. Minister say what are the designations and the emoluments for those persons?

Ms. Hughes: In 2017, we got no budgetary allocation for employment cost; so, we actually had to do a vire. In terms of the staff, there are three employees. They are a Senior Business Analyst and that salary is \$195,614; a Coordinator of Outreach Services, \$195,615; and a Coordinator of Web Services, \$194,615.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: There is a reduction, by 50%, under that line item. Could the Hon. Minister say what the reason for the decrease is?

Ms. Hughes: We are going to do inter-programme travel which means that, if the National Data Management Authority (NDMA) is going out to Nappi, we would organise so that we can go at the same time.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, line item 6284 – Other: I note that, in 2017, the sum budgeted is \$8 million and the proposal for 2018 is \$29.5 million. Could you indicate why the increase, in the first instance, and, secondly, what are the likely activities that this money is going to be utilised for?

Ms. Hughes: This Department of Industry and Innovation will be gearing up in 2018 and that is why there is what would appear to be a substantial increase. Here is what we want to use it for. First of all, the Department has a very heavy emphasis on ensuring that we can raise the level of ICT skills, especially in the private sector and also with young entrepreneurs. The funding for this includes funding of a feasibility study and design for an ICT park, feasibility study for the establishment of an ICT venture capital fund and, of course, the possibility of creating an animation training programme. These are the three things that can mobilise and push the development of the sector. The ICT Park and the venture capitalist fund, we think, are very important initiatives. We would provide certain facilities, benefits and concessions to the sector in that area. Then, of course, on the animation side, we think that Guyana stands to benefit in the area of animation development. The returns are very, very high.

3.27 p.m.

We have a local animation network and we have already networked with the animation network in Trinidad and Suriname. That is because when Walt Disney says that it wants five seconds of animation for the next top of the line Disney movie, they expect that there is going to be between 100 and 200 people. In Guyana, we still have a few, so the network has expanded to cover the countries which I mentioned. This really is a training programme that will boost that. The beneficiaries would be the young ICT entrepreneurs. It will also be any ICT person that we noticed from our hubs or from training who has the interest and capacity and, of course, university students.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6302- Training (including Scholarships): Could you indicate the likely beneficiary? I have a follow-up question after that is answered.

Ms. Hughes: The training actually takes place on four different levels.

Training at the basic training level is going to be done in Regions 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9. That basic tier includes introduction to computers, introduction to internet and the web and Microsoft Office and that is to benefit community youths and unemployed community members.

The next level up is what we are calling a mid-tier training level which focuses on web design. It includes programmes such as photoshop, web design, information architecture, illustrator design, planning, and analysis. The beneficiaries of this tier are community youths and the unemployed community members.

The next tier up is courses beginning the introduction of Java Script, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), front end frame works - the programming aspects.

The top tier is mobile development. Here, we are looking at targeting groups and it would include the development of mobile apps and mobile apps architecture. For all of those, we would take people that we saw in our primary training programmes and are going to adjust them to where interest capacity foundation education they may have had in ICT. I hope that helps.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, is there any consideration, as this programme is developed, regarding training specifically, towards seeking to develop a fund to fund bright young boys and girls who might have capacity, but because of their station of life, are incapable of paying for their education? Is Government considering – and it is something to think about, if it is not part of what you are attempting to do – a scholarship fund, maybe, to be utilised to develop young men and women whose families might not have the means to take them where they want to go, but they have the capacity to develop in their own way and to help us to develop?

The other question is regarding another complement that should be thought about. You know that in other jurisdictions, they go out there and scout for young bright people within the secondary schools and seek to integrate them so they could develop themselves and whatever they are attempting to do so that they can participate as they try to develop. I am seeking to find

out whether those considerations are in the programme and, if not, could they be considered in the future?

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, you are absolutely correct. I mentioned the venture capital fund. When we are finished with our scouting process and we have individuals who have interest or promise, we will have a foundation on which we can give them some opportunities. I would say that what we have focused on - and I have not mentioned it before - is a series of clubs, many of which wish were already in existence. We are working closely with the STEM group. Only yesterday I was at the University of Guyana (UG) because its computer department was handing out some equipment. So, on different levels, there is a movement. All of these are opportunities in which we are providing training to build an ICT-ready workforce. That is the end result.

Scouting talent is one of the reasons we started the hackathons and the code sprints. We have done it with youth, existing young providers and companies because it is a way of seeing what is out there, where the talent exists and passing the opportunities on. In fact, in our Industry Innovation Unit, we have already been doing training. We have modules that are taught in a few communities, usually about two or three weekends a month, and that is additional training that we are providing.

We recognise that, especially in the areas of the ICT hubs, training is required for them to be at the level that we want them to be. That is why the training aspect is such an important component of the delivery of an ICT-ready environment.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6284- Other: Under that heading, the Hon. Minister stated that the moneys allocated would be used for ICT parks' studies and designs and the animation training programme. Could the Hon. Minister say when the ICT parks would come into operation and where would they be located?

Ms. Hughes: I wish I had that answer. This is the first step. This is a feasibility study. The feasibility study would give us guidance as to where would be the best locations and all the other pertinent information we would need.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6116- Contracted Employees: There was no budgetary allocation in 2017. However, you mentioned that \$4.4 million was vired. Could you say from which line item or from which programme head it was taken?

From all indication, it would seem as though these three persons were employed sometime in mid-2017. Can you say if the vacancies were advertised publicly and what are the dates of appointments for the three staff members?

Ms. Hughes: The virement was done from Programme: 331 - Policy Development and Administration, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees. Earlier, I gave you the salary scale of the individuals. The date of appointment for the Senior Business Analyst and the Outreach Services Coordinator was 2nd May, 2017. The date of appointment of the Web Services Officer was 1st June, 2017. All of the vacancies were advertised on our website and also in the local press.

Programme: 334- Industry Innovations - \$ 69,405,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 331- Policy Development and Administration - \$5,605,000

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, just to confirm, are we on Policy Development and Administration?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We are at capital expenditure. Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, are you still engaged with the Chairman?

Mr. Ali: No, Mr. Chairman. I am waiting until you get to Programme 332.

Mr. Chairman: Do you not have any interest in the present one?

Mr. Ali: I have a lot of interest but I have more interest in Programme 332.

Programme: 331- Policy Development and Administration - \$5,605,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.42 p.m.

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications – \$2,557,125,000

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, project code 1217300 – IT Centre of Excellence – \$144,000,000: The remark is, “Provision for establishment of centre for excellence in information technology.” Could you say what the likely activities are? I suspect that one would be to deal specifically with the building. The question is whether there are other activities outside of preparing the building.

Ms. Hughes: The funds are really for the setup cost for the centre. The centre is funded by the Government of India. But these are really just the operational charges.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1217300 – IT Centre of Excellence: The specific amount of \$125,000,000. Would that be for the equipment for the centre? And if so, when do we expect the equipment? I am talking about the grand component.

Ms. Hughes: It actually is for the equipment. The equipment has already been shipped. We expect it by the end of December. It also includes the funding for the experts who are coming from India and would be here for two years.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1217300 – IT Centre of Excellence: The 2017 allocation was \$22,000,000 and the 2018 local is \$19,000,000. That I presume to be the infrastructure cost – setting up the building to accommodate the equipment. May I ask whether the building has been fully setup to receive the infrastructure equipment that is coming?

Ms. Hughes: The building is 98% ready. We are doing the finishing works right now.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1219000 – National Broadband Project – \$2.3 billion: Could the Hon. Minister give us a status update on this project, please?

Ms. Hughes: In terms of an update on the National Broadband Project, the contract with Huawei Technologies International was signed on the 6th November, 2017. The loan application to the Export–Import Bank of China (EXIM - China Exim Bank) for the \$37.6 million has been submitted by the Ministry of Finance to China Exim Bank, and we await a response.

Mr. Ali: That is what is confusing me a bit because I have been following a lot of your public statements on some of these matters. You said that the application for the loan has been submitted, that is the first thing. And the second thing is that the contract has already been

signed. Is the contract signed before the application for the loan? That is one. What would have necessitated this decision to sign the contract before the application for the loan?

Secondly, the allocation is already in the Budget Estimates. Is the presumption that the loan is approved? And if the presumption is not that, then how did we arrive at the allocation?

Ms. Hughes: The procedure with China Exim Bank is that a contract must be signed with a Chinese Company prior to its entertaining the loan application, and hopefully approving. So, that is exactly why we have been negotiating with Huawei Technologies International and also signed the contract with them and now await the response from China Exim Bank.

Mr. Ali: For some clarity. The contract that we signed with Huawei Technologies International is it a contract that provides that the supplier of the service provides the financing? And if so, is Huawei Technologies International applying to the China Exim Bank or is the Government of Guyana contracting a loan from the Bank? If the Government of Guyana is contracting a loan, what are the terms of conditions of that loan?

Ms. Hughes: The Government of Guyana is signing for the loan and the requirement with China Exim Bank is that there must be a Chinese 'executor' I suppose you would call it. And that is why Huawei Technologies International is on board. We have spent seven to eight months working out the terms of the project and what the deliverables would be and that is how we came up with the amount.

Mr. Ali: So, the application is made. The presumption is that you have to enter into a contract with a Chinese firm before the application is entertained by the China Exim Bank. Could the Hon. Minister say whether any other company was considered or negotiated with, or whether we tried to have the China Exim Bank, or any agency, supply us a shortlist of other Chinese companies in China that may be able to offer us the same or similar service, so that we will know whether our negotiation is bearing the best result with one entity? That is because there will be one entity in full control of the entire data management system. That is the first question.

The second question is what is the interest rate, in the terms and conditions of the loan? Is it concessional financing, or is it market rates that we are borrowing for this project?

Ms. Hughes: The project is actually an extension of the current network and that is why it made sense to go with the company that first established the network, which was Huawei Technologies International. I think that it is concessional financing and at a 2% interest rate. But I would ask the Minister of Finance to correct, if I had made an error.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, I thank you. Could you say when you expect the approval from the China Exim Bank? Secondly, what is the commencement date of the contract you have entered into with Huawei Technologies International?

Ms. Hughes: We expect to hear or I should say that the commencement date should be around April, 2018. And the contract with Huawei Technologies International recognises that it is dependent on the date that China Exim Bank approves the loan. So, it is not as if the Huawei Technologies International's contract is going to commence before the China Exim Bank approves. We hope to get approval by April, 2018.

Mr. Hamilton: Project code 1217300 – IT Centre of Excellence: Just two questions here. Could you indicate to the House the likely amount of students we are hoping to train at the IT Centre of Excellence per year? Secondly, what disciplines in information and communications technology (ICT), the experts that you said will be coming, are likely to train them in? And thirdly, what is the recruitment procedure that will be adopted to recruit students for the centre?

Ms. Hughes: We anticipate that we will be training approximately 200 students per year. They will primarily come from the public service. But we will also accept applications, in time, from the private sector, should they be interested.

In terms of the areas of training: cyber security, network administration and programming are the main areas. If you want a comprehensive list, it could be provided.

Mr. Hamilton: The final question is: Could you indicate whether the programmes are one or two years or beyond that? And secondly, are they certificate, diploma or degree programmes?

Ms. Hughes: The training is modular. There are various lengths and it is structured so that you can do a series of modules that eventually lead to a diploma in a specific area. There is an accreditation that is given for the training provided.

Mr. Hamilton: Is there a concept paper that is available and that can be made available so that we can have an understanding as to the likely outcomes of what will be transpiring at the IT Centre of Excellence?

Ms. Hughes: Yes. There is a concept paper and I can bring that tomorrow morning if you would like.

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications – \$2,557,125,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.57 p.m.

Programme: 334 – Industry Innovations – \$1,476,000

Programme: 334 – Industry Innovations – \$1,476,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Hon. Minister and assistants, I thank you for your cooperation and assistance on what we are doing. This brings us to an end of our consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Public Communications.

We will turn to Agency 49, Ministry of Social Protection. I will allow a minute or two for the Minister to have her advisers with her.

Agency: 49 – Ministry of Social Protection

Current Expenditure

Programme: 491 – Policy Development and Administration – \$294,155,000

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6112 - Senior Technical: Could the Minister tell me and the House where the person will be placed who has been taken on to make it three senior technical persons? What is the remuneration and what is their specific task in the Ministry?

Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Ally]: Line item 6112 - Senior Technical: The appointment is of a Planning and Management Analyst.

Dr. Persaud: I am just checking to see if the Minister is finished with her answer.

Ms. Ally: The second person is the Superintendent of Works.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled: I noticed that there has been a loss of one person. What position has become vacant? Has that vacancy been advertised, what impact will the vacancy have on the Ministry? Let us start with that.

Ms. Ally: I would like to inform the Hon. Member that the person was transferred to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and on promotion as a Data Entry Clerk.

Dr. Persaud: Under this like item, what is required is technical and craft skilled persons. Under the objectives listed there are many things that need to be done, including dealing with effective personnel and accounting services, monitoring programmes within the Ministry. Could the Minister say if there are vacancies in this area and what are the numbers we are looking at in terms of vacancies? What I am really asking is: Is there under-resourcing of the area in terms of human resources to effectively provide for what is being asked?

Ms. Ally: It is only one person that was transferred so that position will be advertised later.

Dr. Persaud: In addition to that, there is a department and I am sure that there are other vacancies to adequately deliver the services required. Are there other vacancies in the department? We have talked about one person already lost from that area. Are there mechanisms to fill those vacancies if they exist?

Ms. Ally: Sorry, there is only one vacancy.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support: I notice there is an increase in staff by nine. Could the Minister say where these persons will be placed?

Ms. Ally: They will be placed in various departments like Accounts, Registry and Personnel.

Dr. Persaud: Again, I am just wondering if there are additional vacancies in this department. Because I noticed under the strategies and objectives that there are a lot of deliverables that are required, I am wondering if the department is adequately staffed.

Ms. Ally: I wish to inform the Hon. Member that this department is adequately staffed.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Under the Staffing Details there are 36 persons identified, but when I looked at the approved positions I do not find any of these. So my question is: Are there any contract workers at the Ministry? Your staffing details indicate that you have 36 but when I look at the list of the approved position I do not see anything under the contract employees. Could you please explain?

Ms. Ally: Current, 2017, it is 41 and for 2018 it is anticipated to be 36.

Mr. Chand: Under the same line item 6116: In 2018 you will have 36 contracted employees, could the Minister provide a list of those designated posts and the pay levels? Could the Minister also explain why although there is a reduction the budgetary expenditure for contracted employees has increased? So one, we want a list and, two, if you can explain these numbers.

Ms. Ally: It is a very long list. If you would like to me read out the list I will give you the first 10: Permanent Secretary; Deputy Permanent Secretary; Head, Public Relations Officer; Head, Special Projects Unit; Technical Officer; Ministerial Advisor; Project Coordinator; Manager, Information and Resources Centres; Systems Analysis; and Administrative Officer. In terms of the increase that you asked about, it has to do not only with the increase but with gratuity, vacation allowance, uniform allowances and so forth. It embodies as one to give a grand total.

Mr. Chand: Just to remind the Minister that she can be kind enough to provide the whole list and the pay levels of the designated posts; to lay it over.

Ms. Chandarpal: I want to ask the question again...

Mr. Chand: Sir, I did not get an answer on the lay over as yet.

Mr. Chairman: You did not get an answer? Hon. Minister?

Ms. Ally: Sir, I will so do.

Ms. Chandarpal: With respect to the question I had asked, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I had indicated that in the approved positions I looked for the contract workers. Could I be advised as to which sub head it is subsumed under?

4.12 p.m.

Ms. Ally: I do not know what sub head the Hon. Member is talking about, but I can tell you that this is the authorised staffing. Could you look on page 223?

Ms. Chandarpal: Mr. Chairman, I am looking under Staffing Details on page 223, Programme 491 - Policy Development and Administration. You will note for line item 6116, Contracted Employees, it indicates that there are 36 contract workers for 2018. When I turned to page 598, under the list of approved positions, I looked there and I could not find contract workers. That is what I am asking. It must have been subsumed under some other head, which is it?

Ms. Ally: Contract workers are paid under line item 6116, Contracted Employees. I think what the Hon. Member is talking about is the public service appointees.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6224 - Print and Non-Print Materials: The objectives listed include the implementation of the strategic plan, policies and programmes. Could the Minister say how she plans to use the moneys allocated under this head to do this?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6224 - Print and Non-Print Materials: This sum will be utilised for the printing of annual reports for 2015, 2016 and 2017, tender documents, magazines, letterheads, business cards, invitations and compliment slips *et cetera*.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings: Could we be provided with the list of buildings which are being rented by the Ministry please?

Ms. Ally: It is the Maraj Building for the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic.

Ms. Chandarpal: Could we be provided with the cost associated with each or is it just for the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic?

