

# **Official Report**

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

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82<sup>ND</sup> Sitting

Friday, 15<sup>TH</sup> December, 2017

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*Assembly convened at 1.57 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **Misleading statements published concerning Bulletproof Vehicles**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr. Harmon, you made a request.

**Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]:** Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members of the National Assembly, I rise to make a statement with respect to an article which was published, today, on page three of the *Guyana Times* newspaper. The article is titled:

*“For Ministry of the Presidency*

*\$100 million allocated for bulletproof vehicles purchased on credit.*

*Gov’t roasted for alleged breach of Accountability Act.”*

The article, in itself, is, at best, mischievous and seeks to suggest and/or insinuate the existence of corrupt practices that are devoid of accountability and transparency, as reported by a Member of this House, who is on suspension, Juan Edghill.

First and foremost, permit me to state, unequivocally, that such a statement is erroneous and misleading. In truth and in fact, the following is what really transpired: At no time, since this Government came into office after the 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 Elections, was the Ministry allocated \$100 million under the project code 2405200, Land Transport, for the purchase of vehicles. This could be confirmed by the Ministry of Finance.

The Ministry of the Presidency (MoTP) inherited an aged fleet of vehicles from the former Administration, including those used in the Presidential fleet. It was to the extent that, on more than one occasions, the Very Important Person (VIP) cars in the President and Prime Minister's fleet developed mechanical problems when those two officers were being transported. The Administration took a firm decision to phase out the old and aged vehicles over a period of time, in addition to purchasing reconditioned and/or new VIP vehicles to complement the President's fleet and to be used exclusively for State visits by other Heads of State.

The vehicles, as outlined, which were purchased with the 2016 budgetary allocation, have been delivered and are in the possession of the Ministry of the Presidency. Important to mention, also, is that those vehicles are in no way bulletproof vehicles, as was mentioned in the article. The sole supplier of the Toyota Saloon vehicles is Beharry Automotive Limited (BAL) and this could be confirmed. So, for 2016, for land transport, there was an allocation of \$53.800 million and that allocation purchased three reconditioned Toyota Crowns from Beharry Automotive Limited, two reconditioned Toyota Premio, four motor cycles and two Toyota Prado. The allocation was \$53.800 million and we spent \$53.583 million.

In 2017, for land transport, we had an allocation of \$22.500 million and with that one Toyota Crown was bought from Beharry Automotive Limited, one reconditioned Toyota Allion and one reconditioned Toyota Premio were bought for the sum of \$21.553 million.

For 2018, as I did indicate in this honourable House, the allocation is \$48.240 million and that is for the acquisition of two new Toyota Crown vehicles and six reconditioned motor cars.

Mr. Speaker, as can be seen from the 2016, 2017 and 2018 allocations, there was or would be no purchase of bulletproof vehicles and on no occasion was a \$100 million allocated to the Ministry.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

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

**REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNEMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY  
ON DEFINITIE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE.**

**Amendment to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, during consideration of the Estimates last evening, at our 81<sup>st</sup> Sitting of the National Assembly, a letter was handed to me from Hon. Gail Teixeira, MP and Opposition Chief Whip. Attached to this letter was a draft motion seeking leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly on a definite matter of urgent public importance. The motion stands in the name of the Hon. Irfaan Ali and is seconded by the Hon. Gail Teixeira. I call on the Hon. Member to make his request. Hon. Irfaan Ali is not here. Ms. Teixeira, as the seconder of the motion, could you speak?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Member Irfaan Ali is, unavoidably, unwell and he has handed over the responsibility to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Jagdeo.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. Mr. Jagdeo, you have two minutes to speak on the motion.

**Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Jagdeo]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion before us is an adjournment motion on a matter of urgent public importance. About seven days ago, our country learnt that the Government of Guyana had received a signing bonus – a bonus that had been denied by the Government in various articles and statements from Government Ministers.

The signing bonus should have entered public revenue because it is public moneys. But when we examined the Estimates before us for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 – and the Estimates for 2018 also have numbers relating to 2016 – those public moneys that should have been paid into the Consolidated Fund are not reflected in the Estimates.

We, therefore, urge the House and you, Mr. Speaker, to direct the Hon. Minister of Finance to amend the financial Estimates before us to reflect the receipt of US\$18 million, which was received and not deposited in the Consolidated Fund, in contravention of the Constitution and our financial laws.

If we were to pass these Estimates, as presented by the Minister of Finance, we will be knowingly agreeing to an illegality that is being perpetuated on this House. *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]*

I can demonstrate, clearly, that it is illegal to withhold public moneys which are received as revenue and not pay them into the Consolidated Fund or any other fund provided for by the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) of 2003.

Just yesterday, we heard, in this House, a statement by the Hon. Vice-President, Carl Greenidge. He mentioned, in his speech, that the moneys are in a deposit fund and a deposit fund is provided for by the FMAA. The Minister of Finance, himself, in his explanations, has never mentioned the creation of a deposit fund. He has described it as a special fund and His Excellency the President...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Mr. Jagdeo, I am interrupting you to point out that, at this stage, you have a short time of two minutes, which you know that you have exceeded, to simply speak about the motion.

**Mr. Jagdeo:** Mr. Speaker, I will heed your advice and end here. We hope that there would be a ruling for us to debate this matter, fully, because it is definitely of great public importance.

Secondly, the matter has not been in the public domain for very long; it came up just recently. Whilst we were considering these Estimates, it was made public.

Thirdly, it is urgent because, if the Estimates are not corrected and are passed, then we may be, in this House, sanctioning an illegality.

On those grounds, I urge you to rule that we should have this motion debated in full. Thank you.  
*[Applause]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. The motion was received in the time set out for receiving such motions, that is, before 11.00 a.m. on the day on which it is sought to be taken.

A motion to adjourn the House on definite matters of urgent public importance is an extraordinary procedure. The Standing Order, which guides the Speaker in his treatment of such requests, sets out three indispensable elements.

*2.12 p.m.*

The matter must be definite; it must be urgent and it must be of public importance. Of the existence of all three elements, the Speaker must be satisfied. The matter appears to be definite; it is one of public importance. The statement of the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs at the 81<sup>st</sup> Sitting, and the procedure which is being followed in relation to the signing bonus, which was outlined by the Hon. Minister of Finance at the very Sitting, underlines its public importance.

In addition, the Hon. Members will recall that, in his presentation at the 78<sup>th</sup> Sitting of the National Assembly the Hon. Raphael Trotman, Minister of Natural Resources, informed Members of the signing bonus and gave details.

The Hon. Members Mr. Ali and Ms. Teixeira - and I am informed that now Mr. Jagdeo is the mover of the motion - now seek, one week later, to move the House on that very matter which was brought to the attention of the House some seven days earlier. The Hon. Members, who have sought to move the suspension of the business of this House, through the extraordinary procedure of this adjournment motion, appeared to have approached the House almost leisurely, some seven days after they were made aware of the matter.

Meanwhile, consideration of the Estimates continued throughout that time, and the Hon. Members approached the House only on the final day of the examination of the Estimates. The Speaker holds that the urgency which is envisaged in the Standing Order is not represented by this application and, consequently, disallows the application.

I thank you. Mr. Isaacs please proceed.

## **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]*

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.*

*In Committee of Supply.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we continue our consideration of the Estimates and we are now on day 5.

**Agency 40: Ministry of Education**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration - \$1,810,303,000**

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6284 – Other: I see quite a hefty jump in the allocation made for this year. Could the Hon. Minister kindly say what includes “Other” under this head?

**Ministry of Education [Ms. Henry]:** Under line item 6284, Other, the following sums will be catered for: clearing of containers of books and costs of miscellaneous goods by the Book Distribution Unit and that would be for \$3 million; operating cost for the Hinterland Hot Meal Programme and that would be \$8.9 million; medical board examination of staff appointed under pensionable establishment and for retirement on medical grounds, we have made provision for \$3.8 million; maintenance and improvement of the Ministry of Education’s website, \$300,000; for maintenance and improvement of the Ministry of Education’s website, which will include an upgrade and network infrastructure, we have put aside \$4.7 million; payment of stipend to evaluators for the purpose of Ministerial Tender Board, we have put aside \$2 million - \$3,000 per person per sitting; subscription cost, which is the seventh item under that line item, for the analytic solution, and we have put aside \$7 million. We have also put aside for the renewing of the subscription to the Ministry of Education’s software, \$3 million; payment for Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) internet services, \$2.5 million; organisational audit to be conducted within the Ministry, that would be \$5 million; the eleventh item would be revision of the terms of reference for professional staff and that would take \$1 million. We also catered for the provision of desk planners to the tune of \$1.5 million and we... *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Please proceed.

**Ms. Henry:** The last area covered there would be the cost of advertising, recording of special events and appearances on television by staff of the Public Relations Department to the tune of \$8.8 million. If you were to compute that you would get the total reflected there. Thank you.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: I see this has been reduced. What are the National events? Are we not going to be celebrating some National events this year? What are the National events you are catering for this year?

**Ms. Henry:** Under line item 6291 – National and Other Events, we are catering for six events this year. These will include the Athletics Championship, Education Month, Mashramani, other

events in terms of religious, perhaps books distribution, and, of course, any other event within the Ministry that is of a national nature. The reason why there is a substantial reduction has to do with the fact that, prior to this presentation, the Ministry of Education included the Department of Culture which hosts the nation's national events, but now that Department is no longer under the Ministry of Education; it is under the Ministry of the Presidency, so it is not reflected under this line item.

**Mr. Persaud:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There has been a reduction of 90 employees under this line item, but, there is an increase in the allocation from \$366.3 million to \$375.8 million. That is my first question. I have two more on this same line item, could I move with them, Sir?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Persaud:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The second question is that I assumed these 90 employees were redistributed among line item 6111 – Administrative to 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled. For those who were moved from line item 6116, would the Hon. Minister provide us with the designation and emoluments of the employees within their respective line items? The final question on this, Sir: I am asking that that request be granted by a layover process. Thank you.

**Ms. Henry:** I will start with the last question first and to say that certainly the information will be laid over. As it relates to the reason why the numbers of contracted employees would be decreased, this is in keeping with the policy to move persons to the permanent and fixed term establishment. So there is a decrease in contracted employees while the other areas would increase in terms of the fixed establishment. The reason in terms of salaries, that is to cater for the allowances of the persons who remained contracted and are expected to be contracted at least during some period of 2018. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Staffing Details, line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: In 2017 you had 99; I see you now have 142. Could the Hon. Minister give us the emoluments and the designation of these people? I have a further question. The salary amount quoted in 2017 was \$119 million and now I see a mere \$120 million. Could the Minister tell us why this small amount with 43 more persons more and less than \$1 million being allocated?

**Ms. Henry:** I could certainly begin first of all by reading out the designations and the emoluments of the persons. It is a lot; it is 43. I do not know if it would meet your needs if I lay it over. I will start with Confidential Secretary and that will be \$88,865 per month [*Interruption*] No, he wants it now.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Yes, it could be laid over.

**Ms. Henry:** I would certainly lay over the information to the House.

**Mr. Persaud:** Line item 6311 – Rates and Taxes: There has been a reduction in excess of 50% on this line item. Could the Hon. Minister kindly explain why we have the reduction and from which organisations have we benefited from this generosity? Thank you, Sir.

**Ms. Henry:** As I pointed out in a previous answer, but, I will repeat for the purpose of emphasis and certainly to answer this question, the reason why there is a reduction in rates and taxes is because we no longer would be paying rates and taxes for buildings which are under the Department of Culture Youth and Sport and so that would cause a reduction in the allocations for 2018.

2.27 p.m.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: I noticed that it has moved from \$89,999,000 to \$67,872,000. Could the Hon. Minister tell us why has it decreased?

**Ms. Henry:** I wish to re-emphasise that the buildings which were catered for in 2017, and which came under the Departments of Culture, Youth and Sports, are no longer under the Ministry of Education, and, therefore, sums have not been allocated for those buildings and that is why you would see a significant reduction in the sum allocated under this line item.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Could the Hon. Minister advise, if anywhere, between line items 6111 and 6117 we are catering for ministerial advisors and, if so, at what emolument for each?

**Ms. Henry:** The Ministry of Education does not have any ministerial advisors so it is not relevant to the Ministry at this point in time.

*Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration - \$1,810,303,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 402 – Training and Development - \$1,951,413,000**

**Ms. Selman:** Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister say what is responsible for the significant reduction in the budgetary provision for this line item?

