



OFFICIAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION
(2020-2025) 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*

99TH Sitting

Tuesday, 4TH February, 2025

Assembly convened at 10.14 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

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Peoples Progressive Party Civic (38)

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Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P., Vice-President

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and Governance and Government Chief Whip [Virtual Participation]

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and International Co-operation [Virtual Participation]

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Hon. Sonia S. Parag, M.P., Minister of the Public Service

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Hon. Deodat Indar, M.P., Minister within the Ministry of Public Works

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Development

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Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.

Hon. Roysdale A. Forde, S.C., M.P. [Absent on – Leave]

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ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

GREETINGS TO STUDENTS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, today is a day that we pay reverence to the people of South Georgetown. We have two schools with us: Success Elementary – although they are in Eccles, they started in the southern part of our city – and we have the Charlestown Government Secondary School. Several of our Members of Parliament (MPs) who are here came through, Charlestown Government Secondary School.

HISTORY OF CHARLESTOWN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Let me give everyone a little history before we start. When I wrote the Common Entrance Examination, if you did not have enough money to pay for secondary schools such as St. Stanislaus College, Indian Education Trust College, Central High School, Tutorial High School, or Richard Ismael Secondary School, you had to go back to a government school and you finish school in second form. Charlestown students and teachers, this is the History of your school. In October, 1965, the Government opened Charlestown Government Secondary School to take in the children from Saint Stephen's Presbyterian School, Carmel Roman Catholic School then and Dolphin Primary School, then. The students who graduated from second form would go over to Charlestown, but you would go into third form. My elder sister, two brothers and I, in 1968, entered Charlestown Government Secondary School. Dr. Westford, I think you can add to the history of Charlestown too. So, welcome Charlestown and please do not forget our history.

SPEAKER'S OUTFIT

If you are worried about the outfit, it is a Nigerian print, sewn by someone at James and Barr Street, Albouystown. I will share the contact number.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE

FINANCIAL YEAR 2025

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly and that, when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly, an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2025 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on January 17, 2025, as summarised in the attached Schedule 1;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution requires that the expenditure of each of the Constitutional Agencies listed in the Third Schedule of the Constitution be financed as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund determined as a lumpsum by way of an annual subvention approved by the National Assembly after a review and approval of the Constitutional Agency's annual budget as a part of the process of the determination of the national budget;

AND WHEREAS the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, Cap. 73.02, requires that the annual lump sum subvention recommended by the Minister with Responsibility for Finance for each Constitutional Agency be included in the annual budget proposal for approval by the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Minister with Responsibility for Finance recommends lump sum subventions for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2025 as summarised in the attached Schedule 2;

AND WHEREAS the Natural Resource Fund Act 2021 provides that the amount that the Minister with Responsibility for Finance shall request the National Assembly to approve, and the amount that the National Assembly shall approve, as the withdrawal from the Fund for the next ensuing fiscal year shall be included in the annual budget proposal and shall not exceed for that year, the ceiling calculated in accordance with the said Act:

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2025 of a total sum of one trillion, two hundred and ninety-eight billion, three hundred and forty-six million, nine hundred and eighty thousand, and one hundred and eighty-one dollars (\$1,298,346,980,181), excluding eighty three billion, eight hundred and three million, five hundred and fifteen thousand, six hundred and seventy-six dollars (\$83,803,515,676) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in Schedule 1, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and make further provision in respect of finance:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly approves the recommended lumpsum subvention for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2025 as stated in Schedule 2, amounting to a total sum of eighteen billion, nine hundred and forty six million, five hundred and sixty-two thousand, and one hundred and seventy-three dollars (\$18,946,562,173) which is charged upon the Consolidated Fund by the Constitution and for the sums voted for the Constitutional Agencies to form part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures of Guyana for the financial year 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the sum of \$512,436,702,092 equivalent to US\$2,463,889,710 to be withdrawn from the Natural Resource Fund for the financial year 2025 in accordance with the Natural Resource Fund Act 2021.

*[The 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 continue consideration of the Estimates. This morning, we will start with the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. I invite Hon. Minister, Ms. Parag and her team, to take us through, her Agency first and then the regional allocations.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 13 Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Current Estimates

Programme: 131 – Policy Development and Administration – \$510,372,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Let me say a pleasant morning to everyone and join with you, Sir, with your leave to welcome the students of Success Elementary and the Charlestown Secondary Schools. My child is a product of Success Elementary. The teacher that is accompanying the students here, is one of his teachers who did an exceptional job and I am grateful. Knowing that, I plan to be on my best behaviour.

Mr. Chairman: You can use the c-word that ends with s – congratulations.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. I turn your attention to line item 6116. There is an increased allocation there from \$97,673,000 to \$147,788,000. I also see an increase in the staff from 27 to 30. May I ask the Hon. Minister for the designations, salaries and benefits of the three new contracted employees.

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Ms. Parag]: May I ask your permission, to be able to sit? It is a very long day and I have to go through several regions. I would also like to welcome the students from both schools here today. On behalf of the Government of Guyana, we welcome you to the House of the National Assembly and we hope that you will not only be entertained, but you will learn a lot from this session. In relation to the question asked by the Hon. Member at line item 6116, the variation, on 2025 allocation is explained by the 10% increase and appointment of the three staff. In 2024, the three staff would have been the appointment of one Communications Officer, a Vehicle Driver and one Programme Manager.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask for the salaries and benefits of the Programme Manager and the Communications Officer?

Ms. Parag: The Communications Officer, who moved from the Ministry of Public Service to the Ministry of Local Government, is at \$413,000 with the same package. The Programme Manager moved from the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) to the Ministry of Local Government at the same package, \$462,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: Is it \$462,000 she said?

Ms. Parag: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, very much. May I turn the Hon. Minister's attention to line item 6284, Other?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Mahipaul: There is an increase there from \$14,771,000 to \$26,826,000. May I ask the Hon. Minister what does the increase cater for?

Ms. Parag: This would account for provision for placement or procurement notices, advertisements –the advertisements on the television, the radio programmes, identification cards (ID) for replacement of new IDs for staff at the Ministry, as well as provision for marking of additional assets procured under the Ministry's portfolio, provision for the renewal of domain. We have provisions catering for the purchasing of office-related software to carry out operations.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I have a follow up on that same line item. In last year's answer for the expenditure of the \$14,771,000, that also catered for the new ID cards for the Ministry's staff. Sir, am I to understand that that project did not happen last year and is now catered for in this year's budget.

Ms. Parag: It is a yearly renewal of the ID cards, so we would have to do it again this year.

Programme: 131 – Policy Development and Administration – \$510,372,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Mr. Chairman: I want to let the teachers and students know what we are doing. For the Budget, before any moneys can be spent by the Government, it has to pass in the National Assembly. We are now doing the expenses which is in the Budget, by the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, has prepared and we have to pass it. If there is a no-vote with the majority, then the expense cannot be incurred by the Government. Members will ask the Minister questions to justify the expenditure.

Programme: 133 – Regional Development – \$207,350,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I turn your attention to line item 6116, Contracted Employees. There is an increase there of 14 contracted employees. May I ask the Hon. Minister for the designations of those 14, and the first three in terms of highest, in terms of their salaries and benefits.

Ms. Parag: Of the 14 employees, we have, 11 Community Development Officers, one Senior Regional Development Officer that has moved from Programme 04 to line item 6116 and one Engineer moved to Programme 04. line item 6116.

Mr. Mahipaul: From Volume II of the Estimates, for targets in 2025, the Ministry is expected to improve four existing infrastructures. May I ask the Hon. Minister to name the four infrastructures scheduled to be improved in 2025?

Ms. Parag: We have the Bourda Green, the Bourda Market and we have a few more on board.

Mr. Mahipaul: Bourda Market is one of the four. May I ask the names of the other three infrastructures that is listed in Programme 2?

Ms. Parag: We have the Bourda Green, and we have Bourda Market and it is under the Georgetown Enhancement Programme. We also have the East La Penitence Market and drainage, and Albouystown. It is actually in excess of ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, when you say Albouystown, does it mean La Penitence Market?

Ms. Parag: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes? Okay. Those in Albouystown...

Ms. Parag: Some people will call it Albouystown and some will call it La Penitence. We are referring to La Penitence Market.

Mr. Mahipaul: I heard the Hon. Minister say that it falls under the Capital Project, and when we get there, we will deal with that, the Georgetown Enhancement Programme. Given that there are four infrastructures, and we have the Bourda Market, La Penitence Market or Albouystown and a drainage network, may I ask the Minister if the Stabroek Market falls in the same area and the East Ruimveldt Market?

Ms. Parag: Yes. We have the rehabilitation of the Stabroek Market, as well as the East Ruimveldt Market.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am finished here. I think Cde. Lawrence has a question. Thank you.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning all. Mr. Chairman, may I continue to sit?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you may.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you. Hon. Minister, you said Bourda Market and you said Bourda Green. Will you be working on both areas? If so, what will you be doing?

Ms. Parag: Let me apologise. We have a consultancy for the Bourda Green and we have a construction of the Bourda Green. It is two different things for the Bourda Green Market.

Ms. Lawrence: A follow up. Hon. Minister, what are you constructing on the Bourda Green? It is an open space with stalls, what are you constructing?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. A consultation was held with vendors of the Bourda Green area, by both the Ministry as well as His Excellency, before the Ministry had that. The vendors indicated that they wanted proper space to utilise for the Bourda Green. To maximise on space and include any other thing other than the vegetables and greens area, we wanted to see if we can put at least a two-storey building there to accommodate vendors.

Programme: 133 – Regional Development – \$207,350,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 134– Local Government Development – \$2,453,231,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. I turn your attention to line item 6112, Senior Technical. We see a decrease in the sum there, from \$15,183,000 to \$12,834,000. However, in the staff details, we see it remaining as three staff as of 2024. May I ask the Hon. Minister why is there a decrease in the total wages and salaries for line item 6112?

Ms. Parag: Hon. Member, one staff was moved from Programme 134 under line item 6112, to Programme 133, under line item 6112. There was a promotion in addition to that in Programme 134, line item 6112.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow up, may I ask for the designation of the staff that was promoted and if the salary of that staff is higher than the one that moved or is lower than the one that moved?

10.33 a.m.

Ms. Parag: It is for municipal officer 1 to municipal officer 2, from \$136,000 to \$178,000 and the staff alignment 1 – coordinator of Health moved to Programme 133, line item 6112.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I move to line item 6294, Other? There is an increase from \$1,342,962,000 to \$1,612,962,000. I am aware that this line item caters for the operational expenses for our landfill sites. May I ask the Hon. Minister to disaggregate this sum and specify the amount that will be spent at each landfill site in Guyana?

Ms. Parag: As you would know, solid waste management has been a burning issue throughout the country and we wanted to be able to create that space. Although it is not the mandate of the Ministry of Local Government, but it is through the rates of taxes from any municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) and the Hon. Member would know this as well, the space for disposal or garbage collection are usually the mandate of these Local Democratic Organs (LDOs). The Ministry takes it upon itself, based on consultations and outreaches with various groups of persons and the densely populated communities. The Ministry started to create space in terms of landfill sites to accommodate the disposal of garbage. Its development in any community when creating new schemes, especially when these schemes are very populated, is there is a designated area for the disposal of garbage. The Ministry is thankful for the investment by the Government as well as the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service in ensuring that we are well equipped financially. To contribute to this, we have several landfill sites that are in operation. From 2020 to 2024, we have created 13 landfill sites across the country, and just last year, we were able to give a very nearby region, such as Region 5 – Blairmont, the opportunity to have a landfill site for the first time to accommodate the disposal of garbage.

We have to cater for the operation of these sites after they are created. Then, there are multi-year operational roll overs for these landfill sites and that would include the Lusignan Municipal Landfill site, Lethem Municipal Landfill site, Bartica Municipal Landfill site, Rose Hall Municipal Landfill site, No. 52 Village and No. 63 Village Municipal Landfill sites, Karakara Municipal Landfill site, Zorg en Vlygt in Region 2, Enterprise, East Canje, Corriverton, Belle Vue, Blairmont, and Esplanade. We want to be able to create new landfill sites in 2025, so we will have the operation services of Haags Bosch, Lusignan – these again are those from before – Esplanade, Mahdia, Nurney, Lethem, Karakara, and Zorg en Vlygt. This is in addition to rollovers. We also cater for the Waste Management Education Awareness Programme. We really want to have that programme rolled out in a more robust way this year. If we are going to be investing in solid waste management as we have been doing and more substantially this year, we want to be able to... We have the national clean-up exercise that is supposed to create a wave where residences in communities are taking responsibility for their own environment. We want to be able to carry out education awareness on solid waste management in the communities. However, we are investing heavily through this programme. It will also create for several new landfill sites in various regions, such as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 in 2025. We want to be able to ensure that we equip the Local Democratic Organs with the capacity to contribute to the collection of garbage, the disposal of garbage, to ensure that we have that education awareness on littering in the communities and putting bins in the communities, *et cetera*.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow up: Is it that the Ministry is directly managing these landfill sites with its 26 employees, or is contracts given out for the management of these landfill sites?

Ms. Parag: The operations of the landfill sites are through contracted persons. However, the general oversight and supervision still come from the employees of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister to name the contractors that are associated with the existing 13 landfill sites, and their contracted sums?

Ms. Parag: We do not have that entire list with us. We do not want to be calling names right off of our heads right now that could become available.

Mr. Mahipaul: I would appreciate it if the Minister could also provide the associated sum to each one of these contractors for the 13 landfill sites. May I ask the Minister further, Sir, what is the period that they were contracted for each one of the landfill sites?

Ms. Parag: It is 18 months for the smaller sites and 12 months for Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much. May I ask what is the beginning period for each one of the 13 landfill sites, so at least I will know when the 18 and 12 months, respectively, will come to a close?

Ms. Parag: It varies because the operations for these landfill sites are not given out willy nilly by the Ministry, it goes through a National Tender and Administration Board (NPTAB) process and a national bidding process. After that is done, depending on when that bid is out and finished, then the contract time will vary.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am very well aware of that, thank you very much. However, we have 13 landfill sites that are existing, and on the basis of these 13 landfill sites that are existing sites, contracts were already awarded for them, because it is a rollover of the Minister outlined finances in 2025 to compensate the work that had already begun in 2024. May I ask the Hon. Minister if she could lay it over because I believe it may not be in her position at this point in time, the list of the 13 contractors, their associated sums and the periods they will be contracted to manage these landfill sites?

Ms. Parag: Well, as you know, we do not have anything to hide, please, Mr. Chairman. These contractors again went through a national tender process and have won their award through a fair bidding process. We have nothing to hide in terms of who has gotten landfill sites and has been operating. We could make that information available. I want to remind the Hon. Member – I know he knows this information already and I am not sure why he wants it again – this information is even if a contract period is given in August, there would definitely have a roll over in terms of that contract period going to the next year if its 12 months or 18 months because it is definitely going to be the next year that is going to end. We also have moneys or provisions in the budget now to cater for a retendering of the operations, so everything is going through a pretty fair process and in a very organised way.

Mr. Mahipaul: I do agree that there is a tender board process that these projects go through, but whether it is fair is another problem. May I go to the same line item for the allocated sum, which increased from \$1.343 billion to \$1.613 billion? May I ask the Hon. Minister how does the Ministry plan to ensure that the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site can sustainably handle both municipal and industrial waste considering the increase in the waste volumes, particularly from large scale oil and gas projects?

Ms. Parag: We are constructing a new municipal waste cell as well as a hazardous waste cell.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask if that is cell 3 or are you constructing another one, cell 4?

Ms. Parag: It is two separate things; one is a cell 3 and there will be a hazardous waste cell separate from that.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cell 3 began construction last year, if I am not mistaken. May I ask what is the percentage in terms of its completion at this current stage?

Ms. Parag: It is about 90-95% completed.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow up: is there any specific measure in terms of preventing over capacity within the year of 2024, noting that the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site was expected to take off about 300 tonnes of waste, but it is handling somewhere around 700 tonnes?

Ms. Parag: We had the foresight to see that with the waste that is being generated throughout the communities as well as through the industrial sector, we would necessarily need more space. That is why we are actually creating two new landfill sites in Region 4 to accommodate that. We have already identified one that will be the extension of the current Lusignan Landfill site to be able to accommodate the excess waste, or the excess of what we have now.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Hon. Minister pointed out that the Ministry is constructing or identifying, rather, two new sites for Region 4, the Lusignan landfill site being one. May I ask for the second one?

Ms. Parag: We are consulting with the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC), which has been very proactive in assisting us with identifying lands that will be suitable for the establishment of a landfill site, so we are consulting with it on the second one.

Mr. Mahipaul: We see... May I ask this question first? Could the Hon. Minister tell us the period it took for cell 2, which will give us a projection of how long cell 3 will last us?

Ms. Parag: It was projected to have a life capacity or a lifespan of about four years, but by the end of 2025, we will see that it may be at its capacity.

Mr. Mahipaul: Given that there is construction for the hazardous waste and considering the significant reliance on the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site for both hazardous and non-hazardous waste disposal and the potential strain on the infrastructure due to the increase waste from ExxonMobil's projects, how is the Ministry ensuring that the environmental impact of the landfill operation, especially concerning the surrounding communities, knowing that we have growing development in the area and also a road is running through that area – the people at Farm and even in Eccles area are subjected to a stench and that stench was there since last year; I must admit that it is not as heavy as it was last year...What does the Ministry have in place in terms of its monitoring to mitigate this environmental impact?

Ms. Parag: I am not sure whether the Hon. Member spent some time at the landfill site, it does not seem so. [Mr. Mahipaul: I did.] We are catering for the environmental monitoring of the landfill sites, water and air quality testing in our budget. A very small amount of treated waste goes to the landfills from ExxonMobil – let me be clear.

10.48 a.m.

Irrespective of your view that ExxonMobil is dumping a lot of its waste there, that is not so. We do not want to be misled or for misinformation to go out into the public that is so. A very small amount of treated waste from ExxonMobil is going there. Nevertheless, we have already allocated, in this budget, for the monitoring of the waste in terms of the environmental issues that it will create, which will be water, air and quality testing.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask, from this allocated sum, if the Ministry is focusing on staff enhancement, particularly for the monitoring of the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site, to guarantee operational efficiency and safety standards, considering the hazardous waste that is coming to this landfill site also?

Ms. Parag: We already have four qualified staff at the landfill site. We have a senior environmental officer and a junior environmental officer who are well qualified to work in this particular area.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister a follow-up, Sir? The Lusignan Landfill site, which we are moving to expand, based on the answer provided by the Hon. Minister, that site is currently underperforming. It is underperforming because it was set up to accept 300 tonnes of waste and is accepting about 100 tonnes of waste. May I ask what measures will be put in place to get that landfill site to function at maximum capacity so that the additional waste there will not be a burden to the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site?

Ms. Parag: I do not know that the Lusignan Landfill site is underperforming. Very often, the Ministry is in contact with the contractors to ensure that, even if one does hear of something, they rectify it immediately. I know they have been doing that. I also know that they have been in operation. Now, when I said that we are going to create a new landfill site, it is not adjoining the current landfill site. It is going to be a whole new area down at the back of Lusignan – an extended portion. That is going to be hundreds of acres of land that will be able to take off that waste that you speak of. The idea, too, is to take off the burden on the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site, so that is why we want to be able to create... I mean, if we are looking into the future of the country in terms of transformation and the number of housing schemes that will be created, the amount of investment that will be made in terms of companies, industries, *et cetera*, we know that the current landfill site – and that is why we are also catering so heavily... I am very thankful that this year, the allocation has been very substantial to permit us to do that. We are going to be able to create a large landfill site at Lusignan, plus another area in Region 4 to not have the burden be carried by the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site. The current Lusignan landfill site will continue to be in operation at least for 2025 and then we will decide what to do based on the creation of the other one.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow up: what is the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, just allow me to let MP Deonarine Ramsaroop come in. He wants to follow up. Member of Parliament, you have the floor.

Mr. Figueira: I have a follow up too, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Member of Parliament Figueira, take off your microphone. Go ahead, MP Ramsaroop.

Mr. Ramsaroop: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, you may continue.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Based on the answer provided by the Hon. Minister, may I ask what the tonnage of waste the Lusignan landfill site is supposed to take off per day?

Ms. Parag: I am not sure whether you know, but the Lusignan landfill site is not a sanitary landfill site. It is an inherent landfill site, so what happens is that it takes off about... If I am to give you tonnage... I will give you by truck. It is about 60 to 75 truckloads per day.

Mr. Mahipaul: This is in keeping with the very information that I do have – 60 to 75 trucks per day but... [**Ms. Parag:** See, I told you, this Government tells the truth. We tell the truth all the time.] It was supposed to take off more. [**Ms. Parag:** You have the same information that we have.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, if a member knows what it is, what are you trying to do, confirm it or trap somebody? Come on, we are honourable people in here.

Mr. Mahipaul: What I am trying to do...

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is why I said earlier, I am sure the Hon. Member know the answer to some of these things, so I am not sure what he is trying to get again.

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

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Minister, you indicated that Region 10 is earmarked for a new landfill site. Has the site been identified already? If so, where would that site be?

Ms. Parag: We are working with the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) and the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission to identify that site. There was a suggestion of a potential area at Ituni, but we are having a relook at that because we want it to be within a distance, of course, that is reachable and will be able to take off waste very easily in terms of time span and also away from residents and areas that... We do not want environmental issues.

Mr. Figueira: Would you be open to the idea of engaging the municipality as well as some local leaders who are aware of several potential sites to which such a landfill site could go?

Ms. Parag: I am advised by the staff that they did engage the municipality last year, which was in 2024. Given that these agencies would have the ultimate say in terms of what land can be transferred and what is available, I think we could start with them, and then we can move towards that [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Let us try MP Ramsaroop again. Are you online, Sir? We are not hearing you. Check your microphone if it is unmuted.

Mr. Ramsaroop: It is unmuted, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: We are hearing you. Go ahead.

Mr. Ramsaroop: The Hon. Minister mentioned several landfill sites that will be developed throughout the country. My question to her is, does the Ministry have a policy to convert these wastes into energy? I know Guyana is going to be growing. There is a lot of waste coming. Secondly, that waste poses a threat to the water table on the coastal land because it is not wise to dump all this garbage in an open-door site. We have to come up with policies, so I am asking if the Minister has a policy in the Ministry this year or in the future to convert that waste into energy.

Ms. Parag: I will start with the part of the question that asks about a new landfill site. We do plan to have all the new landfill sites as double-liner landfill sites. They will all be sanitary landfill sites. Then, in relation to the policy that is developed in relation to these landfill sites and waste-to-energy, the Government has been looking and exploring. However, we believe that the private sector should invest in that. We are looking to see who would be able to work along with a waste-to-energy project or facility. It is not something that is outside of a discussion point.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am moving to line item 6321, which speaks to subsidies and contributions to local organisations. May I ask the Hon. Minister, from this sum, if she could provide the salaries and wages or the salaries and benefits for the Chairman and Secretary of the Local Government Commission? [**Mr. Hamilton:** Last year you asked...]

Ms. Parag: Yes, last year this question was asked, and I also think that the Hon. Member, just like knowing the number of trucks that were going into the Lusignan Landfill site, already has that information and is now trying to get that information from us. I am not going to say what that information is today, but I can tell you that for the budgeted sum for 2025 for the Local Government Commission provision is made for the assistance of the Commission with recurring charges to aid in their daily operations in order to carry out its function effectively and that is \$197,278,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, I did ask the question last year, but it was not answered. Again, this year, it is not answered – the salaries and benefits for the Chairman and Secretary. A follow-up, please.

Mr. Chairman: We have to distinguish between the answer you want to hear and the answer provided by the Minister. I do not know what is right and wrong.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I have a follow-up, please?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister when will the Local Government Commission be sworn in?

Ms. Parag: I know there has always been a disconnect in the Opposition in terms of the Members, but the Government has already kick-started that process. We have actually, according to the law, written to the Leader of the Opposition ages ago. There is no response to date.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, for the record, the Leader of the Opposition responded to the letter and made the nominations of three Members. To date, there is no correspondence regarding the swearing-in ceremony. The question is, when will the Local Government Commission be sworn in?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I am going to reiterate my answer. The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, who wrote to the Office of the Opposition up to days ago, stated that she did not receive a response from the Opposition Leader. I will not come to this Committee ill-equipped with information, please, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Office of the Leader of the Opposition responded to that request. I am finished here with the current expenditure, but I see my Hon. Colleague has a question.

Ms. Lawrence: I would like to take the Minister back to line item 6294, and ask her what the present position is with the Belle Vue landfill site on the East Bank of Berbice and whether there is any allocation in this year's budget for further development and use?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. There was a bridge that needed to be reconstructed before we started the operation. That bridge has been reconstructed, and we are going to start the operations in 2025 for the Belle Vue landfill site.

Programme: 134 – Local Government Development – \$2,453,231,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I have been very lax with respect to cell phone use in the Chamber, but it is getting a bit ridiculous now.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 131 – Policy Development and Administration – \$48,000,000

Programme: 131 – Policy Development and Administration – \$48,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 133 – Regional Development – \$2,728,500,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1904100 – Georgetown Enhancement Programme:

“Provision for enhancement initiatives.”

I am guided by the description, which states:

“The project entails provisions for markets and drainage network.”

11.03 a.m.

Earlier, when I asked a question on programme 2, the Hon. Minister indicated that there are four projects or four infrastructures to be enhanced, and she was kind enough to say, Bourda Green, Bourda Market, East La Penitence Market or Albouystown Market, Stabroek Market and also the drainage network. May I ask the Hon. Minister to disaggregate the \$2.725 billion and state the specific sum that is allocated to each one of these projects?

Ms. Parag: In terms of the drainage network, we are looking at \$2 billion. Let me just correct it because I had previously corrected it when the Hon. Member, Ms. Volda Lawrence, had asked a question in relation to the Bourda Market. I am talking about two phases of the Bourda Green. I just want to put that on record. There are two phases of the Bourda Green; there is a consultancy, and then there is a phase one. We have the design and supervision which is the consultancy of the Bourda Green – \$40 million; construction of phase one of Bourda Green – \$260 million; rehabilitation of the East Ruimveldt Market – \$50 million; rehabilitation of La Penitence Municipal or Albouystown as we know it – \$100 million; construction of green space at Merriman’s Mall – \$75 million and rehabilitation of the Stabroek Market at \$200 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, may I ask the Hon. Minister – and this is specific to Georgetown – if there will be a collaboration between the Ministry and the Mayor and City Councillors of Georgetown in the execution of these projects?

Ms. Parag: There has always been a consultation with the Georgetown Municipality. It is not just the Mayor, but we do have councillors on both sides of the House sitting on the Mayor and City Council. We try to engage as many persons as possible on that Council in relation to our capital city.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I move to project code 1302200, Community Infrastructure Improvement projects?

Mr. Chairman: Let me put this programme first and dispose of it.

Programme: 133 – Regional Development – \$2,728,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 134 – Local Government Development – \$35,936,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1302200 – Community Infrastructure Improvement Project: This project code also caters for markets. May I ask the Hon. Minister to tell us how many markets and where are the markets located for this project code?

Ms. Parag: I know the Members or the residents of Region 6 and those who have responsibility for Region 6 would be happy to know that, for the first time, we are going to be creating what is

called a culture market at Palmyra, that is one; we want to be able to construct the Port Kaituma Market; the western section of Mon Repos Market; rehabilitate the market at Unity, Mahaica; rehabilitate the Rose Hall Municipal Market; construct the Bath Market; construct the Rosignol Railway Line Market; design and construct the Anna Regina Market; rehabilitation of the Port Maurant Market; rehabilitation of No. 79 Village Market; rehabilitation of the Lethem Municipal Market; and later in the latter part of 2024, we had asked the Municipality of Linden to relook at their work programme to accommodate some rehabilitation to the market there.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to state the respective sums for the culture market and the other markets she listed a few seconds ago?

Ms. Parag: It is \$800 million towards the culture market; \$100 million towards the Port Kaituma Market, \$200 million towards the western section of the Mon Repos Market, \$75 million for the rehabilitation of the market at Unity, \$50 million for the market at Rose Hall, \$75 million for the construction of the Bath Market, \$50 million for Rosignol Railway Line, \$200 million for the design and construction – and I want to pause here please, Sir. With the construction of the Rosignol Railway Line, on the roadways there are persons who are selling in stalls and we want to prevent the obstruction of traffic but be able to have them ply their trade in a space where they are going to be able to do so legally, so that is why we are creating this space to, one, take them off the road, but have them also be able to continue to earn an income. We also have the design and construction of the Anna Regina Market. That market has been there for as long as I was a little girl in Essequibo, growing up and going to the Anna Regina Market... [Mr. Mahipaul: Me too.] The Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, is also from Essequibo, so he knows what that market looks like and I am sure that he is on board to agree that we can relook at that market.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, she has not concluded the sums.

Ms. Parag: To continue: \$200 million for the design and the construction of the Anna Regina; \$30 million to relook at the rehabilitation of somewhat of the Port Maurant Market, the No. 79 Village Market – \$180 million and the Lethem Municipal Market – \$40 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, we see the Mon Repos Market reappearing and this time, it is for phase two of the operations. May I ask the Hon. Minister a follow up question? How much money in total, with this \$200 million for 2025, would we be expending on the Mon Repos Market?

Ms. Parag: It is about \$888 million. The Mon Repos Market has a good stretch of a structure, plus the stalls. There is a number of vendors there, Sir. As you would know and as many people who would go on a Saturday morning early at Mon Repos would know.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow up, please: the Parika Market vendors are asked to do the electrical work themselves within their respective stalls and that, in my view, may be risky given that the market was, first of all, destroyed by a fire. What measures does the Ministry have in place to verify that the work being done by these vendors is in keeping with the standard accepted by the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL), an international standard and how are they verifying it?

Ms. Parag: First of all, I think the Hon. Member, may know this or is now being educated on it, but in relation to all the market that is being built by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the contracts will include the electricals to the point of giving them the access to that power from the wire that one will put into each stall, or wherever his/her stall will designated to be, or the areas designated to be. Now, beyond that, whether one is at the Parika Market, the Skeldon Market or any other market, he/she still have to engage the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated. The Ministry also, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, collaborates to ensure that there is a monitoring mechanism when persons are establishing these circuits and so on to ensure they have electricity, as well as Guyana Power and Light Incorporated, which would be there. I know for a fact it was there at the Parika Market because we engaged it directly to be there. Now, the other thing is in relation to fire prevention methods. The materials that are being used now to construct a market, such as the Parika Market, – and one will not have that with every single market, because some will be like the Lenora concept, which is an open shed, so he/she will not have all of these walls, but he/she will have his/her stalls –we are ensuring that the materials that are being used are more user-friendly and safer for the vendors. I mean, definitely, if we are investing in this, we do not want a fire to happen. We do not want them to have to lose, as well as we do not want to lose in terms of the investment. It just makes sense that we are encouraging the contractors and checking on them to make sure that they use these materials that are user-friendly.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask a follow up? May I ask the Hon. Minister, what is the status of the market behind the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) building at Hydronie, where there is

a big shed, basically, but no movement for months now in terms of work being done or any advancement that I see? May I ask for an update on that market?

Ms. Parag: I am not sure whether you took a walk down there because... [Mr. Mahipaul: I did.] Well, maybe you took a walk down there, but you probably did not drive because what happened is that the actual market is completed. In a very short space of time, we had a lot of movement to get that market finished, and we did. You would know, too, that the road that was leading to the market was in a state; that road is also being constructed by the Ministry of Public Works. However, just after the budget period, we are looking at both the Parika Market and the Hydronie Market to have vendors utilise it.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask, with your permission, what was the total cost for the Hydronie Market given that it is completed?

Ms. Parag: Again, I do not know if you knew this, but perhaps you did, because I think you have all this information written down there somewhere, there was the construction of the Hydronie Market in different phases, which would have been three phases. All three phases, as you know, would cost money. You could do the calculation. It is \$196 million and change for phase one, \$123 million and change for phase two, and \$115 million and change for phase three. [Mr.

Mahipaul: Did you say \$150,000,000?] No, it is \$115 million

Mr. Mahipaul: I wish to move to project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance. May I ask the Hon. Minister, what will be the subvention for Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), municipalities and the city of Georgetown from this project code?

Ms. Parag: The sum of subvention that will be given to the NDCs will continue to be \$5 million, but it is also given a grant which we gave from 2021 to 2024, and that grant would have amounted to – and the Hon. Member can make checks with all NDCs, inclusive of those not in control by the Government but in the Opposition hold – they have also received that grant – about \$9 million to \$10 million per a year. We will continue with that. For Georgetown as well as we have allocated \$30 million, New Amsterdam – \$18 million, Linden – \$18 million, and Anna Regina – \$18 million. You could appreciate that because Georgetown is the capital city, we are giving them more than the other municipalities. To mention also, all of these NDCs and municipalities are also being assisted by the central Ministry. In addition to their subvention, they are controlled based on their

work plan. We are also equipping them. For example, in 2025, we will be equipping all NDCs and municipalities with compactor garbage trucks. We will be equipping the NDCs with bins, and the market areas, such as the Bourda Market area, will get a compactor bin. We are looking at places like densely populated areas, such as Mon Repos and so on. Now, the bins will also be given to the communities. In addition to that, the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, the Minister of Home Affairs and I was present at the fire station on Mandela very recently, where 40 firefighting mobile vehicles were procured and are here to be distributed to several NDCs across the country, equipping them with a first response mechanism that will directly benefit the communities.

11.18 a.m.

