



**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PARLIAMENT OF
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC
OF GUYANA**

OFFICIAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2020-2024) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE, LILIENDAAL, GREATER GEORGETOWN

85TH Sitting

Friday, 9TH August, 2024

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

The Assembly convened at 10.40 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

*Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.,
*Speaker of the National Assembly,
Parliament Office,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.*

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (38)

(i) MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY/CIVIC (PPP/C) (38)

Prime Minister (1)

+ Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Anthony Phillips, M.S.S., M.P.,
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Prime Minister's Office,
Colgrain House,
205 Camp Street,
Georgetown.*

Vice-President (1)

+ Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P.,
*Vice-President,
Office of the President,
New Garden Street,
Georgetown.*

[Virtual Participation]

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (1)

+ Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, M.P.,
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Carmichael Street,
Georgetown.*

+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Speaker**

Senior Ministers (16)

+ Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.,
(Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni),
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance,
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance,
Government Chief Whip,
Office of the Presidency,
New Garden Street,
Georgetown.

[Virtual Participation]

+ Hon. Hugh H. Todd, M.P.,
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Lot 254 South Road,
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[Virtual Participation]

+*Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.,
Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance
and the Public Service,
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+ Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.S., J.P., M.P.,
Minister of Public Works,
Ministry of Public Works,
Wight's Lane,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Dr. Frank C. S. Anthony, M.P.,
Minister of Health,
Ministry of Health,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P.,
(Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara),
Minister of Education,
Ministry of Education,
Lot 26 Brickdam,
Georgetown.

+ *Hon. Brindley H.R. Benn, M.P.,
Minister of Home Affairs,
Ministry of Home Affairs,
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Georgetown.

+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.,
Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
Minister of Agriculture,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Regent and Vlissengen Road,
Bourda, Georgetown.

+ Hon. Pauline R.A. Campbell-Sukhai, M.P.,
Minister of Amerindian Affairs,
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,
Lot 251-252 Thomas & Quamina Streets,
South Cummingsburg,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Joseph L.F. Hamilton, M.P.,
Minister of Labour,
Ministry of Labour,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Vickram Outar Bharrat, M.P.,
Minister of Natural Resources,
Ministry of Natural Resources,
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+*Hon. Oneidge Walrond, M.P.,
Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce,
Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce,
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+ Hon. Collin D. Croal, M.P.,
(Region No. 1 – BarimaWaini),
Minister of Housing and Water,
Ministry of Housing and Water,
Brickdam,
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+ Hon. Vindhya V. H. Persaud, M.S., M.P.,
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Minister of Human Services and Social Security,
Ministry of Human Services and Social Security,
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+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Charles S. Ramson, M.P.,
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports,
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,
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+ Hon. Sonia Savitri Parag, M.P.,
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Minister of Local Government and Regional Development,
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Georgetown.

Hon. Deodat Indar, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of Public Works,
Ministry of Public Works,
Wight's Lane,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

Hon. Anand Persaud, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,
Fort Street,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Warren Kwame E. McCoy, M.P.,
Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister,
Office of the Prime Minister,
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205 Camp Street,
Georgetown.

+ **Cabinet Member**

Other Members (15)

Hon. Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.,
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East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Alister S. Charlie, M.P.,
*(Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo),
148 Lethem,
Central Rupununi,
c/o Freedom House,
41 Robb Street,
Georgetown.*

Hon. Dr. Vishwa D.B. Mahadeo, M.P.,
*Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
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Corentyne,
Berbice.*

Hon. Mr. Sanjeev J. Datadin, M.P.,
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John Street,
Campbellville,
Georgetown.*

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Seepaul Narine, M.P.,
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East Bank Demerara.*

Mrs. Yvonne Pearson-Fredericks, M.P.,
*Mainstay Lake/Whyaka Village,
Mainstay Lake, Essequibo Coast,
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41 Robb Street,
Georgetown.*

Hon. Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.P.,
*Lot 340 East Street,
South Cummingsburg,
c/o Freedom House,
41 Robb Street,
Georgetown.*

[Absent]

Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.,
*55 AA Victoria Avenue,
Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Faizal M. Jaffarally, M.P.,
*(Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),
Lot 16-30 New Street,
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Robb Street,
Georgetown.*

Hon. Dr. Tandika S. Smith, M.P.,
(Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara),
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Tuschen, North,
East Bank Essequibo.

Hon. Mr. Lee G.H. Williams, M.P.,
Paruima Upper Mazaruni,
c/o Freedom House,
Robb Street,
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* Hon. Ms. Sarah Browne, M.P.,
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[Absent – on leave]

* Hon. Mr. Vikash Ramkissoon, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
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Regent and Vlissengen Road,
Bourda, Georgetown.

[Absent – on leave]

Hon. Ms. Bhagmattie Veerasammy, M.P.,
Lot 32 Crown Dam,
Industry,
East Coast Demerara.

Hon. Ms. Nandranie Coonjah, M.P.,
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Georgetown.

MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION (32)

(i) A Partnership For National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) (31)

Hon. Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P.,
Leader of the Opposition

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.,
*Lot 10 Delph Street,
Campbelville,
Georgetown.*

Hon. Mr. Roysdale A. Forde, S.C., M.P.,
*Lot 410 Caneview Avenue,
South Ruimveldt,
Georgetown.*

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Shurwayne F.K. Holder, M.P.,
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Essequibo Coast.*

Hon. Ms. Catherine A. Hughes, M.P.,
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Lot 13 A, New Providence,
East Bank Demerara.*

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Ms. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, M.P.,
*Lot 48 Atlantic Ville,
Georgetown.*

Hon. Mr. Sherod A. Duncan, M.P.,
*Lot 590 Good Hope,
East Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Volda Lawrence, M.P.,
*Lot 7 Freeman Street,
Castello Housing Scheme,
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Georgetown.*

[Absent]

Hon. Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams, M.P.,
*Lot 933 Block 1,
Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Christopher A. Jones, M.P.,
*Opposition Chief Whip,
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Tucville,
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Hon. Mr. Vinceroy H. Jordan, M.P.,
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Hon. Ms. Amanza O.R. Walton-Desir, M.P.,
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East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Coretta A. McDonald, A.A., M.P.,
*Lot 202 N, Fourth Street,
Alexander Village,
Georgetown.*

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Deonarine Ramsaroop, M.P.,
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Lot 40 Block 3
Craig Milne,
Cove & John,
East Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Vincent P. Henry, M.P.,
*(Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo),
Shulidnab Village,
South Central,
Rupununi.*

(Culvert City Lethem)

Hon. Dr. Karen R.V. Cummings, M.P.,
*Lot 2 Belfield Housing Scheme,
East Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Tabitha J. Sarabo-Halley, M.P.,
*Lot 3382 Caneview Avenue,
South Ruimveldt Park,
Georgetown.*

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Ms. Natasha Singh-Lewis, M.P.,
*Lot 1110 Plot 'B',
Herstelling,
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Annette N. Ferguson, M.P.,
*Lot 842 Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Juretha V. Fernandes, M.P.,
*Lot 1282 Block EE,
Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. David A. Patterson, M.P.,
*Lot 151 Durbana Square,
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Georgetown.*

Hon. Mr. Ronald Cox, M.P.,
*(Region No. 1 – Barima Waini),
Mabaruma Compound.*

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Jermaine A. Figueira, M.P.,
*(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),
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Hon. Mr. Ganesh A. Mahipaul, M.P.,
*Lot 14 Plantain Walk,
West Bank Demerara.*

[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Haimraj B. Rajkumar, M.P.,
*Lot 18 Public Road,
Johanna Cecilia,
(Region # 2 Essequibo Coast).*

Hon. Ms. Nima N. Flue-Bess, M.P.,
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Lot 88 Nelson Street,
Mocha Village,
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Dineshwar N. Jaiprashad, M.P.,
*Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
Lot 80 Babu John Road, Haswell,
Port Mourant, Corentyne Berbice.*

[Absent]

Hon. Ms. Maureen A. Philadelphia, M.P.,
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Lot 17 Block 1, Section F,
Plantation Belfield,
East Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Beverley Alert, M.P.,
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)
Lot 169-170 Stanleytown,
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[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Richard E. Sinclair, M.P.,
*(Region No. 8 –Potaro/Siparuni)
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Lot 4 Public Road,
Stewartville,
West Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Devin L. Sears, M.P.,
*(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),
Lot 90, Section C, Wismar, Linden.*

(ii) A New and United Guyana, Liberty and Justice Party and The New Movement (ANUG, LJP & TNM) (1)

Hon. Dr. Asha Kisooson, M.P.,
*Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly,
Lot 855, 3rd Field,
Cummings Lodge,
Greater Georgetown.*

Officers (2)

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, A.A.,
Clerk of the National Assembly,
Parliament Office,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

Ms. Deslyn West,
Assistant Clerk of the National Assembly,
Parliament Office,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

Hansard Division Officers (14)

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Chief Editor

Ms. Marlyn Jeffers-Morrison,
Senior Editor

Ms. Shawnel Cudjoe,
Senior Editor

Ms. Shevona Telford,
Senior Editor

Ms. Carol Bess,
Editor

Ms. Indranie Persaud,
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Ms. Lushonn Bess,
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Reporter

Ms. Eyoka Gibson,
Reporter

Mr. Daniel Allen,
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Mr. Parmanand Singh,
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Audio Technician

Mr. Daison Horsham,
Audio Technician

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Page

85TH Sitting

Friday, 9TH August, 2024

Announcements by the Speaker	13307
Questions on Notice For Written Replies	13308-13311
Questions on Notice For Oral Replies	13312-13315
Introduction of Bills and First Reading	13316
Public Business – Government’s Business	13317-13438
Motion – To Approve - Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1/2024	13319-13339
Motion – Consideration of - Financial Paper No. 2/2024 – Current and Capital Estimates	13340-13436
Introduction of Bills and First Reading	13439
Committee’s Business - Motions – Authority of the PAC to Summon Witnesses	13440-13441
Adjournment -	13442

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Congratulations to Mr. Collin Croal and Ms. Susan Rodrigues

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, first, my congratulations to the Hon. Ministers – Mr. Collin Croal and Ms. Susan Rodrigues – for what I consider to be the best exhibition I have witnessed in my lifetime in Guyana. I will allow an intervention from the Hon. Member, Ms. Annette Ferguson, later so the Hon. Member could give a comment. Congratulations, Hon. Ministers. I was really, really impressed. Congratulations to you, your staff, the exhibitors and the hundreds of persons who were waiting at the gate to get in before it was officially open to the public.

Congratulations to the Clerk of the National Assembly and his team

Let me congratulate the Clerk and his XI on winning the inaugural Intra-Parliamentary Softball competition by defeating the Government Chief Whip XI in the finals. Congratulations, Mr. Clerk.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following papers and reports were laid:

- (1) Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman for the year 2023.

[The Prime Minister on behalf of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance]

- (2) Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana National Shipping Corporation Limited for the year ended 31st December, 2022.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[For Written Replies]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there are seven questions on today's Order Paper. Questions number one to six are for Written Replies and question number seven is for an oral reply. For the Written Replies, questions number one to five are in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. David Patterson. Question number one is for the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs. Questions number two and three are for the Hon. Minister of Public Works. Questions four and five are for the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, may I?

Mr. Speaker: Just one second. I understand that the question for the Minister of Natural Resources is here. Hon.

Member Mr. Patterson, you wanted to interject. Normally, I do not allow that, at this time, but go ahead.

Mr. Patterson: No. I am just inquiring. I did not see a response to my *[inaudible]*.

Mr. Speaker: It arrived. That is what I was checking.

Mr. Patterson: It has arrived; thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The answers to all of these questions have been received and, therefore, in accordance with our Standing Orders have been circulated.

(1) DISAGGREGATED STATISTICS FOR FIRES (GUYANA FIRE SERVICE)

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Brindley Benn, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs provide the following information, in written and digital formats: The Guyana Fire Service's annual disaggregated statistics for fires, including those claiming lives, for the period 2017 – September, 2023, in every region and district.

Please see Appendix I for reply.

(2) DAMAGES TO THE DEMERARA HARBOUR BRIDGE (DHB)

Mr. Patterson: On 8th October, 2022, MV Tradewind Passion collided with the Demerara Harbour Bridge, causing extensive damage in excess of \$1 billion.

Could the Hon. Minister provide this National Assembly with the sums recouped by the Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation or the Ministry for damages caused by this collision?

Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]: No funds have been recouped either by the Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation or the Ministry of Public Works. A claim has been filed by the Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation to recover damages in excess of \$1 billion. The ship owners made an application under Section 402(1)(a) of the Guyana Shipping Act, Chapter 49:01 to limit their liability. Despite strenuous objections by the Counsel for Demerara Harbour Bridge Corporation, the application was granted. Consequently, the Tradewind Passion obtained a court order to limit its liability to the sum of \$246 million. The proceedings are currently pending awaiting trial.

(3) OPERATION OF MV TRADEWIND PASSION

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Minister inform the National Assembly if the MV Tradewind Passion is still operating in Guyana?

Bishop Edghill: The MV Tradewind Passion has not been operating in Guyana since departing the jurisdiction.

(4) COPIES OF DOCUMENTS OF THE TECHNICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS ON OIL PRODUCTION IN GUYANA

Mr. Patterson: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permits for Liza Destiny, Liza Unity and Prosperity approved the safe operating limits for these floating productions, storages and offloading (FPSOs) at 120,000 barrels per day (bpd) (Liza Destiny) and 220,000 bpd (Liza Unity and Prosperity). ExxonMobil Guyana Limited (EMGL) has announced that of February 2024, Liza Destiny was producing 160,000 bpd; Liza Unity, 250,000 bpd; and Prosperity, 230,000 bpd. Additionally, the company has stated “that production increases never occur without strict reviews, risk assessments, and that all of those are being reviewed by the Government and the EPA”.

Could the Hon. Minister provide the National Assembly with copies of documents submitted by ExxonMobil Guyana Limited detailing the technical and environmental assessments undertaken to justify the increased production above the previously approved Environmental Protection Agency permit limits?

Minister of National Resources [Mr. Bharrat]: Preamble

1. Mr. Speaker, please permit me to address the erroneous statement made by the Hon. Member, Mr. David Patterson on the approved “safe operating limits” of the Destiny, Unity and Prosperity FPSOs. The Environmental Permit requires the permit holder to not only adhere to the conditions of the permit but also the operating parameters and environmental limits specified in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA).
2. It is the ESIA which addresses the maximum expected production rates and applicable impact assessments which form the basis of the issued Environmental Permits. That being said, I must note that the Liza Phase 2 ESIA (Unity FPSO) was approved for a maximum production rate of 300,000 barrels per day while the Payara ESIA

was approved for a maximum production rate of 264,000 barrels per day. As such, these facilities are clearly still operating within their approved production rates.

3. Furthermore, it was under the previous administration that the Liza Phase 1 ESIA was approved for a maximum production rate of 144,000 barrels per day along with the Phase 2 approval. So, it is surprising that such inaccurate statements could be boldly declared. Even more so, when the ESIA's and their respective Environmental Permits were not only subject to public consultation but also published online.

Overview of the Production Optimisation Review Process

4. Production optimisation is a standard practice globally, executed across many production fields after a facility has been commissioned. While approvals of Field Development Plans (FDP) cater for the licence holder's best estimate of expected production, the FPSOs are designed to accommodate higher production levels. This is done to cater for the level of uncertainty which naturally exists around reservoir models, and it explains the higher production levels considered in the ESIA.
5. Even so, production optimisation and the resulting increased production levels are not done casually, as implied. This process is closely monitored by both EMGL as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) and EPA until the approved production level is achieved, and the reservoir and facility performance are stabilised. This process includes constant engagements and the provision of additional information by EMGL as required by the regulatory agencies. If during the optimisation tests, it is found that components of the processing facility need to be upgraded to cater for higher production levels, this is also done under the supervision of our regulatory agencies.
6. It must be underscored that approvals and permits would not be issued if our assessments found that the operation pushes any piece of equipment on the FPSO above its operating

limits. In fact, the MNR, GGMC and the EPA are still reviewing the findings of the most recent production optimisation tests to ensure that all concerns are addressed. The MNR has even secured external support to support the Government's team in reviewing these submissions as well.

7. The Petroleum Production Licence from Yellowtail onwards includes a condition to conduct audits on the production optimisation for the respective project. These Production Licences are public.
8. The safety of all personnel and the facility, along protection of the environment are of paramount importance, and this is achieved through rigorous technical evaluation and monitoring. Production optimisation, once done safely and efficiently, brings benefits for all stakeholders, the Government included.

(5) COPIES OF THE REVISED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) PERMITS ON OIL PRODUCTION IN GUYANA

Mr. Patterson: The Environmental Protection Agency permits for Liza Destiny, Liza Unity and Prosperity approved the safe operating limits for these FPSOs at 120,000 bpd (Liza Destiny) and 220,000 bpd (Liza Unity and Prosperity). ExxonMobil Guyana Limited has announced that of February 2024, Liza Destiny was producing 160,000 bpd, Liza Unity, 250,000 bpd and Prosperity 230,000 bpd. Additionally, the company has stated "that production increases never occur without strict reviews, risk assessments, and that all of those are being reviewed by the Government and the EPA".

Could the Honourable Minister provide the National Assembly with copies of the revised Environmental Protection Agency permits approving this increased daily production?

Mr. Bharrat:

1. Mr. Speaker, I must emphasise that these facilities are operating within their approved capacities. As previously stated, the Liza Phase 2 Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) (Unity FPSO) was approved for a maximum production rate of 300,000 barrels per

day while the Payara ESIA was approved for a maximum production rate of 264,000 barrels per day. The Liza Phase 1 ESIA was approved for a maximum production rate 144,000 barrels per day and updated air quality, water quality and oil spill modelling were also done to assess the impacts of higher production at Destiny.

2. This fallacious statement is made worse by the fact that the Hon. Member's Government would have issued the approvals for the Liza Phase 1 and 2 ESIA's.
3. The EPA, as part of Government, promotes transparency and accountability. In doing so, the EPA ensures that the Environmental Permitting process is subject to public consultation and that the resulting ESIA's and their associated Environmental Permits are published online. Should the Hon. Member wish to access these documents, they can be found on the EPA's website.
4. Once again, I must reiterate that production optimisation is a standard practice globally, executed across many production fields after a facility has been commissioned. Approvals and permits would not be issued if our assessments found that the operation pushes any piece of equipment on the FPSO above its operating limits. This means that if equipment upgrades are required to accomplish the proposed production rates, then this implemented as well.

(6) TEACHERS' SALARY

Question 6 was deferred due to the unavailability of answers from the Minister.

[For Oral Replies]

(7) CLIFF ANDERSON SPORTS HALL

Mr. Speaker: For oral replies, question seven is in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Nima Flue-Bess. Hon. Member, you may ask your question. Sorry, I do not see the Hon. Minister of Education online and the Hon. Member is not here. I will allow you to ask that question, if the Hon. Member appears online or here later in the proceeding...

Ms. Ferguson: Culture [*inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, Culture... My notes are saying it is. Let me just double-check. The notes had the Ministry of

Education but, I understand, the question is directed to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport. Hon. Member Ms. Nima Flue-Bess, you may now proceed with your question.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to everyone. Could the Hon. Minister inform this House what is the total sum spent to date on the rehabilitation of the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall?

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Mr. Ramson]: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Hon. Member for her question. First of all, allow me to say that this project is in keeping with President Ali's vision for creating Guyana as a premier destination for world-class events of which this Hall having an air-conditioned facility that is modern and caters for corporate sponsors appropriately. It is an important modernisation project to execute and advance that. In 2022, we spent \$47 million. In 2023, \$237 million and to date it is \$8 million.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could I ask the Hon. Minister to recall the total he gave me just now? I got the first one.

Mr. Ramson: For 2022, it was \$47 million; 2023, \$237 million; and \$8 million for 2024.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could the Hon. Minister also inform this House how much of the 2024 budgeted allocated sum will be spent on the rehabilitation of the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall?

Mr. Ramson: This year, there is \$59 million budgeted for the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasant morning to you, Hon. Members and all the public servants who are here with us this morning. My follow up question to the Hon. Minister is, could you inform the National Assembly of the name of the contractor who has been contracted to do this project? What is the duration of the project and what method of procurement was used to award the contract? Thank you very much.

10.51 p.m.

Mr. Ramson: First of all, just allow me to state that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports follows all of the laws towards our financial expenditure, public financial expenditure; and the audited accounts from the Auditor General, it shows that. In fact, when you go through, over the previous years, even though they have not reached to the PAC – the reports are available – you will see that there are

no breaches of procurement. So, the Ministry follows all the financial laws when it comes to public expenditure.

I can share with the Honourable Member the names, based on the various contracts, because there were multiple contracts; it was not just one contract. We gave you the sum that was based on the question that was asked. There is the rehabilitation of the main roof, Rishma and Sisters Enterprise; rehabilitation of the electrical installation, A. Orgasein and Sons; rehabilitation of side walls, R. Persid; the design and supervision, which is Engineering and Management; then the northern front of the building is ECS Construction; and then the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) which is ECS Construction once again, which was a contract that we terminated in 2023 based on poor performance, and we went out to tender once again. All of the projects that are existing... and I think that the Honourable Member who initiated the question would eventually lead to the third question, which would be the projects that would have been completed already. We have completed the plumbing and installation, the main roof, the side walls, the face of the northern front and extension, and the ceiling of the units and the vented wall. The only two outstanding projects, which are expected to be completed by the 30th September, are the HVAC and the finishing on the inside.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I must let you know that I am dissatisfied...

Mr. Speaker: That is a speech, thank you very much; a follow up question, please.

Ms. Ferguson: Yes, Sir. Mr. Speaker... [Mr. McCoy: (Inaudible)]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you for the assistance, Hon. Member Mr. McCoy.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I asked the Honourable Member a simple question.

Mr. Speaker: I think he gave a simple answer too.

Ms. Ferguson: What method of procurement was used? I do not want to hear we are following this. What method? Was it selective tendering? Was it [inaudible] tendering?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member. Honourable Member, we have a lot more questions coming up as we examine the supplemental. Ms. Nima Flue-Bess.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I note the Minister gave some answers to the third question which I had asked,

but I am looking at the answer of 2022, February. It was stated then that \$15 million will be spent on installation of bucket seats at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall, \$80 million for installation of air conditioning at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall, \$30 million for filing cabinets and so forth – this I am reading from the answer – and \$50 million rehabilitations of the flooring at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall. So I am wondering if these aspects of the work will be done.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, are you wondering too?

Mr. Ramson: I would like to check the *Hansard* just to verify that because we would have never... [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] I will. Not to share it from there. At least it might have been a mistake when I said \$50 million on the flooring; we would not have budgeted \$50 million on the flooring. The bucket seats would come on the next phase, which is now that we have finished the air conditioning, the extension and the creating of corporate boxes, the new public entrance, and also the extension to now house four dressing rooms to cater for the international standards, because we have to have now four dressing rooms as well as an anti-doping room and physiotherapy (physio) rooms. All of that is now catered for in the extension. The buckets seats would come subsequent to these projects being completed. Obviously, with one being connected to the other, we still had to wait for this to be done.

There was a delay also that was caused by the recall of the equipment in relation to the AC, which I have stated publicly too. The manufacturer has sent that; it has already been shipped and it is received. The completion of the HVAC is expected based on the work programme and the meetings that I have had with the consultant as well as the contractor on site. We are expecting to see them deliver that within the timeline.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Minister. Hon. Member Ms. Nima Flu-Bess.

Ms. Flu-Bess: A follow-up question. Could the Honourable Minister say when the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall will become accessible and be able to be used by the youths in this country?

Mr. Ramson: The Honourable Member may or may not know, but the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall has still been used for practice purposes by many of the teams, because most of the areas that were under construction, with the exception of the period when maybe the walls had to be done... Teams are still using it for practice purposes, but we have not

allowed public access to it. Once these remaining two contracts are completed – and I expect them to be completed within that timeframe or shortly thereafter – it will become public again. When we move into the next phase, which is on the bucket seats, those are purchases, so we can continue the use of the facility while executing those projects. We will close again when the time comes just to break down and install, but it would not be a long period of closure.

Ms. Flu-Bess: A follow-up question. When last was a practice session held at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall?

Mr. Ramson: I do not want to mislead the House, so I would not be able to say with accuracy the specific date, but what I would say is that I know it is used every Sunday. In fact, I am part of the practice sessions that participate there early every Sunday. I have also been there on times when we went to do check-ups, on site visits with the contractors and meetings. I know that it has been used.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Minister. Honourable Members this exhaust the questions on this item.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the first time:

THE OPEN DATA BILL 2024 – BILL NO. 13/2024

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the use and administration of public data; to provide for public data to be made available in an open format and under an open licence; to facilitate transparency, effective governance and innovation in the use and administration of public data and for connected matters.”

[*The Prime Minister*]

DECEASED PERSONS ESTATES' ADMINISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2024 – BILL NO. 14/2024

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Deceased Persons Estates' Administration Act.”

[*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]

PUBLIC BUSINESS**GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS****Motion****Motion to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1/2024**

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1/2024 – Schedule of Contingency Fund advances on the Current Estimates totalling \$8,566,812,000 for the period 2024-04-01 to 2024-07-30.”

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members we will resolve ourselves into committee to consider the Financial Paper No.1/2024, Current Estimates.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman Let me give everyone an opportunity to get to the correct page. I know there was a request for copies from some Members, so let us ensure that you are all on the same page. I invite the Hon. Prime Minister and his team to take the first agency under this... Sorry, Hon. Senior Minister, we need to go back into the House, please. The Hon. Senior Minister with Responsibility for Finance needs to move the motion. No, sit there; you can sit there. Sorry, let us get this correct.

Assembly resumed.

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and Public Service [Dr. Singh]:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sir, in accordance with article 171(2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1/2024, Supplementary Estimates, current advances made from the Contingency Fund, totalling \$8, 566,812,000, for the period 1st April, 2024 to 30th July, 2024. I now move the aforementioned motion. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Minister. The House will now resolve itself into Committee to consider Financial Paper No. 1/2024.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

11.06 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: The first agency up is agency code 02-021, Office of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and his staff, headed by the Permanent Secretary (PS), are in place, and now I propose the question that the sum stated herein for agency 02-021, Office of the Prime Minister, Chart of Account 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, stands part of the Schedule. The Hon. Member Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, are we not going to go to Financial Paper No. 1 first?

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. Are we not at number one?

Mr. Patterson: Are we going to number two, Sir? Of course, you have the privilege of doing what you like.

Mr. Chairman: No... Got the wrong... What did you say there, Sir?

Mr. Patterson: The privilege of doing the order in your *[inaudible]*.

Mr. Chairman: You said something. I do what I like.

Mr. Patterson: No. You have the privilege of doing what you like, Sir. The privilege.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I may have the privilege, but I exercise that privilege based on the Standing Orders. I do not do as I want here. In accordance with the Standing Orders.

Hon. Members: *(Inaudible)*

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we now go to Financial Paper No. 1/2024.

Current Estimates**Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$4,000,000,000**

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson and thank you for the observation about the wrong paper.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, Sir. I start by stating this: for the last two years, including Budget 2024, we have asked questions and the Hon. Prime Minister has committed to lay over the documents, the Clerk has written to him at least twice and we have received no information. I am making... **[Hon. Members: (Inaudible)]** I am starting that off, Sir,

because I do not anticipate it would be any different on this occasion.

Mr. Chairman: There is a Standing Order with respect to anticipation too.

Mr. Patterson: Well, okay.

Mr. Chairman: Do not anticipate.