Ms. Ally: It is just for that building.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6272 - Electricity Charges: I noticed a consistent increase in the electricity charges. Could the Minister advise me why there is this escalation in electricity charges? Is there an addition of buildings that are being paid for?

Ms. Ally: This increase is to take care of the arrears for the Lamaha Street building. We have to clear that.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6281 - Security Services: In 2017, \$13,568,000 was spent on security. For 2018, the Ministry is asking for \$22,592,000. Could the Minister justify the increase? While you are doing that please indicate which companies are presently providing services, when these contracts would come to an end and how these companies are chosen.

Ms. Ally: This is to take care of security at Cornhill and Lamaha Streets. It counts as provision for the increase in security rates. The security firms are RK's Security Services and the Special Constabulary. The contracts will end next August.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6284 - Other: Minister, could you say what constitutes Other?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6284 - Other: It includes rental of photo copiers, internet fees, sanitax services, configuration of computer network, washing of curtains, consultancy for annual reports, advertisement of public tenders and vacancies, notices, United Nations (UN) Programme activities, maintenance of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), biometrics and fire alarm systems. Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6291 - National Events and Other Events: Could the Minister say what national events are being proposed or planned? Are there any plans for national campaigns to deal with important social issues?

Ms. Ally: In accordance with the line item 6291, National and Other Events, I would like to inform the Hon. Member that this includes the celebration of national holidays, events and major activities including Mashramani.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6293 - Refreshment and Meals: Which entities will benefit from this amount that is expended?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6293 - Refreshment and Meals: It is refreshments for meetings, conferences and consultations *et cetera*, under Programme 1.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6294 - Other: There is an increase in this allocation, could the Minister please indicate how the sum will be allocated?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6294, Other, includes the replacement and new employees identification (ID) cards, stipends for work study students, Minister's activities, round table discussions, annual staff conference, purchase of Christmas cards, wreaths and tokens *et cetera*.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Minister please explain to the House which buildings under Programme 491, Policy Development and Administration, would be maintained?

Ms. Ally: Major maintenance works were completed in 2017 but provision is made for painting. This will be done to both the Lamaha and the Cornhill Street buildings.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Minister please explain if this \$750,000 is going to be enough for training in Policy Development and Administration? What does the training entail?

Ms. Ally: Yes, it will be enough under Programme 491, Policy Development and Administration?

Ms. Veerasammy: Could the Minister please explain what this training entails?

Ms. Ally: It is training for clients for micro-credit loans, the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) programme and other training programmes for staff.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: Could the Minister please explain the amount expended here, \$5,065,000? Which organisations will benefit from this?

Ms. Ally: I refer the Hon. Member to the *Estimates* since all the organisations are listed there. It will be good if she could extract that information from the listed. It will help.

Programme: 491 - Policy Development and Administration - \$294,155,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 492 - Social Services - \$15,133,355,000

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: Could the Hon. Minister explain the loss of one person from this unit or Ministry and say where the vacancy is and what specific programme will be affected by this vacancy?

Ms. Ally: That person is a probation officer and that vacancy will be advertised when the commission resumes.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Minister say if there are sufficient probation officers regionally to cope with all the numerous social issues that we have? What is the Hon. Member planning to do in terms of employing more probation officers?

Ms. Ally: At the moment there are 17 vacancies. These will be advertised by the Guyana Public Service Commission and at that point, maybe, we will have the full compliment.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Minister say how long these vacancies existed? If she did advertise these before, what was the response to the advertisements and how were these vacancies advertised?

Ms. Ally: These vacancies were recently created and have not been advertised before.

Dr. Persaud: I would love to know what “recently” meant. Could the Minister now say how many probation officers she has?

Ms. Ally: There are 75 probation officers.

4.27 p.m.

Dr. Persaud: Under line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, I notice, again, that there was a loss of one person. Could the Hon. Minister provide an explanation in terms of what vacancy exists?

Ms. Ally: I believe that I answered that question. I said one Probation Officer.

Dr. Persaud: I think that the Hon. Minister answered the wrong question. I originally asked about line item 6112. If it is a Probation Officer under line item 6113, I would now go on to ask this: Under the approved list of persons under line item 6113, I notice that, provided under that

line item, are a Psychologist and other similar persons. Could the Minister say how many Psychologists are employed presently by the Ministry and where are they placed, if any?

Ms. Ally: I am sorry but that is not under Programme 492.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Minister then say under which Programme this could be found?

Ms. Ally: It is under Programme 494.

Mr. Chand: Could the Hon. Minister advise us on how soon the vacancies which were advertised are be expected to be filled?

Ms. Ally: When the Public Service Commission resumes they would be filled.

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I see a remarkable reduction in the Revised 2017 expenditure versus what is now allocated. Could you kindly explain that?

Ms. Ally: I am sorry Hon. Member, could you repeat the question?

Ms. Manickchand: There is about a \$25 million reduction in the allocation proposed in 2018 for Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations versus what was projected to be spent in 2017. Could you kindly explain that remarkable reduction?

Ms. Ally: I am sure that this is somewhere else. Whatever is approved is what is listed in the Estimates of Expenditure.

Ms. Manickchand: There is a reduction in what was projected to be given to local organisations this year. If it is that the Hon. Minister meant that it is listed on page 442 of the Estimates of Expenditure under Local Organisations then could I suggest that the Minister turns to that page and explain to us, and this is my respectful question, whether that would see a remarkable reduction in the allocation to the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic?

Ms. Ally: In answering that question, I would to, again, refer the Hon. Member to page 441 of the Estimates of Expenditure. The organisations and agencies that are listed there are for page 442. Those are the agencies that these contributions are being given to. If there is any one with a shortfall I am sure that, if justified, there would be an avenue to rectify it.

Ms. Manickchand: Would the Hon. Minister accept that the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic was given \$66 million in 2017, \$66 million in the Revised 2017 and it is now projected to be given \$41 million in 2018?

Ms. Ally: What is the question?

Ms. Manickchand: Would the Hon. Minister accept that there is a \$24 million reduction in the moneys that would be given to the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic and that is why we see, under line item 6321, a reduction in subsidies to local organisations?

Ms. Ally: Yes. Like I said, if it is not there or if it was reduced then at the appropriate time, maybe when the existing amount is exhausted, there would be an avenue for a new request, once it is justified.

Ms. Manickchand: I am fully aware that this is a subsidy. The Guyana Legal Aid Clinic runs clinics in Regions 2, 5 and 6 and in Georgetown with itinerant services in Region 3, East Bank Demerara and the East Coast Demerara. I am also aware that the \$66 million that was given last year and the year before were never enough. I am asking the Minister, and the Minister must be aware of that also, if the moneys were not enough to do what had to be done for the expansion of legal aid, why would it be reduced for 2018?

Ms. Ally: I recalled I said, a little earlier, that if this money is exhausted then there would be an avenue, if justified, for a request to be made and this would be addressed.

Ms. Manickchand: Do you anticipate that this would cause hardships for the women, mostly, who are served at the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic?

Ninety-seven per cent of the clients of the clinic are women. A large per cent of that 97% are single women. A large per cent of the clients of the clinic rely on the services of the clinic for financial relief relating to family matters, for example division of property, maintenance of children and for representation for claims against domestic violence. Would the Hon. Minister say if this would severely affect those women?

Ms. Ally: I thank the Member for the long lecture but the simple answer to that is, if managed properly, no.

Dr. Persaud: Under the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, does the Minister expect that there would be a shortfall in any one of these regions because of the reduction in that figure? What was the justification to cut the budget which was requested for legal aid?

Ms. Ally: I think that I have adequately ventilated and represented the matter of this allocation.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, if a question is asked, either the answer you gave was not adequate or the interlocutor wished more information. My approach is that you should make every effort to offer an answer to the question.

Mr. Ally: All I would say is that I do not think that it would affect the regions because, as I said earlier, if there is need, probably at mid-year, and a request is made and is justified it would be addressed.

Dr. Persaud: I would like to note that all the moneys were spent that were previously requested. Mr. Chairman, I would assume that it was needed even during 2017 and there would be a need in 2018. I would move onto the next question under the same line item.

I notice that there is an organisation called *Together in Peace* that received \$10 million. It was not budgeted for in 2017 but it received \$10 million in the Revised budget and continues to do so in 2018. Could the Minister say when this organisation was formed, where it is based, who heads this organisation and what is the mandate of this organisation? I am comparing it to what was given to very good organisations like the *Red Thread* - \$25,000, the *National Commission on the Elderly* - \$2 million and the *Regional Women's Affairs Committee* - \$400,000.

Ms. Ally: First of all, this is a new shelter; it is a trafficking in persons' shelter. It was created in 2015. Unfortunately, I cannot disclose where it is based for security reasons and for the protection of the victims. **[Mr. Ali: Is it at Congress Place?]** No, it is at Freedom House on Robb Street.

Dr. Persaud: I understand the Minister's point of security but what if people would like to have shelter there and the country would like to know a little more about the people? I would like to know who constitutes the Board of this organisation and a little more information about this shelter. If it is new then it would be good for us to know too.

Ms. Ally: For the additional information, I am sure that the Hon. Member is familiar with the *Sisters of Mercy* and I would like to let her know that they are the people who deal with this.

Dr. Persaud: It was an easy answer. I think that could have been given to us. Under line item 6281, Security Services, I notice there is a leap from \$40,965,216 and now they are asking for \$90 million. Could the Minister say what security firms have been employed and whether there new charges? Could the Minister also tell us a little more about what the contracts which were was entered into, when they will be renewed and when they would end?

4.42 p.m.

Ms. Ally: You may know that the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) now comes under the Ministry of Social Protection and the additional money is to provide security for NOC in 2018. We would have to advertise and do the preliminaries in order to determine a contract and who would get it. In addition to that, we have to provide security for the domestic violence centres and shelters in Regions 2 and 6.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6284 – Other: I notice that budgeted, previously, in 2017 is \$128,211,000 and \$121,048,000 was spent in 2017, but what is being requested in 2018 is \$202,500,000, could the Minister say what warranted this increase by more than \$81 million?

Ms. Ally: The following warranted the increase: Implementation of national plan of action; gender equality and social inclusion policy; building network of advocates countrywide to strengthen the communities responses to social issues in Guyana; empowering and equipping communities through acquisition of knowledge and coping skills; improving the quality of life of vulnerable groups inclusive of women and girls by providing access to social support and other forms of community resources; the Difficult Circumstances Unit to facilitate curriculum programme and administrative improvements at the New Opportunity Corps; probation agency fees and the transaction fees for the Guyana Post Office Corporation (GPOC); temporary financial assistance programme for survivors of domestic violence inclusive of rent resettlement, assistance and so on. These are some of the areas that we are going be looking at under ‘Other’.

Dr. Persaud: I would be grateful if the Minister could layover this with a disaggregation of figures for the House’s benefit.

Line item 6294 – Other: There is a figure of \$19 million. Could the Minister give us a summary of what that entails and, also, could she layover the disaggregation of this figure?

Ms. Ally: Stipends to Local Board of Guardians; chairpersons and other members; discharged prisoners; eight committees. In Berbice and Georgetown it is to cater for prison welfare services; resettlement of prisoners; police protection, like in Kato Region 2; funerals, residents of the Palms; night shelter; the Hugo Chavez Centre for the Homeless and support for victims of trafficking persons and domestic violence. Surely I could provide this document to the Hon. Member.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6284; could the Minister say how many persons benefited under the Difficult Circumstance's Unit and what criteria were used?

Ms. Ally: I can layover that document with the number of persons who would have received assistance from Difficult Circumstance's Unit. I would like to remind the Hon. Member that names would not be provided.

Dr. Persaud: I would be happy for that information and, maybe, if I could have an idea where these persons were from in terms of regions would also be welcome.

Ms. Ally: Certainly.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you. Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): In 2017 \$20,700,000 was requested and \$16,716,000 was spent. Where the training occurred, in that area and was there any scholarship granted under this line? Were these areas catered for; physiology, child development, post drama, stress disorder, abuse and drama support?

Ms. Ally: A series of training on capacity building initiatives were embarked on. For example, training was conducted for the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI). In terms of scholarships, we have offered two scholarships to do a master programme at the University of Guyana and that has to do with the element of social work.

Dr. Persaud: I am glad that the Minister raised the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute. Could the Minister say how many classes graduated from the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute in 2017 and could she also say if there is provision to increase or ask this House for

more moneys to increase scholarships for more persons who deal with, especially, physiology, children and women?

Ms. Ally: In 2017, the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute conducted the following training programmes, aimed at empowering women and girls, in Regions 3, 4 and 5: One Information Communications Technology (ICT) programme – 28 persons benefited from that; electrical installation – 18 persons benefited from that; leadership and capacity building – 25 persons were trained from 15 women's organisations.

In 2018, the Ministry, through the GWLI, plans to conduct the following training programmes: targeting women in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10; two ICT programmes – 30 persons; one electrical installation – 25 persons; two leadership and capacity building programme – 40 persons; one care of the elderly home base care – 20 persons; and one food preservation and processing – 20 persons.

Ms. Veerasammy: Follow-up: Minister, in my budget speech, I had made a recommendation that in the face of the upcoming Local Government Elections I had expected that the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute would have, probably, considered implementing some leadership programme towards capacity building for our local governance for women who would want to contest the Local Government Elections. Minister, please, I would really like to hear you say something about that.

Ms. Ally: I did say for 2018 we are going to do two leadership and capacity building training and one of those would target exactly what you said.

Ms. Chandarpal: Could the Minister tell us exactly the sums allocated for the institute for 2018 and, while the Minister is at that question, could she also tell us whether the Board of GWLI is functioning?

Ms. Ally: Unfortunately, the chairperson for that board passed away.

Interruption by Members (Opposition)

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel

Ms. Ally: I would like to give you the figures for 2018 that is projected. It is \$23,463,899.

Ms. Veerasammy: That amount would have been the projected amount, probably, in the budget. The entire training for the social services is only \$20,700,000. I guess that would have been revised because that is much more than what is allocated to the entire social services department.

Ms. Ally: The figure that I give was for the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute.

Ms. Veerasammy: Under line item 6133, Benefits & Allowances, I am seeing that, for 2018, the budget is almost doubled. It is \$46,213,000 as against this year's amount of \$20,646,000. Could you explain what the necessity is for this massive increase of more than a 100%?

Ms. Ally: In response to the Hon. Member, this is for the payment of traveling, ration and vacation allowance for 211 staff personnel who were appointed by the Guyana Public Service Commission.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Building: At the cost of \$106,200,000; could the Hon. Minister identify for us which are the buildings to be maintained and where they are located and the processes of tendering for contractors to do the repairs and so on?

4.57 p.m.

Ms. Ally: This would deal with the NOC dormitories and other buildings in the compound. They are in need of repairs to the roof and replacement of zinc sheets at the Mahaica Hospital; replacement of the gutters and general maintenance at the Night Shelter, the Palms Geriatric Institution; the Hugo Chavez Centre for Rehabilitation and Reintegration and probation offices in Regions 2 and 5.

Ms. Veerasammy: Under line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, at the cost of \$16,264,000, could the Hon. Minister explain how this money will be spent?

Ms. Ally: This will be for the maintenance to the perimeter fence; repairs to the walkway between the stores and the kitchen at the NOC; and revetment at the Palms Geriatric Institution.

Ms. Chandarpal: Under line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence, I have noted that there is an increase. Could the Hon. Minister please explain the increase?

Ms. Ally: At the moment, we have additional officers in the regions. I will read the list: Port Kaituma – four trips per year; Mabaruma – four trips per year; Matthew’s Ridge – four trips per year; Barakara – four trips per year; Bartica, Isseneru, Upper-Mazaruni, Kamarang, Mahdia, Tumatumari, Campbelltown, Seven Miles, Kwakwani, Rockstone, Berbice River and also a return trip to Lethem – Six trips per year; Sand creek – four trips per year; Annai – four trips per year; Aishalton –four trips per year; visits to other Hinterland areas such as Moruka, Mabaruma, Port Kaituma, Mahdia, Kato, Pomeroun, Orealla; for Region 1 – transporting of Local Board of Guardian members; Warapoka, Waramuri, and Mora; Region 2 – Wakapau, Friendship, Jacklow, and the list goes on.

Ms. Chandarpal: I wish to go back to line item 6113. I want to ask the Minister how many social workers are there and I would be happy if she could disaggregate it by region. I know that we had asked already and that you had provided an answer, but this is some additional information.

Ms. Ally: We have 75 probation officers, but I can furnish you with the list of where they are posted.

Ms. Chandarpal: Under line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Services, could the Minister tell us how large the fleet of vehicles at the Ministry is and how many of these vehicles are less than five years?

Ms. Ally: There are five vehicles for Programme 492. You are asking the question under 6264 and that is to purchase spares and perform maintenance and repairs to three of the all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in regions 1, 8 and 9. There will be additional charges for the servicing and maintenance of these vehicles. In addition to those that will be procured in 2018, the bus is for the Palms Geriatric Institution and the New Opportunity Corps.