This is so that we must not have to call a fire truck from three villages away to come. Plus, we are also building the capacities of the NDCs by putting in axillary firefighting officers. These are things they are getting besides the subventions. These will heavily benefit the residents and municipalities of these communities.

Mr. Mahipaul: There are subventions of \$5 million for NDCs, \$30 million for the Mayor and City Council of Georgetown (M&CC), \$18 million for New Amsterdam, and \$18 million for the rest of the municipalities. This is what was there since 2017. I heard the Hon. Minister saying that the grants for the NDCs will take some of them to \$9 million and others to \$10 million per NDCs. It depends on their work programmes. Are there grants for these municipalities and the city of Georgetown also? If so, I know it will depend on their work programme. May I ask if there is an amount for these municipalities and the city of Georgetown?

Ms. Parag: Yes, but there is no amount that I could tell you at the moment. Remember, they have not – all the municipalities – submitted and we are encouraging them right now to submit their work programmes. This is so that we do not have a lapse in time – so to speak – during the year where we may have to wait to give out subventions. We do not want that. We really do not want that. We want the Local Democratic Organs (LDOs) to move forward in terms of the communities benefiting from these subventions. They must be able to do so now and then we will consider the grant based on that. Each LDO will receive its subvention in full early in the year.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I want to move to project code 3600300, Solid Waste Disposal Programme.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister, what equipment and which landfill site will new equipment be procured for? I am assuming that it is new equipment.

Ms. Parag: We have a few. We have the skip lift bins. We want to have a Hiab truck to remove derelicts. We want four four-inches water pumps, the skip lift trucks, the flat bed Hiab truck, 30 skip bins, two dump trucks and 200 hundred litter bins. These, of course, go to what I just spoke about in terms of the communities and some of the market areas being equipped with bins. It will not be all the market areas. There will be some of them. You know that we must start from somewhere. We want to be able to do that this year. Again, I am very pleased. I know when we go out to have community engagements, one of the issues that people do raise is the garbage situations in the communities. The Government is ensuring that all sectors are taken care of. This is a sector for which we had a significant allocation for this year to manage solid waste efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister – she did indicate earlier that they are looking at two sites to complement the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill Site in Georgetown. One of the areas is still being done through a study. They are working hand in hand with the Guyana Lands and Survey Commission (GLSC). May I ask the Hon. Minister, what amount from this project code is put aside for those studies and surveys with reference to that project?

Ms. Parag: One of them is for \$25 million and change. The beneficiaries for this are going to be about 43,800 households and businesses in those areas. The construction of most of these will include that particular.... We know you love a study, but we want to be able to say that we are ensuring what we are doing is going to have the effect and impact that we want for the beneficiaries.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much. Sir, earlier, the Minister was kind enough to say that a site has not been located yet because of the study, and one was located. I asked the question, assuming that there was a sum allocated for them to do the necessary studies and find that site. I heard the

answer there being that it will benefit \$43, 800 households in the area. That makes me believe that there is already a known site and a known area. May I ask the Hon. Minister where is that?

Mr. Chairman: Where is what – the area or the site?

Mr. Mahipaul: Where is the site for the landfill.

Mr. Chairman: I believe she answered that two times before.

Mr. Mahipaul: No. This is the other one, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Mahipaul: There were two; this is the other one.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but I heard two answers. Now, you are bringing back the same question for the area. The area might be Soesdyke to Diamond but where the site is, is a different story. Hon. Minister, you have an opportunity to give us a third answer.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We have exhausted this. This is just to say that the previous Government had plans, studies and Commissions of Inquiry (COIs). It injected moneys into plans, studies and COIs such as the feasibility study and so on. That is where the money went. Now, Mr. Chairman, I did not say earlier that I was doing a study. I said there is a collaboration with the Guyana Lands and Survey Department to identify an area that is suitable for the second landfill site. I also said that site has not been identified yet. We are still in talks and discussions rather than doing a survey or a study at the moment. We are still in talks for getting that. It is a topographical identification; it is not what they injected money into. I hope this answer is the final one for this question. For me, it is, please, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: He has another 24 minutes to go on this programme.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That does it for me for the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. I want to thank the Minister and her staff for the questions they have answered.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chair...?

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

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could I take the Minister back to project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance? You did mention that apart from the subvention, the municipalities and NDCs receive grants. Is this grant specific? Does your Ministry say to these entities that this grant is to be spent, let us say, on salaries or the removal of garbage? Is it specific?

Mr. Parag: As I said before, we ask the municipalities and the NDCs to submit their work programmes. Look, if we are going to invest money, we must know that the money is going towards the benefit of those living in those areas – those who will see the benefit from the municipality in that way. When we give the subvention, they will work along with their work plan. If we are giving them a grant, what we do is inform the Local Democratic Organs – whether they be the municipalities or the NDCs – look, the Ministry is giving a grant and will like to see how it will be spent. Believe it or not, some of these NDCs and even the municipalities do not use up the grant and it goes over to the next year. I can tell you that because they will come the next year and ask us to approve that sum to be used – which they had from the grant of 2022 or 2021. It also depends on that. It depends on whether they have that. If they do – say for example – want to purchase something such as a garbage truck that will go towards picking up garbage in the city and it is plausible and so on, we will approve that. If not, we work along with them to revise that plan, and the grant may be given then. It is towards something specific, but they also have to come and show us that the specific something is going to benefit the residents. More than that, it is to improve the efficiency of the delivery of that kind of thing to work with them to get the subvention. Later on, if we do believe that they should get a grant then we will do that part.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chair, could the Minister turn with me to project code 1904300; it speaks to Regional Economic Transformation? The Legend states that the projects entail:

“Provision for community driven entrepreneurial interventions.”

One, could the Minister state if this is in all the regions? Is it done through the municipalities and the NDCs? Is this a programme that is run by the Ministry? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It is a programme that is run by the Ministry. It spans across all 10 Administrative Regions. We specifically ensured that there is gender equality in relation to this particular economic transformation programme.

Ms. Lawrence: I have a follow up, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister kindly indicate if communities can put forward projects or say if the Ministry has a programme of things which it would be catering for within the year? How is it that this programme is rolled out? How do you roll it out?

Ms. Parag: It is a programme that ensures the development of persons who – I do not want to say, small business – are on the verge of starting their entrepreneurial careers and want to be self-employed. What happens is, if one has a small shop in a community, the community can put that forward or the person can approach the Ministry. For example, as in Sophia, we were able to work with about 100 persons. The Hon. Minister is not here. Minister Mr. McCoy and so on would know this. We were able to work with 100 persons there who were starting up these small businesses and shops. We were able to move them from one level to the next with this.

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

Mr. Jordan: Sir...?

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

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is just a follow up on project code 1902900, Project Development and Assistance. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over for the year 2024 that which was expended in Region 5 by the NDCs – the grant and not the usual subvention? Also, could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say what will be given to Region 5 for 2025? Could you at the same time, confirm if all NDCs in Region Five received that special grant and say what was the total amount expended based on the special grant for Region 5?

Ms. Parag: What I will tell you is – we can lay over that we have given the NDCs all of their subventions in Region 5. All 70 NDCs received in full, their subventions for 2014, plus a grant. The NDCs in Region 5 in terms of.... Are you asking if what we are giving is to the region or the NDCs? You asked about 2025 for the region.

Mr. Jordan: No, I was specific – the NDCs in Region 5.

Ms. Parag: They will be getting their full subventions of \$5 million. Then we will work with them in terms of the grants.

11.33 a.m.

Mr. Jordan: Minister, what I wanted to know also is the amount that was spent in 2024 based on your allocation and what you spent...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member...

Mr. Jordan: ...and laid...

Mr. Chairman: ...let me just stop you there.

Mr. Jordan: ...laid over, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Mr. Jordan: That is what I was asking.

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Mr. Jordan: It was not for her to give me but to lay it over.

Mr. Chairman: We are not examining last year's expenditure. We are examining the expenditure for which this line item is catering for in 2025.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You can always pose a question to the Minister in writing.

Mr. Jordan: I want to ask Sir, what is the total amount to be given to the region for the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) for 2025?

Ms. Parag: You have 10 NDCs in Region 5 and they will be getting \$5 million each as their full subvention. It is five multiplied by 10.

Mr Jordan: No, Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, just one second. Mr. Jordan, am I hearing correctly? Are you asking if this money is being given to the region for the NDC because that is what you said?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chair, I was specific. It is not the standing subvention, but it is the grant. I know the subvention is \$5 million for the NDCs – but the grant.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Jordan: The grant would vary. The Minister said earlier it was based on the work programme so that is what I am asking for because I cannot determine the grant.

Ms. Parag: Let me just say that the grant is not an entitlement, but the subvention is. They both come under the subvention programme. What we have been doing is to further equip both of these financially. We have been asking them, look, submit a grant. We know you would need it to be able to do X, Y and Z in the community and we want to help you. This is the approach that we have taken. What we have also found is that not all of the NDCs have expended their grants from the previous year. It does not necessarily mean that one will get \$4 million, or one will get \$5 million again. We have to look at it logically too, because we are, again, investing and expending moneys in them. We want to work with the NDCs to get them to a place where they can carry out their functions in the communities.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. You were quite clear.

Programme: 134 – Local Government Development – \$35,936,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we thank you and your staff for taking us through the agency.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would also like to thank my staff at the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development who have been working very hard for the last year since I have been there and I am sure before, to put together and execute those programmes. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Minister, we went through your agency with a few minutes to spare – 24 minutes. You may want to ask – if they are not here – some of your other regions

you have to defend, to look at the timing because yesterday we had a situation where we suspended for the PM.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much.

Agency: 71 Region 1: Barima/Waini

Current Expenditure

Programme: 711 - Regional Administration and Finance – \$459,088,000

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, let me first say good morning to the Members of the National Assembly, to the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development and the members of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) from the Barima/Waini Region. I have one question under this programme, and it is for line item 6116, Contracted Employees. The staffing details shows an increase for 2025 by 20 contracted employees and there is also an increase of about \$34 million. Could the Hon. Minister give us the designation of maybe the five most senior persons under this line item, and could she state as well how this increase will enhance the human resource capacity under this programme? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: We do have a number of persons on board. The administrative staff will definitely assist in terms of the execution and implementation of the programmes in the region. We have an Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) who is perhaps the highest and that person will be earning \$208,000, out of those persons who are newly employed. There is a Senior Personnel Officer, a District Development Officer, a Community Liaison Officer, a Stores Clerk, an Administrative Assistant, a Handyman, and a Clerk III. They will enhance the capacity of the administrative staff.

Mr. Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. A follow-up.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Cox: Is the Hon. Minister saying there is an addition of an Assistant Regional Executive Officer? I know there is one in Port Kaituma, Matarkai and Moruca. Is there a new one, in addition to that person, in Mabaruma?

Ms. Parag: This is to give support specifically to Baramita. You know Region 1 fairly well and Baramita is a very vulnerable community, so we wanted to give some extra assistance to develop and manage the community well.

Programme: 711 - Regional Administration and Finance – \$459,088,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 712 - Public Works – \$919,397,000

Mr. Cox: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: In 2024, it was NIL and in 2025, there is an increase by 10. It is a similar question. Who are they in terms of designation and their specific roles in this programme? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. Sorry, Mr. Chairman. To ensure that again we are able to execute and implement the programmes that we have, we need to have certain labour skills and certain skills. Why you would see it going from NIL to 10 and then 10 again in 2025 is that we have had five Labourers, two Clerk of Works, one Equipment Operator, two staff transitioning from the line items 6117 to 6116, a Carpenter and a heavy-duty Vehicle Driver.

Mr. Cox: Under line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister state whether provisions under this line item is made for the Barabina Hill Road. I know that Barabina Hill had several challenges over the years.

Ms. Parag: Under the region, we do not have Barabina Hill but the Ministry of Public Works, the Central Ministry will be looking at that.

Mr. Cox: A follow-up question under the same line item. Are there any provisions under this line item for One Mile, Orinoco and Four Miles leading to Train Line Road?

Ms. Parag: Those are from the Central Ministry, the Ministry of Public Works.

Mr. Cox: Could the Hon. Minister state then the three roads in Mabaruma and possibly two in Moruca that are catered for under this line item?

Ms. Parag: We have in Moruca. We will be doing repairs to the gravel surface road for Parakese Island, Kamwatta, Haimaruni and for the surface road at Chinese Landing.

Mr. Cox: My final question under this programme is the Maintenance of Other Infrastructure and it is for \$23 million. To be specific, in Port Kaituma, what are the other infrastructures that would be catered for here?

Ms. Parag: We will be purchasing utility poles and electrical line hardware for the replacement in the Mabaruma district; we will be purchasing utility poles and electrical lines in the Moruca district, and we will have repairs done to the guard huts and culverts at the Mabaruma and Moruca Roads.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated for Programme 712, Current Expenditure stands part... Sorry. Hon. Member...Is it Dawn Hastings-Wiliams? Yes, Hon. Member, you may proceed.

Ms. Hastings Williams: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: Hon. Minister, could you say how much of that sum will be spent in the Matarkai, Mabaruma and Moruca sub-regions and for which bridges. Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Let me just tell you what we are going to be spending on the Matarkai sub-region. We have repairs to log bridges along the road to Baramita. That is going to be an \$8 million allocation. Then we have in the Moruca area, the timber bridge at Mora and that is going to be a \$6 million allocation.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum...

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Cox, you may proceed.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to turn the Minister's attention to Volume 2 and in the Indicators, it says that in 2024, you were able to touch three communities with regard to communities assessing electricity and your projection for 2025 is 16, which is an increase by 13. That is very good and 13 is a good representation, providing that we have a large number of communities in Region 1. Could you explain how was it only accessible to three in 2024 and not six or seven? Were there any specific challenges?

Ms. Parag: We have Rincon, Kwebanna and Mora that benefited from the electricity in 2024.

Programme: 712 - Public Works – \$919,397,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 713 - Education Delivery – \$3,606,056,000

Mr. Cox: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: With an increase of about \$200 plus million, Senior Technical will have an increase in terms of staffing details from 233 employees to 335 employees. I know this covers education, which is very important in Region 1. Could the Hon. Minister say where exactly these technical senior personnel will be stationed in terms of the three districts, and how do they see them providing technical support, especially when Region 1 has been struggling with regards to educational performances? Thank you.

11.48 a.m.

Ms. Parag: First of all, Mr. Chairman, I do not think Region 1 is struggling in terms of education. I would say that, given that 22 schools were built under this Government in Region 1, that is development at its highest in terms of education. Now, these teachers and staff that we are talking about under the senior technical – and I will turn my attention to the other part of your question – will be placed across the three subdistricts. We are ensuring that they are going to be placed in schools. What you have now, more than ever before in this country, is a ratio of teachers-to-students that you have never had. These teachers are going to be in schools, ensuring that we up the quality of education. That is the support that they will be given to contribute to the quality of education. I know that once you are back here in the National Assembly next year, you will tell me that that has improved in terms of the quality, based on the fact that we have had a number of teachers now being distributed across the schools and trained at the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) as well.

Mr. Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased with the goals of the Ministry – of course of the region – but the Minister is responsible for answering. As a teacher for over 21 years, I have worked equally with the region in education to ensure that we realise our objectives as well. I want to turn the Minister's attention, though, Mr. Chairman, to the indicators under this programme. In 2023, the target was 23.4% for the number of pupils passing with 50% or more at all four subjects at the National Grade Six Assessment. The achievement was 12%, which is falling below 50% of the achieved target, and in 2025, you are now setting a target of 40%. My question

is what specific measures under this programme will be implemented to ensure that this target is achieved?

Ms. Parag: First of all, what is going to be happening is those very technical staff that we spoke of earlier in the previous answer that will be going to all the schools across the Region – those teachers will contribute heavily to the quality of education. There will be literacy officers who are focusing and zoning in on upping the literacy level of the students in Region 1. That will improve the quality of the curriculum from the Ministry of Education within the schools in the regions.

Mr. Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a follow-up. I did note...

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, If I may just mention that you would recall in 2024, we had strikes being held across the schools in the regions. For several weeks, children were not being taught. They were out of school, and this contributed heavily to learning loss.

Mr. Cox: I am aware that there are literacy officers across the region in order to enhance literacy. Is there any provision, since we have an equally challenging task –at mathematics especially – is there any expert in the mathematical area, not just literacy, but numeracy as well? Do we have any of those, or are there plans to have those, especially in the three districts? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: There are specialist teachers that will be deployed into the regions every month. This is not something that is unique to the region or even the country. This is the entire Caribbean that is facing an issue with the mathematics. However, as the Minister of Education stated previously when she had her estimates, that they are working assiduously with the mathematics curriculum, especially zoning in on having targeted programmes towards enhancing mathematics in the schools.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: While I do agree with the Minister that schools are being built, we also need to maintain the existing buildings. Could the Hon. Minister just provide a breakdown of the buildings to be maintained in Mabaruma and Moruca?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will be very happy to provide a breakdown under this line item 6242. We have repairs that will be done to the St. Nicholas Primary School teaching quarters; the Kwebanna Primary School teaching quarters; the Karaburi Primary School

teaching quarters; the Kamwatta Nursery School; Waramuri teaching quarters; Santa Rosa Nursery School; Kariako teachers' quarters; Kariako Primary School; Chinese Landing Primary School; Chinese Landing Primary School teachers' quarters; St. Bede's Primary School teachers' quarters; St. Bede's Primary School; Kachikamo Primary School teachers' quarters; St. John's School teachers' quarters; Savannah Black Water Primary School; St. Ninian's Primary School; Black Water Primary School; Black Water Primary School teachers' quarters; Wauna Primary School; Hosororo Primary School; Barabina Primary School; North West Secondary School; Mabaruma Primary School; the Education Office at Mabaruma; Hobodeia teachers' quarters; St. Anthony's Primary School; Powaikuru Primary School; Powaikuru teachers' quarter; Arakaka Primary School; Port Kaituma teachers' quarters and the Education Officers (EO) living quarters.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to turn our attention to Volume 2, with reference to matriculation rate. In 2023, there was a very significant number compared to the achievement in 2024, which is 9%. We are now setting a target of 25% for 2025. I am aware of the many challenges, like I said before, but I would like to know the specific measures at the secondary level to ensure that this matriculation rate is achieved.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Member, this is something you are aware of. The Ministry of Education has dispensed resources towards the schools in Region 1 and they are already there to ensure the quality of education is improved. We do have the Mathematics Specialist. You are not even listening, Hon. Member. I guess you do not care to hear the answer.

[**Mr. Mahipaul:** How do you know that he is not listening?] It is because he is listening to you. Now, Mr. Chairman, as I have been saying, there are specialists that are there for mathematics, and there are resources that are being made available and on time through the regional system, as well as directly from the Ministry of Education, to ensure that the schools are well equipped to have the reading resources and the learning resources.

Mr. Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6292 – Dietary: Is this line item specific to the provision of meals for the dormitory schools throughout the region, like the Northwest Secondary School, the Port Kaituma Secondary School and the Santa Rosa Secondary School? Could we get the total number of students being catered for in each dormitory? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Yes, but in addition to all those you have called, we also have the Kwebanna Secondary that we are catering for – that is coming on board for 2025 – and we are catering for 320 students.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Through you, I am looking at line item 6261, Local Travelling and Subsistence. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House, what mechanisms are in place for those teachers and literacy officers, who have to leave their school, and travel to distant or other schools to assist in literacy or numeracy programmes, to ensure they receive their subsistence on time? When they leave their school to go and work at other places it sometimes takes months for them to receive the little subsistence that they have.

Ms. Parag: In Region 1, as far as I am aware, they are receiving their subsistence on time and I have been so advised by the region. Provisions will also be made for advance to be given. In relation to the transportation, the region is providing that and the Regional Education Development Officer (REDO) herself has been travelling with the provided transportation. Boats are being made readily available to them for their transportation.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$3,606,056,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$1,989,435,000

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): Is there any provision under this line item, Hon. Minister, for training of critical staff members, especially for the Port Kaituma Cottage Hospital, of which the theatre is presently non-operational because of the lack of trained staff? There is, no provision of ultrasound services, even though it should be readily available, because, again, of lack of trained staff.

Ms. Parag: What we have in this training line item 6302 is a routine Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) training for three to six times yearly; the continuing medical education for doctors and medics; the continuing nursing education for nurses; and upgrading training for Logistics Management Information System (LMIS), the Basic Competency Training (BCT) to the CHWS, which are the Community Health Workers.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, we have an increase of 26 from 2024. I am aware that the Curisima Health Post, completed two years ago, is not operational as yet because of lack of staff; the mortuary at Baramita Cottage Hospital is not operational – bodies have to be transported to Kaituma, which is many miles away; and the Tassawini, Five Star, and Bay Creek Health Posts are also non-operation, even though completed more than a year ago. Could the Hon. Minister state if these employees or if provisions are made for staffing at those far-flung communities, which are very critical to health care?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. The officers completed their training at the end of December. Therefore, the operationalisation of the buildings will be before the end of February. However, medical outreaches have been conducted with those very officers from then to now, and so we will ensure that all that you... As a matter of fact, we already have it on board, all of those that you would have mentioned, to be in operation before the end of February.

12.03 p.m.

Mr. Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and thank you very much, Hon. Minister. We look forward to the staffing very soon. Let us turn to line item 6264, Vehicles Spares and Service. Hon. Minister, is there any provision under this line item for the servicing of the White Water vehicle, and is there any provision for maybe the purchasing of one for the Wauna Health Post, since the last one was crashed by the Medix?

Ms. Parag: Wauna had already purchased... First of all, please, Mr. Chairman, this particular line item is for vehicle spares and services and not for new purchases. However, I would like to inform the Hon. Member that Wauna has already purchased an All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) last year.

Mr. Cox: With regard to White Water, I asked if there is provision for servicing one that is presently down.

Ms. Parag: In 2025, this line item will also cover the ATV for White Water.

Mr. Cox: For the maintenance of buildings, while I am aware that we need to maintain what we have and it is very critical as well... I do agree that new health posts are being built, as one was recently commissioned in Imbotero, where I am from. I am very pleased. I raised this since 2020. I am happy that we have one right now. Could you say which outlying buildings are catered for

under this line item, not those within the Mabaruma central area, but the outlying region – the riverain communities?

Ms. Parag: Since we are on it, I will lay over to you all of which we are doing: repairs to the Port Kaituma District Hospital; repairs to the Environmental Health Quarters; repairs to the St. Mary's Health Hut; repairs to the Lower Kaituma Health Post; repairs to Powaikuru Health Post; repairs to the St. John's Health Centre; repairs to Waramuri Health Centre; repairs to Karaburi Health Hut; repairs to Kokerite Health Hut and repairs to Kachikamo Health Hut.

Mr. Cox: I want to go back to the questions asked earlier. This is a follow-up. With regard to the Baramita Cottage Hospital and the functioning of the mortuary there, what systems are being put in place, presently, to operationalise that?

Ms. Parag: The central Ministry of Health is overseeing that particular mortuary and that project. It is slated for 2025.

Dr. Cummings: I am following up on one of the questions that the Hon. Member, Mr. Cox, asked concerning training. The Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service and the Minister of Health would have alluded to having capable persons there to do ultrasounds and so on. We are talking about telemedicine here, if one does not have the skills, for instance, to confirm pregnancy in a mother. Do you have adequately skilled staff to do ultrasounds at this point in time, or has telemedicine not kicked in as yet?

Ms. Parag: There are 17 sites for telemedicine in Region 1, implemented through this Government in the last four years. There are ultrasound services available and the skills that are required. Telemedicine specifically is to ensure that even where there is that skill gap, there is a person who is there connecting with Georgetown, for example, that will be able to have that skilled person in Georgetown guide him/her on what to do there. That is a direct transfer through digitisation, through telemedicine of the skills. **[Dr. Cummings:** Is it being done presently? That is what I am asking.] It is being done through 17 sites.

Mr. Cox: I would like to go back to line item 6255, Maintenance of other Infrastructures. Is there any provision under this line item for the well at the Mabaruma Regional Hospital, which was originally budgeted for just about \$250,000? I think we are far beyond \$7 million. The target for

the amount of water that should be supplied to the hospital is very minimal. What provisions are in place for that project?

Ms. Parag: The well will be done by the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) and not through the regional system but of course, with our monitoring mechanisms through the regional system.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, just before I pose my question to the Hon. Member, let me take this opportunity to say a pleasant morning and also to welcome our students from the school in the southern district of our beautiful nation. I now turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6252, Maintenance of Bridges. I note, Mdm. Minister that we have a \$3 million increase from 2024 to 2025. Could you provide a disaggregation of the bridges, where these bridges are located, and the cost associated with each of the bridges to be maintained?

Ms. Parag: We do have a \$3 million increase. If we kept the same budget every year, Hon. Member, we could not be improving on a lot. We have increased it by \$3 million. I will give you the disaggregation. We have Unity Square – \$3.5 million, Kachikamo – \$2.5 million, St. John – \$2 million, St. Mary – \$2 million and we will then look at any other bridges that need to be repaired during that time.

Ms. Ferguson: May I now turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6254, Maintenance of Sea and River Defences. My first question is about the health services for the region. I am trying to figure out in my mind whether the health component in the region is responsible for the maintenance of sea and river defences. If so, where are these sea and river defences? [An Hon. Member: This is for the Ministry of Public Works.] This is not for the Ministry of Public Works. These are health services in the region.

Ms. Parag: I think the Hon. Member.... I am not sure, perhaps in her time as a Minister, she did not have this line item being placed at all, but we do. It is because of the fact that we have to have drainage and irrigation, and revetment around the health centres and so on. That is a different geography from what we have out here in the coastland. There are Sacred Heart – \$1 million, Unity Square – \$1 million, St. Anslem – \$1 million, Barima Blackwater, Kachikamo, St. John, Lower Kaituma, St. Mary and St. Dominic

Ms. Lawrence: Would the Hon. Minister go with me to line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies? My question is, what mechanism is now in place to ensure that the expired drugs and medical supplies in the various sub-regional health facilities are disposed of in a timely manner?

Ms. Parag: There is more than an allocation under line item 6221. It is more of a policy and measures being put in place. The region does have a weekly monitoring system in place by the Senior Environmental Health Officer, to ensure that it has the drugs that are close to expiration dates, being either consumed or be... [An Hon. Member: *(Inaudible)*] ...close to an expiration, Mdm. We know that in your Government, you threw out a lot of expired drugs. I am trying to explain to you ...

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you have been going really well speaking to the Chairman.

Ms. Parag: I am trying to explain, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You are doing a great job with it.

Ms. Parag: I am trying to explain that if there are drugs that are close to expiration, say a month of expiration, and the region is doing a weekly monitoring, and it see that the expiration is a month away, but that it can be consumed within the time before the expiration date, obviously, it will not waste the drugs. It is continuing to do that, to ensure that we are not utilising expired drugs, disposing of them and restocking within a timely manner.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Parag: Also, there is a mechanism that is being placed now, in all of the hospitals, health centres, health huts, health posts, and whatever you want to call them at that point or whatever they are. If residents have chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and hypertension, each health centre will have a register of all of those residents. They will call those residents or go to where they are, depending on where they are, to inform them that they can now uplift a three-month supply of their medication. One month prior to the expiration of that three months, they are recalled, to go back within that one-month period, to restock for the next three months. That is to ensure that they have a continuous flow of their medication.

Ms. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Minister tell the Committee how many environmental officers are employed by the region under this head?

Ms. Parag: We have two environmental health officers and seven assistants.

Ms. Lawrence: Do they visit the three sub-regions and all of the health centres every week?

Ms. Parag: Yes. They have a monitoring tool that they are utilising. They do have connectivity in a number of areas. They are utilising that. I know this because separate and apart from Region 1, I visited Region 7 when I went to Kamarang and I can tell you that it also has a monitoring mechanism there.

Ms. Ferguson: May I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6251, Security Services. I note that last year we approved one sum, and then we had a supplementary paper where we approved a difference for this particular region, under health services. I note that for 2025, you have a small increase there. Could you say to the Committee what has occasioned this small increase and whether you will be returning to the Committee later in the year for supplemental? We know, with security, there are always excuses about rate increases as a result of extra manpower being placed here, there and everywhere. Will this amount suffice, or will we see you returning later in the year for a supplementary and what would have occasioned this increase?

Ms. Parag: First of all, there is no line item 6251 here.

12.18 a.m.

Ms. Ferguson: Sorry, but you do not have to be so difficult.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on a second, the Minister is on her feet, and you are sorry? You can stand on a Point of Order and then I will judge. Please, we have been going great. Minister, go ahead.

Ms. Parag: There is no line item 6251, so I would like the Hon. Member to point me to the line item that she is speaking of.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. If there is a zero, you do not have to offer any answer.

Ms. Parag: I am not offering any answer; there is no line item.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, clearly, we are trying to generate our questions on our feet or we have to change our glasses.

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$1,989,435,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$37,135,000

Mr. Chairman: If I have any such actions again as the one from the Hon. Member Ferguson, I will start putting the agencies. Please let us respect persons who are given the floor.

Mr. Cox: We are aware that the present Government stresses a lot on agricultural development and is trying to make agriculture what it probably should be. In the region, Hon. Minister, do you agree that this budgetary allocation is adequate given the large number of activities, let us say are surrounding agriculture that would like to be implemented across the region? Under the Indicators, it states:

“Number of training sessions delivered to farmers”

In 2024, it was 55 and now we are setting a target of 80. My second question is, given the geographical layout of the region, it is very expensive to reach persons or for them to reach central for these trainings, so again, is it adequate, and could you tell us the number of training sessions you are likely to implement under this programme?

Ms. Parag: This is the agricultural programme under the regional budget for Region 1 and while we do have a sum that will cater towards what we specifically had as a plan for agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture’s budget also supplements heavily all 10 Administrative Regions. We do have that collaborative effort through the region with the Ministry of Agriculture. For the training, we will also be collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture. What we put forward in our work plan here and work programme to the Ministry of Finance, the allocation that we have gotten, we believe that it can work for us.

Mr. Cox: I do agree that agriculture is very important and should play a key role in the development of our region, so I have no further questions under this programme.

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$37,135,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Just to let everyone know that the Opposition Chief Whip has asked if I could only spend one hour as allocated on this head. We have 13 minutes remaining. I will stick to his wishes because the savings that have been generated most likely will be used elsewhere, but he asked that I stick to the one hour allocated for this particular head. That is the Opposition Chief Whip's requested.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$26,500,000

Programme: 711 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$26,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 712 – Public Works – \$344,500,000

Mr. Cox: Project code 1100200 – Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister say where these capital projects with reference to bridges will be constructed in the Mabaruma District?

Ms. Parag: In the Mabaruma District, we have the construction of a bridge and revetment at the Barima end and access road – Mabaruma and the construction of a foot path bridge at MacKenzie and Yarakita – Mabaruma.

Mr. Cox: Project code 1400400 – Roads: Now that you are constructing the bridge for the Barima end road, are similar projects being undertaken for the construction or the rehabilitation of this road? It is a key link between Morawhanna and Central Mabaruma. Is there any project being undertaken there for the rehabilitation of that stretch of road?

Ms. Parag: I am advised that in 2024, the contract for that road was executed. It is ongoing, but the contract was signed for the road in 2024.

Mr. Cox: A follow up: Just to rephrase the question, is there any additional provision or is it adequate, and likely to be completed soon?

Ms. Parag: There is no provision in 2025 for that.

Mr. Cox: Project code 2601400 – Power Supply:

“Provision for electricity distribution network...”

I am also aware that communities have been linked to the main grid in Mabaruma. Under this project code, which additional communities are we targeting in the Matarkai District and the Moruca District as well?

Ms. Parag: What I have here is for the Moruca District. What we have is the extension of the Kumaka electrical grid, that is to Rincon; extension to Mora; an establishment of an electrical grid at Kwebanna; we also have the establishment of an electrical distribution network in Karaburi and the extension of the Kumaka electrical grid to Hobodeia.

Mr. Cox: Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown with reference to those in Moruca

Ms. Parag: We have the retention payment for three of them, which is for the electrical grids to Rincon, Mora and Kwebanna. For the first one there is \$2.8 million, second – \$3,030,000 and third – \$3,153,000. For the new ones, we have the upgrading of switch gear and synchronisation of the generator sets at Moruca – \$15 million; establishment of the distribution network at Karaburi at \$60 million, and extension of the Kumaka electrical grid to Hobodeia – \$22 million.

Mr. Cox: With regard to Matarkai, no provision was given under this project code. That was the second part of my question, or the first part rather.

Ms. Parag: That is already in operation through the Office of the Prime Minister.

Programme: 712 – Public Works - \$344,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$247,235,000

Mr. Cox: Sir, could you advise how many minutes are remaining?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Seven minutes are remaining.

Mr. Cox: Project Code 1202600 – Buildings - Education: Is there any provision under this project code for the secondary schools that are presently under construction or are those undertaken by the central Ministry? This is with reference to the Hosororo Secondary School, which is under construction, and the one in Moruca, Kwebanna Secondary School.

Ms. Parag: Those are being done through the central Ministry of Education, not through the region.

Mr. Cox: Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of this allocated sum with regard to the buildings that are being constructed?

Ms. Parag: What we have as two rolls over projects are the construction of the centre and the extension of the Wallaba Primary School at Moruca. For the new ones, we have the rehabilitation of St. Anthony's Primary School, the reconstruction of the Powaikuru Primary School and the extension of the education department at Mabaruma. There is a major rehabilitation to the Mabaruma Primary School, renovation of Yarakita Primary School, reconstruction of Kariako Primary School, and the extension of Arakaka Primary School. There is the construction of sanitary blocks to various schools in Region 1 – Kariako, construction of security huts to various posts at Yarakita Primary School, Yarakita Nursery School, White Water Nursery School and Kamwatta Primary School.