Mr. Patterson: Very well, Sir. We start with a very easy one, Sir. Could the Hon. Prime Minister through his staff disaggregate the \$4 billion that you have expended under this sum?

Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Prime Minister.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I rise to answer the question. I thank the Hon. Member for asking for the disaggregation. The \$4 billion basically is utilised to purchase 547,000 barrels of fuel at US\$34 per barrel.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, 534 barrels of fuel at US\$34, is that the entire amount that you have done, Sir, with this allocation? The 534,000 at US\$34, that is what you just stated.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I can just repeat what I stated: 547,000 barrels of fuel by US\$34.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson. Hon. Members I now put a question that the sum stated...

Mr. Patterson: No...

Mr. Chairman: I was calling you and you seemed to be busy, engrossed in another conversation, so I assume that you were finished.

Mr. Patterson: That is all right, Sir. Could I ask... [Ms. Singh-Lewis: *(Inaudible)*]

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a problem with me, Hon. Member Ms. Natasha Singh-Lewis? You can always send me a note.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, where was this fuel supplied to? Could he give us that specifically?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the fuel was supplied to the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL), and it was utilised throughout the Demerara-Berbice interconnected system, wherever we are generating power

for the people of Guyana, who live in the Demerara-Berbice Integrated System (DBIS). Fuel is supplied to Essequibo, fuel is supplied to Bartica and wherever GPL operates their generators. The money is utilised to supply fuel throughout and to cover all Guyana Power and Light operations.

Mr. Patterson: Could I ask, Sir... Thank you very much. We know that the fuel was utilised by GPL. It is stated there. Could I ask specifically, how much of the fuel was used in Columbia and how much was used in Bartica? Disaggregate it, Sir.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Another good question by the Hon. Member, but Mr. Chairman, I will ask if we could lay over the information.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, we start there again. Quick computation, Sir. The first answer that the Hon. Member provided comes up to \$3.6 billion. That is what I was waiting for. Had my math genius here. He is short \$400 million. Could the Hon. Prime Minister say to us where is the \$400 billion?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the other \$400 million would have been utilised for other fuel-related costs. You have to purchase oils, you have to purchase lubricants, and that is \$4 billion.

Mr. Patterson: To the Prime Minister that may sound like a little bit of money, that \$400 million. Sir, we ask for a disaggregation. Could the Hon. Member, once again, through you, Sir, disaggregate it? This is the people's money. He has bought fuel. Disaggregate the other costs that he has stated there, Sir. I would like to know where these sums have gone. People would like to know.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, do you have a disaggregation?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, we have no problem with laying over a disaggregated amount. In the interest of the Hon. Member, it is the people's money, and we, I can assure you, Mr. Chairman and the House, will spend the money for what the money is appropriated for, and that is to keep the lights on for the people of Guyana. To keep the lights on. If you are buying fuel, you have to buy fuel to keep the lights on. Simple. The people of Guyana are interested in having their lights on and having power. That is why we are asking for the money. No other reason. To purchase fuel, to purchase oils and lubricants, to keep the lights on, to keep people alive.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I know you cautioned me that there is a Standing Order on anticipation. Could you ask, through you,

Sir, if the Prime Minister is willing to commit to this House a timetable or time period to lay over this information? Since April, since Budget 2024, the information that he promised this House is still outstanding. Could I ask through you for a commitment, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, can you give a timetable?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I can assure the Hon. Member that this information will be laid over and be ready in less than two weeks. In fact, it can be done in two days. Mr. Chairman, I wish to remind the Hon. Member that we have not increased the rates for electricity in this country. We come to this House, we ask for money to keep the lights on, to keep the power on, but we have not increased the rates. Whatever the people are paying now is the same rate that they were paying before the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Four years of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government and we have kept the rate at what it was before we entered office, and that is the only reason why we are coming to this House.

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$4,000,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$4,566,812,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Just give the Hon. Minister and staff an opportunity to settle.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister indicated that he is ready. I would just like to ask the Hon. Minister to kindly disaggregate the \$524 million that is allotted here for the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB).

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Mustapha]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank the Hon. Member for his question. I want to put this in context. The GRDB, as an agency, never collected subvention from the central Government, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the problem with the supply chain, and there was the increase in exports, the millers came to the Government and requested that we reduce the commission. As a caring Government, unlike the A Partnership for National Unity/ Alliance for

Change (APNU/AFC) that said, rice is a private business, we reduced the commission by 25%. As a result of that, we had to find funds to replenish GRDB's account.

When the price for paddy was low, also, the farmers came to us and asked us to see how we could work with the millers to increase or get a minimum price for their paddy. We had a discussion with the millers, and they said that if we forego the commission at that time, they will increase the price, at a minimum price of \$4,000 a bag for paddy. As a result of that, like a government that cares for its people, at that period from April to August, we took out the commission 100%, and the farmers were able to get a price of \$4,500 a bag for their paddy. So, because of that, we had a shortfall of \$524 million, and the disaggregation is as follows: Employment costs, \$404,873,000; material and supplies, \$42,950,000; utilities, \$11,137,000; out-of-crop maintenance, \$21,700,000; field operations, \$43,340,000, giving you a total of \$524 million.

11.21 a.m.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister mentioned that the commission was zero-rated. I remember that from the news way back in March, 2023. When was it restored and when last was the commission paid to the GRDB?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, it was restored in September, 2023. Remember we are still collecting 75% of the original commission because we reduced it by 25% when they came the first time. We are still collecting 75% of the commission.

Mr. Jordan: All right. Could I ask the Minister, from your budgeting or plans for the Ministry, particularly the GRDB, when is it expected that we would return to the 100% collection? Whilst we are doing that, could you also say what is the current staff complement at the Guyana Rice Development Board?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, we are working to restore that to ensure that we start to collect back the 100%. But like any other entity, we are working with a supply chain management. We are working with the millers. As a matter of fact, only yesterday I had a meeting with the Guyana Rice Exporters and Millers Association (GREMA). The millers assured me that, seeing that we have now increased production, we will try as much as possible to restore or go back to normalcy. The staff complement for the GRDB is 250.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister mentioned that the commission was restored to a partial restoration during

September, 2023. In February, we passed a budget here for \$1.146 trillion. Was the Minister and his team not aware that we would have needed this \$524 million to carry out the work at the GRDB?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, probably the Hon. Member does not understand the complexity of the rice industry. For example, right now we have additional costs. We are now looking at a crop that has been affected by paddy bugs. We have to have funds to do that. In February, when we planned the budget, we did not have paddy bugs in the field. We did not have paddy bugs in the field. We had a number of other issues that we had to deal with. These monies are now coming here for us to deal with those issues.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister did mention wages, salaries and materials. I want to know if the entire \$524 million went to the paddy bugs. The paddy bugs have been here since last year.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, this issue was raised in April, 2024 when we had the issue with wages and salaries and all that I talked about just now. As I said, 25% of the commission is still going to the millers, so that is why we now have to have this money coming to pay.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, it is only fair for Guyanese to understand that we passed the National Budget in February, and less than two months after the Minister is saying to the nation that they did not know that they had to get money to pay staff at GRDB. Did they not know that wages and salaries were necessary? Sir, I want to ask the Hon. Minister how many staff resigned since 2023 from that agency?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, again, I am trying to get the Hon. Member to understand the situation. For example, a number of activities have commenced after the presentation of the budget. That is why we had to take money from the budget to pay in those areas. Now, we have to restore those statutory amounts that were budgeted for wages and salaries and other things in the budget.

Mr. Jordan: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I did ask about the staff who resigned from 2023 to now.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I could lay that information over to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, again, like my colleague the Hon. Mr. Patterson, I had asked a number of questions during the consideration of the Estimates. To date, I have not yet received any answers that were promised to be laid over

by the Minister of Agriculture. So I want to put that on record, that I have not received them. I do not know if any other Members received them, but I have not yet received them.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I want to say that I laid over all the information I promised to lay over during the consideration of the Estimates. The Hon. Member should have gone to the Clerk, find out where are these things, and collect them.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a simple question. What was the unforeseen circumstance here that required what is called this contingency for \$548 million, or whatever it is?

Mr. Mustapha: First of all, I mentioned one aspect already. Probably, Mr. Ramjattan did not listen to that part. I talked about the new threat in the system. Remember, for one year we had an El Niño condition. We had to do a lot of other mechanisation to get the crop. Although we passed through an El Niño condition from last year up to April of this year, we were able to produce 653,000 tonnes of rice. That is why the management of the system... We had that situation that occurred during that time, but we were still able to increase production from 610,000 tonnes, in the previous year, to 653,000 tonnes last year, notwithstanding we had serious problems with water around the country – irrigation. We had to put a lot of mechanisms in place so that farmers had irrigation to irrigate their fields.

Mr. Ramjattan: Do I take it that you did not foresee since last year that El Niño might be a problem, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Mustapha: I do not know if the Hon. Member is a prophet to foresee that El Niño will come next year.

Mr. Ramjattan: It was there last year. It was existing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson.

Mr. Ramjattan: Please, it was an existing problem.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, you are busy conducting a cross-the-floor conversation. You did not rise. I recognised the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramjattan: I am sorry, Sir.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. If I can take the Hon. Member back a bit based on the response he gave to my colleague, Mr. Jordan, with regard to the paddy bug. You said that we came in April. In April we

discussed something, but I do not know what we discussed in April. Mr. Chairman, if you look at this Financial Paper that we are considering, it is for the period April, 2024 to 31st July, 2024. The Hon. Member, perhaps, can assist me so I can go to the *Hansard*. Let me know which day in the month of April we came to the National Assembly and discussed paddy bug issues, as you have just highlighted here. Thank you very much.

Mr. Mustapha: This fund was already used after April, after the Budget had been passed. Mr. Chairman, we had a number of issues that we had to deal with. We had to take money from the statutory budget to use it. The paddy bugs were one issue. We had a number of other issues to deal with such as irrigation – to put systems in place to move and get canals clean in certain areas. These are the issues that we have to deal with to get it done. Do you want us to *leff* the rice farmers on their own as the APNU/AFC did and close down the rice industry? That is the point – you want us to leave them like that. Do you know something, Mr. Chairman? They had all the high production. They closed down the sugar industry. They were on the verge of closing the rice industry and we resuscitate it back. Now they are coming here because we gave the rice farmers and millers and caused the consumers to receive a stable price for rice... They are now rowing with the Government, and fighting with the Government, that we should not do that. We should leave the rice farmers on their own because they say rice is a private business. That was their plan.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I asked a simple question based on what the Minister said in this Committee not so long ago. You said we came to the National Assembly and discussed paddy bug issues. [**Hon. Members:** (*Inaudible*)] That is what you said, Sir. That is what you said. I am asking you... Do not tell me about the Guyana Sugar Corporation and [*inaudible*].

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chair, on a Point of Order, I never made that statement.

Ms. Chairman: Hon. Members, I was just about to ask the Hon. Member on the floor to direct her questions to the Chairman. The Chairman will redirect to the Minister. If you want to cross-talk, I will ask you to keep that for the break.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the response given by the Hon. Member to my question is unsatisfactory. I asked a simple question.

Mr. Chairman: He gave an answer. Whether it is unsatisfactory to you or not, that is the answer to the

question. If you have something else, I will allow you to put it.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Member inform this National Assembly on which day and date in the month of April we came to the National Assembly to discuss paddy bug issues so we could have gone into the Contingency Fund to extract some five hundred and something million dollars?

Mr. Chairman: All right, you asked the question again. I do not want to cite the Standing Order with respect to repetition, but he did answer that before. I will give him a chance to respond again.

Ms. Ferguson: All right, Mr. Chairman. Before I take my seat, I would just like to say this is poor planning, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: No. The Minister is on the floor, not you. Hon. Minister.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make this statement. These funds here are being spent for unforeseen expenses. That is the simplicity of the Contingency Fund. Probably, the Hon. Member does not understand how a budget works.

Ms. Ferguson: You do not understand how a budget works.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, they are sitting over there making all kinds of allegations. A man like Mr. Ramjattan, who grew up in a rice area, does not know anything and coming here and blowing hot and cold. Go and tell the people in No. 47 Village that you are fighting us now that we give them [*inaudible*]. Go and tell the people that.

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: Mr. Chairman, on a Point of Order, what is this?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Jones, I know this is the last day before we go into our recess but there are still rules that apply to the end of the business for today. It is very disrespectful for the Opposition Chief Whip to sit, put on the microphone and ask “what is this?”. Come on, please. Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, you had risen just before I gave the floor to the Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson. Do you still want to go ahead? No? Hon. Member Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Ramjattan: In relation to GuySuCo, I will come now, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Ramjattan: You can start.

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

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I just want to encourage my Hon. colleague to just relax.

Mr. Chairman: Do not encourage; ask the additional question.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Hon. Minister if he can say to this Committee what was the total collection of revenues for seed paddy to the commission from January to June.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I can lay that information over to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Jordan: It seems as though he might have to lay over the other two. I want to ask the questions in one so he could lay them over. So, this is the total collection revenue for export by the commission for January to June. So, he might very well have to lay that over too. Could the Hon. Minister state the financial position of the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) at this time?

11.36 a.m.

Mr. Mustapha: All those information, I can lay them over to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Jordan: The last question is, what is the financial position of the Guyana Rice Development Board? It is not necessary to be laid over, it could in one word.

Mr. Mustapha: If the Hon. Member wants that, I can say. It is going back to stability, presently and we are working to get back to where we were before.

Mr. Jordan: I think this will be my last question on this item. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the current rice/paddy production that we are experiencing is sufficient for both the local and export market? Let him answer that first.

Mr. Mustapha: Yes. I met yesterday with the Guyana Rice Exporters and Millers Association (GREMA) and they assured me that there is enough rice in the system for export and local consumption. For the first crop, we have produced 362,040. I am very optimistic that we will produce the 710,000 tonnes that the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance and the Public Service would have set for us this year.

Mr. Jordan: Alright. The, if yes, would have been why is that we have a continuous rise in prices for both brown and white rice in the local market?

Mr. Mustapha: That is why I met with the millers yesterday. They assured me that the price remains the same. That is not a supply problem. We have enough supply problems. We are living in a market economy, and we cannot put a control price at the supermarket. However, I asked the millers to put a recommended price, which they will do. That is the point, that we do not have a shortage of rice, locally or for export.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, did you want to move to the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo)? He is exhausted. Come on, if we cannot decide then I will put the question.

Mr. Ramjattan: What was so unforeseen that you now come for a contingency of \$4 billion that you could not see in February that happened in April?

Mr. Mustapha: As again, last year up to this year April, we suffered a serious problem with *El Niño*. As a result of that, we also had a short fall of production for the first crop. We had to do a lot of mechanisations, replanting and operations in the field to get proper irrigation. That is why those were unforeseen activities we did not plan for and the reason we had to implement them.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just want to get a break down as to how much went into irrigation, how much went into blocking *El Niño* from coming to Guyana. Just disaggregate it.

Mr. Mustapha: I have the disaggregation here: irrigation was \$397 million for fuel; other aspects of the Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) system was \$81 million; the different issues with excavators and tractors came up to another \$45 million; and then there were the other aspects for materials and other things in the estate. I have the disaggregation here which I can lay over to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramjattan: Does that come up to the \$4 billion?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes.

Mr. Jordan: I hear the Hon. Minister keeps repeating about this *El Niño*, in rice and now in GuySuCo and how it actually affected the growth and production of cane and sugar. I am reading from the *Hansard* here where back in February the Hon. Minister said:

“For this first crop, we have about 2,500 hectares of cane at the Rose Hall Estate. When we went to the Rose Hall Estate, there were many abandoned fields, there were forested areas, and we had to clear that. Whilst we are doing that, which is a work in progress, we are mechanising, we are changing the

Dutch beds to make broader beds so that we can have these machines cut the cane in some areas and also load – the cane loader. Those hectares will increase over the next few months. We have until March to have canes that could be planted so that we can reap and get sugar this year.”

Could the Hon. Minister say to this House whether the 2,500 hectares of cane that he mentioned earlier in the year was reaped in totality and whether it was sufficient for the period of grinding at the Rose Hall Estate?

Mr. Mustapha: First of all, when sugarcane is planted, it takes 12 months before it can be reaped. So, if cane was planted earlier this year or late last year we will reap in the second crop of the year, at the end. This new crop starting now, by November-December, we will reap those cane. However, I want to highlight a very important issue that the Hon. Member raised just now, that I was lamenting about the *El Niño*. This year the International Sugar Organisation reported the projected 2024-2025 Global sugar deficit to be \$4.360 million metric tonnes of sugar, which is 47% or 1.4 million metric tonnes that will drop during that period because of the *El Niño* condition. India, one of the largest producers of sugar, production dropped during that time by 1.6 million metric tonnes of sugar.

We are a small producer, and we are getting these serious problems. We had the stunted growth of canes and that is why the sucrose was not there. You had to get about 15 tonnes of cane to produce one tonne of sugar during that period because of the stunted growth. We have worked with that. Now, almost 45% of the industry's cultivation have been mechanised where we have now built the broad beds. We have started the recultivation of cane back at Skeldon where we will do 5,000 hectares of cane. We are now continuing to plant at the Rose Hall and Albion Estates. Also, last crop, we had a serious fire at the Albion Estate. The Albion Estate did not grind the last crop and the canes there had to be taken to the Rose Hall Estate to be crushed for sugar. Due to the stunted growth, we had to use water pumps to continue watering the cane. We had to contract small contractors to use their pumps to water canes in the field. All those systems we put in place to ensure that we had a crop.

Mr. Ramjattan: I got a promise that the disaggregation will be laid over but if it is there, could we get from the Minister whether part of this \$4.042 billion will be going towards paying the salaries sugar workers?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I can go through...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just asked that.

Mr. Mustapha: Do you want to ask the question and answer it? Please, I want to go through it. You wanted it. The condition that existed, we did not make the sugar. The shortfall of revenue caused us to use money to pay wages and salaries. Wages and salaries were 76% of the \$4 billion; pension was 7%; fuel, as I said, was 10%; contractors' payment was 5%; and material cost was 3%. So, we could have left the sugar workers on their own as they did. Mr. Ramjattan went to the Rose Hall Estate when the sugar workers were protesting and said that they had to get severance pay. They dismissed the sugar workers; they refused the sugar workers severance pay, and he went to cry about the sugar workers when they were protesting for political gains. You, Mr. Ramjattan...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please, respect to the Hon. Members. Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, you have the floor.

Mr. Ramjattan: What percentage was it again? Was it 72% or 78%? How much?

Mr. Mustapha: [Inaudible]

Mr. Ramjattan: It was 76%. That is good.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any portion of this \$4 billion caters for the team of engineers that came from Cuba and how much is it?

Mr. Mustapha: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: The Hon. Member, in response to the Hon. Member Khemraj's question with regards to the percentage paid in salaries, stated 76%. Could you say what categories of workers benefitted from that 76% payment?

Mr. Mustapha: When you budget money for wages and salaries that includes all categories of workers in a corporation, management, low down workers, labourers, all workers. Over 8000 workers are working back in GuySuCo. You all dismissed 7,000. We brought over 4,000 back in the industry.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up: 76%, could you provide a disaggregation? Whether 2% went to labourers or whether 3% went to management. That kind of figure I am looking for. As I am on my feet, I believe the time has come for us to

mature as the national leaders. When we come here, we come to do...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I got the question. Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

Mr. Mustapha: I will lay that information over about how much each category of worker received.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could there be a guarantee that there will not be a shortage of sugar later down in the year after spending all this money?

Mr. Mustapha: There is no shortage of sugar and there will be no shortage at the end of the year.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I just want to let you know that there is a shortage.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member this question time not information for the Chairman.

Ms. Ferguson: Yes, I am heading for the question.

Mr. Chairman: I did not ask you a question about whether there was going to be a shortage. If you are going to continue, and I usually give you a lot of latitude, I will have to start using the guillotine.

Ms. Ferguson: No, Sir. Thank you very much, Sir. Could the Hon. Member lay over the information that he just provided to the National Assembly within two weeks? Could we get it in two weeks, Sir. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you can lay it over by the end of today, but we are going into recess from tomorrow. Nothing is going to be circulated until 10th October.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the total cost for production of a pound of sugar across the sugar belt?

Mr. Mustapha: I have to get that information from Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and lay it over.

Mr. Jordan: I would like to know, for the sake of Guyanese, what is the selling price for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), North America and Europe?

Mr. Mustapha: The average selling price per tonne is US\$750.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, you have the floor.

11.51 a.m.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, we are looking at operational costs and the Minister mentioned retooling and a whole lot of things during his feature earlier. Is there any provision in this \$4 billion for the reopening of the other closed estates that was promised in the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Manifesto? We are now four years in, and we have just a few more months. Are there any moneys budgeted here?

Mr. Mustapha: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could I know as the Hon. Minister, what is the estimated time for the reopening of the other two estates?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, those are works in progress. I want to make this statement. If I was a Member of the Opposition, I would be ashamed to come and ask a question like that when they closed down the estates and are now coming here and trying to reopen them. We reopened the Rose Hall Estate and employed 2,000 persons there. We are now going back to the Skeldon Estate to replant the cultivation with 5,000 hectares. We said that we would provide jobs for those workers who they dismissed, and we are doing that. We have already employed 4,000 of those workers that were dismissed by the A Partnership for National Unity and Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC). We will continue to make job opportunities available to those people because we recognise the problems that were created when they closed the sugar industry, and we see the social problems it caused. So, it is a work in progress, and it will be done in phases.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, permit me to lead on to the question. It took almost three years to reopen one of those estates and the Hon. Minister and his team spent \$9 billion just to rehabilitate the Rose Hall Estate. Could the Hon. Minister say how much revenue was garnered since the reopening of that estate and the total amount of sugar produced since the Rose Hall Estate was reopened?

Mr. Mustapha: First of all, the state – when we went there, what we reached were trees growing in the factory and coming through the roof. The entire cultivation... [An

Hon. Member (Opposition): [*Inaudible.*] No, no, no. I am just saying. The entire cultivation was in forests. The entire field operation and equipment were in disarray. We had to put new things in place. We had to expend \$11 billion to reopen the Rose Hall Estate. Almost the entire estate had to be rehabilitated because of what they did. They just left it to rot and we have to rehabilitate it. As I said, if you look at the disaggregation that I will give to the Hon. Member, I will

show him that we have already started to do replanting at the other estate. Since the reopening of the Rose Hall Estate, we have produced over 2,000 tonnes of sugar already from that estate. I informed this honourable House just now that that estate was able to crush the last crop of cane at the Albion Estate because the Albion Estate had a serious mechanical problem – the entire powerhouse. So, the point is to reopen those estates, we are continuing to work by ensuring we engage those people that were fired. We are continuing to work to rehabilitate those cultivations and estates.

Mr. Jordan: The question still stands. How much revenues have you made from the 2,000 tonnes of sugar? I did not get...Sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please ask the question to me. I will direct it to the Minister. Do not cross talk because that means you have now...

Mr. Jordan: We would still like to know how much was made from that estate. The Minister said 2,000 tonnes so we want to know how much was made.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you have a monetary value or a market value?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I just said that we are selling sugar for US\$750 per tonne. The Hon. Member can do the math by multiplying 2,000 tonnes by US\$750 and get the facts.

Mr. Jordan: Then it is only fair that I ask the Hon. Minister, what is the production cost for the 2,000 tonnes of sugar?

Mr. Mustapha: As I said that question was answered. I will lay over the cost but the cost for production will be high because it is now starting. We just started back for the last two years.

Mr. Jordan: The Hon. Minister said earlier that the Rose Hall Estate was grinding canes from the Albion Estate. The *Hansard* also would remind us that the Hon. Minister said that the Rose Hall Estate's grinding period was from February to May. If we check the amount of time or the duration of the grinding at the Rose Hall Estate, it was given by an answer from the Minister that the crop started on 24th February and ended on the 3rd April. Could the Hon. Minister then say where the canes from the Albion Estate went if the duration for the Rose Hall Estate was already in May and they failed to reach that period, and they also took from the Albion Estate?

Mr. Mustapha: The amount of grinding period for the Rose Hall Estate was because we used one period when we

recalculated the entire system at the Albion Estate, so the cane was incorporated into the Rose Hall Estate to grind together. The grinding time we had was almost the same time we planned to grind the cane there.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to understand. The Hon. Minister said that with the Rose Hall Estate alone having 2,500 hectares to reap, they would grind from February to May. Now they are grinding cane at both the Rose Hall Estate and the Albion Estate, and they would only grind from February to 3rd April. Where did the cane go? I am trying to...

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, if I may?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Mustapha: Let me explain this thing for the Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan. I said that we fell short at the last crop because of the *El Niño* condition. There was already a projection for the Rose Hall Estate to grind for a certain period and because of the shortfall of cane from this Estate, cane from the Albion Estate came in and was grinded for that period. It is simple to understand. So, if you had six weeks of grinding for the Rose Hall Estate and with the condition that existed, we had a shortfall at the Rose Hall Estate. For that period, the cane at the Albion Estate came in and for the period that we projected to grind, the cane at the Albion Estate was grinded during that period. The two canes were combined and grinded during that period. It is simple.

Mr. Jordan: I would just want to make a note here. If the Hon. Minister would notice, I am trying to say to him that he said they would grind from February to May and they did grind from February to the 3rd April with the cane from both estates. I want to know where the shortfall came from.

Mr. Chairman: The answer would be similar.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, again...

Mr. Chairman: I fully understand you Minister, but you can try again.

Mr. Mustapha: Let me explain this thing to this Hon. Member. We fell short 108,000 tonnes of gain because of *El Niño*. So, for that period, if the Rose Hall Estate was projected to grind for six weeks, the cane for that Estate grinded for three weeks and for the other three weeks they grinded the cane at the Albion Estate. So, that entire period of grinding took place at the Rose Hall Estate. That is simple calculation.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you for the third time. Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, you have the floor.

Mr. Jordan: We will work with that. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the defects at the Albion Estate, as a result of the fire that he made mention of, were remedied completely and how much was spent to complete those rehabilitative works?

Mr. Mustapha: Only two days ago the Albion Estate burnt cane to start the crop, and that factory will commence grinding. We spent approximately \$600 million to rehabilitate the entire powerhouse because of the fire.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, a preliminary report into the fire revealed that several major electrical infrastructures were destroyed. Those included: four-megawatt generating control panels, 2.5-megawatt generating control panels, a 700-kilowatt low-voltage cap set control panel, a 3.3-kV interbus transformer, an interbus transformer braker, a section of the low-voltage bus bar, and several major sections of the circuitry. It was touted that some \$50 million was sufficient for these repairs. Could the Hon. Minister say whether it was the same set of damages that we are talking about that caused us to spend \$600 million? [Mr.

Hamilton: Touted where?] The Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) provided that report. That is the tout here. [Mr. Hamilton: Read it.] I was just reading from the report.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Mustapha: I do not know where the Hon. Member got that touting report from, but I am saying that I can provide all of those components that he mentioned were destroyed and all of the other components that were destroyed. I can provide it, itemise it, and give him the cost that I called just now so that he could see the amount it cost us to repair that powerhouse.

Mr. Jordan: I would be grateful for that to be laid over, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan, you have the floor.

Mr. Duncan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have been trying to get your attention for a little bit. I want to recommit to a question that Mr. Jordan so ably answered as we were scrutinising the budget on the issue of production costs. Several times, I have noted that when these questions come up, the answers are being laid over. [Mr.

Hamilton: Ask a question.] If you hold on, I am going

to ask the question. [Mr. Hamilton: Ask the question man, do not give (*inaudible*).] For an industry... I am trying to give you some context to the question.