**Ms. Henry:** I would like to point out that the number of buildings and facilities that require security services would have been reduced because the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport is no longer under the Ministry of Education, and so that would result in a significant reduction in the sum allocated in 2018.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees and line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: Would the Hon. Minister provide for us the 37 employees who were redistributed from line item 6116 to line items 6111 to 6115 and the 53 employees who were re-designated from line items 6111 to 6115? Could that information be laid over regarding the position and the remuneration?

**Ms. Henry:** That information will be laid over.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6284 – Other: There is a relatively remarkable jump of about \$12 million. Could the Hon. Minister please say what is included in ‘Other’?

**Ms. Henry:** There are 11 activities for which sums have been provided. So the sum allocated here is to take care of the following: one, operation cost for the Guyana Learning Channel; two, continuous field studio recording and production broadcast, and that would be for \$12 million; three, the airing of programmes for Grades III, IV V and VI in several areas, called the Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) - \$12 million; four, production and acquisition of video content for pre-kindergarten and secondary schools, and that will be \$2.1 million; five, the remuneration of coaches who will work along in schools in the sports programme - \$2 million; six, the Cyril Potter College of Education’s (CPCE) internet charges, setting of examination paper, invigilation and to provide payment for Elton B. Steven’s Company, which is the prep-step programme I believe you are familiar with, and that is \$4.6 million; seven, marking of examinations and payment for DSL internet service - \$6 million; eight, creating teaching videos

for selected lessons - \$4 million; nine, production of learning applications (APPS) for physics, chemistry and biology - \$5 million; ten, installation of the success makers software - \$4 million; and eleven, the establishment of an online interactive science centre - \$4 million. If you were to add those you would get the ballpark figure.

**Ms. Manickchand:** A follow-up: I have not heard anything that is new or it could be my hearing that is faulty. Could the Hon. Minister kindly say what is added to this programme that causes the rise, because all the items delineated there are things that were happening all the time. Is it that there are new things added or have we improved on how we are paying for these services, as a result of which we now have a jump in the allocation under this line item.

**Ms. Henry:** There are four items that are new and which are different. The first one I will speak about is creating teaching videos. That was non-existent in 2017 and it is intended to be introduced in 2018 and, therefore, provisions are made for that. The second thing I want to talk about is the installation of the Success Makers Software. As you are aware, it is non-existent, and therefore we have to provide it, and it comes with a cost. The other thing I want to talk about is the establishment of an online interactive science corner, which is also new and it comes with a cost. In addition to that, there is strengthening and expansion of what we would have been traditionally accustomed to, and that also comes with a cost. So that is why there is an increase.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Are there any scholarships provided for under this programme or is this specifically for training?

**Ms. Henry:** It does include scholarships. In this case, there are scholarships for 30 teachers in the areas of science and the remainder will be used for training.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Could we get a breakdown of what would have been the criteria to choose the teachers and a disaggregation of the regions from which they have come?

**Ms. Henry:** We can certainly lay over the document which speaks to the selection and eligibility criteria for the scholarship for teachers, and also we can provide where this cohort of scholars are coming from.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Lastly on this line item, where are they being trained? Where are the scholarships for?

**Ms. Henry:** The training will be done at the University of Guyana.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I noticed you have moved from \$63 million to \$107,903,000. Could the Hon. Minister lay over to us the buildings and how much will be spent specifically on them?

**Ms. Henry:** I will lay over as asked.

*Programme: 402 – Training and Development - \$1,951,413,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$1,999,706,000**

**Ms. Selman:** Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister provide in writing the activities which will be undertaken under this head?

**Ms. Henry:** I can certainly provide it in writing, but I believe in the interest of *saving the trees* I would like to read it out, unless it is electronically that you would like it.

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you. It is extremely long because I noticed the budgetary provision is extremely high.

**Ms. Henry:** It is not long. Line item 6294, Other, in 2018, caters for the Assistant Chief Education Officer's office for nursery and the Department of Education's Nursery Administrative office. The increase is for the procurement of learning resources, which basically will be 1,500 kits at a cost of \$95,000 for nursery schools on the coastland, to enhance the delivery of curriculum lessons. This line item also caters for the purchase of trophies, the procurement of wall plaques, flags and emblems so that we can provide whatever assistance will be needed when that time comes. It also includes wreaths and sympathy cards *et cetera*.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** Line item 6133 – Benefits and Allowances: For Budget 2017, there was an allocation of \$11,213,000. There is a revised Budget 2017 of \$4,923,000 and then comes Budget 2018 requesting \$21,328,000. Why this variation between budgeted 2017 and revised 2017 and then what prompted this astronomical increase of over 400% for 2018, based on the revised Budget 2017?

*2.42 p.m.*

**Ms. Henry:** This line item caters primarily for Whitley Council leave and this is paid upon request. We are anticipating in 2018 that a significant number of persons will be proceeding on Whitley Council leave and, therefore, we have made provision in the 2018 Budget to accommodate those expenditures.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** I thank the Minister for her response. Is it then that the Ministry's prediction for 2017 was so far out from between \$11 million to \$4 million? What guarantee do we have that the prediction for 2018 will not be similarly flawed?

**Ms. Henry:** First of all, we had a virement and that would have taken care in terms of the revision, but, also the figures reflected here was at the time of the submission of this information. As I pointed out earlier, the allowance or the benefit is paid on request.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6224 - Print and Non-Print Materials: There is a significant reduction from the revised 2017 expenditure and what is going to be given in 2018. We are talking about nursery material and I know there has been, for a few years now, an increased focus on early childhood education with a particular emphasis on making our children literate and numerate. Why do we have this almost negligible sum allocated here?

**Ms. Henry:** Actually, how the procurement cycle works is that it is done at statutory periods in cycles of three years, and 2018 would not be a year that we would be procuring large numbers. For different years it is a different quantity of materials that are requested. So, we do not buy the same amount every year. The figures will fluctuate in keeping with the quantities that we will be procuring in the specific year.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Has there been a change in policy with regard the usage of the Roraima Readers which are locally produced Nursery Years I and II text books and workbooks in the public education sector, although I know that private schools are now using these books? If there has not been a change you will need to renew.

**Ms. Henry:** Just to provide some clarity for the House; first of all, we procure manuals every three years, which is not an annual basis. In terms of policy, yes, there would have been some shifts in terms of the way it is managed and administered. And the other thing I would like to say

is that we are still using the same Roraima Readers. I think that would satisfy the questions that were asked.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I would be happy if it did but it does not. Unless we have changed the policy and are telling the children to copy from the workbook onto their exercise books then work it, workbooks would have to be bought for each new child that comes in. The sum of \$19 million is not going to do that for our 443 nursery schools across the country and for each nursery school child.

**Ms. Henry:** We do not have to buy the workbook this year for them to use it the same year. Let me just provide some explanation here. There were several books that were in the Book Distribution Unit for many years that were not distributed, so they will no longer be sitting in the Book Distribution Unit. They will be in the school system where they should have been in the first place. To correct that anomaly, there is no need to procure books to have them sitting there. This represents a more efficient process of how we will be managing the procurement and distribution of books throughout the education system.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Is the Minister satisfied that \$19,198,000 is going to buy workbooks in the Roraima Readers series, prepared by the Ministry of Education between the years of 2011 and 2015, presently being used by the nursery schools across the country, complemented by other books, as I understand, for every single nursery school child in the Nursery Years I and II programme?

**Ms. Henry:** The Minister of Education is pleased to say that the sum allocated here is adequate to cover every child in nursery school in Guyana. The simple answer is, yes.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Line item 6224 - Print and Non-Print Materials: Mdm. Minister, you spent \$64 million in 2017 on print and non-print, could you say what is the number of Roraima Readers workbooks that were purchased in 2017 and when? When you answer that then I will have a follow-up.

**Ms. Henry:** In 2017 we procured 30,000 of each of the books we needed for each nursery school level. So, that is what that was used for. I can give you a listing of the books and any other information that you would require as it relates to that line item.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mdm. Minister, is there any coordination in data between the Bureau of Statistics and the Planning Unit of the Ministry of Education to know how many children are entering into nursery school for the first time every year?

**Ms. Henry:** I could certainly speak for the Ministry of Education. I can tell you that we do have a very clear understanding of how many children are entering because it is dependent on our capacity, space, and seating accommodation which we certainly have an understanding of. As it relates to the Bureau of Statistics... *[Interruption]* ... You can only put as many people as you can put to sit, but I am addressing the House. To answer the question, the Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Education would not have collaborated on that, but that information is available at the Ministry of Education.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: Mdm. Minister, I am trying to understand how you plan. First of all, the Constitution is very clear on the state's responsibility in Guyana to provide education for every child.

**Ms. Henry:** It is not for nursery. *[Interruption]*

**Ms. Teixeira:** I will get to my question. Who is the Chairman in this House? Mr. Chairman, are you the Chairman or these people here? I am sorry to get annoyed, but it is the fifth day that every time we get up to speak there are five speakers in this House. I defer to you, Sir. Could you please tell these speakers not to pretend to be pseudo-speakers?

The issue I am responding to is what the Minister said, in case our Colleagues did not listen to her. She talked about capacity. The issue is not capacity.

**Ms. Henry:** Alone.

**Ms. Teixeira:** That is what you said Madam. The issue is that the state of Guyana has a responsibility to provide education to every child. The parents may decide to go to private education. These same books you are talking about are used in many of the private schools in Guyana. This is part of what the parents pay for. If you bought 30,000 books this year, 30,000 books does not necessarily mean one for each child, because it could be 30,000 books with different subjects, of which one child will need four or five of them. Therefore, from the calculation which you yourself had said and what you have presented here, the figures are not for

2018 - \$19 million for children workbooks and books in the nursery school division. Are you, therefore, going to allow families who do not have these books to photocopy them, which has been a problem for years? If we deal with statistics, if we deal with your numbers, it is not throwing. If you bought 30,000 books this year you have to buy for the children coming in September 2017 who are going to finish in July 2018; that is how it has to be done. That explains it and you should be concerned when the children in the interior do not have books.

Therefore, what they are doing is exactly what Ms. Manickchand asked. Is the new rule that the children do not use the workbook, that there is one workbook in an entire class and the children copy from the blackboard or whatever so they could answer. We are saying to you that we do not agree with your justification of a cut from \$64 million to \$19 million. It is not justified. Mdm. Minister, I am not threatening you, but, if we go in the interior in one month or two and do not find workbooks you would hear about it. Thank you.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Mdm. Minister, you said there was a Commission of Inquiry (CoI) done into the education sector. The report coming out of that remains a state secret, although from documents exposed in this House we know that we have paid for it already. In that CoI report one of the recommendations, it appears, was that we change the age for entrance into the nursery school from what it is right now, which is one has to be born by June back to one has to be born by March.

I also heard you, Mdm. Minister, saying that admission into the school is based on capacity and not age. Is the Minister saying to this nation that if a child who attains the nursery age wishes to go to school and there is no capacity in the school that that child would be turned away? Is the Minister of Education reversing the present age requirement for entrance into nursery school?

*2.57 p.m.*

**Ms. Henry:** As it relates to the first question which has to do with the children going into the school, we are advocating and we have always advocated that every child matters, and so the issue of a person not being accepted into the school system should not even arise. However, I would like to say that every child that is eligible; there is certainly accommodation for that child in the school system.

The second point as it relates to the age is that the age of admission to nursery school remains the same.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I am very pleased to hear that. It means that our programmes are being continued. But coming out of that there was a specific newspaper report, which has never been refuted, that stated that the Commission of Inquiry (COI) recommended that the age for nursery school be changed and the Hon. Minister has just said that it remains the same. I am now going to ask two questions: Will that recommendation be implemented? And, when is the nation going to be exposed to the report that came out of the COI into Education for which the taxpayers have already been paid?

**Ms. Henry:** May I be directed as to which line item you are speaking to? [**Ms. Teixeira:** You cop-out.] Okay.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, it is a follow-up. We are talking about print and non-print materials. One would imagine that when the Minister determines how much she should ask the Ministry of Finance for, she would be projecting how many children come into the system. We know from the Guyana Post Office Corporation (GPO) that amount 3,000 children are born every month. Well, we knew from the old ...so that every month, we say a child can come in earlier. We have to cater for 3,000 more children. I am not sure if the Minister is aware of all of those details. But the line item that the Minister is asking about is 6224. I do believe that the Standing Orders are clear and it states that we can ask and interrogate about policy which is precisely what I am doing, right now. If what I said was unclear, I can break it down into simpler language.