Mr. Cox: Just specific to the Mabaruma Primary School, could you provide additional details in terms of the specification for the rehabilitation and probably the total cost to be expended under this project code?

Ms. Parag: We have the size of the building as 30x140 – two flats and a building by 25x80 flat, for accommodating 528 students and 28 teachers.

Programme: 713 – Education Delivery – \$247,235,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$387,254,000

Mr. Cox: Project code 1202400 – Buildings - Health:

“Provisions for health facilities, quarters, and payments of retention”

With specific reference to the riverine communities again, which communities are likely to benefit under this project code, communities that probably may not have benefited before and new projects in terms of health facilities?

Ms. Parag: What we have are roll over projects: the construction of health huts, sanitary blocks, living quarters at Haimaruni, Arwansa, Aruka Mouth, Cloud Land, Unity Square and then at Waramuri and Moruca.

12.33 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Before I take Hon. Member, Mr. Cox's next question, the Opposition Chief Whip says you can go for 10 minutes beyond 12.36 p.m. You have, right now, 12 minutes remaining.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, gracious Whip. Project code 2401500 – Land and Water Transport:

“Provision for ambulances ...”

Is there any provision here for the purchasing of new river ambulances for Region 1?

Ms. Parag: We already have four river ambulances, so we will not be purchasing river ambulances in this allocation.

Mr. Cox: A follow-up question, Hon. Minister, would you say the four ambulances are working adequately?

Ms. Parag: Yes, they are.

Mr. Cox: Under this project code, minus ambulances, it states:

“...vehicles, boats and engines.”

Is this specific to the Department of Health for the transportation of maybe staff or is this for communities in assisting them with their transportation under health?

Ms. Parag: What we have are two 40-horsepower boats and engines. They will be servicing the communities of Sacred Heart, St. Mary's, Lower Port Kaituma, Powaikuru, Blackwater Barima, Savannah Blackwater, Red Hill, Five Star and Falls Top. That is to ensure that every riverain community has a mode of transportation for emergencies: riverbed house-to-house vaccination, shut-ins and things like that. There is also a 4x4 ambulance for the Mabaruma Regional Hospital under this project code and that will cater for emergency patients from land communities of the

Mabaruma sub-region. The White Water ambulance will cater for the entire White Water and also two border points – Gaja Landing and Bamboo Landing. Then, there is a canter truck for the Mabaruma Regional Hospital. This will be used to transport the drugs from the wharf to the main regional bond and then from the bond to the last-mile distribution.

Mr. Cox: Just for confirmation, Hon. Minister, are you saying there is provision for a new ambulance for the Mabaruma District?

Ms. Parag: There is a 4x4 ambulance.

Mr. Cox: That has brought me to the end of questioning for the Hon. Minister. Thank you for your time.

Programme: 714 – Health Services – \$387,254,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$32,500,000

Programme: 715 – Agriculture – \$32,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Let us take the suspension for lunch and see if we can get back here by 1.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.38 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.51 p.m.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before we start, let me thank the Minister and the team from Region 1 for taking us through that agency and now invite her team from Region 2 to join her as we begin, at 1.52 p.m., consideration of Region 2.

Agency: 72 Region 2: Pomeroon-Supenaam

Current Expenditure

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$380,098,000

Mr. Holder: Could I direct the Minister to line item 6112, Senior Technical? I noticed that the senior staff will be reduced... In fact, line item 6112 and line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, will be reduced to one. I would like to know what is the designation of the staff that will be leaving or removed and what effect it will have on the programme. Why is there not a plan to fill that vacancy, if there is not one?

Ms. Parag: This line item just speaks to the actual person who was in that designation. That Superintendent of Works is now deceased and that is why we have one less Superintendent of Works. We would look to fill that vacancy a little bit later.

Mr. Holder: The Superintendent of Works has passed some months now. One would expect that an important designation of that sort would be quickly filled to ensure efficiency within that programme. Could the Minister say why she did not cater for that, given the fact that she had adequate time, in my opinion, to fill the vacancy? Has she advertised for the vacancy to be filled so far?

Ms. Parag: The region has someone already who is temporarily filling in, but there is no permanent employment. That is not to say that the budget on the whole would not cater for someone who is going to be permanently employed. In addition to that temporary person filling in, the other Superintendent of Works, Clerk of Works and the region generally, with their engineers are overseeing the projects.

Mr. Holder: Is the person a new employee temporarily filling that position or is it somebody who is already employed and now those additional duties are being added to that person?

Ms. Parag: There is someone who is in that system, but as one would know, in the public service, if an employee is going to act in a position, he/she can have an allowance and have those additional finances to his/her salary.

Mr. Holder: Okay. Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Minister be kind enough to lay over the details of that for me? I would not like her to go through that now, but just lay over that information for me, please.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I am not going to lay it over. I am going to call it out if you wish.

Mr. Holder: I do not wish for you to call it out.

Ms. Parag: I am not going to lay it over but if you want the public to know, I have no problem with that. We have a Nissan Datsun, a Hilux, a Frontier, a Fielder, another Toyota Fielder and another one, so that is three. We have a fibreglass boat, a 75-horsepower engine, a generator and a 200-horsepower engine. The cost is \$16,500,000 allocated.

Mr. Holder: Since you are not laying it over, could you give the specific quantities for the list that you just gave?

Ms. Parag: Yes. For the Nissan Datsun, the annual cost is \$1,170,000.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Ferguson wants to ask a question and then I will come back in.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, may I turn her attention to line item 6281 – Security Services? I note that last year we had a higher increase than what you are seeking now for 2025. Could you explain to the Committee the reason for the decrease as against last year and whether we will see you returning to the Committee later in the year for supplemental, knowing that, probably over time, there might be changes in security rates and human resources? Could you provide an explanation for the decrease and whether you will return to the Committee later for supplementary?

Ms. Parag: It is very simple. Last year, we had 366 days in the leap year, and this year we have 365 days. It is really a matter of just a day's difference.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: This is a programme which falls directly under the Regional Chairman. Could the Minister lay over the details of line item 6211?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, just like the studies, the Commission of Inquiries (COIs) and the plans, they always want you to lay over too. I do not want to lay over. I have with me the information, so if the Hon. Member would like to know the information, I can put that on record.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you have an opportunity to answer whether you choose to say yes to lay over or you want to read it out, that is your prerogative.

Ms. Parag: I am not laying over, please, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You are answering.

Ms. Parag: This is what we have: Statutory meetings, and subcommittees; both once per month; the Regional Intelligence Committee (RIC) meetings; the Regional Chairman and Vice Chairman expenses, stipend for Toshaos; outreaches; training for Toshaos and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs); Men on Mission, Regional Democratic... [Mr. Jordan: Men on Mission? Do they get money there too?] Yes.

2.01 p.m.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, could I ask the Minister how much money there is for 'Men on Mission and if there were an increase to the Toshao stipend and how much would that increase be? Given the fact that on our side we have announced a measure to substantively increase stipends for Toshaos.

Ms. Parag: As you know, mid-last year, as a matter of fact, when they had the Amerindian Heritage Month, from that month, it was announced that Toshaos would be increased and they were increased.

Mr. Holder: How much?

Ms. Parag: You can look that up; it is public records.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Holder.

Mr. Holder: I would like to put on the record that I am asking the Minister, what is the increase and what the Minister or her Government will be offering the Toshaos. I also ask what sum is allocated under that line item for 'Men on Mission'.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the stipend for 15 Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Councillors is \$30,000 each. The stipend for nine capped Amerindian Toshaos is \$45,000 by nine. The stipend for the Deputy Toshaos is \$30,000 by nine and the meagre sum of \$600,000 is for the Menon Mission.

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence – I am asking the Minister again if she can lay over the details of the local travel.

Ms. Parag: I am not inclined to lay over, please, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Ms. Parag: I am not laying over, please, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. Holder: Could the Minister give us the details, therefore?

Ms. Parag: What we have is \$6.1 million for local travel and subsistence. We have subsistence in travelling for staff, subsistence in travelling for staff working beyond normal hours, subsistence in travelling for field audit staff, and subsistence in travelling for an expeditor – travelling, well, this is to check for items, collect quotations, make purchases, *et cetera*. Travelling for staff to follow up on matters with the Minister of Finance, and Local Government in Georgetown.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance. Could the Minister state what equipment falls under this line item? This is under admin, I am interested in knowing what equipment they have to maintain for \$3 million. If the Minister can list the equipment, tell me the location and the cost per equipment.

Ms. Parag: With the Regional Council (RC) office, you have one desktop computer and two Air conditioning (AC) units. You have the Regional Vice Chair's office, four AC units, one desktop computer, and one printer. Office of the Regional Executive Officer (REO), one desktop computer, laptops, a laser jet printer, and AC units. The Deputy Regional Executive Officer's (DREO's) office, laser printer, AC unit, fridge, and laptop. Administrative assistant, one laptop, Planning unit, two desktop computers and seven AC units. Statehouse, an AC unit; Registry, five computers, one refrigerator, three AC units, two laser printers and a one-floor model printer. For the personnel section; four desktop computers, three AC units, and one laser printer. The Local Government office; two desktop computers, two AC units, and one laser printer. Budget and financing; you have nineteen desktop computers, seven laser jet printers, six AC units, and one generator. You have the network equipment and the Integrated Financial Management and Accounting System (IFMA) service equipment.

Mr. Holder: That is all under this programme.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, if I can turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6302, training, including scholarship. I note we have an \$85,000 increase for 2025. Could you say who will be benefiting from the training and, if possible, could you also list the programmes that person is likely to be trained for 2025?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, for this *whopping* increase of \$85,000, you can answer.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And for the *whopping* increase of \$85,000, we have staff training, various staff from different departments and they will be offered training through the Ministry of Public Service – accounting procedures, principles for supervisory management, induction and orientation into the public service, project management, monitoring and evaluation, procurement procedures, and also retirement training. Training for drivers, and the little or the *whopping* increase of \$85,000, will cater for occupational health and safety training.

Mr. Chairman: Folks, I did not want to be funny, but you are talking about a \$380 million budget here and we find, you know, such significance in an \$85,000 increase.

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$380,098,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$658,345,000

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, line item 6112, Senior technical staff. Yes, Senior Technical. Could the Minister say if the absence of anyone to fill this position is having an impact on the programme? The vacancy for that programme was not filled in 2024, and it is not being catered for in 2025.

Ms. Parag: There is no such line item as 6112 under this programme.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6112.

Mr. Chairman: It is 6112, zero, according to my book, unless I am having a Mahipaul moment.

Mr. Holder: I understand the issue that there is zero, but I just wanted to give the Minister an opportunity to speak on it; otherwise, we can probably remove it from the programme completely because it is zero all the way. It means that maybe there is no need for such a position.

Mr. Chairman: The principle is that if there is no money requested, we do not ask a question.

Mr. Holder: I know, moving on Cde. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Holder, remember, this is a format. Right? And who knows, the next Government may find it necessary to put a one there.

Mr. Holder: That is Correct. Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled – \$83,659,000. Moving on, Cde. Chairman. We see it is a significant increase in terms of the numbers there. So, my question is what is the urgent and sudden need for unskilled workers under this programme? What are the job descriptions of those persons they intend to they intend to employ?

Ms. Parag: The Hon. Member said he was born and grew up in Region 2, So did I, and I am very well aware that Region 2 is heavily agricultural based. As a matter of fact, it does not just surround rice fields and cash crops. It is also drainage and irrigation that will enable these particular rice fields and cash crops to have proper drainage so that we can have the crops. In this semi-skilled and unskilled line item, there was a need to have sluice attendants to ensure that we did not have backup kokers. We have two rangers who are employed in this line item and that is a reason for the increase in the 2025 budget, to cater for 16 sluice attendants and two rangers. I am not sure what skills we are supposed to have with the sluice attendants, but we know that when we put them there, they are trained and they know how to open and close a koker door, and they are physically fit to do that.

Mr. Holder: Thank you for that explanation coming from the Minister. I would ask the Minister if there were a number of new sluices and what that number is. Or if these employees are for the existing sluices, or are there shortages at those sluices? As far as I know, they should have had sluice attendants 24/7. I know we left that in place when we left the Government. I would like to know if they are probably shortening the time and creating new slots, or if this is a backup person *per se*. I do not know what the situation is, could the Minister explain that? I do appreciate the need for sluice attendants and the importance of it but I am just trying to understand the addition of the 14 new sluice attendants minus the two rangers.

Ms. Parag: There are no new sluices, but we do have replacements. Some are replacements and some are new employees to fill gaps where we did not have.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, I am tempted, but my job is just a referee.

Ms. Ferguson: Do not let the devil tempt you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: No, it is coming from higher above.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works – \$234,000,000. You have a sum of \$234 million there. Could the Minister give the details on that sum? What is the reason for the increase there, and what exactly will the sums be spent on?

Ms. Parag: The increase will cater for the kosher canals and drainage canals, CD3 1,200 rods and supply canals 1,560 rods.

2.16 p.m.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, for line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service, I know you do not want to lay over, but I am asking again if you could lay over the details of this.

Ms. Parag: I am not going to lay over.

Mr. Holder: That is all right. I will move on to the next programme.

Ms. Parag: Is it the next programme?

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: could the Hon. Member give reasons for the increase for 2025 as against what was approved in 2024? Could she say if the region is utilising more office space and those kinds of things? Could you give an explanation? **[Mr. Hamilton:** There are more buildings.] Mr. Hamilton, why do you not shut your mouth?

Ms. Parag: This is the electricity charges for the Engineering Department and sub-office. The increase will cater for the regularisation of the electrical network.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members...? Wow. Minister, I had to say, wow because some of these questions... You have a \$40 million increase in one line item – Semi-Skilled

Operatives and Unskilled, under Agriculture – with only 18 members added; it is from 41 to 59. I would have had you explaining that to me.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$658,345,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$221,569,000

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

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. [*Interruption*]

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

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, I am just looking for the line item.

Mr. Chairman: There is too much information to process.

Mr. Holder: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges...

Mr. Chairman: There is a very big increase there. Yes.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, let us move on from this line item. I want to get more to the capital expenditure.

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

Ms. Ferguson: No, Sir. No, Mr. Chairman. Let me help my Colleague here.

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

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, through you to the Hon. Member, could I turn her attention to line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. I note we have a \$5 million increase for 2025. Could the Hon. Member state the reason for the increase and what other infrastructures are likely to benefit from this allocation in the 2025 Budget? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, before you answer, I am questioning myself on if I am having a Mahipaul's moment. The Hon. Member said at line item 6255, there is a \$5 million increase. I

think I am seeing \$6,475,000. Are we on the same page, Hon. Member. I am not seeing \$5 million in my book.

Ms. Ferguson: It is \$16 million so it is a \$6 million increase, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Hon. Minister, we are on the same page. I have \$6 million and the Hon. Member has \$6 million. You could answer now. I am sorry, Mr. Mahipaul. You actually missed the whole page. Yes, I am sorry.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First of all, the Hon. Member asked which infrastructure will benefit. It is not the infrastructure that will benefit, the beneficiaries are the staff and family members. This is going to be a chain link fence at the living quarters at the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) – 89. There will be landscaping at the living quarters; chain link fence at the Women’s Centre in Maria’s Lodge; chain link fence at the living quarters at the RDC, 826; and chain link fence at the living quarters at the RDC, 827; and purchasing as well. That is for the maintenance. The beneficiaries remain the people – please, sir – not the infrastructure.

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$221,569,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$5,427,950

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

Mr Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: there is an increase of about \$400 million under that line. Could the Minister explain the reason for that increase?

Ms. Parag: So, we have an increase of 12 non-graduate Assistant Masters/Mistresses (AMs), three untrained Temporary Qualified Masters and one 195 Temporary Qualified/Masters Mistresses (TQMs). There are 195 Temporary Qualified/Masters Mistresses.

Mr. Holder: Thank you. Cde. Chairman, could the Minister give a breakdown of...

Mr. Chairman: Could we help you with a little light?

Mr. Holder: No, it is all right. It is all right. Let us move on from this line item Cde. Chairman. Unless my Colleague, Ms. Lawrence has a question.

Mr. Chairman: Member of Parliament (MP), Ms. Lawrence, you have the floor.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I ask the Minister to look at line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings. Could you kindly say how many teachers' quarters you have in the Region and how many you are catering for in 2025 in terms of maintenance?

Ms. Parag: We have 25 quarters in the region, but this particular line item is catering for the maintenance and general repairs to different schools.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Minister. I do not know if the Minister would be kind enough to point me on this programme where they are going to utilise moneys in this Budget for the upgrading and refurbishing of the teachers' quarters. I am asking because His Excellency did speak to the upgrade of these facilities for the staff in the various regions.

Ms. Parag: In addition to the region's resources which is going through this line item to the schools, you have the Central Ministry that will be assisting the regions with those specific repairs and so on for the teachers' quarters. Yes, there are minimum or basic standards that are to be set at the schools as well as the health centres.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, on the same line item, does this sum cater for repairs at the CV Nunes Primary School?

Ms. Parag: That is already being done by the Ministry of Education through the Central Ministry's budget of last year.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, there are some works ongoing at the school. Could the Minister say why is it that her Government ended up, for example, ripping out the ceiling from the new block which was built only about a year and a half ago? Why is it that we had to incur that kind of expense on what should have been a new block for the students after only a year and a half later?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chair, that is not a programme that is catered for under this line item nor the region. Therefore, I will not be answering that.

Mr. Holder: All right. Thank you, Cde. Chairman.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$5,427,950 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 725 – Health Services – \$1,878,600,000

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

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Cde. Chairman, under employment for wages and salaries – these covers from line item 6111 all the way down to 6117 – could the Minister state the reason for the increase? You have a total increase of about 241 – I believe – staff there.

Mr. Chairman: Where are we? Which line item are we at again?

Mr. Holder: I am sorry. Could the Minister state the increase in terms of the staff – which areas they would be placed and at which facilities?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chair, I do not know which line item the Hon. Member is asking about.

Mr. Holder: This is under the Staffing Details.

Mr. Chairman: Again, my book seems to be having wrong information. I am looking for an increase in these staffing for 241 and I am not finding that.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I work that back. There is an increase in the staffing from line items 6111 all the way down to line item 6117. There is a total increase there. I am asking the question – where will these staff be placed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I was just going on what you said of an increase of 241. You said that you worked it out. I was now looking at the total for 2024 which is 388 and the total for 2025 is 426. When I add 241 to 388 the numbers did not match.

Mr. Holder: Yes. I acknowledged that. It was an error.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I am sorry.

Mr. Holder: I said I worked that back.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member is asking for you to give an explanation across all the employment lines – a total of that increase – to explain all of them. Is that what you said, Hon. Member?

Mr. Holder: It is the increase.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Holder: Explain the increase.

Mr. Chairman: That is right. For line item 6111, there is no increase.

Ms. Parag: For line item 6111, there is no increase.

Mr. Chairman: For line item 6112, there is an increase of one.

Ms. Parag: For line item 6112, there is an increase of one; line item 6113, there is an increase of nine; line item 6114, there is an increase of one; line item 6115, there is an increase of 17; line item 6116, there is an increase of eight; and line item 6117, there is an increase of 2.

Mr. Holder: What are the designations of these staff and where will they be placed?

2.31 p.m.

Ms. Parag: For line item 6112, the increase caters for one Medic; line item 6113 caters for one Medical Technologist, two Medical Lab Technicians, two Dental Aids, two X-ray Technicians; line item 6114 caters for one Accounts Clerk II; line item 6115 caters for five Patient Care Assistants – one Patient Care Assistant will move to the pensionable status, three Blood Donor Attendants, seven Ward Maids and one Captain Engineer; line item 6116 caters for eight persons: one Office Assistant, one Staff Nurse, one Nurse Aide, one Nursing Assistant, one Hospital Administrator – re-employed, one Laundress, one Staff Nurse and line item 6117 caters for one Porter and one Ward Maid.

Mr. Holder: The Minister did not state where the staff will be placed. More importantly, could the Minister say if there is any provision for staffing at the new Lima Hospital which was announced to come on stream shortly?

Ms. Parag: I hope that when I answer this question, the Hon. Member will learn that staffing comes from the Central Ministry, the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Holder: As we are on staff, I noticed in Volume 2 that we are having some trouble with the system here in opening it up. I believe it is at Indicator No. 3. The government is indicating that they will move surgeries to the regional and other hospitals from 50% to 100%. Is Charity Hospital included under this provision?

Ms. Parag: In Essequibo or Region 2, we have Suddie Hospital that is doing 50% of the surgeries. In order to get to 100% to cover the hospitals in Region 2, the other 50% will be done at the Charity Hospital.

Mr. Holder: You intend to do surgeries at Charity Hospital. At least the last time I was there – and I have spoken with some of the doctors as well – is a major problem in terms of instabilities of electricity or stable power at that building. I think that would be important if you intend to do surgeries there. That problem has existed for quite some time. How do you intend to address that if you want to conduct 50% of the surgeries at the Charity Hospital?

Ms. Parag: The Ministry of Health is catering for the electricals and we are catering for the infrastructure in relation to the Charity Hospital.

Mr. Holder: Since you are on electrical, I have spoken with some of the doctors there. I visited there just recently and they have a major problem in terms of comfort in the working environment. Their air conditioning (AC) units are either absent or not functioning. Would you be addressing that under this line item as well?

Ms. Parag: In relation to the Charity Hospital, there are sections of the hospital that are under rehabilitation. When those are all completed, everything in the hospital will be reset in terms of the air conditioning units and so on. It is not a case where sections of the hospital are not being powered. They are being powered, and they do have air conditioning units. It is not such of a discomfort as the Hon. Member, my Friend, would make it out to be.

Mr. Holder: I want to assure the Minister that while I was there, the staff complained bitterly to me, so it is a major issue for them. Moving on to line item 6221, that covers Drugs and Medical Supplies, there is a sum there of \$566 million. Is this sum enough to ensure there are adequate

drugs and medication at all the hospitals, and would that cater also for the new hospital coming on stream?

Ms. Parag: The original budget and the whopping increase again of \$51,000 added to this will give an increase and it will cater for what the regional drugs and medical supplies are. In relation to the new hospital, the Ministry of Health will be supplementing that hospital.

Mr. Holder: We are increasing drugs and the Minister is giving some assurance that there will be adequate drugs there. On the other hand, could I ask the Minister what her Government is putting in place to ensure that there is no wastage of drugs? Even as we increase, we have to be careful of how we manage the system to ensure that there is no wastage of drugs. I would like the Minister to speak on that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you have to speak on that.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Sir. There is a weekly monitoring system and capacity in terms of the Pharmacy Care Assistants who are doing the inventory and logging or recording. The monitoring mechanism is also in communication with the Ministry of Health and the Materials Management Unit (MMU) to be specific, to ensure they have the appropriate number of drugs. Where you have medical supplies and drugs, again – and I stated this before when I was speaking in relation to Region 1 – all of the regions where you have residents with chronic illnesses, will be given medication in doses for three months. We will ensure that there is no wastage and when it comes to a point – as they always have – when they have low stock, they will have to communicate with the MMU and get it sorted out.

Mr. Holder: The Minister is saying there is a system in place to ensure there is no wastage. Could the Minister say how much drugs were dumped of last year and where those drugs were dumped?

Mr. Chairman: We are talking about buying drugs here, not dumping drugs.

Mr. Holder: Yes, but...

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with the allocations before us with respect to the expenses which these will take care of.

Mr. Holder: Does this line cater for the safe disposal of drugs which have expired or for some reason not usable, and where do you normally safely dispose of the drugs?

Ms. Parag: This line item 6211 will cater for the purchase of the drugs and the storage of the drugs at the different health centres, *et cetera*.

Mr. Holder: Could I ask if there is anything in your budget to cater for the safe disposal of drugs? Again, where are you dumping those drugs?

Ms. Parag: I will answer the Hon. Member by saying this particular line item is catering for the purchase and the storage of the drugs at these health centres.

Programme: 725 - Health Services - \$1,878,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have one hour allocated for Region 2 and we have already expended 50 minutes. I have no indication that time will be allowed beyond this from the Opposition Chief Whip. Unless I get an indication, I will stick to the one hour allocated.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$69,125,000

Mr. Holder: Project code 1202900, there is an allocation of \$36 million. Could the Minister say what exactly that allocation is for?

Ms. Parag: We have a rollover of the rehabilitation extension of the boathouse at Charity. You have the new ones such as the rehabilitation of the regional store at Anna Regina, the construction of a concrete drain at Suddie Amerindian Hostel and the construction of a sanitary block at Suddie Amerindian Hostel.

Mr. Holder: Project code 2503000 – Furniture and Equipment: Could the Minister give a similar breakdown as to what the \$33 million caters for there?

Ms. Parag: It caters for: the automatic sprinkler system, smoke detectors, fire extinguisher, fireball, filing cabinets, table mics, executive chairs, sitting chairs, surveillance camera, desktop

computer, table model printer, a stand fan, a bed with mattress, writing desk, cubicles, three-piece suite, wooden cupboard and 20 dining chairs.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Member Holder, you may proceed.

Mr. Holder: I have no more questions under this programme.

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$69,125,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$160,200,000

Mr. Holder: Project code 1300700 – Miscellaneous Drainage and Irrigation Works: Could the Minister give a breakdown of the sum and the location these works will be done?

Ms. Parag: I think the Hon. Member is a resident of Henrietta. There is the construction of a regulator at Henrietta; construction of regulator at Coffee Grove; construction of regulator at Columbia; construction of regulator at Mainstay; timber revetment at Andrew Sea Sluice; construction of siphon at SC6 Better Hope; construction of a regulator at La Belle Alliance; construction of irrigation check at Better Hope; construction of a box culvert at Sparta; construction of irrigation check at Fear Not; extension and rewiring of engineering department building; construction of washroom facilities at Taymouth Manor Pump Station; construction of washroom facilities at Golden Fleece Pump Station; construction of washroom facilities at La Union; construction of washroom facilities at Lima Pump Station; construction of washroom facilities at Hampton Court Pump Station; construction of washroom facilities at Perth Pump Station; and construction of washroom facilities at Charity Pump Station.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Member Holder, you may proceed.

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Let us move on to the next programme.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$160,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.46 p.m.

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$196,950,000

Mr. Holder: Project code 1100300 – Bridges: There is an allocation of \$96 million. Could the Minister give details on that allocation, including location and the individual cost?

Ms. Parag: There is the construction of a reinforced concrete (RC) bridge at Golden Fleece – \$30 million; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Capoey –\$50 million; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Good Hope playground – \$12 million; and the construction of a timber bridge at Paradise – \$4 million.

Mr. Holder: Project code 1400500 – Roads: There is an allocation of \$100 million. Could the Minister give a similar breakdown?

Ms. Parag: We have a rollover upgrade of Barber Man Street, Henrietta. There are also new projects, which includes the upgrading of Kayman Dam, Hampton Court; the upgrading of Zelina Street, La Belle Alliance; the upgrading of Gobin Street, Johanna Cecelia; the upgrading of Grassy Dam, Charity Phase II; the upgrading of Fatso Street, New Road and the upgrading of Caricom Street, Anna Regina.

Mr. Holder: Could the Minister say why the Anna Regina Market Road was not included in this sum?

Ms. Parag: The reason is that the road is like a main access road. It comes under the Ministry of Public Works central Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. It is a public road.

Mr. Holder: Could you say why the back street to Venrietta – the road at the back – was not included in this sum as well?

Ms. Parag: The region has been submitted it to the Ministry of Public Works for it to be done.

Mr. Holder: There is another road in the same village which we would have been fighting for over the last five years, I believe, and every year I come here and make a representation for it. It is the street running from east to west between Sideline and Middle Walk. It is a short street there that I have been making representations for on behalf of people who would have been complaining constantly. Yet, for four years and five budgets, we have not gotten anything for it. I am asking, why is there not a provision for it in this final Budget of the People's Progressive Party/Civic?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, let me start by saying that all the roads that have been otherwise done by the region, which form main roads, are very long streets, and are submitted to the Ministry of Public Works, this being one. It is rather unfortunate that the Hon. Member would say here that they have been fighting for it for five years, as if that road fell apart in 2020, when this Government took Office. Obviously, a road cannot just fall apart in a couple of days, so it would be five budgets going ahead. This probably would have been before, when the Hon. Member was part of the Government that was in Office at the time and had the opportunity to do something about it. That road has been submitted to the Ministry of Public Works to be done.

Mr. Holder: It has been submitted, so could the Minister give a timeline for when works will begin?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I can give an estimation of when the region is going to get its budget rolled out. The Ministry of Public Works, as we know, is running the entire country in terms of road networking, and with it being submitted to the Ministry of Public Works, I cannot say whether it will be next month or two months from now. However, what I do know is that the Ministry of Public Works has already done thousands of roads across the country and will be servicing the communities individually with road networking.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, this is a special plea. Let them do thousands and plus one more for him. Thank you.

Programme: 723 – Public Works – \$196,950,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$418,300,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I will give you an opportunity to ask a question on this next head because your time is up.

Mr. Holder: Project code 1202800 – Buildings - Education: There is a sum of \$291,800,000. Could the Minister give a breakdown in terms of what that sum is for?

Ms. Parag: The rollovers will be the construction of the new Mainstay Lake Primary School and Tapakuma Lake Nursery School and the construction of a water trestle and fence at Mainstay Lake

Primary School. There are new bridges which include the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at the Department of Education in Cotton Field; the construction of a landing at Martindale Nursery School and Martindale Primary School; the construction of a RC bridge at Walton Hall Nursery School; the construction of a shed at Martindale Nursery School; the construction of a RC bridge at Riverstown Primary School; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at 8th of May Primary School; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at C.V. Nunes Primary School; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at the Special Education Needs (SEN) School; the construction of a landing at Capoeira Lake; the rehabilitation of a landing and shed at Akawini Primary Annex. There is also the construction of a new nursery school at Bethany; the construction of a new nursery school at Siriki; the construction of the new Hackney Nursery School and the construction of a duplex living quarter at Friendship Primary School.

Additionally, we have the extension to the kitchen at Aurora Secondary School dorm; the extension of the school kitchen at Mashabo Primary School; the construction of a school kitchen at Mainstay Lake Primary School; the extension of the school kitchen at Tapakuma Lake Primary School; the construction of the school kitchen at St. John's Primary School; the construction of the school kitchen at Liberty Primary School; the extension of the school kitchen at Ulele Primary School; the construction of the school kitchen at Hackney Primary School; the construction of the school kitchen at Kabakaburi Primary School; and the extension of the school kitchen at Mabel Sandy Primary School. There is also the construction of water trestles at Wakapau Secondary School, Wakapau teachers' quarter; Good Hope Primary School; Friendship Primary School; Dredge Creek Primary School; Mabel Sandy Primary School; Liberty Primary School; Wakapau Primary School; Ulele Primary School and St. John's Primary School. Additionally, there are sanitary blocks at Lima Sands Primary School and Good Hope Primary School.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I now have to put those two heads that we have not passed yet.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$418,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 725 – Health Service – \$224,695,000

Programme: 725 – Health Service – \$224,695,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister and your staff of Region 2. I invite you to bring to your assistance the staff of Region 3. Hon. Members, please let us turn to pages 350 and 351, as Region 3 staff come in place.

Agency: 73 Region 3: Essequibo Islands/West Demerara

Current Expenditure

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$443,525,000

Ms. Alert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I remain seated with your permission?

Mr. Chairman: [*Inaudible*]

Ms. Alert: Thank you. If I may turn the Minister's attention to line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, could she share with us what skill sets are being lost here? In 2024, it was 35, and in 2025, it is going to be 27, so I am interested in the loss of skills.

Ms. Parag: Although we do plan to have these skills replaced, we have a Labourer, a Caretaker, a Field Auditor, another Labourer, a Boat Hand, a Caretaker II and a Caretaker III.

Ms. Alert: Thank you, Minister. Line item 6111 – Administrative: What position is going to be filled there, through you, Mr. Chairman?

Ms. Parag: This is one senior personnel officer who retired and two field auditors who were appointed.

Ms. Alert: Thank you, Minister. Taking the Minister to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, it moved from 31 to 57. What are the major skill sets that the region will be gathering here?

Ms. Parag: There was a typist clerk, an overseer and a labourer who were moved from line item 6117, Temporary Employees, to line item 6116. There was a Captain Engineer, a labourer, an Accounts Clerk II, and another Labourer who were moved from line item 6117. There was a ward

maid who was moved from health. Also, there was a Receptionist who was promoted to an Accounts Clerk.

Ms. Alert: If I look at your staffing details, Minister, I see a slight reduction. However, if we go over to your Indicators, you plan on hiring some 15 persons. Could you explain that variance there?

Ms. Parag: What line item are you referring to, please, Hon. Member?

Ms. Alert: I am looking at your staffing details. You are moving from 156 to 153, but when I look at your Indicators, which show that you are going to be having fewer staff, three fewer staff thereabout, a minor number of fewer staff, but then you are going to be hiring 15 persons, so...

Ms. Parag: It is a cycle with employment. Every year, people will go, whether they be retired, resign or just leave. There will need to be a replacement for those people, so it is just a cycle that goes around. We have to cater for various areas.

Ms. Alert: Just for confirmation and clarity, Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that these 15 positions are not known at this point in time – the 15 hires that you are planning to bring on?

Ms. Parag: Well, Mr. Chairman, if you have an indicator, it is to say that this year, 2025 – just as you had in 2024 – you would have an indicator of having so many persons that you would be having on, and just so in 2025, some of them may not be known, and some of them may be known, so you would have to cater for a number.

Ms. Alert: This is the final question for me on this area. I am still on wages and salaries. Could the Minister kindly say when the last Human Resource (HR) audit was done?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I do not know whether that is a line item or even a policy under any of these programmes.