Mr. Chairman: Are you trying to give me the context?

Mr. Duncan: No. I am trying to give the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Well, talk to me.

Mr. Duncan: Mr. Chairman, for an industry that is being touted to be on the rebound and all these glorious things, I note that we had one Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who did so well at GuySuCo. We have now promoted him to an Ambassador and the new CEO is absent this morning. Perhaps, he has already been promoted as well already but he is not in the correct place. He should be answering some of these questions. With that being said, Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan...

Mr. Duncan: ...the question that I have...

Mr. Chairman: ...you spent more than half of the time on your feet at this interjection, talking about other things other than to me and asking the question. Who are you to say that the CEO of GuySuCo should be here? Who are you to say that?

Mr. Duncan: I am representing the people of Guyana. That is who I am to say that.

Mr. Chairman: No.

Mr. Duncan: I am representing the people of Guyana, and we are scruti...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan, I will give you an opportunity to ask the question and if you are going to disrespect the Chair by speaking when the Chair is speaking, you might want to take an early recess. Go ahead.

Mr. Duncan: Could I answer the question you asked then of me which is who am I? I am elected.

Mr. Chairman: You have a question to ask of the Minister, ask it.

Mr. Duncan: With that being said, the question I have is, why is the Minister of Agriculture, who is here for more appropriations for his Ministry, so ill-equipped about questions of production costs at GuySuCo this morning?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, are you ill-equipped?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I answered that already. This thing keeps reoccurring. The Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan asked that question and I said I would lay over that information. For the Member's information, I am the Minister responsible for GuySuCo and I choose who I want to sit by my side to help me answer the question and I answer it myself. He cannot come and tell me who I should bring. The CEO is here. Mr. Paul Chung who is the CEO, I have a lot of respect for him, and I have a lot of confidence in him that he will move this industry forward.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We want to acknowledge that sitting in the House has been the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GuySuCo. Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

12.06 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. If I can take us back to the line item - GuySuCo. Earlier, the Hon. Minister stated that 76% went to salaries, labourers and also management. This Paper that we are considering is from April to July, 2024. My question to the Hon. Member is whether the former CEO of GuySuCo benefitted from this allocation? If yes, perhaps, you can provide us with the figure of the payments made from ...

Mr. Chairman: You are now talking to the Minister and testing my patience. Please talk to me.

Ms. Ferguson: Sorry, Sir. My follow-up question is, we are aware that the Corporation has a new CEO. Based on my research, he may have taken up the position sometime between May and June. Again, this Paper is from April to July. Could the Hon. Member say, from the 76% that went to salary, what amount was paid to the current CEO and also to the former CEO from this allocation?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, all the moneys here in the Contingencies Fund were paid to those persons who were employed in the Corporation at that time. If the CEO was employed in June and his salary was paid from this fund, he would have enjoyed it. The former CEO who resigned in May, would have received salary from this.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman. could the Hon. Member say to the House what is the total salary that was paid to the current CEO?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, your guidance, I do not think it is appropriate to identify a person's... I could lay it over to the Hon. Member. I do not want...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Please lay it over. Hon. Member ...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Again, we are considering taxpayers' money and by right, we should know the amount of money being paid to the CEO.

Mr. Chairman: You will know. He will lay it over. Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say to us what is the annual wage bill for GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: Approximately \$12 billion, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jordan: From the audited reports and a recent interview with the CEO of GuySuCo, we learnt that for 2021, GuySuCo lost \$7.8 billion and in 2022, \$10.2 billion. Could the Hon. Minister say how soon could we see GuySuCo returning to some amount of self-sustainability and eventually, profitability.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, we are working to get there. Let me tell you something, in 2017, the Coalition Government lost \$34 billion in the sugar industry. We are coming down to \$10 billion and we will get there very shortly. Let me give you – in 2015, they took over for half a year and they lost \$2.6 billion. In 2017, they lost \$34 billion and in 2020 another \$6 billion and we are bringing it down. We are bringing down the cost and the loss and we will get there to break even with what we are doing now.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, when we can put over \$40 billion into GuySuCo in just four years and still lose almost \$20 billion, could the Hon. Minister say what is it that he is bringing down with GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, we lost \$11 billion at the Rose Hall Estate that the APNU/AFC closed down. We had to spend \$11 billion to reopen the Rose Hall Estate. Who caused us that? The APNU/AFC closed down the estate and left it to rot. We immediately lost \$11 billion there. At Enmore, we still have the shutter estate. We have workers there. We have almost 500 workers who are doing drainage and irrigation works. We have to continue to give them wages and salaries. When the Hon. Member is talking about losses, these are the areas. They caused the taxpayers of this country to lose money because they neglected the sugar industry, and they closed it down. Our commitment to reopen it and reemploy people, we are doing that. And because we are doing that, we are spending the fund in the interest of the people of our country.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, my final question on this line item. Could the Hon. Minister say whether any investigation was done with regards to the fire at the Albion Sugar Estate? In the answer, could he list what was the cause of the fire, what actions were taken, if anyone was held or if it was out of negligence? He did mention the total repairs. So those questions...

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, an investigation was done. The cause of the fire was electrical in origin and that is why we had serious damages with those components that the Hon. Member mentioned.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister. Hon. Member, is this your final, final, final?

Mr. Jordan: Yes. There is a second part. I wanted to know if it was as a result of negligence. We know birds do hit electrical wires and we know rats run into panels. Was it as a result of overheating, negligence? What was it? [Mr.

Hamilton: Too much electricity.] Overload?

Mr. Mustapha: It was electrical in origin. I am not an electrician. I can ask the technical person to tell me what caused it. They said there was some feedback power into the system that caused overheating, which caused the fire.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, I now put the question.

Item 2: 212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - \$4,566,812,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Hon. Members, this completes the consideration of the items.

Question

“That the Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2024 on the Current Estimates – Advances made from the Contingency Fund totalling \$8,566,812,000 for the period ended 1st April, 2024 to 30th July, 2024”.

Put and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Minister and your staff for taking us through that line item. Hon. Members, this is an appropriate to take a one-hour recess. We will be back here at 1.15 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.16 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.42 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, you have the floor.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2024, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said resolution.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: This completes our consideration of Financial Paper No. 1.

Consideration of Financial Paper No. 2/2024 – Current and Capital Estimates

BE IT RESOLVED

That the National Assembly approves the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 2/2024 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling thirty-two billion, one hundred and eighty-two million, six hundred and four thousand and twenty-one dollars (\$32,182,604,021) for the period ending 31st December, 2024.

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]

Mr. Speaker: Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, you have the floor.

Dr. Singh: In accordance with Article 171(2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2024, Supplementary Estimates Current and Capital totalling \$32,182,604,021 for the period ending 31st December, 2024. I now move the said motion.

Motion proposed.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: We now ask the Hon. Prime Minister and his staff to join us to take us through the first item standing in his name.

Current Estimates

Item 1: 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – Maintenance of Buildings – \$22,500,000, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$7,500,000, Equipment Maintenance - \$30,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have some simple questions on this. Could the Hon. Prime Minister ... I see the *Legend* could provide us with some further information under that agency code.

Mr. Chairman: Some expanded information here, Hon. Prime Minister.

1.47 p.m.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, in an effort to help the Hon. Member understand why we are requesting this money under line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings, the project overview – fostering sustainable development in the Hinterland, Poor and Remote Communities (HPRCs) is one of the core priority outcomes of Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

[**An. Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] The Hon. Member asked for some clarification, and I am just being helpful. A key component in achieving such an outcome is the provision of public service, training, retooling and the use of Information Technology (IT) as an enabler for educational, social and economic advancement in those areas.

The Government of Guyana (GoG), working closely with the United National Development Programme (UNDP), began the process of the establishment of physical access to Information Communication Technology (ICT) within the HPRCs. Many areas have seen these services for the first time. Accessibility remains a key component to achieving the full potential of this project. Training and access to internet connectivity remain a major aspect of the project. It is envisioned that, at the end of the project, beneficiaries within the HPRCs will be equipped, from the most remote locations, to access online schooling, telemedicine, government services and an improvement in communication. The project is also geared to utilise ICT as an enabler and to use the medium for economic promotion within the communities. Technical and tertiary training of residents of the HPRCs will also play an important part in the effort of sustainability and viability. This one is line item 6242. If you use the other line item, line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure...

Mr. Chairman: [*Inaudible*] there as yet, Prime Minister (PM).

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Okay. Sorry. It is the line item with buildings.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, in all fairness to the PM, I put all three line items together.

Mr. Chairman: I was unfair because I should have said we are at the first one and then take the second one.

Mr. Patterson: Okay, then, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: PM, go ahead with line item 6255.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure and I should add that line item 6282, Equipment Maintenance, like batteries, *et cetera*, that need to be replaced and any other component as part of this project. There is line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings – the physical structure that is housing the equipment. Of course, on the roof, you will have the solar panel, and inside you will have 20 laptops, *et cetera*.

There is Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – security in terms of fencing, weeding and if you have to construct a bridge to the location. There is line item 6282, Equipment Maintenance. I did mention batteries, *et cetera*, and components. I hope that satisfies the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, PM. Now that we have exhausted the questions on...

Ms. Ferguson: Not as yet, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I just want to get an understanding of what the Prime Minister just provided on line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. Going further up, there is line item 6242. Is line item 6242 linked to line item 6255?

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Having served as a Minister, I know the Hon. Member should be familiar with these terms. ‘Maintenance of Buildings’ is separate from ‘Maintenance of Infrastructure’. A fence and a bridge to a building fall under infrastructure.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I would not continue with any arguments where the Hon. Prime Minister is concerned. In January, 2024, we approved a sum of \$9.5 million for Maintenance of Buildings, and this was your explanation given when my colleague, the Hon. Volda Lawrence, asked you the question. This was your response:

“This entails to ensure the effective maintenance of all infrastructural facilities on the Civil Defence Commission locations. These works will be undertaken: reinforce two large gates at the Lethem’s Warehouse – \$1,080,000; enhance the security of the compound at Lethem by installing 20 solar lights around the perimeter – \$3 million; and the routine electrical maintenance of all facilities, the remaining \$1.5 million will be utilised for that.”

The Hon. Prime Minister, in responding to the Hon. Patterson’s question, had to deal with ICT hubs. In his response to line item 6255, he did not say that this sum that is now being asked for is a continuation of the works at Lethem on the warehouse and all manner of things. Could you say to the honourable Committee what the sums that you are now requesting will be utilised for?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, you did not say.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: The Hon. Member is right. I did not say and it is for a reason. There are five programmes under the Prime Minister’s Office. Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is programme one. We are discussing programme one. You are raising an issue to support your argument from programme two, Civil Defence Commission (CDC). That is totally unrelated. I did not come here to ask for any money for programme two. I asked for programme one, Office of the Prime Minister. It is a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Project. We are building 200 ICT hubs throughout the country, and we are asking for some counterpart funding to do some repairs to existing ICT hubs. This is under Programme 021 and not Programme 022.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I stand corrected. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will put all three since we have exhausted the questions.

Item 1: 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – Maintenance of Buildings – \$22,500,000, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$7,500,000, Equipment Maintenance - \$30,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$13,089,996,848

Mr. Patterson: Should I proceed or are you allowing the staff to get there?

Mr. Chairman: You are very kind to the staff and the PM. So, let us wait for a few minutes to get the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL) and the other related staff of power generation to be in place. Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, you may proceed.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first part: \$12 billion is for GPL under the line item – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Of course, the very first question is: what is the disaggregation of that sum?

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, just as I explained this morning, the sum is for fuel. That is petroleum, oils and lubricants. Again, 1,641,000 barrels...and recall that we would have projected buying at \$70 per barrel, but today, we are paying \$104 per barrel. Just like in the previous paper, we are asking for \$34 per barrel in order to satisfy the fuel requirements for GPL. Let me repeat before you do your calculation like this morning. It is 1,641,000 barrels by US\$34. This morning, you did a straight \$200 to one. I think the exchange rate is \$215, as I speak.

Mr. Patterson: Are you saying to this National Assembly that the Bank of Guyana’s (BoG) official exchange rate is \$208.18 but GPL is purchasing at \$215? Prime Minister, are you confirming that?

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am stating a fact of a transaction done by GPL. I am advised that is the rate they are using. I think it is beyond my pay bracket to enter any debate as to the Bank of Guyana and its operations.

Mr. Patterson: I am quite glad for that admission, Sir. I used \$208. I used the official bank rate, and I am sure the members of the private sector would be very glad to hear that the Government is using \$215.

Mr. Chairman: We have to be careful when we say rate. Is it the buying rate or the selling rate?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the selling rate is \$208, according to the Bank of Guyana. I know you should know that, Sir. [Mr. Hamilton: That has nothing to do with when you are purchasing overseas. [Inaudible] Okay then. Sir, once again, could I ask the Hon. Prime Minister what quantity of these 1,641,000 barrels will be going towards the Columbia sets specifically, and the fuel sets?

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Based on the figures I have here, Mr. Chairman, 610,539 imperial gallons per month at Columbia. That is applied per month at Columbia.

Mr. Patterson: What about the site for the fuel ship in Berbice?

2.02 p.m.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: For the power ship, it is 1,125,223 imperial gallons.

Mr. Patterson: Is that per month? Great. With regard to the power ship, GPL had advertised for a vessel to transport these 1,125,223 imperial gallons per month. Can the Hon. Prime Minister tell us the name of the company that won that contract and how much you pay to transport the fuel to the power ship?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, we have two companies that are transporting the fuel; Horizon Maritime and Island Trader Shipping Company are the names of the two companies, and each company is being paid \$30 per gallon to transport the fuel.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, PM. Hon. Minister.... Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: It is foresight, Sir. You are seeing things to come. Sir, thank you very much. With regards to the procurement of fuel, can the Hon. Prime Minister state the companies that are procuring the fuel and the barge filling transportation company, how much are they being paid?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, if I heard the Hon. Member clearly, he is asking the names of the companies that were procured...

Mr. Paterson: That will be, sir. This is supplementary.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: That will be procured. We have a tender that is under evaluation but if you want to know the names of the companies that, at present, are supplying fuel, they are Staatsolie and Nova. The fact that we have a tender under evaluation, that is subject to change. It could happen.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Could the PM say...Let me just quote you correctly. For the 610,539 gallons per month for the sets in Columbia, can the PM inform us how many sets are operational as well as what is the total output of these sets at Columbia?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, we have 17 gen sets at Columbia. Sixteen are working right now and generating electricity; 1 is under maintenance, and we have a total of 20 megawatts, as I speak, being generated at Columbia.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, in August, 2023, the Government announced that it was procuring 17 containerised gen sets, and when all 17 are working of 1.54, I think we are supposed to be getting 28 megawatts of power. The Hon. Prime Minister is now saying that we have 16 working and we are still eight megawatts short of power. Is it that the sets are not functioning optimally?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, we are getting about 85% power from each set, and that is why I gave the figure of 20 megawatts as against what you are mentioning.

Mr. Patterson: The gen sets that were supposed to be giving us 28, are only...we have a shortfall of eight megawatts.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The issue here, Mr. Chairman, is that we are running the sets on diesel and that is why we are getting just about 85%. We are running it on diesel as against heavy fuel oil (HFO) and that is why we are getting 85% per set. That is the only reason. When we decide and convert to run it on HFO, it will go up to the 28. That is the expectation.

Mr. Patterson: You can explain that to your colleagues over there who are talking about...Thank you very much. Sir, can I now ask on the power ship? What is the capacity that we are getting currently and what is anticipated out of this 1,125,233?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I would like to report to the Committee that we are paying for 36 megawatts, and we are getting 36 megawatts.

Mr. Patterson: Can you also inform, sir, for the sets at the Garden of Eden, which should be on HFO, can you confirm that they are now operating on HFO and what is the production capacity that you are getting there? When we are finished, we will go to Kingston.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Again, Mr. Chairman, Garden of Eden was designed to produce 46.5 and we are getting 46.5.

Mr. Patterson: We know for what it was designed. We bought them. Sir, we will go to the sets at Kingston. Sir, can you tell us how much fuel you have catered for and what is the capacity we are getting out of the systems at Kingston?

Minister within the Ministry of Public Works [Mr. Indar]: Mr. Chairman, may I add to the Prime Minister's comments?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you answering for the PM?

Mr. Indar: I am adding to the Prime Minister's comments.

Mr. Chairman: He has not answered as yet.

[*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

I do not want to have to ring the bell in the well. Hon. Member, do you have another question?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, we will come back to that.

Mr. Chairman: PM is getting that answer.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir, but the question is directed to the PM if he is there with his calculator.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Prime Minister is about to answer. Go ahead, Hon. Prime Minister.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me apologise for taking a while in the interest of accuracy. In terms of fuel, 292,358 imperial gallons and that is a DP 2, and then you have 535,184 imperial gallons at DP 3. In terms of generation, for DP 2 – 22 megawatts and DP 3 – 29.4 megawatts, and that gives us a total of 51.4 megawatts.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, PM. For the sake of clarity and for the education of everyone, what are the installed capacities of DP 2 and DP 3? It is how much you are supposed to be getting, not how much you are producing.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: They are the same. Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the installed capacities are what were given there – DP 2 – 22 megawatts and DP 3 – 29.4 megawatts.

Mr. Patterson: Are the PM and GPL saying that there is no maintenance going on at...so how can you have the...

2.17 p.m.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that we have 2 gen sets, 1 in DP 2 and 1 in DP 3, under maintenance. What we have given you is the installed capacity, but we have one gen set in each area, DP2 and DP3, under maintenance.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, maybe I put the question incorrectly. Sir, I know the installed capacity, which is the maximum. I asked the PM: what are they producing now? He said to me, 22 and 29, which are the installed capacities, and he gave the impression, from his statement, that we are producing at maximum capacity. That is why I asked him to clarify, Sir,

what is the installed capacity and what he is producing right now. I hope that made it clearer to you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I followed all of that, but what I heard you say after that was that the Prime Minister (PM) said there is no maintenance. I listened quite keenly, so that was where...and then you repeated what you said prior.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, because I asked him...because there are sets, and I am coming to the sets under maintenance. There are [*inaudible*] sets.

Mr. Chairman: PM, the question that he followed up was: does it mean that you have no maintenance going on if you are producing at maximum capacity?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: We have the equivalent of 12.4 megawatts capacity, which is under maintenance right now.

[*There was distortion in the audio.*]

Mr. Patterson: (*Inaudible*). Thank you very much, Sir. (*Inaudible*).

Mr. Chairman: You can switch seats. I am promoting you to the front bench. Since a certain person went into the front bench, it started giving you problems.

Mr. Patterson: Imagine when he gets into your seat.

Mr. Chairman: I will be dead by then.

Mr. Patterson: The sets being maintained by Power Producers and Distributors Incorporated (PPDI), can the Hon. Prime Minister say who is undertaking the maintenance?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the sets that are maintained.

Mr. Chairman: It seems as if it is a bug.

Mr. Patterson: (*Inaudible*).

Mr. Chairman: You may have to wear a mask.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The sets that are traditionally maintained by (*inaudible*).

Mr. Chairman: We could not hear, PM.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I am saying that the sets that are traditionally...

Mr. Chairman: PM, maybe you can switch over to the other station.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I repeat that the sets that are traditionally maintained by PPDI continue to be maintained by PPDI. As I speak, PPDI continues to do the maintenance of those sets.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Is the PM confirming that the engineers from Cuba are not undertaking the maintenance for PPDI?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: There is no secret, I can assure the Committee. No maintenance is being done by Cuban engineers. Yes, we had a visit. It was in the papers. There was a lot of talk that we had with them, but no maintenance is currently being done by Cuban engineers.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Sir. *(Inaudible)* Can I ask the Prime Minister *(inaudible)* Can the Prime Minister say *(inaudible)* schedule and how does GPL intend to get the maintenance back on schedule, major overhauls?

[The distortion in the audio was rectified.]

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that we have, as usual, and you are aware of that, a maintenance schedule. Yes, we were a bit behind schedule but having installed the power ship and getting 36 megawatts from the power ship now, it has helped us to fast-track and work towards getting back on schedule for maintenance.

Mr. Patterson: The PM acknowledged, and I do acknowledge that you have a maintenance schedule. I asked how many of the major overhaul schedules were behind for the engines.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I will ask that we submit a detailed report on the number of gen sets under maintenance and the schedule.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, just for clarity, can I just inquire...because I am looking at a legend and I do not see Bartica on this. There is Matthews Ridge and LINMINE. I am just checking to see if from the \$12 billion gross that Bartica is included in this allocation of the \$12 billion for fuel and...

Mr. Chairman: There is a principle. If there is a zero, no questions asked...

Mr. Patterson: There is no zero, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I did not finish. If something is not stated in legend, it is not there.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, in all due... Sir, the Prime Minister...

Mr. Chairman: I will allow PM to answer.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, can I clarify? The Prime Minister said that how they are buying 1,644,000 barrels of fuel at \$34, and he went on to say where and where they are allocated. He told me where and I am now asking about Bartica. How much is allocated for Bartica?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am a bit amazed that Hon. Member, being the one who was responsible for this sector, will ask such a question. Bartica remains under GPL. From the money we were asking for, we are providing fuel for Bartica. Under the listed other utilities here, they fall under Hinterland Electrification Company Incorporated (HECI). So, if I am to understand you and to be helpful in educating you for some clarity, 69,848 imperial gallons a month are being supplied to Bartica.

Mr. Patterson: I just need some clarification from the PM and from GPL. Is the PM saying that the Bartica power plant is no longer managed by GPL and has now been transferred to HECI?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I never said that. Mr. Chairman, please, we need to listen to each other in the House. We need to listen. **[Mr. Duncan: That is what you said.]** I did not say that. The Members on my side of the House will stand with me.

Mr. Chairman: And the Chairman.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: And the Chairman. Bartica remains under GPL, so we are buying fuel for Bartica, and we are maintaining the engines at Bartica. The other utilities are under HECI, and you are aware of that.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. Thank you very much. Can you repeat the number, the volume you said you were procuring for Bartica, please?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, before you answer, there seems to be a pattern. I do not know if it is to keep us here until 12th August, but I have no problem with that. We can always amend the Standing Orders. The questions are coming and are being answered. Expansion and further clarification are being asked for. Do I understand you mean that? The same question is coming in four different forms, and I will start interpreting, shortly, what repetition is.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I wish to repeat for clarification of the Members on the other side of the House that 69,848 imperial gallons are purchased every month for Bartica.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Sir. This will be brief, Sir. For Matthews Ridge, there is \$18.8 million. Can the Prime Minister disaggregate?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, Bartica. [An Hon. Member: Not Bartica.]

Mr. Chairman: Matthews Ridge.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Sorry. Matthews Ridge Power and Light Company Incorporated, \$18,872,000. Six million is to cover some outstanding debts for the utility and \$12,872,000 is for the purchase of fuel.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. LINMINE, \$740.9 million.

Mr. Chairman: What is the question?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I am asking him to disaggregate that.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but you said LINMINE, 740.9 million. So what?

Mr. Patterson: No, I was waiting. The PM was shuffling his papers.

Mr. Chairman: You have to ask the question. Whether or not he is shuffling, if you keep your attention to me, I will be your guide.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Sir. Much better visage. There is \$740.9 million. Can you disaggregate that, please, Sir?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, Linden is a peculiar utility, and the Hon. Member is aware of this. I am surprised that he will ask such a question. Bosai Minerals Group (Guyana) Incorporated, the bauxite mining company in Linden, we have a contract where we pay them. They generate the electricity. So, we pay them according to that contract. We are asking for \$740,970,626 to pay Bosai to generate electricity for the rest of the year. Bear in mind that Linden is a heavily subsidised community in terms of electricity. They pay the lowest electricity for the entire country. I just want to make the point. It is a commitment. [An Hon. Member (Opposition): *(Inaudible)*] Okay, just listen to me. It is a commitment by the Government of Guyana to ensure that electricity is supplied to the people of Linden.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, I know it is a commitment, which you tried taking away many times, to disastrous effects. [An Hon. Member): *(Inaudible)*] You are welcome to try

again. Mabaruma and Lethem, I am combining them, both have solar farms.

2.32 p.m.

Obviously, the whole... The question is – you answered this in *Budget 2024* that, in time, we will see a reduction – why are we coming for this? I assume this is fuel on the assumption that this money is for fuel as before.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, I never answered but I am allowing you to answer.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, for both Lethem and Mabaruma, there are expansions or increases in the number of households who are getting electricity now. Having said that, if we did not have the solar farms in those two communities, it is quite obvious that we would have been asking for more than what is listed here.

Mr. Patterson: Under maintenance, could the Hon. Prime Minister inform this House of any maintenance for our transmission and distribution (T&D) lines are included under any one of the heads for the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) Incorporated here?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the simple answer is no.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, under this very line item, I noted earlier in the year that we approved \$6.1 billion. The Office of the Prime Minister is now returning for \$13 billion more. My question to the Hon. Prime Minister is – what you are now seeking, is it sufficient? Would it take you to the end of the year? Would we be seeing you return to the Assembly when we get out of recess for additional moneys? This is taking into account what the Hon. Member, Mr. Jagdeo, said which is that there is a zero-rated excise tax on fuel, so we do not anticipate an increase in fuel prices. Thank you.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am amused here. I think the Hon. Member is mixing up herself. Let me deal with the issue at hand. This paper is a supplementary provision. It means that we did some planning; we played around with some figures... [Mr. Duncan: You played around with a set of things.] Listen and learn. Listen and learn. Listen and learn. We made a projection and, based on the current factors, we considered when planning for power. [Mr. Duncan: You always *(inaudible)* out.] You are nowhere but *IN THE RING*. We looked at the current and expected fuel price – whether it will increase or decrease. We looked at a number of other factors. I could spend the

rest of the day trying to explain to you. The short answer is, based on our projection, this will suffice for the rest of the year. However, if there is a need – I am not clairvoyant – come December or November, we will come back to this House, but this is the projection for the rest of the year.

Mr. Indar: Mr. Chairman, could I be allowed to add?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister Mr. Indar, yes.

Mr. Indar: Mr. Chairman, I would like to explain to the folks – Ms. Ferguson and the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson – that when we come through the Office of the Prime Minister to ask for money... For example, there is Linden for \$740 million. There were six sawmills in Linden; there are now 19. All of them are on the grid. We do not know if, in the next six months, there is going to be 40 sawmills in Linden. We do not know that. We do not know, at this point, if a million models that generate the price of oil in the external stock market will change in another few months. There are about a million models to tell you what the power price will be in two days from now. They cannot predict it right up to now. We do not have a crystal ball to know what will happen and those things. What we know now – the information we have – we are bringing it to the National Assembly earnestly and asking the supplementer to keep the lights on in Linden, Lethem, Georgetown and everywhere else in the country. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, could I ask the Prime Minister how much of the \$12 billion caters to the rental sets in Anna Regina? There is \$12 billion in the Remarks column, from the sum that you are asking for.

Mr. Chairman: Prime Minister, included in that sum, is there anything for the rental of sets at Anna Regina?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, it comes right back to the issue of listening. All the money is for fuel. All the money requested for the GPL is for fuel. Everything regarding the rental of the sets will come from its operational expenditure. I did not come here for anything under GPL other than money for fuel. I came only for money for fuel. It is only money for fuel.

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Prime Minister. Could you say how much of this money caters for fuel for the rental sets in Anna Regina, therefore?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, for the sets at Anna Regina we are purchasing fuel – 242,304 imperial gallons per month. There is only one set that is being rented at Anna Regina.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we need urgent approval for this line item to keep the lights on. Hon. Member Mr. Holder, you have the floor.