**Ms. Henry:** I would like to reemphasise that the sums provided for under line item 6224 are adequate for the work to be done by the Ministry of Education. Your explanation and breaking down and so on are, certainly, most welcomed.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The question remains unanswered. I know that the Minister can choose not to answer. Is the report on the COI going to be released? Is there going to be an implementation of the recommendation to change the age for the entrance into the nursery school system?

**Ms. Henry:** I wish to repeat that the sums allocated under line item 6224 are adequate for the work projected by the Ministry of Education.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Line item 6292 – Dietary: \$1 billion is budgeted which is an increased from \$913 million. Is this the School Feeding Programme for the entire country; for all 10 regions? We asked about the school feeding programme in the interior when we were considering the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs budget and we were told that it is not there. We are now asking you under the Ministry Education. We were told that it was there and when we asked under the regions we were told that it was not there. Is this \$1 billion for the school feeding programme for the entire country? What is the total number of children who would benefit, at the nursery school level, from the National School Feeding Programme?

**Ms. Henry:** To answer the first part of the question, this line item caters for all nursery school children throughout the length and breadth of Guyana; so that will be all of the regions. To answer more specifically, in Regions 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9, currently there are 24,846 students. For the Juice and Biscuit Programme, which is in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and Georgetown, currently there are have 40,360 students. There is a Breakfast Programme in Regions 3, 4 and Georgetown where 13,302 students benefit. However, the increase is to cater for the expansion of the Hot Meal Programme to Mahdia Nursery School because it was not included in 2017 as well as the Breakfast Programmes to Regions 5 and 6, in 2018.

**Ms. Teixeira:** There is a large nursery school population, is that not so? In other words, it is almost over 60,000 children who are being fed, is that correct?

**Ms. Henry:** When you are finished, I can answer.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Sorry, Minister. I am still on Dietary. There are 24,000 children that are getting the actual meal programme, in Regions 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9. Then approximately 40,000 children are getting biscuits and stuff like that. The total of children being fed is approximately 60,000 children, is that not correct? Is that the total nursery school population? If that is case then the point that we are making under line item 6224, with print items, is correct; You do not have enough money under print and non-print materials, for the children’s workbooks if that is the quantity of children that are being fed across this country under the National School Feeding Programme. You do not have the money and, therefore, I am saying that we absolutely need the

National School Feeding Programme and we are not challenging that. I am trying to show you that, by your own admission, the statistics which you have given do not and cannot be catered for with the \$19 million for workbooks in 2018. That is the point. The two do not match and the National School Feeding Programme shows that it does not.

**Ms. Henry:** The figures presented, in terms of the number of students, under this programme cater for children who are in nursery school as well as those who are in Grades One and Two at the primary level. I can certainly disaggregate the numbers and give you for those who are in Grades One and Two, and the nursery level because that is where the sums are allocated for students at those levels. Again, I wish to reiterate that it does cater for all nursery school students who are part of the Early Childhood Education Programme which this allocation here also caters for.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am misunderstanding you Minister because under Primary Education, Programme 404: there is provision for school feeding for primary kids. Are you saying that this provision, under Nursery Education, includes children at the primary level, according to what you just said? It states here that this is for nursery schools and there is a provision for primary schools in the next programme. You are getting me confused.

**Ms. Henry:** As I said before, this caters for Grades One and Two children who are in the primary system. The primary school which will be under programme 404 would be for those going to Grade Six because as you know that primary is from Grades One to Six. Let me say again, the number of students reported here are those in the nursery schools and in Grades One and One in the primary school.

**Ms. Teixeira:** You are talking about almost 80,000 children in this group that are being fed. Unless, you are feeding some children who are getting the meal and plus the breakfast. You said, under line item 6224, that you bought 30,000 books in 2017. If there is a population of school children that is anywhere from 60,000 to 80,000, as you are saying, who are receiving food, even if you take Grade One and Two out of your cohort there are not enough books in the system for children. How can you be buying 30,000 books when there are almost 80,000 children in the system? That is the point we are trying to make Minister. Your figures are not in any way making sense. And the problem is, I do not mind if the Ministry of Education has different

polices, the children of this country are not getting the workbooks and things they need, especially, children in the riverine areas and in the interior. That is the main problem and it should be the main concern.

**Ms. Henry:** I will continue to say that the sums allocated are adequate for what is expected to be done by the Ministry of Education and that is it.

**Ms. Manickchand:** One last question on this. Is this Minister aware that private schools are using the public schools' books; the books produced and published by the Ministry of Education? And if the Minister is aware of that, and I could advise the Minister that the private schools are using them, what provision is being made to supply, either at a cost or reduced cost, or for free, these books, particularly, the Roraima Readers, to the private schools? They are on the shelves of various book stores. They have been photocopied and are on those shelves. Is there any provision being made to provide and supply for those schools?

**Ms. Henry:** The sums allocated here are for the public education system in Guyana, and I would like to keep my comments to that.

*Programme: 403 – Nursery Education – \$1,999,706,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

3.12 p.m.

**Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$3,387,893,000**

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: Again we see a remarkable reduction in allocation from the monies expended in 2017. In 2017, the Government of Guyana told us that they needed, and they spent, \$366,770,000 for text books for Primary School Children. In 2018, it is asking for \$133 million only. Could the Hon. Minister advise if she believes that this is going to be enough to provide for the Primary School Children?

**Ms. Henry:** The reason for the reduction is because in 2017, we had an emergency intervention for Mathematics which required large sums of money being expended for print and non-print materials. We have now mainstreamed those activities into our normal curriculum activities and,

therefore, there is no need for us to do an intervention in 2018. Those activities are now part of what we do in mainstream Grade Six level, so there is no need for the additional sum.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I understand that answer. Under the same line item, the Ministry published, for usage by our local primary school population, the *Atlantic Readers* which are being used in the primary schools across the country. Could the Hon. Minister say when the work books for these readers will be published?

**Ms. Henry:** I would like to report to the House that those books had a lot of errors when they were done in 2014-2015 and, therefore, in order to do the corrective works... I cannot give a timeline because it is a lot of work to clean up all of those errors that are in the books that you left in the bond. Until that is cleared away, we will be able to give a date. It is a lot of work to really correct that mess.

**Ms. Manickchand:** They were first editions and we expect that they would have errors. They were done by the professional officers of the Ministry, many of whom are sitting behind the Minister right now, and I apologise to them for that slight but I was not asking about the readers. The readers were first edition readers which were published in 2014. They were promised workbooks to go along with those readers and it is those workbooks that I am talking about. When will the workbooks be published? I would advise the Minister that, perhaps, a good person to look to for an answer is the head of National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD), who is in the House.

**Ms. Henry:** When we have the correct version of the text book, the workbooks will follow. One follows the other.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The same Print and Non-Print Materials, why is it that primary school children have to pay for their test papers? This is not for the assessment test; this is the term test. Mr. Chairman, there seems to be more speakers than you and I would appreciate you giving me instructions rather than them giving me instructions. I am on Print and Non- Print Materials and I am asking why are children being asked to pay or to provide moneys for photocopying or for typing of test papers every time they have to write term tests? Why is that happening? Do you not have enough paper in the system? Do you not have enough copiers to be able to help the different education districts to get their papers ready for these children? I am talking about

Primary School. Why is it that the children are being asked, every term, to pay for their test papers? What happens to the children who cannot afford it? Do they have to ask people to give them monies so that they can write the exams? [Mr. Jordan: No child left behind.]

Yes, thank you Mr. Jordan. No child left behind. How is the Ministry addressing no child left behind and why this happening when Government has made do much money in tax revenue? Why do the children still have to pay for their term tests?

**Ms. Henry:** The Ministry of Education provides materials to students at no cost. Thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Maybe, the Minister did not understand my question. I asked what was the reason children in the Primary Schools, in every school and class, were being asked to pay for papers when they had to write their term tests? I am not talking about the national assessments as yet; I am talking about term test. Is there shortage of copying machines, typing paper or pencils? Why do the children, in Guyana in the public school system, have to pay? They have to pay three times per year for three term test papers. If there are four subjects then they must pay for each one of the subjects. Is this a concern to you Mdm. Minister?

**Ms. Henry:** What I would like to say is that the Ministry of Education provides materials, including test papers, at no cost to the user, who is the student. If there is any instance where the Hon. Member is aware of a cost attached I would be happy to have that report and I can assure you that it will be dealt with in the most professional manner. Thank you for bringing it and may I have the report?

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

**Mr. G. Persaud:** Line item 6284 – other: \$172,788,000 is allocated in 2017, the Revised is \$174,788,000 and the request for 2018 is \$325 million. My question to the Hon. Minister is what expenses and activities were added to this line item for 2018 giving us approximately 100% increase?

**Ms. Henry:** The Ministry of Education has now implemented a system where we have coordinators and monitors who will provide services at the primary school level, Grades Two, Three, Four and Five. That will cater for the cost for their service. In addition to that, internet service is also catered for in this line item.

**Mr. G. Persaud:** Will the Hon. Minister be kind enough to let us know the date of the advertisement for the recruitment of those staff and the procedures that were used in recruiting the coordinators for whom expenses fall under line item 6284? Thank you.

**Ms. Henry:** In this area we utilise retired teachers and so there would be no advertisements that is placed external to the Ministry for the purpose of monitoring and coordinating Grades Two, Four and Six Assessments.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Hon. Minister, in an effort to truly represent the people we came here to represent, I enquired about a social media platform in relation what people wanted me to ask you, and there were lots of questions about Social Studies and holidays. There was an overwhelming request of me to ask you about catering for special needs students, for students who have special need education learning, disabilities learning, special circumstances that they have to learn. I am aware that we pulled out of the five years particular strategic plan for special needs education. Could you tell me if this increase of more than 50% in line item 6284, other, in any way deals with addressing special needs education and if it is not this line item, could you say which line item addresses the special needs education of children in the primary sector?

**Ms. Henry:** Special education needs is addressed under programme 402 and so questions related to that ideally would have been catered for under that programme. This line item does not cater for special education needs.

**[Ms. Manickchand:** Programme two?]

Yes,

Training and Development.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Line item 6284 – Other: Mdm. Minister, you have increased the budget from \$174 million in 2017 to \$325 million in 2018. Is this increase to cater for the transportation of school materials into interior locations? The reason I asked is because I was in Rupununi, at the end of October, and one of the trucks coming in broke down and that was when the school materials were now coming into Region 9 when the school term would have been started in September. What I am asking about is whether any money is catered to expedite the supplies reaching the schools in as rapid a way as possible and in time for the school year?

**Ms. Henry:** The Book Distribution Unit which is catered for under Programme 401, Administration has the responsibility of ensuring distribution of books and so sums would have

been allocated under that programme. This “Other” in line item 6284 does not cater for that activity. Thank you.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Minister kindly tell us what is included here and what accounts for more than doubling of the provisions which were spent last year?

*3.27 p.m.*

**Ms. Henry:** This line item caters for 29 Primary Schools, the Office of the Assistant Chief Education Officer - Primary and the Department of Education - Primary Administrative Office. The increase is to cater for payments to 11 coordinators, who would be paid \$180,000 each per month; 45 monitors who would be paid \$140,000 per month for 11 months; the expenses as it relates to all primary National Grades Two, Four and Six Assessments; and for internet charges for 29 primary schools.

*Programme: 404 - Primary Education - \$3,387,893,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 405 - Secondary Education - \$3,631,532,000**

*Programme: 405 - Secondary Education - \$3,631,532,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$4,335,451,000**

**Ms. Teixeira:** Line item 6301 – Education Subvention and Grants: This has moved from \$2.5 billion in 2017 to \$3 billion. Included in this total are a number of post-secondary schools or colleges, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College *et cetera*. Included in it, also, is almost \$2.5 billion for the University of Guyana’s (UG’s) Turkeyen and Berbice campuses. Could the Hon. Member advise us, with the increase moving to more than \$400 million more, what are the new programmes catered under this line item? Are these just the usual UG programmes that are being covered? Is there any new innovation to allow for this increase? Is this what the University of Guyana had requested or is this what they are being given? I am adding both the Berbice and Turkeyen campuses because it is one university and not two; it is just two campuses.