Programme: 492 – Social Services – \$15,133,355,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration - \$572,406,000

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member Keith Scott will deal with Programme 493.

Mr. Chairman: We will allow a minute for the changeover to take place.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: There is an allocated sum of \$7,860,000 as against \$10 million for 2017. Could the Hon. Minister state the number of buildings and the location of each?

Minister within the Ministry of Social Protection [Mr. Scott]: Did you say line item 6242? Hon. Member, it is a building at Brickdam and a building in Region 3.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister state what repairs are to be done to those buildings?

Mr. Scott: It is the roof of the building in Region 3; it is just for general repairs.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6271 - Telephone Charges: For 2017, it was \$3,607,000 and for 2018 it is now \$8.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister state why there is such a huge increase for telephone charges and what will be the departments or offices that will receive these allocations?

Mr. Scott: The increase is to facilitate new offices in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: There is another huge increase from \$7,751,000 to \$11 million. Could the Hon. Minister state, again, why the huge increase and where will it be allocated?

Mr. Scott: Madam, the answer is...

Mr. Damon: It is not madam; it is Hon. Member.

Mr. Scott: Hon. Member, I am sorry. The electricity charges will be for offices in Brickdam, Berbice, Cornhill Street, Pouderoyen West Bank Demerara and New Amsterdam, Berbice.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under the same line item, is the Hon. Minister then saying that there are more buildings now for electricity charges as against 2017?

Mr. Scott: Yes, there are more buildings, for example in Region 3. The electricity charges for those areas would have gone up because of additional buildings.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6281: Security Services – There is an increase of \$8,841,000. Could the Hon. Minister state the security firm and how many locations will be serviced along with the amount of security personnel that will be paid from this sum?

Mr. Scott: The Company is RK's Security Services and the locations are Region 3, the Brickdam Labour Department, New Amsterdam and the Head Office.

5.12 p.m.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: I had asked the Hon. Minister, if he could have stated the number of security personnel.

Mr. Scott: It is two per shift and there are three shifts per day.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister give us the total number of security personnel? He has given us the number per region. We need to know how many in total there are. You are saying that it is two persons per shift and three shifts per day. Could you give us the total number of persons?

Mr. Scott: Mr. Chairman, I will provide the total to the Hon. Member later.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6284 – Other: There is an increased sum of \$2.237 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what will come under this line item?

Mr. Scott: The allocation is to purchase and maintain the database software for the Department of Labour. It is to cater, also, for complaints, inspections, surveys and accidents; host and upgrade the website, make amendment to the Co-operative Societies Act and the Friendly Societies Act; as well as to develop software for the Co-operative Department for the imputing and the retrieval of files.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There has been an increase of \$71.933 million under this line item. Under the details, on page 442, it states that the Guyana National Cooperative Union Limited will receive \$24 million. Could the Hon. Minister state what the rationale is for this sum? What would it be used for?

Mr. Scott: Under line item 6321, are you asking me to justify the increase of \$24 million?

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Yes. There is an increase, under that line item, of \$71.933 million. If we go to the breakdown, under the details of the subsidies on page 442, we see that the Guyana National Cooperative Union Limited will be given \$24 million. What is the reason for \$24 million being given to this organisation?

Mr. Scott: The \$71.933 million that you are speaking of is for the Board of Industrial Training (BIT). There is no increase for the union.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Hon. Minister, there is a sum total, under line item 6321, which goes to local and international organisations and Constitutional Agencies. Now, under line item 6321, which is subsidies to Local Organisations, in 2017, the amount given was \$259.991 million. In 2018, it is \$331.924 million, which gives us a difference of \$71.933 million.

Now, if we look on page 442, which gives us the breakdown of that amount, under Labour Administration, item 3, the Guyana National Cooperative Union Ltd was given \$24 million last year and is being given \$24 million this year. My question, Hon. Minister, is: for clarification, what will this money be used for or what is the rationale behind this amount being given?

Mr. Scott: Some \$3.8 million would be used for salary for four persons; \$20.1 million would be used for stipends, maintenance of buildings, rental of a building for a regional office, national events, training in different areas; vehicle spares and services, \$756,000; fuel and lubricants, \$1 million, security, rates and taxes, stationery, utilities and other operational expenses. These would total \$24 million.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under the same line item and under the same heading, there is Occupational Health and Safety, which is being given \$2.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister state the rationale behind giving Occupational Health and Safety \$2.5 million as against giving the Guyana National Cooperative Union Limited \$24 million? What would the \$2.5 million be used for?

Mr. Scott: Hon. Member, Occupational Health and Safety is getting \$2.5 million because it is a sub-committee that advises the Minister. The Guyana National Cooperative Union Ltd is an umbrella body that covers the whole country in the different regions and, therefore, it would need more.

Mr. Chand: Cde Minister, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: This year, the number of contracted employees total 30 and next year it will be 24 employees. What is the explanation for the reduction? In terms of the expenditure for wages and salaries, *et cetera*, the allocations for this year and next year are similar. Please explain this for us.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Chandarpal, do you want to add to this question?

Ms. Chandarpal: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you will have the questions together.

Ms. Chandarpal: For the Board of Industrial Training, there is a hefty increase. Could he please provide how many persons would be benefitting from this training, the types of skills and the regions where these persons are located? If he cannot, then could he lay it over for me, please?

Mr. Scott: The first answer would be directed to Mr. Chand and the second one to Ms. Chandarpal. Mr. Chand asked for an explanation for the reduction by six, from 30 employees to 24 employees. That reduction is because there was the resignation of two staff, one person being re-assigned and a few others being upgraded. One Labour Officer, one Confidential Secretary, one Office Assistant and one Statistical Clerk resigned. Two staff were upgraded from contract employment to the permanent establishment. That accounts for the difference you would have seen.

Regarding the BIT, the total of number of persons is 1680 and that covers all of the regions.

Mr. Chand: Could the Minister advise on the subsidies to local organisations? There is the heading - Support to Other Trade Unions. Could you say how many unions would receive this support? Could you lay over the names of the unions and the criteria that were used to determine whether a union was eligible or not? Could you say whether one of the criteria was that the unions should have audited statement from the Auditor General's office?

Mr. Scott: Hon. Member, the unions are nine in number and I could give you or lay over for you the names of the unions as well as the amount money each union receives.

Mr. Chand: I have an important question. Would the unions receive the disbursement only if the unions provide an audited statement from the Auditor General's Office for the last year?

Mr. Scott: We had asked them to outline what they would do with the money. We did not ask for audited statements.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Chand, you have the last question.

Mr. Chand: Mr. Chairman, there is a sum identified for the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Is it that the Government would have a delegation at the ILO's conference next year? If the answer is yes, what is the composition of the team?

Mr. Scott: There is no line item that suits your question.

Mr. Chand: There is a budgeted sum of \$3.55 million.

5.27 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: What is the line item, Hon. Member?

Mr. Chand: The line item is 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Please repeat the question. Or, is the Minister ready to answer?

Mr. Scott: Hon. Member, what you are talking about is the contribution that we give to the ILO.

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration - \$572,406,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 494 – Child Care and Protection - \$586,880,000

Dr. Persaud: The Child Care and Protection Agency (CCPA) is the one lawful agency that deals with all of the children of this country and I feel that there are numerous problems affecting children. I feel that there is serious under budgeting for this. Line item 6112 – Senior Technical and line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: I will start with staffing. Could the Hon. Minister say how many Case Workers, Social Workers and Psychologists, specifically dealing with children, there are across the country?

Ms. Ally: The number of Case Workers across the country is 88, the number of Social Workers is 51 and there is one Psychologist.

Dr. Persaud: Would the Minister be so kind as to provide to this Committee, by laying it over, a disaggregation of the numbers that she shared with regard to Social Workers and Case Workers? Could the Minister please state, now, where he or she serves? If there are cases in the regions, how do the children access the Psychologist since there is only one?

Ms. Ally: The Psychologist is, more or less, a policy person who is located in Georgetown, but who gets assistance from the various officers within the 10 Administrative Regions. Also, we get assistance from the Ministry of Public Health; we work in collaboration with that Ministry.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Minister for that answer. I think that is a waste of resources because there needs to be Psychologists to actually counsel children and deal with children's issue. I noticed the staffing under line items 6112 and 6113. There is no expansion to cater for that. Could the Minister say if there is provision to have Psychologists who would actually interface with the children? I do know that the Ministry of Public Health is also short-staffed when it comes to Psychologists. It is a very much needed skill in the country.

Ms. Ally: If it is helpful, like I said, we work in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and there is a programme, under that Ministry, to deal with mental health, *et cetera* in the various communities.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, we are entering our last half hour of the time allotted for this matter; everyone is aware of that.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister advise us on the qualifications of the Psychologist who has been hired? Is he or she a properly trained Psychologist with proper credentials and is the person registered with the Medical Council of Guyana? Secondly, could you advise on how many other trained Counsellors, not Social Workers, are in the Child Care and Protection Agency?

Ms. Ally: The qualification of the Psychologist is a Doctorate.

Ms. Teixeira: A Clinical Psychologist is not necessarily someone who has a doctorate. But, he or she should have a Doctorate of Medicine. It is a different qualification. I could get a Doctorate in Psychology by writing lots of research issues. Unfortunately, I have noticed the staffing has dropped in the Child Care and Protection Agency. I am following up on my Colleague's

question. What efforts are being made to fill the four vacancies that there are right now so that the Agency would be better able to offer services to the children of this country?

Ms. Ally: Under this Programme, there are 37 vacancies and this is recurring for all of the Programmes. When the Commission is constituted, advertisement would be done.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Minister give this Committee, by laying it over, and she could also tell us, too, the ratio of Counsellors and Case Workers per home or shelter? How are they shared, if they are shared, by region? Do those persons have to service more than one region?

Ms. Ally: I would like to lay over the document on that.

Dr. Persaud: The reason I am asking all of these questions is because I am on the side of the Child Care and Protection Agency. I know their constraints. Therefore, I would like to ask if the Minister plans to fill those vacancies. I know that she said they are recurring. What sort of advertising does she plan to do to fill those vacancies? It is because they are very much needed. I know you said that it would be done when the Commission is constituted, but, we are now going into 2018, but 2017...

Ms. Ally: Unfortunately, we would not wish to employ people via contracts and so we will await the Public Service Commission (PSC) and, in the normal way, advertising will be done via the newspapers and circulars.

Ms. Teixeira: Is the Minister saying that if the Public Service Commission is not appointed and set up in the next six months, there would be no vacancies advertised for the Child Care and Protection Agency and, therefore, the Agency will be hamstrung? Is it not possible, Minister, that the vacancies could be advertised? The Public Service Commission will do what it does but there is no necessity to wait before you advertise. In the interest of the children, I think it is very, very important that these vacancies be advertised and that they are as transparent as possible. It is because we do know that people have applied for some of these posts and they have not been invited to the interview.

Ms. Ally: I did not say that if the Commission is not constituted we are... we, too, have the interest of the children at heart and we have always had it and, therefore, we will do everything possible to ensure that they are given adequate care and attention.

Dr. Persaud: Under line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), I have noticed an increase in the sum allotted for training. Could the Minister say what scholarships are going to be pursued? What type of training will be pursued and would these be targeting the areas that we mentioned since clearly there is need? In terms of trainings and scholarships, the University of Guyana (UG) graduates people from their social work programme. Is there a plan for partnership with the University so that unemployment, too, could be addressed when it comes to young people?

Ms. Ally: I am pleased to inform the Hon. Member that, at the moment, we have four persons doing their Masters under this programme at the University of Guyana. They started in 2017. Also, in 2017, training is being done in a number of areas - case management by Child Care and Protection Agency officers; action plan to upgrade our staff, following the Commission of Inquiry (COI) Report, disaster preparedness for things like trauma; home management, first aid and foster parenting. Those are all being done in 2017.

In 2018, we will continue capacity building for the staff, caregivers and the care centres and other service providers and these will be ongoing. This year, we will also be providing training for persons at the community level to provide network support for children and families.

Dr. Persaud: This is the final question on this because of time constraints. Under line item 6343, Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance, could the Minister explain why it is catered for here? I am just a little curious.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6343- Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance: This has to do with foster care. General pension is under Programme 492. This is for foster care payments.

5.42 p.m.

Dr. Persaud: I just have a comment. Maybe, in the future, it should be under a different heading for clarity. Thank you.

Programme: 494 – Child Care and Protection - \$586,880,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 491 – Policy Development and Administration - \$174,561,000

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1903700 – Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) Projects: I noticed that the Legend states:

“Provision for community driven entrepreneurial interventions.”

Could the Minister say where this will be rolled out, how many people will benefit and in what regions and areas?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, could I ask for a minute to find this information?

Mr. Chairman: You have it, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Ally: For 2017, 20 projects were rolled out in all the regions except Region 6. The plans were not forthcoming from Region 6. There were two projects in Region 1, four projects in Region 2, one project in Region 3, three projects in Region 4, three projects in Region 5, one project in Region 7, one project in Region 8, and two projects in Region 10. So, there were 20 projects in total.

The allocation for 2018 has been increased so that more people can benefit. For 2017, about 253 households benefited, totalling 1,170 persons.

Dr. Persaud: A follow-up question on the same line item. Could the Hon. Minister say, specifically, what programmes were rolled out? I would also like all of the information to be laid over, if she would be kind enough to do so. This should increase job opportunities and employment and improve access for training and enhance social and cultural cohesion. Could the Hon. Minister say how many persons have been employed since this training occurred? Are there developments, in terms of creating niche markets, or are there partnerships which the training has targeted? The final question on this from me is: is there going to be provision for the same in Region 6, which has a high incidence of unemployment?

Ms. Ally: The Hon. Member asked several questions but let me start with the projects. We have had, in the 20 projects, things like poultry rearing, farming, baking centre, multipurpose cooperative centres, garment construction centre, salted fish processing facility, shade house cultivation, snackette, cash crop farming, chicken rearing, pig rearing, rearing of cross rate

chicks and subsistence farming, sheep rearing, fruit preservation, catering and hospitality service, block making establishment, buying and selling fish...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, may I enquire whether the intention is to make that document available?

Ms. Ally: Most certainly, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I am enquiring whether that is the intention. I am not saying you should do that. Is that what you intend to do?

Ms. Ally: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Well, is there a necessity for reading all of it? I could understand reading some of it but all of it?

Ms. Ally: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We have 15 minutes remaining for the Capital Expenditure. So it would be helpful if we can just try to make full use of it.

Ms. Ally: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Ally: The second part of the question: With regard to these projects, the end game is that 1,130 people will benefit from this SLED programme and that is out of the 20 projects in the various regions.

In the project plan, they had to indicate how they would market their products and so on and I would like to say that the Project Unit is satisfied with the plan in its entirety.

Dr. Persaud: Could I just re-emphasise that we had asked for this to be laid over, along with all the answers to the other components of the original question. I hope that happens soon. Today would be lovely.

My comment, though, is on Region 6. I cannot understand, based on the projects you identified, why the information was not forthcoming because those are not new things. I would like to see

more out of the box or unconventional programmes, moving with the advance of time and technology, for these people under SLED.

Under project code 2511000, Furniture and Equipment, could the Hon. Minister say where these are being placed?

Ms. Ally: First of All, I would like to respond to the Hon. Member about Region 6. Since the Hon. Member is no stranger to social issues, maybe she can help in Region 6 to bring people together. **[Dr. Persaud: Ask.]** Well, I am asking you now to help to bring people together, if you wish to. If you believe that you need to see more successes, then you can make your contribution.

In terms of the furniture and equipment, first of all, I would list what are the things that we... **[Dr. Persaud: I do not need the list. I just need where they would be placed.]** They would be placed in Region 4.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1216400 – Buildings: There is nothing in 2018, but for 2017, I am very concerned, Hon. Minister, that there is \$200 million for buildings and only \$22.7 million has been spent. Therefore, budgetary provisions were made. Could you explain to this Committee the why only \$22.794 has been spent?

Ms. Ally: The Ministry of Social Protection is located in several buildings in Lamaha Street, Kernel Street, Broad Street, *et cetera*. It was conceptualised that we should have all the different sections housed in one location. In a phased way, we were to have this one building, and it would have started with \$200 million, and that is the High Street location. Unfortunately, because of cost, we had to put that on hold and, therefore, we did not proceed with the High Street building. That was the sum of money that was voted to start that building in 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you then say what the \$22.7 million was spent on since the grand plan did not come through?

Ms. Ally: That amount was spent and approved for consultancy fees and an elevator for the Lamaha Street building.

Ms. Teixeira: Was this consultancy, which you hired, to do with your grand plan of a mega building? If so, was it advertised? Was it publicly tendered? Who was the company and what was the cost of the consultancy?