3.01 p.m.

Ms. Alert: If I may clarify, Mr. Chairman, if we are looking at wages and salaries, let us look at Administrative, it is just over \$15 million. What audit was done to ensure that the correct skill set or the correct personnel are in place to move the region forward? When was the last audit done? When one looks at the approved positions, there are still things listed in the Ministry of Local

Government and Regional Development, such as typists and telephonists. As the region moves forward, what HR audit is being done to ensure the right skill set is in place in the region? If it was never done, that is fine.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, a highly technical analysis of human resource turnover and requirements – has that been done to inform these changes?

Ms. Parag: The Ministry of the Public Service, of which I benefited several years as the Minister, is the over-arching Ministry for capacity building, in the general public service and Central Government. I do know that the Ministry of the Public Service had made an unofficial assessment on a needs basis for the various agencies, the regional systems, as well as the sector Ministries, to see where there would be training needed for several future skill sets, as well as existing gaps on skill sets. I do know there is an assessment there. The region, in running its different programmes, whether it be agriculture, public works, education or health, will know the need for its specific skills to be filled. It will submit that to the Ministry of the Public Service to have employment. Besides the whole skills-set analysis being done, there is the annual audit being done by the Auditor General, which is conducted throughout every department in every ministry and region. We are subjected to that.

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$443,525,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: If I had listened correctly to Mr. Mahipaul, he said that if there is anything for Region 3, I can put all of them now.

Programme: 732 – Agriculture – \$706,642,000

Ms. Alert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I bring the Minister's attention through you to line item 6116, contracted employees. There is a significant increase there. Could the Minister give a reason for that increase?

Ms. Parag: We do have the appointment of one Sluice Attendant. One person has moved from line item 6117 to this line item. We have two more Sluice Attendants appointed. It also caters for the 10% increase in salary.

Ms. Alert: I beg your pardon, Minister, I did not catch that last part.

Ms. Parag: In addition to the salaries being an increase, the 10% will.

Ms. Alert: The same question through you, Mr. Chairman, for the temporary employees. In addition to outlining what is giving rise to this, could the Minister also say what is the duration of this temporary employment?

Ms. Parag: We do not have a specific timeframe in relation to these employees, please, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Alert: I was also asking, in terms of the temporary employees, what has given rise to that increase? Is it just the salary increase? What is it?

Ms. Parag: It is actually one person being moved to a salary of \$113,000. Then, there was an Agricultural Officer who had resigned, so we need that temporary filling. There was also a Sluice Attendant and an Overseer who resigned.

Ms. Alert: For the maintenance of bridges, could the Minister outline where these bridges are that are going to be maintained?

Ms. Parag: What line item is that?

Mr. Chairman: It is the maintenance of bridges.

Ms. Alert: It is line item 6252.

Ms. Parag: We have repairs to a timber bridge at La Destin; repairs to a timber bridge at C-Line Irrigation, Hubu and repairs to a timber bridge at Hubu.

Mr. Chairman: Look after Hubu well.

Ms. Parag: That is all, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: I have just one question. Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: There is a sum here of \$479 million. This is a Programme that continues yearly. What is the duration of the maintenance of these drainage and irrigation works or these canals? Is it yearly? If it is yearly, does it start from January or March?

Ms. Parag: It continues throughout the year. It starts from January, as soon as we complete the budget.

Programme: 732 – Agriculture – \$706,642,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 733 – Public Works – \$261,293,000

Ms. Alert: If I may draw the Minister's attention to line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, apart from the roads and bridges, what are the other infrastructures? Could you disaggregate that for us?

Ms. Parag: We have repairs to a walkway at Uitvlugt; repairs to the pavilion at Caria Caria, repairs to the revetment at Canal No. 1, and cleaning and clearing at various burial grounds.

Ms. Alert: For Senior Technical Staff at line item 6112, what positions are likely to be filled there? Are there any engineers coming on board?

Ms. Parag: No, we do not have any new staff.

Ms. Alert: That is it for me on this Programme, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: A sum of \$66 million is there. Are these the maintenance of timber bridges or reinforced concrete bridges that were constructed before?

Ms. Parag: This would be timber bridges.

Programme: 733 – Public Works – \$261,293,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$7,616,955,000

Ms. Alert: I wish to draw the Minister's attention to line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, and to ask if there are any schools, farms, or technical instruction centres that are listed for maintenance?

Ms. Parag: What we have here is the repainting of the interior and exterior of the building, that is, the staff of the Department of Education building at Plantain Walk and Makouria as well. We also have the nursery schools at Anna Catherina, Bagotville, Belle West, Canal No. 2, Clairmont, De Kinderen, Den Amstel, Endeavour, Farm, Hydronie, La Grange, New Aanlegt, Noitgedacht, Parfaite, Philadelphia, Sans Souci, Schoonord, Sea View, Shirly Field-Ridley.

Ms. Alert: For the part of the question where I asked specifically about school farms and practical vocational training centres, I still have not heard an answer on that, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Parag: That would be undertaken by the Central Ministry –the Ministry of Education.

Ms. Alert: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: Could the Minister say why this increase and what is it in aid of?

Ms. Parag: I beg your pardon, what is the breakdown she is asking for?

Ms. Alert: It is for line item 6117, Temporary Employees.

Ms. Parag: Okay. Is it why there is an increase?

Ms. Alert: Yes.

Ms. Parag: We have three Typist Clerks, one Labourer and two Librarians appointed.

Ms. Alert: What does that give us? Is it a 200% or 300% increase? Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Minister say what would have caused this slight increase?

Ms. Parag: We have 11 newly appointed Sweeper/Cleaners.

Ms. Alert: Thank you Mdm. Minister. Again, through you, Mr. Chairman, for line item 6117, could the Minister at this instance say what will be the duration for these temporary employees?

Ms. Parag: I would not be able to say that at this point. They are going as temporary employees right now.

Mr. Mahipaul: I want to follow up on line item 6117, Temporary Employees. I heard the Minister described them as three Typist Clerks and some other positions that are basically under the public

service employment. Why are these employees categorised as temporary and not structured or accepted in the Public Service Commission, under the fixed establishment?

Ms. Parag: I am advised that they are above the age of the public service employment, so that is why.

Mr. Mahipaul: Okay. I want to take the Hon. Minister to line item 6116, Contracted employees. There is a sum there of \$456,991,000, which is an increase close to \$100 million – \$97.1 million. When we look at the staffing details, it shows just an addition of 11 employees. May I ask for the top five designations, salaries and benefits under this line item?

3.16 p.m.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I previously stated that his particular line item only caters for 11 newly appointed Sweeper/Cleaners.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, that is why I am asking for the top five in terms of their salaries under this line item because though we increased it by just 11 Sweeper/Cleaners, the increase in sum amounts close to \$100 million. Also, 11 sweeper/cleaners cannot earn \$100 million in 12 months.

Ms. Parag: No, but it also includes their gratuity, pension, vacation allowance, salaries and so on.

Mr. Mahipaul: Okay. Sir, I want to turn the Minister's attention, finally, to line item 6113, Other Technical and Crafts Skilled. We see a decrease here from \$548,346,000 to \$511,721,000, a decrease of \$36 million. However, in terms of the staffing details, we are seeing a huge decrease of 179 staff. May I ask for some explanation there?

Ms. Parag: Is it 179 staff in the negative?

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, a decrease in staff.

Ms. Parag: It is because these persons have now transitioned to a different line item. They have, for example, 13 grade 1, class 1 master/mistress, promoted to line item 6111, Administrative. They have all moved to different line items.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$7,616,955,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 735 – Health Services – \$2,868,630,000

Ms. Alert: May I draw the Minister's attention to line item 6112, Senior Technical and ask what positions are going to be filled here?

Ms. Parag: We have an Occupational Therapist, a Pharmacist and a Medical Technologist.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6292 – Dietary: There is a sum of \$117,481,000. Does this sum cater for meals for the patients at the hospitals in Region 3?

Ms. Parag: Yes, it does.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask if it caters for all the hospitals: the Wakenaam District Hospital, Leguan District Hospital, Leonora Cottage Hospital and West Demerara Regional Hospital?

Ms. Parag: It does cater for all of them.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow up: May I ask the Hon. Minister if she knows when was the last time the patients at the Leonora Cottage Hospital were fed? I can report to her that my recent check indicates that they are not getting food. It has to come from their families. That is why I am asking the question. I appreciate the fact that it is catered for, but it may require some degree of management to guarantee that it does happen, and we get value for the money.

Ms. Parag: There is a kitchen that is there. Based on the patient's request for meals, the kitchen prepares and takes the meals to them.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you.

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$2,868,630,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 731 – Regional Administration and Finance- \$33,500,000

Mr. Mahipaul: In the description of this project code 1208700, we are told that it is for the construction of an office and a multipurpose centre on the island of Wakenaam. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate, first of all, how much is for the construction of the office and how much is for the construction of the multipurpose centre?

Ms. Parag: I know the Hon. Member is a resident...

Mr. Mahipaul: I was a resident.

Ms. Parag: The Hon. Member was a resident of Wakenaam, so the construction of the administrative sub-office and multipurpose centre at Wakenaam is to cater for accommodating the regional administrative staff employed in Wakenaam. We want to decentralise some of the agencies, like what was done in Region 2, somewhat. That is for agencies on the Islands, for example, the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS), National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI), Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) and so on. This particular sum is to ensure we have that building to house that.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow up: will this construction be done in the compound at Sans Souci that exists or is there a new area that you are going to build this building? Also, is this one building that will serve two purposes; be a multipurpose centre and also have offices?

Ms. Parag: It will be in Sans Souci; it is where that old Guyana National Co-operative Bank (GNCB) building was

Mr. Mahipaul: It is one building that will serve both purposes.

Ms. Parag: Correct, it is multipurpose.

Ms. Alert: If I may draw the Minister's attention to project code 2401700, Land and Water Transport:

“Provision of vehicles.”

Could the Minister say what vehicles are going to be procured and where they are going to be deployed?

Ms. Parag: We have a 32-seater bus. It will be used to transport students... May the Hon. Member please restate the project code.

Ms. Alert: Project code 2401700 – Land and water transport:

“Provision of vehicles.”

Ms. Parag: We do not have a vehicle under Programme 1.

Ms. Alert: My apologies, I was moving ahead just trying to move Region 3 along.

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$33,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 732 – Agriculture- \$132,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: There is one project code here, project code 1300800, Agricultural Development - D & I:

“Provision for drainage and irrigation structures.”

The description states:

- “1. Construction of ramp and landing at Tuschen.
2. Construction of bridges at Leguan and Wakenaam.
3. Construction of revetment at Maria’s Lodge and Ruby.”

Could the Hon. Minister please disaggregate this sum and specify the amount for the ramp and landing at Tuschen, the sum associated with the bridges at Leguan and Wakenaam and the sum associated with the revetment at Maria’s Lodge and Ruby?

Ms. Parag: Is it the disaggregation of the sums you are looking for? **[Mr. Mahipaul:**
(Inaudible) Okay. I can have that available to you in just a few.

Mr. Mahipaul: In the meantime, could I ask which bridge we are talking about here in Wakenaam and which one in Leguan?

Ms. Parag: It is the bridge at the Moor Farm.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Moor Farm in Wakenaam. Which one is it in Leguan?

Ms. Parag: It is the one at Henrietta.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask a follow up, Sir? Which part will this ramp and landing at Tuschen to be constructed?

Ms. Parag: It is Phase 2 of the Tuschen Housing Scheme.

Programme: Programme 732 – Agriculture – \$132,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 733 –Public Works – \$216,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, we are now at project code 1100400, Bridges. There is a sum here of \$116 million. The legend tells us that:

“The project entails provision for bridges at Cornelia Ida, Edinburgh, Leguan, Vergenoegen, Wakenaam and Zeeburg.”

May I ask the Hon. Minister if these bridges that will be constructed are reinforced concrete bridges?

Ms. Parag: It is both please, Mr. Chairman. At Zeeburg, there will have a timber bridge; at Cornelia Ida, there will be a timber bridge; at Edinburgh, there will be a timber bridge and then, there will be reinforced concrete bridges at Phoenix, Leguan; the Health Centre at Vergenoegen and Domburg, Wakenaam.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask, the Hon. Minister to disaggregate the sum and tell us the cost for the reinforced bridges at their respective locations and the cost of the timber bridges at their respective locations?

Ms. Parag: These are all timber bridges: Zeeburg – \$20 million; Cornelia Ida – \$20 million, Edinburgh – \$28 million. There are the reinforced concrete bridges at Leguan – \$20 million; Vergenoegen – \$10 million and Wakenaam – \$18 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: Those millions look a little different there with wood and concrete. Sir, I move to roads. There is a sum of \$100 million there for the:

“Provision of roads.”

All we see here is that:

“The project entails for provision of roads.”

May I ask where these roads will be and are they concrete roads or asphaltic concrete?

Ms. Parag: There will be the construction of an asphaltic road leading to Zeeburg Secondary School, the reconstruction of Middle Street, Windsor Forest – all asphalt –. the construction of the road at Groenveldt, Edinburgh; the road at Reserve 413 Parika; rehabilitation of Front Street, Pakistan, Windsor Forest and rehabilitation of De Witte Zwaan, Leguan.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask for the cost that is associated with each one of these roads?

Ms. Parag: The one at Zeeburg is \$14 million, the one at Windsor Forest, Middle Street is \$38 million; Groenveldt – \$7 million; Parika – \$10 million; Pakistan, Windsor Forest – \$18 million and De Witte Zwaan, Leguan – \$13 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: How much is the one at Leguan, may I ask?

Ms. Parag: It is \$13 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you.

Ms. Parag: They differ in size.

Mr. Mahipaul: That is understandable.

Ms. Parag: In dimensions, yes.

Programme: 733 –Public Works- \$216,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.31 p.m.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$425,000,000

Ms. Alert: Thank you. Minister, the question I had posed too early – Project code 2401700 – what vehicle will be procured and where will it be deployed?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is a 32-seater bus, and it will be used to transport students on the islands of Leguan and Wakenaam. That is, about 100 learners from each island that will benefit from this service.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sorry, Sir. May I ask a question on Project code 1203000 – Buildings - Education – \$331 million? The only guidance we are getting from the legend is for the payment of retention and provision for schools and educational facilities. May I ask the Hon. Minister to tell us what is the sum for retention in this line and could she specify the sum for the schools and educational facilities?

Ms. Parag: For the rollover, we have the payment of retention for the construction of Crane and Tuschen Nursery School. For new buildings, we have the extension of La Parfaite Harmonie Primary, Parika Salem Primary, Anna Catherina Nursery, La Parfaite Harmonie Nursery, New Aanlegt Nursery, Seaview Nursery, Bagotville Nursery, Jasso's Nursery, De Kinderen Nursery and La Grange Nursery.

Construction of water trestles, we have the Patentia Secondary School, De Willem Secondary School, Zeeburg School, Karia Karia, Great Troolie, Sandhills Primary School and De Willem Secondary School.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All I want is what is the sum associated with retention so I will know the remainder will be for the other projects. What is the sum for the retention?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It is \$8.6 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: It is \$8.6 million. Thank you. That is it, Sir.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$425,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$349,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. Project code 1203100.. The legend is good. It gives us good details. I wish all would have been the same. It says:

“1. Completion of health centre and living quarters - Hogg Island.”

May I ask the Hon. Minister what is the cost of that project? It goes on to say:

“2. Provision for Leonora Cottage and West Demerara Regional hospitals.”

May I ask what is the cost for this also and what is it that they will be doing at Leonora Cottage and West Demerara Regional Hospitals?

“3. Provision for health centres and posts - De Kinderen, Greenwich Park, La Parfaite Harmonie, Maryville, Meten-Meer-Zorg, Tuschen and Wakenaam.”

If we can also have the costs for these health centres and posts.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. The entire sum for the construction of the Hogg Island Health Centre is \$32 million. The construction of the washroom for the laundry department at the West Demerara Regional Hospital – \$3 million and the extension of the pharmacy building right there – \$12 million. The construction of a shed at the Leonora Hospital – \$6 million. The construction of a walkway with a shed at Leonora Hospital – \$4 million. The construction of a bridge at Leonora Hospital – \$14 million. The construction of a holding area for garbage at Leonora – \$2 million. The construction of a new health centre for the La Parfaite Harmonie Housing Scheme – \$50 million. The construction of new health post at Maryville – \$50 million. The extension of two rooms at Meten-Meer-Zorg Health Centre – \$8 million. The extension of the dressing room at Vive La Force – \$4 million. The Tuschen Health Centre, the extension of two rooms – \$10 million. De Kinderen Health Centre, the extension of two rooms – \$8 million. The Greenwich Park Health Centre – \$10 million. The construction of a guard hut at the Zealandia Health Post, Wakenaam – \$800,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I turn the Hon. Minister’s attention to Project code 2512800 – Furniture and Equipment. I see a provision for furniture and equipment – \$140 million. I am guided by the legend which only tells me that the project entails:

“Provision for furniture and equipment.”

May I ask the Hon. Minister if this is the sum for the purchasing of furniture and equipment for all the extensions that we are doing in the respective health facilities so that they will be fully functional upon their construction?

Ms. Parag: Yes, Mr. Chairman. They are for all of these newly constructed.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up. Upon the completion of all of this construction, are we to see these facilities fully operational?

Ms. Parag: It will be operationalised.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Cde. Chairman.

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$349,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Minister and the staff of Region 3, whom the Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul loves so much. Thank you very much. I now ask the staff of Region 4 to join their Minister as we take the estimates for Region 4.

Agency: 74 Region 4: Demerara/Mahaica

Current Estimates

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$318,359,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Good afternoon to everyone. Line items 6111 to 6117. Could the Hon. Minister say if there are any vacancies that exists under this programme?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I am advised by the Regional Executive Officer that we do have vacancies under the various heads.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Okay. Could the Hon. Minister say if any of the current staff are expected to retire this year?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, every year there are employees who reach the age of retirement.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could you say the number of employees that are expected to retire?

Ms. Parag: I would not be able to say the number of employees that will be retiring this year.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I would like to turn the Hon. Minister's attention to Volume Two, Indicators. I note that indicator number three references:

“Number of skilled personnel recruited”

I note that last year they had 12 and this year they have 30. What skill sets are you looking for this year?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much for that question. Previously, when we were looking at Region 3, one of the Hon. Members – I think it was Hon. Member Ms. Alert who asked about the rise and how we factor in that number. In this particular case, it is the same answer that every year you have that cycle of either persons retiring, people being deceased, people resigning and you will need a replacement. Some are known skill sets and some are unknown based on whenever these things may happen, so a number is put in there as an indicator – some being known, some being unknown.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Hon. Minister. I note line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence. The legend stated here in Volume Two community outreaches conducted – 29 for last year and 29 for this year. I also take note that there is no increase under this line item. I am at line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence. Could the Hon. Minister say if the outreaches for last year were completed with the given allocated sum since it is the same for this year?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It was completed. The travels to different areas and having outreaches would not necessarily be the same this year because you would have already completed that. It will be different areas, but we do believe that it will be adequate to cover that.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you. Through you, Cde. Chairman, line item 6294 – Other, I note there is a very significant increase. When I look through all the other line items, this is definitely significant so I would like to know what this line item will cover.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. I am advised that the disaster management support has been shifted to this line item and this is causing the increase that you are seeing.

Ms. Flue-Bess: It was shifted to this line item?

Ms. Parag: Yes, it was previously under another line item.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could the Hon. Minister say...?

Ms. Parag: It was under line item 6291 previously.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Through you, Cde. Chairman, that is National and Other Events. Are you saying last year's disaster expenditure was placed there?

Ms. Parag: Well, this is why we have moved it to this line item. It is under the proper line item. It is under a line item that is more suitable. Even when you had the line item before, which is 6291, it worked under there for the national events such as Mashramani, for different consequences of all these national events.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I still do not understand the explanation given because if you are looking at national events, which is line item 6291, it has nothing to do with disaster preparedness or relief or whatever it is.

Ms. Parag: That is why it is shifted now under line item 6294 – Other.

3.46 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: May I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6272. I note there is a small increase this year for electricity charges. Is it a result of the region anticipating some increase in its electricity charges for 2025 that would have caused them to request this small increase for 2025?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, this is catering for different centres. You have a craft centre at Grove and Diamond, the sub-office where you have the residents, you have a main office, you have a sub-office and you have the main office which has a new store's office, so you have to cater for different equipment that will come in and appliances that will come in. It is a matter of catering for those.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I am still seeking some clarity on this shifting of the allocation, from one programme or heading to another. I do not know if we can get some explanation there.

Ms. Parag: It is simply because it was previously under another line item, and it is now being shifted under line item 6294. The point is not the shifting. The point is we have a sum under this particular programme and under this line item to be expended. Now, if the Hon. Member was asking me how it was being expended, that is different – that is a more relevant question.

Mr. Chairman: She is allowed to ask because this is a policy issue. You know if you are changing from one head to the next...

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I am not cutting you, but I do think that this is the line item. Perhaps I do not know if it was a mistake to be on it there, but it was and it is now being shifted here.

Mr. Chairman: They promoted, some demoted and they have new qualifications. I do not know. Hon. Member, policy is a part of the prosecution you could do here.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Cde. Chairman, I will put it in writing and ask for a written explanation on that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$318,359,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture – \$536,283,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works. I note there has been a significant increase, and I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if there are new areas identified for cleaning under this sum.

Ms. Parag: Yes, there is the North drainage canal, Cane Grove; last street canal, Lancaster; East canal Factory Road, Unity; West canal Factory Road, Unity; Nooten Zuil – main canal; both sides of canal Hope Lowlands; Victoria facade canal; Craig Mill canal, Cove and John, Golden Grove East façade; North of Public Road – Haslington; East canal – Pump Road Enmore; Non Pareil drainage network; canal parallel to East Road Enmore; Enterprise back canal, East to West; both side canals of Enterprise Main Road; Vryheid's Lust North main canal; Vryheid's Lust South main canal; Eccles main canal from Old Road to New Road; Mocha main drain canal; Herstelling main drain canal; Little Diamond from Old Road to New Road; Covent Garden East to West - Old Road to New Road; Herstelling sea dam trench; Block one and two Diamond; Aqueduct trench –

Diamond; canals from first to 22nd Avenue Diamond; Cuffy seepage canal, Friendship; Cuffy sluice main canal, Friendship; A-Dam North canal, Friendship; A-Dam South canal, Friendship; Rahat canal - Hope; excavation and desiltation of canal from undivided sluice to Brickery; Guyana Defence Force (GDF) canal - Garden of Eden; Garden of Eden South main canal; Land Clearance (LC) drainage canal – New Hope; Triumph double doors; Buxton Northern/Southern sluice door; Greenfield Eastern door; Unity sluice door; Mosquito Hall main sluice door; Spring Hall sluice; Hand-en-Veldt sluice; Helena number one and two sluice; Mahaica Market sluice; Slaughterhouse sluice door; Joy Phillips sluice; Mary Hope's koker – Cane Grove; Alliance number two sluice; Timehri back sluice door – Soesdyke; Noitgedacht sluice door – Soesdyke; Meristeen's sluice door – Soesdyke; Latchman's Sand Road sluice – Soesdyke; Cherry Farm sluice; Lane sluice – Coverden; Rahat sluice – Friendship; Cuffy small door number one – Friendship; Cuffy small door number two – Friendship; Cuffy main door – Friendship; New Hope sluice; Market Street North sluice – Grove; Market Street South sluice – Grove; Little Diamond double doors; Herstelling North sluice; Herstelling South sluice; Bagotstown sluice door; Flower Mill Eccles and Huntley diesel pump, Cane Grove. These are the maintenance of the pumps now, Joy Phillips, Cane Grove, Victoria, Golden Grove and Triumph.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I asked a question to get a yes or no answer – a yes or no. I got a whole list, so I am going to ask if all those areas you have identified are new areas. Are there new areas you have identified for 2025?

Ms. Parag: These are maintenance of existing areas that we have been cleaning, from last year, and we will clean again this year, continuously.

Ms. Flue-Bess: The new areas identified there, I would assume, are about two or three based on the list you have given. I did not hear any area for the highway unless I am mistaken. Do we not have farmers on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway? I do not know if I have mistaken or I have mixed up the names.

Ms. Parag: I know, we are going from Soesdyke coming down the East Bank from Soesdyke, coming all the way down and cleaning the sluice, the canals and the dams. But I am not certain of any sluice that is there, also, the Hon. Member said that she is assuming that there are three new

ones, but I do not know how we are assuming unless she recalls the entire list from 2024. The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) cleans the larger canals and the creeks.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I am just clarifying my line item heading that says, “maintenance of drainage and irrigation works”, that is why I asked about the Linden-Soesdyke Highway. I will move the Minister’s attention to Volume two, Agriculture, the indicators. I note indicator number eight, which talks about kilometres (KM) to Farm-to-Market Roads prepared. I saw that they had one listed for 2024, and now there is 1.2, Could the Hon. Minister say which area they are specifically targeting for 2025?

Ms. Parag: It would be at Huntley, Cane Grove. That is the area.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, if I can turn the Hon. Member’s attention to line item 6284 – Other. I note there is a decrease and while I appreciate a little decrease in this area, could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the decrease and what constitutes ‘Other’, under this line item?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. The decrease is as a result of a transition of five sluice attendants, that is, line item 6116, and you have... I was just saying the decrease under this line item is a transition from this line item to 6116, labourers and sluice attendants.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Through you, Cde. Chairman, line item 6255, maintenance of other infrastructure. I note that there was a decrease in the allocated sum from 2024. What other infrastructure was removed from this line item to cause the decrease? Something had to happen.

Ms. Parag: This line item is based on needs, when you put forward your work programme, or your work plan, to the Ministry of Finance. This allocation that was given will be adequate for us to cover the areas that we want to target.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture – \$536,283,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$286,142,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads. I note that there has been an increase under this line item. Could the Hon. Minister say which roads will be covered on the East Bank of the Demerara under this line item?

Ms. Parag: While I will give the ones on East Bank, I would also like to say that we will have sectional repairs to Cheap Shop Street – Mahaica; repairs to Fort Cross Street – Koker Dam Mahaica; repairs to Good Hope Burial Ground Road; repairs to Logwood Playground Street – Enmore; repairs to Montrose School Street – Montrose; sectional repairs to Rum Shop Street – Herstellling; sectional repairs to 110th Street – Prospect; sectional repairs to Republic Avenue – Mocha Arcadia; repairs to Second Cross Street, parallel to Gas Station Road – Success; sectional repairs to Factory Road – Unity; sectional repairs to First East to West Cross Street – Enmore South; repairs to Apollo Street – Nabacelis and repairs to Rigid Pavement Street – Continental Park, Eccles.

4.01 p.m.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I am hearing about sectional repairs. I am wondering if these sectional repairs are being done as a result of... [Mr. Bharrat: Sectional...?] That is what I said. ...as a result of ongoing works which are causing damages to existing infrastructure. Is that the reason why we are having these sectional repairs?

Ms. Parag: No, Hon. Member. It is not because of that. It is the normal wear and tear of the roads as the roads' conditions deteriorate after a number of years, *et cetera*. The Central Ministry of Public Works will do an entire road. The Region can supplement by repairing roads.

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

Ms. Flue-Bess: No.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Flue-Bess, you have the floor.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Yes, Cde. Chair. I would like to turn the Minister's attention to the Estimates of the Public Sector, Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 2, I note under Strategies states:

“Advise on design, supervision and construction of civil works.”

Under Impacts states:

“Identification of issues and the execution of policies for the betterment of the communities in the region.”

My question is – how many engineers are employed at the Region currently?

Ms. Parag: We have two engineers, and they are ably assisted by Clerks of Works.

Ms. Flue-Bess: How many Clerks of Works do we have to assist the two Engineers?

Ms. Parag: We have four of them and we have two Overseers.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I did not hear the answer.

Ms. Parag: I am sorry, Mr. Chair. We have four and two Overseers.

Ms. Flue-Bess: There are four Clerks of Works and two Overseers.

Mr. Chairman: ...and two Overseers.

Ms. Flue-Bess: There are Indicators 3.3 and 3.4.

“3.3 km of roads maintained.”

Which areas were identified to benefit from this? Could the Hon. Minister identify the five areas where bridges will be maintained?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chair, I will just ask the Hon. Member to repeat her question.

Mr. Chairman: Member Ms. Flue-Bess, repeat the question.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chair. At indicator 3.3 states:

“3.3 km of roads maintained.”

I see they have 11.6km for the target. I am asking which areas were identified for this to be completed in, and then I will read the other question.

Ms. Parag: There were 9.2km of roads which were maintained in 2024, but the allocation that we have now is for 2025. Are they asking for the areas for 2025, Mr. Chairman? We just read that out.

Mr. Chairman: Member of Parliament (MP), Ms. Flue-Bess, again.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chair. I am looking at the indicator here and the target is 11.6km in the book. I am asking about this. Is this not what I asked about before?

Mr. Chairman: It is under the indicators – policy.

Ms. Parag: Yes, please, Mr. Chair. I read out all the roads that will amount to the km of roads for this allocation just now when I spoke about the East Bank, the East Coast and all the roads that I called out.

Mr. Chairman: What the Minister mentioned earlier when she read from Cane Grove, coming all the way up to the East Bank, those are the...

Ms. Flue-Bess: Mr. Chair, I asked a specific question earlier about the roads to be maintained on the East Bank. Now, for the indicator here, they have 11.6 km as the target for 2025.

Mr. Chairman: That is right.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Is the Minister saying to this Committee that all the roads she listed earlier cover this? I asked specifically for the East Bank.

Mr. Chairman: That is my understanding. Minister, are you able to disaggregate?

Ms. Parag: No, please, Sir. I am advised by the Regional Executive Officer that those roads I just called are inclusive of the East Bank and the East Coast. They are all roads that will amount to this target that we want to achieve, which is 11.6 km. They are pieces; it states sectional. They are sectional repairs.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chair...? Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a follow-up question on line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads, for the question that my Colleague, the Hon. Ms. Flue-Bess, asked. Sir, there are several roads that fall under the ambit of the region. We heard a list of roads which they have given priority to for 2025. May I ask the Hon. Minister how it is that the region goes about in terms of determining the priority of roads?

Ms. Parag: The regional office has an Engineering Unit and a Public Works Programme. This is done based on their assessment in different communities – whether it comes from complaints or

them actually going into the communities, checking and seeing the conditions of the roads. This is based generally on the conditions of the roads.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I have a follow-up.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, MP.

Mr. Mahipaul: Is the Minister saying that there is a removal from the process of also involving the Regional Democratic Council's (RDC's) Councillors in their respective areas, who from time to time would submit projects they would like to see included in the Budget for 2025; and the roads that they submitted may not have been considered?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister did not say that. Minister, you can talk for yourself.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chair, I did not say that at all. I did not in any way, shape or form, implied that. The Councillors do submit on occasions and they are taken into consideration by the regions. Mr. Chairman, again, we do take our direct engagement with people very highly and seriously. When we do have complaints directly from the people, we have to make those a priority.

Mr. Mahipaul: This is my final follow-up, Sir. Thank you very much. The final decision in terms of prioritising lies with the Regional Administration. Am I correct to say that, Sir?

Ms. Parag: When it goes to the RDC, it is not as if the REO sits in his office and decides that this is a priority. Obviously, the Engineering and the Public Works departments will go out, check and assess these roads to make sure of the complaint. If they are in a community, they look and assess the degree of work to be done and then prioritise based on that.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Parag: It is approved by the RDC after that.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chair, if I can take the Hon. Member back to line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads – based on the Indicators that my Colleague just shared, 11.6km is likely to be done under this line item. Could you say how much from this 11.6km is going towards the roads on the East Bank of Demerara – that is one? Secondly, could you identify the roads which will be done on the East Bank of Demerara?

Ms. Paraj: Mr. Chair, I have already listed all the roads. If the Hon. Member was not paying attention to the East Coast of Demerara that is not my fault. I listed all the roads to be done by the region which are inclusive of the East Bank of Demerara. Mr. Chairman, to disaggregate in terms of how many km would be for the East Bank of Demerara right now, we do not have that information with us right here.

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$286,142,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery – \$9,784,815,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Flue-Bess, you have the floor.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chair. Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: could the Hon. Minister say if fuel and lubricants is given to the bus that usually transports the children from Supply to the Soesdyke Linden Highway, all the way to Dora?

Ms. Parag: Yes. It does, Hon. Member.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you. Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Building: could the Hon. Minister state the number of primary schools, the number of secondary schools and the number of nursery schools which will benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: From this, we have at the nursery level – Enmore Newtown Nursery School; Company Road Nursery School; Prospect Nursery School; Vryheid's Lust North Nursery School; Mocha Arcadia Nursery School; Clonbrook Nursery School; Annandale North Nursery School; Mon Repos Nursery School; Prince William Street Nursery School; Martyr's Ville Nursery School; Kuru Kururu Nursery School; Hand-En-Veldt Nursery School; Good Hope Nursery School; Vryheid's Lust South Nursery School; Helena Nursery School and La Bonne Intention Nursery School. These are all in relation to the nursery schools. There is the La Bonne Intention Nursery School; Triumph Nursery School; Unity Nursery School; Beterverwagting Nursery School; Hope Estate/C Nursery School; Northbrook/Victoria Nursery School; Ghandi Memorial Nursery School; New Friendship Nursery School; Ann's Grove Nursery School; Better Hope Nursery School; Eastville Nursery School; Strathspey Nursery School; Strathavon Nursery School; Ogle Nursery School; Chateau Margot Nursery School; Blossom Scheme Nursery School; Plaisance Nursery

School; Diamond No. 2 Nursery School; Golden Grove Nursery School; Victoria North Nursery School; Hauraruni/C Nursery School and Little Friends Nursery School.