**Ms. Henry:** For the sums allocated for the University of Guyana there is nothing new happening.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I asked another question. The figure of approximately \$2.4 billion, which I added together, is that what the university asked for? The reason why I am asking is because we have heard about a law school, we have seen a new centre for oil and gas at the university and we are reading about what the university is promoting. Having been on the council, I know that UG has always been cash-strapped and was not able to do all the things it would have liked to even though the budgets were in the range of \$2 billion. I am interested to know whether the university asked for this amount of money or did it ask for more? It has been publically saying that it would have something on forestry, new oil and gas centre, a centre of excellence, a new law school, *et cetera*. Where is the money coming from? The amount of money raised by fees at the university adds up to approximately \$700 million, which is not enough. Could you advise me on that?

**Ms. Henry:** The University of Guyana requested more than what it was allocated in 2018.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Line item 6301 – Education Subvention and Grants: Hon. Minister, I turned to page 437 and I am looking at the allocations broken down there. I see there have been some increases in the technical institute and that would follow what you say is the focus of the Ministry. It is something that we agree with but I see that the Linden Technical Institute (LTI) is getting close to \$50 million more, which is unlike any other technical institute. Is there anything special happening there so that we could advise our young people in Linden to access these programmes? Could the Hon. Minister explain whether there is anything special happening at LTI comparably speaking to the others? For example, the Lenora Technical & Vocational Training Centre (LTVTC) is getting a \$2 million increase with its entire allocation being \$10 million while the LTI is getting \$201 million.

**Ms. Henry:** The Government of Guyana, in 2018, will provide the people in that community with a new dormitory which will commence operation in September 2018. For the first time, we will cater for 150 live-in students from Riverine and outskirt areas and so \$29 million would have been allocated for that. In addition, there will be an official commencement of the Continuous Vocational Education Training (CVET) programme for the first time in Linden.

**Ms. Manickchand:** That CVET programme, I am happy to see its fruits being borne now. The Mahaicony Technical & Vocational Training Centre, which is getting \$7,500,000, caters, also, for all the young people coming out from the Mahaicony River and from the Maraikobai Mission. Is there any consideration for making the same kinds of plans for this Mahaicony Technical & Vocational Training Centre as is being done for the Linden Technical Institute? If so, there is more than \$100 million difference in the allocation.

**Ms. Henry:** In the case of the Mahaicony Technical & Vocational Training Centre, this sum of \$7.5 million, which is allocated here, specifically caters for stipends for students and has nothing to do with any other costs. The other costs are absorbed in the other line items which are spread throughout Programme 405.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The Lenora Technical & Vocational Training Centre was specifically located at Lenora to address the skills we could harness from the young and old, because as I remember there was an 82 year old lady being trained there. There are students not only from Parika to Wales to Vreed-en-Hoop but from all the Region 3 Islands and this institute is getting \$10 million. Is there any consideration for the building of a dormitory for the people who want to come from Hog Island, Wakenaam, Leguan and Saxakalli *et cetera* to train at the Lenora Technical & Vocational Training Centre?

**Ms. Henry:** In 2018, the Government of Guyana would graciously be awarding \$10 million to cater for the students' stipends which will allow them to pay transportation cost to and from that institution.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The question was not answered. The question was, is there any consideration for a dormitory to be built there considering that Region 3 houses a much larger population and caters for persons from all the islands who cannot access this institute easily by road because there are no roads? I also note an absence of the New Amsterdam Technical Institute (NATI) and the Essequibo Technical Institute (ETI). I am wondering if this was a mistake because I understand mistakes were made in the budget document or whether they were not slated for any allocation under this line item.

**Ms. Henry:** The New Amsterdam and Essequibo Technical Institutes were never subvention agencies and were never catered for under this line item. There was no need to include them this

year. In addition, while this budget focuses on what will be done in 2018, on a long term projection, the Government of Guyana would like to ensure that there are facilities spread throughout the country where we can provide live-in accommodation for our students but this budget focuses on what will happen in 2018 only.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Line item 6301 – Education Subventions and Grants: You say that you did not include NATI and ETI because they are subvention agencies? They are not subvention agencies. How did they get their money to do their work? Where do they make money? The University of Guyana gets a subvention because it always needs money. I am aware that moneys were there in the past for the ETI and NATI so I am not sure why they are not included now when they were in the same bracket as the University of Guyana. The University of Guyana does not have anything in its Act that states it must get money from the Government of Guyana.

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

**Ms. Teixeira:** It does not say that. These are all bodies that have statutory or other things...

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Ms. Teixeira, help us with the question please.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, I am trying to understand why NATI and ETI are not included when they are very similar to the University of Guyana, Critchlow Labour College (CLC), the Government Technical Institute (GTI) and all of these listed organisations. The University of Guyana has nothing in its Act to state that it must receive money from the Government of Guyana. Is there some law that state that those institutions should not receive moneys or is it, as you would have admitted, that they were on the list years ago? Why have they been taken off the list?

3.42 p.m.

**Ms. Henry:** Just to answer the question. As I said before, they were not and they are not. The word ‘not’ is important. However, having said that, we are speaking about line item 6301. These institutions - New Amsterdam Technical Institute (NATI) and Essequibo Technical Institute (ETI) – are covered in the Chart of Accounts. It is spread throughout the programme, but they are not getting subvention, as in the other cases, where they are getting stipends for students and

so, as we heard for Lenora and the other technical institutes. That is where the distinction is, if that is of any help.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you for clarifying that. Where are they getting their subvention from?

**Mr. Chairman:** I will allow one other question after Ms. Teixeira's.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Okay. This is my last question. I have gone through everything and I cannot find where they are getting subvention from. This, apparently, is the appropriate programme. Where are they getting money from? Are they getting it from line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships)? It is because they are not listed under that. Are they getting it from under line item 6294?

**Ms. Henry:** Let me go this very slowly. As has been the case forever, they are given funding under the various line items. However, from this specific line item, they are not funded as a subvention agency.

They would get administrative cost and all of the other costs that are applicable. Just as how the Ministry funds its schools, it would fund those institutions. I do not know if that is of any help or clarification, but that is what it is and it has always been that way.

**Mr. Chairman:** This is the last question.

**Ms. Teixeira:** It is not a question; it is a Point of Order. I object to being called slow, Mr. Chairman. I would like you to please correct that. I am really not slow.

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Teixeira, it is not a Point of Order. We should try to avoid these no points of order that are being raised from time to time.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I apologise. I am just trying to bring some levity into the room. I would not do that again. I will be serious and slow. Thank you.

*Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$4,335,451,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 401 – Policy and Administration – \$309,784,000**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we have 32 minutes remaining of our second hour.

*Programme: 401 – Policy and Administration – \$309,784,000 agreed to and ordered to stand Part of the Estimates.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, we are asking for some time. We have to move our books around too. It is not only the Ministers who do. So, you went very fast with the consideration of Programme 401. We are trying to get our papers together. Could you give us one minute, too, when you give it to the Ministers?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Sir, could I just clarify that we are on the capital expenditure.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on the capital expenditure Hon. Member. We are at programme 402 – Training and Development.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I now know why we are having trouble. It is because the page number in the schedule is incorrect. I apologise but I could not figure out why we could not find the pages.

**Mr. Chairman:** The page numbers are incorrect.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. That is why we were having difficulties.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is it the case that there were questions to be asked on Programme 401, capital expenditure?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** What I am saying is that I am prepared, in the light of the error on the page, to permit some questions on the first programme, Programme 401.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Yes, I believe so.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am not asking Hon. Members to do it, but if they have it to do, then I am certainly going to allow it. Hon. Members are not sure.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Then, there would be three questions. Ms. Manickchand, you have the first question.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Thank you, kindly.

Hon. Minister, I see that, in 2017, the Ministry was given... [**Mr. Williams:** What is the project code?] Sorry. It is project code 1215000 - Administrative Buildings. The Ministry was given \$55 million but only \$26 million was spent.

For 2018, the Ministry is asking for \$124 million. Could you explain why all was not expended? Was it laziness in implementing the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), which we had discussed during the debates and the consequences of that? Why is this large amount being asked for now?

**Ms. Henry:** This sum caters for the construction of the office building to house the Buildings Unit. Works were not done in 2017, as slated, because as one would have recognised, there are some issues as they relate to the Buildings Unit. We did not want to repeat the mistake of Kato Secondary School and so we proceeded with caution and we have made provision for the design, which would be completed this year. We have learnt from that and we are moving forward.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand, I said I would allow three questions. You have had one and there would be two others. It is because we have already passed this item. However, in light of the error, I said that I would allow three questions on it. You may have all three questions, if you wish.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I may or I may have one more.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, state the three questions altogether.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Could the Hon. Minister tell us what was asked for when the \$55 million was awarded in 2017 and why \$26 million only was spent? I am aware that Kato Secondary School was contracted to someone, who publicly bid for it, and to whom it was awarded, in accordance with the Procurement Act. It was also supervised by a construction company, which was a consultant company, which was also procured in accordance with the Procurement Act. So, the Buildings Unit of the Ministry of Education had very little to do with the construction of

Kato Secondary School. The question is: is it that the same companies that were addressing building and/or consulting on the Kato Secondary School were the companies that were slated to do whatever it is the Ministry had plan to do with this \$55 million?

**Ms. Henry:** The answer is no.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Last question on this issue, Sir. What is going to be built with this \$124 million and would Value Added Tax (VAT) be charged on the services to build whatever it is?

**Ms. Henry:** “Whatever it is” are two buildings. We are going to construct the office building to house the Buildings Unit and that would be to the tune of \$117 million and the other one would be reconstruction of the Sport Complex, which is a rollover project, and it is \$7.6 million. That is \$124 million.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Is VAT going to be charged?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, there is one other question; you could have it, Mr. Neendkumar.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Project code 1215000. This is a programme that has been budgeted for and I think the Minister has it totally wrong. The Legend states:

“The project entails provision for buildings at Brickdam and Carifesta Avenue.”

Some \$186 million was projected; \$26 million was spent and now there is a request for \$124 million. Could the Minister put this whole issue in perspective? This has nothing to do with Kato Secondary School. *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]*

**Ms. Henry:** The comments were noted.

#### **Programme 402 – Training and Development – \$133,805,000**

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Project code 1215100 – Teachers’ Training Complex: I notice that there is a total of \$28 million. The Legend states that it would be for provision for furniture, equipment, upgrading of electrical system and payment of retention.

Could the Hon. Minister tell us where this furniture would be placed?

**Ms. Henry:** The furniture is intended for the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE).

**Mr. Neendkumar:** The Legend also states that the allocation is to purchase furniture, equipment and upgrading of electrical system. Where would this electrical system be upgraded?

**Ms. Henry:** They are all related to the Cyril Potter College of Education.

*Programme: 402 – Training and Development – \$133,805,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

3.57 p.m.

**Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$107,906,000**

**Ms. Selman:** Project code 2607300 – Early Childhood Education Project: Could the Hon. Minister provide an estimated breakdown of how much moneys will be spent on each aspect of the project in the project profile? Also, could the Hon. Minister identify the process to be employed in identifying the parents who are likely to benefit from the budgetary allocation for care-giver education? Could the Hon. Minister also say how many parents will benefit from this project?

**Ms. Henry:** There are four components that are catered for. Component one has to do with capacity building for nursery and grade one teachers. Component one has to do with early childhood education resource kits to all nursery and grade one classes. Component three has to do with parental caregiver education. That is where parents will be beneficiaries of those sessions. Component four has to do with project implementation, support, administration, monitoring and evaluation of the programme. That is how we broke it down into four components.

**Ms. Selman:** What I requested was the estimated breakdown to be spent on each aspect. I know that there are four components. If the Minister could say “\$10 could be spent on the caregiver programme and \$5 would be spent on whatever programme”, that is what I am requesting. In addition to that, I am also asking the Minister to identify the process to be employed in identifying the parents. How is the Ministry going to identify the parents who will benefit from the caregiver programme?

**Ms. Henry:** I will start with the last question. The parents would be identified and if they have a child in a nursery school, then they are eligible. That is how parents would be identified. So, all parents who have children at the nursery level are eligible to participate in the parental caregiver education sessions. The sums that are allocated for the various components: Component one - \$29 million, Component two - \$16.9 million, Component three - \$13 million, Component four - \$10.600 million. This gives the total sum of \$70 million.

**Ms. Selman:** Am I to understand that all the parents of children in nursery school in Guyana are eligible? If so, the Ministry is basically working with a budget and I am sure that a number of parents are being thought about, whether it is 10 or 20 parents.

**Ms. Henry:** This is a hinterland programme and, therefore, the regions where the parents will be coming from would be Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9.