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Cde. Chairman, if I heard correctly, the Prime Minister said only one set is being rented for Anna Regina. Is that correct?

Mr. Chairman: You heard correctly.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: You heard correctly, indeed. Mr. Chairman, there is a set that is generating 1.5 megawatts out of a total of 10 megawatts for Anna Regina. It is only one set.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, I am talking about the rental sets. There is one prime set that I know is working at the powerhouse but there are a number of sets outside. The last time I checked, there were a number of sets there outside the powerhouse. [**Bishop Edghill:** How many were there?]
There were several sets out there. I am just trying to get clarity on this.

Mr. Chairman: All right but this is the second time we have clarified. The Prime Minister said one set. He repeated that one set is being rented.

Mr. Holder: One set is being rented, all right. Could the Prime Minister be as kind as to say what is the annual cost of rental and the total cost incurred over the last four years for rental sets?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: There is \$16 million a month for the set at Anna Regina. We are renting the set at Anna Regina for \$16 million per month.

Mr. Holder: Could the Prime Minister give us the total accumulated for the last four years in the rental? This is for the complete rental of sets.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Is this for the country?

Mr. Holder: No. This is for Anna Regina.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I would ask that I lay over the answer for the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you are allowed because you have to go back to some historic cost.

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$13,089,996,848 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 1: 02-025 Office of the Prime Minister – Government Information and Communication Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$130,308,590

Mr. Patterson: I was going to allow my more media-savvy colleagues to get a go because they are more familiar with this agency. Sir, but there is... [*inaudible*].

[*Technical difficulties encountered.*]

Mr. Chairman, I thought you muted me; you have my apologies. ...\$130.3 million being sort for this. As usual, could the Hon. Prime Minister, through you, disaggregate this amount for me, please?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, as requested by the Hon. Member, the disaggregated amount is as follows: the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority's (GNBA's) licence fee for radio and television, for the years 2021 to 2023 – \$41,811,823; telecommunications agencies licence fee for radio and television which is the spectrum fee for the years 2020 to 2023 – \$9,240,000; the security services – \$20,240,643.

2.47 p.m.

Legal fees for various cases – \$6,455,000; broadcasting rights for Caribbean Premier League (CPL) 2022 – \$6,546,000; Guyana National Printers Limited for printing of copies of 2020 and 2021 annual reports – \$400,000; Department of Public Information Agency Commission – \$985,968; Guyana Lands and Survey Commission (GLSC), application to lease state situated at Block 'B' Homestretch Avenue – \$1,355,000; internet service – \$409,625; subscription for software screening and online services – \$1,298,770; final benefits – \$3,654,243; satellite fee – \$14,651,484; salary deductions, Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) – \$3,096,849; value-added tax (VAT), Guyana Revenue Authority – \$16,576,080; vehicles repairs and servicing – familiar to the Hon. Member there – \$887,105; and National Communications Network (NCN) fixed asset projects, PBS Solution – \$2,700,000. Those figures give a total of \$130,308,590.

Mr. Patterson: Through you, Sir, could the Hon. Prime Minister say why during *Budgets 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024* the National Communications Network, under his stewardship, has not applied for or appropriated for fees to the different agencies? There are fees and telecommunication summing up to \$50,000,000. There were four budgets and we are now coming for supplementary four years later to liquidate 2021 to 2023 debts.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: This agency receives a subvention from Government. It has its operational cost and it has revenue coming in. Normally, it would pay for all these fees from its revenue. However, there was a short fall in revenue for those years. Now, we are in a position where we are asking to clear all of these debts before we go forward into the new year.

Mr. Patterson: There is a provision of \$20.4 million for security and we passed the Budget in February. What has necessitated the security company here, which this \$20,400,000 will be paid to?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The security is contracted out and, obviously, we depend on revenue to pay for the security. We are asking for the money because of the projected shortfall to be appropriated to cover payment to security. You would agree that we cannot leave the place without security, so we have to pay for the security and to have the security there at all times.

Mr. Patterson: There is a fundamental point that seems to be coming out from the Prime Minister which is whatever was projected to be its revenues and the expenditures, there is a shortfall in 2024. All of the questions that I do... All of his answers will be related to the shortfalls of the projected revenue. Could I ask the PM what caused this shortfall of \$193,000,000? Is it the lack of advertising? Is it increasing revenue or expenses, *et cetera*? It has only been four months ago since we passed a budget.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: It is obvious, there has been a ramp up in production activities and, therefore, there is an increase in production cost. At the same time, we have experienced a shortfall in revenue associated with advertisement, *et cetera*. That is the reason we are coming for this money fill the gaps.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister has not responded to the question about the security firm. Could the Prime Minister list the legal cases? Are these fees or judgments on the legal?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I will take the second question first. It is legal fees and not judgments. You know what legal fee is so I do not need to explain any further. I think you did ask that question and I must apologise for not naming the firm. The name of the firm is Amalgamated Security Services. We arrived at a contract with that firm to provide security through public tender. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Patterson: My apologies; Mr. Chairman, the cross-talking is now getting to us. The fees for lands and surveys

are statutory. They are known all the while and they are due 1st January of every year, if I can recall. Is this any new additional land you are taking from Lands and Surveys other than what is there in Homestretch Avenue?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: No new land. We are not taking any new land. These are fees for the existing lands that we have there.

Ms. Ferguson: May I turn the Hon. Prime Minister's attention to the Security Services? It is \$20,400,000. You gave the security firm that is providing such services. I did hear you mention contract but you did not state the time period of the contract.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, why did you not state the time period?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I must apologise to the House and to the Hon. Member. It is for the financial year 2024.

Ms. Ferguson: Therefore, you will agree with me, Prime Minister, that it was a lack of budget planning for 2024. You came in February for 2024 Budget, so how come you are now coming for \$20,400,000 for the security firm? Is it from April to December? That sort of information I am trying to get from you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, we are trying to get additional information.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry for not explaining this properly. We have a subvention. The subvention is basically used to pay salaries. From revenue that is made from the business of the entity is used to cover all its operational costs. The reality of 2024 is that we are experiencing a shortfall in revenue. However, we have commitments to honour including security. That is the reason we came, as a last resort to make request from this honourable House to provide the money to National Communications Network to continue its operation in a secured manner, *et cetera*.

Ms. Ferguson: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister for his response. You made mention that it is because of the shortfall in revenue, could you say what caused the shortfall? Is it that private persons are not advertising with National Communications Network or Government entities are not paying for their advertisements?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: There is a shortfall in revenue and that was compounded by an increase in production cost. That is the situation we are in right now.

Mr. Duncan: With the question of shortfalls, I think the Hon. Prime Minister did mention advertising revenue being one of the critical areas. One would have noted that *News Room*, for instance, carries a lot of Government programming. There are other programmes that you mentioned earlier such as *IN THE RING* that has a lot of viewership and so on. Maybe, the interest in National Communications Network has dipped a little there, because nothing interesting is happening over on that side. I noticed too, private commentators and so on do a lot of interviews, for instance the Vice-President on other media.... As a matter of fact, one would notice as well that National Communications Network carries some of the programming from other news networks. [Mr. McCoy: What is the question?] I wanted to ask you if you were sitting there but you are not worthy enough, so let me ask through the Chairman, based on the advertising shortfalls, what are the sort of interventions that NCN will have going forward, so that we do not come back with a shortfall in advertising revenue and the need for more funding? That is the question that I have. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: There are certain things that NCN is doing. It is strengthening its marketing department, by being more aggressive there. Therefore, it will be able to attract more business. It has the sports channel that are coming on stream shortly which should be another revenue stream for the entity. With all these plans that it is implementing, we should be in a better position come 2025.

Mr. Duncan: Part of those interventions, would that be geared to, perhaps, better quality programming or perhaps the Government actually utilising National Communications Network more? I say that modestly.

3.02 p.m.

As I have mentioned, we see, for instance, Ministers in this House who have programmes on social media that are not carried on National Communications Network and a lot of in-depth interviews done by the Government that were not done by NCN, whether part of those interventions might be government actually utilising the service of NCN that they are asking all of these millions of dollars for, to bring back viewership to the once much watched and much viewed NCN under the previous administration. Thank you.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, as a policy, we facilitate all government entities, including ministers and departments of government who want to use NCN. However, we cannot restrict anybody from going on a social media platform to promote what they are doing or their

businesses. That is the mix and that is the reality of Guyana today. The world is like that today. A government official will pick out his or her phone, will speak, will press the button and it would reach the wider world. Am I to tell him or her go to NCN and do that? No.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. I will take one more question for the Prime Minister on this particular item. I will resume the Assembly and then suspend. I would like to see the two Chief Whips after this. Go ahead.

Mr. Duncan: I just want to follow-up quickly on that. If part of this dip in viewership for the National Communications Network is part and parcel of the fact that the Opposition's very in-depth and studied opinions are so rarely carried on the National Communication Network, that might be part of the reason the viewership is so low.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I think this whole discussion is being skewed from the issue at hand. We talked about a reduction in revenue. We never talked about a reduction in viewership. The NCN has national reach so there has been no reduction in viewership. You are talking about a reduction in revenue. It is a more complex issue for you to understand. Do not come and simplify it here. We are not simplifying. There is nothing about loss of viewership being discussed here. It is revenue. There has been a ramp up in production and the production cost went up. Obviously, when you look at production cost versus the revenue, it will lead to a reduction in revenue. If a company is getting \$100 and has been producing at \$50 and now, it is suddenly producing at \$150 but still brings in \$100, there is a reduction.

Item 1: 02-025 Office of the Prime Minister – Government Information and Communication Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$130,308,590 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask the Chief Whip and maybe one other Member from the Opposition, with two persons from the Government along with the Clerk to meet me in the Speaker's Chambers. We will suspend for 10 minutes.

Sitting suspended at 3.06 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.34 p.m.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Item: 2 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$2,854,210,893

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I see here for the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) another \$2 billion for operational costs. Could the Hon. Minister kindly disaggregate this sum?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, the disaggregation are as follows: wages and salaries – \$813 million; for the grinding estate and the vested estate – \$480 million which gives you \$1.293 billion; fuel – \$287 million; lubricant – \$73 million; other essential material and supplies – \$470 million and lorry contractors – \$127 million. That gives you a total of \$2.247 billion.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister now say how much has been taken from the Government coffers for 2024 to offset wages and salaries for GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: We have \$2.278 billion from the first \$4 billion and the one that you just mentioned of \$1.293 billion.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say to us what is the total number of employees within GuySuCo?

Mr. Chairman: That was answered. Hon. Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Mustapha: It is 8,294.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Member, please, I will be using the guillotine with respect to repetition. Go ahead.

Mr. Jordan: I asked about the total number of employees. I never asked that before, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member provided the answer earlier when he was sitting there and he answered again. Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Jordan: The field section of GuySuCo – it was reported by this Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that it has a deficit of over 2,000...

Mr. Chairman: Where did he report this?

Mr. Jordan: It was by the Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Chairman: Where did he report it?

Mr. Jordan: It is at an interview with the *Stabroek News*.

Mr. Chairman: Newspapers are not a place where we quote from. Come on; next.

Mr. Jordan: All right, Sir. What is the total deficit of the labour force in the fields for the various estates?

Mr. Chairman: Did you say deficit for the labour force?

Mr. Jordan: Yes, the labour force.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Mustapha: The turnout for harvesters who are persons cutting cane is just around 60% and, for the others, we are trying to mechanise it because that is the reason for the mechanisation that we are doing.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, if he is going to say to me about 60%...

Mr. Chairman: He answered.

Mr. Jordan: I would like to know then...

Mr. Chairman: He answered.

Mr. Jordan: I would like to know then...

Mr. Chairman: He answered the question.

Mr. Jordan: No, no. I am asking another...

Mr. Chairman: The answer you might want...

Mr. Jordan: I am asking another question.

Mr. Chairman: ...I cannot tell him to answer what you want of him.

Mr. Jordan: I am asking another question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Jordan: If it is about 60%, what is the 60% of?

Mr. Mustapha: We have 5,000 harvesters on roll, but the details of harvesting might change from time to time. It depends on the changes. I am saying that generally, we have approximately between 57% to 60% turnout of the harvesters.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say how has the shortage in labour affected the Corporation in general?

Mr. Mustapha: That is the main reason we are doing the mechanisation programme. If you look, we are now converting the Dutch beds into broad beds. We are having harvesters and planter being introduced into the system.

Mr. Jordan: The Hon. Minister, during the consideration of the Estimates in this House in February, said that GuySuCo is set to produce 100 tonnes of sugar for the year 2024.

However, for the first crop, GuySuCo only managed to produce 6,738 tonnes of sugar, which is just about six per cent of the total amount. The question to the Minister is, how do you expect to achieve the other 94% of sugar production by the end of the year? What are the plans in place to ensure that this target is achieved?

Mr. Mustapha: When we formulated that target, the El Niño was not in relation to that. We had 108,000 tonnes of cane. I mentioned it earlier in the first paper that was destroyed, so we will have to relook at the target. As it stands now, we are not moving because the mechanisation that we have done and the new canes that we have planted, I am optimistic that we will reap close to there. We are looking to see as close as possible to the 100,000 tonnes that has been projected in the Minister's Budget Speech.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister now say to us the start date or commencement date for grinding at the various factories? At the same time, could the Hon. Member say to us whether the factories are ready for grinding?

Mr. Chairman: All right. Hon. Members, we have some allocations in these supplementary papers. A lot of the questions that we have had this morning are questions that should properly qualify for a written response.

Mr. Patterson: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you could start an early recess too if you want but if you check the number of questions that were allowed and answered in this House... Go ahead, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I alluded that the Albion Estate has already started to burn cane. The Rose Hall Estate, the Albion Estate and the Blairmont Estate burnt cane yesterday and they will start to cut as from today. By the end of this week, all three of the Estates would start to grind and the Uitvlugt Estate would start in another two weeks' time.

Mr. Jordan: Could I now ask the Hon. Minister if in any way this \$2 billion is catering for the team of engineers from Cuba under this line?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister state the purpose of the visit of those engineers from Cuba to GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I answered that question in a written form already to this honourable House. I said what GuySuCo did; I said what were the needs of GuySuCo; I said the sort of people it brought in such as the agronomists

and the technical personnel. I wrote to the Hon. Member and answered those questions.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister provide the salaries and other benefits for the engineers or whether they have been given a stipend?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, the sum of \$169 million has been budgeted for that area for the year and for all the technical people who came from Cuba.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the expected duration for those engineers?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I wrote to the Hon. Member. The *Stabroek News* carried it, this morning, and stated that I wrote to the Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, and said it was for a twelve-month period. It is there in the newspaper this morning. I quoted it from him, his question.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, if you may permit me, the questions that I asked – and you would know very well because you asked that three of the questions be not... You struck three of them because you said that they are speculative and that is why...

Mr. Chairman: I do not strike out. I apply the rules.

Mr. Jordan: Whatever term you want to use, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Listen, there is a rule. When a Speaker speaks, you listen and then he gives you the floor. If you want to engage this as an argument, I could suspend again and we could go and argue in the corridor. Do you want to do that?

Mr. Jordan: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Oh, thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just have a final question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. ... Go ahead. The Hon. Member has a final question.

3.46 p.m.

Mr. Ramjattan: In view of...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramjattan, Hon. Member, he has one final question. Let us get...

Mr. Ramjattan: On GuySuCo.

Mr. Chairman: On GuySuCo. Go ahead, Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Ramjattan: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. With all these expenditures, and it is almost \$10 billion now, do you

see the necessity for a special audit as to these expenditures for GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, we are having regular auditing at the GuySuCo. Even the State Auditors audit GuySuCo's records.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, we heard about revitalisation, resuscitation and mechanisation. They brought in technical people, we just heard from the Minister, Agronomist, engineers, brought in Chief Executive Officers (CEO), changed CEO, and tens of billions of dollars are being pumped into the industry. On the other hand, we heard about flooding, I believe in 2021, and drought in 2023. My question to the Minister is, how many times, given all these facts, have you exceeded or did the GuySuCo exceed the annual production, as it was in 2019 – the 2019 annual production?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I think we exceeded production last year by 28%. As I was saying, when we started, because of the flood, we re-planted and we had to do a lot of replanting. We had a set back with the *El Niño* condition and we have continued. We had to replace it because the 108,000 tons of cane that were lost, we had to replace those. We will continue. It is a work-in-progress.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, I am not certain that the Minister understood the question or if he got it right. I am speaking about the 2019 production and not the current production target. I said the 2019 production.

Mr. Chairman: How the Minister chooses to answer, I cannot direct.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the Hon. Member understands about the growth of cane. The factor was different in 2019. We suffered one of the most devastating floods in 2021. Almost 55% of the cultivation was destroyed. We had to rebuild it. How could you make a comparison in 2019, when you never had a flood? How could you make a comparison after 2019 in 2021 and 2022? At least, we recovered last year, and we surpassed the target by 28%.

Mr. Holder: The 2019 target was 92,000-plus tons. What were the productions for 2020, 2021 and 2022?

Mr. Chairman: Could you put those three in a written form and I will make it generally available... Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, I noted that you provided a response with

regard to the wages from the \$2 billion that is being sought. You said that \$813 million will go towards wages. I note also that you provided to the Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, that \$169 million will take care of the engineers from Cuba. I guess it is \$169 million from the \$813 million. Would the remaining balance take care of current staff members or are you looking to hire new staff members that this sum will take care of?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, just a correction to the Hon. Member. I said \$813 million is one part of the wages. There had to be another \$480 million, giving us \$1.2 billion. Those moneys that I mentioned, \$169...

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister kindly disaggregate the sum of over \$437 million, for the GRDB?

Mr. Mustapha: There is \$249 million for materials and supplies, \$14,100,000 for utilities, \$12,200,000 for out-of-crop maintenance, \$38,768 for field operations, insecticides for paddy bug programme is \$40 million, \$35 million for diesel, \$22,161,86 million for labour costs, and research and development for climate smart agriculture to do their research in seed production is another \$25 million, giving a total of \$437,289,683.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister kindly state if there is any moneys budgeted for compensation or in any way assisting farmers that are being affected by the recent paddy bug infestation?

Mr. Mustapha: I just mentioned that \$40 million has been budgeted under the paddy bug programme. What we are doing now is working with the farmers. We are providing the insecticides, we are providing the labour cost, we are spraying all the meres, and all the dams to keep away the bugs. That is the help we are giving them. We are also providing some farmers, who were affected last crop, with seed paddy and other inputs like fertilisers and things like that. We have been making these inputs available to farmers.

Mr. Jordan: He was supposed to be specific there. Could the Hon. Minister say or provide rather, the list of farmers that would benefit or the areas that would benefit by regions, from this intervention?

Mr. Mustapha: All the regions with all the farmers that are planting rice. What we normally do around the country is work with the farmers. For example, in Essequibo we provided five boom sprayers to the farmers. These are large sprayers. We are providing the chemicals. They are working with the GRDB to do the spraying across the rice growing areas. This is same thing that is happening in Region 6 and

Region 5 and all the rice growing areas of every single region; and every single farmer will benefit from this programme.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many farmers? Mr. Chairman, my reason for asking is because I can provide for the Hon. Minister a list of a number of farmers in Region 5 and Region 6 who are not benefitting from this programme, or who have not benefitted. They have not yet been contacted by the Ministry. The same is true for Region 2.

Mr. Chairman: We got the gist of the question.

Mr. Mustapha: We have approximately 5,600 farmers in this country. Probably, the Hon. Member is asking these farmers for individual help. What we are doing is working on a programme to eradicate the paddy bugs. It is not individual farmers that are getting these insecticides to spray on their farms. We are not giving it to individual farmers to work with. We do it in a cultivation area. We are spraying the dams, and we are spraying the meres. If the Hon. Member can bring those farmers who have suffered to my attention, or who said they never received seed paddy; I am willing to consider them.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide the list of farmers that have received or would receive seed paddy out of their investigation? There is no secret in it. They are all farmers.

Mr. Mustapha: Definitely. Over 500 farmers of this crop, we have already provided seed paddy to.

Mr. Indar: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for allowing me. I have a question for the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Allow the Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan to complete the section. I will come back to you. Go ahead, Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move to the Mahaica/Mahaicony Abary–Agricultural Development Authority (MMA/ADA).

Mr. Chairman: Okay, if it is related to the last intervention, Hon. Member Mr. Indar.

Mr. Indar: Thank you. Minister Mustapha, thank you very much for answering the questions in the National Assembly. In 2015, there was a Commission of Inquiry that was done by the APNU/AFC Government. I will direct to page 11 and page 12 of the report that states GuySuCo has \$82.4 billion. In the same report, page 12 states that GuySuCo has \$62.70

billion in long-term liability of which \$29.2 billion was employees' retirement benefits. I direct you to that report. Mr. Minister, after the closure of GuySuCo, could you please inform the House, how many people were laid off because of the closure of the estates by the APNU/AFC Government?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, we knew that almost 7,500 workers were laid off, dismissed, and placed on the bread line. Some of them were denied their severance pay. Up to now, some of them have not received their severance pay. The Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU) had to take them to court, with the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, to get their severance pay. A number of those persons...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. We heard that before. Thank you. Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move to the MMA/ADA. I see \$60 million. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate that sum?

Mr. Mustapha: The disaggregation is: fuel and lubricant – \$15 million; maintenance of canals, drains and access dams – \$30 million; vehicles spares and services – \$3 million; equipment maintenance – \$6 million; other goods and services – \$6 million; giving a total of \$60 million.

Mr. Jordan: Two hundred and fifty million dollars was given to the MMA/ADA as a voted provision in February of this year. Now the Minister returns for \$60 million. Could the Hon. Minister say, how much of that \$250 million has already been spent to date?

Mr. Mustapha: That is in a different programme. That is \$250 million as a capital programme. This is recurrent programme. These are projects which we are maintaining – recurrent programmes. We are on our way to completing our capital programme at the MMA. Approximately \$180 million has been expended already on that programme. These programmes, what we are doing, we are doing more maintenance. We are having more production coming out of this area. We have more pastures. We are doing more livestock production there. There is almost a 12% increase in livestock production coming out of those areas. We have built the Ellis area for the Black Belly sheep production. A number of things we have been doing. That is why we need more funds to continue the maintenance of these infrastructure.

Mr. Jordan: One hundred and nine million dollars is for the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute

(NAREI). Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate that sum?

Mr. Mustapha: During the budget debate, I mentioned that we are doing some major works at NAREI. In our recurrent expenditure, we said we will intensify our coffee production. We brought in a number of coffee plants from Costa Rica. We are now working in the Pomeroon. We are working in Region 1 to resuscitate Guyana's production in coffee once again. We have started ginger production in Region 1. We have started our shade house programme with St. Lucia. The shade house programme is \$21 million. The new hydroponic programme that we have started, and now we will expand on it, is \$16 million. The tissue culture laboratory that we have to put in, the biotechnology and DNA state of the art laboratory, will cost us \$25 million. The expansion in coffee and cocoa is \$23 million. The spices in Region 1 are ginger, turmeric and nutmeg and is \$25 million, giving us a total of \$110 million.

Item 2: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$2,854,210,893, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

4.01 p.m.

Capital Estimates

Item 2: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Guyana Livestock Development Authority – \$115,412,000

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister kindly disaggregate that sum and then I will move on?

Mr. Mustapha: We have here: drilling of wells to provide potable water because we have suffered severely during the *El Niño* condition – \$30 million; establishment of an irrigation system designed to effectively distribute water to the veterinary laboratory, genetic improvement laboratory, the livestock farm and office building – \$10.4 million; rehabilitation of main irrigation canal, six miles, at Ellis – \$18 million; construction and internal drainage work network, eight miles, at Ellis – \$16 million; construction of primary irrigation structure to intake water and provide drainage to farmland at Kabawa – \$12 million; and construction of a main access bridge at the back of Blairmont – \$29 million giving a total of \$115,412,000.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say how many of those projects that he just mentioned started prior to the requisition for these sums? The legend says that the

provision caters for additional resources to facilitate the completion.

Mr. Mustapha: This is part of the project that we started. These are new projects now that will commence to enhance what we have there. We started the house. There is already the staff house at Ellis. We have the pens at Ellis. There are also a number of other infrastructures. So, these here are new infrastructures that will complement it and make it usable.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say then, how much of the \$100 million voted for under this line has been expended?

Mr. Mustapha: Fifty-seven per cent, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jordan: During the consideration of Estimates in February, the Hon. Minister stated that the Ministry received some 707 black belly sheep as the first tranche from Barbados and that the second tranche was expected shortly, for which he gave a time that was before the end of the first quarter of this year. Could the Hon. Minister say whether they received that second tranche?

Mr. Mustapha: We are hoping to receive that by the end of September. Out of the 707 black belly sheep that we received, 455 new births were recorded and 109 were distributed to farmers in the region with the programme that we have to increase the brand that we want to create between Barbados and Guyana.

Mr. Jordan: Further to that discussion, he said that it would roll out the programme in Region 5, that is, the distribution of the black belly sheep. Could the Hon. Minister say whether that programme was ruled out, how many farmers benefited from that programme, and provide a list as a layover of those farmers that had benefited?

Mr. Mustapha: That programme rolled out some time now. A total of 89 farmers were already targeted – 28 females and 61 males. They all received in Region 5. We can also provide the list.

Item 2:21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Guyana Livestock Development Authority – \$115,412,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Contribution to Local Organisation – GuySuCo – \$3,219,000,000

Mr. Jordan: I think I would ask only one question here. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this sum?

Mr. Mustapha: The sum of \$1.86 billion is for the grinding estate and it comes under field. There is the acquisition of 10 rotary ditchers and four tractors to improve infield drainage – \$84 million; acquisition of cane harvesting equipment to improve efficiency in harvesting – \$500 million; rehabilitation of bridges to increase accessibility to cultivation – \$75 million; acquisition of five drones – \$44 million; acquisition of four high tower tractor for boom spray – \$32 million; and major overhaul of the aircraft to improve herbicide application – \$120 million. That is for the field. For the factory: the rehabilitation of mill and boilers to improve efficiency – \$327 million; rehabilitation of factory infrastructure – \$127 million; acquisition of major components equipment including new high-grade centrifuge basket, high-grade seed crystallizer, juice heater, *et cetera*, to improve the extraction process which leads to better recovery – \$390 million; rehabilitation to the process house across the industry – \$126 million; and acquisition of sugar packaging equipment to facilitate added value product – \$20 million. Those are for the grinding estate. As I said, we have started the planting of 5,000 hectares of cane at Skeldon and \$1,353,898,500 will be expended at Skeldon to continue that process there.

Item 2:21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Contribution to Local Organisation – GuySuCo – \$3,219,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Estimates

Item 3:31-311 Ministry of Public Works – Policy Development and Administration – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$544,353,241

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chair. To the Hon. Member, I note that the Ministry is requesting an additional \$544 million and change. In the remarks legend, there is a disaggregation of the amounts being sought. Could the Hon. Member provide to this National Assembly what operational costs or expenses would \$247 million take care of for the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority?

Mr. Chairman: Persons with their telephones, on the ring please lower them.

Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman and thanks to the Hon. Member for the question. The additional sums are being sought for the GCAA is to facilitate, what I think every one of us in this House should be proud of, Guyana's expanding aviation industry. The expansion of the aviation industry takes two

dimensions: local travel as well as international travel. We have more planes and more flights into the hinterland. We also have to cater for offshore activities which is significantly increasing. Then, added to that, there are more international flights in and out of Guyana and using our airspace. One, there is a need for more air traffic controllers. We need to train more people. We need to develop more people to ensure that we keep our capacity.