We are now going to the primary schools. These are Hauraruni Primary School; Enmore Hope Primary School; Grove Primary School; Enmore Primary School; Silver Hill Primary School; Yarrowkabra Primary School; Craig Primary School; La Bonne Intention Primary School; St. Paul's Primary School; Peter's Hall Primary School; Cane Grove Primary School; Virginia Primary School; Plaisance Primary School; Friendship Primary School; Mocha Arcadia Primary School; Providence Primary School; Beterverwagting/Quamina Primary School; Mon Repos Primary School; Timehri Primary School; Golden Grove Primary School; Gibson Primary School; Kuru Kururu Primary School; Hope Estate Primary School; St. Cuthbert's Primary School – Mahaica River; Diamond Primary School; Helena Primary School; Long Creek Primary School; Kuru-Kuru Primary School; Soesdyke Primary School; St. Mary's Primary school; Mahaica Primary School; Victoria Primary School and Paradise Primary School.

For secondary schools we have: Annandale Secondary School; Plaisance Secondary School; Hope Secondary School; Buxton Secondary School; Bladen Hall Multilateral School; Ann's Grove Secondary School; Diamond Secondary School; Golden Grove Secondary; Friendship Secondary School; Lancaster Secondary School; Beterverwagting Secondary School; Covent Garden Secondary School; Good Hope Secondary School; Soesdyke Secondary School and La Bonne Intention Secondary School.

Mr. Mahipaul: Chair...?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member.

4.16 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. It is good that we are doing maintenance works on our schools. It is sad that we have to be doing it every year. Sir, when I look at line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, I see an increase there of over \$90.7 million, but the corresponding Staffing Details for this line has decreased by 183 staff. How is it that we have such a huge increase for this line item, but the Staffing Details have decreased by 183 staff?

Ms. Parag: The increase caters for a salary scale upgrade for some teachers as well as the 10% salary increase. When you see the decrease, it is from line items 6113 to 6112. That is for 154 trained Teachers and 29 Assistant Masters.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, you may proceed.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Nima Flue-Bess, you may proceed.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Indicators 18, 19, 20 and 21 speak to the percentage of schools with internet access. At the secondary level, there is 94% and it is expected to be 100% this year. The percentage of schools with electricity access at the nursery level is 100%. The percentage of schools with electricity access at the primary level is 100%. At the secondary level, it is at 100%. Could the Hon. Minister say which are the secondary schools without internet access?

Ms. Parag: They are the schools on the highway. I am also advised by the Regional Education Officer (REO) that they do have internet access, but it is sketchy. It is a bit intermittent.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Is it the school or schools on the highway? Is it more than one? Is it the Yarrowkabra Secondary School or the Dora Secondary School?

Ms. Parag: You have St. Cuthbert's Secondary School, Dora Secondary School and Yarrowkabra Secondary School.

Ms. Flue-Bess: It is that all three are on the Linden/Soesdyke Highway. Can we expect they will get full internet access in 2025?

Ms. Parag: Well, they will have internet access, but it is the upgrade of the internet access that will help the free flow of the internet.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, if I could take the Hon. Member back to line item 6242. The Hon. Member itemised a number of schools that will be benefiting from this year's allocation with regard to repairs, and, if possible, renovation. If I can take the Hon. Member to Volume 2, page 340, Indicators 8 and 9. I note here that you have at Indicator 8:

“8. Percentage of pupils scoring 50% & over in all subjects at NGSA”

Last year, you had 36%. This year, you are looking to achieve 100%. Perhaps, you can explain what mechanisms are in place to ensure that you fulfil the 100% achievement. At Indicator 9, you have:

“9. Matriculation Rate”

Last year, you had 25% and for 2025, Mdm. Minister – you have to look at me not Mr. Mahipaul – I notice here you are looking to achieve 100%. Could you say what systems or mechanisms are in place to ensure these percentages are achievable?

Ms. Parag: This particular line item that the Hon. Member is tying into the Indicators is irrelevant to that. This is dealing with infrastructural maintenance.

Ms. Ferguson: This has nothing to do with confusion or anything. You are improving schools. Obviously, if you are improving schools, I expect or anticipate that, at the performance level, we will have 100% attendance at school, and, by right, you will be able to achieve what you set out in your Indicators. You just cannot tell me that I am confusing things here.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, those are the words of the Hon. Member and she has just answered herself.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I want to come back to the question I had earlier with regard to line item 6113. The Hon. Minister was kind enough to say to us that the decrease is because staff have upgraded themselves and were moved to line item 6112, Senior Technical. There is a difference of 183 staff who moved to line item 6112 based on the answer. The difference in line item 6112, which existed from 2024 to 2025, is 283 staff, which is about 100 staff difference. My worry is that the 10% the Hon. Minister spoke to, which is here in the revised 2024 sum, is \$643,188,000. That 10% was paid retroactively from January to December, so it covers the entire 2024. Now, we are moving into 2025 with a staff.

[Mr. Chairman left the Chair.]

[Mr. Jaffarally, Presiding Member, assumed the Chair.]

Presiding Member [Mr. Jaffarally]: Hon. Member, could you put the question, please?

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes. The question is coming, Sir. We are moving to a staff strength that has decreased by 183 staff. Why do we have an increase of \$90.7 million? It cannot just be that we have moved staff and catered for the 10% because the 10% is reflected in 2024 at Indicator 2.

Ms. Parag: Through you, Mr. Chairman. I believe, Hon. Member, that you are only looking at one aspect of it. Staff were moved from one line item to the other. Then there was also the 10% but it is not just the 10% increase. The teachers also had an upgrade in salary. It is the salary plus 10%.

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes. That was reflected in the 2024 number because it was paid retroactively. In December 2024, when the salaries were paid to these teachers, they were all paid based on that decision by His Excellency, retroactive January of 2024. The entire figure of 2024 paid for all this. Why is it that this huge increase is reflected in 2025 with such a huge decrease in staff?

Ms. Parag: It will have to because that salary upgrade and that 10% did not come mid-year or when we had that budget in 2024. You are moving ahead with the salary increase and the 10% in 2025. We have to cater for that.

Mr. Mahipaul: The increase, basically, was taken out of line item 6141 of the Ministry of Finance. Thank you.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery – \$9,784,815,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$2,267,679,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman.

Presiding Member: Yes, Hon. Member.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Does this maintenance cover all the health centres in Region 4?

Ms. Parag: It covers the Cane Grove Health Centre, Mahaica Health Centre, Unity Health Centre, Clonbrook Health Centre, Victoria Health Centre, CC Nicholson Health Centre/District Hospital, Paradise Health Post, Enterprise Health Centre, Melanie Health Centre, Buxton Health Centre,

Lusignan Health Centre, Diabetes Comprehensive Care Centre, Lusignan, Beterverwagting Health Centre, Better Hope Health Centre, Plaisance Health Centre, Mocha Health Centre, Herstelling Health Centre, Diamond Hospital, Grove Health Centre, Craig Health Centre, Soesdyke Health Centre, Kuru Kururu Health Centre, Hauraruni Health Post, Long Creek Health Centre, Dora Health Post, Dora Living Quarters, St. Cuthbert's Mission Health Centre, Low Wood Health Post, Silver Hill Health Post, Moblissa Health Post, Laluni Health Post, Swan Health Post, Diamond Health Centre and Supply Health Centre.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you. I know my question was direct, which is whether this list covers all the health centres in Region 4. Does this list that the Minister just read out cover all the health centres in Region 4? It is simply a yes or no.

Ms. Parag: All that is needed, and they have to have necessary repairs.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I would like to turn the Hon. Minister's attention to the Indicators in Volume 2. I see that they have a strategy to:

“Empower individuals for their own health through health promotion and disease prevention”

The Impact is:

“Improved practices and status of nutrition and food preparation”

Then, I come down to Indicator 1:

“1. Percentage of facilities offering holistic Primary Health Care Services (PHC)”

Could the Hon. Minister say if all the health centres in Region 4 have been providing such services?

Ms. Parag: Yes. It is 100%.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Does providing holistic Primary Health Care Services include the provision of medication?

Ms. Parag: Yes, Mr. Chairman. It does.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could the Hon. Minister state if the – I did not hear her mention when I asked earlier – Region has any responsibility in the maintenance of the Diamond Hospital?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I did call Diamond Hospital as one of the buildings we were...

Ms. Flue-Bess: You said Diamond Health Centre. You never mentioned anything about the Diamond Hospital.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, if I can recall correctly, you asked the Minister about health centres and not the Diamond Hospital.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Mr. Chairman, through you, the Minister is saying that when I asked about health centres, she called the Diamond Hospital.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, from my list here, I have Diamond Hospital and I said Diamond Hospital.

Presiding Member: I think it is a good time to...

Ms. Ferguson: No, no.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you may proceed.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if I can draw the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6116, Contracted Employees. I note that you moved from 30 to 32, but when I look at the salaries to be paid under this line item, they are very small. They are similar to what was paid last year. My question to you is, could you identify the highest paid position under this line item and the salary, and the least paid position under this particular line item? Could you further provide an explanation as to why the figure looks close to 2024, though you moved from 30 to 32?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: You are most welcome, Sir.

4.31 p.m.

Ms. Parag: The highest paid person is a Medical Doctor and that salary is \$620,977. The lowest paid would be the Vehicle Driver and that salary is \$86,150.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up. I think the Hon. Member failed to respond to my last question. I asked whether you could provide an explanation for the small figure which looks close to last year. Although you moved from 30 to 32, the figure looks similar to that of last year's figure.

Ms. Parag: It is one Statistical Clerk and a Driver, so it is not a big difference.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Cde. Chairman, for employment, I am looking between line item 6115 and line item 6117. I am not 100% sure under which category the Porters fall, but I would like to ask how many Porters are currently employed at the Diamond Regional Hospital?

Ms. Parag: They are under varying categories. They could either be contracted or they could be pensionable employees. It could be either of those line items – line item 6116, or line item, 6117.

Ms. Flue-Bess: How many Porters do we have currently employed at the Diamond Regional Hospital?

Ms. Parag: We have nine porters at the Diamond Regional Hospital.

Ms. Flue-Bess: You have nine Porters. Is that the full complement needed for the hospital?

Ms. Parag: At the moment, it is adequate. Should the need arise otherwise, we will look to employ.

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$2,267,679,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

[Mr. Chairman assumed the Chair.]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Member, Mr. Jaffarally. Are we at Programme 745 – Health Services?

An. Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us turn then to page 534. I was going to call the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, but I noticed the Assistant Chief Whip, Mr. Duncan, was not here and I did not want to deprive the Chief Whip of the expertise of Mr. Mahipaul.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$4,000,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Project code 2506800, Furniture and Equipment – Administration: Could the Hon. Minister say where these furniture and equipment will be placed?

Ms. Parag: They are for the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) office.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Just for clarity, are they for the entire office or special sections in the office?

Ms. Parag: They are for the main office.

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture – \$81,700,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Project code 1701200, Agricultural Development: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the sums of money for the different headings given here?

Ms. Parag: It is for the construction of timber revetment at the Mahaica Market Sluice Outfall; the construction of a timber revetment at the Mosquito Hall Sluice, Unity; the construction of a timber revetment at the Nickeen Channel, Soesdyke; the construction of a timber revetment at the Beezee Dam, Enmore; the rehabilitation of the landing to Low Wood Primary and Health Centre; the construction of a timber revetment at Golden Grove; the rehabilitation and extension of Timehri Dock/Landing and the rehabilitation of Jango Bridge in Mission Road, Newton farming area.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I asked for the moneys to be disaggregated among the projects so that I could know the cost for each project. Thank you.

Ms. Parag: The project at the Mahaica Market Sluice is \$9 million; the project at the Mosquito Hall Sluice is \$13 million; the project at the Nickeen Channel is \$10 million; the project at the Beezee Dam is \$10 million; the project at the landing to Low Wood Primary and Health Centre is \$9 million; the project at the Golden Grove is \$13 million; the project at the Timehri Dock/Landing is \$13.5 million; and the rehabilitation project of Jango Bridge is \$4.2 million.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I note that something is listed here for Yarrowkabra, but I did not hear any sum given for it. According to the *Legend*, I am reading,

“The provision of landing to Low Wood, the dock at Timehri and the bridge at Yarrowkabra”.

This is what is listed/stated in the book.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, Yarrowkabra is there.

Ms. Parag: Yes. Mr. Chairman. We have the rehabilitation of the Jango Bridge as Yarrowkabra, East Coast.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture – \$81,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$215,600,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Project code 1100500, Bridges: I see the descriptions given here for Annandale, Bare Root, Kuru Kururu, Swan, Timehri and Triumph. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the sums?

Ms. Parag: Bare Root is \$7 million; Timehri is \$5.6 million; Triumph has 2 different sums – one is \$8 million and the other is \$8 million; Annandale is \$7 million; Mahaica is \$8 million; Kuru Kururu is \$10 million and Swan is \$12 million.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I did not hear the cost for Swan. Sorry.

Ms. Parag: It is \$12 million.

Ms. Ferguson: Project code 1100500, Bridges: While I appreciate the Minister providing the disaggregation with regards to the cost of each project, it would be good for the National Assembly, and by extension, for the people in Kuru Kururu to know exactly which bridge, and where is it located. I think, it can be for the similar areas. This is because, yes, we might be saying a bridge, but then again, you might have done a bridge last year and returned claiming that you are going to be doing the same bridge. Therefore, could you specify where exactly in these areas are we likely to find the various bridges? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member asked a question just now and it is as if you are sitting here trying to mislead the nation, when in fact, the previous Member called out the various areas and asked for the disaggregation by sum, which is what I answered to. To sit here and say it would be good – now ask the question if you want to know the description.

Ms. Ferguson: I do not need...

Ms. Parag: It is the construction of the reinforced concrete bridge at first south-eastern Cross Street, Annandale, that is the first; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Bare Root village; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Sari Turn Main Access, East Coast; the rehabilitation of a timber bridge on Alliance Road, Timehri; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Ram John and Khadoo Street, Triumph; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Surat Drive, Triumph; the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Monument Hill, Kuru Kururu; and the construction of a reinforced concrete bridge at Swan, Soesdyke-Linden Highway.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, just as the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, said for the nation, for explanation under capital, my understanding – and we will get some explanation from the Regional Executive Officer (REO) – is that when you come here, it is a new bridge. If it is an old bridge, we would return to the Maintenance of Bridges. Am I...

Ms. Parag: No, some projects are rehabilitation and then you have the construction. That is why I said rehabilitation when I was mentioning ‘Rehabilitation of’ and then you have ‘Construction or Reinforced, which is the new.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so if you return and improve it, and make it from a bicycle lane to a car bridge, then that would be reconstruction, right? That is capital. However, if you patch some holes in it, it is maintenance. Thank you very much.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. I would just like to point to the status of the project that was just stated, and it has new, and not anything about maintenance to the bridges. At least that is the status being shown in the project profile. Moving on to project code 1400700, Roads. I was going to point out to the Minister that the status here says new, so which road or roads will be done with this allocated sum?

Ms. Parag: We will have the construction of a road at 19th Street, Dazzel Housing Scheme, East Coast Demerara; the construction of a road at Hill Foot, Soesdyke; the construction of a road at Waterside Dam and the construction of a road at Vigilance South Housing Scheme.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman.

Ms. Parag: Cane Grove.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I was just going to ask where is Waterside Dam located?

Ms. Parag: It is located in Cane Grove, East Coast Demerara.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: It is the dam near to the water side – Waterside Dam.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Is it water sight or water side?

Ms. Parag: It is Waterside – s-i-d-e.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Oh. It is Waterside Dam. Okay. Thank you. Could the Hon. Minister say what will be the cost for each of these roads?

Ms. Parag: For the 19th Street Dazzel Housing Scheme project is \$13.6 million; the Hill Foot Soesdyke project is \$11.7 million; the Waterside Dam, Cane Grove project is \$18 million; and the Vigilance South Housing Scheme project is \$13.6 million.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Just checking with the Chief Whip, we are five minutes over the hour?

An. Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Hour and a half? Sorry, it is an hour and a half – we are on track. Hon. Member, Ms. Nima Flue-Bess, you have the floor.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. The road at Hill Foot, is it the main road into Hill Foot or the road within the newly developed scheme?

4.46 p.m.

Ms. Parag: It is the western side of the scheme.

Ms. Ferguson: Could I take the Hon. Member to project code 1400700, Roads. Earlier, you identified the roads that will be benefitting from this allocation. In your listing, you said 19th Road, Dazzle Housing Scheme. Since it is a new project, could you say for my benefit and the benefit of the nation, whether Dazzle Housing Scheme currently has a 19th Road, or will you be making a new road now since it is new?

Ms. Parag: It is a mud dam, but it is referred to as 19th Street.

Ms. Ferguson: It is a mud dam that you will be converting to a road. Would it be asphaltic or concrete?

Ms. Parag: It will be concrete.

Ms. Ferguson: Okay. Could you give us the length and the width of the road to be constructed?

Ms. Parag: It is 800 feet by 12 feet.

Ms. Ferguson: It is 800 feet by 12 feet. On completion of this road, would two vehicles be able to traverse simultaneously?

Ms. Parag: It is 12 feet in width.

Ms. Ferguson: I know it is 12 feet in width.

Ms. Parag: Vehicles would be able to pass. There is available space on the sides.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, you know because we are all drivers, the width of a vehicle is actually eight feet, if my memory serves me accurately. To make a 12 feet road in width, how can it accommodate two cars at eight feet in width? I am just trying to understand why would you want to be constructing smaller roads when we know that we have to accommodate multiple vehicles on those roads. We see what is happening in many of the communities. Thank you very much.

Ms. Parag: What is being constructed is currently on a mud dam, that does not even have the width of a normal road. What is being constructed is the width that is existing currently.

Ms. Ferguson: I will visit the area tomorrow.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms Ferguson would you like to follow up on the thickness of the road? No?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I can take your advice. Through you, to the Hon. Member, could you say what the thickness of the road is? This is because we have huge trucks now, some with 24 wheels and double-axle vehicles. We have to ensure that the roads are sturdy. Could you say what is the thickness of the road? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Should we add the pounds per square inch (PSI)?

Ms. Parag: It would be six inches.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, if there are no other questions, I would put the question.

Programme: 743 – Public Works – \$215,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery – \$494,030,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Project code 1203300, Buildings - Education: I see a provision for schools and educational facilities. Could the Hon. Minister say where these schools and educational facilities are located because I see the status is ongoing?

Ms. Parag: We have three roll-overs in extension to the two-storey Diamond/Grove Primary School, extension of the two-storey Diamond Primary School and extension of the north wing of a two-storey building at Annandale Secondary. For the new ones, we have extension to the Kuru Kururu Primary School, extension to Yarrowkabra Primary School, construction of a sanitary block at Clonbrook Primary School, construction of the sanitary block at Diamond Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Yarrowkabra Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Mon Repos Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Strathspey Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Victoria Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Helena Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Ann's Grove Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Kuru Kururu Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Virigina Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Low Wood Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Eccles Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Providence Primary School, construction of sanitary block at Montrose Primary School, construction of the building at Beterverwagting (BV) Practical Institute Centre (PIC) compound to house BV Secondary School, extension of Laluni Primary School, construction of a bridge at Covent Garden Primary School and an extension of Mae 26 Nursery School.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the cost for the sanitary block at Kuru Kururu Primary School and Low Wood Primary School?

Ms. Parag: The one at Kuru Kururu Primary School is \$2.8 million, and the one at Low Wood Primary School is \$2.8 million.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I note that the planned duration for these projects is up to December, 2025. Could the Hon. Minister say if the sanitary blocks for these schools will be completed by the next school term?

Ms. Parag: Yes. Mr. Chairman, is the Hon. Member asking about the school term as after April, after the Easter term?

Ms. Flue-Bess: Yes.

Ms. Parag: No. It will be for September.

Ms. Flue-Bess: It will be until September. All right. Project code 2407900, Land and Water Transport, I note there is provision for a vehicle. Could the Hon. Minister say if this vehicle to be purchased is for the students they have to take to school from Supply to Dora?

Ms. Parag: It is a 32-seater bus and it is from the East Bank Demerara, around the Supply area, to the Yarrowkabra area.

Ms. Flue-Bess: That means that the students will now have a new bus, and we would not be dealing with the bus breaking down and having them under the trees for weeks anymore? Is there a current bus that is being used to transport these children?

Ms. Parag: We have this new 32-seater bus that we were going to buy, but the ones that were breaking down were from the Five B's (Buses, Boats, Bicycles, Books and Breakfast) Programme.

Mr. Mahipaul: What are you rowing about?

Mr. Chairman: They are rowing about a bus, whether it is new or two. Hon. Members, please. Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: On this very project code, 2407900, for clarity, is it one bus that we are purchasing at \$36 million? How many buses are we purchasing from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: It is actually two 32-seater buses, at \$18 million each.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much. Based on your response to my Colleague, you said the minibus will be serving the Highway and the Soesdyke area. Pardon?

Ms. Parag: It is not a minibus, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: It is the big bus, the school bus. You said two. Could you say where exactly the two buses will be assigned? Secondly, how will the children be informed that the Government is now providing free transportation services to get them to and from school? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: We have a functioning Education Department in Region 4, as in other regions. The schools will also be involved in informing the children about the transportation for them to go from one place to the next. These two buses will be used, as I said, for the East Bank Demerara route – from Supply to the Linden/Soesdyke Highway to Yarrowkabra.

Ms. Flue-Bess: A follow-up question because I know we have a functioning Education Department. What mechanism or system does the Education Department have in place to inform parents prior or if the bus should have any difficulties?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, when I was going to school, we had a functioning Parent/Teachers Association (PTA) and any announcements that had to be made in relation to students and students' welfare, would be made at the PTA. That is one of the ways that students will be informed, as well as their class teachers will be informing those students who are going to be transported.

Mr. Chairman: That is a tried and tested system.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Project code 2503400, Furniture and Equipment – Education: I notice that there is provision for school furniture and equipment and this is new. Will the furniture and equipment be distributed to different schools along the East Bank Demerara or is it for those that you are currently doing construction for, extension and so on, as you mentioned earlier?

Ms. Parag: These are the schools that the distribution will be made to: Plaisance Secondary School, Ann's Grove Secondary School, Dora Secondary School, Soesdyke Secondary School, St. Mary's Primary School, Supply Primary School, Cane Grove Primary School, Victoria Primary School, Foulis Nursery School and Enterprise/Non Paniel Nursery School.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could the Hon. Minister say if any furniture for the teachers is in this?

Ms. Parag: For the teachers, you will have for Good Hope, Martyrs Ville, Lusignan, Eastville, Montrose, Vryheid's Lust Primary School, Eccles and Providence Primary Schools. You have teachers' tables for Good Hope, Martyrsville, Lusignan, Eastville, Montrose, Vryheid's Lust Primary School, Eccles and Providence Primary Schools.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery – \$494,030,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

5.01 p.m.

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$212,500,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Project code 1203500, Buildings and I see a provision for health centres. I note that there is a list here, “Provision for health centres and outposts at Beterverwagting, Beter Hope, Cane Grove, Eccles, Enterprise, Herstelling, Long Creek, Melanie Damishana, Mocha/Arcadia, Moblissa, Paradise, Plaisance and Soesdyke. I see it is stated as ‘new’ in the project status. Can the Hon. Minister say if new health centres will be constructed or extension works are expected to be done at these health centres and posts?

Ms. Parag: It is extension works, and there will be new construction at Moblissa, but as Mr. Chairman had alluded earlier, when you are going at a certain level for an extension, it comes under new.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I see that there is a provision for the Lusignan Diabetic Clinic and the Dr. C.C. Nicholson Hospital. Is that provision made for construction works or is it a grant or something that is being given?

Ms. Parag: At Lusignan, the oxygen lines are going to be placed, and at the Dr. C.C. Nicholson Hospital, it will be for the enclosing of the upstairs of the dental department.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Can the Hon. Minister say what will be the cost for the oxygen equipment or whatever will be provided to the Lusignan Diabetic Clinic?

Ms. Parag: It will be \$600,000 for the Lusignan clinic.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you. Through you, Cde. Chairman, I now move to project code 2407900. I see here listed provision for a truck. Can the Hon. Minister give us the details about whether it is a garbage truck, a truck to transport drugs or whatever it is in relation to this?

Ms. Parag: It is a cold storage enclosed canter truck for the Diamond hospital to transport supplies across the East Bank from the Materials Management Unit (MMU). [Mr. Mahipaul: *(Inaudible)*]

Mr. Chairman: Like Member Mahipaul wrote this particular provisioning.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I note the duration for this project is stated as 31st December, 2025. How early do you expect to acquire this truck for the Diamond hospital?

Ms. Parag: The purchase will be completed before then.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Would it be within three months or so?

Ms. Parag: It is going through the tender process and after then...So, we will give it a few months, but definitely not until December.

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

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Hon. Member: You just provided that a tendering process will be used to procure the truck. Can you say what method – whether it would be sole sourcing, single sourcing or public tender? There are methods of tendering.

Ms. Parag: It will be going through a public tendering process.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Project code 2503700 – Furniture and Equipment – Health: Provision for furniture and equipment. Can the Hon. Minister state where these furniture and equipment will be placed?

Ms. Parag: The furniture under health will be placed at all the health centres and hospitals and offices as well. *[Interruption]*

Ms. Flue-Bess: Cde. Chairman, I cannot hear my own voice.

[Mr. Chairman hit gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Please, I want to hear the Hon. Member, Ms. Nima Flue-Bess. You have the floor, Hon. Member.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you. I did not get to hear the Hon. Minister's response earlier so that I can do my follow-up.

Mr. Chairman: I do not think she heard you because you could not have heard yourself. Do you want to repeat?

Ms. Parag: I heard her, please, Mr. Chairman. She asked about the furniture and whether it was for all of the health centres and hospitals. I said that it was for all of the health centres, hospitals, and offices.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Does the furniture include beds or accommodation for patients to sit outside to use the services offered?

Ms. Parag: There are things like the patients' waiting chairs, examination couches, patient benches conjoined, office desks, storage cupboards, semi executive chairs and laboratory stools. Those will be it for the actual furniture.

Ms. Flue-Bess: No more questions.

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$212,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let me thank the Hon. Members, Ms. Nima Flue-Bess, Ms. Annette Ferguson and Mr. Mahipaul, for effectively using every single moment of the time allocated. Thanks to the Minister, Regional Education Officer (REO) and the staff from Region 4 for taking us through that head. It is five o'clock and we are scheduled for a break. Minister has had a relatively long day so far and she is doing extremely well. Let us give her a break for one hour and she can come back with Regions 5 to 10. Let the Assembly resume.

Sitting suspended at 5.09 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.12 p.m.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Agency: 75 Region 5: Mahaica/Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$328,380,000

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say to the Committee what are the three new positions under 6111 – Administrative?

Ms. Parag: You will have one Registry Supervisor, one Field Auditor and one Procurement Officer.

Mr Jordon: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the position of Assistant Regional Executive Officer falls under 6116?

Ms. Parag: Yes, it does.

Mr Jordon: Could the Hon. Minister say to the Committee what method/methods were used to employ the Assistant Regional Executive Officer, the salary and benefits of that Officer and the required qualifications and experience that are needed for that position?

Ms. Parag: It is a contracted employee and so that was by contract. The designation is Assistant Regional Executive Officer, with a salary of \$208,289. I do not have the qualifications here with me.

Mr Jordon: According to page 635, where we have the list of approved positions for agencies and, in particular, this programme, could the Hon. Minister state the role and functions of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)?

Ms. Parag: The Chief Executive Officer does not exist here.

Mr Jordon: If the Hon. Minister will turn with me to page 635, and I am looking at Region 5, Regional Administration and Finance, Programme 1, Administrative, I see Chief Executive Officer under scale 12.

Ms. Parag: All of that is fine and good and I am not doubting that it does exist in there, but we do not have a person in that designation in Region 5.

Mr Jordon: Just to follow up. Just for clarity, Minister, it is repeated across four other regions. I wanted to know if it is a new position or whether it is a mistake in the budget document. If you look at the document on page 635, you will see it there as the second most senior position under Administrative.

Ms. Parag: If that exists in the book, it was not created by our Administration, and I am most certain that we do not have persons with that designation in the regions.

Mr Jordon: Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee what is the total number of vacancies under this programme?

Ms. Parag: We have an estimated number of just over 130 vacancies across the programme.

Mr Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee what programme or programmes, plans or policies are in place to effectively fill these vacancies and when are they expected to be filled?

Ms. Parag: Again, I will utilise my knowledge as well as experience as the former Minister of the Public Service. Vacancies will exist across different sectors and different regions at all times. There is no time when the public service is completely filled and all vacancies are filled, but as the need arises, a recruitment process will be done for that particular vacancy to be filled. If it is an emergency or if someone dies or someone retires then, obviously, we will look to do that. However, filling an already bloated public service, we have to look at key functioning areas in the different sectors to be able to make it effective.

6.19 p.m.

That does not necessarily mean filling over 130 vacancies. I would say to the Hon. Member that if, for example, you have an engineering department and you need six engineers because that is necessary due to the rollout and the transformation that we have going on with the infrastructure, then we will look to fill those vacancies. It is like that.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask the Hon. Minister...I am just being careful. You said, “an already bloated public service”. Is it that the manpower is not necessary at this time? How does the absence of human resources affect the operations of the administration?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. An organisational structure for any ministry or any sector will be made not only upon the existing needs but also future needs. If you have a structure for occupational safety and health of about 20, and you can fill that with 12 persons and effectively manage, that is what will be done. There will be eight vacancies but it does not necessarily mean that they have to be filled for the organisation to be effective. Like I said, where it is definitely needed to be effective, we will seek to fill those vacancies.

Mr. Jordan: I can conclude, through the Chairman, safely that the vacancies or the absence of 130 personnel is not directly affecting the operations of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC).

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. I would say it is not directly affecting the Regional Democratic Council (RDC), please, Sir, because in 2024 we had the allocation as well as the execution and implementation of several projects that we had as a work programme and work plan, and we managed to do that. Of course, a lot of what the region is doing is in collaboration with central ministries as well, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Works. So, we are getting a whole lot of assistance from them too.

Mr. Jordan: I would like to move to line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service. I see \$3.3 million allocated in the budget for 202. I want to ask the Hon. Minister what the size of the fleet of vehicles under this programme is.

Ms. Parag: We have six vehicles and two tractors.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any of these vehicles are inoperable at this time?

Ms. Parag: I am advised that we have two in the workshop and four are working.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the two in the workshop are four-by-four pickups?

Ms. Parag: We have one sports utility vehicle (SUV) and a four-by-four pickup.

Mr. Jordan: I now move to 6242. I see \$19 million allocated. Could the Hon. Minister say which building or buildings will be maintained out of that sum?

Ms. Parag: We have the RDC main building, the RDC boardroom, the RDC main office and the RDC sub-region office – those are three living quarters – Building B-2, Building B-104, Building B-331 and Building B-168.

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$328,380,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$270,653,000

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over 6251, 6252, 6253 and 6255?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I will not lay over these, but I do have the breakdown for them. For 6251, we have the maintenance of the farm-to-market roads in Novar, Abary, Wash Clothes, Jacoba Constantia, Cotton Tree, Zee Zight, Good Faith, Recess, No. 5, Kingelly, No. 2 and No. 9. For 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges, this would be in No. 28, Tempie, Belladrum, Baiabu and Rosignol. Then you have 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works. This will be done. Manual cleaning and maintenance of 158 kilometres (KM) of canals within all 10 Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) areas.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we look at page 350 in Volume 2 under the indicators, I recognise at indicators five and six that the Administration had targeted, during the year 2024, 85 acreage of farmlands that were affected by flooding, and the number of farmers affected by flooding was 325. The question, Sir, is: Why is it that in 2025 we are not targeting any farmlands or farmers that are likely to be affected by flooding, as the target stands at zero?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. That target was based on an actual flooding that happened, and an actual figure was put towards that specific thing. Now, in 2025, we are not... We cannot say... That is not happening right now so that is why we have not put that, but that was something that happened. Now, the other thing is that you do have Hope-like canal structures that are going up in Region 5 and Region 6, which will alleviate a lot of the flooding as well.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I just want to understand this budget and its function from the Minister. Is it that you are planning and proposing what you want to do during the year, or will you just wait until farmers are affected and until lands are flooded? Is it a reactive operation or a proactive operation? An indicator and a projection should be that you want to achieve something, and so there should be at least one.

Ms. Parag: Thank you. That was actually a preventative measure that we had for the indicators last year. Now we do not have that, but you know we have the National Drainage and Irrigation Office as well in Region 5 and they have been doing a lot of work in Region 5 to complement the region.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Indicator four states:

“Acreage of new farmlands made available”

This is why I asked the question in the way that I did. It is because in 2024, 2,000 acres probably were made available, or... The Minister could explain. In 2025, there is a target to make 15,000 acres of land available. I want to ask the Minister two questions: How did you deal with the target to have it at 2,000 in 2024 since you said it is more of a reactive approach? Where are these lands located, totalling 13,000 acres, that you will now bring into bid cultivation or whatever it might be in 2025?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. This was a target that was developed by the Mahaica Mahaicony Abary (MMA). Since it falls within Region 5, we have included it.

Mr. Jordan: Did the MMA say where these lands are located so that we can understand?

Ms. Parag: It is from Vendetta going up, that is going up to the Berbice River.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No further questions on this line.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$270,653,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$234,474,000

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask a similar question as I did under Administration. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say the size of the fleet of vehicles under this programme? When she gets that, how many are inoperable?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. We have three pickups, one skid steer and one trailer, but there is one vehicle that is in the workshop.