**Ms. Selman:** I have read the document and I know that it would be parents from the hinterland. I am simply asking: how many parents are from Region 1, Region 7 and Region 9? How many parents in the hinterland will benefit from this programme? It is a very simple question. Is it going to be 20 nursery school parents?

**Ms. Henry:** The response is all parents who are interested. It is open-ended. All are eligible, all are welcomed, all are encouraged and all are invited.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** For project code 1215300, Nursery Schools, I see a total of \$24.406 million budgeted. Could the Minister tell us how this money will be spent?

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel].*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we still have some way to go before we end the work of the fifth day. Let us try to remember that, please. Hon. Minister, do you have an answer to give? Please do so.

**Ms. Henry:** The sum allocated has to do with rollover retention for three nursery schools. These are the extension of the Turkeyen Nursery School to the tune of \$1.3 million; the Carmelita Nursery - \$1.5 million, and the Mocha Arcadia Nursery School - \$1.4 million. In addition to that, there would be an extension to the St. Christopher's Nursery and we would be constructing a

special education needs hub at the Liana Nursery School. Let me go over that again. There are two new projects - the extension of the St. Christopher's Nursery and that is for \$15 million and the construction of a special education needs hub at Liana Nursery School, which is expected to cost about \$5 million. That will give you the total figure of \$24.4 million, as is stipulated here in the document.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** The Legend has something different from what the Hon. Minister said. The Legend states that it is a community affairs project and that the \$24 million is supposed to be used for payment of retention, construction of special education needs hub at Lima Nursery School and extension of St. Christopher's Nursery School. I would like to know if you are changing it now. This is what the Legend has.

**Ms. Henry:** My Legend states Liana Nursery and what I said is Liana Nursery. So, I do not know if the Hon. Member's is different.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, is there a different Legend from the one to which the Hon. Member is referring?

**Ms. Henry:** I am not sure if there is a different one, but I was speaking about "Liana Nursery" consistently. He is speaking about "Lima". I do not know if his is different; he would be better able to advise us. The sums allocated are for the Liana Nursery School.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** When I asked the question, the Minister gave a totally different description. I agree. I am asking her: how much is the payment of retention? There would also be the construction of a special education needs hub at Liana Nursery School. She did not say that in the first place. She mentioned the extension of St. Christopher's Nursery School. Could the Minister tell us now what the correct thing is?

**Ms. Henry:** The sums are for the retention payment for the three nursery schools - Turkeyen Nursery, \$1.4 million; Carmelita Nursery, \$1.5 million; and Mocha Arcadia Nursery School, \$1.4 million. The new projects: the extension of the St. Christopher's Nursery, \$15 million and construction of the special education needs hub at Liana Nursery School, \$5 million, which will give you the total of \$24.4 million.

*Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$107,906,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 404 - Primary Education - \$102,782,000**

**Ms. Manickchand:** In 2017, under project code 1215400, \$99.663 million was budgeted and only \$77.363 million was spent. Why is that, Minister? Throughout the Ministry of Education's Programme - and I know we are running out of time, which is why I am making the point now, lest time fails us - there is serious and heavy under spending. Does the Minister believe this under spending by one of the major ministries in the Government has anything to do with the Minister of Finance's announcement that the country has performed poorly in terms of the growth that he projected in his Budget Speech?

**Ms. Henry:** I am not aware of the Hon. Minister of Finances' statement.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Did you not read the Budget Speech?

**Ms. Henry:** You read it, so you would know. I am not aware of that statement and, therefore, I would have to say no.

**Ms. Manickchand:** There was a question: why was there under spending under project code 1215400?

**Ms. Henry:** St. Stephen's Primary was one of the schools identified for rehabilitation work in 2017 and that was not done. That is why sums were not expended for that.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Again, this thing has nothing to do with Noitgedacht.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Neendkumar, do you have a question? Do you have a project code?

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Yes. It is the project code – 1215400 where \$66.782 million is budgeted. The Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand, is right in that the Ministry has under spent. There was \$99.663 million and they only spent \$77.363 Million but I have a more serious problem. The Minister is explaining a different area.

*4.12 p.m.*

The Legend states “payment of retention”. I would like to know how much. It states that there would be the completion of annexe at St. Stephen’s Primary school and provision for information technology laboratories. The Legend has something totally different from what the Hon. Minister said to us. Could she tell us why she is misleading the Committee?

**Ms. Henry:** The contract for the St. Stephen’s Primary School was recently signed and so 15% mobilisation would be paid in 2017. The contract was signed for \$33.9 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we are very close to the end of the time allotted to us for this agency.

**Mr. Ali:** I would just like to confirm with the Hon. Minister that we heard correctly when she said the mobilisation for the 2017 project would be paid in 2018. Hon. Minister, just confirm what you just said.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Ali, you did not have a project code to which you had asked the question. I should say, “say either yes or no”.

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Chairman, I am no longer a Minister, maybe of the church.

**Ms. Henry:** The answer is no.

**Mr. Ali:** Could the Hon. Minister repeat what was her honourable response to the question that was put to her?

*Programme: 404 – Primary Education - \$102,782,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Programme: 405 – Secondary Education -\$1,321,031,000**

**Ms. Manickchand:** Your Honour, I am sure you would not mind me doing this. Programme 405 deals with secondary education and then there are items under that in the Legend. But if we just look at the bolded figures, what one would see is that, in 2017, almost \$1.2 billion were allocated to this Ministry for secondary education - to benefit the children who are going to secondary school. The Ministry underspent that sum by about \$600 million, which means our children did not get the benefit of \$600 million. It also means that this heavy under spending, which could be

seen throughout the programme in education, contributed to our economic crisis that we are undergoing right now. Could the Hon. Minister kindly say why the Ministry of Education is under spending this much?

**Ms. Henry:** Yes. The reason the sums were not spent in 2017 is because two of the schools that were scheduled to be built in 2017 were not built in 2017.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Sir, could I follow-up and ask why?

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Manickchand, I will give you the floor as long as you catch my eye. You do not have to rise before the time.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Sir, it is nothing against you, but it is just a personality trait. I am anxious for an answer about our country.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please proceed.

**Ms. Manickchand:** We still do not have a sense of why. The reason I am asking, Minister, believe it or not, is not to embarrass you. If we do not have a sense of why the Ministry underspent last year, the Ministry is going to underspend this year, which means that the money that should be going into the economy and circulate is not going to go there. But more than that, when \$600 million is not spent in the secondary sector, children are being robbed of \$600 million and that is my concern. If we cannot have an understanding of why it was underspent, then we will go into 2018 under spending again. So, the question remains: why has the Ministry underspent so badly in 2017?

**Ms. Henry:** First of all, the reason these schools were not built is because they were under-budgeted for in 2014 and so a lot of work had to be done in terms of resolving the design issues. However, that is behind us now and so we anticipate that, in 2018, we would be able to get that done, which we have been unable to get done from 2014 to now.

**Mr. Chairman:** This is the last question.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, could you say when these projects were advertised, when the contract was signed and whether any mobilisation advance was paid? If the contract was not signed when it was advertised, why was it not signed?

**Ms. Henry:** Yes. It is simple and I got that. Could you repeat the project code?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, if you would like the answer to the questions, then you have to repeat them.

**Mr. Ali:** Okay, Sir. I shall repeat it. The project code is 2607500.

**Ms. Henry:** As we speak, there is no contract existing for this. Nothing has been signed.

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister did not answer the other part of the question. When were the projects advertised?

**Ms. Henry:** The projects were not advertised.

*Programme: 405 – Secondary Education -\$1,321,031,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education -\$895,645,000**

**Ms. Manickchand:** Again, Hon. Minister, if we look at the bolded figures, in 2017, \$1.3 billion was budgeted for post-secondary/tertiary, which is the TVET centres and so on, and, in this programme, the Ministry underspent by \$500 million. Could you tell us why there was such heavy spending in the programme? It is because, with this under-spending, children and people who need skills would have been seriously affected because \$500 million worth of service did not reach them. Could you explain that to us?

**Ms. Henry:** Again, the reason the sums allocated were not spent is because we were not able to get the construction project off in 2017 as we had anticipated.

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Chairman, it is unfortunate and I could see the predicament of the Minister of Finance. If the Minister of Finance is making a budgetary provision for 2017...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I do not mean to interrupt you but we are dealing with education and the Minister of Education answers the questions.

**Mr. Ali:** I know.

**Mr. Chairman:** The items are derived from...

**Mr. Ali:** Definitely, Sir, and it has a direct correlation to the project code.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Ali, let us stay with this. We have gone beyond our time.

**Mr. Ali:** I am going to stay with you, Sir. Project code 121600: I would give one example. In excess of \$202 million was budgeted for the University of Guyana. This is an institution that is in need of tremendous infrastructural work. Could the Hon. Minister say what would have caused this Ministry not to spend almost 65% or \$165 million of the budgeted allocation?

As it relates to Programme 406, does the Ministry have a procurement plan? When were these projects advertised? Why were they not awarded? If it is a problem with the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB), then tell us that. It is so that we would know what corrective actions are required. Otherwise, we would continue on the same path of poor performance.

**Ms. Henry:** As I said before, we have learnt from the Kato experience and so we are extremely cautious, as it were, in 2017. Moving forward in 2018, we would certainly leverage from that experience and we are going to ensure that we have quality building. So, we are not going to sacrifice expediency for quality.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, this is the last question on this programme.

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Hon. Minister, there is nothing to be proud of here and there is nothing to clap. Here is... *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]*

4.27 p.m.

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Chairman, we allocated more than \$1.3 billion for this Ministry to spend on the improvement of infrastructure for secondary school students and for University of Guyana students. The Ministry is under-performing by almost 63% and the Hon. Minister believes she does not have the duty to give us an explanation here for that level of under-performance. What could the Hon. Minister give us, qualitatively, to assure us that the Hon. Minister would be able to execute the 2018 programme with this type of performance in 2017? Could the Minister qualitatively outline to us her plans to improve this in 2018?

**Ms. Henry:** The Minister of Education is happy to report that we have strengthened the buildings unit. We have recruited a senior person to head the department and so, both qualitatively and quantitatively, we have made the provision to ensure that, in 2018, we are able to execute the projects which are funded.

*Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$895,645,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, according to our schedule a break is indicated. I would like to suggest that we proceed to conclusion. Thank you.

We now examine the Ministry of Finance. The Legend states “Minister of Finance”, but I do not think we would want to examine him. We would prefer to examine the Estimates.

### **Agency: 03 Ministry of Finance**

#### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration - \$14,333,246,000**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the Minister does not seem to be very popular; everyone is going out. [**Mr. Ali:** No, this Minister is competent.] That is why I am troubled, because everyone seems to be leaving when a competent Minister is going to make a presentation.

Hon. Members, I must tell you, after we are finished here, there is a meeting which ought to have taken place during the break. It might take us fifteen minutes. That meeting is for the Members of the Statutory Instruments Committee. That would be after we are finished here. I am saying it would take fifteen minutes to twenty minutes or more, but it is after we are finished here.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6141 – Other Employment Costs: We have an increase of just below \$1 billion. Could the Hon. Minister explain this increase?

**Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]:** This is an omnibus head in a sense. It caters for projected salary increases, some one-off payments, some short falls; and because agencies are not allowed

to budget for vacancies, when permission is given for them to go ahead and fill the vacancies, the payments are met from the Ministry of Finance. This amount would cater for all of those things.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6141 – Other Employment Costs: The Hon. Minister mentioned that the head caters for projected salary increases. Could the Hon. Minister say what his projections are for 2018?

**Mr. Jordan:** I would not want to be that presumptuous in giving projections, because we are still engaging the Guyana Teachers' Union and the Guyana Public Service Union. What I am saying is that there is a global figure that takes care of all of these different items. Notice, we cannot make an estimate of what might be one-off payments, how many vacancies we will fulfil, gratuities, new recruits in nursing and teachers and so on. That figure there is there. Whenever we conclude negotiations with the Unions and there is a figure, we could either use this one here or if we have to come back for supplementary to meet whatever we would have agreed to, then we would do that.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6141 - Other Employment Costs: Could the Hon. Minister say whether with this one-off payment we could expect any expenditure out of this amount in terms of bonuses for our policemen and women and other public servants? Did you cater for that in this head?

**Mr. Jordan:** I could tell you flatly, no. We are not projecting a bonus in 2018 unless substantial increases in revenues occur beyond what we have projected. I think it would be appreciated that our budget is in deficit. We are proposing to borrow in excess of \$40 billion for next year, so we do not project any bonus being paid for next year.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Hon. Minister, you have the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) as one of the agencies receiving a subsidy. They will be having a \$1 billion increase in allocation. Could you give us a brief outline as to the categories and types of activities that necessitated such a large increase and what benefit you hope to derive out of it?