Secondly, you will be aware that we just came out of an International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) audit. There are a number of recommendations that came along with that audit that we need to fulfil. That is why we are seeking the additional moneys. Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chair, I have a follow-up. While I appreciate the response given by the Hon. Member with regard to increased flights both locally and internationally, could the Hon. Member inform this National Assembly whether the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority is still receiving significant sums from overflights? I know that, normally, the GCAA garners additional revenue from overhead flights. So, could the Hon. Member say how we are progressing in that area?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member is correct. As a matter of fact, before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), revenue from overpass flights and moneys earned by Air Navigation Services was the main revenue earner for the GCAA. The Coronavirus disease brought that down. We are in a recovery stage. I am advised that we are having an average of about 52 overflights per day at this current time. We are recovering and revenue is coming in, but we are not yet back up to full strength, where the overflights are concerned.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Hon. Member, for your response. So, therefore, Hon. Member, would it be safe for me to say that when we are out of recess, you will not come back to the National Assembly seeking additional funds for operating expenses for the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority? I guess by then we will move from 52% to, I guess, a 60% increase.

Bishop Edghill: I did not say 52%. I said 52 flights. So, when one budgets, forecasts, and as I stand here, the sums being sought are our best forecast to take us to the end of the year. I think that we... [Mr. Ramjattan: *(Inaudible)*] Thank you, Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan. I guess it is only the PPP/C that ever came to this National Assembly with supplementary budgets. I guess we are only one. Just to remind us, supplementary budgets were even sought in 2019, a year after a no-confidence motion was passed, but we

would not go there. Budgeting is like that. One anticipates and forecasts. This is what is required based upon our best forecasting ability at this time, taking all things into consideration, to take us to the end of the year. If we have to get money during recess for anything, it would not be a supplementary, it will come as a contingency. Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: I just want to correct the Hon. Member. I said after recesses.

Mr. Chairman: Question, question, please. Correction... Come on.

4.16 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: I am happy to know that the Ministry is continuing the training of the Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs). That being said, I will now move on to the other organisation, Transport and Harbours Department. I note here Hon. Member, through you Mr. Chair, that the ministry is seeking an additional \$295,000,000 and change for the Transport and Harbours Department. Again, the legend here caters for the provision of operational cost, so can you say exactly what this sum will be utilised for and whether it is sufficient to take you to the end of the year? Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This provides us with an opportunity to inform the House and the general public that there is a significant increase in the movement of our ferries serving our people in Region 2, Region 1 and in Region 7. Comparing the number of trips in 2023 to the current period, we have done 133 more ferry trips than we would have done last year. This is significant because, number one, more goods and services are being delivered to those regions; there is more building out of facilities whether it is hospitals, roads, schools. Vessels get to transport materials, workers, and people; and with the agricultural development in Region 1, there is also more produce that is coming out to Georgetown. You will see the impact of Government's overall successes in terms of delivery of goods and service, in terms of agricultural development being manifested by the traffic, because this is a main way of getting people, goods and services into these regions.

We have done 133 more trips. You will recall that we came to this National Assembly and we did disclose that we added an additional vessel which is up and working robustly – rice farmers are bringing their paddy to the coast, the plantain trucks are coming, the farmers with the cassava are coming. As a matter of fact, we had to take food from that side to get into Region 9 when we were having difficulties with what

was happening as result of the flooding. There is a lot more trips that are being made and this is all that is happening here.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Minister. Member Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair I think that exhausts my questions, and I thank the Hon. Member for his responses.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Member. Hon. Member Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, just for clarification, you put the entire head or just this one?

Mr. Chairman: I am putting just this one, 6321.

Item 3: 31-311 Ministry of Public Works – Policy Development and Administration – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$544,353,241 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Maintenance of Roads – \$605,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could I start a global question, so we do not have any repetition. I will, Sir. Could the Honourable Minister and ministries coming for increase supplementals, could I ask the Honourable Minister, what is his Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) total money spent to date, overall, in his ministry and in particular his roads and sea defence. I am asking it now so I do not have to repeat it for every line item.

Mr. Chairman: Hon Minister, your completion rate.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, under this line item that we are considering, Maintenance of Roads, we had a budgeted allocation of \$3,626,000,836. Our expenditure to date is \$1,589,632,125 which would represent an expenditure, as of current, of 43.83%, at this time of the year.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Sir. I was trying to get him to answer in one go but I will repeat the question per line item, and I am sure you would not tell me that is repetition. Very good, Sir. Maintenance of Roads, you have spent 43% percent and you are coming for additional sums. Before we even get to where the roads are, how is it and what has the ministry put in place, in this the eighth month of the year, that you are going to spend the additional \$2,400,000,000 that is short plus this additional \$6,000,000,000? What is the ministry going to do to achieve this target?

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I thank the Honourable Member for his question. I will first report to you, Sir, in the House, what we would have done so far. In Georgetown, we have maintained 17,280 meters square of roads, which in length would be 2,658 kilometres (km). In Region 10, we have maintained 3,151 kilometres, in Region 2 we have done 1,871. The Georgetown to Timehri road, we have expended more than 48,000-meter square of work, 7,385km of road have been done and Georgetown to Mahaica, 1,231; in Region 5 we have done 985, and in Region 6, 3,102.

I do not think that the activities of the Ministry's road maintenance programme need to be questioned because it is obvious and public for all to see. The monies that are being sought at this time, which is \$600,000,000, is intended for the purchase of asphalt, \$300,000,000; the maintenance of the road from Palmyra to Moleson Creek, which members on the other side traverse as well. That is an old, old road that we have been doing our best job at keeping alive while we come out with the new programme to expand that to four lanes. We would spend another \$85,000,000 there on that maintenance. The maintenance of road shoulders: most people refer to it as weeding and cleaning, but it is more than just weeding and cleaning. We have to do so by getting the water off the road, making sure the roadside drains and all the rest if it is taken care of. We are asking for an additional \$70,000,000 to take care of that in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. This is largely because of the increase of the number of roads that have to be maintained and the kind of work that must be done. For example, let us look at the Linden-Soesdyke Highway, we have to pick up the loom, sand. There are times when we picked up to 40 truckloads of sand in a one-kilometre area by *Splashmins*. That would have led to flooding. The Special Projects Unit, road maintenance programme had to do that.

We got damages, barrancas that are broken and big sections of the road that slipped away. There again, that is a very old, old road. We are coming out with a programme to totally rehabilitate that section from Soesdyke all the way into Linden, that should be something that you will be seeing very soon, in a matter of days, into the actual programme. But we have to still deal with all the breakaways. I am sure some of the Members of this House, who have publicised the photographs of the holes and the breakaways, will know that it takes money to fix it. That is what we are seeking here to do.

Maintenance of the roads in Georgetown: you would recall that we did the maintenance on all the roads in Queenstown,

Alberttown, Kingston, Campbellville, Kitty; we went into East and West Ruimveldt, Albouystown, Charlestown; we are currently, right now, in Rasville and Roxanne Burnham Gardens, Lodge, Werk-en-rust and Wortmanville. [Hon.

Members: (*Inaudible*) I notice several grumblings in the House. Is it that we do not want the people to know what is happening? That is what we are doing. The reason why we are going there is to let you know where the peoples' money is spent and to dispel some of the allegations that work is only being done in specific areas. Out of this amount of \$600,000,000, \$150,000,000... [An Hon. Member:

(*Inaudible*) I will come to Tucville very soon; I promise the Hon. Chief Whip that we will do that. One of the things that we have do is that for us to maintain these roads, we have to get the drains properly desilted and the water flowing. Along with this work, it is not just putting on the asphalt, it is the desilting and the draining of the roads so the roads could maintain dry so that the asphalt would not be deteriorating at a fast rate. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Minister. Thank you for coming to Eccles two Saturdays and we saw what happened there with the guy piling sand on the parapet. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, you can help me. I asked under this line head, what is the ministry going to do, what systems are they putting in place to...?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, when I got to the ministry it was one special projects team doing maintenance. We have added already another team; we have bought more equipment; we came to this House and asked for permission to buy equipment; we are putting in place more people to get more things done.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, thank you very much for that. Could I ask the Minister if he is putting in place more people, where exactly? Because he gives the submission of \$605 million. There is no provision here for increase in wage and salaries. Where exactly will the more people be funded?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chair, it is a very good Friday afternoon. The Hon. Member who is asking the question was a minister in this very Assembly. The Special Projects Unit's Maintenance of Roads programme, the wages – because they are temporary workers, we employ them based upon need – the wages of these workers are paid from this very, same line, and it does not reflect itself in employment cost of contracted employs and people on the establishment. The

wages are paid through the Special Projects Unit from this very same line item of Maintenance of Roads. Thank you.

4.31 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: The most obvious question, Sir, could you now say how much is included for wages? You made it very specific, \$300 million is for asphalt and you expounding on how much you are doing. Sir, therefore, we would like to know how much exactly you will, in this... thank you... in this thing that you are expanding and how much is actually work.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, when we came here in early 2024 for *Budget 2024* the appropriations that were made covered wages and salaries for the teams in the Special Projects Unit. We are here for \$600 million, and I have just emphasised what we will do with the money. It is for the purchase of the asphalt and to use in the maintenance work in the various areas. This is not for wages and salaries, that is already catered for since Budget 2024.

Mr. Duncan: Mr. Chairman, I welcome the Hon. Minister's elucidation on the many roads that are being fixed. While one has no problem with the quantity based on the revenues from the oil industry which is funding all of this, I am certain the Minister has to be concerned about quality. This is because on more than one occasions, on more than a handful of occasions, we have seen the Minister reprimanding contractors on the quality of roadworks. We can talk about lots of those places he has mentioned. I have been to Bartica personally – South. My Lord, what is happening there in South? We can talk about Linden, we can talk about lots of places where the quality of the work is highly questionable, right? The Minister has questioned the quality of the work. Right now, I just saw flashing across social media pertaining to, for instance, Cemetery Road, that some subcontractors were given different portions of the road to complete, and the main contractor again is failing at his end. The question I have for the Hon. Minister is, while I thank him for all he is doing with his Ministry, what safeguards are we putting in place so that these additional appropriations do not go to the same substandard work we are seeing in all those metres of roads and so on he is praising this afternoon? That is the question for the Hon. Minister.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, nothing that the Hon. Member said applies to this line item but since it is already on the floor, I guess you will give me the permission for a response. With the literal hundreds of con... If we do not want to say thousands but I will say hundreds at this time, the literal hundreds of contractors that are engaged in road

construction in all the regions of Guyana, we must start off with the standpoint of the good job that our good Guyanese people are doing in the majority. We do have some who have not performed well, and we do not need to come to the National Assembly to be lectured about that. We have addressed that. I can tell the Hon. Member how we address it. Number one, the Ministry has a very active audit department. The Ministry also has a very active lab that goes out and tests. Besides that, because of the increase of work we are doing, all the other labs that are available in Guyana, private labs, I think there are what, eight or nine? About 14 other labs have been engaged by the Ministry to do testing on our roads. If we do 5,000 roads and you have problems with 43, some of us would spend more time talking about the 43 but we would not like to talk about the 4,000 plus roads that the communities are happy about.

I am acknowledging that we have contractors who have not performed well. We have terminated, we have charged liquidated damages, we have caused them to go back and get their works in keeping with the Defects Liability clauses of their contract and we have been managing that situation very well. The gentleman, the Hon. Member, spoke about Cemetery Road. I noticed the same article that he did. I will pronounce on that tomorrow afternoon at 4.30 because the deadline for the completion of the work is Saturday, tomorrow, in the afternoon. That is not what the media will determine. I know the instructions we gave and Mr. Duncan should have been pleased enough to say that the residents who live in the carriageway, every time I have stopped there, have been singing the praises to ensure that this project is done. We have gone beyond fixing the road. We have gone beyond fixing Cemetery Road *per se*, and we removed all the dirt and debris. We have had to clean the garbage in the drains and the footpaths. The drains are being fixed and we have added to all of that, lighting throughout the entire carriageway. All of that was being done in the period from the deadline to now. By tomorrow afternoon the nation will know the exact state.

We had some of the very same members who were asking questions, who commented yesterday at 1.30 when we closed the road for one hour to get some grading and shaping done to put the asphalt last night at the Princess Street bridge, we want the road finished and we closed it for one hour, and Members who are concerned about this road were the ones who made very negative statements about the Government's actions. This project should have been finished one year ago. It should have been finished one year ago. It was not. We made a decision, getting the road delivered to the people. Getting was our number one priority.

Yes, we said it publicly and I could say it here, nominated subcontractors, as agreed on by the Ministry and the contractor, went in to execute various sections of the work. I think you should drive through there tonight and you will see what is taking place on Cemetery Road. The people are happy, Mr. Duncan. The people are happy, Mr. Chairman. The road is there.

Item 3: 31-312 – Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Maintenance of Roads – \$605,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Same agency code, chart of account 6251 and I propose the question that the sum stated herein, current expenditure, stands part of the estimates. The Hon. Member Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: It is 6254 you have to put, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry, 6254. I propose the question that the sum stated for 6254, Maintenance of Sea and River Defences here in current expenditure stands part of the estimates.

Item 3: 31-312 – Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences – \$150,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Sir. Once again, can the Hon. Minister state what level of expenditure is the Ministry currently at for this programme head?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member would be advised that the entire budget, passed in the Appropriation Act of 2024, is already committed – all.

Mr. Patterson: Already what?

Bishop Edghill: Already committed. The actual expenditure to date is 23.3% but all of it is committed. Which means you have contracts signed and performing.

Mr. Patterson: He spent 23% in the first eight months of the year. In comparison, he is not coming for a large amount – \$150 million more. Once again, we would like to ask the same question that I asked before, how is the Ministry proposing, what are they doing to ensure that they can spend the other \$77 million plus the \$105 million being sought now?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we are dealing here with the Maintenance of Sea Defences. If the Hon. Member would want to discuss the entire sea and river defence programme, we can do that, but I did indicate to you we had a budget. We went out to public tender in the second quarter of the year, and most of these contracts were awarded. They are in the

execution stage, and you will see before the end of the year their completion. It is all committed. I am sure both you and the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, who presided over that Ministry will know that execution ramps up once you have your contracts signed and mobilised, and work is going in, interim payment certificates (IPCs) will begin to pay. We are not paying people here for work that is not done so you will see more expenditure when the work is done. Thanks.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I know we want to push on. I know you are listening keenly and you are going to cut repetition and those things. Did you hear the response to the question that I...

Mr. Chairman: As I have said before I cannot determine how the Minister will answer.

Mr. Patterson: I do not know. I am asking, what exactly is the Ministry going to do to ramp up and take care of the extra? I know about committed funds, I know about progress payments, *et cetera*. It was a very specific thing. It is not a lot of money [*inaudible*]

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the majority of these contracts are for a life cycle of four to six months. We have four months remaining in the year. These contracts have been signed and work has started. I do not see a *jumbie* behind the bush.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, as a whole, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure's Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), when you take the whole ministry, they have only spent 17% of the money allocated to them. That is a concern to us over here. They have been expended, they have been given \$100 billion for capital works, maintenance and things like that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You have asked it once, repeated and the Minister gave an answer so...

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I am just saying, can the Minister say...

Mr. Chairman: If the current question is the one question that had remained, can I put?

Mr. Patterson: No, Sir, the Minister may want...

Mr. Chairman: Well, move on.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the Ministry has spent 17% of...

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but move on from this because he answered twice.

Mr. Patterson: Simply, can the Minister say where these works will be done?

4.46 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: If the Hon. Member is asking for the supplementary sum, it will be spent in four areas – maintenance work to existing river defence structures at Agatash and Byderabo in Region 7; maintenance work to existing river defence structures at Bartica; and maintenance works to Earthen Embankment. There is an incorporation of boulder slopes at River's View/Region 10 which is not far from Bartica; and emergency works to river dams along the Pomeroon River and tributary creeks in Region 2. That is where the money is going to be spent.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I will now put the question. Before I do that, I will put three chart of accounts because there seems to have been an error. I may have put line item 6321 twice. Just to ensure we are on the same page I will include all three.

Item 3: 31-311 Ministry of Public Works – Policy Development – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$544,353,241 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Maintenance of Roads, Maintenance of Sea and River Defences – \$605,000,000, \$150,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Estimates

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Rehabilitation of Public and Main Access Roads – \$4,170,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Sir, this is the – Rehabilitation of Public and Main Access Roads. The Remarks state:

“The provision caters for additional resources to facilitate the settlement of outstanding payments.”

Sir, the first question, as always, I would ask is, what have you done so far for 2024? The second question as I am up, what settlements are these catering for?

Bishop Edghill: In legal language, there is something that is called continuity of Government. It does not matter who is in office – government is government. In April, 2019, the Chief Justice ruled to enforce a judgement. I think the then Minister of Finance was being cited to be committed to prison in 2019. This is a matter that engaged NH International Limited and Emile Elias and Company

Limited. Mr. Patterson who is asking the question, was the Minister of Public Infrastructure at the time. The A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government did nothing to settle this matter. With the judgment and interest, it has now come to US\$20 million. This sum that is being sought is to settle this matter which has been determined by the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), enforced by rulings of the Chief Justice since 2019 that were not addressed by the APNU/AFC and needs to be addressed today. Mr. Chairman, I do not know if you want me to speak further on this matter but that is all I will tell the Committee at this time. If the Hon. Member would like to continue to inquire, we can do so.

Mr. Patterson: Of course, I would love to continue. Could the Hon. Minister say, since he mentioned Emile Elias, which project was awarded and who was the Government that awarded the project at the time that they sued, as he made it? Could he tell the world and the country the name of the project and.... [An Hon. Member: You must speak the truth and the whole truth.] ...the whole truth, yes. Sir, may I ask him to say when was the case first instituted?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member, who is asking the question, would like to go in that route, he is telling the nation that a decision of our courts is not one that he and his Government were prepared to honour because it was not something they were comfortable with. This NH International Limited and Emile Elias and Company Limited matter is one that has been around for more than 20 years. It was litigated and completed during the tenure of the APNU/AFC. The project that we are discussing is the Georgetown to Timehri Road. That is the project. As a matter of fact, it is the Georgetown to Timehri Road. We had issues and the matter was litigated. The then Attorney General in the APNU/AFC lost the case. The judgement was passed, and they refused to honour it. That is why the matter is being addressed here this afternoon. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: This is not repetition, Sir. I asked because the final judgement was made by the CCJ. Could the Hon. Member tell me who was the Attorney General who lost in both the first instance and the Court of Appeal? Could the Hon. Gentleman say that?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I cannot deal with that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Bishop Edghill: What I can tell you is the fact of the matter, that, as the Minister of Public Works in 2024, I am asked to ensure that the judgment of the court is upheld and that the

sums and interest accrued are paid on a judgment that was finally litigated and determined in 2019. I am asked to take care of that in 2024.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, this is a good time to put the question.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, in the very first section of my question, I asked how much they expended under this item and that was not answered.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister has been answering for the last few minutes.

Mr. Patterson: I did not ask...He went to the judgment as opposed to the...

Mr. Chairman: We cannot determine how he answers – whatever he answers, he answers.

Mr. Patterson: I am putting it again because it was unanswered.

Mr. Chairman: He has answered.

Mr. Patterson: Has he answered how much...?

Mr. Chairman: Over and over again... In some parliaments, the Minister would say that it is too expensive to answer that question.

Mr. Patterson: With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, when I started, I asked...

Mr. Chairman: Yes. With due respect to you, I am saying that I cannot determine how any Minister will answer.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Rehabilitation of Public and Main Access Roads – \$4,170,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Hinterland Roads – \$904,816,795

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I will start with the same thing. As of today, how much have you expended under this project code 1405200?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the entire \$5.51 billion that was appropriated by the Appropriation Act of 2024 has been committed. The sum that has been expended – which means, paid out – is \$2,006,767,760, representing 36.42%.

Mr. Patterson: This is critical hinterland infrastructure. Could I ask the Hon. Minister, for the Linden/Lethem

Corridor, which is currently almost impassable, how much of this \$904 million, if any, is committed to that corridor?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the first thing we need to dispel is an inaccurate statement. There were challenges during the flood in the Lethem/Linden Corridor. Sections of the road were washed out. A truck was caught in a section and there was a breakaway. Emergency teams and works were activated and the entire corridor is passable. As I stand here and speak, Minister, Mr. Bharrat, who is the Minister of Natural Resources and whose agency the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) also undertakes maintenance works on that corridor, having travelled the section that was under question in social media, reported that the GGMC with an experienced contracting firm in the area that has been there for years, MMC, has repaired the section that was slushy and traffic is moving through the entire corridor. We had problems.

To the Hon. Member, for the \$904 million that is being sought, I can tell him how it is going to be spent. We are going to be doing work – the construction of the main access road to Kamwatta Hill in Mabaruma. This means that the main internal roads in Kamwatta Hill Village, which are approximately 900 metres of laterite, will be upgraded to rigid pavements at a cost of about \$106.9 million. There is the rehabilitation of Kissing Rock Road in Mabaruma, Region 1. We are improving the main access to the Kissing Rock community. This is approximately two kilometres of laterite road which will be rehabilitated for \$24 million. There is the rehabilitation from Kumaka to Kwebana Road in Moruca. We are going to do additional work to the main access connecting Kumaka to Kwebana, laterite repairs for approximately 30 kilometres of road for \$91.5 million. There is the rehabilitation and construction of the main access road in Sugar Hill, Mabaruma, Region 1. The main internal road in Sugar Hill, which is approximately 850 metres of laterite road, will be upgraded to rigid pavement at a sum of \$74.54 million. There is the rehabilitation of Waramuri access roads in Moruca, Region 1 for \$91.5 million. That is the main access connecting Kamaka to Waramuri. There is the upgrade of the sand road to laterite, which is approximately 10 kilometres. We are improving the road. There is the rehabilitation and construction of the Waramuri waterfront in Region 1 for \$132.5 million. That is the main access of Sand Road waterfront to inside the village. This is a proposed rigid pavement of approximately 100 metres. This is what the money being sought will do. As I said, all that was budgeted was already committed.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Hinterland Roads – \$904,816,795 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

5.01 p.m.

Item 3:31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Sea and River Defence Works – \$1,585,890,623

Mr. Patterson: Project Code 1501400, what is your expenditure as it is for this project code?

Bishop Edghill: The total sum that was appropriated by way of the Appropriation Act of 2024 was \$4.5 billion. Today the expenditure is 74.4%. The projects that the supplementary that is being sought will be spent on is for works at Good Intent, Essequibo Coast, Region 2; Zeelandia, Wakenaam Island, Region 3; Waterloo, Leguan Island, Region 3; Anna Catherina, Edinburg, West Coast Demerara, Region 3; Garden of Eden, East Bank Demerara, Region 4; Kingston, Georgetown Seawall, Region 4; Essex and Concord, Mahaica, East Coast Demerara, Region 5; Belgium and Washington, West Coast, Berbice, Region 5; Crabwood Creek, Corentyne, Berbice, Region 6; and Nos. 61 and 62 Villages, Corentyne, Berbice, Region 6.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Minister say what portion of the \$1.5 billion is allocated for the Kingston Seawall?

Bishop Edghill: The answer is \$150 million. If the Hon. Member asking the question would have visited the Kingston Seawall, he would have seen that the beach is eroding. We are going to do some rock armour work and breakwater interventions to preserve the beach.

Mr. Patterson: Could I ask the Hon. Minister if any works catered for the wharf at Mabaruma in this project code?

Bishop Edghill: The answer to that question is no. This is Sea and River Defences.

Ms. Ferguson: Under this very project code I know, based on the explanation given in the remarks in the *Legend* that the moneys cater for additional resources to address emerging threats along our sea and river defence network. So, I guess these are new works that will be done. My question to the Hon. Member, through you, Mr. Chairman, is, what method of procurement will be used to effect these projects?

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Member for the question. We have completed 4,575 metres of sea defence, capital works, so far for 2024. The entire programme went out to public tendering and all that will be done with the

supplementary that is being sought, they will also go out to public tendering.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, earlier you provided the list of areas that will be benefitting from this \$1.5 billion. I noted that you did provide a sum for the Seawall, \$150 million. For the other areas, can you provide the disaggregated amounts that will take care of those other areas, please? Thank you. While the Hon. Member is trying to get his information, can he also share with us the length of works to be done in those areas too?

Bishop Edghill: Could I clarify, Mr. Chairman, whether the Hon. Member is asking for what the original capital was or the supplementary? This is because I already gave the areas where we are working with the supplementary.

Ms. Ferguson: The supplementary, Sir. You made reference to the seawall, some areas in Region 2, Region 3 – those areas.

Bishop Edghill: The engineers' estimates that I am guided by, the works that we going to do at Good Intent, Essequibo will cost around \$106,000,000; the work we are going to do at Zeelandia, Wakenaam will be just about \$95 million; the riprap work at Waterloo, Leguan, will be about \$179 million; the riprap defences at Anna Catherina, Edinburg, will be about \$128 million; the riprap defences at Garden of Eden, will be about \$166 million; the upgrade of sea defences and the incorporation of rubble mounds, breakwater and groins at the Kingston Seawall, you already got it but it is \$150 million; the riprap defences between Essex and Concord, Mahaica, will be about \$294 million; the construction of riprap sea defences between Belgium and Washington, West Coast Berbice, \$123 million; the construction of riprap sea defences at Grant 1651 Crabwood Creek, Corentyne, \$127 million; the construction of riprap sea defences at Nos. 61 and 62 Villages, Corentyne, Berbice, is just about \$150 million.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and thank you very much, Hon. Member. Perhaps, you missed the other part of the question. While you provided the sums that will be expended based on the engineers' estimates, I guess the estimates will also state the lengths of measured works that are expected to be done in those areas. In the interest of time, it would be good for the Hon. Member to lay over that information, please.

Bishop Edghill: I cannot lay over information I do not have with me. Information that I have with me I present it to the

House. The average section of these projects will be between 200 and 250 metres. Do you want the exact number for each?

Ms. Ferguson: It is taxpayers' money. They are tuned in, and they are listening.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please. The Minister is on the floor. If you have a Point of Order, you can raise that.

Bishop Edghill: The length of riprap defences at Zeelandia is about 120 metres. The construction of riprap defences structures at Waterloo is 250 metres; construction of riprap defences structures in Anna Catherina is 105 metres; construction of riprap defences at Garden of Eden, East Bank Demerara is 250 metres; the upgrading of sea defences and incorporation of rubble mould, breakwater and groins along the Georgetown Seawall is 550 metres; construction of riprap sea defences between Essex and Concord, Mahaica is 250 metres; construction of riprap sea defences structures between Belgium and Washington, West Coast Berbice is 150 metres; construction of riprap sea defences structures at Grant 1651 Crabwood creek, Corentyne is 180 metres; construction of riprap sea defences structures at Nos. 61 and 62 Villages, Corentyne is 225 metres.

Item 3:31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Sea and River Defence Works – \$1,585,890,623 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3:31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Stellings – \$159,230,878

Mr. Patterson: The project code you just put, Sir, additional resources to facilitate the completion of the Bartica stelling, \$159.2 million. Could I ask the Minister, with this provision, when will this stelling be completed? Secondly, how much has been expended thus far on this stelling?

Bishop Edghill: May I remind the honourable House that the Bartica stelling and its construction is a project that we inherited where almost the entire contract sum was paid to the contractor during the tenor of the Hon. Member asking the question. That contractor underperformed... [An. Hon. Member: Shameless.] ...or did not perform.

Mr. Chairman: Parliamentary.