Mr. Jordan: Minister, at the present time, across programmes so far, we have three vehicles in the workshop.

Ms. Parag: Yes, across the programmes that you have dealt with so far.

Mr. Jordan: Right. Correct. Thanks.

Ms. Parag: Let us not make it...because we have not dealt with some of the programmes as yet.

Mr. Jordan: I am moving along. Minister, on page 352 – public works, the indicators in Volume 2, I see you have at number five:

“Number of communities accessing water.”

In 2024, it stood at 165, and you intend to take that, according to your target in 2025, to 172. Can you say what programme or programmes are in place to ensure that this is achieved?

Ms. Parag: That would be for the new schemes that are being developed. Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) will... Housing development that is happening there, then you will have an increased need for water access.

Mr. Jordan: I did not want to ask, but Minister, could you list the other communities, apart from the 165, that will take you to 172? Let us just have the location or the names of these communities for guidance and clarity.

Ms. Parag: You have Experiment, Shieldstown and the Bath area, but you have schemes within those that will need the access, which will take the target up to...

Mr. Jordan: Apart from these, Minister, are there any other communities within the region that you might know of that do not have access to potable water at this time, and are they a part of your plan to take it to 172?

Ms. Parag: There are communities that have low water pressure, but it is not complete inaccessibility. Water has not been inaccessible to them.

6.34 p.m.

Mr. Jordan: Minister, final question on this. Is there a plan to properly assess communities that are having partial water access so as to bring them to a point where the entire community can benefit? I know of a number of communities that have access to potable water only at the point of the public road and first streets. Is the assessment only for new schemes or for those old villages that have been there for time immemorial?

Ms. Parag: The GWI, as the agency that will look after that, is doing a general assessment. With the regions we are looking at the number of schemes that we have coming on board as the new

schemes. However, I have no doubt that Guyana Water Inc. will be doing its assessment across the coast.

Mr. Jordan: No further questions on this.

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads. We note that there is a small increase from \$80,000,000 to \$84,000,000. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this caters for the maintenance of the Belladrum Beach Road?

Ms. Parag: This caters for sectional repairs to the No. 7 Village access road, Bath, Mahaicony, Hope Town, Dehoop, Dundee, Novar, Ithaca, Bush Lot, Rosignol, Zee Zight, Bath Settlement, Woodley Park, D’Edward and Cotton Tree. The Ministry of Public Works, the central Ministry, I understand, will be looking at the beach roads.

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$234,474,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$4,253,551,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the first question I want to ask the Hon. Minister is: could she say to us what the three new administrative positions are, moving from 167 in 2024 to 170 in 2025?

Ms. Parag: We have a transfer in two of the Graduate Heads of Department and one GSM, and a 10% increase in salary. This is 6111 you are looking at.

Mr. Jordan: I recognise under 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, that there is a sum of \$90 million to be expended during the year 2025. I know that, from last year, there was a sum of \$85 million. From a part of that sum, the Bush Lot Secondary School was slated to be maintained or rehabilitated, whichever way it was titled or detailed. The work started during the year, and it has not been completed. As a matter of fact, it is this very school from which a beam fell from the roof, hitting a parent in the head during a parent-teacher conference and severely injuring that parent. I know the Minister is fully aware. Could the Hon. Minister say when the repairs at Bush Lot Secondary School are expected to be fully completed, and when will the children return to going to school for an entire day and not on a rotational basis?

Ms. Parag: That is not a regional project; it comes under the central Ministry. Nonetheless, that building was neglected for many years. We had planned to do the maintenance of that school through the central Ministry, which they did, and it has been ongoing and will be completed in March. In addition to that, there is now an award as well for a completely new wing for that Bush Lot Secondary School, and it is in excess of \$400 million.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say, again, what is the total number in the fleet of vehicles under this programme, and how many are inoperable?

Ms. Parag: We have a minibus, three motorboats, two Nissan 4x4, a Mitsubishi canter, a Toyota 30-seater bus, a canter truck and a motorcycle, another Toyota 30-seater bus, a Nissan minibus, another Toyota 30-seater bus and another one. So, there are several.

Mr. Jordan: Minister, please be kind enough to say how many, if any, are inoperable. Thank you.

Ms. Parag: One of the 30-seater buses is in the workshop at the moment.

Mr. Jordan: Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges – \$14,000,000. Could the Hon. Minister state which of the bridges across the education delivery programme area will be maintained and whether they are concrete bridges or timber bridges?

Ms. Parag: It is the maintenance of bridges. It is not newly constructed bridges. It includes repairs to the main entrance bridge at Blairmont Nursery, repairs to the main entrance bridges at Shieldstown Nursery, repairs to the back entrance bridge at Number Five Nursery, repairs to the western entrance culvert bridge at Hopetown, and repairs to the entrance bridge at Bush Lot Nursery.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, page 354, Volume 2. I want to ask the Minister to turn with me to indicator nine. I recognise that in 2020, under this programme, they achieved a 20% matriculation rate, and in 2025, they expect to move to 55%. Could the Hon. Minister say what programmes are in place to increase the matriculation rate to 55%? What plans do you have in place to cause that increase?

Ms. Parag: There is a learners' enhancement programme that is in place, and there is a monitoring maths mechanism in place.

Mr. Jordan: This programme is across all schools, I presume, Minister.

Ms. Parag: Yes, it is.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I want to move to indicators 16 and 17: Percentage of schools with internet access – nursery, 95% in 2024, and it is expected to move to 100% in 2025. Percentage of schools with internet access – primary, 97%, and it is expected to move to 100% in 2025. I just want to know from the Minister which schools fall within the nursery 5% and the primary 3%. Just list those schools.

Ms. Parag: We have Mora Point, Mortice and Moraikobai.

Mr. Jordan: Okay. No further questions here, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$4,253,551,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$1,543,711,000

Mr. Jordan: Line item 6111 – Administrative: Could the Minister kindly say the designation of that officer?

Ms. Parag: It is for one Optometrist.

Mr. Jordan: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: Could the Minister say what the four new positions are that are catered for here in 2025, moving from five in 2024 to nine in 2025?

Ms. Parag: There is one staff nurse and three medexes.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say whether the position of an Assistant Hospital Administrator is within line item 6116 – Contracted Employees?

Ms. Parag: Yes, it is.

Mr. Jordan: I want to ask the Minister the salary and benefits of this position, the qualification needed, the method used to employ this person, and whether it was just a selection because it is based on a contract.

Ms. Parag: I do not have the qualifications here with me, but \$323,962 is what I have for the salary.

Mr. Jordan: Minister, through the Chairman, could you say whether this position was ever advertised by the Regional Administration and how we arrived at filling the vacancy by contract?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, it is a contracted employee and does not necessarily have to go through the advertisement period for that. Through the pensionable, there are several rules but through the contracted, not necessarily, and the person was employed based on a need at that moment for an Assistant Hospital Administrator.

Mr. Jordan: The Hon. Jaffarally knows why I am asking the question. This is an established public service position and it is the second established public service position in the Regional Administration that has been filled by means of a contract when the Minister cannot fully say whether it has been advertised. I would like to know when it was advertised, what led to the necessity of moving to a contract, and what the qualifications of the person who is holding the position currently are.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the public service rules are clear. You can be employed under pensionable or on a contract. **[Mr. Mahipaul: (Inaudible)]** Listen, Mr. Mahipaul, before you answer.

6.49 p.m.

A person can be employed by either method. If it is that a person is employed by contract, the person can go through a very regular and normal recruitment process with a proper interview. Once the person has satisfied the requirements, the vacancy can be filled. That has been done by the Region.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say to us...? We know of the position, what are the necessary qualifications needed? Someone is already in the position, what is the qualification of the person?

Ms. Parag: **[Dr. Singh:** One has to be fit and proper.] I tend to agree with my Hon. Colleague that one has must be fit and proper. More than that, the young lady who is in this

position... [Mr. Jordan: *Inaudible*] All right; hold on. You asked and assumed that I knew. ...has been a public servant before in the Ministry of the Public Service as a Training Officer. She is a trained and certified teacher and also possesses qualifications that an Administrator can have.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I will move on as time will eventually tell all this. For clarity, could the Hon. Minister say when will the Trafalgar, Number 28 Health Post be upgraded from that status to a health centre?

Ms. Parag: Under the current line item, we look at the rehabilitation and repairs to the infrastructure. I do not believe that is a question for this line item. Maybe, it is a question for capital expenditure perhaps but not this line item.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I recognised that line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, increased from \$430 million to \$455 million in 2025. Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee what method is in place to ensure as these moneys are spent... We do not have a shortage of basic medical supplies and stuff that the medical practitioners have to use to be exact – such as gloves. Quite recently, Nursers at the Fort Wellington Hospital and Mahaicony Cottage Hospital had a shortage of drugs. I know that the Minister will say that it is not true. Last year, when we came here – one unit was not functioning; the Minister said it was. We went back and it was not. Could the Hon. Minister say what systems are in place to ensure that it does not reoccur?

Ms. Parag: I think that was a scenario where you said it was not working; I said it was and it was actually working. Now, the other thing is – that is absolutely not so. There are gloves being supplied to the needs of the Fort Wellington Hospital. I sit here with the Regional Health Officer (RHO) who has informed me that at no time recently has there been a shortage of gloves at the Fort Wellington Hospital.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister missed the main part of the question. What system do you have in place to ensure that we do not have a shortage of supplies during the year?

Ms. Parag: There is no shortage of supplies. The systems that have been put in place are – the Regional Health Officer will get from all the health centres as well as the ... Each health centre will do this on its own once staff know they have their Nil List. The staff know what is missing,

they will put the items to be uplifted and go to the Materials Management Unit (MMU). The items then come to the region and then distributed to the health centres. As far as I am aware, we do have the essential drugs. We keep a three-month stock of the drugs.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, again at line item 6211, I would just like to ask the Hon. Minister, is there any number of expired drugs which were disposed during the year 2024?

Mr. Chairman: Could you repeat the line item again?

Mr. Jordan: It is 6221; I am sorry.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Jordan: It is Drugs and Medical Supplies.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, this particular line item is for purchase and distribution of drugs. It is not for disposal of drugs in 2024. That is what the Hon. Member asked – how much drugs were disposed of last year?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, at line item 6282, Equipment Maintenance, I see \$9,500,000. What are the equipment expected to be maintained under this line item?

Ms. Parag: We have the air-conditioning (AC) unit, desktop computers, Canon Printer, Hewlett-Packard (HP) Printer, risograph, refrigerator, portable suction, electrocardiogram (ECG), ultrasound machine, electromagnetic waves (x-ray) machine, infant warmer, defibrillator, steriliser, microscope, digital rotator, digital scale, dental chair, portable dental x-ray unit, dental sensor emit system, AC unit, blood bank refrigerator, biochemistry analyser, automatic water still, Eledent ultrasonic scaler, centrifuge, haematology analyser, water bath, patient monitor, blood gas analyser, treadmill, stationary bicycle, doppler, ergometer bicycle, portable ultrasound machine, ultrasound scaler, freezer, refrigerator, industrial gas stove, autoclave, infant scale, adult scale, haematology analyser, ecroma, audio metre screener, water treatment plant, incinerator, chill fridge, air compressor, computers, printer and x-ray machine. This is for the Fort Wellington Hospital now: x-ray machine, ultrasound machine, water treatment plant, incinerator and biochemistry analyser. The list goes on and on.

Mr. Jordan: I have no further questions here, Sir.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$1,543,711,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$20,500,000

Mr. Jordan: I would just like to know from the Hon. Minister which building electrical systems would be upgraded under this programme.

Ms. Parag: It will be the Fort Wellington Main Office and Annexe.

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$20,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$141,970,000

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$141,970,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$160,400,000

Programme: 753 – Public Works – \$160,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$202,500,000

Mr. Jordan: Project code 1203600 – Buildings-Education: I see it states \$143 million:

“Provision for schools, educational facilities and payment of retention.”

First question – could the Hon. Minister say what amount of this will go to retention and for which project?

Ms. Parag: We have the construction of the Augsburg Primary School to effect the 10% retention payment, there is \$3,093,000; the construction of the Hopetown Practical Industrial Centre for \$1.4 million; and the Resource Centre’s building at Fort Wellington for \$2,847,000.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say what percentage of the work is completed thus far at the Augsburg Primary School? When is it expected to be fully completed?

Ms. Parag: It is at about 70% and it should be completed by the end of February. They are working.

Mr. Jordan: I was going to say that the same question is for the Hopetown Practical Industrial Centre. You can go ahead.

Ms. Parag: It is at about 75% and it will be completed around mid-March.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask of the Minister – is there any provision for new schools in this amount?

Ms. Parag: We have for extensions of schools such as the Bath Nursery School, West Demerara Nursery School, Cotton Tree Nursery School, the Resource Centre at Fort Wellington, Mortice Nursery School and Bush Lot Secondary School Annexe.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I know during last September Term when the construction of the Hopetown Primary School started, we had to displace over 100 children. It was not in the best of manner. Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee why was proper housing arrangement not catered for prior to the starting of the demolition of the Hopetown Nursery School?

Ms. Parag: I would not say that the children were displaced – so to speak; parents were engaged. They were asked of their opinions, suggestions and recommendations about where to go. The children were placed in the empty spaces that we had in the primary school which is right next door.

7.04 p.m.

Mr. Jordan: Minister, through the Chairman, it appears as though you might not be aware of the location where the children were placed. Could you say whether that location is conducive enough for the children? Does it have the adequate spacing and all that comes with it, as required for classrooms, such as sanitary block and what is not to properly house the children?

Ms. Parag: The spacing is adequate and there is a sanitary block. It is just a fence that separates where they were from where they are now.

Mr. Jordan: I understand that because I know the location very well. When you look at the building that the children were placed in, it is, to my knowledge, a very small building. Let us be fair, it is not conducive. They are cramped, from my understanding and from what I saw. Is it that you are saying it is sufficient?

Ms. Parag: What we do and do well is consult with the people. In this particular instance, the parents were consulted in relation to the school. The parents actually were all right with the children going to the space in which they are in now and we ensured that we conducted that consultation so that it was not an imposition.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I will not dispute what the Minister said, which is that parents were consulted, because we cannot bring the parents here to make the argument. The point and the question I want to get home to the Minister, apart from the parents agreeing, we have standing regulations as to spacing, seating and all that come with how the children should be in classrooms. Are you saying, with a hundred children cramped in a building, despite the parents having agreed, it is satisfactory?

Ms. Parag: Hon. Member, the fact of the matter is we are doing now building an entirely new school to accommodate these children. Moving them from one area and ensuring that we do have the space and place to put them in, with the consultation and agreement of the parents are somethings that we consider to be good things we did for these children right now. We do not want these children to be at home and have learning loss. We want to ensure that they are in school and able to access the resources that are so readily available from the Ministry of Education and from the Government. We want to ensure they do have a space and a place to do that while waiting to move over into their brand-new school. It is a temporary situation. You have to appreciate that. It is no big and far move so that transportation becomes an issue.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I want to move on, but I just want to say to the Hon. Minister that there are other facilities right in the community that would have been better for the children.

Moving on to the other project code 2401900: “Provision for vehicle.” I see provision for a bus. Could the Hon. Minister say whether this \$22 million is for a 32-seater bus?

Ms. Parag: It is for a 32-seater bus for the Special Education Needs Unit (SEN).

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee when a bus will be provided or made available for the children of Perth and Strath Campbell villages and the environs coming out of the Mahaicony branch road? Will the bus that leaves Wash Clothes village pick up those children as it comes out of the road?

Ms. Parag: There is already a bus working there. I do not know where this Hon. Member is going and getting his information from. There is already a bus that is transporting these children from that village particularly.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee whether or not she is aware that the bus does not pick up children from Perth, Strath Campbell and other villages within the environs?

Ms. Parag: I want to say that this bus we have operating – my Hon. Colleague is right – is not called the Irfaan A; it is not called the Bharrat J; it is not called the AK; it is a bus that is there for just the secondary schools. Strath Campbell has a school, so I am not sure where we are transporting these children to. The Hon. Member does not seem to know that.

Mr. Jordan: That is why I was specific to say those that are coming out of the road, Mdm. Minister. Those that are coming out of the road. That was the question, Mdm. Minister. Let us move on. You can put the question Mr. Chairman and move on to the next programme.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$202,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$248,000,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I just have one question here. I would like to know for the ambulance that will be purchased, which hospital will it be servicing?

Ms. Parag: It will be servicing the Fort Wellington Hospital for now.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$248,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I really want to thank the Hon. Minister and her staff for taking us through that head and the Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, for efficiently utilising the time of one hour to cover every head under this agency. Mr. Mahipal takes the credit for teaching him well. I invite the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) members of Region 6 to join us as they take us through the consideration of the Estimates for Region 6, Agency 76.

Agency: 76 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne

Current Expenditure

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$337,360,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us at line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support, the increase in the finance since there is a reduction of eight persons?

Ms. Parag: It was due to a promotion. It is a move from line item 6114 to 6113.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is an increase of 12 individuals. Could the Hon. Minister indicate their designations and emoluments?

Ms. Parag: We have six Accounts Clerks, five Typist Clerks and three Clerk II General.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: There is a total of \$23 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the percentage of maintenance of buildings that were completed in 2024 and a projection for 2025?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I will give for 2025 since this allocation covers what are to be done in 2025.

Mr. Chairman: I did not hear you properly.

Ms. Parag: I am going to give what is for 2025 since the allocation covers 2025.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please.

Ms. Parag: There are repairs to the State House, Admin Block A; the Personnel Building and the Amerindian Hostel, Stanleytown as well.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: There is a decline of almost \$2 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate why there is a decline?

Ms. Parag: It is based upon the need of a fence that has to be built or when the need arises.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6294 – Other: There is \$11.3 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what covers Other?

Ms. Parag: This caters for the stipend for Tender Board Members, the Chairman and the Evaluators. It also caters for awareness planning in response to natural disasters and tourism awareness in the Region.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6111 – Administrative: There is an increase of three employees. Could the Hon. Minister give the designations and emoluments for these three administrative employees?

Ms. Parag: We have a Senior Registry Supervisor and two Accountants.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you, very much. There is no other question.

Mr. Jone: Mr. Chairman, may I?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Jones, you may proceed.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I see the description of several homes including the Dharm-Shala but I note that there is an increase to all of these homes and bodies. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what occasioned the increases of all of these bodies?

Ms. Parag: We believe these organisations are doing well and we believe we should assist them some more. It is a minimal sum.

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$337,360,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$1,805,259,000

7.19 p.m.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is an increase from 11 to 29. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the position for these employees?

Ms. Parag: The positions include – the appointment of one Accounts Clerk II, six Rangers, four Sluice Attendants, four Pump Operators, two Equipment Operators and a Vehicle Driver.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical and line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There is a reduction of one and two. Could you say if these individuals retired or resigned from their position?

Ms. Parag: For line item 6112, one Superintendent of Works was appointed. For line item 6113, one Storekeeper II was promoted to Superintendent of Works and one Mechanic is now being paid under a different line item, which is line item 6115.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Will this sum of \$602 million take care of all the drainage pumps and other irrigation equipment for the Region?

Ms. Parag: Yes, Sir. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this will take the two Hope-like canals in Region 6?

Ms. Parag: This is not for the Hope-like canals. This is for the maintenance of the internal drains.

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$1,805,259,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$677,055,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many roads will be built in 2025 in Region 6?

Ms. Parag: This is for maintenance of roads. There will be correction to potholes and surface to Macaw, Plegt Anker; repairs with crusher run to beach entrances; correction to potholes and surface with hot mix in Zorg en Vlygt to Belmont; correction to potholes in Maida/Tarlogie;

correction to potholes and surface in Black Bush Polder, Public Road; correction to potholes and surface in Kilcoy North Road; correction to potholes and surface in Belmont to Germania; correction to potholes and surface in Alness Village and correction to potholes in Crabwood Creek Road, Number 69 Village; road network, New Amsterdam; Number 52 Village and Number 74 Village.

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$677,055,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$8,297,449,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Member indicate where these employees are assigned?

Ms. Parag: There are one Kitchen Assistant, one Janitor resigned and one Caregiver resigned. There are new recruitments being paid under this line item now.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Through the Chairman, there is a sum there of \$334 million. Will this take into consideration the educational buildings, schools or both?

Mr. Parag: It will take all into consideration – educational buildings and schools.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: The budget is \$220 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the Committee what these other infrastructures are?

Ms. Parag: These are for maintenance of facilities in the schools and other educational buildings, such as fences and so on.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: There is a total of \$50 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the number of vehicles assigned to the education delivery?

Ms. Parag: There are 16 vehicles, two boats and one generator. It is to take care of the cost for three additional school buses. **[Dr. Singh:** None of which are called David G.] None of which are the David G and they are not labelled with any official's name.

Mr. Jaiprashad: A follow up: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if the boats assigned to Barakara and Orealla are in operation?

Ms. Parag: Yes. They are.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6284 – Other: Through the Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate the sum allocated there? What will it be utilised for?

Ms. Parag: What was the question, please, Sir?

Mr. Jaiprashad: It is line item 6284, Other.

Ms. Parag: Yes. I got the line item.

Mr. Jaiprashad: It is line item 6284.

Ms. Parag: Yes. I have the line item. What is the question?

Mr. Jaiprashad: What will this sum be utilised for?

Ms. Parag: This is for the purchase of materials to repair furniture; transportation of examination papers; cost for upholstering of one suite; stipend for 20 National Literacy Department members; 20 nurse literacy support; members of the School Boards Secretariat and Chairperson; stipend for work study students, *et cetera*.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Line item 6292, Dietary: There is an increase of \$12 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this sum is for the three hostels that we have? Also, could you give a number of students in each?

Ms. Parag: Yes. It is for the three dormitories and the special needs school. It will cater for 117 students.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you, very much.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$8,297,449,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$3,593,200,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: We know we are dealing with health. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the reduction from 318 to 303? Is it that these individuals resigned, migrated or retired?

Ms. Parag: A Laboratory Attendant resigned; a Laundress and a Ward Maid retired, as well as two Vehicle Drivers and one Labourer died.

Ms. Jaiprashad: Line item 6111, Administrative: There is an increase of six employees. Could the Hon. Minister give the designations and emoluments?

Ms. Parag: Thank you. It is a Hospital Administrator, a Public Relations Officer, a Finance Manager, an Assistant Hospital Administrator and two Matrons.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: We know that we are getting two new health facilities in the region. Where will this sum of \$160 million be allocated to?

Ms. Parag: This is for the maintenance of the existing health centres and buildings across Region 6.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Through the Chairman, does this include New Amsterdam Hospital, Port Mourant Hospital, Mibicuri Hospital in Black Bush and Skeldon Regional Hospital as well?

Ms. Parag: Yes. It does.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister indicate?

Ms. Parag: This is for other repairs regarding the infrastructure such as the fence, the environment, water trestle and so on.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you. I have no further questions.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$3,593,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$72,100,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1208100 – Building -Administration: The sum of \$68,900,000 is for ‘Provision for Building’. Could the Hon. Minister indicate which building will be taken care of?

Ms. Parag: It is for the construction of the Regional Executive Officer’s living quarters at New Amsterdam.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you, very much.

Ms. Parag: Oh, it was also for the rehabilitation of the Amerindian Hostel in Stanleytown.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you, very much. There are no further questions for that.

7.34 p.m.

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$72,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$90,600,000

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$90,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$407,600,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1100700, Bridges. Could the Hon. Minister indicate where these bridges will be constructed or is it maintenance work for the region?

Ms. Parag: This is not maintenance. It does not fall under Current and maintenance. It is Capital and it is for rehabilitation of the Kilcoy North bridge, Corentyne; rehabilitation of Quintin Street bridge, East Canje; construction of RC Culvert at Main and Victoria Streets, East Canje; rehabilitation of the heavy-duty bridge at Vena Street, Kendalls; construction of heavy-duty bridge at Yakusari South, Third Street; Field 7 and 8, Black Bush Polder; construction of Courda heavy-duty bridge at Rose Hall; construction of Amar Bridge; Fields 8 and 9, Lesbeholden – that is a heavy-duty bridge; construction of Patrick Dam to High Dam, heavy bridge; construction of bridge at end of Razack Dam, West Canje; rehabilitation of foot path bridge at Adelphi, East Canje;

construction of heavy-bridge, Corentyne; and rehabilitation of heavy-duty bridge at Number 0, Middle Walk, over Makunda Canal, Corentyne. That is it for the bridges.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1401100, Roads – we are aware that Region 6 is one of the regions with the most roads under construction. Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many more will be completed within the calendar year?

Ms. Parag: With this budget we have through the region – because we have public works as well – rehabilitation of Johanna, First Street; Field 13, Black Bush Polder; rehabilitation of Third Cross Street, Chesney New Scheme; construction of concrete roadway at Siparuta, leading from health centre to Jetty; construction of Third Street behind OBL, Port Maurant; rehabilitation of Auchlyne, Third Street, Corentyne; sectional rehabilitation of Lord Street, Fort Ordinance; construction of First Street, High Dam, West Canje; construction of Number 61, Middle Walk EPR, Corentyne; construction of Cromarty Farm sideline, Corentyne; construction of Brighton sideline, Corentyne; construction of Sakooran Street; construction of Numbers 61 and 62 sideline; rehabilitation of Glasgow, Second Street, New Amsterdam; construction of Number 50, Middle Walk, Corentyne; construction of Letter Kenny, sideline, Corentyne; construction of dry pad, Ulverston; rehabilitation of Glasgow, first cross from the second bridge, right of main access; construction of Second Street, High Dam, West Canje; and rehabilitation of Glasgow fourth access street on first cross, New Amsterdam.

Programme: 763 – Public Works – \$407,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$336,405,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 2402000, Land and Water Transport. Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many 30-seater buses we will be having for Region 6 this year?

Ms. Parag: We will have three 30-seater buses for Yakusari, Orealla, and Crabwood Creek.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you. Is there any provision for Canje, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Parag: Canje already has a bus.

Mr. Jaiprashad: Thank you very much. I have no further questions for Education.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$336,405,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$337,000,000

Mr. Jaiprashad: Project code 1204000, Buildings – Health. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, the \$216 million provision for health facilities and living quarters, where will this be done?

Ms. Parag: This will be for the construction of living quarters complex at Springlands, Corriverton, the construction of two new bus sheds at New Amsterdam Hospital, and rehabilitation of the Mibicuri Hospital at Black Bush Polder.

Mr. Jaiprashad: A follow-up question on that. What is the accommodation for the living quarters at Springlands?

Ms. Parag: It will be 16 two-bedroom apartments, fully furnished.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$337,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. MP, for taking us through that questioning and Hon. Minister and staff for assisting in providing the explanations. Thank you very much, Regional Executive Officer (REO), Mr. Narindra Persaud. We have 30 minutes savings on that head. Hon. Members, let us invite those from Region 7 to join their Minister and other staff members of the Ministry to take us through Agency 77. Hon. Members, we are not going to be taking this break, but whoever wants can stretch their legs and have some refreshments. Before we take Region 7, let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Vickram Bharrat, could you move the suspension of the necessary Standing Order?

Suspension of Standing Order No. 10

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Order No. 10 be suspended to enable this sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 8.00 p.m.”

[Minister of Natural Resources]

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Bharrat]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I ask that we suspend the Standing Order until we complete the business for today?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much. The question is, Hon. Members, that the Standing Order be suspended for us to go beyond 8.00 p.m. and complete the business of today.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Agency 77: Region 7 Cuyuni/Mazaruni

Current Estimates

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$461,612,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Good evening, everyone and welcome to my home, my region, the hard workers.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you for that welcome.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: My first question to you, Minister. I would like to take you to Volume 2. I am looking at your Indicators under Administration and Finance. Indicator 4 states there, “village sustainability plans” (VSP). In 2024, you had submitted and approved five VSPs. Your target for 2025 is 10. Coming from Region 7, I know there are at least 18 Amerindian villages. For 2024, only five out of the 18 submitted their village plans. Your target for this year is 10. Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee, what mechanisms she has in place to ensure that she achieves her target of 10 for this year?

Ms. Parag: I am advised that, through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the village councils are consulting to submit their village plans.

Ms. Fernandes: Could I have a follow-up on that, please?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can, Hon. Member, Ms. Fernandes.

Ms. Fernandes: Could the Hon. Minister advise? On her response she said it will come through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. However, I do know that the Minister of Amerindian Affairs did respond, in this House last year when I questioned her, saying that she received all of the plans. I also know that the plans need to be submitted in order for moneys to be disbursed to the regions. I beg to question as to how moneys were disbursed without these plans being submitted, since it is only five being recorded here.

Ms. Parag: The regions do not disburse moneys to the villages. The regions will work with their programme heads to enhance the villages and so on, and they will consult. It is not based on the village plan for moneys to be disbursed to the villages.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you for that response. Mr. Chairman, through you, another follow-up. The Indicator that we are looking at here, it states specifically the number of “villages sustainability plans submitted and approved”. It is not just plans that were submitted for no reason. They were plans that were submitted and approved. It gives the impression that every other village either did not submit plans or their plans were not approved; so we definitely... Could the Minister give some clarity on why the plans are submitted for approval, if it is not necessary for the disbursement of funds?

Ms. Parag: What I do know is that even if a village is asked to submit a plan, it is usually to guide the region in relation to when they are submitting their budget. Still, the money is not disbursed, or moneys are not disbursed to the villages for that purpose. It is to guide the region in how they will go about to enhance or carry out under their various programme heads, to execute their programmes.

7.49 p.m.

Ms. Fernandes: Could I further ask who approves the plan when submitted?

Ms. Parag: I am advised that the RDC will put approval on the plan, meaning that if you send this plan and you say these are the things you are looking at, that they will be guided by it.

Ms. Fernandes: So, the RDC has received plans, placed approved on them and goes out and monitors to see if the plans are being worked with accordingly in the villages?

Ms. Parag: There are projects that are being incorporated into the budget, such as if they suggested them. It is just sometimes like when the NDCs submit certain things, their finances cannot be able to cover but the central ministry will guide and assist in terms of certain things, or a different sector ministry, depending on what the project is. That is how the region is an advisor, they try to incorporate it under their programme heads – not all of it. They can be able to do that, to assist. However, you know too that the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) funds that they are getting, that the village will decide how they want to utilise that towards development and sustainability projects within their own, and also without the interference of Government in their own villages. So, all this is doing is just an approval to see where we can incorporate to assist under the various programmes.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you. And through you, Sir, could the Hon. Minister say which villages consist of those five?

Ms. Parag: Waramadong, Karrau, Chinoweing, Jawalla and Phillipai.

Ms. Fernandes: Could the Hon. Minister also say if plans are submitted from the communities of Agatash and Dagg Point?

Ms. Parag: I understand that Dagg Point as well as Agatash had requested certain things in which the region had placed in their budget to be done.

Ms. Fernandes: So, no other disbursement was made to Dagg Point or Agatash with regard to a sustainability plan in the year 2024.

Ms. Parag: I do not think they have a clear understanding of this. The region does not disburse money for a specific programme. A region through its programmes and through its consultations with the village, if approved, or if guided by what they want, can incorporate that into their own budget in which the region will execute. So, if it is any sustainable programme, it will be in consultation, I am assuming, with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs.

Ms. Fernandes: My final question on this item. I just want, if an example can be given on any one of the five villages that submitted plans, what was one of those plans that was submitted and if it was actually executed, or it is just a process that villages are going through and no works are being done at the end.

Ms. Parag: I am told by the REO that Waramadong specifically, if I am to give an example, had asked for a new primary school. They had asked for an upgrade in the kitchen and they had asked for the D.C. Fox [*inaudible*]; Karrau had also asked for a new secondary.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you. Through you, Sir, those moneys were actually dispersed through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Was it not or through the region?

Ms. Parag: There was no money disbursed to the villages.

Mr. Chairman: I heard that.

Ms. Parag: There was no money disbursed to the villages.

Ms. Fernandes: The works were conducted by the region.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. MP, the Minister was speaking to me. I want to hear her out. Minister, there was no money dispersed, and I think you were completing the sentence.

Ms. Parag: So, it is a warrant that is coming from the Ministry of Education and executed through the region in terms of manpower and monitoring.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chairman: No monies disbursed; manpower [*inaudible*]. Hon. Member Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The same Volume, the same page, I am looking at Indicator number 7; here you have villages “access to internet”, and you have “18” for last year, and “18” for this year. It is commendable Minister that the 18 villages now have access to internet according to your Indicator here. My question to you: are you aware that some of the internet will not be able to function because of inadequate power supply at these buildings, whether there are schools...? What are you going to do to ensure that these internet systems are operable?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, keep paying the bill.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am advised by the REO that the schools do have solar power, and that for the internet access for these, they will now be engaging Star Link as well; so they will be having better internet access.

Ms. Fernandes: On the same page, I am looking at Indicator number 3. It states “Number of skilled personnel recruited” for 2024; that number was 46. I know the target for 2024 was 70 and I see that target being revised in 2025. Given that you had 46 actual in 2024, I see the target of 70 here again. Could I ask if this target of 70 is a set target to cover all necessary or needed right now or is this a target that will still be leaving room for more persons to come on board?

Ms. Parag: It is a target for 2025 and it incorporates both, existing as of now as well as leaving room for more within the year.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister; MP Fernandes.

Ms. Fernandes: We can move on, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum... Hon. Member Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams.

Ms. Hasting-Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will now come to line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee if any provision is made for the maintenance work on the Mongrippa Hill Community Ground? Minister, this project had started in 2023, we are now in 2025, and no work has been done, or maintenance on that building. Is there any provision for it to be completed this year?