Ms. Ally: It was not advertised; it was done via a prequalified contractor.

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1216400 – Buildings: I would like the Hon. Minister to say if the building referred to is the Drop-in Centre. If not, could the Minister then clarify what the \$144 million will be spent on?

Ms. Ally: This sum of \$200 million, under this project code, is for the High Street building. There is another sum of \$144 million for the Drop-in Centre at Sophia under Programme four.

Ms. Veerasammy: Mdm. Minister, could you please state if this is the first elevator that will be installed at the Palms Geriatric Home? If that is so, is there an intention to place elevators in the other buildings also?

5.57 p.m.

Ms. Ally: This is not the programme for that, but I think you would be happy to know that three lifts would be installed by the end of the year at The Palms.

Programme: 491- Policy Development and Administration- \$174,561,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are very near the two hours allotted to us.

Programme: 492 - Social Services - \$ 57,196,000

Programme: 492 - Social Services - \$57,196,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 493 - Labour Administration - \$ 4,000,000

Programme: 493 - Labour Administration - \$4,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 494 - Child Care and Protection- \$165,500,000

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1216400 - Buildings: It was noted that the last supplementary had an addition in excess of \$20 million for mobilisation. Could you say in the new sum of \$144 million, would that involve more than was asked for in this House? Was there a change in the contractor, because the work did not start as was envisaged earlier?

Ms. Ally: I do not envisage a request for any additional sum. This \$144 million is anticipated to conclude the building, and there is no change in the contractor.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister give us the schedule that is expected for this building? When would we see completion of this building? Also, what was the original \$40 million used for?

Ms. Ally: The anticipated time to complete this building is 12 months and the original amount of money was used for mobilisation fees, for clearing of the location.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1216400 – Buildings: From what you said Minister, you appear to be putting back the centre at the same place. Is that the same site that you said was being cleared?

Secondly, I noticed that the budgeted allocation was \$40.8 million, but what was spent was \$64 million. Could you advise what the additional money was for? Could you also state who the contractor is, was the contract done by public advertisement and what the total of the contract is?

Ms. Ally: First of all, I would like to indicate to the Hon. Member that the site is not Hadfield Street. It has changed. We have been able to acquire a plot of land in Sophia and the building is going to be built in Sophia. The order of the day was public tendering. The \$40 million of the total sum was used for consultancies and mobilisation - because you did mention the \$60 million - and \$20 million was used for extension work at Broad Street. I must emphasise that, to have a Ministry housed in so many buildings, you would know that, it is very uncomfortable. It is manageable but there are a lot of challenges in managing one ministry at so many different locations. So, we had to do the extension of the Child Care and Protection Agency in Broad Street.

Ms. Teixeira: The issue that I want to raise is: Where are the children being housed in the interim? You said the land is in Sophia. You also said that \$64 million was spent, but it is an increase on your original budget that was approved by this House. Because I do not recall seeing

a supplementary financial paper, could you say where the additional \$24 million came from? If it was by a supplementary financial paper, could you say if it was Supplementary Financial Paper I, II or III?

Ms. Ally: It was a supplementary dealing with, I think, \$23 million or \$20 million. It was done on the last occasion that we tabled the supplementary estimates, and it was approved by the National Assembly. In terms of where we house the children, there is a location at Sophia where some are housed while others were placed in foster care.

Ms. Teixeira: The supplementary financial paper for \$23 million or \$24 million, was it for this building or for the building under Policy Development and Administration where \$22 million was spent? Is it very clear in the supplementary that it was for the Drop-In Centre?

Ms. Ally: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: I had also asked, what is the name of the contractor and the value for the contract?

Ms. Ally: The contracting service is P.D. Contracting Service. The length of contract is 12 months.

Ms. Teixeira: When was the contract awarded or signed?

Ms. Ally: It was signed in December.

Ms. Teixeira: I just heard the Minister said it was signed in December. If that is so, then how did we spend \$64 million? This is 14th December, 2017. How do you spend \$64 million in one or two weeks even if it was for mobilisation or consultancy? You spent more than what was budgeted. You came back for a supplementary. When you came for supplementary it was because you ran out of money and needed more.

Ms. Ally: I would like to inform the Hon. Member that \$4 million was for consultancies and \$16 million plus the supplementary amount was for the mobilisation fees.

Ms. Teixeira: That does not add up to \$64 million. Four million plus 16 million plus 20 million does not add up to the 64 million which this book is telling us was expended on this heading.

Ms. Ally: I cannot answer one question 42 times. I said that \$20 million was spent on the Broad Street building.

Programme: 494 - Child Care and Protection - \$165,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this concludes consideration of the Ministry of Social Protection.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspend at 6.11 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.28 p.m.

7.29 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 54 – Ministry of Public Security

Current Expenditure

Programme: 541 – Policy Development and Administration – \$722,814,000

Mr. Rohee: I would like to address line items 6111 to 6115 – Administrative, Senior Technical, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, Clerical and Office Support, as well as Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: The figures indicate that each one of these line items show significant increases in allocations to the tune of approximately \$49 million. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to indicate to the honourable House the justification for these increases? And apart from the justifications, what are the posts that each of these line items have implications for? Thank you.

Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]: Indeed, there have been increases in relation to line items 6111 to 6115. But that is as a result of line item 6116, Contracted Employees, being decreased and a lot of the contracted employees coming onto the pensionable establishment. As you may notice it is almost 69, so the question simply cannot be without the addition of line item

6116. As a result of the contracted employees going across to line items 6111 to 6115 there was an increase in the moneys to be paid for staff transitioning – contracted to pensionable status. That is what caused the increases there.

In relation to the second question as to the staffing, I can give him the transitioning and the staffing. I have the two-page document that has almost 86 workers. Would you like me to call the names out?

Mr. Rohee: No.

Mr. Ramjattan: I will certainly give it to you.

Mr. Rohee: Indeed, there has been a significant reduction in contracted workers. However, in respect of those contracted workers remaining under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, would the Hon. Minister indicate which departments they fall under, their designations, the salaries as well as the benefits and allowances?

Mr. Ramjattan: I have that very long list. Again, it is made up of a couple of pages with who have stayed on as contracted, their designations and salaries too. I can deliver that to Mr. Rohee if he so requires.

Mr. Rohee: Follow-up: Is there an explanation as to why there are still so many contracted workers on your staff? And is it the intention of the Ministry to have these remaining contracted workers, to use the word that has been used here quite often, ‘transitioned’, moved from contracted workers onto the pensionable establishment?

Mr. Ramjattan: The reason is because, as a matter of fact, almost all of them that remained as contracted employees are the data entry clerks at the various police stations and the Ministry. They requested that they stay as contracted. It is more or less a voluntary thing. They prefer to be contracted employees.

Mr. Rohee: I find that answer very interesting, notwithstanding the fact that the policy announced by the Administration, of which the Minister is part, was that all contracted workers would move over to the fixed establishment. Let us move on.

Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: In 2017, the Budget allocation was \$20.573 million. However, only \$2.508 million was spent. Could the Hon. Minister explain what this was spent on? And since no money was appropriated, how \$2.508 million was spent?

Mr. Ramjattan: Indeed, at the beginning of the year there was a zero sum and it was revised to \$2.508 million because of National Anti-Narcotic Agency (NANA) requesting that the Ministry get a building, and which we have now gotten. That is why we had to pay rentals for the new NANA building.

Mr. Rohee: I wonder if the Minister would be kind enough to indicate to this House the location of this building that is housing NANA and whether NANA has a full complement of staff.

Mr. Ramjattan: It is in Parade Street, Kingston, and it has not gotten its complement of staff as yet. However, it has gotten 12 staff and I have the list of the members of staff here.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister provide the details with respect to the maintenance works and which buildings they were?

Mr. Ramjattan: This was for the maintenance of the Juvenile Holding Centre, installation of grills to doors and windows, plumbing works, painting and general routine maintenance. Then there were electrical works, repairs to roof, replacing of ceiling, repairs to plumbing system of the Ministry's Secretariat in Brickdam, electrical works to the Citizen's Security Strengthening Programme Office, and some works done at the forensic laboratory. If you would like to have the entire list, I have it here with the amount spent on each one of the repairs that brought the sum up to the \$12 million.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: In 2017, \$3.977 million was budgeted for, but only \$2.165 million was projected. This time around we have a request for \$3.325 million. Could the Minister justify this request?

Mr. Ramjattan: There has been a decrease because the field trips for which this sum went towards will be done in collaboration with other departments of the Ministry.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: In 2017, \$75.124 million was budgeted for but only \$71.624 was projected to be spent. This time around, there is a request to increase this amount to \$75.1 million. Could the Minister explain this figure?

Mr. Ramjattan: There has been a decrease here, I think, by \$24,000. The decrease is reflective of the current consumption of electricity. Somehow, because of the fact that we have put in light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs, we have gone ‘green’, and it has helped.

Mr. Rohee: You have gone what?

Mr. Ramjattan: Electricity consumption has decreased.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Minister provide a breakdown in respect of the programmes and scholarships that are implicated in this line item?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, I can do so. We have a number of persons attending training: forensic video analysis, forensic executive diploma, first aid, and technical report writing. The estimated cost for each is here. But it is another two-page document which I can give you with the exact description of training, the amount of persons attending the training and the cost that came up to that sum.

7.44 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6284 – Other: Mr. Chairman, we would be pleased if the Hon. Minister could provide a comparative break down for line item 6284 projected for the 2018 Budget.

Mr. Ramjattan: This line item caters for payments of advertisements, advisories and internet services. We can get the break down for you as to how much went into each one of these categories.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, a follow up to line item 6284 - Other: The Hon. Minister is telling us that \$27,800,000 will be expended on advertisement and internet for the year 2018. It just sounds like an abnormal amount of money to be spent on advertisement and internet. I just want him to confirm that that is so.

Mr. Ramjattan: I can indicate to the Hon. Member that it is indeed an expensive exercise. It is for advisories which include notices and all of that, internet services and advertisements. We can very well give you that document as to the break down, and it will also be audited by the Auditor General.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, line item 6294 - Other: Again under Other we have \$667,885,000 being budgeted. May I respectfully inquire of the Hon. Minister to edify us on what the projects are that will be financed from this huge sum of money?

Mr. Ramjattan: This line item caters for the operational expenditure of the Juvenile Holding Centre, Community Policing Groups, the Fire Advisory Board, the Strategic Management Department and some elements of the Ministry's Secretariat. We have a break down here as to how much was spent in 2017 and how much we estimate to spend. For the Community Policing Group we will spend about \$11,890,000; the Fire Advisory Board, \$5.4 million; the Task Force on Trafficking in Persons (TIP), \$11,810,000; the Juvenile Holding Centre... and we have it all. I can give the document to you. It adds up to \$67,885,000. We spent \$68,928,000 this year.

Mr. Nandlall: I am just thinking, why is it that we are putting such an important expenditure under the rubric of Other. It does not speak well for accountability. But my question relates to line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I can see that we are budgeting \$9,627,000. Why I had made that previous comment was because the Community Policing Group, for example, could have been under this head - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Anyhow, I am asking in relation to contributions to local organisations, \$9,627,000.

Mr. Ramjattan: I will just give an answer as to what the \$9,627,000 is going towards: the National Road Safety Council, \$3.5 million; the Parole Board, \$5,900,000; and the Guyana Legend, \$225,000. As to the line items, I inherited that.

Programme: 541 – Policy Development and Administration – \$722,814,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 542 – Police Force – \$11,499,678,000

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6111 - Administrative: There seems to be a decrease from one 198 to 165 in terms of the Staffing Details and there is also a reduction from \$379,949,000 to \$326,729,000. Would the Minister please explain these anomalies to the House?

Mr. Ramjattan: These are not anomalies. Indeed there were 12 officers who retired and this line item caters for those - from Cadet Officer to Deputy Commissioner. And there was a reduction here based on retirement, I understand. That explains it.

Mr. Rohee: If there are some officers or senior ranks who are retiring, I would expect that the police would make provision for their replacement in keeping with promotions, unless you do not intend to make any promotions to replace those ranks who have retired. Could you explain that?

Mr. Ramjattan: As the former Minister should know, these promotions have to be done by the Police Service Commission which has not yet been established or constituted. So we will await the Police Service Commission to constitute those Members and then we will proceed from there. But at this stage those 12 retirees cannot be replaced. It has to be done by the Police Service Commission.

Mr. Rohee: If I may persist on this matter, I am still on this particular line item. The Minister claimed that this situation has arisen as a result of senior ranks retiring and thus the reduction from \$379 million to \$326 million. Sir, if that is the case, it would be logical to expect that there will be other ranks awaiting promotion who will replace them, at least in an acting position. Nothing is wrong with having these persons moved up to serve in those positions, with those ranks having retired, pending the Police Service Commission being put in place. Therefore, provision will have to be made not only for the acting appointment but also for the salaries, unless you do not intend to do it in 2019.

Mr. Ramjattan: This line item does not cater for the acting increases. It is line item 6131, Other Direct Labour Costs that caters for that. So, yes, they are getting the acting allowance but it comes under line item 6131 and not this line item.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you. I am grateful for that information. The Hon. Minister had made a statement to the effect that he was short of thousands of police ranks. This was a public statement

that was made. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the thousands of police ranks which he wants have been recruited to the Guyana Police Force (GPF) and whether provision is made for them to be paid under any one of these heads?

Mr. Ramjattan: I understand that there is a shortage of just above 600. Presently, the three training schools are filled with recruits now undergoing training. So effectively it is approximately 620 that could fill the establishment's strength.

Mr. Nandlall: May I be permitted to go back to line items 6111 to 6116? The Staffing Details encompasses 5,574 employees. We are aware that there have been several recommendations to civilianise the GPF. Is that policy being pursued? If you are going to give us broad figures, what percentage of these employees are non-police personnel? In other words they are civilians. Or are they are all police persons?

Mr. Ramjattan: We understand that all these Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, line item 6115, that is 555 of them, are civilians. So we are in keeping with our policy.

Mr. Gill: I would like to welcome our brave men and women in uniform. There is a moderate increase from line items 6111 to 6115. There is a moderate increase in these line items but it is grossly inadequate to cover the 20% increase in salaries that were promised to our brave men and women in uniform. So I must ask the Hon. Minister: Is this increase catered for in this Budget? If not, why not?

Mr. Ramjattan: We do not forecast any increase, but we are pleading with the Ministry of Finance. We do not know how far that will go but the trouble is that at present, on this estimate, there has been no forecast for that.

7.59 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled: In 2018, the number shows an increase from \$587 million for 2017 to \$749 million for 2018 while the staffing detail shows an increase from 517 to 582 employees. Please explain this Mr. Minister.

Mr. Ramjattan: The line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, caters for payment of salaries for members at the mid-management level and these are sergeants to chief inspectors.

This increase is due to the moneys which would be spent with respect to the promotions from sergeants to inspectors and so on.

Mr. Rohee: Having had promotions at the level at which the Commissioner of Police or the Commissioner of Police (ag.) could make promotions, and there being no promotions at the senior management level, is that not creating some dissatisfaction and low morale in the Guyana Police Force (GPF)?

Mr. Chairman: Is there a line item Hon. Member?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, it is the same line item 6113, other Technical and Craft Skilled.

Mr. Ramjattan: There will be lots more dissatisfaction if there was to be promotion without the Guyana Police Service Commission (GPSC).

Mr. Rohee: I was in no way implying that promotions should proceed in the absence of the Guyana Police Service Commission so I would like the Minister to take note of that.

May we proceed to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, which has decreased from 15 in 2017 to 12 employees currently? However, there is an expenditure that is expected to be increased from \$75 million in 2017 to \$77 million in 2018. I would be happy if the Minister could explain this increase.

Mr. Ramjattan: The increase is due to salary increases. Two of the 12 employees who came on during the course of the year have higher salaries than the others and that is what has caused the increase of \$2.5 million.

Mr. Rohee: That answer, to some extent, is different from the previous straight answer that the Minister gave. In relation to line item, 6113, other Technical and Craft Skilled, could the Minister elaborate a little more because I was not clear about increases which would be granted to the disadvantage of others?

Mr. Ramjattan: There have been increases in salaries this year and we have to cater for those increases next year. There are two persons, who we have taken on this year as contracted employees, who have higher salaries than the normal contracted employee. That increase has

really taken on the conclusion here that we have to get approximately \$2.7 million more for 2018. That is why there is an increase.

Mr. Rohee: Unless I do not understand the explanation quite well. If there have been increases this year for certain levels of ranks, as a matter of principle, why have there not been increases for other ranks; notwithstanding the existence of the Guyana Police Service Commission?