**Mr. Jordan:** The bulk of that money is going to the GRA as we ramp up our efforts to improve tax administration and to support the tax reform efforts that we would have been making since 2015. This includes bringing on additional staff, the Automated System for Customs Data

(ASYCUDA), stopping the Total Revenue Integrated Processing System (TRIPS) from tripping, more out-stations and so forth. This increase in GRA is approximately from \$5.2 billion in 2017 to \$6 billion, which is approximately an \$800 million increase. That will take care of the bulk of the increases under the head. There are other slight increases there, but, generally, that is the big one.

**Mr. Ali:** We are on the same head, 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Could the Hon. Minister say, in relation to the GRA, how many new staff he envisions would be hired to complete the task he has outlined?

**Mr. Jordan:** There have been a number of advertisements in the newspapers as you know. They are projecting to hire 42 new staff, mostly high-level and, of course, we have to take into consideration promotions and so forth. Yes, about 42 high-level staff mostly.

**Mr. Ali:** The same head, 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL). There is an allocation of \$200 million for the Special Purpose Unit (SPU). Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say what the specific tasks of this SPU are and what is the expenditure allocation for?

**Mr. Jordan:** As indicated, at the time when we came for the supplementary for the \$130 million, this SPU will deal principally, in the first instance, with Skeldon and the other estates that the Guyana Sugar Corporation Inc. (GuySuCo) would not be keeping. The \$200 million that we have here will be spent on legal and professional fees; approximately \$6 million will be used for the production of embedded survey maps and cadastral surveys of the identified estates; approximately \$57 million will be spent on strategic partnership with PricewaterhouseCoopers, which is the firm that won the bid; another \$30 million will be spent on the engaging legal firms to assist the SPU with the regularisation and conveyancing of lands, vesting of moveable and immoveable assets, as well as providing technical input into the development of the legal framework necessary for the management of partnership with investors. Then, approximately \$96 million will be spent on employment cost for the year and another \$10.2 million in operating cost including advertising, procurement of supplies, travelling and subsistence.

**Mr. Ali:** Thank you very much. Two follow up questions: Hon. Minister, you said estates that will not be kept. Could the Hon. Minister outline to us which are these estates that will not be

kept? In relation to the PrizewaterhouseCoopers contract, what is the sum and the duration of this contract?

**Mr. Jordan:** Let me answer the first question while we get the second answer. The first question, of course it has been said that GuySuCo will only retain three estates. I think the locations are known by now. If we are only going to retain three, then, there is a presumption that the rest will be divested in whole or in part. The contact is US\$370,000.

**Mr. Ali:** What is the duration?

**Mr. Jordan:** The duration is 12 months.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, in this expenditure for the SPU, did you anticipate or cater for any study in relation to how the closure of estates or the estates that you will not keep would affect the lives of workers and people in those areas socially and economically?

*4.42 p.m.*

**Mr. Jordan:** No, that has not been done, but do not forget that there are two parts to this. This study could be done by the remnants of GuySuCo or it could be done by the Government; but, specifically, this money does not include that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, do you have another question that you would like to ask now?

**Mr. Ali:** Yes, just a follow-up. Hon. Minister, you said that there are other agencies that could conduct these feasibility assessment and economic and social assessment. Would you be kind enough to say whether these studies are actually contemplated by any other arm that you just mentioned?

**Mr. Jordan:** I would love to my good Friend, but I rather suspect that we are off-track where the questioning is concerned for this line item. We can discuss that afterwards.

*Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration - \$14,333,246,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management - \$4,870,368,000**

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6262 – Overseas Conferences and Official Visits: We have \$300 million budgeted for in 2018 and the exact amount was budgeted for in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister say what projections or what analysis would have caused you to arrive at the same figures for 2017 and 2018?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I can tell you there will be a bit more travelling next year particularly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, due to the engagements regarding the border controversy. But a conscious decision has been made by the Cabinet that, unless travelling is absolutely necessary, we should find other means of conducting our international business. So this figure represents no more no less, so to speak, despite the increased cost of travelling and increased travel.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6262 – Overseas Conferences and Official Visits: Three hundred million dollars in 2017. Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough to outline to us the top five agencies or offices that would expend the most resources under this head?

**Mr. Jordan:** Give me the top three and I will name them at this said time.

**Mr. Ali:** Give me the top five.

**Mr. Jordan:** I know three off-hand.

**Mr. Ali:** Give me the top three then.

**Mr. Jordan:** The top three agencies that would expend the most resources under line item 6262 would be the Ministry of the Presidency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6262 - Overseas Conferences and Official Visits: Hon. Minister, in 2017, were there any other sources of financing in relation to Government travel overseas, that is, any major companies operating in Guyana especially from the private sector?

**Mr. Jordan:** Apart from the Government, international agencies provided tickets, subsistence and other amenities. Some Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) also would have done it, especially the ones on climate change *et cetera*. I, personally, do not know of any private arrangements and I do not know if any one of our Ministers has gone on any private

arrangements. These have been the three top sources of financing for Government's travel: The Government itself, international agencies and NGOs.

**Mr. Ali:** Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Sorry...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Ali, you should let me allow the Minister to sit down and then you could rise. Please.

**Mr. Ali:** Thank you very much. The Minister is a good batsman. He is always quick on the front foot. Line item 6242...

**Mr. Jordan:** You mean line item 6262.

**Mr. Ali:** The same head. Sorry, line item 6262, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Could the Hon. Minister say what Government's policy is in relation to any private sector entity financing or supporting Government's travel or business abroad?

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I cannot speak to what I do not know. I do not know that there was an announced policy. I rather think that Ministers would be judicious in their undertakings if such propositions were made to them. But, I do know that we have an open policy.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will put the question.

**Mr. Ali:** Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I came up a bit slower but you were faster than me this time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, this is the last question.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6262 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: The reason for the questioning is in relation to the answer by the Hon. Prime Minister, when a question was provided to him in writing and a certain policy was announced. I was just getting to whether that is the official policy of the Government.

**Mr. Jordan:** It may be his.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Hon. Minister, you have an allocation of \$53,793,000; the identical allocation for 2017. Are you envisioning less training or the same level of training? How would you have arrived at the same number or is it that the same

number of persons are continuing to be trained? Is there a programme that they are doing for which you have to pay the second year fee or the third year fee? How is it that you arrived at the same number in 2017 and 2018?

**Mr. Jordan:** It is a different mix. As I said, it is not necessarily that we are going to train less but we are training a different combination, especially in relation to oil and gas. Sixty persons will be trained on building an indicator, so that we could enhance... and ground programme budgeting.

While I am at it, Mr. Chairman, I would just like to express a bit of concern that we have deviated from what we used to do, I think up to last year, which is that when we are doing Current Expenditure we would also do the Capital Expenditure at the same time, to understand the integration of the Programme. I hope we can go back to that method of doing things.

One hundred and forty persons would be trained on monitoring and evaluation. We have targeted 15 persons to be trained in the production sharing agreement, another 20 persons to be trained on the Natural Resource Fund legislation and persons also to be identified for training in debt management, office etiquette *et cetera*.

*Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management - \$4,870,368,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

### **Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration - \$4,297,064,000**

**Mr. Ali:** I just want to assure the Minister that we support the proposition that he made earlier.

Project code 1701900 – Minor Works: Hon. Minister, you have an amount of \$50 million set aside which is the identical amount for 2017. Could you say to us what the basis is for the expenditure made out of this head? What are the criteria used to make expenditure out of this head?

**Mr. Jordan:** The main objective of the minor works, which I inherited from the previous Ministers, is to facilitate community based initiatives and employment, especially of unemployed youth, women and more or less the disadvantaged. Also, when I or any other officer would go

out and there is a crying need or a need which has not been identified in the Budget but that is small enough to be accommodated here, then we would look at it and try to fulfil that need. We have done quite a bit of these projects which spread over various Regions. So that is essentially what it is for.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, who exercises the discretionary powers in identifying or in approving who could be funded, what projects could be funded and which community could benefit? In 2017, how many persons were employed under this Programme and where were they employed?

**Mr. Jordan:** As I said, the Minister of Finance or a number of officers and Ministers may go out to community outreaches and a need maybe seen for a footpath or for repairs to something or for assistance with an entrepreneurial project *et cetera*, and the project will be brought to me. I would sit with my project people to determine whether we could fund it or not and then we would make a decision. This has been, as I understand, the practice in the past and it is a practice that continues.

**Mr. Ali:** In this discretionary fund, as I would like to title it, could Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), Community Development Councils (CDCs) and private citizens approach the Minister or apply to the Minister to have their projects or ideas financed under this Programme?

**Mr. Jordan:** Yes. As I said, that is not a big thing. If the NDCs want to approach for a small sum and we could accommodate it, why not? In fact, I think that the NDCs already did that and constructed a fence at the playfield of the Strathspey Primary School; but mostly private citizens would do this. As officers would walk-about in the communities that is how they would see what needs to be done. That is how we would get the project ideas.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 1900400 – Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF): Hon. Minister, you have \$380 million for the 7th and 8th cycles. Could the Hon. Minister say to us when the projects, project document and project scope was last adjusted? If I may put it in a simpler term, were there any changes in priorities in relation to this Programme over the last year?

**Mr. Jordan:** The 7th and 8th?

**Mr. Ali:** The \$380 million; the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> cycle. Were there any changes in priority?

*4.57 p.m.*

**Mr. Jordan:** I do not know whether there has been any particular change. I can tell you what happened in the 9<sup>th</sup> cycle, which I am more or less familiar with, where the change has been more to sustainable livelihood and entrepreneurial development, to move away from bricks and concrete which most of these BNTF projects seem to have concentrated on. That is the most I can say; I do not know too much. But I can read out a number of the projects that were done under the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> cycles and you would probably get an idea of whether there was a change or not.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 1900400 – Basic Needs Trust Fund: Could the Hon. Minister state when the programme for the 9<sup>th</sup> cycle was approved by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)?

**Mr. Jordan:** The programme was approved in March of this year and I think we had a launching in Guyana in October.

**Mr. Ali:** Could the Hon. Minister state what the life cycle of this 9<sup>th</sup> cycle is?

**Mr. Jordan:** It expires December, 2020.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 1900400 - Basic Needs Trust Fund: Hon. Member, could you say what would be the regional allocation in relation to the 9<sup>th</sup> cycle, not by project but by Region?

**Mr. Jordan:** The projects have not been finalised as yet, so I cannot give you that.

**Mr. Ali:** Could the Hon. Minister outline to us briefly the method of accessing resources in the 9<sup>th</sup> cycle so the communities out there could know?

**Mr. Jordan:** There are various methodologies, but the principle one is community outreaches where officers will go around and have outreach seminars in various communities across the country. There are private approaches, because some people may submit projects; and government approaches, some government agencies or semi agencies may also submit projects. Those are the three principle approaches that are used in the collection of the projects. Filtering might be a different story.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 3401000 - Low Carbon Development Programme: Hon. Minister, I am sure you are very impressed with the strategy and so you have kept it. The allocation of \$1,350,000,000, almost doubling the allocation in 2017, what is it you anticipate you would finance with this allocation in 2018?

**Mr. Jordan:** If we start with institutional strengthening that will be \$88.6 million; Amerindian Development Fund, \$339.7 million; Amerindian Land Titling, \$96.4 million; Micro and Small Enterprise Development \$234.1 million; Adaptation Project, Cunha Canal Rehabilitation, \$144.6 million; Information Communications Technology (ICT) Access and e-Services for Hinterland, Poor and Remote Communities, \$93.7 million; Sustainable Land Management and Development, \$263.9 million; Green State Economy Development Strategy, \$74.5 million; and Trustee Administration fees \$14.5 million. The total is \$1.35 billion.

**Mr. Ali:** I am very impressed that even the Green State Economy is benefiting from the Low Carbon Development Programme. It is being financed out of that strategy. It is very complimentary to those who authored that strategy. Hon. Minister, I must complement you for following a good strategy. The Micro and Small Enterprise Development, how is that fund going to be managed? Is it a revolving fund? Is it a seed capital fund? Who will be in charge of managing this fund?