Bishop Edghill: Did I say something wrong, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: No. One of your Colleagues.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. That contract which was entered into under the APNU/AFC tenure, where almost the entire contract sum was paid to the contractor and the stelling was

not built, was terminated. We went back out to advertise, and we have an award that went to a gentleman for a company, \$553.927 million. To date, we have paid out to the contractor \$262.092 million. The moneys that are being sought is for the completion, to take us right to the end. The work at the Bartica stelling has advanced significantly, even though it may not be to the satisfaction of the Ministry in terms of the rate of implementation. However, measures are in place to have it completed and the \$159 that is being sought is to pay for the completion, until the conclusion, minus the retention.

Mr. Patterson: Is this \$159 a variation to the existing contract or is it a new contract?

Bishop Edghill: This contract that I am referring to is a new contract. This is not the contract that was entered into, where almost all the money was paid to the contractor, and he did not deliver the work. This is a new contract. At this time as I stand, the work is about 63% completed. The \$159 is not for additional works, it for the contractor to be paid in keeping with the scope that he bid for the completion of the stelling.

5.16 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that in February, 2024, the Ministry did not anticipate that the contractor would be finishing this year and so they did not include any sums of money for it? That is what he is saying.

Bishop Edghill: We had a sum that was budgeted for stellings. During the year, because of an emergency nature, we wrote and got permission from the Ministry of Finance for the reprogramming of some of the moneys for some of the other stellings that needed to be addressed. This supplementary is to replenish the moneys that are required to complete Bartica.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Stellings – \$159,230,878 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Reconditioning of Ferry Vessels – \$680,467,304

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you, I know we had an initial budgeted sum of \$405 million for the reconditioning of ferry vessels. Could the Hon. Member inform the Committee whether the full cost has been expended to date? If not, what percentage of the \$405 million has been committed to date?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for the question. It was the entire sum, and that is why we are here for a supplementary. The reality is, we had to move

up some of these vessels for dry docking and emergency works. Due to their age, we were scheduling, in a phased manner, to ensure we that had enough vessels in service while we had those in dry docking to keep the system properly alive. We have had a number of instances where we had to move things around. This is what is required to make sure that we take care of those vessels so that all of us in this House, when we make our journey, could benefit from that service.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, I note that in his response not so long ago, he made reference to the vessels being placed into the dry docks for the necessary rehabilitation. My question to the Hon. Member is whether the dry dock at Mazaruni is being utilised by the Ministry.

Bishop Edghill: The answer to that is no.

Ms. Ferguson: Could you explain to the Committee why is it that the Ministry is not utilising the dry dock services at Mazaruni, or could you say whether the dry dock has been sold?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am advised by management that a good average of when last that dry dock was used is more than 15 years ago. Dry docking is not just a space, but you have to have the skills in-house. For you to maintain the skills that are required for dry docking for seasonal activities, it would be much more costly than going out. All the docking of these vessels has gone out to public tender. As a result of public tender, that is what we are doing. When we had emergency repairs, we had to use the known skills in a restricted manner to get the vessels going.

Ms. Ferguson: The Hon. Member just informed this Committee that the dry dock facility at Mazaruni has been out of commission for 15 years because he did not have the skills, but he did not answer the second part of my initial question. I asked whether the Government has since sold the dry dock facility at Mazaruni.

Bishop Edghill: The Government has not sold the dry-docking facility. If the Hon. Member has a proposal, she may submit it. I can tell you further that the size of vessels...and the Hon. Member was a Minister. You cannot take the MV Kanawan and the MV Sabanto into the Mazaruni River. You cannot take the MV Militia into...There are only two small vessels that could go into the Mazaruni docks. It has outlived its serviceability for the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD). We are buying bigger vessels. They cannot fit into the dry dock. So,

the issue here is that we have not sold it. It is still there and if the Hon. Member has a proposal about how we can develop it, we should discuss it.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, this seems to be a good time to put the question.

Ms. Ferguson: Not as yet, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, go ahead.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, just before I move to my other question, I have a follow-up question to the response given by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Which one of the responses? Is it about the selling?

Ms. Ferguson: It is the stellings.

Mr. Chairman: Is it the selling or stellings?

Ms. Ferguson: It is the stelling.

Bishop Edghill: We are finished with the stellings, Sir.

Ms. Ferguson: Sorry.

Bishop Edghill: We are at the vessels.

Ms. Ferguson: The rehabilitation of vessels. I am dealing with a headache at the moment.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I was at the selling of the facility.

Ms. Ferguson: Pardon me, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: I was at the selling of the facility. That was the last point.

Ms. Ferguson: Yes. I need to do a follow-up to the Hon. Member with regard to that facility. Could the Hon. Member inform the National Assembly what...

Mr. Chairman: Okay. This provision is for reconditioning of ferry vessels and not the Mazaruni dry dock.

Ms. Ferguson: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I will give you one last chance to get your final question.

Ms. Ferguson: So, the Ministry is now seeking a supplementary sum of some \$680 million plus dollars, and based on the explanation given here:

“The provision caters for additional resources to facilitate critical upgrading of vessels.”

Could the Hon. Member inform the Committee which vessels would be benefiting from these resources, and could he provide a disaggregation of the sums being sought?

Bishop Edghill: The vessels that are operated by the Transport and Harbours Department are well known. Right now, the MV Kimbia goes about seven knots. That is the speed. This means if it goes at seven knots, it increases the travel time; it is slower. We are going to spend about \$161.7 million to do the necessary repairs to get it back up to its speed so we can get faster movement.

With regard to the MV Sabanto, we are going to spend about \$82.5 million. We are losing money because there is a leak. The seals for the rudder stock glands are leaking and that is costing [inaudible] ... It is in-service, but we are losing money. We have to stop it at some time and get it fixed so we can start getting the savings there. The MV Kanawan is having some issues with the doors. I am sure some of us posted on social media about the vessel being docked at Supenaam and the trucks could not come off. It was because we were having issues with the doors. It has been used up and down. We need to get it fixed and we are going to spend about \$66.5 million to do some upgrades on the MV Kanawan to provide a better service. The MV Makouria and the MV Malali are to be docked to do full docking at \$140.68 million each. The ML Parakeet, which was built in 1958 and operates between the Mazaruni dockyard at the Bartica Stelling, we are going to spend about \$10 million to upgrade it and get it fixed. That is what we are asking for. It is to improve what we have.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member: when these vessels are in dock, what mechanisms are in place to ensure that services to our people are not fully disrupted?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member could have asked the question if there was a gap or an outcry because of lack of service. I just reported to this Committee that we are doing 133 trips more than what we were doing. The vessels have already been fixed in 2024 and there was no lack. This was because of management, strategic planning and organisation. We will fix the others but while we have one in and one out, it is about management and the needs... We know when it is paddy season. You cannot take certain vessels into work at a dockyard when we have the huge trucks with paddies coming to the coastland. We know when. The thing about it is, for these aged vessels...and there are times when you have to commend some of the public servants who work because some of these vessels are undergoing repairs while they are working. We have had companies like the Machine

Corporation of Guyana limited (MACORP) on the vessels looking after engines and gearboxes while they are working. We did not shut things down and say that it cannot work. We know the importance.

So, every effort is being made to ensure the service is continuous, acceptable and professional, and I also want to say, timely, because with the coming of the online booking... predictability. We have gotten rid of all the long lines and all the rest of it. The Hon. Member, Mr. Shurwayne Holder, would be able to tell you how he enjoys that service on a consistent basis because of what has been transpiring. So, we can assure you and all the people of Guyana that while we are fixing and upgrading, the service will continue. That is why we went ahead and saw the need for what was available in Guyana at the time, and we bought it, that is, the Hercules. It was because we saw what was happening and what was required. If we had gone overseas and purchased a vessel that would have come in 2025, your question may have arisen at that time. Thank you.

Item 3: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Reconditioning of Ferry Vessels – \$680,467,304 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister and your team for taking us through your head.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, may I take the opportunity to thank my team which has consistently lent support to ensure that our programmes are properly implemented. I thank the team, Sir.

5.31 p.m.

Current Estimates

Item 4: 38-381 Ministry of Labour – Policy Development and Administration – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$77,532,661

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, you had a voted provision of \$501,500,000. You are now seeking an additional \$77,532,000 and change. Based on the explanation given in the ‘Remarks’ column, it will cater for the Board of Industrial Training’s (BIT) outstanding payments. Could you say what outstanding payments the Board of Industrial Training has incurred?

Minister of Labour [Mr. Hamilton]: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As indicated, the provision is to deal with outstanding payments to trainers, outstanding payments to trainees and outstanding payments to people from whom we would have procured items.

The Board of Industrial Training’s programmes are for an average of four months. Let us assume, as I speak, we have set out our programmes for the year to execute. In September month, as is happening now, any group or village that come to us and recommend, propose or request training to be done, we would not deny them, because we are in September or October. Therefore, the case of this sum is: last year, in the third quarter, there were many groups in the hinterland, coastal and riverine communities which approached the Board of Industrial Training and recommended and proposed training be done. We executed those training. Of course, the Hon. Member would recognise that, by December, the cycle, moneys and cheques... We do not write cheques and hold them. So, these moneys are outstanding. It was additional training that was done but people could not be paid because of 31st December. We are trying to deal with those outstanding payments from 2023, for trainers, trainees’ stipend and for tools and equipment and all those kinds of things we would have procured from suppliers.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, you would agree with me that the budget for 2024 was passed in February, on 2nd February 2024 to be precise. What would have caused you, Hon. Member, not to factor in the outstanding payments in *Budget 2024*?

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, you do not factor in liabilities and unpaid accounts into your budget planning. The Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service and the Ministry of Finance’s team will tell you that this is a matter in which we were engaging the Ministry to get the necessary funds to deal with these unpaid accounts. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour... [**Ms. Ferguson:** (*inaudible*)] Mr. Chairman, let me go back again. You cannot forecast... Maybe this will help the Members over there. We are moving from a place where, under their government, they used to train 1,300 persons average per year to a place where, in four years, we have trained 12,470 persons. We are not at your standards. [**Mr. Jones:** Tell us where they are working now.] My God, where did you find these people from?

As I said when I started, we forecasted. We want to train 3,000 and we set out to train them. If in October an Indigenous community comes to the Ministry and the Board of Industrial Training and say that they want us to train 30 young people in two different skillsets, we would not deny them that. The programme will start. That is what we are attempting to do. You denied them that by (*inaudible*). We have moved the Board of Industrial Training 100 and odd

percent beyond what you used to do. [An. Hon. Member: When will they get the stipend?] When this is passed, they will get the stipend. This does not affect 2024 work. The 2024 work is ongoing. Training programmes are being executed through the length and breadth of this country. Trainers are being paid and trainees are being paid their stipends.

What we are dealing with is unpaid accounts for 2023 that went beyond, according to our forecast. I am saying that we will continue to do that. As I speak to you, as much as we forecasted, people and communities are still coming and demanding because the Board of Industrial Training is now visible for all the country to see, and they are requesting training. I am saying that we will never deny persons, whether they come September, October, November or December and ask the Board of Industrial Training to do training for young people in their communities. The \$77 million, as I said, is to pay persons in all 10 regions – trainers, stipend for trainees and moneys owed to persons who we might have procured personal protective equipment (PPE) and all the other things from.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister, for that very comprehensive explanation of this allocation.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, you said the \$77 million and change caters for payments to be made to trainers and trainees in all 10 administrative regions. Could you, for the benefit of this Committee say to us, from Regions 1 to 10, how many trainers and trainees we had per region and provide a disaggregated amount of...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it is a good question for a written response. Thank you. Hon. Members, I now...

Ms. Ferguson: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I now put this...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, no.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much. The Hon. Member stated that some of the moneys will go towards paying for items procured. Could he say, from this amount, how much will take care of the items procured, if it is food items and who were the suppliers? Could he provide that kind of information to us?

Mr. Chairman: “Who were the suppliers?”. That last part now would make me want to tell you to write for an answer. Hon. Minister, I give you a chance to respond.

Mr. Hamilton: Just to say, perhaps, if the Member understands how we execute these programmes, she would appreciate that in some instances, you give a contract – and Mr. Chairman you will be acquainted – to a trainer, and the trainer is responsible for procuring. The trainer is responsible for training. The trainer will make available their facilities to train. Therefore, when I disaggregate, it is that not necessarily a disaggregation in the context in which the Hon. Member is speaking. It is a disaggregation in the context that I have to pay this trainer so much money and within that, it is the trainer who will procure, if the trainer is doing a programme, let us say, welding and fabrication. The Ministry does not go out there and procure items. It is the trainer, based on the contract signed, who procures.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members...

Ms. Fernandes: Mr. Chairman, just this one question. I have not asked any question...

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

Ms. Fernandes: I have not asked for...

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

Ms. Fernandes: Mr. Chairman...

Item 4: 38-381 Ministry of Labour – Policy Development and Administration – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$77,532,661 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

[Mr. Chairman left the Chair.]

[Presiding Member, Presiding Member, assumed the Chair.]

Item 5: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Field Materials and Supplies – \$47,520

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Programme 39-392 – Social Services received more than \$45 billion in February, 2024. Chart of account 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies received \$19 million at that time; I think it was about six months ago.

5.46 p.m.

Now, for the same line item 6222, in the ‘Remarks’, it states:

“The provision caters for outstanding payments”.

Forty-seven billion dollars? Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown for the outstanding payments per sum? The second part is, could the Minister tell us what field materials and supplies, if they were already procured and where was it sent?

Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Dr. Persaud]: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Hon. Member. I am aware of what was given for the 2024 Budget, but this refers to 2019 and it is an outstanding payment that was not made. It is for the Hugo Chavez Centre and payment for field materials. Among those is pampers. I also want to make a little correction; it is \$47,000 and not \$47 million. Thank you, Hon. Member.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Mr. Chairman, I just want to get this correct. The Minister is saying that this payment was outstanding since 2019. We had a budget in 2020, one in 2021, one in 2022, one in 2023 and we had one just six months ago in 2024 with several supplementary. Could the Minister tell us why the outstanding payment was not made before?

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I would love to know why it was not paid in 2019 and 2020, too, but we are here now to have a look at it. Thank you very much.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: I see a significant increase in this supplementary for maintenance of buildings.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, I have not put that.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Presiding Member: I will now put...

Ms. Ferguson: No, Mr. Chairman.

Presiding Member: You do not say 'no' to the Chairman. You can request the floor. Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: Sorry. A simple question was put by my colleague and the answer given by the Hon. Member is unacceptable. The simple question we asked was: after five budgets of the People's Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/C) and several supplementary, why only now this \$47,000 was discovered and needs to be paid? Could you say to which companies or organisations these moneys were owed? Thank you very much.

Dr. Persaud: In answering the last part of that question, I would say it is well known that I cannot divulge the names of companies, but again, I would like to say that this could have been resolved in 2019, but the fact is, it is here now. Thank you.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, this is an amount of just over \$47,000. I will take the opportunity to put the question.

Item 5: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Field Materials and Supplies – \$47,520 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Presiding Member: Hon. Members, if you look at your document there, we have three other charts of accounts for the same agency code. Those are line items 6242 for the sum of \$854,070; line item 6243, \$1,600,385; and line item 6292, Dietary – \$1,216,470. These are small amounts, and I will propose to the Members that I put all three of these charts of accounts for your consideration and we will take it through that course. If you have a question under any chart of account, you will name which line item so that the Minister would be able to respond appropriately.

Item 5: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Maintenance of Buildings – \$854,070, Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$1,600,385, Dietary – \$1,216,470

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, through you, to the Hon. Member, line item 6292, Dietary. I note we had an approved sum of \$255 million. The Ministry is now seeking \$1.2 million and, based on the explanation given, it is to take care of outstanding payments. Hon. Minister, could you say for which period this money is outstanding and for what purpose?

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, it is for chart of account 6292.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. This again relates to 2019; this again relates to the same supplier; this again relates to the Hugo Chavez Centre, and it is dealing directly with dietary supplies. Mr. Chairman, maybe, there was not enough forecasting. It is important to always have our homes and shelters catered for. When we have small suppliers for small sums, it is always good to ensure these are honoured in a timely fashion, but here we are today to ensure that is done. Thank you very much for your question, Hon. Member.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Could the Minister tell us if any other expenses here, between line items 6222, 6242, 6243, 6292 and 6294 are before 2020?

Presiding Member: I will allow all except line item 6294. I have not put that. Go ahead, Minister.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you. I will answer the Hon. Member by saying that line items 6242, 6243 and the one we just

completed are all within the former Government's tenure, 2018, 2017 and 2019. None are within our period. It speaks to construction, janitorial and cleaning supplies as listed here, and these were not honoured. These are related to the Palms Geriatric facility and to the Hugo Chavez Centre. Clearly, maybe again, forecasting, planning and all of these things. All of them are well before 2020. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could I ask when this was discovered?

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Ramjattan, this was discovered over a period of time. As it was discovered, it is being cleared now. I am sure it was well known before 2020. Thank you very much.

Item 5: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Maintenance of Buildings – \$854,070, Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$1,600,385, Dietary – \$1,216,470 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5: 39-393 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Child Care and Protection – Other – \$390,040

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Could the Minister disaggregate the sum and tell us what these outstanding payments are for?

Dr. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Again, this speaks to the same supplier. It seems, for some reason, this supplier was not paid in 2019, even though there were subsequent budgets, and this involved items such as deodorants, toothbrushes, toothpastes and all for the persons housed at the Hugo Chavez Centre. The year was 2019.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Hon. Member, I recall that *Budget 2019* was passed in December. It might have been 15th December, 2018. The next budget was 2020. The next budget was 2020. [**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** There was no budget in 2019.] There was a budget in 2019 that came in 2018, but subsequent to that budget, we had the 2020 budget. To the Hon. Member, though we are dealing with outstanding payments, could you say to this Committee when exactly the supplier contacted the Ministry to claim these outstanding payments?

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you Hon. Member. This was a recent contact to us, and this was done very, very early in 2019. It came right after the 2018 Budget. Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, you said the supplier contacted you recently.

'Recently' is not a period. Could you say whether it was in the month of April, March, or February? That kind of information. Thank you very much.

Dr. Persaud: I am reliably informed by the technical team that we can get that period to you, but we have the GRNs dated at the same time in 2019.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, before you take the floor, we have a Member who is online that has been trying to get our attention for a while. I will allow Member Mahipaul to put his question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, are you hearing me?

Presiding Member: I am hearing you loud and clear, go ahead.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. May I ask the Hon. Minister to provide us with the company that was doing the supplies in 2019 when it claimed that they have to be paid? Nothing is wrong with naming the company, Sir, as you know, in keeping with the Procurement Act. We do not name people, but for the company, nothing is wrong with that. Could we have that name, please? I have a follow-up, Sir.

Presiding Member: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Precedent was set there before where we avoid naming individuals, but we are at liberty to disclose the names of companies doing business with the Government. Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Chairman and thank you Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul. This is a person that is so named who is supplying Hugo Chavez under the lines mentioned before. It is not a company and so I cannot give that name to you.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, with your permission, the supplier had to have a business registration that would have had the name of the company. If the person chose to register the company in his or her name, then that is by no fault or reason for us not to have that information. In keeping with the Procurement Act of 2003, section 10 (1) and (2), that information ought to be made public upon request. So, I am again asking the Hon. Minister to please comply with the law and name the supplier or the company to which it was registered.

6.01 p.m.

Dr. Persaud: Again, I reiterate, this is a person's name. We do not have a registered company. We do not have a name of a company. A person can be a supplier. I am merely following the precedent set today in the House and what has

been told to us in terms of giving names of persons. I am pretty sure that you would already know who the suppliers were and are because this was within the Government's tenure before us. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ferguson: Through the Chairman to the Hon. Member, I am following up for my last question asked with regard to when exactly the supplier came to claim these claims. The Hon. Member said that she will provide that information. What is of concern to me is that now this individual came and claimed for outstanding payments, what verification or mechanism...Do you have documentation to substantiate that the person supplied these items? Also, Could the Hon. Member be kind enough to lay over the information to us, please? Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: I am looking at all the documentations in front of me which includes a Goods Received Note (GRN) as well, which suggest that the items were provided and that there is everything right here. It states the Hugo Chavez Centre. It details all the items and if you like I can read out all these items to you. It is quite a lot. Would you like me to read it out because I have it right here? Mr. chairman, I think the point has been made.

Item 5: 39-393 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Child Care and Protection – Other – \$390,040,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Presiding Member: This brings us to an end of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. Thank you, hon. Minister for providing the answers to questions to the Minister.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, to my team. The Members who asked the questions, thank you.

Item 6: 44-444 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport – Sports – Security Services \$15,260,215

Ms. Ferguson: I note, the Ministry is asking for \$15.2 million and it will cater for outstanding payments. Could the Hon. Member inform the National Assembly the period for this outstanding payment? Thank you.

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport [Mr. Ramson]: I would like to thank the Hon. Member for her question. The period is 2019 just as my Cabinet Colleague, Minister, Dr. Persaud and it caters for the liabilities for that year for security services. I would not, on the other hand, just to be clear, level any aspersions on the team at the Ministry or any member of the Public Service about his/her projections,

capabilities or any fault of not providing the correct projections. I would not do that. It would not be appropriate for Members in this House – I want to make this very clear – to suggest that when supplementary are sought that there is a failure of projections because that then is levelled against the technical staff at the Public Service, which is something that we will not countenance on the Government side.

Presiding Member: Ms. Ferguson, do you have a follow up?

Ms. Ferguson: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Member state which locations of the Ministry the services were provided? At the said time, could you provide the name of the security service who provided such services? Thank you.

Mr. Ramson: I do not need staff on this because we have the details. Hon. Member, I can do more than give you the locations because questions have been raised about when the Ministry was notified about the period of the liability. I have a letter here from Mr. Christopher Jones during the time when he was Director of Sports. **[An Hon. Member: Hon. Member.]** Yes, Hon. Member but, at the time, he was not honourable. I was referring to the time when he was Director of Sport but he is current. I am saying the letter is from Mr. Christopher Jones as Director of Sport. He wrote to the Permanent Secretary to notify that there will be a shortfall. I would not want to cast any aspersions on him either about failure to give accurate projections. I would not want to do that. I would say other things.

To identify the locations Andrew Lewis Gym, National Aquatic Centre, National Sports Commission, Colgrain Pool, National Racquet Centre, National Gymnasium and the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall. All of which, every single portion of this supplementary is going to clean up the outstanding liabilities or as the Hon. Member, Mr. McCoy, referred to as 'the mess' that has been left by the A Partnership for National Unity/ Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC). Now, we have to come to this honourable House to take care of that but, at the same time, there is interrogation about whether the veracity of the process had been identified.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you. You did not answer the second part of my question; what is the name of the security service?

Mr. Ramson: I apologised to the Hon. Member. That slipped me while I was answering. The name of the security service is Radar Security Service and Supplies. I am sure

your Colleague, Hon. Member Mr Jones would be very familiar with the name of the security service too.

Ms. Ferguson: Through the Chairman to the Hon. Member; the Hon. Member made reference to a letter signed sometime by the Hon. Member, Mr. Christopher Jones, while he was Director of Sport. In that letter, you stated 'shortfall'. He wrote to the PS concerning the shortfall. Could you provide the National Assembly with the date of the letter and the period for the shortfall?

Mr. Ramson: I will do more than that for the Hon. Member. I am very happy to lay over a true and valid copy of the entire letter to the Hon. Member for her edification and information.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member just referred to a letter so I guess the Hon. Member could say to us the date of that letter and the period of the shortfall. I have my reason for asking because, as I said before, the last Budget of the Coalition Government was in December, 2018, for 2019.

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, would you want to offer an additional answer?

Mr. Ramson: No.

Presiding Member: Ms. Ferguson, the Minister has answered and has made known his intention to lay over a certified copy of the letter in its entirety to you.

Item 6: 44-444 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport – Sports – Security Services – \$15,260,215 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Estimates

Item 7: 45-453 Ministry of Housing and Water – Water Service Expansion and Management – Hinterland Water Supply – \$600,200,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: If you permit me Mr. Chairman, today being recognised as the international day for the World's Indigenous People. I would like to wish my Indigenous Colleagues, who are in this House, Indigenous people of Guyana and around the world a happy and safe Indigenous day. With that said, there are over 750 young Indigenous people presently in Kamarang having their annual district sports or games along with supporters, visitors from throughout the country. At the moment, they are not receiving or having access to potable water. My question to the Hon. Minister is, will this money that you are seeking from the House be able to complete the well at

Kamarang, Warwatta and Kako communities of which are not receiving water through their taps or houses today?

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]: This supplementary is for the drilling of 16 new wells in the hinterland and riverine communities, extension of a number of new water systems. In fact, this year alone, we have completed over 20 well systems which includes... I will come to the question because I will save all the follow up answers.

6.16 p.m.

The question was asked about some areas in Region 7, which includes obviously Jawalla and Quebanang for Region 7 which are a part of this year's 20 wells that we have completed. Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member would know... If the Hon. Member is honest, she will tell you that in Kamarang we drilled a well because the Hon. Member has shares in a hotel right near where the well is. Wells, sometimes when one attempts to drill a well it is like mining. One could be successful sometimes and unsuccessful the other times. It gives one productivity and sometimes it does not give one the level he/she desires. It is the same for Kamarang with the well that was drilled there.

The 20 wells that we will be drilling on the supplementary for this year will be in the following areas: two in the Mabaruma sub-district; one in Arakaka, which is in Matarkai; another well in Para, which is in the Moruca sub-region; five in Matthew's Ridge, Big Creek, Tassawini, Eyelash and Baramita. In the Region 2 area, wells will be at Wakapoa, Siriki, Kabakaburi. There will be another three in Region 3: Karia Karia, Santa Mission and Lower Bonasika Creek. The final one is a new well in Kamarang.

Mr. Chairman, just quickly, in 2020, access to potable water in Region 1 was at 38%, which is when we took over. In Region 7, 55%; Region 8, 55%; Region 9, 60%; and when Members take into consideration the riverine communities in Regions 2, 3, 10, Orealla 6, *et cetera*, 40%. Mr. Chairman, at the end of 2023, Region 1 moved from 38% to 79%; Region 7 from 55% to 70%; Region 8 from 55% to 87%; Region 9 from 60% to 94%; and the other regions where the riverine, *et cetera*, from 40% to 82%. As I speak, by the time we are finished 2024, Region 1 will be at 92%; Region 7 is expected to be at 92%; Region 8, 95%; Region 9, 97%; and the other riverine areas, 91%.

Presiding Member: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Ms. Hon. Member Dawn Hastings, do you have a follow-up?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Yes, Cde. Chairman. Thank you. My question was very specific to the communities of Kako, Warwata and Kamarang who are not receiving potable water presently. Is the Minister saying that there are no provisions made for these communities to have access to potable water at any time now? If not, when and where could we find that money to complete the projects?

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, do you want to offer any additional information?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I just said to you, we have \$1.5million. We have gotten another \$600 million now, which we are asking for. This is to ensure that we advance the water distribution to have 100% access by 2025. It therefore means, the areas who do not have access to potable water as yet will be as a priority for 2025. Under the Basic Needs Trust Fund, one of the communities that I called there is on that programme, which means it is going through the procurement process.

Presiding Member: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I read that to say that two out of three have been targeted. Are there any other questions? Go ahead, Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On the very line item, I note that the Ministry, through the Minister, is requesting an additional \$600 million. Could you say to the National Assembly whether this sum is sufficed and we will not see you returning to the National Assembly for additional sums when we are out from recess?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the additional \$600 million is to advance to ensure that we have 100% access to potable water across our country by 2025.