Ms. Parag: That is a ground that comes under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports; it does not come under the regional budget here.

Ms. Hasting-Williams: Another question on the same line item on Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. Is there any provision made? I just heard the schools and the community centres have solar systems. Yes, that is true in many cases or most cases. Is there any provision made under this line item for the solar system at Imbaimadai Primary School to be maintained? Because I know they need batteries; there is a need for new batteries in many of these schools.

Ms. Parag: That is for a different line item, please; this is a different programme. That is a different programme; it will be for the administration programme.

Ms. Fernandes: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could the Hon. Minister say what caused the electricity charge to move from the budgeted sum of \$12 million and change and revised to \$7 million and change, but now for 2025 we are seeing an allocation of \$11 million. Are there outstanding bills that have to be paid, or do we expect additional connections in 2025?

Ms. Parag: There were several meters that were assessed by Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL), the power company, and they had decided this was the rate and charges for these particular and specific meters.

Ms. Fernandes: Could the Minister just clarify, if the assessment was for \$7.060 million what would warrant being budgeted for \$11 million?

Ms. Parag: The \$11 million will be catering for all of the meters. There are 18 meters and several different areas – Regatta Pavilion, living quarters at Mongrippa Hill, living quarters at Seventh Avenue, RDC building, living quarters at Triangle Street, the Regional Guest House, engineer's quarters, and so on.

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$461,612,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$247,512,000

Ms. Fernandes: Could the Hon. Minister kindly say to us for 6285, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, what is the \$16 million actually being budgeted for? Let me retract that, Sir. The 6254, Maintenance of Sea and River Defences, the \$16 million being budgeted there...

Ms. Parag: It is the maintenance of river defence at Bidrabu, Front Road; maintenance of river defence at Agatash; maintenance of river defence at First Avenue from Sixth Street to Ninth street.

Ms. Fernandes: Bidrabu also you said.

Ms. Dawn-Hastings-Williams: Please confirm if we are at Public Works now, Current Expenditure or...?

Mr. Chairman: We are at Public Works, Current.

8.04 p.m.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6251. I note that you have allocated \$74 million for the maintenance of roads. Minister, could you say to this Committee if any provision has been made for works to be done on the Kako to Waramadong road? If that is so, what scope of the works will be undertaken and the amount of money that will be spent? This project started long ago and, in 2023, I can remember the Minister then telling me I would be able to jump on my ATV and ride home to Kako. To this date it is not possible.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, can the Hon. MP jump on her ATV and get there soon?

Ms. Parag: I think the MP can still jump on her ATV and go through the road, but she is probably scared to jump on the ATV right now. However, there is maintenance for the Kako to Waramadong road and it is in the sum of \$14 million.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, it is not the travelling on the road but the jumping on the ATV that is the issue. Hon. Members, can I...? Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. If I can I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6112, under the Staffing Details there. I note for Senior Technical you have an increase by one, but if I am to parallel this with the salaries for 2025, I note we have an increase. I know the increase will also factor in the 10% that was awarded last year. Could you say to the Committee, for the additional staff, what is that designation and the salary and benefits associated with that designation? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: It is a promotion from an Overseer to a Senior Superintendent of Works.

Ms. Ferguson: Yes. So, the other part of the question, what is the new salary?

Ms. Parag: The salary is now \$178,560.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you.

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$247,512,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$2,946,575,000

Ms. Fernandes: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings. Sir, we had a budgeted allocation last year for \$79 million. We have a revised figure coming in at \$39.7 million, and budgeted for 2025 is \$60 million. When we asked in the House – I know it was listed; the \$79 million – how it would have been spent in 2024... I am asking, could the Hon. Minister tell the Committee what projects or what buildings were not maintained in 2024 and why?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, for the expenditure for this year, what do you have to say?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. All the buildings were maintained because there was a warrant from the Ministry of Education that assisted the region's budget.

Ms. Fernandes: A follow-up on that. Could the Minister advise if the Potaro Primary School was maintained based on their request to the Education Department in Region 7? They had an issue with rain blowing in on the children, and the last I checked, it was not fixed.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, I will put that one, but this was a “was,” not a ‘will be’.

Ms. Parag: It was maintained in 2024 – repairs – and as well as a new extension is being constructed.

Ms. Fernandes: Under the 2025 allocation.

Ms. Parag: Yes.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings. Minister, there is a building that was started on the compound of Bartica Secondary School, which was earmarked, I think, to do vocational training. Is there any provision made under this line item to complete that building, which is not completed to this day? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Is it the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) building that you are speaking of? That project is undertaken by the Ministry of Education, and they will see it to completion in terms of furnishing, *et cetera*.

Ms. Fernandes: Could I turn the Minister's attention to Volume 2 of the Estimates, page 380? Looking at Indicator number 15:

“Share of textbooks per student by grade – Primary”

It states here basically 100% in 2024 and 100% in 2025 for Grades 1 to 4 and Grades 5 to 6. I am asking the Hon. Minister because I do know that we had a distribution of a leaflet from the Ministry of Education stating the textbooks that are there. Does this 100% indicate that all of these textbooks are actually given to each child? Is that what it is intended to indicate?

Ms. Parag: I am advised that some are set for the class, and then a set for each individual child.

Ms. Fernandes: My understanding is that the books are given to the class but not directly to each... Each child does not have the textbooks that they can take home and work from on their own.

Ms. Parag: No. There are some textbooks that are just for the individual classes and then there are some textbooks that are given to the children individually for their use.

Ms. Fernandes: A follow-up on that, Sir, through you. Mr. Chairman, a follow-up, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you. Could the Minister advise – St. Anthony's Primary, Potaro Primary School, Two Miles Primary and St. John-the-Baptist Primary School – when last those schools received textbooks and when last there was a check to see if the classrooms have textbooks?

Ms. Parag: I am advised that just over a week ago there was distribution of the textbooks, and the monitoring is going on in the schools as we speak.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you. On the same page, Mr. Chairman, through you, we are looking at Indicator number 9. Indicator number 9, we are looking at the matriculation rate. The matriculation rate for 2024 was 14% and I am seeing a target of 25%. What specifically is being planned by the Ministry of Education to move the matriculation rate from 14% to 25% in 2025? If the Minister could also turn her attention to Indicator number 7, it states the student to trained teacher ratio is

27:1 and they are aiming for 21:1 come 2025. What is being done to ensure that we get to these levels?

Ms. Parag: In terms of your matriculation rate and so on, there is the Mathematics Intervention Initiative, and you would have heard this throughout the different regions who were asking these questions. That intervention programme is going on across the regions. That is something that is being implemented in all the schools, as well as a moral intervention programme, the monitoring, and a subject committee meeting.

Ms. Fernandes: A follow-up, Sir. I do know of the Mathematics Intervention Initiative. Could I ask the Minister, how is it that we intend to move to a 25% matriculation rate, as stated here, when we have students who were not successful at the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA) being placed into classrooms to follow the same syllabus at the secondary school level without any special syllabus being designed to accommodate their level?

Ms. Parag: I am also advised that a remedial programme will be introduced for those students.

Ms. Fernandes: Could I further ask, through you, Sir, could the Minister say if this new remedial programme is going to be replacing the current setup that we have, in which students that did not pass the NGSA examination were placed into, for example, a classroom at the Three Miles Secondary School, and they are expected to follow the same syllabus that other students are following?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It is really an enhancement programme. So it is a boost really, to push them up further, in terms of their literacy and those kinds of interventions. Not to say boosting as in we are going to shoot you up to the next grade, but in terms of their own development.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you for that response, Minister. Another question concerning the same matriculation rate. Could the Minister say if there is any plan in place to deal with the students who are not Guyanese and do not speak English but are placed in classrooms to be taught by English-speaking teachers?

Ms. Parag: The region is currently seeking the recruitment of Spanish teachers.

Ms. Fernandes: In the interim, through you, Sir, how do we deal with that? Please appreciate, Minister, that we are looking at the classroom, particularly if I can give the Bartica Secondary School as an example. A lot of times when you get to the Grade 10 level, you would see a handful of students actually showing up for class, about 10 or so, and then teachers are having the additional responsibility of teaching students who speak different languages. That is a challenge that I do not believe just waiting on a Spanish teacher can fix. I believe we need a system in place right now to deal with that.

Ms. Parag: I am advised that there are Spanish teachers. They are looking for additional Spanish teachers, but they do have Spanish teachers who are available and who are contracted employees in the meanwhile that they can transition.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you, Sir. Through you, I appreciate that answer from the Minister, but I believe the Spanish teachers at the school are only teaching Spanish as a subject, as opposed to being in charge of teaching the students who speak Spanish.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, there are Spanish teachers, but they are also capable and have been doing so in assisting the schools with the interpretation, and the students as a matter of fact.

Ms. Fernandes: Sir, I will move on. Looking at Indicator number 22:

“Percentage of schools with electricity access: Primary”

It is indicated here that in 2024 we had 88%, and we are projecting 85% for 2025. Should I ask the Minister which school will be left without electricity that was with electricity in 2024?

Ms. Parag: That is just an indicator, but we want to be able to push that to 100% in 2025. I cannot sit here and tell the Hon. Member that we are going to be leaving schools without electricity because that is not the aim and we are working towards ensuring that the schools do have power.

8.19 p.m.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you, Minister. I just want to be clear that the Indicator for 2024 said you achieve 88%, so I was clarifying because the Indicator for 2025 is saying 85%, which is basically projecting less. Probably, that is a typo, I am not sure.

Ms. Parag: Perhaps that is a typo, but it is not so. We are already at 88%. We are not going backwards; we are going forward.

Ms. Fernandes: I will take that as a typo, Sir.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I would like to redirect my question that I asked earlier on the solar system, under the line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. I think there is some moneys allocated there of eighty something million dollars. I would like to ask the Minister if under this line item, she is going to undertake or maintain the solar systems at the schools and if so, which schools will benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: This maintenance is actually for sanitary blocks, water systems and so on, at various schools. I believe the Ministry of Education, Central Ministry, will do the solar system and so on.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, I note under staffing detail, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is an increase of eight staff. Could you say or provide the Committee with the highest position and the salary and the least position and the salary? Could you also provide the eight additional positions to this particular line item?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, again, I am just checking on the books and the print, we are at line item 6116.

Ms. Ferguson: That is correct, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I hear you keep repeating eight.

Ms. Ferguson: Under line item 6116, last year, there were 11 staff under the staffing details and for 2025, it has now moved to 19 staff, which will give an eight-staff increase.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, there is no such thing under line item 6116.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Hon. Member is on the health section, not the education section. Am I right or wrong?

Ms. Ferguson: You are absolutely correct, it is that time of the night, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You know, Member of Parliament, where you are concerned, I do not want to be absolutely correct; I prefer to be corrected.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$2,946,575,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$1,329,020,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, do you want to take me after Ms. Hastings-Williams since she...

Mr. Chairman: No.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You get priority.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Sir. The questions remain. Could the Hon. Member provide the positions of the additional eight staff, under this line item 6116 and also, if she could provide the highest to least positions along with the salary scale.

Ms. Parag: We have one Entomology Technician, four Medics, two Pharmacy Assistants and one X-ray Technician. The medic is the highest paid, which is \$213,000, and the least paid is the Entomology Technician at \$103,000.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Under the same line item, 6116 and line item 6112, Senior Technical, under staffing details, Hon. Minister, say to this Committee, how many specialists doctors the Ministry have at the Bartica Regional Hospital and in what area are they specialised?

Ms. Parag: We have six specialist doctors at the Bartica Regional Hospital: General Surgeon, Paediatrician, Orthopaedic Surgeon, two Obstetrician/Gynaecologists, and an internal medicine and a heart Specialist.

Ms. Fernandes: I will just turn the Minister's attention to *Volume 2*, page 382. We see at number five for the Indicators that a number of trained health care workers were recruited. I see that last year we were able to recruit 25. The target for this year is 65. Could the Minister say, specifically, what areas those workers are going to be assigned to?

Ms. Parag: They are going to be assigned at the Hospital as well as the health centres.

Ms. Fernandes: Could I take that to mean that there are current health centres that are in need of trained health care workers right now; none of them has its full complement?

Ms. Parag: They have a complement, but we want to be able to give them more capacity.

Ms. Fernandes: Okay. I have one more on *Volume 2*, Sir. I just want to say, when it comes to Indicator number seven, I commend the team at the Ministry of Health in the region for having a zero per cent malnutrition rate for children under five. I think this is commendable for the region, given the national rate, so congratulations on that.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, as I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6272, Electricity Charges, I observe that for the regions that we considered earlier, there has been a high increase in electricity charges. For this particular region, I recognise we have moved from \$10 million to \$19 million for 2025, which is a \$9 million increase. Could the Hon. Minister explain the reason for the increase and state which facilities in the region will benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: The electricity is for the new digital X-ray machine and medical equipment at the Bartica Regional Hospital; the doctor's office, as well as the living quarters; the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) building; the duplex building for doctors; a new drugs bond; a mortuary and bottom flat living quarters.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Hon. Chairman, may I proceed? Thank you. Could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships)? I note we have an increase of \$3.4 million. Could you say, Hon. Minister, who will benefit from this provision, and what areas of training they are likely to be exposed to?

Ms. Parag: The training will be for Community Health Workers (CHWs) in microscopic to enhance the quality of the malaria diagnosis being offered at each health facility, as well as continuing refresher training in keeping with the requirements of the Logistic Management Information System and the training to enhance the testing scope of hinterland health facilities for a more accurate result.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up to the Hon. Member, could you give us a target number, because I guess the figure is derived from the number of persons you intend to target for the training sessions?

Ms. Parag: It will be about 48 persons for all three trainings.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, Mdm. Minister. No further questions, for now.

Ms. Fernandes: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: There is an allocation of \$44,500,000. Could the Hon. Minister say whether or not that includes fuel and lubricants for the river ambulance?

Ms. Parag: Yes, it does.

Ms. Fernandes: Mr. Chairman, could I have a follow-up and ask for the 2024... Sir, I am going to put that question over to the capital expenditure, so I will hold that for now.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$1,329,020,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$35,000,000

Ms. Fernandes: Looking at the Indicators, I see that indicator number two states:

“Number of farmers trained”

The target for 2025 is 1,913. Could the Hon. Minister advise what locations these farmers are being identified in?

Ms. Parag: These farmers will be identified in areas of climate-smart agriculture; acoushi ant management; pest and disease control, cash crops and farmland crops; introduction of beekeeping, management of hives, and breeding management; digitisation of farm records; ham making; humane slaughter of swine; new and improved technology in agriculture and poultry training. Persons from all three sub-districts will benefit.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: A follow-up on that same question: Hon. Minister, could you please inform this Committee which villages in the Upper-Mazaruni and Middle-Mazaruni you will introduce the beekeeping projects, training or whatever it is?

Ms. Parag: It has already started in Kamarang.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Hon. Minister, you said it has already started in Kamarang, which other communities do you intend to expand that programme to for this year?

8.34 p.m.

Ms. Parag: Chinoweing and Arau are two of the other villages that we intend to do.

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$35,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us turn to page 539.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Not at all. I am looking for the Chief Whip. He told me I can allow you half an hour extra. I wanted to do a confirmation of the confirmation. As of now, according to the savings from the last head, we have eight minutes to complete this section. It was half an hour and the Hon. Opposition Chief Whip graciously allocated the savings from the previous head to this one.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$22,500,000

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$22,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$130,483,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Let me take the Minister to project code 1402100, Bridges. There is an allocation of \$40 million. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this sum and say how much will go to Isseneru, Kamarang, Waramadong and Warwatta as she has stated in her project description?

Ms. Parag: We have the rehabilitation of a heavy-duty timber bridge at Warwatta for \$10 million; the construction of a heavy-duty timber bridge at Kamarang for \$8 million; the construction of a timber bridge at Isseneru for \$11 million and the construction of a heavy-duty timber bridge at Waramadong for \$11 million.

Programme: 772 – Public Works – \$130,483,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$320,135,000

Ms. Fernandes: I am looking at project code 2504400, Furniture and Equipment - Education. We have an allocation here of \$60.5 million. The legend states:

“Provision for furniture and equipment for schools.”

Could the Minister say what schools are being catered for under this allocation?

Ms. Parag: One second, please, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We have four gas ovens for the dormitories and 100 nursery sets for almost all the schools in the Lower, Middle and Upper Mazaruni and Upper Cuyuni. We have 180 Type A hard plastic combination sets that will be going to several Lower and Middle Mazaruni schools. We have 50 for the D.C. Caesar Fox Secondary School; 50 for Three Miles Secondary School; 50 for Bartica Secondary School; and 10 for Potaro Primary School and so on. We also have 100 Type B hard plastic combination sets and these are for Agatash, Two Miles, Karau, Batavia, Kurutuku and Eteringbang. We have five computer laptops; 10 dining hall benches for the Bartica dormitories; 10 dining hall benches for D.C. Caesar Fox Secondary School; 50 tablets for Bartica Secondary School; 10 carbon dioxide fire extinguishers for three schools; 36 dry chemical fire extinguishers; three automatic sprinkler systems; three fire alarm systems; five air conditioning (AC) units; and 60 teachers’ tables. It continues: 80 teachers’ chairs, two javelins; five Casio Keyboards; 100 recorders; 10 whiteboards; 50 wooden cupboards; 30 chalkboards; one combination outboard playset; 15 boardroom tables; 20 boardroom chairs; 20 drawing tables; 28 partition screens; 10 display screens; 30 book packs; 15 stacking racks; 30 double bunk beds; two kayak; 10 solar-charged controllers; three projectors; two freezers; one executive desk and chair; one semi-executive desk and chair and four filing cabinets.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Project code 2507600 – Furniture and Equipment - Staff Quarters: Could the Hon. Minister say which of the staff quarters will benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. You have Kurupung and Karau Creek. There is then the Regional Education Officer's (REdO's) quarters for D.C. Caesar Fox, Kurupung and Kartabu; you have Bartica, 72 Miles and Kartabu – teachers' quarters; D.C. Caesar Fox, Kurupung and Kartabu – Departments of Education; Kurupung and D.C. Caesar Fox – teacher's quarters; Kurupung and D.C. Caesar Fox – teachers' quarters; Bartica teachers' quarters; the REdO's quarters and Teacher's Complex – Bartica; D.C. Caesar Fox, Kurupung, Kartabu, Two Miles and Bartica – parents' dormitories; and the Kamarang District Education Officer's (DEO's) quarters – Department of Education.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$320,135,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$267,108,000

Hs. Hastings-Williams: Minister, let me take you to project code 2601800, Furniture and Equipment - Health. Could the Hon. Minister say if there is any provision for the purchase of a new X-ray machine for the Bartica Regional Hospital? The one there has not been working for the longest while.

Ms. Parag: A new X-ray machine has already been installed, and we are just waiting for the transformer. The Ministry of Health is going to provide that.

Mr. Chairman: Is someone trying to come in online? I am getting... All right. Someone probably just recognised that they may have a question. Hon. Member, who is online... This is the third time; is there anyone online who would like to ask a question? All right. We are still at Health Services. For the X-ray machine, the new one has been installed. It is not catered for under this current allocation. Hon. Member, Ms. Fernandes, you have the floor.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you, Sir. Could the Minister say if any of the allocation under the very project code is for the morgue to be up and functioning again?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is the morgue included, or should we consult with the Hon. Mr. Holder?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the morgue is functioning.

Mr. Chairman: That morgue is functioning.

Ms. Fernandes: I am referring to the one at the Seventh Avenue location. Could you confirm that all is good there?

Mr. Chairman: It is the morgue at the Seventh Avenue location.

Ms. Parag: Yes, please, Mr. Chairman. I am advised by our Regional Health Officer (RHO) that it is in working condition – both morgues.

Ms. Fernandes: Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Both mortuaries are working.

Ms. Fernandes: I thank you for that because I do note that we had an issue recently. I am glad that it is up and running again.

Programme: 774 – Health Services– \$267,108,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$37,642,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Project code 1301200 – Agricultural Development: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us what initiatives she has planned for this money and in which communities?

Ms. Parag: There will be the development of open field agricultural land at Quebanang; development of open field agricultural land at Waramadong; eight cassava mills for Upper, Lower and Middle Mazaruni – we do have the areas which are Isseneru, Kalakun, Maracam, Tasserene, Turumbang Settlement, Kaikan, Chinoweing and Jawalla. There is one storage refrigerator for Bartica; long-range walkie-talkies for Bartica – 4; a medicine cooler, 2°C to 20°C for Bartica; and a long flight drone with automatic return for Bartica.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, let us hold a minute. The Hon. Member, Mr. Rajkumar, is the one trying to get in.

Ms. Parag: We also have the construction of a 20-feet by 30-feet laying pen.

Mr. Chairman: Hold a bit, Minister. I have now asked Mr. Rajkumar to try and come in. Hon. Member, Mr. Rajkumar? Hon. Member, Mr. Rajkumar? I think we have completed Region 3, though. Is that right?

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: It is Region 2. Hon. Member, Ms. Fernandes, you have the floor.

8.49 p.m.

Ms. Fernandes: Just a follow-up. I was listening to the list read out by the Hon. Minister and she said, the provision of a walkie-talkie. Could I ask the Hon. Minister, through you, Sir, in this technological age, with cell phone service advertised at 100%, why is it not a cell phone instead of a walkie-talkie in 2025?

Ms. Parag: There are only four long-range walkie-talkies. The Hon. Member knows that there are still remote areas with no cell reception, so it is for communication between the staff and for emergency purposes.

Ms. Fernandes: I note that there are those situations, but I also note that particularly in Region 7, there is the use of the satellite phones as well, so that is an option because they can send texts like a regular cell phone. That can be an option. Sir, that was the final question from me. I just want to say thank you to the team from Region 7 for the wonderful job they do to keep our region up and running.

Mr. Chairman: What did you say was the final question? I am still waiting for the final question.

Ms. Fernandes: Sir, I was asking if there was consideration for the use of the satellite phone.

Mr. Chairman: Was that the final question?

Ms. Fernandes: Yes, Sir. Then I gave a comment.

Mr. Chairman: Then the word with a C and an S – congratulations.

Ms. Fernandes: That is for Region 7's administrative team.

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$37,642,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I join in congratulating the Hon. Minister and the team from Region 7 for taking us through that Agency. Hon. Members, let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, let us take a 15-minutes break and then come back. You have had a long, long day, but you are doing fine. Let us try and get back here at the latest 10 minutes after 9 o'clock.

Sitting suspended at 8.52 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 9.17 p.m.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Agency: 78 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$259,122,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I note in the staffing detail, there has been a decline of two staff, but the allocated sums remain almost the same as in 2024. Could the Hon. Minister explain why this is so?

Ms. Parag: The decrease is due to two Clerk II General who were contracted employees and are now appointed and moved to line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support (COS).

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6111 – Administrative: I notice in 2024 it was five, and now it is reduced to four in 2025. Could you say what skill set was lost by that drop?

Ms. Parag: The decrease is due to one Administrative Assistant now appointed as an Overseer. That person has been moved to the Public Works Programme under line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled. No skill set was lost.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: I note that there has been a decrease of almost 50% in the allocated sum. Could the Minister say if the fleet of vehicles has declined, or what has caused this decline?

Ms. Parag: A virement was done last year. What we have now is a sum that will be adequate for what we have to do, which is to purchase cooking gas, lubricants, diesel, *et cetera*.

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the sum projected to be spent for 2025, which is \$22 million?

Ms. Parag: This is to provide continuous and necessary maintenance of buildings that are being occupied by the staff. The buildings will have major rehabilitation, and that includes: repairs to the guest house at Mahdia – \$2 million; repairs to the administrative building at Mahdia – \$7 million; repairs to the guest house at Kato – \$6 million; repairs to the Deputy Regional Executive Officer's (DREO) quarters – \$3 million; repairs to the Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) quarters – \$2 million; and repairs to the Campbelltown Hostel – \$2 million.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line Item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: I note that there has been an increase in local travel and subsistence by \$11 million. I am looking at the Indicators in *Volume 2*, which speak to community outreaches, and I note that there is now a target for 25 communities. Could the Hon. Minister state at least five areas intended to be visited during 2025?

Ms. Parag: This particular line item is for the payment of salaries and so on, in different communities. The outreaches are done under a different line item.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$259,122,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$217,888,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: I would like to turn the Hon. Minister's attention to the Indicators in *Volume 2*, which states:

“2. Number of communities accessing potable water.”

I note there has been an increase of five new targets. It has moved from seven to 12. Could the Hon. Minister state the five communities she intends to give potable water?

Ms. Parag: The Indicators are based on the villages that the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) has identified as giving potable water. Those villages would be Monkey Mountain, Kato, Paramakatoi, Kamana and Kopinang.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated...

Mr. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, not as yet. Could I proceed? Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Hon. Member, if I can turn her attention to line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships). I know that we are examining the programme for public works, but I note that there is a provision for 2025 for training. Could you say who will be benefiting from this training and the areas where the training will be done?

Ms. Parag: It will be for the tender process and evaluation system.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up, Sir. With regard to the tender processing and evaluation, who will be conducting the training? Is it the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB), experts who will be coming in or consultants to undergo the training?

Ms. Parag: The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board will undertake the training.

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$217,888,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$2,015,376,000

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister please state what buildings she will be renting with that small sum of money?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you are getting a bargain.

Ms. Parag: This is to provide accommodation for coastline teachers and officers in the following areas: Monkey Mountain, Kopinang and Micobie.

Mr. Sinclair: A follow-up question. There was a building in Micobie I visited that was not up to standard. I thought some decision was made on that in December of last year. Could the Hon. Minister state what is the state of that building and if proper rehabilitation work was done on it?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I do not know which building the Hon. Member visited. I know that we have rental buildings to provide for the teachers and officers in Monkey Mountain, Kopinang and Micobie. The Hon. Member said he visited a building. I do not know which building he visited.

Mr. Sinclair: Through the Chairman, could the Hon. Minister please disaggregate the funds for that particular line item?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you assist us where the funds are for this line item, Maintenance of Buildings?

Ms. Parag: It is under Rental of Buildings. The sum is \$3,600,000 for the three rentals.

9.28 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Sinclair, I do not want to get you or quote you wrong, but I thought I heard you asking about where the funds are for...No, so my apologies to you for misdirecting the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6421: I was asking the Hon. Minister to disaggregate that fund there – that small sum of \$3,600,000.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Sinclair, just help me again here. Is it line item 6421?

Mr. Sinclair: It is Rental of Buildings. **[Ms. Ferguson:** It is line item 6241.] **[An Hon. Member (Government):** *(Inaudible)*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Senior Minister, at our age the numbers jump around, so instead of getting a...so, thank you very much. It is line item 6241.

Mr. Sinclair: My next question...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this will be on the same page. We disposed of line item 6241, Rental of Buildings. Are we still there? He was talking about maintenance.

Ms. Ferguson: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: That is line item 6242.

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6241, if I could assist my Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, are you volunteering to replace Ms. Lawrence as the advisor?

Ms. Ferguson: Pardon me?

Mr. Chairman: Are you volunteering to replace Member of Parliament (MP) Lawrence as the advisor?

Ms. Ferguson: We are working collectively, Sir. It is a team effort.

Mr. Chairman: A team effort?

Mr. Ferguson: Yes, a team effort.

Mr. Chairman: We are at line item 6241.

Ms. Ferguson: Therefore, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, if I could take her back to line item 6241.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can.

Ms. Ferguson: Earlier when my Colleague said it is a small sum and asked what it was for, the Hon. Minister identified three areas. What we are asking now, is whether she can now disaggregate the \$3.6 million to the three areas? Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: I think she did say \$600,000. Hon. Minister, please.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, we have \$3,600,000 for the rentals. It is \$1.2 million each. One will be in Mahdia, Monkey Mountain – but these are for the teachers and officers who are going to these areas – Kopinang and Micobie. Micobie is...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. You just confirmed that I heard right. The next heading was line item 6242.

Mr. Sinclair: Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister please disaggregate that sum of money – \$118 million? [An Hon. Member: What is it used for?]

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is to conduct maintenance works to the following buildings: Arasawa Primary School for \$10 million; Bamboo Creek Primary School for \$9 million; Bashville Primary School for \$9 million; Chiung Mouth Primary School for \$8 million; Itabac Primary School for \$8 million, Kaibarupai Primary School for \$7.5 million; teacher's quarters at Church Street Mahdia for \$8 million; teachers' quarters at 7 Miles Mahdia for \$5 million; Mahdia Primary School for \$6 million; Taruka teachers' quarters for \$6 million; Paramakatoi Primary School for \$10 million; Kato Primary School for \$10 million; Waipa Primary School for \$15 million; and Kopinang Primary School for \$6.5 million.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you very kindly. Line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: you have a little sum there of \$51 million. Could you say what it is going to be used for?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Minister, what are you using this \$51 million for?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This is to conduct maintenance works at several schools, quarters, and reading compounds; repairs to fence, guard huts, trestle, and sanitary block; the emptying of septic tanks; and the raising of walkways. Mr. Chairman, I do not remember a time ever in our history when we have ever had maintenance on so many infrastructures, building of infrastructures, maintaining and repairing and the environment as well.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Chairman. I was a part of the Tender Board for that region, so, I do not think the Minister is speaking accurately.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, are you being accurate?

Ms. Parag: I am being accurate, Sir, because I can even see that the Hon. Member is wowed by how many buildings and infrastructure will be repairing.

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could the Hon. Minister please state what she plans to do with this money? Also, please disaggregate the sum if it is across the region.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. This allocation will cater for the provision of dietary for the increased enrolment in the Kato and Paramakatoi dormitories, and for students who will now be housed in the new dormitory at Kopinang, Micobie and Monkey Mountain which is expected to open in September, 2025.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you very kindly. Line item 6203, Training (including Scholarships): Could you say what that will be used for? [Ms. Ferguson: It is line item 6302.] Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): You have a tidy sum of \$14 million.

Ms. Parag: It is to be used to conduct general headteachers' meetings with staff development sessions; to conduct end-of-year review projections; to facilitate training for examination supervisors and invigilators; to conduct literacy programmes for the heads of department of English in secondary schools, and to conduct mathematics seminars for heads of department of mathematics in secondary schools.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you very kindly. I have no further questions on this.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$2,015,376,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$853,480,000

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Are you using \$3,600,000 for this? Could you say in which area you are going to spend this money?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It will be rental of apartments for the nurses, doctors, and other medical staff from Mahdia.

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6264 – Vehicles, Spares and Service: You have here a tidy sum of \$11 million. What vehicles do you have in stock that would need servicing and repairs for 2025?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, what is the stock of your vehicles that require this tidy sum to repair?

Ms. Parag: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Here is what we have: a Toyota HiAce; two Toyota Land Cruisers; Ambulances; a Honda All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV); a John Deere side-by-

side; a Honda ATV; a Toyota Land Cruiser; Ambulances as well; another Honda ATV; another Honda ATV for Money Mountain; another ATV for Money Mountain; an ATV for Monkey Mountain; a two-wheel scooter for Money Mountain; a Honda ATV for Kurukabaru; a two-wheel scooter for Kurukabaru; another Honda ATV for PK; a Honda ATV for Kato; a Honda ATV for Kato; a two-wheel scooter for Kato; a Honda ATV for Kanapang; a Honda ATV for Kopinang; a two-wheel scooter for Micobie; a boat and engine for Micobie; a boat and engine for Tumatumari; a boat and engine wiper; a boat and engine for Kaibarupai; a boat and engine 15-horsepower Manual Start, Tiller Handle, High Thrust (MDH) generator; a generator for Monkey Mountain; and a generator for Chenapau.

Mr. Sinclair: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Could you say what you will spend this money on and please disaggregate the sum of money?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It is for the drugs and medical supplies from the Materials Management Unit (MMU) to Mahdia and then to the North Pakaraimas. Then you have transportation for the fogging exercise; referral of urgent medevac and non-urgent patients to the Guyana Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) for level five health services; and patient flights to Mahdia District Hospital from the North Pakaraimas and return.

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you. I have no more questions.

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$853,480,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$72,761,000

Mr. Sinclair: I see you have line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, and you are asking for \$6 million. Where will this building be located and what is the use?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. This is to provide continuous and necessary maintenance of the number of buildings that are in urgent need of maintenance works so as to prevent major rehabilitation, and then you have the shade houses at Kurukabaru, Kato and Itabac at \$2 million each.

Mr. Sinclair: I do not have any more questions, Sir.

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$72,761,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$18,000,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Project code 1209000, Buildings – Administration, Provision for Building: Could the Hon. Minister say where this building will be or is being catered for, I see it is new?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. The building that we are speaking of here is an extension that will allow for additional space for Government officials travelling on duties in the North Pakaraima Mountains. The current facility has five rooms, and the extension will cater for an additional three rooms. It is at Kato.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$18,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$183,500,000

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon Member, could I turn her attention to project code 1100800, Bridges? I note, Hon. Minister, that you have budgeted here some \$94 million provision for bridges. Let me just go to the project file. Reference number 375:

“The project entails construction of bridges at Kurukabaru, Monkey Mountain and Red and...”

What is the other one?

“Tumong creek.”

9.43 p.m.

Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. My question to the Hon. Minister, could she provide a disaggregated sum for the bridges? I do not know if they will be new bridges, or she will be renovating the

existing bridges. Could she explain and provide the disaggregated sum for the bridges, please?
Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, just before I put it to the Minister, I think the first name might be Kurukabaru. It is one of the highest villages in our country.

An Hon. Member: (*Inaudible*)

Mr. Chairman: I will.