**Mr. Jordan:** I am not sure, but I am being told that the method of the fund has not changed. I could get it if you want a write up on it.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, we are willing to accept the information about who is managing it; whether it is the Ministry of Business. The only reason I asked about the Micro and Small Enterprise Development is because it is supposed to help micro enterprises. I would like to know if a private enterprise is managing it and what is the interest rate, if there is any. What are the conditions governing the management of the programme? Because, we have seen some of these seed capital attracting high interest rate which makes repayment very difficult. I would also like that piece of information. Could you give us the contract, if there is any, of the entity or agency that is managing this programme?

Project code 4402900 – Institutional Strengthening: Could the Hon. Minister say what studies would be conducted under this head?

**Mr. Jordan:** There are two studies actually. One is a market demand study for re-establishing the National Development Bank. It is a project of US\$75,000 with the duration of about three months. I want to make it clear, we are not saying that we are establishing a National Development Bank; we are undertaking a study to determine the feasibility of establishing such a bank. I do not want the press to run an article stating that tomorrow. It is a feasibility study. The second study is strengthening institutional capacity for development planning in Guyana. This is US\$140,800, a grant from the CDB, and the duration again is three months.

**Mr. Ali:** Earlier, mentioned was made of the Wismar Bridge and the Kurupukari Bridge and it was said that the financing for the studies would be accommodated through the CDB/United Kingdom (UK) assistance. Could the Hon. Minister verify for us whether that information is accurate based on what you have just told us?

**Mr. Jordan:** The information is accurate. Those technical assistance programmes would have been approved under the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund (UKCIF) project.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister could you direct us to where the provisions would be made for the Wismar Bridge?

**Mr. Jordan:** That is being considered under a new CDB loan.

**Mr. Ali:** Is this a loan that is under negotiation?

**Mr. Jordan:** Yes. It is a loan under negotiation.

**Mr. Ali:** Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say what would be the title of that loan?

**Mr. Jordan:** I cannot say at the moment because we are still putting it together. We expect a fairly large loan because, I believe, it has to go with the UKCIF project. When the UKCIF project is done for the road there would be a combination of the UKCIF money and the CDB money.

**Mr. Ali:** Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say whether he anticipates the study would commence this year?

**Mr. Jordan:** We anticipate that the CDB loan could be approved during next year, 2018, based on how far it has advanced.

**Mr. Ali:** Under the same head, would the Hon. Minister say whether any step would have been taken to advertise for prequalification or short listing of any consultant to undertake this study?

**Mr. Jordan:** No, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4403700 - Technical Assistance - Enhanced Country Poverty Assessment - \$10 million: Hon. Minister, this is a new allocation and the Legend states, "Provision for improved poverty analysis." Could you say which agency would benefit from this? What poverty analysis would be done? Are you doing a new baseline study?

**Mr. Jordan:** These are country poverty assessment reports that are done for the Caribbean Development Bank. Actually we are now playing catch up, because almost all the borrowing member countries of the CDB have had their reports completed. These reports go as far back as 2002. So we are late. As a matter of a fact, since 1999 Grenada had not done their reports. We are now doing ours. This \$10 million, which would be coming from the CDB, is to make us complete our country poverty assessment report.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4402900 - Institutional Strengthening: Hon. Minister, I noticed the head states "Institutional Strengthening." Are you satisfied with the delivery in terms of the implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) and capital project? If no, what steps are you taking to have this underperformance corrected?

**Mr. Jordan:** I think I am record, like a broken record, especially during this year, saying that I am dissatisfied with the rate of implementation of the PSIP. I identified a number of reasons why the PSIP had slow implementation. One of the major steps that we have taken is to institute a mini 'war room' - which our good Friends on that side would remember - chaired by none other than the President himself. We meet monthly to go through that. The International Development Bank (IDB) is also putting up substantial resources to strengthen our capacity to implement the PSIP. They have contracted the firm Delivery Associates and it has done a diagnostic of the whole value chain of the PSIP. We expect approximately US\$750,000 technical assistance to help with the implementation of the PSIP.

**Mr. Ali:** In your explanation, I noticed that you mentioned nothing about the delays in procurement; and the long delays sometimes. How do you intend to address that, especially where you have major projects being re-advertised many times? And what would be the cause for such frequent re-advertisements?

*5.12 p.m.*

**Mr. Jordan:** One of the major problems we have in Guyana is not only with the public sector but also with the private sector. I have been saying, and I am also on record saying, that our private sector does not have capacity to implement large projects. Secondly, we do not have a fairly large private sector that can take on the number of projects that we have. Right now, the very few who are capable are overloaded with projects and, sometimes, we get worried ourselves.

Now, that is an issue that is really facing us and it cannot be solved overnight. One suggestion is to not break up these packages in the small units. I know the last Government did it to help support building capacity locally but, as you well know, that has a lot of negatives because ...

**Mr. Ali:** And positives.

**Mr. Jordan:** Well, yes, there are positives but there are too many negatives, to be quite honest, in terms of quality of work, delays, overruns, and all of those kinds of stories. Then, of course, we have pushbacks in getting international consultants to come here. As you would recall, when the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) Vice-President came here, she said that one of the pushbacks that we have as a country, in not being able to attract international firms, is the perception of the high level of corruption in Guyana. We have to... [**Mr. Jagdeo:** And now it will be worse with the oil.] No, it is made worse with the CGX Energy Inc.

**Mr. Ali:** I am happy that the Hon. Minister raised the issue of corruption perception index because I noticed two days ago we slipped two spaces down. Maybe he will have an explanation for that. I smell something oily.

There is \$850 million budgeted for the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). I know that the Ministry of Finance is normally very efficient in the implementation rate but, in 2017, at the

latest estimate, we are not close to the budgeted allocation. Could you say to us what may be some of the reasons for this?

Secondly, are you confident that the resources would be utilised in a timely manner in 2018?

**Mr. Jordan:** There are basically three broad areas where some slippages took place. The biggest one was in Total Revenue Integrated Processing System (TRIPS). You may call it a slippage but let us say that this is an enforced slippage, so to speak, because this project, as you well know, has cost us a fortune and it still does not work. This year we decided to enforce delivery because it appears that these people were getting moneys, all of the time, on promises rather than on delivery. This year we decided to not pay until we were satisfied with what was being delivered. Quite frankly, I think the faster that we get rid of TRIPS the better will be. We have paid over \$1 billion for this software that has really and truly never really worked. That is one of the major reasons why we had, what you may call, a slippage but it was an enforced position.

There was a small one called Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA). We made a sizable down payment but we did not make the other payment that we wanted to make because the particular condition was not fulfilled.

There was a late award of the two living quarters; one to be located at Anna Regina and the other at New Amsterdam. Those are the three broad areas.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4500800: Guyana Revenue Authority: Hon. Minister, could you say to us what would be the total cost for the ASYCUDA system?

**Mr. Jordan:** The total cost is US\$3.7 million.

**Mr. Ali:** With all the problems that you mentioned with TRIPS, you were able to collect an additional \$56 billion in revenue from 2014 to now. How much additional revenue do you anticipate to collect as a result of the change in system?

**Mr. Jordan:** I am being advised by the Commissioner General that the changes to the ASYCUDA system alone could improve customs collections by as much as 20%.

**Mr. Ali:** Is this 20% on the 2017 figure?

**Mr. Jordan:** Let us just say that it will gradually go up to 20%.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, you are changing the goalpost on me.

**Mr. Jordan:** No. I am not changing the goalpost. I said overall when the system is put in and so on. As you know there will be teething problems but then it will gradually go up.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, I have three questions. What is the base figure that we are dealing with and by what year we will achieve the 20%?

**Mr. Chairman:** That is the second question. What is the third question, Hon. Member Mr. Ali?

**Mr. Ali:** It is just those two questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is that your final question?

**Mr. Ali:** Yes.

**Mr. Jordan:** I think that it is difficult to get involved. If I am to tell you the 2017 base I will be wrong because the base has to be cleaned of all of the arrears that might have been in 2017 before the per cent is put on it. I do not think that we should play around with those figures like that now. We can discuss that because there are a significant number of arrears in 2017. As I said, at half year alone, we collected, I think, nearly \$9 billion in arrears. We do not want to put an increase on top of some moneys that are basically one off.

**Mr. Ali:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister, for your kind answer.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Ali, this is your final question.

**Mr. Ali:** Thank you Sir. You are so generous.

Hon. Minister, let us forget 2017, what per cent of your total revenue in 2016 was based on previous years arrears?

**Mr. Jordan:** The arrears for 2016 were \$20 billion so if you have the revenue figure for 2016 the per cent will be easy but I do not have it right now.

**Mr. Ali:** Did you collect all in [*inaudible*]?

**Mr. Jordan:** No. I am telling you that the arrears that were collected in 2016 totalled \$20 billion.

**Mr. Ali:** An in 2017, did the value go up?

**Mr. Jordan:** I am saying that, so far, up to the end of October it is just the \$9 billion.

*Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration – \$4,297,064,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management – \$130,151,000**

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4503100 – Contribution to Local Organisations – Linden Enterprise Network (LEN): There is a Capital contribution of \$160 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what is this \$160 million envisioned for?

**Mr. Jordan:** There are three components. There is roughly \$118 million to be used on lending; \$6.2 million to acquire per capital expenditure; and \$36 million, roughly, for operating expenditure.

**Mr. Ali:** For Linden Enterprise Network, could you say what is the total outstanding portfolio and what is the bad debt to date?

**Mr. Jordan:** This is the first time and I will have to promise because I do not have that kind of information at hand?      **[Mr. Jagdeo:** Are you putting in the money.]      The bad debt is small so do not worry.

**Mr. Ali:** Could the Hon. Minister say whether he is satisfied with the performance?

**Mr. Jordan:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I am satisfied. It is better than the performance under the Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP), if only, because the rules of the game have changed slightly and the monitoring is a bit stiffer at the moment. In fact, now, I think that there is a request for changes in the nature of the portfolio but we are not yet prepared to go down that road.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, LEN was just a component of LEAP. LEAP was a macro programme.

**Mr. Jordan:** Sorry, I meant Linden Economic Advancement Fund (LEAF).

In terms of the LEN programme, could the Hon. Minister say who is managing this programme and what are the effective interest rates? How did he deduce that the programme is performing when he does not know the data that we would have asked for – bad debt and the outstanding portfolio?

**Mr. Jordan:** Can you repeat the question? I heard something about interest rate. The interest rate is 8%.

**Mr. Ali:** Which agency is managing it?

**Mr. Jordan:** Sorry. Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member give me the project code? I have a feeling we have gone back to the programme 031.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Ali, you have been doing so well. Did you ignore the project code? I heard someone saying that it was a mistake. Let us correct it.

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Chairman, I will correct it. The Minister of Finance has confused us so much with this mix up in the pages and so on. I will go to Programme 032 – Public Financial Management.

Project code 1217100 – Free Balance Upgrade Project: Hon. Minister, you had some comments about an earlier programme. Are you satisfied with the performance of free balance?

**Mr. Jordan:** I am a very hard task master so I am not easy to satisfy. I believe that we are fairly satisfied. I will want to put it like that. Actually, the new version of the free balance is what produced this book. That is why I am going fairly because as you know...

**Mr. Ali:** And are you satisfied with this book?

**Mr. Jordan:** This has to do with the printing of the book and the printers, and with free balance. It was the printers who messed up the book and not free balance.

**Mr. Ali:** Why I asked that question is because, in this book, I saw that some tables went missing. Is this as a result of the free balance system or were these tables omitted?

**Mr. Jordan:** I wholly blame the printers.

**Mr. Ali:** Would the Hon. Minister undertake to us that the corrective measures will be undertaken in relation to the hiccups that we have outlined?

**Mr. Jordan:** I am sure that the officers of the Guyana National Printers Ltd. is listening and that it would appreciate that there are other people in the market if they want to continue holding our good graces.

*Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management – \$130,151,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*5.27 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, this concludes our consideration of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2018. I would like to thank you all very much for your assistance and co-operation in our achieving the end of the estimates so early. The Assembly will now resume. Thank you.

*Assembly resumed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Jordan:** I have to report that the Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of the Expenditure for the Financial Year 2018 and approved of them as printed.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NOS. 13(N) AND 54**

**First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]:** Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2017, Bill No. 15 of 2017 to be introduced at this stage.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Standing orders suspended.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Prime Minister moved the suspension motion. We would like to make it clear that we are not in support of that and we have made our position clear. There are a number of serious mistakes and errors including the non-inclusion of the US\$18 million in Budget 2018. Therefore, we will not support the waiver of the Standing Orders as proposed by the Prime Minister. We believe that there is time for us to amend and bring the accurate books and records of the Estimates and Expenditures of the country of Guyana.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph (2) of Article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Appropriation Bill 2017, Bill No.15 of 2017 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read the first time.