Item 7: 45-453 Ministry of Housing and Water – Water Service Expansion and Management – Hinterland Water Supply – \$600,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Estimates

Item 8: 47-471 Ministry of Health – Policy Development and Administration – Rental of Buildings – \$14,332,938

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could the Hon. Member [*inaudible*] whether these are new buildings that are being rented? If yes, where are they located? How many are they? Could we have a disaggregated sum of each of the buildings? If not so, if these are old buildings, why were they not catered for in the Budget that we passed in February? I know, previously, the

Minister said, rental of buildings we are talking about the storage bond, surveillance unit and staff quarters at the Infectious Unit, so I do not think you will come with that at this time. Let us get the information, Sir.

Presiding Member: Let us not try to pre-empt the Minister. Thank you very much, Hon. Member Dr. Cummings. Hon. Minister, proceed.

Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. The sum that we are seeking is for existing rentals that we have. These are liabilities so this is for a building that the Ministry has been renting at Camp and Charlotte Streets. I think Dr. Cummings would be fully aware of that building. This is to pay outstanding sums.

Dr. Cummings: A follow-up: I noticed there is a new spanking building, Mr. Chairman, where the Hon. Member is... I think that is where his office is located, so I am wondering if there is adequate space there so that some of the members could relocate there. Is it not possible? Is it?

Dr. Anthony: We have a new head office. I think that is what the Member is referring to and we have already relocated a number of persons who were in different places. We have relocated them but, unfortunately, the space is not enough. We are now building another building in the compound where the old Regional Health Office was, the regional services building. We have taken down that building and we are building a much bigger building there. Hopefully, at some future point, we will be able to bring more staff into the compound.

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that is sum stated...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: On the same line item, note you are requesting an additional \$14.3 million, for outstanding payments... Pardon?

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, could you proceed with your question, please? I am not sure the...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr...

Presiding Member: Yes. Go ahead.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, we are considering Agency 47-471, Ministry of Health – Policy Development and Administration, 6241 Rental of Buildings. You had an initial \$75 million, you are now seeking \$14.3 million for

outstanding payments. [An Hon. Member (Opposition): That is what it is saying here.] Yes. This is what I am reading. The provision caters for outstanding payments. Mr. Chairman, the question that I would like to put to the Hon. Member is, what period are the outstanding payments for?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. We are asking for \$435,000 and that is from a contract that we have had with National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) for the use of the Camp and Charlotte Streets building – \$435,000. To answer your question, it probably would be maybe for a month or two. I will have to do the computation.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, before you take the floor. Minister, I am just trying to get this clear with you because, under the chart of account 6241, it is stated here as description, rental of buildings, there is a voted provision of 75.6 and there is an amount now that is being sought of 14.3. In the remark's column, it stated:

“The provision caters for outstanding payments.”

The amount that the Members are questioning is \$14.332 million. Hon. Minister, proceed.

Dr. Anthony: The contract sum to NICIL is \$14,332,000 and we are seeking \$435,000.

Ms. Ferguson: Is there a typographical error there?

Presiding Member: Yes. Right, so Minister I just read what is in front of me and I think it is in front of all the Members. It states clearly here that the supplementary provision now sought is in the amount of \$14.3 million. I will allow Member Patterson to pose a question.

6.31 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Could I ask for your guidance now? The Ministry only wants \$400,000. This is \$14.3 million. Is the Minister going to amend his request? You can get up and amend your request.

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Member. That is why I sought clarification from the Minister. Based on the documentation in front of us, the amount we are being asked to approve is in the vicinity of \$14.3 million.

Dr. Anthony: We will seek guidance from the Ministry of Finance but, right now, this is what we are seeking.

Presiding Member: Thank you very much. I cannot put the question. I will be asking the National Assembly to approve

an amount that is stated before us – unless it is amended. If amended, I will put the amended sum for the Members' consideration.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, could you go with the sum that is stated on the Financial Paper?

Presiding Member: The document before me, Hon. Member, clearly states that, currently, the Ministry is seeking supplementary provision for the amount of \$14,332,938 under the Chart of Accounts 6241, Agency Code 47-471. I put the question that this sum stated stands part of the Schedule.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I understand your difficulty. For the records, could we ask what exactly is the Minister going to do with \$14.332 million and for whom is this outstanding payment? This is not a repetition, Sir. The Minister has one outstanding payment for over \$400,000. What is the Minister going to do with the \$13.9 million that you were about to put, Sir?

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, we have been renting a building from the NICIL. We will utilise the sums of money to continue the rental with NICIL because we have staff who are located there.

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, do you have a question?

Ms. Ferguson: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, with your permission, it will be good for us to probably move on to the other items until we get clarity. The Minister is requesting, based on information before him. The Minister is being honest. It is less than what we have here on the Financial Paper. There is no way we can proceed as this, Sir. I would like to suggest that we get clarity from the Hon. Dr. Singh. We can move on to the other items and then we will get the goodly Dr. Singh to clarify. Thank you.

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Member. The Chairman sought clarification from the Hon. Minister. The Hon. Minister has indicated to the Chairman that he is seeking the sum of \$14,332,938.

Ms. Ferguson: No. That is not what is said.

Presiding Member: I sought clarification from the Minister of Health who is answering. That is why I put the question that the sum being sought... Hon. Members, let us allow the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and Public Service to clear the air.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me make a contribution which I trust will be helpful in this matter. In the Ministry of Finance, we have – I am advised by my staff – a request from the Ministry of Health for an additional amount of \$14.332 million as is indicated in the Financial Paper. That is the amount for which we are now seeking a supplementary appropriation.

We maintain that request and trust that we will secure the approval and approbation of this Committee for the amount that we were advised is required. Were we to ascertain – in the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Health – that it is in fact not \$14 million but an amount lower than that, the balance will simply remain unspent. For the time being, the information that I have at my disposal is the additional amount that is required is \$14.3 million. Thank you very much, Sir.

Presiding Member: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I take the opportunity now with that clarification to put the question. Dr. Cummings, you have the floor.

Dr. Cummings: This is just for clarity and the *Hansard*. The amount of \$14,332,938 that is being sought, what period is it for? I do not know if the Minister or the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and Public Service could tell us what period we are talking about here.

Dr. Anthony: That would be for a year. That is the period that we are talking about.

Ms. Ferguson: This is a follow-up to my Colleague's question based on the response just provided by the Hon. Minister. You said for a year, what year – 2024 or 2023? As it is stated here in the Remarks, it caters for outstanding payments. Which year is it and for what period? There are 12 months in one year.

Dr. Anthony: As I said to Dr. Cummings, it caters for a year. It is looking at the year 2021.

Item 8: 47-471 Ministry of Health – Policy Development and Administration – Rental of Buildings – \$14,332,938 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8: 47-471 Ministry of Health – Policy Development and Administration – Security Services – \$12,367,266,000

Presiding Member: Hon. Members, while we are looking at this line item, I want to announce – judging by our numbers here, we are not going to have a break. We are going to go through so we can stagger our exits from the hall to have some refreshments. Dr. Cummings, you have the floor.

Dr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is for line item 6281, Security Services. I would like to know if there was change in the security service or is it the same? Why was it not budgeted for in the February Budget preparations which was passed? I am wondering, who the providers are; what is the rate per hour; and the reasons for this additional sum.

Dr. Anthony: These are sums of money for payments or liabilities incurred in early 2020. They are for two security companies.

Dr. Cummings: Just name the two – what are the two security companies?

Dr. Anthony: The two security companies are Brans Security Services and Strategic Action Security Limited.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, on the very line item, this is for 2020. Why only now? When were these outstanding payments discovered? [Mr. McCoy: Why did you not pay them?] You do not worry about why we did not pay. I am asking you a question – when were these outstanding payments put forward?

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, I would like to answer the question with another question of my own. This was incurred during your period of Government. Why did you not pay for them? Why did you not pay for them? These are liabilities coming back from your period. Therefore, you should have been paying them. You did not budget for them, but you are now asking me to account for your liabilities.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I would like to inform the Hon. Member....

Presiding Member: I would like you to ask the Hon. Member a question.

Ms. Ferguson: Based on the response just provided, I would like to provide clarity to this Committee. In 2020, the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government had no budget. Our last budget was for 2019 and it was passed in December, 2018.

Presiding Member: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, do you still request the floor? We are at Chart of Account 6281.

Mr. Patterson: I thought you would call for order before thing.

Presiding Member: I am hearing you loud and clear.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir. Could I ask the Hon. Minister – when was it discovered in his Ministry that there were outstanding liabilities which he said is from early 2020? When did his Ministry discover these outstanding payments due?

Dr. Anthony: In fact, I was happy to listen to the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson. The Hon. Member said the last budget of the APNU/AFC was in December, 2019. [Ms.

Ferguson: It was in 2018.] It cannot be 2018.

Presiding Member: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member said 2018.

Dr. Anthony: All right. Of the contracts that were entered – one was from January to December 2019. [Mr.

Patterson: (*Inaudible*)] You were liable because this was a whole year. This is a whole year where you had a contract in place that you signed and you did not pay the people. This is for a contract that was here and you did not pay anybody. Now, you are asking me why we are paying them. [Ms. **Ferguson:** (*Inaudible*)] Yes. We are now paying it. Now, we discovered them and are rectifying your errors. That is what we are doing.

Presiding Member: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Mr. Patterson, do you have a follow-up?

Mr. Patterson: This is not a follow-up, Sir. I asked when it was discovered by the Ministry of Health.

Presiding Member: Minister, would you like to offer any additional information?

Dr. Anthony: Not really.

Item 8: 47-471 Ministry of Health – Policy Development and Administration – Security Services – \$12,367,266 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

6.46 p.m.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control - Communicable Diseases – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$19,962,330

Dr. Cummings: I would like to ask the Minister, Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony, what drugs and medical supplies are being catered for under this heading? Of course, \$4,500,000,000 was the voted provision in February and now you are requesting \$19,962,330 more. What is it for?

Dr. Anthony: Again, this \$19,962,330 is for liabilities that we have, some of them dating back to 2018.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$19,962,330 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Field Materials and Supplies – \$339,740,000.

Dr. Cummings: In the light of the increase in the number of dengue cases, I am happy that you want to expand your work. However, could you give us some of the field materials and supplies that you are catering for under this line item?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much. One of the things that we are doing is increasing the testing for dengue. As of yesterday, the total amount of tests that we did was 30,022. If we compare that with last year, for the whole year we did 27,438 tests. What we are seeking here is additional resources. Apart from testing, what we want to do is increase fogging. What we are asking for, under this head, is to buy more of the chemicals that are required so that we can increase the rate of fogging in different communities across the country.

Mr. Patterson: Just for the fullness of explanation, the Minister said they have done 30,000 tests to date versus 27,000. Could you tell us the percentages of positive, confirmed cases this year versus last year?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much for that question. So far, this year with the 30,022 tests that we did, we had 7,977 positives. Of those that were positive, we had 893 persons who were admitted to hospital. When we compare that with last year, we had 7,925 new cases, for that whole year. Of those we had, 1,236 persons who were in hospital. So last year, 27,438 tests, of which we had 7,925 cases, and of those cases 1,236 persons were hospitalised. This year 30,022 tests so far, as of yesterday, of which we had 7,977 cases and of those 873 were in hospital.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Field Materials and Supplies – \$339,740,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Fuel and Lubricants – \$60,000,000.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Fuel and Lubricants –

\$60,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$7,664,921.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Minister state what these outstanding payments cater for? It is on the record.

Dr. Anthony: These sums are for liabilities that were incurred from 2019.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$7,664,921 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$13,020,400.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I have some concerns. This thing is strange with these outstanding payments and outstanding payments. Anyway, let me move to my question. Chart of Account 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence; the Hon. Member is asking for \$57,000,000.

Presiding Member: That is not correct, Hon. Member. We are on Chart of Account 6261 and the sum being sought is \$13,020,400. So if you do not have a question, I will now put the question.

Ms. Ferguson: All right.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$13,020,400 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Presiding Member: I am allowing adequate time for questions Hon. Members.

Capital Estimates

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Equipment – Medical – \$230,515,000.

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Chair, under this chart of account 2509000, Equipment – Medical, the voted provision was made in February for \$23,500,000 and now – Am I correct? – \$230,515,000 is being sought. I know it is for the expanded dengue work program. Could the Minister tell us what type of equipment we are talking about here? How

many are they? Where will they be placed? Is it for national or regional level?

Dr. Anthony: The Vector Control operates centrally, and getting them out to the different regions sometimes can be problematic. So, what we will be doing here, in every Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDC), is giving them a fogging machine and teaching them how to fog so that we do not have to send teams to every NDC to do that. The chemicals that we just passed, we will be teaching them how to use it and we will be able to distribute that. What we have in this provision here is 57 mounded thermal fogging machines, 46 swing-fog machines, 161 ultra-low volume (ULV) aerosol backpack sprayers, and we will be procuring 163 of another set called SG 20 manual backpack sprayers. We are also procuring personal protective equipment (PPE), meaning helmets, long boots, gloves, masks and so forth for 753 persons.

Item 8: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Equipment-Medical – \$230,515,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Estimates

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Rental of Buildings – \$1,920,000.

Dr. Cummings: Chart of account 6241, Rental of Buildings: the Minister alluded to this department, [*inaudible*] Regional Health Services. They have dismantled their building – demolished. Are they renting other buildings? In the remarks section states, “caters for outstanding payments.” Is it previous payments or is it after February when the budget would have passed?

Dr. Anthony: This is a building that the Ministry is renting in Linden, and this is from a rental from 2017 and 2018. So, this is paying those outstanding liabilities to the person who the Ministry had rented from, in Linden.

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Rental of Buildings – \$1,920,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Maintenance of Buildings – \$7,800,000

Dr. Cummings: This chart of account 6242, under the caption Maintenance of Buildings, the voted provision in February was \$50,000,000 and now \$7,800,000 is being sought. Could the Hon. Minister tell us where this preventative maintenance of building was done?

Dr. Anthony: This again is for outstanding liabilities to a contractor who did work on the Festival City Polyclinic. That contract started in 2018, so this is outstanding liability.

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Maintenance of Buildings – \$7,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

7.01 p.m.

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$30,000,000

Dr. Cummings: Yes, Mr. Chairman. With regard to chart of account 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies, in February the voted provision was \$40 million. At this time, the supplementary is almost the same, which is \$30 million. Did the Minister not know there would have been extra liability at the time and catered for it under that provision for the period of February? Was it a lack of vision? I do not want to say incompetence, but he did not think of...

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, it is not a lack of vision or mismanagement on my part because this here is \$30 million that was incurred in 2019 for chemicals that were purchased from a company you did not pay. So, we are now paying those sums.

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$30,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$22,128,341

Item 8: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$22,128,341 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

[Mr. Chairman resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are at chart of account 6221.

Item 8: 47-476 Ministry of Health – Standards and Technical Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$67,452,079

Item 8: 47-476 Ministry of Health – Standards and Technical Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$67,452,079 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 51-511 Ministry of Home Affairs – Policy Development and Administration – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$12,751

Mr. Chairman: I now put the question that the sum stated for chart of account 6221 stands part of the Estimates. Those in favor say aye... Sorry. Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just wanted to know if you could take the whole bracket there because there are some big item numbers and from what I am hearing now, they have been outstanding for the period of 2019.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. Your period.

Mr. Ramjattan: Whatever it is, I want to ask a question on Security Services – \$5,222,298.

“The provision caters for outstanding payments.”

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, when you say the bracket, most of...

Mr. Ramjattan: It is agency code 51-511.

Mr. Chairman: ...all right. All of the rest might be the same thing, which is outstanding payments.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. That is right. I just wanted to know whether these were outstanding payments for...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: ...what period of time you are talking about here.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, go ahead.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Benn]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These payments began from 2020 and have been outstanding from the beginning of that year?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. Could you kindly say, for example, the \$5,222,298 was an outstanding payment to whom?

Mr. Benn: Those particular ones are for Kalibur Security and Brans Security Services.

Mr. Ramjattan: These amounts were, as discovered, unpaid from when?

Mr. Benn: Both of these payments were for 2020 and those were unpaid accounts which we inherited at the Ministry.

Mr. Ramjattan: The important point here is that you inherited it in 2020. Did you make any attempt to pay them off in 2021, 2022 and 2023?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for his question. We are now bringing the accounts to the House for overwhelming, inherited outstanding payments which were not made. There was a lot of effort being placed into assuring that, in fact, these payments had integrity, that they were valid. We spent quite a lot of time, and we have been assailed by the vendors and the service providers in respect of these accounts. The risk has always been, perhaps with these long outstanding inherited accounts, that persons were saying that they would be faced with bankruptcy, they would have to sell their houses, cars, and all of those kinds of things. Having done a thorough scrubbing of these accounts, we have arrived at the position where basically we are saying, and we find ourselves perhaps in an invidious position of having to defend the former Government's and the former minister's, management of this matter. So, I am saying clearly, we find ourselves in the invidious position of having to defend you.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. I do not need defending. This is an institution.

Mr. Benn: Are you allowing me to answer? I find myself in the invidious position of having to defend you...

Mr. Ramjattan: You cannot come here and say that.

Mr. Benn: ...my predecessor.

Mr. Chairman: You are not defending me, but you are speaking to me.

Mr. Benn: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, the accounts were scrubbed, reviewed, discussed, and argued over, until we established a position where we could go ahead to some finality and respect of paying people who are in precarious positions in respect of their finances and their businesses.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Benn: All of these things here...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is that basically then for all those outstanding payments, from 2020 they started?

Mr. Benn: No. I am saying generally they are outstanding, and they are overwhelming. Most of them are for previous Government's [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Ramjattan: I would like to...

Mr. Chairman: I want to say let us do it as you said. Let us take it by bracket.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. The bracketed one.

Item 9: 51-511 Ministry of Home Affairs – Policy Development and Administration – Print and Non-Print Materials – \$136,288; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$82,299; Telephone and Internet Charges – \$1,417,000; Security Charges – \$5,222,289; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$74,100; Other – \$11,664,197; Refreshment and Meals – \$35,737

Mr. Chairman: The only one there that you may also want to ask about is the \$11 million.

Mr. Ramjattan: The \$11 million was the next one I was coming to.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is Kalibur Security with the sum of \$5 million and the \$11 million...

Mr. Chairman: And Brans Security Services.

Mr. Ramjattan: ...is for Other. Who had to be paid there from 2020?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, go ahead. We are at chart of account 6284.

Mr. Benn: For chart of account 6284, it was for Western Scientific Company Limited. The accounts were liabilities that began for the year 2018, in the term of the person who is now asking me the question, to deal with the idiosyncratic way in which he managed the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please. Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: What period of time was this sum of \$11 million accrued?

Mr. Benn: It was accrued from 2018 to 2020.

Mr. Ramjattan: The verification was done by whom, that indeed Western Scientific Company Limited has to be paid \$11 million?

Mr. Benn: The Ministry has auditors. The Ministry had its senior people go through those accounts. The accounts were moved around to identify what backed their requests, in terms of payments, and this is what we have arrived at.

Mr. Ramjattan: When was the first time the Ministry, after the Coalition Government, became aware that indeed all of this money was outstanding?

Mr. Benn: I am not sure I understand the question from the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to know if the people did not ask for their money in 2020 or 2021. Why have you brought it in 2024?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure why the Hon. Gentleman is shouting on matters relating to his own...

Mr. Ramjattan: This is very suspicious.

Mr. Benn: Could we have a...?

Mr. Ramjattan: This is very suspect.

Mr. Benn: That is why we have now brought it here. Mr. Chairman, there was the Ministry of Public Security. There was a separation for some aspects of that ministry. There was a Ministry of Citizenship. Some of these accounts come over from the Ministry of Citizenship in respect of the numbers that we are not seeing.

Mr. Ramjattan: I still have not gotten the answers to when it was, for example, the Western Scientific Company Limited or Kalibur Security indicated to your Administration that they are owed these moneys. Why was it not paid earlier?

Mr. Benn: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: This is the third time, Hon. Minister and you would be...

Mr. Benn: I know it is really the same answer.

Mr. Chairman: I think we have exhausted the answer.

Mr. Benn: The honourable gentleman did not pay so the accounts had to be proved and verified. At the time when we came in, we had to deal with challenges and issues related to some of those accounts. We have now come to the position where we could go forward with movement on them and to avoid people's businesses going bankrupt. This is what we inherited.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could we then get a schedule of all those who are owed outstanding moneys and from when? That could ease the whole situation for this National Assembly.

Mr. Chairman: That request/question is being put...

Mr. Ramjattan: For everything.

Mr. Chairman: ...for now, at this moment.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: As the youngsters would say, 'atm'.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, it is my position that we have come now, and that we should agree or not agree on the documentation of these requests for supplementary to deal with matters which were some years ago and which did not begin in our time, in the time of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government. I do not have a big difficulty in giving some information in respect of these, but I know that there has been a recent concern of persons being leveraged in respect of information relating to their accounts.

7.16 p.m.

I do not want us to find ourselves in that position, where we are accused of facilitating a continuing situation where, perhaps I understand, people are being made demands on in respect of past accounts.

Mr. Ramjattan: I could appreciate. This comes as a big surprise to me. There is a bureaucracy there that ought to have been known since after the Administration. All I am asking is for these big amounts like \$278 million in Dietary later on for the police and all of that... Could you give an account as to who have to be paid these moneys and for what period of time they were outstanding for? That would suffice for me, because this is strange.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member, especially for the big accounts, do you have that information that you can...?

Mr. Benn: We can provide them with some of the information, but I am getting upset that the gentleman is asking me, when he had the bureaucracy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please. You could be getting upset but he has a right to ask the question...

Mr. Benn: ...on his indiscretions as a Minister?

Mr. Chairman: He has a right because we have come here today with a request for as much as half of a billion dollars in one head. It just did not drop out of the air. It has to have some back up in front of your staff, as to how it will accumulate ...

Mr. Benn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will provide the honourable gentleman with the information to satisfy his newfound interest in these accounts.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we have to be fair. We have an amount here in one head for \$572 million. What we are being told is there is no breakdown of this head aggregating to half of a billion dollars?

Mr. Benn: No. Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I never said or I never suggested that there is not any breakdown. You said that I have in front of me information relating to these accounts.

Mr. Chairman: All that the Hon. Member is saying, for the big sums give us an indication.

Mr. Benn: Yes, we will give him an indication.

Mr. Chairman: When? Now or later?

Mr. Benn: Well,...

Mr. Ramjattan: He could send it to the Parliament because it will be...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think the Hon. Member has been extremely fair to say that he is prepared to deal with all these brackets here, get through all of these chart of accounts, and if he can get some indication on the big items. That is all he is saying.

Mr. Benn: Let me try to call out some of the big items.

Mr. Chairman: I can help you with some of the heads, instead of having the Hon. Member to move up and down.

Mr. Ramjattan: The one on \$135,782,592 – Vehicle Spares and Service under the Guyana Police Force.

Item 9: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force – Field Materials and Supplies – \$48,611,557; Office Materials and Supplies – \$34,376,464; Print and Non-Print Materials – \$27,102,730; Fuel and Lubricants – \$20,909,751; Maintenance of Buildings – \$18,295,466; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$40,546,164; Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$17,000,000; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$57,179,589; Vehicle Spares and Services – \$135,782,592; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$9,112,848; Equipment Maintenance – \$507,568,799; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$51,543,175; Other – \$70,099,573; Dietary – \$278,592,642; Other – \$91,140,000

Item 9: 51-513 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Prison Service – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$2,108,479; Other – \$2,521,053.

Item 9: 51-515 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service – Field Materials and Supplies – \$522,239; Rental

of Buildings – \$1,950,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$446,500; Vehicle Spares and Services – \$10,678,670; Equipment Maintenance – \$160,000; Other – \$4,300,000; Refreshment and Meals – \$4,500,000

Mr. Chairman: Give us the agency code number and chart of account.

Mr. Ramjattan: Chart of account 6264 and agency code number 51-512.

Mr. Chairman: \$135,782,592.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, that is a big one. Then, the \$500 and ...

Mr. Benn: Chart of account 6264, \$135,782,592, outstanding payments...

Mr. Ramjattan: Sir, I know there will certainly be difficulties here. All I am asking for is, in a written answer, could he set out the schedule in relation to all these amounts of more than \$25 million and explain when it was? If it was 2020, or 2017, or whenever, get me the names of the people. I would like to know because this is taxpayers' money and it is coming up four years after. That is all I am asking for. It will take some time.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, the outstanding amounts for vehicle spares began in the year 2020 to 2023.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, that is what I want. Do not tell me that the outstanding was with my Administration alone. The whole Police Force is [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Ramjattan: Sir, rather than embarrass whatever institution it is – the Guyana Fire Service has some problems – I am asking if he could do that in a written form and explain to us the time between when the outstanding payment happened and also to whom they are going to pay the moneys. I hope they are not paying their friends and families.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I already said I will give the information. He requested it in written form. I will do so but again I say, the only person or political entity which is embarrassed in this matter basically, is on the other side.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, gentlemen. Hon. Members, I have the Hon. Member, Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul to ask a question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister say if, from the sums there, the payment that is outstanding for Lyken's Funeral Home is catered for?

Mr. Benn: I am not sure that we are at that line item. I do not know what is the special interest that the Member has in it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member,...

Mr. Benn: We are jumping all over the place now.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, to be fair to the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan...

Mr. Benn: No, I am finished with Mr. Ramjattan. I am talking about Mr. Mahipaul's question.

Mr. Chairman: When you used they, I assumed they comprised Mr. Mahipaul and Mr. Ramjattan. Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, it is hard to pick out a particular payment. As indicated by the Hon. Member, Mr. ...

Mr. Benn: I will answer on Member Mahipaul's question. It started in 2019.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, ...

Mr. Chairman: Not as yet, Mr. Mahipaul. Hold on.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sorry.

Mr. Benn: In 2019. Someone said something about friends and family, so I [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, Sir, the signal is giving me some trouble. I was capturing the question on the Guyana Police Force. I was focussing on chart of account 6284 or 6294. At the Lyken's Funeral Home, a report was done, and it was submitted. In fact, today marks one year since they raised the matter. The report captured from 2018 to 2021, not receiving payment. Could the Hon. Minister say what is the sum in this amount, that is going to be paid to Lyken's Funeral Home, for the services rendered to the Guyana Police Force?

Mr. Benn: We are trying to get the number. Mr. Chairman, I am glad Mr. Mahipaul identified specifically the period under which this liability was incurred.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Members, the Minister will endeavour to produce the breakdown as requested by the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You are welcome.

Item 9: 51-511 Ministry of Home Affairs – Policy Development and Administration – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$12,751; Print and Non-Print Materials – \$136,288; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$82,299; Telephone and Internet Charges – \$1,417,000; Security Services – \$5,222,298; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$74,100; Other – \$11,664,197; Refreshment and Meals – \$35,737 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force – Field Materials and Supplies – \$48,611,557; Office Materials and Supplies – \$34,376,464; Print and Non-Print Materials – \$27,102,730; Fuel and Lubricants – \$20,909,751; Maintenance of Buildings – \$18,295,466; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$40,546,164; Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$17,000,000; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$57,179,589; Vehicle Spares and Services – \$135,782,592; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$9,112,848; Equipment Maintenance – \$507,568,799; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$51,543,175; Other – \$70,099,573; Dietary – \$278,592,642; Other – \$91,140,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 51-513 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Prison Service – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$2,108,479; Other – \$2,521,053 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 51-515 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service – Field Materials and Supplies – \$522,239; Rental of Buildings – \$1,950,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$446,500; Vehicle Spares and Services – \$10,678,670; Equipment Maintenance – \$160,000; Other – \$4,300,000; Refreshment and Meals – \$4,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 51-517 Ministry of Home Affairs – Customs Anti-Narcotics – Maintenance of Buildings – \$2,010,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 51-517 Ministry of Home Affairs – Customs Anti-Narcotics – Maintenance of Buildings – \$2,010,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I really want to thank the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, for proposing to deal with these heads in the bracketed way, as he said and the Hon. Minister and his staff for taking us through these Estimates. Thank you.