Mr. Ramjattan: We had increases for all ranks this year. I understand the previous question to be whether there was a forecast for increases next year. The answer to that is no. That is the best answer I could provide for the increase at this stage for the 12 employees.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: In 2017 there is a projected expenditure of \$171 million but we now see an increase to \$195 million for 2018. Could the Hon. Minister explain what I would consider to be a significant increase?

Mr. Ramjattan: The increase of \$18.1 million is as a result of purchasing more electrical and finger print materials, animal feeds, evidence bags and a number of other things. This is due, primarily, to the additional acquisition of 24 horses and 15 dogs in the canine section, and the increased usage of evidence bags, crime scene materials, latex gloves, handcuffs *et cetera*.

Mr. Rohee: Are those items not to come under Capital Expenditure?

Mr. Ramjattan: It is for the feeding and veterinary materials and expenses for the animals.

Mr. Rohee: Do you mean to feed them?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, to feed and also to take care of them.

Mr. Nandlall: I want to congratulate the Minister on the fact that the dogs and the horses are finally here. [Ms. Teixeira: After two and a half years.] Yes, after two and a half years. Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could you tell us, Mr. Minister, which building or buildings are being rented by the Guyana Police Force, what is the rent and where it is located?

Mr. Ramjattan: This is an increase due primarily to the rental of a house for the Commander of the F-Division and his registry staff and an increased in rental cost for the Agricola Police Outpost. I could provide you with the contract and whatever else you might need to prove that.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: There was a projected expenditure of \$576 million in 2107 but this has reduced to \$565 million for 2018. Could the Hon. Minister explain the decline in this provision in the light of the fact that the Guyana Police Force has more vehicles than it had at the time when consideration was given to formulate the budget for the GPF?

Mr. Ramjattan: This decrease is due to increased efficiencies of the vehicles, there being new ones.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6284 – Other: There is \$165 million budgeted for this year which shows an increase of \$10 million from last year. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what are the activities that would be funded under this line item? Why has there been an increase of \$10 million?

Mr. Ramjattan: It is an increase of \$5 million that I notice here.

Mr. Nandlall: It is from \$155 million in 2017 to \$165 million for 2018.

Mr. Ramjattan: I see that the Revised is \$160 million.

Mr. Nandlall: No, the Revised figure is \$155 million. Do we have the same book?

Mr. Ramjattan: Okay, the intelligence capacity of the organisation is important and vital. The force has sought to have some re-engineering done in relation to its intelligence capacity. I understand that the undertaken has received a boost from the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). This is what the expenditure is going towards; our crime and security intelligence network and informant funding and information protection.

Mr. Nandlall: That sounds very *[inaudible]* but the ordinary Guyanese taxpayer would like that to be broken down. They are no wiser having received that explanation. **[Mr.**

Nagamootoo: Do you understand it?] It is not for me Mr. Nagamootoo.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, what is the question that you are asking? Please ask your question.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir, I am asking the Hon. Minister if he can break down that very complicated explanation which he has given so that the ordinary man in the street, who is looking on the television, can understand why \$165 million taxpayers' moneys will be spent this way.

Mr. Ramjattan: If I were to break it down Mr. Chairman, I would say that it would be as if someone stole something and an informer is going to indicate who stole it, if the informer has the information. There are times when you have to pay the informant. The moneys are for informant funding. The increase is for that purpose; it is for informant funding and information protection. We have to now have all these information protected and that protection has a cost. The other thing is the intelligence network that we want to spread nationally to the extent that we can always go back and find the information and the informant who would have helped *et cetera*. All of that is to make the GPF far greater than it is right now.

Mr. Rohee: The colleagues Ministers who are cheering the Minister of Public Security are probably new to these issues but I would like to press on. Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: The Hon. Minister, in his Budget's speech, spoke about recruiting five Civilian Policy Analysts for the GPF. Could the Hon. Minister indicate where in the GPF will these five Civilian Policy Analysts be located and whether they have already been recruited?

Mr. Ramjattan: They have been recruited and are at the Strategic Planning Unit of the Guyana Police Force.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide to the House the details of the maintenance works?

Mr. Ramjattan: This line item caters for the payment to contractors for repairs to bridges, fences and construction of water trestles. I have the rehabilitation works done here in a list. We had works to fence the headquarters, the Prashad Nagar Outpost, Madewini, Springlands, Beterverwagting and Parika and Mackenzie Living Quarters. The amount of money proposed for that. The estimated cost is \$41,500,000. I can share this with you.

8.14 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: As the Hon. Minister knows there is one robbery under arms occurring every day in the country. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, between line item 6111 to line item 6115, whether he is assured that there are enough ranks within the Guyana Police Force to address the technical capacities of the force in order to deal with the “one robbery under arms per day” which is occurring in our country.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, there is. We have reduced it from one and a half from the previous administration.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6294 – Other: There is \$ 63 million budgeted which is another increase of about \$8 million from last year. “Other” does not inform us about the purpose for which these moneys would be used. Hon. Minister, could you please assist us with some explanation?

Mr. Ramjattan: This line item caters for the payment of services rendered for the handling, transportation and storage of dead bodies and the cost for sending out radio and television messages.

Mr. Rohee: On the same line item, could the Hon. Minister say whether the bodies or corpses of the Lindo Creek massacre victims are still lying... [Ms. Ally: Which line item?]
You must pay attention and you would know and stop sleeping. Could the Minister indicate whether the corpses of the Lindo Creek massacre victims are lying unclaimed by their relatives?

Mr. Ramjattan: I am informed that the Lindo Creek corpses or bodies were disposed of during the course of Mr. Rohee’s stewardship.

Mr. Rohee: We seem to be having some fun here but this is a serious question. I do not accept, with due respect, the explanation given by the Minister.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is my explanation.

Mr. Rohee: I have no problem with it remaining on the record. I would like my objection to remain on the records with respect to the Minister’s answer. Thank you very much.

Mr. Nandlall: I see that, under line item 6322, Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations, we are making a contribution of \$13 million to an international organisation. Might I enquire which organisation is that?

Mr. Ramjattan: The line item is catering for payments of contributions to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP).

Mr. Rohee: Under the same line item 6322, Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations, I recall that the Minister of Finance cautioning his colleague Ministers about paying increases to international organisations of this type and keeping expenses down. There is an increase here of approximately \$.3 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain why the increase to organisations which we were part of for quite some time?

Mr. Ramjattan: The increase is \$347,000, unless my math is wrong. This increase is due to the projected rate or exchange rate but whatever it is, we would pay it. We know of no such circular from the Ministry of Finance which indicated that we should not to pay these important international organisations which helped us so much – the INTERPOL and the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police.

Mr. Rohee: On the same line item 6322, Subsidies to International Organisations, I do not recall saying that there was a circular. I said that there was a statement from the Hon. Minister of Finance appealing to his colleagues about the question of Subsidies and contributions to international organisations and the need to keep those contributions at the lowest possible level. Never did I make any reference to a circular from the Minister of Finance.

Programme: 542 – Police Force - \$11,499,678,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 543 – Prison Service - \$1,837,954,000

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6111 – Administrative; line item 6112 – Senior Technical; line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skills; line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support; and line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: There have been a number of incidents at prison locations, particularly the Georgetown Prison. The Minister ought to be concerned about the staffing level at those prison locations. Could the Minister tell this honourable House whether, in light of those most unfortunate developments, he is satisfied with the staffing level at the five prison locations around the country, particularly in the city?

Mr. Ramjattan: Though there is room for improvement, we are satisfied in the context of the circumstances here.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister provide the House with the details with respect to maintenance works for 2017 and that which is envisaged for 2018, the cost, the details and how the contractors were selected for those works?

Mr. Ramjattan: It was done by public tender for the renovation in relation to all of the buildings. I have a list of the various buildings which were maintained, the name of the contractor and the contracted sum, which I could share with you; it is a long list.

Mr. Rohee: I would be happy to receive a copy of that list from the Hon. Minister. May we proceed to line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, and to ask the Hon. Minister whether he could provide the details for 2017 and 2018 – the cost, the details of the works and the method by which the contractors were selected in 2017?

Mr. Ramjattan: I do have that list. It is for renovations of buildings and for officers. I could provide that list to you. It also has the condition of the building and the cost which would add up to the \$28 million. I could provide that to you along with the list for 2017.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could the Hon. Minister provide an explanation with respect to the increase in the electricity charges from \$38 million in 2017 to \$44 million in 2018? Could the Hon. Minister, in providing that explanation, inform the honourable House whether the increase in the electricity charges will add to the increase in the security of the prisons?

Mr. Ramjattan: It is as a result of the increase in additional equipment procured in 2017 including the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system, computers and a lot of other items; for example, industrial ovens, rice industrial dryer, air conditioning units, and upgrading of CCTV. I could give you the list and you would see what the equipment is that has resulted in increased it.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6292 – Dietary: This has a very small increase and I was wondering why, particularly after what occurred in July, 2017 and in early March. The increase in Dietary, which I assume is for the prisoners, is less than \$2 million. Could the Hon. Minister say how many prisoners are now benefitting from dietary and how many anticipated or declined? I would

have thought that, after the Commission of Inquiry, the allocation for Dietary would have been higher in 2018, since one of the recommendations was to improve the quality of life of the prisoners. Could the Hon. Minister explain why there is such an infinitesimal increase for the prisoners' diet?

Mr. Ramjattan: The answer to that, as I am informed, is that the prison is having an increase in chicken production and agricultural production. Although the increase is \$2.7 million only, their diets would be of quality to the extent that, indeed, the small sum would take care of it because of the additional work.

Mr. Rohee: It is good to hear that there is an increase in the poultry production at the prisons. The Hon. Minister ought to explain, if he pleases to do so, whether the chicken is being sold or whether all are consumed by the prisoners at the various prison locations. In addition to the same matter, could the Hon. Minister state the extent to which the Guyana Prison Service has moved towards self-sufficiency in dietary materials for the... **[Mr. Trotman: *[Inaudible]*]**

You deal with ExxonMobil Corporation. With due respect, Mr. Chairman, I want to address you.

8.29 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, that was the first thing that you should have said.

Mr. Rohee: Yes, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister explain to the House the extent to which the prison location have moved to have self-sufficiency in dietary for the prisoners at the various prison locations?

Mr. Ramjattan: In relation to the first question asked about reports about the chicken, I have not gotten reports that any is going anywhere, but if the Hon. Member has gotten the reports he could please send them to me. In relation to the other matter about the self-sufficiency; indeed, it is a work in progress and we have made a lot of progress in Mazaruni and New Amsterdam in relation to agricultural produce, chicken and, to a lesser extent, green vegetables and so on.

Mr. Rohee: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide the House with some comparative statistics, for the past five years, of production of eggs and poultry, meat as well as other products under the heading of dietary, so that we could make a truly objective analysis of the decreases or increases of production of dietary at the various prison locations?

Secondly, when I referred to the sale of poultry meat, my statement was not intended to imply illicit activities. It was mainly to imply a commercial enterprise by the prison service to earn resources based on the sale of the products to the public, so that the prison, itself, would have a steady flow of income to deal with other expenses that it may have from time to time.

Mr. Ramjattan: We would provide the Hon. Member with the statistics that would show that there have been incremental increases.

Programme: 543 – Prison Service – \$1,837,954,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimate.

Programme 544 – Police Complaints Authority – \$34,760,000

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There has been a decrease in the number of contracted employees from nine to five and, concomitantly, an increase in the amount of money requested. Could the Hon. Minister explain the situation that implies this situation?

Mr. Ramjattan: The decrease reflected under this line item is due to the employee's transition from contracted to the pensionable establishment.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister explain to the House Government's policies with respect to senior citizens? I am talking about contracted employees since the Hon. Prime Minister wanted to know what head I am speaking under. I am speaking through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister to enquire as to the Government's policies in request to senior citizens' employment as contracted workers.

Mr. Ramjattan: I have nothing to say to that question, Sir.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you Mr. Minister. Could the Hon. Minister indicate how soon the previous Chairman of the Police Service Commission, who is describe as a senior citizen, will be replaced at the Police Complaints Authority?

Mr. Ramjattan: Very soon.

Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority – \$34,760,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 545 – Fire Service – \$1,235,522,000

Mr. Rohee: I refer to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, to ask the Hon. Minister about the number of contracted workers at the Guyana Fire Service, which appeared to have been increased from seven to nine. Could the Minister say what the justification for the increase is and who are the persons who have been contracted at the Guyana Fire Service?

Mr. Ramjattan: Well, it is as a result of two persons, the head of Strategic Management Unit (SMU) and another SMU officer, being employed on contract, as they wanted it.

Mr. Rohee: When the Hon. Member told us about other officers being employed is a rather loose way of describing the situation. Could the Minister say who the officer is? I do not want their names, but could he say what the position is and why was the office required to be filled?

Mr. Ramjattan: We created a new office call the Strategic Management Unit and we have a head that has been employed and another officer in that Strategic Management Unit. They were both contracted to do the work there.

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: I have noticed that the allocation has skyrocketed from \$4 million in 2017 to \$18.2 million in 2018, could the Hon. Minister explain this astronomical increase?

Mr. Ramjattan: This line item caters for the purchasing of medical supplies for the ambulances and also of other medical supplies for the personnel at the Guyana Fire Service.

Programme: 545 – Fire Service – \$1,235,522,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$226,405,000

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There has been a significant increase from \$117.8 million to a \$128 million as the cost attach to the employment of these contracted workers but, in the staffing details, there is no indication, whatsoever, about the number of contracted workers to whom these salaries will be paid. If there is no number of contracted workers, the question is to whom are these salaries going to be paid?

Mr. Ramjattan: Since the creation of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU), the zero under the staffing details has been done because of the special nature of the security arrangements for that. I do not know how a former Minister could be indicating that he is surprised by this.

In any event to answer the question as to why it would be increased is as a result of the emolument increases for the salaries of the officers.

Mr. Rohee: I am following up on that same question which I had asked about contracted employees.

Mr. Chairman: Are you still speaking about something?

Mr. Rohee: Yes. The Hon. Minister represents a Government that came to office on a crust of a fresh approach. If you are making a fresh approach you cannot compare yourself with what we did when we were there. In the context of a fresh approach you should provide the numbers of contracted workers; I do not need the names. I just need to know how many contracted workers are going to receive the salary or we could easily, for propaganda sake, describe them as phantoms. Thank you.

Mr. Ramjattan: We could provide the numbers for you but we felt that keeping it the way you had it is good enough.

Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$226,405,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

8.44 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 541 – Policy Development and Administration - \$452,500,000

Mr. Rohee: Project code 1216600 – Citizen Security Programme II: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether provision is made for the brand new command centre which he spoke about and where is this building to be located?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. There is going to be a surveillance system designed and it would be to the tune of \$10 million.

Programme: 541 –Policy Development and Administration - \$452,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 542 – Police Force - \$688,216,000

Mr. Rohee: Project code 2405900 - Land and Water Transport – Police: The Guyana Police Force (GDF) has just received a new fleet of various means of transportation. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether, in addition to what was provided by the People’s Republic of China, these vehicles - motorcycles, engines and boats - are meant to augment what was already received? If not, how and where is this additional land and water transport...? Finally, on the same question, could the Hon. Minister indicate what criteria were used to distribute the vehicles from the Chinese package and what criteria would be used to distribute these under this provision?

Mr. Ramjattan: In relation to the provision of the land and water transport for the Police, we are going to augment that which we got as a gift from the People’s Republic of China with additional land and water transport. These include boat engines- 40 horse power and 15 horse power - boat trailers, ballahoes, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, armoured vehicles, prison vans, *et cetera*, which we did not get. Also, some more outrider motorcycles and bicycles would be purchased.

In relation to the question about the criteria for distribution of the new vehicles to the various Divisions, it was on a needs basis. There were some Divisions and police stations within the Divisions that had been without vehicles for a number of months and a number of years. Based on that, we delivered to those areas. Also, another criteria used, along with needs, was the mapping of where the crime was high and where there was need for additional patrols. Although some stations and Divisions, such as ‘A’ Division, already had a number of vehicles, because of the high crime rate, we had to put more patrol vehicles in that Division. So, it was based on needs plus the areas in which crime was high.

Mr. Rohee: Of the 11 vehicles that were taken away from the community policing groups, how soon does the Minister intend to hand the vehicles back to the community policing groups? The Minister has made promise after promise. *[Interruption]* Could you be quiet please? Could the Minister indicate when the community policing groups would be given the 11 eleven vehicles

which were taken away and handed to the Police? Now that the police have quite enough, when are they going to be handed back to the community policing groups?

Mr. Ramjattan: It would be very soon. That is as best an answer I can offer at this time.

Mr. Gill: Project code 1216800 - Police Stations and Buildings. The Legend does not include rehabilitation of the Blairmont Police Station. Could the Minister say how soon this building will be renovated so that the police officers do not get wet when it rains?

Mr. Ramjattan: We have prioritised some of the stations that were named in the Legend. We are doing some work there currently. A construction services has gotten the contract and it is going to be completed. Works on the police station and the barrack room at Blairmont are going on right now.