## **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING**

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

### **APPROPRIATION BILL – Bill No.15 of 2017**

A Bill Intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read for the first time.*

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Appropriation Bill 2017, Bill No.15 of 2017 be read a second time.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS**

## **BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL 2017 – BILL No. 15 of 2017**

A Bill Intituled

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2018, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read for a second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

*Bill considered and approved.*

*Assembly resumed.*

*Bill reported without amendments, read for a third time and passed as printed.*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I have two announcements to make. Firstly, I would invite Members of the Statutory Instruments Committee, after we rise from this Chamber, to meet for a brief consideration of two instruments. The Members of the Committee would have been served with them some time prior to this. Hon. Members, just as a reminder, the Members of the Committee are the Hon. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P., Minister of Natural Resources, Hon. Valerie Patterson, M.P., Minister within the Ministry of Communities, Hon. Ms. Jennifer J. Wade, M.P., Mr. Charrandas Persaud, M.P., Mr. John Adams, M.P., Hon. Mohabir A. Nandlall, M.P., Hon. Adrian V. Anamayah, M.P., Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P., and Hon. Vickram Outar Bharrat, M.P.. Thank you. Those are the Members who I have invited to meet with me in Committee Room No.2 to attend to this statutory instrument.

Secondly, I have been asked to invite Hon. Members to meet in the Members of Parliament Lounge for some refreshments. I would also invite members of the press who have survived the ordeal of two weeks and some of whom were fallen by the wayside because they are not here now but they are all invited to join and take refreshments in the Members of Parliament Lounge.

Hon. Members, this is the end of a great effort on the part of all of us. It was a very eventful period. I thought last year was interesting and demanding. This year was interesting but not so demanding in terms of the work, let us not be mistaken, because I believe that when Members did decide to cooperate and work together, although they were not like Mr. Ali and the Hon. Minister of Finance where they were doing a continuous hand dance, where all of us were spectators... Apart from that, I think that the discussions went fairly well. Also, except for the interruptions from the Speaker when someone is speaking and Members felt compelled to, at that very moment, speak to the colleague across the way and that colleague felt equally compelled, at that very moment, when the Speaker is on his or her feet to answer, I think that the work went fairly well.

We continue to create history in some of our extraordinary practices. I make bold to say that it is not true that if I disagree with you I must take steps to enforce my view if I am working within the framework of some rules. If I am not working in the framework of rules then the fastest draw wins. The surest shot and the strongest bully wins but those of us who may have had the pleasure of reading western novels knows that the fastest drawer does not die in his bed. Invariably, someone around the way challenges him and he finds that he is not equal to that person. I deliberately did not try to make any comments during the “Announcements by the Speaker” and I am only talking now, I am not reading from any slip or anything. You could see that Ms. Haniff is making sure that everyone knows that because she is moving everything away from me. What I am saying is that we can do much better, even if we disagree with one another. I am sure that I am going to say this next year, several times next year. Some Members are either blessed or cursed with very deep voices that carry far. Those Members should know that they are so blessed or cursed with those voices that they would need to be a little circumspect when they are expressing their views when another person is on the floor, because those voices carry beyond their immediate vicinity across this Chamber. Those voices might even pass by the Speaker. Someone just whispered: “That is the intention” but I do not know. Sometimes, not always, the

Speaker has very acute hearing. What I am saying is that the persons who are blessed with these voices shall really be mindful of other persons in the Chamber. Then, I will ask you, to not let the Speaker work so hard thinking he is maintaining order.

I offer, to everyone, a blessed Christmas, an enjoyable rest and a loving experience with your families. You know that you could tell them you would have to be here at 10.00 p.m. and beyond some other night for the next 10 or 12 days. I hope that with God's willing, we will all meet again next year, thank you. [Applause]

Hon. Prime Minister I invite you.

5.42 p.m.

### **CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR GREETINGS**

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Your Honour, before I move the adjournment of the House, I would just like to ask, whether I should give way to the Opposition if it wishes to convey greetings?

**Mr. Speaker:** At this part, the Speaker does not call names. The Speaker does not call speakers. Should he do that? Well if the Speaker should do that then I invite Hon. Ms. Teixeira. You have the floor Ma'am.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am adequately represented by my Comrade and Colleague Ms. Priya Manickchand.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will tell you that in the Speaker's light, we must hear you; he would want to hear you. After Ms. Manickchand is finished, the Speaker will still want to hear you. Ms. Manickchand, you have the floor.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I would not feel jealous that you called on Ms. Teixeira and so badly want to hear her that you did not look my way. I am going to restrain myself from that.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am lucky; we have two now.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I want to say a thank you to the staff for having gone through these many weeks with us. I know that it is not easy at all to come here day after day. It gets very tiring after

the first couple of days to stay from 10.00 a.m. to very late at night, because I know that they are here even after we leave for having gone through these many weeks with us.

First, I would like to say thanks to the Clerk of the National Assembly and the staff of the Parliament Office and to Your Honour himself. [Applause] I wish to thank, also, the press. In these particular proceedings, they played a role that will be marked in history for a long time to come and, as a public officer just said, teach us lessons. I believe without the press corps, we might not have learnt some of those lessons enough so that public officers could say that they are guided by them now.

To my colleagues on the Government's side of the House, I wish to say thank you for your endurance. I know the jobs you have. I know that it is not easy if you are working and I know the scrutiny that you and your family come under daily and that in itself is not easy. To my colleagues on the Opposition's side of the House, who have been very patient and who have come here daily to do what the people have asked us to do, I say that you did a tremendous job in representing the people you swore to represent.

In this advent period, where joy and peace is celebrated and where hope is brought back and we are reminded about the hope that we could enjoy as a people and as a human race, I want to say to everybody in this House today and to all of Guyana, from the Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), particularly, but from the entire House, a very Merry Christmas and a very prosperous and successful New Year where our economy and country is going to do better as we hope where we hope that our children are going to thrive, where we hope that our mothers and women are going to be more respected and be safer and where we hope our fathers and men could enjoy the dignity they have or have had in doing what some define as their roles – looking after their families. I wish all of Guyana from all of us in this House, a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous and successful New Year. [Applause]

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Ms. Teixeira, you have the floor.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Why did you not do that for me earlier during the Budget Debate? My Colleague has represented our views very clearly. I just wanted to add to that. Thank you again to the staff, media and our Colleagues on both sides of the House. We are doing what we have come here for; we are elected representatives of our people.

However, I look at the world today and there is so much conflict, pain and threats to civil society and to safety in many countries. Therefore, while we have our own hopes for Guyana, sometimes our vision gets very limited and we do not see what is going on in the world. For example, the suffering of many people, Sierra and the threats that we are now seeing in the Middle East, Egypt, Palestine *et cetera*. Mr. Speaker, for some of us, on both sides of the House, these are things that we actually have common views on and that is the funny thing. These are common issues for us as Guyanese. We have always had a historical empathy for the suffering of people, particularly those who are in terrible wars, conflict situations and, of course, there are more reports coming out about starvation and famine due to climate change.

My view, of us going into the New Year, is that we are very blessed as a country. We live in a country that has many religions, many ethnic groups and many different geographical areas; we are blessed. Somehow we see that as something that divides us as a people. What is so exciting about Guyana is that, as we come to Christmas, we do not understand how unique we are. That is my problem and why I get so passionate and behave badly in this House. We are one of the few countries in the developing world where people of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam and other traditional religious beliefs that are very sacred, special and ancient going back to 10,000 years, yet we all celebrate Christmas, Phagwah, Diwali, Eid-ul-Fitr and the Eid-ul-Adha. We are very blessed and my hope is that we get perspective as a people on the big challenges of climate change, of war, of civil war and of conflicts that are taking place all around us. I am sure if Mr. Greenidge was here he would have joined me but I pray and hope that Mr. António Guterres, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, keeps to a commitment that was made that if there was no significant progress, the Guyana-Venezuela border controversy would go to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). These are issues that we agree on.

We obviously would have disagreements because we are the Opposition and Government, we have different views and we come from different perspectives but, at the same time, we have common views on many things. I hope that, in the New Year, in the National Assembly and Parliamentary Sectoral Committees we are able to listen to each other. One thing the PPP/C has, which we offer, is a lot of experience in Government, we have learnt from many mistakes and we have had many challenges. Some of the things we said in the House, before and during the Budget 2018, are useful. We are trying to balance between being very oppositional for

Opposition's sake, which we are not, and pointing to the way forward, which we have done on the sugar issue *et cetera*. I pray and hope that, not on behalf of any religion but on behalf of our humanism as Guyanese, we are able, in 2018, to work for the betterment of our country, to not divide our people on any basis, religion, ethnicity or gender, and that we are able to protect our people to have a better nation and a better people. Thank you very much. [Applause]

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira. Hon. Prime Minister, you have the floor.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to, first of all, extend Seasons Greetings to you, to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly, to the members of staff of the Parliament Office, members of the media, Members of the Opposition and, of course, my colleagues on the Government's side of the House.

I would like to observe that 2017 came fast and furious. I try, in my mind, to recount some of the happenings in this House. You, more than anyone else, have been, at times, like a monument of patience, as Shakespeare said, "smiling at grief." We came through, you held the scale even and brought us to a point where we can say, towards the end of this year, that we have done what we came here to do and what we have been elected to do; and that is to do the people's business. Even when we differ and even when we appear to be quarrelling we, in fact, are sharing different perspectives and are learning not only from mistakes but, I can assure the Hon. Ms. Gail Teixeira, we are learning from successes. As said during the Budget's Debate, Guyana has a journey of continuity. No one side, party or no one Government can claim credit for where we are today. We are very fortunate that some of the battles that have been won ought not to be fought for again. Unlike many other countries, we have rights that protect our people. We have a Constitution that guarantees these rights to all our people. Of course, it may be a challenge at times for us to see beyond the narrow confines of these halls and we do not share the larger picture and the world continues to have tremendous problems.

In another few years, we would have to find jobs in the world for 600 million young people. The population is growing very quickly; hence, the UNDP's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), have told people in the world that you need to be prepared for challenges and create new avenues for opportunities and employment. In the world 750 million persons, mostly women, have jobs but it is still not enough to feed their families. We have to be not only

concerned about Guyana, which is our course a descent of our heart, but how we can contribute to a world that is full of plenty of everything and how we use our vast resources, not only for ourselves but to place them at the advantage of humanity.

*5.57 p.m.*

I am grateful that, for all the quarrels we may have, we are united on one matter, which is Guyana. Guyana comes first. Guyana's borders are precious to us. Our borders come first. Our territoriality comes first and we are united on that. For all we may say about differences, we are united on the issue on which we ought to be united.

I am glad that two Hon. Members of the Opposition spoke before I did, so no one would claim to be muzzled as we go into the end of the year. We met long enough for 82 sessions. We worked hard and we worked regularly. I am hoping that, next year, we would redouble our efforts; we would build on what we have achieved; and we would work to achieve greater bipartisan cooperation, greater consultations and consensus building in this House. It is because our people deserve no better and we should give the best for what we have been elected here.

Sir, for me, personally, 2017 was the year when I became 70 years old. It was the year in which I achieved that milestone and so I would have something to remember this year. However, remembering 2017 should just help to gear up for the future, the next year. I hope that we would come back here energised, as we proceed into the holiday period, to work even with more alacrity and greater determination to overcome some of the mistakes we might have made in this year or perhaps in the past, learn from them and move on.

In saying so, I know that Christmas time is a special time, not only for Guyanese at home, but for Guyanese who would be returning home. We hope that the friendship that we have always demonstrated, the hospitality, the warmth, the love of food, drinks and music, we, ourselves, would begin this evening to share some of that and that we would help to spread the goodwill of the season.

So, once again, I wish to convey warmest greetings to all the Hon. Members of this House. Since His Excellency, President Granger, is a Member of Parliament, together with the National

Assembly, I would like to convey, also, on his behalf and on behalf of the entire Government of Guyana, the warm feeling for a great, joyful holiday. Thank you very much.

Sir, in saying those words, it is my honour to move that this House be adjourned to the 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2018.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Speaker:** Did you say 10 a.m., sir?

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I will repeat that for the record. It is the 10th day of January, 2018 at 2 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you Prime Minister for clarifying that.

*Adjourned according at 6.01 p.m.*