Hon. Members, I have to move now to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General's Chambers. I do not see the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs. I do not know if the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service will cover for the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: I can tell you Sir, the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs is in the House and we are contacting him to get into the Dome now.

Mr. Chairman: In the meanwhile, I want to invite the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan's attention to the Guyana Defence Force. Would we go ditto on this? The Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira is online. I think she is prepared to answer online. Just for an acknowledgement.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: She is online. We will come to you just after the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Standing by is the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Ms. Parag. I note some of her staff here.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, just for guidance, we will also put this as one head.

Mr. Chairman: The Guyana Defence Force?

Mr. Jones: Yes, the Guyana Defence Force.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. We are asking the Hon. Minister, Ms. Sonia Parag to be ready.

7.31 p.m.

Item 10: 52-523 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Attorney Generals Chambers – Other – \$100,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, I note here that you are requesting \$100 million and the purpose for this request is to take care of legal fees for arbitration. Could you say what are the cases or what were the cases for arbitration? Perhaps, you could give us the disaggregated amount that the \$100 million will take care of.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Sir, the House is aware that under the APNU/AFC Government a disastrous, calamitous and

scandalous parking meter contract was entered into by the Georgetown Mayor and City Council (M&CC), led by the APNU/AFC elected officials on that Council. The population is very familiar with the facts and circumstances that surrounded that very controversial contract. It brought out hundreds of Guyanese on the streets of Georgetown. We, in the Opposition, had appealed to the Government and the Georgetown Mayor and City Council not to enter into this agreement because it would expose us to millions and millions of dollars of liability. However, our sagacious admonitions fell on deaf ears, and they proceeded recklessly to enter into this contract.

We have since been sued at an arbitration centre in Washington DC called the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). We had to retain a battery of lawyers to defend this arbitral claim. The claim is against the State of Guyana to the tune of US\$100 million in damages for compensation in respect of this contract. We have since retained a law firm in Washington DC. We have been paying for the legal services rendered. We have already paid nearly US\$1 million, and the case has not yet reached the trial stage. This sum of money is to continue the payment of legal fees in respect of that arbitration.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, through you, I heard he made mention that the Government retained the services of a law firm in the United States of America (USA). Would he be kind enough to share with the House the name of that law firm?

Mr. Nandlall: Certainly. The law firm that we initially retained was Foley Hoag Limited Liability Partnership (LLP). The particular partner in Foley Hoag LLP retired from the firm. We continue retaining that particular lawyer who has now moved on and established his own law firm called Reichler and Associates. The lawyer is Mr. Paul Reichler, possibly the most distinguished lawyer in the world. He is also leading our team in the Venezuelan border controversy.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I do not have any other questions to persecute the Hon. Member. Thank you very much, Sir.

Item 10:52-523 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Attorney Generals Chambers – Other – \$100,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much, Attorney General.

Mr. Nandlall: Annette, it is an APNU liability we are fetching.

Mr. Chairman: That was a parting shot from the Attorney General.

Item 11: 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$1,582,503; Field Materials and Supplies – \$2,061,562; Office Materials and Supplies – \$6,221,938; Print and Non-Print Materials – \$3,920,194; Fuel and Lubricants – \$2,860; Rental of Buildings – \$24,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$5,367,249; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$1,433,876; Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$1,238,995; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$294,021; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$26,079,350; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$108,414,833, Telephone and Internet Charges – \$2,188,000; Water Charges – \$205,317; Security Services – \$65,888; Equipment Maintenance – \$2,724,904; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$1,415,670; Other – \$1,756,380; Dietary – \$193,490,618; Other – \$25,347,886; Training (including Scholarships) \$897,770

Mr. Chairman: I had an indication from the Chief Whip that these are all outstanding payments, and they will proceed, similarly, as we did with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I refer to line items 6284 and 6294, Other, could the Hon. Minister indicate or provide a breakdown on what are the outstanding payments and does this include payments for the black box that was sent? This is the black box in the fatal helicopter crash. Could she also indicate when could we expect the completed analysis report?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member is online, but remember, she has to consult with her staff too. She went off.

Ms. Manickchand: The Opposition Chief Whip is saying she is messaging. It looks like she is trying to come on, but it might not be coming through, so you could check that, please, failing which, I could call her and she could answer through my phone, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Could you contact her?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes. I can contact her.

Mr. Chairman: Please do.

Dr. Singh: I have confirmed that the Hon. Minister is online, is speaking and is attempting to answer the question, but apparently, her audio is not coming through.

Mr. Chairman: What we could do is call her on *WhatsApp*, put on the microphone and... She is online. I am seeing her online. She is speaking, but no audio is coming through.

Ms. Manickchand: So, just to be clear again, the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip who is to answer, is prepared to answer, is attempting to answer through the parliamentary technological system and it is not coming through, so I am going to put her on speaker and she is going to answer through my telephone.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, very much, Hon. Minister, Ms. Manickchand. I heard what Hon. Member, Ms. Geeta Chandan-Edmond asked. However, I do not have a subhead, and, therefore, I do not know what she is talking about a black box.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Teixeira: This is [*inaudible*] payments... Hello?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Chairman: We put the entire agency code and she identified line items 6284 and 6294.

Ms. Teixeira: Well, I did not hear her, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: That is okay.

Ms. Teixeira: Am I on and are you hearing me now?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Go ahead. Do you still have her on speaker, Hon. Minister, Ms. Manickchand?

Ms. Teixeira: No, I am not, the phone cut off.

Mr. Chairman: We are hearing you now. It is line items 6284 and 6294.

Ms. Teixeira: These are outstanding, as I tried to say earlier. These are outstanding payments from 2006 to 2012 and 2017 for the Guyana Defence Force (GDF). So, that is number one. I am advised by the GDF that these payments for 2006 to 2012 were known and that they had sought to get funds to cover them in 2017. They were able to get part of the money in 2017 to pay some of the outstanding amounts for 2006 to 2012, however, they still needed additional money. If we are looking at the head totally, for example, and I will come to the question by the Hon. Member. The sum of \$2005.8 million was outstanding payments for 2006 to 2012 and \$178 million for 2017. This additional amount of money was not catered for in the Budgets of 2017, 2018, 2019 and so

forth. So, this is an attempt to clear these outstanding amounts that were there for quite a long time. As I said, the Guyana Defence Force did make a request in 2017 to try to cover 2006 to 2012. They tried several times, according to them, but they were unable to get the funding to do that.

In relation to line item 6284, Other, the question had to do with some bus. Line item 6284 has to do with outstanding payments which totals, if I am looking at the right one, \$1,417,000. Sorry, it is \$1,756,380. This has to do with the rental of some of the tables, chairs and tents for various activities that have been held in that period of 2006 to 2012. There was no such expenditure under 2017 that is a liability. There is nothing under line item 6284 regarding a black box or any other box. This is to do with the rental of tables, chairs, tents and those kinds of things for holding events. I am not clear on the question for line item 6292, Dietary. Line item 6292 has to do with dietary. Again, these are dietary issues. Did she ask about line item 6294? That is \$25 million. So, when we go to line item 6294, it is all dietary – \$193 million total, of which \$103.3 million was for 2006 to 2012 and \$90 million for 2017. When we come to line item 6294, which we are asking for \$25.3 million in order to close these outstanding liabilities.

7.46 p.m.

There were none under this head for 2017 except a very small amount under Dietary for... Sorry 6294, again, yes Dietary. It was \$90 million. So, line item 6294 is all things like uniforms, items to do with sports care, funerals, parades, medical bills, *et cetera*, that may have had to cover. Under 'Other', for 2006 to 2012 it was a total of \$5.3 million and the balance was 2017.

Mr. Chandan-Edmond: Mdm. Minister, I was referring to the fatal helicopter crash.

Ms. Teixeira: Were you hearing me Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we heard you clearly and the Hon. Member is on the floor with respect to one of the parts of the question.

Mr. Chandan-Edmond: Are you hearing me Minister?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, I am. Thank you.

Mr. Chandan-Edmond: Okay, I was referring to the fatal helicopter crash where some of our servicemen died. My question was whether the amount claimed here will include payments for the analysis of the black box that was sent? Could you also indicate to us when we could expect the completed analysis report?

Ms. Teixeira: I believe those are in the hands of the Civil Aviation and those bodies that would have to do with inspection of crashes. Out of that, it would lead to whatever follow-up action by the Government or the GDF. I am not aware that the final inspection or what is called the examination and report regarding the crash in the helicopter, which took place, is completed. It could be, but I am not aware of it. That question is a little premature in that these inspections, analysis of crashes, are not usually done quickly. As far as I am aware, this is all to do with outstanding payments, nothing to do with current, Mdm. Geeta.

Mr. Chandan-Edmond: I refer to line item 6302, the voted amount is \$400 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Is it 63 what?

Mr. Chairman: It is 6302.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes.

Mr. Chandan-Edmond: Could you indicate whether the additional \$25 million caters for only ongoing training or does it include payments for new or additional courses that may have been contemplated upon, say cybersecurity...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, again this thing says outstanding, not new – outstanding payments.

Mr. Chandan-Edmond: Does it include payments for only ongoing courses then?

Ms. Teixeira: Obviously she is correct, it is Training Including Scholarships. This is to do with outstanding payments of 2006 to 2012, with regards to what may have been training with the aircraft owners and local training.

Item 11:53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$1,582,503; Field Materials and Supplies – \$2,061,562; Office Materials and Supplies – \$6,221,938; Print and Non-Print Materials – \$3,920,194; Fuel and Lubricants – \$2,860; Rental of Buildings – \$24,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$5,367,249; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$1,433,876; Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$1,238,995; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$294,021; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$26,079,350; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$108,414,833; Telephone and Internet Charges – \$2,188,000; Water Charges – \$205,317; Security Services – \$65,888; Equipment Maintenance – \$2,724,904; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$1,415,670; Other – \$1,756,380; Dietary – \$193,490,618; Other – \$25,347,886;

and Training (including Scholarships) \$897,770 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: We are looking for the Hon. Prime Minister to move the suspension to go beyond 8 o'clock and to complete our business.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, may I, with your permission, move the...

Mr. Chairman: Wait, there is a formal question giving the particulars, so we will resend it to you.

Dr. Singh: Very well, Sir.

Suspension of Standing Order No. 9

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Order No. 9 be suspended to enable this Sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 8.00 p.m. and, if necessary, beyond mid-night to allow for the continuation and conclusion of the consideration of the Financial Paper No. 2 of 2024 and for the First, Second and Third Readings of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 12 of 2024.”

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]

Dr. Singh: Permit me, Sir, on behalf of the Hon. Chief Whip to move that the National Assembly agrees to suspend Standing Order No. 9 and temporarily amend the Resolved Clause of Resolution No. 2 of 2020 for the 85th Sitting to go beyond 8.00 pm and, if necessary, beyond mid-night to allow for the continuation and conclusion of the consideration of the Financial Paper No. 2 of 2024 and for the First, Second and Third Readings of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 12 of 2024.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Item 12: 71-711 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$16,811,481

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman through you to the Hon. Member, line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency, I note here the region is requesting \$16.8 million and, based

on the explanation in the remarks in the *Legend*, the provision caters for outstanding payments. Could you say, Hon. Member, what are these outstanding payments catering for and for which period?

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Ms. Parag]: There was a Regional Toshao Conference that was held and the service providers is what the outstanding payments were for.

Ms. Ferguson: The Hon. Member failed to answer the second part of my question. When was the Conference held, in which year?

Ms. Parag: I do recall saying there was a Regional Toshaos Conference held last year in Region 1. It was held in 2023.

Ms. Ferguson: In which period in 2023 was the Conference held?

Ms. Parag: It was held in the third quarter, just before the Toshaos Conference.

Ms. Ferguson: We all are aware that the budget cycle, I think, commences around August, September, October time. Could the Hon. Member explain why is it that these outstanding payments were not catered for in *Budget 2024*?

Ms. Parag: There were some verifications to be done on the outstanding payment which was done shortly after the Budget and that is why it is here now.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much. I do not have any further questions.

Item 12: 71-711 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$16,811,481 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-711 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Regional Administration and Finance – Maintenance of Buildings – \$2,650,000

Ms. Ferguson: I note that the region is requesting \$2.6 million and based on the explanation given here, the provision caters for outstanding payments. Could the Hon. Member state which period these payments are for and for what purpose?

Ms. Parag: This is catering for the unpaid expenses that were incurred in 2023 for urgent repairs that were done to the Regional Vice-Chairman's living quarters. It was in a bit of a deplorable state coming on to the end. It was after the

budget period, so we could not have included that in the Budget, so it is now included in this.

Item 12: 71-711 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Regional Administration and Finance – Maintenance of Buildings – \$2,650,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Field Materials and Supplies – \$366,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, I note the region is requesting \$366,000 and, based on the explanation given, this caters for outstanding payments. Could the Hon. Member inform the National Assembly for which period these outstanding payments caters for?

Ms. Parag: Hon. Member, it was the latter part of the last quarter of 2023, so it is now included.

Ms. Ferguson: I note here, based on the description, ‘Materials and Supplies’. Could you say what were some of the ‘Materials’ procured in the penultimate quarter of last year?

Ms. Parag: It was safety equipment – safety boots, long boots, reflective vests, spades, and pickaxes for the Public Works Section, department staff.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Field Materials and Supplies – \$366,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

8.01 p.m.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Fuel and Lubricants – \$218,432,000

Ms. Ferguson: Just before I put my question, I must commend the Hon. Member for answering in a positive way. She deserves a round of applause. Mr. Chairman, Fuel and Lubricants, I note that the region is requesting \$218 million. Based on the remarks given, it caters for outstanding payments. Could the Hon. Member state for which period and how many vehicles benefited from this provision? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: This is actually for 2024, and what it caters for or is needed for, is the operationalisation of the mini-electrical grids at Yarakita, Warapoka, Manawarin and the extension of the electrical grids at Moruca and Rincon-Moruca, and the establishment of a new electrical grid at Kwebanna-Moruca.

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Member, you are doing well. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, could you provide a disaggregation of the moneys based on the areas you have just highlighted? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Yes please Mr. Chairman. We have for White Water \$4.2 million; Yarakita \$1.5 million; Kamwatta \$1.5 million and change; Mabaruma Power Station \$162,960,000; Moruca Power Station \$28 million; Parakese \$1,220,000; Warapoka \$1,098,000; Manawarin \$1,098,000; Kwebanna \$1,098,000; Waramuri \$1.2 million and change; Kamwatta \$1.2 million and change; and Arakaka Power Station \$6.5 million.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Fuel and Lubricants – \$218,432,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Buildings – \$1,000,000

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Buildings – \$1,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Roads – \$1,080,000

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Roads – \$1,080,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Bridges – \$5,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Member, I note the request of \$5 million to take care of the Maintenance of Bridges but in the remarks in the *Legend* it “caters for outstanding payments”. Could the Hon. Member state for which period and, perhaps, you can list the bridges that were maintained and give a disaggregated sum of each bridge maintained? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: This was the latter of the last quarter of 2023, as well as where they had emergency works on the Kabura Bridge. It said it had a dimension of 416 feet by four feet linking Lower and Upper Kabura. It was essential to get that done. The payment was in the last quarter of 2023 and so we are now placing it here to be paid.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Bridges – \$5,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works – \$3,000,000

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works – \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Vehicle Spares and Service – \$400,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, with your leave, Sir, rather than us doing it line item by line item because the explanation in the remarks in the *Legend* is the same thing. Can we not put everything together? Perhaps, the Hon. Minister could say to us, for all the areas, which are the periods of these outstanding payments.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, are you prepared to say the periods as we go from the top of page... or sorry as we go from items 12,13 and 14?

Ms. Parag: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For everything other than what I have just stated for 2024 for the Fuel and Lubricants, everything else was in the latter quarter of 2023. The budget of course, for that period, would have been passed already so they are here and most of them were emergency works that were done to the buildings, the irrigation and the bridge.

Item 12: 71-712 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Public Works – Vehicle Spares and Service – \$400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-713 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Education Delivery – Print and Non-Print Materials - \$985,500; Maintenance of Buildings – \$33,661,100; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$597,400; Equipment Maintenance – \$147,000; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$1,060,000; National and Other Events – \$1,204,554

Item 12: 71-713 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Education Delivery – Print and Non-Print Materials - \$985,500; Maintenance of Buildings – \$33,661,100; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$597,400; Equipment Maintenance – \$147,000; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$1,060,000; National and Other Events – \$1,204,554 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-714 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Health Services – Field Materials and Supplies– \$1,088,495; Office Materials and Supplies – \$278,750; Fuel and Lubricants – \$3,061,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$7,996,480; Maintenance of Other Infrastructure –

\$3,650,000; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$8,364,260; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$135,000; National and Other Events – \$952,128; Dietary – \$2,334,850; Training (including Scholarships) – \$5,871,580

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I think you made a mistake there. Instead of 6265, I heard you said 6266.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. Correction. Thank you very much, 6265.

Item 12: 71-714 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Health Services – Field Materials and Supplies– \$1,088,495; Office Materials and Supplies – \$278,750; Fuel and Lubricants – \$3,061,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$7,996,480; Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$3,650,000; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$8,364,260; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$135,000; National and Other Events – \$952,128; Dietary – \$2,334,850; Training (including Scholarships) – \$5,871,580 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 13: 72-722 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Agriculture – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works – \$1,359,700

Item 13: 72-722 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Agriculture – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works – \$1,359,700 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 13: 72-724 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Education Delivery – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$231,144; Water Charges – \$14,834,497; Dietary – \$37,792,607

Item 13: 72-724 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Education Delivery – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$231,144; Water Charges – \$14,834,497; Dietary – \$37,792,607 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 13: 72-725 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Health Services – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$170,938

Item 13: 72-725 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Health Services – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$170,938 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 14: 76-761 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Regional Administration & Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$1,239,283; Field Materials and Supplies

– \$747,698; Office Materials and Supplies – \$1,970,134; Print & Non-Print Materials – \$267,400; National and Other Events – \$479,538; Refreshment and Meals – \$3,148,472

Item 14: 76-761 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Regional Administration & Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$1,239,283; Field Materials and Supplies – \$747,698; Office Materials and Supplies – \$1,970,134; Print & Non-Print Materials – \$267,400; National and Other Events – \$479,538; Refreshment and Meals – \$3,148,47272 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 14: 76-762 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture – Field Materials and Supplies – \$156,000; Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works – \$3,986,924; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$2,100; National and Other Events – \$200,000; Refreshment and Meals – \$6,860

Item 14: 76-762 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture – Field Materials and Supplies – \$156,000; Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works – \$3,986,924; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$2,100; National and Other Events – \$200,000; Refreshment and Meals – \$6,860 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We now turn to Item 14. Do I get your concurrence, Member Ferguson, to put all these similarly?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, with your leave to the Hon. Member, if the explanations are similar, right, based on the outstanding payments, I do not mind us putting everything together and just voting.

Item 14: 76-763 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Public Works – Field Materials and Supplies – \$148,685; Fuel and Lubricants – \$15,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$452,765

Item 14: 76-763 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Public Works – Field Materials and Supplies – \$148,685; Fuel and Lubricants – \$15,000; Maintenance of Buildings – \$452,765 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 14: 76-764 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Education Delivery – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$29,000; Field Materials and Supplies – \$408,000; Office Materials and Supplies – \$1,557,750; Print and Non-Print Materials – \$448,376; Fuel and Lubricants – \$23,660; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$1,354,668; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$197,620; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$2,605,150; Equipment

Maintenance – \$13,243; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$64,000; Other – \$361,964; National and Other Events – \$641,000; Dietary – \$36,940; Other – \$150,800; Training (including Scholarships) – \$1,127,800

Item 14: 76-764 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Education Delivery – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$29,000; Field Materials and Supplies – \$408,000; Office Materials and Supplies – \$1,557,750; Print and Non-Print Materials – \$448,376; Fuel and Lubricants – \$23,660; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$1,354,668; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$197,620; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$2,605,150; Equipment Maintenance – \$13,243; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$64,000; Other – \$361,964; National and Other Events – \$641,000; Dietary – \$36,940; Other – \$150,800; Training (including Scholarships) – \$1,127,800 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Estimates

Item 14: 76-764 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Education Delivery – Furniture and Equipment – Education – \$450,000

Item 14: 76-764 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Education Delivery – Furniture and Equipment – Education – \$450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Estimates

Item 14: 76-765 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Health Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$5,766,347; Field Materials and Supplies – \$2,382,940; Fuel and Lubricants – \$480,642; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$2,478,420; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$1,126,188; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$1,054,046; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$1,126,173; Telephone & Internet Charges – \$58,580; Equipment Maintenance – \$2,463,690; Cleaning and Extermination Services – \$2,869,750; Other – \$364,800; National and Other Events – \$2,097,680; Dietary – \$16,254,623; Refreshment and Meals – \$3,314,960; Other – \$858,186

Item 14: 76-765 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Health Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$5,766,347; Field Materials and Supplies – \$2,382,940; Fuel and Lubricants – \$480,642; Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$2,478,420; Local Travel and Subsistence – \$1,126,188; Vehicle Spares and Service – \$1,054,046; Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$1,126,173; Telephone & Internet Charges – \$58,580; Equipment Maintenance – \$2,463,690; Cleaning

and Extermination Services – \$2,869,750; Other – \$364,800; National and Other Events – \$2,097,680; Dietary – \$16,254,623; Refreshment and Meals – \$3,314,960; Other – \$858,186 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Estimates

Item 14: 76-765 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Health Services – Furniture and Equipment – Health – \$1,348,188

Item 14: 76-765 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Health Services – Furniture and Equipment – Health – \$1,348,188 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 15: 80-801 Region 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice – Regional Administration and Finance – Buildings – Administration – \$8,622,931

Item 15: 80-801 Region 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice – Regional Administration and Finance – Buildings – Administration – \$8,622,931 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Senior Minister.

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Parag: Fortunately, or unfortunately, not all are the same period and not all carry the same explanations.

Mr. Chairman: You want us to go back?

Ms. Parag: I gather they may not have anything to ask so I suppose we can move ahead very quickly, Sir.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, can I be of assistance, Sir? I think I heard you call on me.

Mr. Chairman: Not as yet. Not just yet. I was getting you to be ready. Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, you so impressed Member Ferguson that she did not want to pursue any lengthy persecution of these items. I really want to thank the Hon. Members, Chief Whip of the Opposition and Member Ferguson for their concurrence in putting all of these items. I want to thank you and your team for taking us through them. Thank you very much.

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Question

“That the Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2024 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$32,182,604,021 for the period ending 31st December, 2024

Put and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker. Hon. Senior Minister within the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, you have the floor.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I now wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2024. I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution. Thank you very much, Sir.

Motion put and agreed to.

8.16 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: We now move to the Supplementary Appropriation No 1/2024, Bill 2024 – Bill No. 12/2024. I call on the Hon. Prime Minister to move the suspension of Standing Orders 13 (n) and 54.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I request that we move the Standing Orders that you mentioned.

Suspension of Standing Order Nos. 13 (n) and 54

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Orders Nos. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation No 1/2024, Bill 2024 – Bill No. 12/2024 to be introduced at this stage.”

[Prime Minister]

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Sir. In accordance with paragraph (2) of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation No 1/2024, Bill 2024 – Bill No. 12/2024 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the aforementioned 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 the first time:

Supplementary Appropriation No. 1/2024 Bill 2024 – Bill No. 12/2024

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, 2024, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those funds for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]

Question put and carried.

Bill read the first time.

Dr. Singh: I move that the Supplementary Appropriation No. 1/2024 Bill 2024 – Bill No. 12/2024 be read a second time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS**GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS****Bills – Second and Third Readings****Supplementary Appropriation No. 1/2024 Bill 2024 – Bill No. 12/2024**

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, 2024, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those funds for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]

Question put and carried.

Bill read a second time.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation No. 1/2024 Bill 2024 – Bill No. 12/2024 be read a third time and passed as printed.

Question put and carried.

Bill read the third time and passed as printed.

COMMITTEE'S BUSINESS**MOTIONS****Authority of the Public Accounts Committee to Summon Witnesses**

WHEREAS Article 2 of the Legislative Bodies (Evidence) Act, Chapter 2 of 2012 provides that “Committee” means a Committee referred to in the definition of “legislative body” and a “legislative body” means – (a) the Cabinet; or (b) any Special Select Committee of the National Assembly; or (c) any Committee of the National Assembly empowered by resolution of the Assembly to summon witnesses;

AND WHEREAS Article 223 (8)(a) of the Constitution of Guyana states that “the Public Accounts Committee” means the Public Accounts Committee established by Order 70(2) of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly; and (b) “the public accounts of Guyana” includes the accounts of – (i) all central and local government bodies and entities; (ii) all bodies and entities in which the state has a controlling interest; and (iii) all projects funded by way of loans or grants by any foreign State or organization;

AND WHEREAS Standing Order 82(1) of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly (with amendments to February 2015) states that, “There shall be a Standing Committee to be known as the Public Accounts Committee to consist of not less than six (6) or more than ten (10) Members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection as soon as may be after the beginning of each National Assembly. It shall be the duty of the Committee to examine the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by the Assembly to meet Public Expenditure and such other accounts laid before the Assembly as the Assembly may refer to the Committee together with the Auditor General's report thereon”;

AND WHEREAS, the Committee for the purpose of examining the Accounts of entities, is required to invite persons to produce books, plans, or documents, to aid in the work of the Committee;

AND WHEREAS on occasions, some persons are reluctant to appear before the Committee, thus affecting the work of

the Committee; AND WHEREAS the Public Accounts Committee has observed that it is not deemed a legislative body as defined in the Legislative Bodies (Evidence) Act, Chapter 2 of 2012 and is not empowered to summon persons to appear before the Committee;

AND WHEREAS the Public Accounts Committee is desirous of summoning persons to appear before the Committee to explain the use of Public Funds during their tenure

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Public Accounts Committee be deemed a legislative body, as defined in the Legislative Bodies (Evidence) Act, Chapter 2 of 2012, with the power to summon persons to appear before the Committee, to produce books, plans, or documents, to aid in the work of the Committee.

[*Mr. Figueira, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee*]

Motion deferred.

Adoption of the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on its Examination of the Public Accounts of Guyana for the Years 2017 and 2018

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on its examination of the Public Accounts of Guyana for the years 2017 and 2018, be adopted and refer the Report to the Government for consideration.

[*Mr. Figueira, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee*]

Motion deferred.

Adoption of the Second Special Report of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Second Special Report of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services be adopted.

[*Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance and the Public Service on behalf of the Minister of Human Services and Social Security*]

Motion deferred.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think this concludes our business for this 85th Sitting of the National Assembly. Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a well-earned respite for the next two months so as to have a good time with your families. I wish the same for the staff. Some of them are

going on leave. I thank all those who have served us so well over the past year. Hon. Prime Minister, you have the floor.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity to wish you, the Clerk, all staff and Members of Parliament on both sides of the House, a happy recess.

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do stand adjourned to a date to be decided on after the 10th of October.”

I ask that we adjourn to a date to be decided after the 10th of October.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Members, the Assembly stands adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Adjourned accordingly at 8.22 p.m.