Mr. Rohee: Project code 2608300 - Equipment – Police: The Legend states that there would be the purchase of equipment, arms and ammunition. Could the Hon. Minister advise us on whether the equipment that is intended to be procured would assist the Guyana Police Force's Narcotics Branch in stemming the flow of narcotics through the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) since this has been a major problem over the past couple of years?

Mr. Ramjattan: It is not only the procurement of arms and ammunition and equipment that will do that, but it is a lot of the intelligence, networking and the informant funding that will also help in that regard. Yes, we project that there will be more interdictions by the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) and the various drug enforcement agencies from the other units, such as the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and the Police, in this forthcoming year.

Programme: 542 – Police Force - \$688,216,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 543 – Prison Service - \$1,686,000,000

Mr. Rohee: Project code 1216900 Buildings – Prison: Reference has been made to the construction of a new prison at Mazaruni to house about 3,000 prisoners, and I think the Minister publicly said that.

Mr. Ramjattan: I said 400.

Mr. Rohee: How many?

Mr. Ramjattan: I said 400.

Mr. Rohee: Well, it must have been a printer's devil because I recall reading that it would house approximately 2,000 prisoners. If the Minister is now saying that it is 400, my question is: with the overpopulation in the prisons, does the Minister consider rehabilitating the Mazaruni Prison to accommodate 400 inmates sufficient? It is because, in my view, it is not.

Mr. Ramjattan: It is not the rehabilitation but the construction of a brand new prison in the Mazaruni estate, and a very state-of-the-art and modern one, that will house an additional 400 prisoners. So, it would be whatever Mazaruni already houses plus 400 in this new, state-of-the-art prison.

Programme: 543 – Prison Service - \$1,686,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority - \$690,000

Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority - \$690,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 545 – Fire Service - \$318,981,000

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, in respect to the provision that is made to purchase water tenders and ambulances, could the Hon. Minister say how old, in terms of mileage and date of manufacture, are these ambulances and water tenders that he intends to purchase?

Mr. Ramjattan: We are going to provide that information. I do not know and my officers, at this stage, are in no position to accurately give that, but it would be provided to the Hon. Member.

8.59 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the specifications of the ambulances and the tenders will correspond with the new laws that have been passed with respect to the age of vehicles and the age of the tyres?

Mr. Ramjattan: They certainly would be in compliance.

Programme: 545 – Fire service - \$318,981,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 546 – Customs Anti- Narcotics Unit - \$10,000,000

Mr. Rohee: Ten million dollars is a paltry allocation for an organisation like the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit to fight the massive problem of drug trafficking. It is totally inadequate and I am surprised that the Hon. Minister and the Hon. Minister of Finance, notwithstanding what has been said by the Head of State of this country about the need to fight drug trafficking, have allocated a paltry \$10 million. Criticisms have been made, in the past, about CANU not having air or sea capacity. When is the Government going to provide the resources for CANU to have air and sea capacity to effectively fight drug trafficking? Is the Government going to take some of the money from the bonus...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Rohee, Hon. Member, let us stick to the programme.

Mr. Rohee: Okay. I am sticking to the programme, which has to do with the fight against drugs.

Mr. Chairman: This is capital expenditure for the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit.

Mr. Rohee: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: It does not speak about the narcotics. Do you want to speak about it in this context?

Mr. Rohee: I am speaking about an allocation that was made to the tune of \$10 million, which I consider a rather paltry sum, considering the importance which is attached and was attached to the fight against drugs, and the need for CANU to have air and sea capacity to deal with this this fight. So, I am surprised to see the Minister has allocated a paltry and meagre \$10 million to engage in a fight which, at the highest level of the Administration, it has been spoken about the need to do so. We have heard before talks about affordability. Resources are available, but the Minister of Finance, apparently...No, I do not want to be like my Colleague.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Rohee, I am holding my breath but the question is not coming.

Mr. Rohee: The question is pellucid. Why has the Government, through the Ministry of Public Security, not made available more than \$10 million for the purchase of air and sea capacity for CANU to fight drug trafficking, more so since they have created the National Anti-Narcotics Agency (NANA)? So, I consider this a great disservice to our country.

Mr. Ramjattan: There is absolutely no question and the Hon. Member could assure himself that, indeed, assets will be procured for the purpose of fighting drug trafficking.

Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$10,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you for the effort we have made to get where we are now. There is a break scheduled, but I believe Members would like us to push ahead.

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We will seize the time and proceed.

Agency 43: Ministry of Public Health

Current Expenditure

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration- \$1,507,499,000

Dr. Anthony: Under line items 6111- 6117, 302 persons are going to be employed in 2018, which is an increase. But we noticed that the allocation for salaries and wages has decreased. Could the Minister explain that?

Minister of Public Health [Ms. Lawrence]: To the Hon. Member, regarding line item 6111, there has been two transitions from line item 6116 and there have been five new appointments here. So, the positions that they now hold account for the moneys appropriated here. In terms of temporary employees, line item 6117, this, also, is a person in transition.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister say how much of this money would be used for drugs and how much would be used for medical supplies?

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, this is for the reagents for the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department (GA-FDD).

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister say whether or not the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department's laboratory is operational?

Ms. Lawrence: The answer to the Hon. Member is yes.

Dr. Anthony: Under the same line item 6221, could the Minister lay over what are the reagents that the Ministry would be procuring and in what quantities?

Ms. Lawrence: It is approximately 324 items. So, certainly, this list could be laid over.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister say what method of procurement would be used to get these items? Would it be sole sourcing or competitive bidding?

Ms. Lawrence: The Government Analyst Food and Drug Department has several pieces of equipment and they are like a photocopier machine. If it is Canon, it does not use Xerox ink. It is likewise for some of these machines at the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department and in other departments. Hence, we would utilise the Procurement Act to sole source for those that we need to sole source and we would have open tender for the others that we need to go to open tender for.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister provide to us what are those items that are going to be sole sourced, what are the items that would be going out for competitive bidding and what would be the approximate cost of those items?

Ms. Lawrence: It is the same list which the Hon. Member was told that I would lay over. It has all of the information.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister say whether the suppliers of these reagents have registered them with the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department?

Ms. Lawrence: The Government Analyst Food and Drug Department is the overarching body to ensure quality and to ensure that drugs and food items that enter this country subscribe to the regulations and the various aspects in terms of the law which they must follow. Certainly, if the

Government Analyst Food and Drug Department is buying items, then it would fulfil that scrutiny too.

Dr. Anthony: I understand that the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department has a responsibility. But my question was a very specific. Are the re-agents that are being procured for the laboratory been registered with the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department and are they meeting that quality standard?

9.14 p.m.

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, as I said, the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department operates under the Act. There is no difference between what the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department does and what other companies do or what we do in other parts of the Ministry of Public Health. They all fall under the Act, whether it is for the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department, the National Public Health Reference Laboratory (NPHRL) or the hospitals. They all face the same scrutiny.

Dr. Anthony: I am very happy to hear that. If the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department has certified that those reagents from those suppliers are of the standard ...

Ms. Lawrence: What is the question?

Dr. Anthony: I am coming to the question. Minister, could you please layover those compliance certificates from the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department?

Ms. Lawrence: These certificates would be made available and the Hon. Member could visit the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department and he would be able to scrutinise them. But we will not bring those compliances to be shared around in this National Assembly or any other place.

Dr. Anthony: I think my request is a reasonable one. This is not a private arrangement. The Minister should lay it over to the National Assembly and I would receive it from the National Assembly. I think that is the procedure. Could the Minister please layover those certificates to the National Assembly and then I would receive them from the National Assembly?

Mr. Chairman: I heard what the Hon. Member said and I would let the Minister treat with it. I gathered, from what the Minister said, there seemed to be some reservation about wholesale distribution or availability of it. I do not know. The Minister would know and would be able to say. The request, Minister, is that you layover the compliance certificates to the National Assembly. Is it the case that there is some difficulty with doing that? This is the time for us to know.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Public Health does not seek to, in any way, disrespect this National Assembly or any Member of this National Assembly. Every company that is vying for the purchase of drugs, reagents, *et cetera*, must supply all their compliances as part of the tender documents. That goes to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) along with all the other documents for scrutiny.

Further to that, Mr. Chairman, there have been a lot of persons utilising forged documents, which they would have copied or copies of which would have fallen in their possession. As a result of that, we have to ensure that no entity brings any lawsuit or anything against the Ministry of Public Health. Mr. Chairman, as I have said, this is in excess of 300 items. I am saying that we could make allowance for the Hon. Member to visit the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department, perhaps in the company of a staff of the Parliament Office, for him to peruse those documents. But, to let those documents out of the office of the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department, I think, would be putting the Ministry of Public Health in a very compromising position.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. Hon. Dr. Anthony, I heard what the Minister said, the fears she expressed in relation to making the unrestricted availability of the particular documents which you have asked for and she made a suggestion to you. I do not feel, in light of the explanation the Minister has given, that the House should require the Minister to present those documents in the manner in which we are accustomed to receiving documents. I do not believe that such an act on our part, as the House, would possibly be in the best interest of what we are all seeking to do and that is to prevent the unauthorised use of documents to obtain medical supplies or to pass off as someone entitled to acquire medical supplies for consumption by the people of Guyana.

I would not direct nor instruct the Minister to make the documents available in that way. The Hon. Minister has offered an explanation as to why and what is her concern. The Hon. Minister has even quoted the possibility of legal actions. I do not know whether that is possible or not. I do not know. You do not know either, Hon. Member. That is unless we want to discover it and say, 'oh my goodness, she was right'. However, that would be after the fact. If it is possible for that information to be made available to interested Members of this House, we would have to take the unusual step of working out a protocol, with the Minister, to view those documents. I would advise Members to be guided by that. You want to say something.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just for clarity, when suppliers supply a reagent or a drug, they need to have a registration and compliance from the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department. That drug is registered. The Minister has assured us that all the reagents that would be bought have met those requirements and have been registered by the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department. So, that is not a secret. For those items to be procured, all I am asking is for the Minister to show us the food and drug certification to say that these items have been registered in Guyana and are allowed here. I am asking for the certification. That is all. I think that is a reasonable request.

However, the Minister suggested that I could go there and view whatever they have there. I would prefer, perhaps, that they bring it to the Parliament and I could come to the Parliament, which is a neutral ground. We could look at it here. I am not interested in knowing people's secret. I want to know what should be publicly available and certification of these reagents and so forth should be publicly available.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony. I do not think there is a question of the willingness to make it available. What we are really talking about is where it should be made available. That is what we are talking about here. I do not know whether we will talk about it forever, or whether we will simply decide that it is the best of a bad job, it is half-way house and let us do it. Those of us who are particularly interested in the reagents and seeing the certificate could do it. I am saying: let us work out a protocol with the Minister or with the officer who the Minister said could be a part of it and then use it that way.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, I would be guided by you. Maybe, we could work out a protocol where we could access the information.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you. Hon. Minister, you will assist or give instructions for a protocol to be devised which would enable the Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony, and any other person who will be interested in it to be able to view that.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I am so guided.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Let me remove any ambiguity. What I am saying is that a protocol should be worked out with the Minister so that the certificates concerning the reagents could be viewed in the place where the Minister suggested that they be viewed. That is what I am suggesting. I understood you to say that you would be guided by that, Dr. Anthony. I know you were not speaking for yourself only but that is what I understood you to be saying. If I understood you incorrectly, then tell me. I will not ask the Minister to do something...

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, my preference is for the documents to come to the Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: There is no question about that.

Dr. Anthony: Then, we could probably view them here. However, I am willing, along with maybe the Minister's team and people from the Parliament Office, to work out some arrangement where we could access the information. I have persons on our side who are interested in that information as well.

Mr. Chairman: I know there is a grey area there, but I would not prolong this. I will treat what you say to me in good faith, as it deserves to be treated, and I will understand it to mean what I have said and I hope that the two coincide. Thank you.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many of the 83 contracted employees are in the regions?

Ms. Lawrence: Hon. Member, they are all administration staff. We are at Policy Development and Administration. So, all of these persons are in Georgetown.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6241- Rental of Buildings: There is an allocation for in excess of \$180 million. Could the Minister tell us which buildings are to be rented? If there is a contract for the rental of these buildings, what is the duration of the contract?

9.29 p.m.

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, we have four buildings which are rented under this line item and we are in the process of having one of the contracts... We have some grey areas we are working on with our lawyer and the company we are renting from. We have three contracts, but we are working on one.

Dr. Ramsaran: I thank the Hon. Minister for her answer. I would like her to disaggregate further the four contracts and to say, specifically, if the bond in Sussex Street is so included? Secondly, what accounts for the increase of \$300,000 in rental this year? Primarily, is the Sussex Street bond among those four contracts and could the Hon. Minister name the four buildings?

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, with regards to the four buildings, one we rented for the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), the other one is in Queenstown for the staff who were displaced from Liliendaal, another one is for the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB's) Secretariat for the Maternal and Child Health Programme and there is also the Sussex Street storage bond.

Dr. Ramsaran: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate, in terms of money value, and particularly tell us how much has been paid for the Sussex Street bond and when that contract will be terminated?

Ms. Lawrence: For the one in Campbellville we paid \$25,000. The one where we house the staff from the Liliendaal complex we are paying \$1.5 million, the bond is \$12.5 million and the building for the IDB project we are in negotiations with that. We are looking at another \$1.5 million.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: Could the Minister tell us what type of equipment would be maintained here and, perhaps, the disaggregation this entails?

Ms. Lawrence: This is also another large list, but I can tell you it has to do with the equipment at the Ministry of Public Health's Office at Brickdam, the other offices I have just called and also the Food and Drugs Department. It has to do with things like photocopiers, fax machines, water dispensers, refrigerators, computers, projectors, printers, battery back-up, electric kettles, stabilisers, surge protectors, fans, the Denver Instrument Top Loading Balance, Barnstead Mega-Pure System, the indoor odour and allergen removal system *et cetera*. Those are some of the items but the list is very long.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6284 – Other: I see here a big increase, almost double. Could the Minister explain what this heading would be used for?

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, this increase caters for the roll out of the Geographic Health Information System (GHIS) which will enhance our health care service, evaluation and advertisement, bidding, demurrage fees, small contracts, consultancies and also our medical assistance.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister layover that list, because I understand that it also includes medical assistance?

Line item 6294 – Other: Again, could the Minister give us a sense of what this line item represents and, perhaps, could she also layover the list?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Dr. Mahadeo, do you want the floor?

Dr. Mahadeo: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Lawrence: Let me answer the Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony, first, please. The medical treatment is not under line item 6284, it is line item 6294. Line item 6294, Other, has to do with the medical treatment and the establishment of a Hybrid Categorisation Laboratory, in addition to the percentage which is paid by the State for insurance for all of the Ministers.

Dr. Mahadeo: Going back to line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: I would like to ask the Minister if the \$12.5 million per month rental for the building in Sussex Street is budgeted for the whole of 2018?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Mahadeo: My understanding was that we were ending that contract. Could the Hon. Member layover line item 6291, National and Other Events, to the sum of \$12 million? What would be the other national events that we will be observing? Could line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), also be laid over? And could the Hon. Minister also tell us about if line item 6311, Rates and Taxes, is to the Mayor and City Council?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, first of all, there are three questions asked by the Hon. Member. Let me say, yes, in terms of the Sussex Street bond, that it is the Ministry's intention to bring that contract to an end on 31st December, 2017. As we speak, it seems as though we may go over for another two months because we are storing the Computed Tomography (CT) Scanner for Bartica there. As I mentioned, in the Budget debate, the place that is being put together to house the CT scanner is about 55% completed. The Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that gave us the CT scanner would like to have their technical people come to Guyana to go with the CT scanner to Bartica. It has to go by boat and they have indicated that certain protocols must be followed. So they want to send their persons down to travel with the CT scanner and to install it. Once the space that is being built is completed, we will be in contact with them and then they will inform us when those persons will be available to come. It seems that that will not happen for the next two to three weeks.

Dr. Mahadeo: Is the Minister telling us that we will be paying \$25 million to house the CT scanner? If we convert that to United States (US) dollars it is going to be costly. Did I hear correctly?

Ms. Lawrence: Just let me say to you Mr. Chairman, we will pay that amount to house the CT Scanner that costs over \$90 million of which we did not pay one cent.

With regards to the rates and taxes that the Hon. Member asked about it is not much. So I can just give it to you. It is paid for the Guyana Nurses Association, the Food and Drugs Department, the head office and the Materials Management Unit (MMU).

You asked another question about line item 6291, National and Other Events. This caters for Mashramani and we will do something for Diwali and also for the various programmes for World Health Day. That is what this caters for.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister say when the Presidential Commission for the Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) was established, what is the composition and what work has it been doing?

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, while this Presidential Commission was given consent by Cabinet, in the month of September of this year this Commission met three times. It has established three committees and this fund will be used to pay a stipend to the Commissioners and also to pay a monthly stipend to the Secretary of the Commission

9.44 p.m.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister to lay over to the House the names of the members who are a part of this Presidential Commission for the Prevention of Non-Communicable Disease, so that at least we will get to know who the people are?

Secondly, on the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Board, could the Minister tell us when this Board was established and who are its Members? Has this Board been meeting and producing the reports which are supposed to be laid over in this National Assembly? I have not seen any coming to the National Assembly.

Ms. Lawrence: It was just a couple of months ago when Cabinet gave its approval for the nominees to this Board. I can assure you that work has begun. The Board is meeting and trying to do all the things that have not done for several years. I will lay over both of the documents.

Dr. Anthony: Could we get the names of the people and the reports?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes.

Dr. Mahadeo: I am sorry to be going back to this line item all the time. Line item 6241- Rental of Buildings: The Minister said that we budgeted \$12.5 million for the entire year for this building, but by February we would not be renting this building anymore. My first question here is: Would we have \$12.5 million for 10 months, which would be \$125 million, which we would not be using on this line item?

The second question is, if we are storing that \$90 million equipment in the bond for a year we would have spent already 12 times \$12.5 million, which is over \$144 million. So that is definitely not cost effective.

Ms. Lawrence: That is not a question. It is a comment.

Dr. Ramsaran: The Hon. Minister in a previous answer, I think under line item 6294, made reference to a hybrid Caterpillar machine. Could the Hon. Minister tell us where this is going to be installed? Is it the one at the Caribbean Health Institute (CHI)? What is the exact cost associated with that activity?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes, this machine is at CHI. No, at this point in time I cannot give the cost but I can lay that over. May I add, for the records, that RAD-AID International gave us two (CT) scan machines? One is at New Amsterdam and this one is going to Bartica, both at the cost of \$90 million. We are talking about \$180 million.

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: This item has shown a small and steady increase over the years. Could the Minister please note or tell us now what is the plan for who or what organisations for the coming year?

Ms. Lawrence: With regards to this particular line item, the increase which the Hon. Member noted has to do with the Central Board of Health, which received \$1million increase, but the difference in the increase is the arrears to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). So we are going to pay them now.

Dr. Ramsaran: The CARPHA is international but I was referring to local. Under line item 6321 there is a small increase. What is the list of the organisations so that we will know what cooperation you are dealing with local organisations?

Ms. Lawrence: That slight increase of \$4 million would be catered for by the increase to the Presidential Commission for the Prevention of Non-Communicable Disease.

Dr. Ramsaran: This is the last question, because we are dragging out the answers from the Minister. What is the list, not the increase, of organisations locally that will enjoy the original and the increase? How many organisations besides the Commission?

Ms. Lawrence: On page 441, under Agency Code 43, all of the agencies are listed there and you would see that the Central Board of Health received \$1 million increase, as I said, and the other increase was to the Presidential Commission for the Prevention of Non-Communicable Disease.

Programme: 431 - Policy Development and Administration - \$1,507,499,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 432 - Disease Control - \$1,828,558,000

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us, in broad terms, how much money would be spent on drugs and how much would be expended on medical supplies? Could the Minister please lay over the list of drugs and medical supplies that the Ministry would be procuring?

Ms. Lawrence: Certainly, that will be done.

Dr. Anthony: I was asking for a broad disaggregation between the two but, nevertheless, let us move on. The suppliers of drugs and medical supplies, could the Minister say to us whether these suppliers are prequalified to supply drugs and medical supplies?

Ms. Lawrence: There is no prequalification by the Ministry. It is open bidding.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister say, because this year I think we received \$758 million, whether all of this money was expended on open competitive bidding for drugs and medical supplies?

Ms. Lawrence: The purchase of drugs for 2017 used both methods, which is open and also single source.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister lay over how much moneys, to which agency did we sole source, the value of the contracts, who were the suppliers, and the same thing for the persons who won by competitive bidding? Could the Minister also tell us, for the contracts of competitive bidding, when they were advertised and so forth? We need the details of them.

Ms. Lawrence: Certainly Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Anthony: Could we get a timeline on when this would be laid over, maybe in the next 24 hours, the next 48 hours, or next week?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it would be helpful, in the context of what we are doing, if words are possible to do so, to give some indication of within a fortnight, within a week, within a month or something would help the questioner to have some indication of what he must do and when. Once it is possible some indication, I think, would be good.

Ms. Lawrence: By the end of the first week of January we should be able to have all of the documents here, because some work will have to be done on some in terms of the disaggregation that the Members are requesting. For those with the list, we can begin to do that next week.

Dr. Persaud: Under line item 6294, Other, in the 2017 Budget \$15,610,000 was budgeted, but in the revised figures only \$3 million was spent, and now there is a whopping \$60,610,000 budgeted. Could the Minister say what is going to be done with this figure?

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, please note that the increase is due to the payment of stipends for mass drugs administration, such as filariasis. I hope all Members got their filariasis tablets and drank them. The payment is for Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10

9.59 p.m.

Dr. Persaud: Would the Minister be able to disaggregate this figure, and lay it over to the House, please?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10(1)

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Mahadeo, please regain your seat. Hon. Members, it is fast approaching the 10 o' clock hour and I must request the leader of the Government's business to move the adjournment.

First Vice President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Chairman, I move that we continue the work of this Assembly until the conclusion of this Agency.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line items 6272 and 6273 – Electricity Charges and Water Charges: Could the Hon. Minister say whether electricity and water charges from these headings will go to paying for electricity and water at the Sussex Street bond?

Ms. Lawrence: The answer is no.

Dr. Mahadeo: I will direct her attention to line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: Could the Hon. Member say whether we have the resources for equipment maintenance, meaning biomedical engineers, or whether this would be outsourced? If it would be outsourced, how would we choose the technicians or biomedical engineers?

Ms. Lawrence: While we are doing open competitive bidding on these things, I must assure the House that the Ministry, with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our partners, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO), is seeking to have some scholarships in 2018 to be able to train a cadre of persons so we can have our own technical people here to take care of our equipment.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: I know that the regions would normally vire the money back to the Ministry of Public Health. Could the Minister say how much money she is expecting from the various regions, and by when would these moneys come into the Ministry of Public Health, so that a more centralised procurement of drugs and medical supplies could be done?

Ms. Lawrence: I think that the Hon. Member is asking under the wrong programme, this is Disease Control.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister then guide us under which heading that is going to happen? Because when we asked the Minister of Communities, we were told repeatedly that the moneys for drugs and medical supplies would be sent back to the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Public Health would then purchase those drugs on behalf of the region. So, if this is not the heading, I would be guided so that I can ask my question then.

Ms. Lawrence: Please let the record show that the Minister of Public Health is not shying away from answering the question. It is just that I pointed out to the Hon. Member that he is asking the question under the wrong programme. And so, may I now inform the Hon. Member that he can ask that question under Programme 4.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There are 48 contracted employees at a cost of \$120 million. I would be grateful if the Minister could lay over to the House the positions and the emoluments of these positions, when she is laying over the other documents. And could she also lay over the Training (including Scholarships) to the tune of \$57.426 million? That is line item 6302.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I have to lay over so many things that, when I am finished, all my Budget money would have gone for printing. May I just call a few positions under line item 6116? Surveillance Officer, Senior Medical Technologist, Senior Social Worker, Nutritionist, Medical Technologist, Data Entry Clerk, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Counsellor, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Outreach Worker, Veterinary Public Health Officer, Health Education Officer, Clinical Psychologist, Social Services Assistant and Case Navigator, Typist Clerk, Health Education Training Coordinator, Epidemiologists, vehicle Drivers...

Dr. Mahadeo: We are wasting time.

Ms. Lawrence: ...cleaners, maids, office assistant...

[Mr. Chairman hits the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I really do believe that that is my purview. Let us just try to keep it that way. I suggested to Members that it may be helpful to speak and to submit papers. This Minister has expressed the desire to do that. That is what is happening. There is no wasting of time; surely not. Please go ahead.

Ms. Lawrence: And to conclude, the tuberculosis (TB), STI and HIV Outreach Workers.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member's concern is paper, I would be willing to accept it electronically. I had asked for the positions and the remunerations, the emoluments, and

the Minister did not say. I only got a quarter of the answer. So I am asking, to save paper and expense, if it could be submitted to the Clerk electronically, and I would be grateful for that.

Dr. Anthony: Under line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: During the debate Minister Cummings told us that, in 2018, we will be going to ‘treat all’ for HIV patients, meaning that every patient that is diagnosed with HIV will receive treatment. So I am asking how much money has been budgeted, under this heading, for the procurement of HIV drugs and what would that increase be from what we did in 2017?

Ms. Lawrence: Two hundred and fifteen million dollars is set aside for that. Let me give you the breakdown: \$62 million is for non-essential HIV medications, \$63 million for antiretroviral (ARV) drugs, \$41 million for test kits, and \$50 million for point of care test.

Programme: 432 – Disease Control – \$1,828,558,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services – \$1,081,488,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Again, I am asking for the 23 contracted employees that will be employed at the cost of \$94.483 million in 2018. Could the positions and the emoluments of these 23 employees be laid over electronically?

Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could the Minister say which institutions the \$25.702 million will cater for and approximately how many patients?

Ms. Lawrence: This allocation is for breast milk substitute for HIV exposed infants up to 18 months.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Again, can the Minister tell us how much money will be expended on drugs, and medical supplies, who are the suppliers, and whether sole sourcing or competitive bidding will be done? And perhaps, the Minister can layover the list of items and the quantities we will be buying next year.

Ms. Lawrence: What we procure from this line item are vaccines for chickenpox, human papilloma virus (HPV) and two others. We also purchase dental drugs and reagents and pay for the contraceptives which we purchase through the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association

(GRPA). You also asked what type of method is being used. As you have heard we purchased some directly from GRPA, so that would be sole sourcing, and the others would be competitive bidding.

Dr. Anthony: As I requested, could the Minister layover that information?

My understanding is that one of the external funders for our vaccination programme, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), comes to an end at this year. I would like to know whether or not we budgeted enough resources to take care of having enough vaccines for next year. By how much did our vaccination budget go up?

Ms. Lawrence: This covers from last year. It comes to an end this year and the HPV next year. And as I said, in the rebuttal on the floor, this is part of the contractual arrangement with GAVI that it will phase out over a period, and the Government will have to take over the purchase of these vaccinations. This started since 2012, so this is nothing new.

10.14 p.m.

Dr. Anthony: My question here was whether, knowing about the phasing out, we had budgeted adequate sums of money for next year so that we can buy the supplies. I am sure that the Minister would layover that information. For this year, under line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, could the Minister tell us who the suppliers were? Who were the people that we sole source from? How much money did we expend and when were the contracts that went to competitive bidding advertised and who eventually won them? Perhaps, Minister could layover that information to the Parliament Office and then we will receive them.

Ms. Lawrence: We will layover that information but just to inform the House that the vaccines were purchased through the revolving fund which we have with Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO).

Dr. Mahadeo: I would like to take the Minister back to line item 6292 – Dietary: \$25.7 million is budgeted. The Minister said that this sum is to purchase milk for infants for mother with HIV/AIDS. Could the Minister say what the projected amount of women with HIV/AIDS is that we expect to deliver, in that \$25.7 million would be spent on milk?

Ms. Lawrence: Through you Mr. Chairman, we have approximately 250 babies. We have looked at providing them with milk on a monthly basis, some three tins but not less than two tins per month. So, we can do the mathematics. These are for babies; they are not for the mothers.

Dr. Mahadeo: For last year, \$20 million was allocated and it was all spent. This year we get \$25 million and so I would take it that we expect to have an increase of infants of HIV mothers. Everything goes up under this Government.

Ms. Lawrence: Unfortunately, the milk that was being purchased did not meet quality standards and the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department has asked that that milk be removed from the market. We are now purchasing another type of milk at a higher cost.

Dr. Mahadeo: That is very revealing. I would like to ask the Minister this: When did we know that this milk was not up to standard and when was the change implemented?

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, this has been implemented since 2016. It was in all of the newspapers that the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department had pulled this milk from the market like they would have pulled so many other things recently.

Dr. Mahadeo: My original question was that we had \$20 million for 2017 that was fully spent and then there would be an increase of \$ 5 million for 2018. The explanation which was given to me was because the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department said that the milk is no longer good and so we are changing it. Now, the Minister is saying that we have changed it since 2016. I am sorry but the explanation for the increase was not given to me.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Mahadeo, is there a question that you wish to ask the Minister that you did not get an answer for and you want to repeat?

Dr. Mahadeo: We budgeted and spent \$20 million in 2017 and we are now budgeting \$25.7 million for 2018. My question is, are we expecting an increase of infants being born to mothers who are infected with HIV and by how much? We have to budget. In budgeting we have to have a projection. I am asking what the projection is. How did we come up with \$5 million more? It must be based on statistics.

Ms. Lawrence: I am told that in 2016 when the milk was pulled they would have had to purchase milk to replenish what they had to destroy and our partners took up the slack and

helped to purchase the difference. What you see here, in terms of the added \$5.7 million to that \$20 million, is the extra money that they would have spent because one can of the milk is \$2500.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services – \$1,081,488,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services –\$14,756,570,000

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221- Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us how much money would be coming in from the region to supplement what is already here to buy drugs and medical supplies?

Ms. Lawrence: It is expected that we should be having \$2.1 billion in total from all 10 Administrative Regions.

Dr. Anthony: For the same line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Or 2017, could Minister say how many drugs were purchased with the monies that came in from the region, in combination with what we have here? Could she also state who the suppliers were, what methods of procurement were used, how much of it was sole sourced and how much of it went to competitive bidding?

Ms. Lawrence: For 2017, it was \$1,763 billion and you wanted to know who we purchased from. It was an opened bid from Global Health Care, ANSA McAl, New GPC Inc., Meditron Inc., HDM Labs and Western Scientific.

Dr. Anthony: Could Minister layover that document to us so that we can see how much of this money was spent using sole sourcing and how much was spent by competitive budding? For those that were sole sourced, how did we arrive at the companies from which we sole sourced? Secondly, are the drugs and reagents that are being purchased from these entities registered with the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department in Guyana?

Ms. Lawrence: When I repeated the list of the companies that we purchased from for 2017 I said that the method used was opened competitive bid. I never spoke about sole sourcing. Further, under this particular programme 434 no reagents are purchased. This is just for drugs and medical supplies. So, yes, we can lay over that which I said that we have; not anything about soul sourcing.

Dr. Anthony: Minister told us that 1.763 billion was expended in 2017.

Ms. Lawrence: I said \$1.763 billion was warranted.

Dr. Mahadeo: Okay, \$1.763 billion was warranted plus they want \$129 million that is here. It is a sizable sum of money and Minister has just stated that all of it went for competitive bidding. Could the Minister tell us when were these contracts advertised, when were they opened, which were the companies that won the contract, the value of the contract and, perhaps, those things can be laid over so that we can study them in more details.

Ms. Lawrence: I thought that I had answered to that. I said that we will layover the requested information. I do not know why we are repeating ourselves. Perhaps, it is the hour of the night.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this is your “third” one more question. Is that right? Dr. Mahadeo you had “two” one more question. You keep saying that this is your last question. Dr. Anthony I am going to allow you one more question to be asked by Dr. Anthony and by Dr. Mahadeo before I put it.

Dr. Anthony: What I want to inquire about is under this same line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies. In the regions, the Auditor General (AG) had stated that there is a problem of reconciling so, the money that was vired to the central Ministry, we are not sure whether the regions are getting the value for what it had sent to the Ministry of Public Health. This has occurred in 2015, 2016 and in 2017. Could the Minister say what mechanisms are now in place so that that reconciliation can be properly done and that the region would know that it is getting value for the money that it has spent via the Ministry of Public Health?

Ms. Lawrence: I did indicate in the House that we have made several improvements in terms of our checks and balances. Let me just repeat for the House that the Warehouse Management System (WMS) uses something that is called MACS and it is now populated with the prices and so that information as it come out of the system will now have the prices. Apart from that, the members of staff at the Warehouse, under the Director, have been working to ensure that we do the reconciliation for 2015 and 2016. I can assure you that they have completed Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, so far. We are assured that, by the end of January, they would have completed all of the other regions.

10. 29 p.m.

Dr. Mahadeo: First I would like the Minister to layover the information in relation to line items 6116 – Contracted Employees, 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations and 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies for the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC).

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Dr. Mahadeo, do you have a question to ask or are you just listing what you want?

Dr. Mahadeo: I started by saying, are we going to, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You have a question, please go ahead.

Dr. Mahadeo: How are we going to procure drugs and medical supplies for the GPHC? Going back to line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, did we procure Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) kits? If we did, were they approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved?

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you very much to the Hon. Member. I did mention HIV kits already but not under this programme. In terms of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, I did mention, in this House, that it has already advertised for its 2018 drugs and medical supplies and several other items and services. We have seen it in the newspapers for 2018 already. The answer is that they have gone to open competitive bidding.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services - \$14,756,570,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education - \$618,809,000

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education - \$618,809,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services - \$791,733,000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, could you just give us a minute so that the staff could go over because Minister Cummings will be answering for Programmes 436 and 437.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you, most certainly. Shall we proceed Minister?

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us about the amount of drugs and medical supplies which would be bought here?

Minister within the Ministry of Public Health [Dr. Cummings]: Here we are talking about reagents for small labs and x-ray items. The expenditure here is to cover increases in a number of x-ray departments, national labs and the quantity of blood products. We want to move from 12000 to 13000 units. It is for the addition of labs at x-ray departments at the Port Kaituma and Leguan Hospitals, Wakenaam and Lenora Cottage Hospitals, Diamond Diagnostic Centre and the C.C. Nicholson Hospital.

Dr. Anthony: For 2017, could the Minister say whether these items were advertised? Did we go to competitive bidding or was it sole sourced?

Dr. Cummings: I am advised that we did go to competitive bidding. A little correction, there was a combination of sole sourcing and competitive bidding.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister layover to us the items which were sole sourced and the value of those items? Could she also layover the items which went out for competitive bidding, when they were advertised, which was they awarded, who won those bids and what was the value of those bids?

Dr. Cummings: Yes, we can layover that but most of the sole sourcing had to do with the lab reagents. As you know, some are specific for certain reagents. So if there is a particular seismic machine then only seismic reagents could be used. Those reagents, especially, are sole sourced but most of the other things are open competitive bidding but I can layover the details.

Dr. Anthony: I would like to see the comprehensive list with the companies that we sole sourced to. Even though I know that it is a specific item but I still want to know the companies that we sole sourced from. I will ask if the Minister can layover that comprehensive list.

Dr. Cummings: Yes. I do have the comprehensive list here and I can lay it over.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Minister say how many hospitals have been licensed this year? I think that we were promised the list in 2015 and in 2016 but we have not received those. Can we know about the licences for 2017?

Dr. Cummings: I was advised that no licensing was done this year. We have not completed the licensing... *[inaudible]*.

Dr. Persaud: None?

Dr. Cummings: We have not done all the inspections for the institutions.

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Has the reconciliation process been completed for the moneys warranted back to the region for 2015, 2016 and 2017? Whatever you have, could it be submitted, even if it is for one year?

Dr. Cummings: My senior Minister would have alluded to that. She said that the Programme is 434 and not Programme 436.

Dr. Ramsaran: I am just trying to clarify. Do you have any of those of medications falling under your Programme? Is there anything warranted out here?

Dr. Cummings: No.

Dr. Ramsaran: Are all your drugs here used centrally?

Dr. Cummings: Yes.

Dr. Ramsaran: Okay.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6282 - Equipment Maintenance: \$55.7 million is budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister say if this would cover the maintenance of equipment, medical and bio-medical equipment in the region?

Dr. Cummings: Yes, Hon. Member.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister say whether we will be outsourcing the equipment maintenance and how it will be done?

Dr. Cummings: This is done through public tender.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6292 – Dietary: \$2.5 million is budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister say where this will be spent and which patients will be the beneficiaries of this?

Dr. Cummings: Through the Chairman, this activity has to do with pre and post blood donation regulation requirements to hydrate and refresh blood donors with cold beverages before and after giving blood. We are targeting approximately 11,000 counts of blood donations and it will require 11,000 persons to give blood. Each donor is given snacks as is a regulatory requirement. It entails snacks, cookies, assorted flavours, fruits *et cetera*.

Dr. Mahadeo: I would take from that it means that the regions are also going to benefit. Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships), \$15 million is budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister layover the list with the trainings that will be done and which regions would be targeted?

Dr. Cummings: Hon. Member, this is the training of 60 inspectors, the implementation of local and international standards using Training of Trainers (ToT) Model, refresher training for healthcare workers and infection control practices, refresher training at the donor centres across Guyana, Guyana National Bureau of Standards staff training for national blood transfusion services, quality assurance training in radiology, post-basic computer training, vaccine administration, supply, chain management and other capacity building workshops.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us whether or not, the reagents to be bought under this line item would comply with the standards of our local FDA? If so, then whatever is the arrangement we work out, we must be able to see the certification for these reagents.

Dr. Cummings: Yes it is compliant and it is not the FDA but it is the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department (GA-FDD).

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could the Minister give us an idea of the buildings that would be catered for with the budgeted amount of \$12.1 million?

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6294 – Other: I have a follow-up question on the question that I asked about the licensing of institutions. We are in the last two weeks of December and no institution has been licensed. Could the Hon. Minister provide the list of institutions that were licensed in 2016? Are we saying that these institutions have been operating illegally?

10.44 a.m.

Dr. Cummings: Hon. Member, we would have done the inspections but the institutions would have to be ready and they have not all complied or completed that part in terms of securing their licences.

Dr. Persaud: Not one?

Dr. Cummings: I am advised that only four of them would have complied.

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services - \$791,733,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services - \$362,839,000

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services - \$362,839,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration - \$281,500,000

Dr. Anthony: Could the Hon. Minister provide the disaggregation of how much money would be spent on the Ministry of Public Health office/complex and how much would be spent on the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department?

Ms. Lawrence: Certainly. For the Ministry of Public Health – Administration building, \$143.5 million and for the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department we will spend \$100 million.

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code 1216200 – Ministry of Health - Buildings: We had budgeted \$221.8 million and we only spent \$171.8 million, could the Hon. Minister advise?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes. We would have only spent \$171.8 million. At this time, this is a roll-over project so part of it would be spent in the next year, as is noted in the Legend.

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration - \$281,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 432 – Disease Control - \$355,864,000

Dr. Anthony: Project code 2509100 – Equipment - Medical: Could the Hon. Minister layover the list of equipment that would be purchased? I think that in the Legend an X-ray machine was mentioned. Could the Minister say where that X-ray machine would be placed?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes. We could layover that list. The X-ray machine would be placed at the Chest Clinic.

Programme: 432 – Disease Control - \$355,864,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services – \$233,000,000

Dr. Anthony: Project code 4403200 – Maternal and Child Health Improvement: Could the Hon. Minister say, out of the \$150 million, how much would be spent on consultancies, infrastructure, equipment and administration costs?

Ms. Lawrence: For consultancy and design upgrades for the C.C. Nicholson Hospital, \$8 million would be spent; for rehabilitation of the Maternity Waiting Homes at Lethem and Annai and the other one in Georgetown, \$20 million would be spent; equipping the Maternity Wing and the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, \$32 million would be spent; for three ambulances, \$34.5 million would be spent; and for Institutional strengthening, \$55,500,000 would be spent. There would also be institutional strengthening for the Ministry of Public Health which is based on the Demand Side Barrier Study, \$6 million would be spent; for technical studies and learning activities which would be a study tour in Belize, we anticipate that we would spend \$6.3 million; and for administrative cost, we are looking to spend an overall \$27.7 million.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Hon. Minister layover this project document so that we could get a sense of the moneys that the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) would be lending to us? How much money is going towards consultancies, how much are we using to build... [Hon.

Members (Opposition): [*Inaudible*] ...this is the \$150 million for 2018. This project is much bigger than that.

While we are on that, in 2017, \$105 million was originally budgeted and \$33 million was spent. Why is this loan under-performing? Could the Hon. Minister explain this?

Ms. Lawrence: It is a well-known fact that, for this project, we would be getting US\$8 million. There is absolutely no reason why we cannot layover the document to the National Assembly. However, let me inform the Hon. Member that, with regard to the delays in the project, he must be aware that we must have the no-objection of the IDB because the consultancies which are front loading this project, several of the applicants did not meet the criteria and so we had to start the process over again.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services - \$233,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services - \$1,498,366,000

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1217500 – Doctors’ Quarters: \$23, 336,000 was budgeted for 2017 and nothing was spent. Could the Minister explain that, please?

Ms. Lawrence: I must indicate to the Hon. Member that she would have read in the newspapers that we pulled the plug on this project and moneys were spent. There is an issue. This matter is now at the Attorney General’s Chambers and with the Auditor General.

Dr. Anthony: Project code 1216200 – Ministry of Health - Buildings: There are a number of items there. Could the Minister provide a disaggregation of how this money would be spent? Could the Minister also say to us when the works at the Port Kaituma Hospital Complex would be completed because, from the Auditor General’s Report in 2017, there seems to be quite a lot of problems there?

10.59 p.m.

Ms. Lawrence: The list, with regard to the buildings, could be laid over. I must inform the Hon. Member that we are going full speed ahead and it is expected that, before the middle of 2018, we will complete all of the works at this hospital complex.

Dr. Anthony: Under that same line item, one of the proposed actions is some work at the CC Nicholson Hospital. But we just heard from the Minister, when we were looking at the Inter-Development Bank (IDB) programme, that the CC Nicholson Hospital would also benefit from that programme. What I want to know is whether there is a duplication of efforts or they are

separate projects. If they are separate projects, what would the IDB Programme be used for and what would this sum of money, which is allocated under this heading, be used for?

Ms. Lawrence: The IDB project is specific to maternal and child health. What we are doing is upgrading the other parts of the facility because we would like to ensure that we could offer a 24-hour service there and that we could offer more services at the CC Nicholson Hospital.

Dr. Persaud: Under project code 1216300, Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, I notice that \$500 million was budgeted and only \$250 million was spent in 2017. I notice that there is serious underperformance with regard to facilities, quarters, equipment and payment of retention. Could the Minister provide a disaggregation with what was spent and could she explain why the moneys were not spent when the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) desperately needs it, as we all know?

Ms. Lawrence: Let me just say that we have done a review of how things are being done at our health facilities. We are ensuring, as we review all of the projects, that our projects meet standards, they are built to specification and that the persons building these facilities have some knowledge of what they are building. It is so that we do not get the same old thing and have the same old problems. What was noted with this particular project was that the supplier did not meet the required specification and the contract was pulled and retendered.

Dr. Persaud: Follow-up on the same project code: Could you say when they were tendered? Equipment is also listed. In that case, there would not have been a problem with building. Could the Minister say if all the equipment required were procured?

Ms. Lawrence: The equipment are for several departments. Some had to be retendered for because, once again, there were specifications that the suppliers did not meet. The departments did acquire several pieces of equipment and that list could be laid over.

Dr. Anthony: Under that same project code, for next year, it is projected that 479 million would be spent. Part of that spending would be for the rehabilitation of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation's main theatre. Could the Minister say how much money would be spent there and what alternative arrangements would be made when the repairs are going to be effected to the

theatre so that the repairs do not compromise the number of surgeries that would be done at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation?

Ms. Lawrence: You are absolutely right, Hon. Member. We want to ensure that the downtime does not extend beyond what it ought to. Just let me inform you that all of that has been taken into consideration. There was a meeting with the doctors and the management team with regard to the down time. They would just be putting in new doors in the operating theatre.

Dr. Persaud: Project code 4402800 – Modernisation of Primary Health Care: \$80 million is budgeted in 2017. There is serious underperformance, as none of this has been spent, and this is a provision for primary health care facilities. Could the Minister explain please?

Ms. Lawrence: This is a contract among the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Health and the Government of India, through the Exim Bank. This contract was just signed a couple months ago. We are at a place where the consultant is to arrive, within another couple of days, in Guyana and that part of it was done by the Government of India. They advertised and they did all that was necessary to employ that consultant. That was done since the signing of the contract and so the consultant will be here. This money is to upgrade the West Demerara Regional Hospital (WDRH), where we are proposing to have a new ambulatory and inpatient care with paediatrics.

In addition, we are going to have a dialysis diagnostic facility constructed within the compound. At the Bartica District Hospital, we are looking to expand the current maternal and child health clinic, construct two new buildings for doctors' accommodation; upgrade the current dental unit; construct two operating rooms for major and minor cases; and new medical specialist outpatient consultant rooms for dermatology, cardiology and general surgery along with orthopaedics, *et cetera*.

Also, there is going to be the expansion of the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department and the construction of a 10-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

At the Suddie Hospital, we are proposing to have a new hospital built with new ambulatory and inpatient care and diagnostic facility and this would be located adjacent to the present facility. There is some land there.

Mr. Chairman: I am putting the question now, Dr. Mahadeo.

Dr. Mahadeo: I just need a clarification.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister tell me whether the West Demerara Regional Hospital, the Suddie Hospital and Bartica Hospital would now be considered as primary health care facilities?

Ms. Lawrence: They are primary health care facilities.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$1,498,366,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education - \$42,231,000

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education - \$42,231,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services – \$61,500,000

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, do you have a question on this?

Ms. Teixeira: No. I am waiting on the next programme.

Dr. Anthony: Under project code 250900, Equipment- Medical, could the Minister lay over the disaggregation of what \$60 million would be spent on?

Dr. Cummings: I would be happy to do so. As you know, in order to improve operational efficiency, we are going to purchase some equipment for the National Blood Transfusion Services (NBTS), which include cryofuges, haematology analysers and so forth. I could give you the disaggregation. It is right here. The items add up to \$60 million.

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services – \$ 61,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$36,000,000

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2508900 – Office Furniture and Equipment: The description in the Legend, at page 211, states:

“The project includes provision for generator, projectors, air conditioning unit, chairs, water filtration system, hair steamers, hair dryers, facial bed and furniture for manicure and pedicure.”

11.14 p.m.

Persons with disabilities have many needs. However, when I turn to the next project code 2509000, Medical Equipment, there is an allocation of \$12.8 million. So, I have a little difficulty with what I believe, and I may be wrong, are the priorities. A lot of persons with disabilities need other apparatus, whether it is wheelchairs, walkers, hearing aids or oxygen machines. My concern is that when we look at the allocation for medical equipment, it is \$12.8 million versus \$23.2 million for services which I believe could be privately contracted out. I am asking, Minister: between the two project codes, is this the best use of limited resources in terms of the needs of children and persons with disabilities? Is this the right way to use the money? Would it not have been better to use \$23.2 million for equipment and the \$12.08 million for some of the other nicer things?

Dr. Cummings: We believe that this is the best use of the money. For instance, the two generators, 50 kilovolt-ampere (kVa) are for the Cheshire Home, two projectors for the training school at the Open Doors Centre. You spoke about walkers. These come under a different heading and there are more so from donations. The walkers are donations from Food For The Poor (Guyana).

Under Programme 437, we are speaking about two projectors, air conditioning units, shampoo chairs with bowls, four styling chairs and hair steamers. These are for the National Vocational Training Centre. We talk about entrepreneurship and we want to train them so that they can help themselves eventually.

Ms. Teixeira: The National Commission on Disability (NCD) is the body that deals with all of the federations of persons with disabilities. Are these the items that the NCD requested? It is because it is the national body, recognised by law under the Persons with Disability Act, to drive, direct and guide the Government and civil society on the needs of persons with disabilities. Was the National Commission on Disability consulted on this Budget in relation to the capital programme?

Dr. Cummings: I am advised that that the NCD is different from the National Vocational Training School. The NCD is a policy from our Ministry. What is being asked for the National Vocational Training School is exactly what has been set out in the Legend.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the Minister did not understand the question that I asked. The Persons with Disability Act was passed in this National Assembly and part of it is that the authority which represents persons with disabilities in Guyana is the NCD. The law points out how it is to be comprised and its mandate. Its mandate is also to advise Government and various ministries that deal or do not deal with persons with disabilities, to advocate, to drive policy and guide the Government on what are the need of persons with disabilities. Therefore, my question has nothing to do with the National Vocational Training School. It is a nice idea. Good for the Minister. What I am asking is: did this Commission, which is legally authorised, guide the capital request under these two heads? Did the Commission have any input, in other words?

Dr. Cummings: This National Vocational Training School comes under the aegis of the NCD. The subvention for the NCD is under current programme and not under the capital programme.

Ms. Teixeira: Madam, I am not asking any of that. All I am asking you is if it was consulted in the selection of these capital items. That is all I asked.

Dr. Cummings: It was not necessary.

Ms. Teixeira: Oh, it was not necessary. Thank you.

Dr. Cummings: It is independent.

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services - \$36,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have completed consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the Ministry of Public Health and we have been able to conclude the work set for us for the fourth day. I thank you very much for the cooperation and assistance so that we can be where we are now.

Assembly Resumed

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House be adjourned until tomorrow, 15th December, 2017, 10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, 15th December, 2017. Before we rise, I am to tell you that all Members are invited to take refreshments, compliments of the Parliament Office, tomorrow afternoon or evening, depending on when we are finished.

Adjourned accordingly at 11.22 p.m.