Ms. Parag: They are new constructions, and it will be a bridge at Kurukabaru Creek. This bridge is needed. It is \$30 million. It is needed to access the community of Kurukabaru from Kato. Over 3,000 residents will benefit from that bridge. Then there is the bridge at Monkey Mountain. That will be \$25 million. It will be for the residents to gain access to other communities. Over 250 residents will benefit from this project. There is the construction of the bridge at Red Creek. That will be \$14 million. It will allow for easier access to schools and health centres there. The bridge is also needed to provide access to the satellite community of Red Creek. There is Tumong and that is at Orinduik Itabac. That will be \$25 million. This bridge is needed to access the community of Itabac, Kanapang to Kurukabaru or Kato and over 3,000 residents will benefit from that one.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you do not have to now walk that one hour from the airstrip to Kurukabaru.

Ms. Parag: Exactly.

Mr. Chairman: You can use an ATV...

Ms. Parag: Exactly...

Mr. Chairman: ...and go across the bridge.

Ms. Parag: ...and go across bridge.

Mr. Chairman: Beautiful.

Ms. Parag: They are going to be benefitting.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Ferguson, we will have it easy.

Mr. Sinclair: Project code 1401200 – roads: I see you have there a provision for roads. You have \$40 million. I am wondering if the road from the nursery school, going to where you have the Teachers’ Quarters, is catered for in this allocation, that is Mahdia, or the road down Seven Miles?

Mr. Chairman: The two roads, are they catered for here, Hon. Minister – the nursery school down that side.

Ms. Parag: The roads that the Hon. Member is speaking about, I assume he is speaking about Mahdia, the Ministry of Public Works will be looking at that.

Mr. Chairman: Those are catered for by the Ministry of Public Works. Do you have a follow up?

Mr. Sinclair: Project code 4407200 – other equipment: I see a provision there for \$30 million. Could you state what are the other equipment you are planning to buy and what are they for? Where would these equipment be assigned to?

Ms. Parag: It is for the purchase of one motor grader, 140 K, and it will be used to upgrade and maintain roadways in Sub-region 2, thus improving transportation, communication and trade, among the communities.

Mr. Sinclair: Could I be guaranteed that I would not get flood down Pepper Hill?

Ms. Parag: This is Kato. This is not for Mahdia.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Sinclair, unfortunately we have exhausted the half of an hour for this Head. We started at 9.17 p.m. Now is 9.48 p.m. I will have to put all the remaining Programmes at this time.

Programme: 782 – Public Works – \$183,500,000 agreed to and ordered to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$278,300,000

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$278,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$252,500,000

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$252,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.; Programme:

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$17,500,000

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$17,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister, the Regional Executive Officer (REO) and the staff of Region 8, for taking us through that Head. Let us ask the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) officials for Region 9, to join the other officials from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, as we take Region 9.

Agency: 79 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo

Current Estimates

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$432,920,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6116 – contracted employees: in 2024, the amount allocated was \$75,654,000 and in 2025, it is \$110,562,000. Could the Hon. Minister state the designations and the placement of the 12 additional contracted employees?

Ms. Parag: There is one Systems Administrator, four Accounts Clerk II, one Cleaner, two Cooks, one Assistant Registration Clerk, one Office Assistant, one Boat Hand and one Stores Attendant.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Henry, let me just caution a certain Minister, who is out of his seat, so that he could be quieter to ensure that you have our full attention. You may continue.

Mr. Henry: Thank you. Line item 6211, specific to the agency - \$52 million, could the Hon. Minister say if this amount caters for any increase of Toshaos stipend, and additionally, if stipends for Amerindian Village Councillors can be paid from this amount?

Ms. Parag: This morning I would have answered a question very similar. In September of 2024, we gave an increase to Toshaos and in their stipends. This does not cater for an increase. An increase was given in the latter of last year. This is to execute the mandate of the strategic plan for the region, addressing issues and requests from villages and Village Councils.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$432,920,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$149,514,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6116, in 2024, the amount allocated was \$16,479,000 and in 2025, \$26.54 million. Could the Hon. Minister list the newly contracted employees and state their designations and where they are currently placed?

Ms. Parag: It is one Livestock Officer. That person is placed in St. Ignatius.

Mr. Henry: I did not get the last part there, please.

Ms. Parag: That person is placed in St. Ignatius.

Mr. Henry: Thank you. Line item 6255 – maintenance of other infrastructure: \$10 million, could the Hon. Minister state what infrastructure is being targeted in this amount?

Ms. Parag: It is for the cleaning of wells, general repairs to the shed, plumbing, replacement of water pump and black tanks.

Mr. Henry: Where is that?

Ms. Parag: At St. Ignatius stock farm.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6281– Security Services: \$12.082 million, could the Hon. Minister say whether security services are being provided for agricultural entities in the outlying sub-districts of Region 9? If so, what are the locations?

Ms. Parag: We are looking at increasing the security services to the five sub-districts.

Mr. Henry: Hon. Minister, are you saying that it is not being done?

Ms. Parag: Not in all five sub-districts.

Mr. Henry: Okay. Will that be done soon or later? Line item 6291, national and other events - \$7,500,000, could the Hon. Minister say what national and other events are supported annually via this allocation?

Ms. Parag: That will be Mashramani, Phagwah, Independence day, CARICOM day, Labour day, Arrival Day, Regional Toshaos Conference, Emancipation day, Eid-UI-Adha, Amerindian Heritage and Farmers' Agricultural Exhibition.

Mr. Henry: Hon. Minister, is the World Food Day not part of this?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, World Food Day ...

Ms. Parag: It will fall under the Farmers' Agricultural Exhibition.

Mr. Henry: It will fall there.

Ms. Parag: That is the event, in the month of October.

Mr. Henry: I know the Chairperson normally says, "ask a question". I am trying to find a way to ask the question, so, I will put it this way. Why is it that the Agriculture Department does such a wonderful job every World Food Day in Karasabai? That is the question. I will leave. I need no answer, please. I am finished here.

Mr. Jones: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman, on the same line item, national and other events, just for clarity, I know this falls under Agriculture, but would this Head not fall under Administrative, as in the region's body dealing with this and not Agriculture?

Ms. Parag: Every Programme would participate in these activities.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$149,514,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$355,814,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6116, contracted employees, in 2024, it was \$19.112 million and in 2025, it is \$48.101 million, which is 11 more contracted employees in 2025, than in 2024. Could the Hon. Minister list by designation and placement, the 11 new contracted employees?

9.58 p.m.

Ms. Parag: It is for one Superintendent of Works, three Checkers, two Overseers, two Clerks of Works, one Ambulance Driver and two Labourers.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings, \$45,114 million. Could the Hon. Minister say which building or buildings will be repaired under this allocation.

Ms. Parag: This will be the guest house at Annai, the living quarters at St. Ignatius, the Regional Accounting Unit and purchasing of building materials to do the maintenance.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6251- Maintenance of Roads: \$86 million, could the Hon. Minister say which roads will be repaired or upgraded?

Ms. Parag: It is repairs to Toka Farm Primary, repairs to Kwaimatta to Yupukari, repairs to Nabruti Farm to market, repairs to Meriwau Farm Road and repairs to Quiko Road.

Mr. Henry: Thank you. Hon. Minister. Line item 6252 –Maintenance of Bridges: \$61 million, could the Hon. Minister list which bridges will be done under this allocation.

Ms. Parag: Surama Number 4; Yupukari Number 3; Rupununi Crossing; Yurong Paru; Bashaizon and Hiowa.

Mr. Henry: Could the Hon. Minister elaborate on the Rupununi Crossing Bridge that she mentioned, there? Where is it really and what form will it take, because Rupununi is a very big river.

Ms. Parag: So, this Rupununi Crossing is at the Karaudarnau Village.

Mr. Henry: What will be done on it, if I may ask?

Ms. Parag: The maintenance of the entire top decking of the bridge will be done.

Mr. Henry: Honourable Minister, will any work be done to extend the bridge so that it becomes crossable or higher above the annual floodwaters?

Ms. Parag: The Ministry of Public Works has already engaged to do remedial works which will be the road network but also the revetment that will help to prevent that.

Programme: 793 - Public Works – \$355,814,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 794 - Education Delivery - \$3,445,777,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: \$82 million, could the Hon. Minister list the buildings including their purposes and locations that are being targeted by this allocation.

Ms. Parag: This will be repairs to the Learning Resource Centre at Lethem, repairs to Lethem living quarters; repairs to Simoni head teachers' quarters, repairs to Potarinau teachers' quarters, repairs to Kaicumbay teachers' quarters, repairs to Kumu teachers' quarters, repairs to Parishara Primary and repairs to Aishalton headmaster's or headmistress' quarters.

Mr. Henry: Thank you, line item 6292, Dietary, \$399 million. Could the Hon. Minister state the average cost of a meal supplied to a student, the cost of preparation of that meal, so that we can be able to know what the cost of a meal per student is and maybe improve it as time goes on.

Ms. Parag: Under Dietary, it will be for Annai dormitory; St. Ignatius dormitory; Sand Creek dormitory and Aishalton dormitory. For Annai you will have 324 students, at \$200 per meal, you have breakfast, lunch, dinner, and supper. Then you have 260 students for St. Ignatius dormitory, at \$200 per meal for breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper. Sand creek dormitory, 282 students, Aishalton is 249 students, and Karasabai Primary Top with 230 students at the same cost.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, just one second.

Mr. Chairman: He said he did not need help.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up to the very line item 6292, did I hear the Hon. Member correctly when she said it is \$200 per meal per child? That is very cheap, can you say what is it they are getting for \$200, when we know here in Georgetown it cannot even buy an *I-CEE*, do you know the short *I-CEE*, it is now going for \$300 here. It cannot even buy a pine tart, a pine tart is close to \$400, not even a hot dog. So, perhaps the Hon. Member can clarify, what is it our children are getting for \$200?

Ms. Parag: The children are getting healthy meals and it is being bought in bulks, as dry ration. Obviously, you buy it in bulk and you cook a meal, then you can disaggregate that sum to say it is \$200 for a meal. They are getting breakfast, lunch, dinner, supper and a snack. It is per a meal, not per a day.

Ms. Ferguson: I understand your calculations, so therefore, if you work it out, three meals at \$200 is \$600 per day and you know in Georgetown...

Ms. Parag: It is a full meal for bulk ration being bought.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up on the very line item. Am I to understand that the meals are being prepared by whether the housekeepers or house cooks...

Mr. Chairman: Or house mother.

Ms. Ferguson: Or mother or father, so could you clarify that please? You said that the items are usually bought in bulk. Do you outsource it, how are these items procured, or who supplies the items?

Ms. Parag: So, we have suppliers from each subdistrict, you have five cooks at each dormitory, and they do cook the meals that are being bought from the suppliers and the children are benefiting from the meals that are being cooked by each one of these cooks at their location.

Mr. Henry: I have a follow-up, what remuneration is given to the cooks, are they being paid at all, are they being paid weekly or monthly and what is it?

Mr. Chairman: Line item?

Mr. Henry: This same line item 6292, Dietary, \$399 million.

Mr. Chairman: Wages and salaries come for a different head, this is just the dry ration.

Ms. Parag: It is not covered by this line item, the wages and salaries as you have said, but each cook is employed as a permanent employee with the dormitory and making a monthly salary.

Mr. Henry: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what the monthly salary is like?

Ms. Parag: It does not come under this line item, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have from line item 6111 all the way to line item 6117. We are still on the head and you still have time.

Ms. Ferguson: Perhaps, I can help my Hon. Member. Based on the question put by my Colleague, could you say where under 'staffing details' you will find the cooks being catered for?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I will ask the Hon. Member to do her homework and check which line item it is and then come back with the question.

Programme: 794 - Education Delivery - \$3,445,777,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 795 - Health Services - \$ 1,714,141,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: \$268 million, could the Hon. Minister say whether anti-venom supplies are available in Lethem hospitals and in health centres and other posts in all the outlying areas in Region 9, also, for the health personnel trained to administer the anti-venom and related medical activities associated with it?

Ms. Parag: Personnels were trained to do this and yes there are available in all the health posts, health centres and hospitals.

Mr. Henry: Hon. Minister, line item 6265, Other, \$35.5 million, Other Transport, Travel and Postage. Could the Hon. Minister say if this amount includes the chartering of aircrafts to remote areas such as Massakenari for emergency, health and evacuation services?

Ms. Parag: Yes, but the Ministry of Health will also supplement heavily with that.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6292 – Dietary, \$46.532 million, could the Hon. Minister state if the cooks working at the regional and district hospitals are trained nutritionists and is there any dietician attached to the regional hospital? This is to assist to have nutritious meals for the patients who normally go ill to the hospital.

Ms. Parag: This Hon. Member is acting as if they trained nutritionists in Region 9 from 2015 to 2020. You know these kinds of questions... this is Dietary and this is the sum of money for dry ration that is being cooked for students and for a meal programme that did not exist before in 2015 to 2020. Now, the Hon. Member is coming to ask whether the cooks are trained as nutritionists. They are cooks who are people from the community who are kind enough to come onboard as employees of the regions to provide the necessary healthy meals for the children, breakfast, lunch, dinner, supper and snacks.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chair, as a response there, I would like to ask if the Minister is kind enough to support the future training of nutritionists and dietitians to ensure that our people get top and healthy services in terms of the food that are given to them in our hospitals and health centres.

Ms. Parag: The Ministry of Health has trained nutritionists who set the menus.

10.13 p.m.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Mr. Chairman, I think we are talking about patients here and not children in the dormitory. Health services – Staffing Details, line items 6112 and 6116: My question here is: Could the Hon. Minister say how many specialist doctors you have at Lethem Hospital and in what areas are they specialised?

Ms. Parag: We have 10 specialists, two Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, two General Surgeons, one Internal Medicine, one Anaesthesiologist, one Orthopaedic Surgeon and two Paediatric or Paediatricians.

Programme: 795 – Health Services – \$1714,141,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Estimates

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$23,000,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 2402300 – Land and Water Transport – \$15,500,000.

“Provision for vehicles.”

The Legend elsewhere states:

“...buses and truck.”

Could the Hon. Minister state how many buses or how many vehicles will be purchased, the type that will be purchased, and where they will be based?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, are we dealing with the capital for health?

Mr. Chairman: We are at Programme 791: Regional Administration and Finance and we are at Project code 2402300.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. We have two minibuses for Annai, Sand Creek and one canter truck for Lethem. That is it.

Mr. Henry: Thank you.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$23,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$50,000,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 1701400 – Agricultural Development – \$50,000,000.

“Provision for agriculture development initiatives.”

Hon. Minister, you know that we were having or still having major issues with cassava production in Region 9. How much of this allocated sum will be spent on cassava production?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member may not be aware – I do not know – or is just deliberately making that statement, but the Ministry of Agriculture has supplied over \$40 million in cassava sticks to Region 9. There is no shortage. The region is working very assiduously to ensure that there is production of cassava. With this agricultural development programme, there will be the establishment of one water system of \$3 million, the construction of a foot and mouth camp, the establishment of a data plant for the plant nursery and animal tracking. Cultivation of three one-acre plantain... purchase of desk and office chairs and so on, extension of swine breeding unit, installation of farrowing crates, the extension of plant nursery, harden floor with fence, construction of storage bond, construction of two water trestles for Karasabai living quarters, the establishment of duck breeding programme and establishment of chicken pens at the following schools: St. Ignatius Secondary School, Nabruti and Sawariwau. Construction of three shade houses, purchase of semen and hormones, purchase of earth auger, purchase of ginger one-acre plot and purchase of rotavator.

Mr. Henry: I am unhappy that we do not have anything on cassava here but thank you very much. That is it for now.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$50,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$321,500,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 1902300 – Infrastructure Development – \$34,000,000. The legend states:

“Provision for culverts.”

Further examination of the Legend elsewhere says:

“...Kabanawau, Massara and Nappi.”

Hon. Minister, can you state whether or not these culverts will be made out of cement or is there plastic or wooden materials that will be used also?

Ms. Parag: You know this Government always uses quality and we do quality work, so it will be cement and steel culverts that will be constructed.

Mr. Henry: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Is that all?

Mr. Henry: That is all for that...

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Project code 2800400 – Water Supply: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us which communities or institutions will benefit from this water supply?

Ms. Parag: Shulinab Village, South Central, will be benefitting. [Mr. Henry: Why, you got to say that first?] You know, the Hon. Member, Mr. Henry...

Mr. Chairman: Do not listen to the Hon. Member, Mr. Henry.

Ms. Parag: Hon. Member Mr. Henry, that is his village. Shulinab Village, South Central, will be benefitting from this Government and the water trestle. We also have Sand Creek, South Central.

Mr. Henry: Hon. Minister, I do not know if you read it correctly, but the Legend further states – and I will help –

“...Annai, Parabara, Sand Creek and Shulinab.”
I am helping you. Thank you.

Ms. Parag: We have Parabara and Annai. They are all there.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I thought he was going to say he is no longer living in Shulinab but Lethem.

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$321,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery – \$298,000,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 1204700 – Buildings - Education – \$240,000,000.

“Provision for schools and educational facilities.”

The question I have is: Does this include satellite internet communication for these schools that are targeted?

Ms. Parag: Not under this project code. As a matter of fact, that programme is under the Office of the Prime Minister, who has been doing a wonderful job across the 10 administrative regions.

Mr. Henry: Project code 2402300 – Land and Water Transport – \$18,000,000.

“Provision for vehicle.”

Could the Hon. Minister state if it is one vehicle or more vehicles and where will they be allocated?

Ms. Parag: It is a purchase of a Senbus, and it will be in Lethem at the Lethem Education Department.

Mr. Henry: Thank you.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery – \$298,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 795 – Health Services – \$257,500,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 1204800 – Buildings - Health – \$134,000,000.

“Provision for health facilities.”

Could the Hon. Minister tell us what this provision entails?

Ms. Parag: I will be happy, Mr. Chairman, to inform the Hon. Member that first up on this list is the upgrading of the Shulinab Health Facility, where the Hon. Member is living. Then we have the

rehabilitation and the upgrading of the Katuur Health Facility. We also have the rehabilitation/upgrading of the Quarrie Health Post, the rehabilitation/upgrade of the Rupertee Health Post and the construction of staff quarters at the Karasabai Health Facility.

Mr. Henry: Thank you very much.

Mr. Jones: To the Minister, for clarity, what is happening in Karasabai? Did you say a health post?

[**An Hon. Member:** Which project code?] Same project code.

Ms. Parag: It is a staff quarter.

Mr. Jones: Right.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, on the same project code 1204800. I know you listed the buildings to be renovated or repaired, but can you provide us with the cost associated with each project that would give you the full allocation you are looking for here of \$134 million?

Ms. Parag: The Shulinab Health Facility is a whopping \$32 million, the Katuur Health Facility is \$14 million, Quarrie Health Post is \$14 million, Rupertee is \$14 million and the staff quarters at Karasabai is \$60 million. [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] There are seven apartments for the staff quarters.

10.28 p.m.

Mr. Jones: Project code 2402300 – Land and Water Transport – \$28,500,000, ‘Provision for an ambulance, vehicles and motorcycles’. The Legend indicates that it is for the purchase of an ambulance and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Could the Hon. Minister indicate where the ambulance is going to be located, similarly, the all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles?

Ms. Parag: It is going to be at Karasabai, Annai and Sand Creek. The ATVs will be for Crashwater, Rewa, Baitoon, Katoka and Wichabai .

Ms. Ferguson: Just a follow-up to the Hon. Member, on the same line item, through you, Mr. Chairman. Are these equipment and furniture going to these locations? Not furniture – what do you call it? The ATVs, the ambulance and so forth, I heard you say that they are going to the

various villages in Region 9. Can you say who would be responsible for their upkeep and ensuring that these things are being taken care of? Since it is taxpayers' money, you do not want them to fall into the wrong hands.

Ms. Parag: Well, it is a good thing it is not in the Opposition's hands, but it is the Regional Democratic Council that will be looking at it, through the REO's office.

Programme: 795 – Health Services – \$257,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister and the staff of Region 9 and your Ministry for taking us through Agency 79. We have 20 minutes of savings. Let us invite the staff of the RDC of Region 10 to join their Minister as we pull up Agency 80. I see the Hon. Figueira has called in for reinforcements. I recognise the arrival of the Hon. Members, Mr. Duncan and Ms. Sarabo-Halley. Hon. Members, you are going to take the position close to...

Agency: 80 Region 10: Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$362,412,000

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see a significant increase from four to thirteen contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the top three positions for these contracted employees?

Ms. Parag: The top position will be the Confidential Secretary, then you have the Accounts Clerk II and the Coxswain or the Cleaners.

Mr. Figueira: Is that the Confidential Secretary, I am assuming, for the REO?

Ms. Parag: Yes, Hon. Member.

Mr. Sears: Just going back a little bit at line item 6111. There is a note of the reduction of staff by two. Could the Hon. Minister share which two positions are vacant?

Ms. Parag: There is a Deputy Regional Executive Officer (DREO) who was transferred to Region 1 and there is an Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) who is at the Ministry of Local Government.

Mr. Sears: Just continuing, following up on this line item. Could the Hon. Minister share when these positions became available and when do we intend to fill them?

Ms. Parag: Both positions became available last year, 2024. I cannot recall the exact month or date. I, also, cannot tell you right away when the DREO or AREO position will be filled.

Mr. Sears: Just a quick follow-up. I note you mentioned one AREO, traditionally, Region 10 has two AREOs. Could you confirm?

Ms. Parag: It previously had two AREOs.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, on this same programme at the indicators, Indicator Three actually, there were a number of skilled personnel recruited. We see a significant increase from 12 to 71 in 2025. Fifty-nine skilled personnel are to be recruited. Could you also indicate to us the top five positions for that?

Ms. Parag: That would be the Personal Officers II, AREO and DREO.

Mr. Sears: On the indicators with regard to the outreaches conducted, we know that, in 2024, there were 12, and the target in 2025 is 14. My question to the Hon. Minister is regarding the outreaches. Are these outreaches coordinated by the Administration or the Councillors of the RDC?

Ms. Parag: All right, so there is coordination with the RDC, and you also have collaboration with the Councillors. The outreaches can be based on collaboration, or they can be based on the RDC.

Mr. Sears: Just a quick follow-up. Can the Hon. Minister share, out of the 14 targeted outreaches, how many are specifically coordinated by the Councillors of the RDC?

Ms. Parag: The 14 outreaches are the indicators for the target of this year, which is 2025. We are now starting the year, and the collaboration has not started.

Mr. Sears: I understand. Just to dig a little bit deeper. This is based on one of the concerns that we have had from some of the Councillors. Some of the Councillors are saying that they have not been getting the necessary support from the administrative arm in terms of financing to cover some of these outreaches. Are there any challenges in giving support to the Councillors at the RDC with regard to the outreaches?

Ms. Parag: The councillors would usually have to go through the channel of the Chairman, but also the RDC is saying that they usually help with transportation costs and so on.

Mr. Figueira: Just a follow-up on the same line of questioning. The outreaches, Minister, how many of the 16 Indigenous communities will these outreaches cater for? How many will they cater for in 2025?

Ms. Parag: The outreaches will be across Region 10, so they will cater for all of the regions, and the riverine areas as well.

Mr. Sears: Again, on indicators, number four, it states here, number of villages sustainability plans submitted and approved. Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether this is reflective of the 10 Indigenous villages across Region 10?

Ms. Parag: Yes, they are plans for all of the villages.

Mr. Sears: On record, we have 10 Indigenous villages, but there are several other Indigenous communities that do not fall within these 10. What does the region or your Ministry cater for those villages that are not a part of the 10? Could you list those Indigenous villages, please?

Ms. Parag: Yes, they do. I am advised by the REO that all inclusive of 10 Indigenous, as well as those that fall outside of. They have been included.

Mr. Sears: Just going back to line item 6302, Training, which (includes Scholarships). In terms of the upgrading of staff, what sort of scholarships are going to be offered under this line Item – 6302 Training (including Scholarships)?

Ms. Parag: There will be the principles of supervisory management, customer service, effective communication and minutes writing, and that is in-house training.

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$362,412,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 802 – Public Works – \$277,186,000

Mr. Figueira: The allocation at 12051000 – Building, \$235 million, provisions for the RDC office building. The plan was previously drawn up. Is this provision going to use the same plan for the RDC building. This is because I am noticing something ‘new’, so I want to know if they are going to be using the same plan that was originally provided.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, we are at current and not capital as yet.

Mr. Chairman: We are taking all the current first. Sorry.

Mr. Figueira: I know, but we said we had no more questions under current, and we were going to the capital. Okay. Are we doing all the current for all the programmes?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Figueira: Okay, I did not get that.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we have been doing that for the past two days. I think the first day we took them the way you...

Mr. Figueira: Are we at Public Works?

Mr. Sears: With regards to line item 6222...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Duncan, I think you are needed.

Mr. Sears: Line Item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies – \$1,160,000: I just want to ask out of curiosity to the Hon. Minister, what field supplies are going to be provided under this line item?

Ms. Parag: We will be having rain boots, measuring tape, road measuring tape, rain gear, life jackets, *et cetera*, for the public works staff and the part-time staff.

10.43 p.m.

Mr. Sears: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I am just moving along very quickly. For line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads, could the Hon. Minister share which roads are going to be maintained in 2025? Is the Five Corner being considered as a part of this line item?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. I see the Hon. Member has not been paying attention. The Five Corner is coming under the Highway Project, which is not a part of the regional project.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defenses: Could the Minister indicate where this work will be done in the region?

Ms. Parag: I am not hearing the Hon. Member.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defenses: For this allocation, could you indicate where in the region this work will be executed?

Ms. Parag: It will be for the continued maintenance of the riverfront, Mackenzie. There is the replacement of damaged retaining wall structure, geotextile boulders and picket driving. There are repairs and maintenance to the eroded sections of the main entrance roadway and revetment walls at Burnham Drive. The previous one was for Republic Avenue, riverside Mackenzie.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6272 – Electrical Charges: I want you to also twin your response, Hon. Minister with the indicator number 1, which states:

“Number of communities (new) accessing electricity”

There are two communities identified. Could you say if this allocation will cater for those two communities and give the names of them?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member wants me to twin the indicator with this.

Mr. Figueira: If it is possible.

Ms. Parag: The reality of the matter, please, Sir, is that line item 6272 is the electricity charges for existing electrical bills.

Mr. Figueira: All right. If I

Ms. Parag: It is for the Multipurpose Building and the Amerindian Hostel in Wismar.

Mr. Figueira: Again, Hon. Minister, the indicators under the same programme states:

“Number of communities (new) accessing electricity”

Could you indicate the names of the two communities that will now be accessing electricity?

Ms. Parag: The region does not generate electricity. Yes, that will be the Linden Electricity Company Incorporated (LECI).

Mr. Figueira: I did not understand that. It states that two new communities are going to be accessing power.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I just want the Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, to put me back on track. I am at Electricity Charges.

Mr. Figueira: Cde. Chairman, I am looking at the Indicators.

Mr. Chairman: I did not hear you.

Mr. Figueira: I am looking at the Indicators.

Mr. Chairman: Is it the Indicators?

Mr. Figueira: Yes. It is under the programme. It is an indicator for the programme – the same programme.

Ms. Parag: I was just about to say that is being run through the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you.

Mr. Sears: Hon. Minister, through the Chair, looking at the Indicators, it states:

“Percentage of pupils scoring 50% & over in all subjects at NGSA”

In 2024, the target was 62% and now we are targeting 75%.

Mr. Chairman: Are we at Education Delivery or Public Works?

Mr. Sears: You have my apologies. Let me just go back to Public Works. I think I am jumping ahead. In terms of line item 6281, Security Services, we note here that in *Budget 2025* we are

catering for over \$40 million. The question to the Hon. Minister would be: Could she share the top paying security firm that was awarded this contract, currently?

Ms. Parag: It is the Home Safe Security company.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the bridges that will be maintained with this allocation?

Ms. Parag: There is the maintenance to the structure of the access bridge or bridge approach to Sunflower Street and the access bridge and bridge approach to Christianburg/Wismar. Yes.

Mr. Figueira: Under Indicators, you mentioned three bridges, Hon. Member. There is another one also to be maintained there.

Ms. Parag: There are two bridges.

Mr. Figueira: Could you also name that bridge as well.

Ms. Parag: That is right. This is maintenance and we are still under current. Perhaps, the Hon. Member could check under capital.

Mr. Figueira: This is the programme for the same...That is where we are at. These are the Indicators for Programme 802. We are on the same programme.

Ms. Parag: You are right. These are the Indicators for the entire programme, whether it is current or capital. These two bridges are for maintenance under the current budget. There is one under capital. I am saying that there is one under the capital budget.

Mr. Figueira: All right.

Programme: 802 – Public Works – \$277,186,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$5,099,210,000

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6299 – Dietary: could the Hon. Minister indicate if this allocation will cater to not only the breakfast programme for the students at the schools, but also the dormitories?

Ms. Parag: It will facilitate 80 students at Amelia's Ward Students' Dormitory; 53 students at Kwakwani Students' Dormitory; and 20 students at the Amerindian Hostel, as well.

Mr. Figueira: For the Linden Technical Institute (LTI), this does not cater to the students who will be housed at that dormitory there.

Ms. Parag: That is right. The Linden Technical Institute does not come under the Regional Democratic Council.

Mr. Figueira: That is noted.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chair, I am just going back to line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings. I would like to merge this with line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. Could the Hon. Minister share which riverine schools are going to benefit under this line item?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, these are the schools that will benefit under this line item: Retrieve Nursery School, Wisroc Nursery School, Burnham Drive Nursery School, Aroaima Nursery School, West Wootoka Nursery School, South Amelia's Ward Nursery, Half Mile Nursery School, Republic Avenue Nursery School, Children's Garden Nursery School, Kwakwani Park Nursery School, Christianburg Nursery School, Early Childhood Development Centre, Blueberry Hill Nursery School, Watooka Day Nursey School, Amelia's Ward Nursery School, Wiruni Nursery School, Pine Street Nursery School, One Mile Nursery School, Coomacka Nursery School, Middle Street Nursery, Ituni Nursery School, Phase 1B Wisroc Nursery School, Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) Linden Centre, 47 Miles Primary, Mabura Hill Primary, Rockstone Primary School, Watooka Day Primary School, One Mile Primary School, Christianburg Primary School, Wismar Hill Primary School.... **[Mr. Figueira: Wow.]** ...Aroaima Teacher's Quarters house 3, Aroaima Teacher's Quarters house 1, Hururu Teacher's Quarters, St. Lust Primary School, Hururu Primary School, Harmony Secondary School, Christianburg Secondary, Wismar Secondary School, Wisburg Secondary School, Mackenzie High School's main building, Mackenzie High School Linden Concert Hall and School (LICHAS), the New Silvercity Secondary School, Linden Foundation Secondary School and Kwakwani Secondary School. That is right. There are 23 nursery schools, 29 primary schools, eight secondary schools and all other educational buildings.

Mr. Sears: This is just a quick follow-up on this question, Mr. Chair. Residents have been complaining about the timely completion of these particular rehabilitative measures which are being done with the schools. Ever so often, we have observed, particularly, coming out of the December period that schools were delayed because of these maintenance works. The question to the Hon. Minister is: What assurance can you give the residents of Region 10 that such delays will not occur heading into post-Easter Term, post-August Term and, of course, post-Christmas Term?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, will you get these works completed?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the works will be completed. As a matter of fact, people are quite happy to be having maintenance and rehabilitation works being done at these schools. I know that it is just for a little period – students being under that construction and so on — but it will be done this year. The programmes that we have on board, we are going to work very closely with the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) and the regional system to ensure that we have the early rollouts and completions of the projects.

Mr. Sears: With regards to line item 6243, Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies, we note there is a minor increase here. Nevertheless, I want to draw our attention particularly to some reoccurring incidents which have happened. I am just asking the Hon. Minister if she could consider, maybe, increasing the provisions for Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies. Many of our young female students, particularly in the primary schools have been making complaints to their parents and the PTAs about Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs). Could the Hon. Minister consider increasing this particular line item? How does she plan to address this particular situation?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chair, it sounds all good and nice that parents and students are coming to complain. Janitorial supplies are being given. There is \$51 million being allocated in the 2025 Budget for janitorial supplies. The schools are well-equipped with janitorial supplies. The health centres do not have evidence of those kinds of reports coming to them. I am not sure – in the absence of these kinds of complaints....

[**Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)]

That is correct.

We are getting hearsay in the National Assembly saying that this is happening and asking if we are going to be providing. What we are providing right now is soap powder, bleach, Harpic, Fabuloso, Pine-Sol, Lysol spray, Fish Spray, Lysol Disinfectant Wipes, air refreshers, sanitisers, calcium lime and rust, dishwashing liquids, soaps, toilet soaps, toilet tissues, brooms, mops,

dustpans, toilet brushes, mop buckets and paper towels. [Hon. Member: *Inaudible*] The Hon. Member like he did not hear me before. I said: bleach, Harpic, Fabuloso. Do you want me to continue? [Mr. Figueira: No. We do not want you to do that.] These are disinfectants. They are being generously provided to all the schools. We have regular cleaning being done as well.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chair, I am just trying to confirm what she said. Did the Hon. Minister say to this honourable Committee that there have been no reports regarding UTIs among young children in primary schools?

10.58 p.m.

Now, the reason I am correlating it is because we have gotten reports, as representatives of the people in Region 10, that there are not enough cleaning supplies. On top of that, janitors or sweepers/cleaners are complaining that they are not well equipped. That is why I am asking this question. Specifically, is the Hon. Minister saying to this honourable Committee that there have not been any reports, whether it be to the teachers, the head teachers or the medical facilities, concerning urinary tract infections (UTIs)?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. We have the Regional Health Officer (RHO) who is saying that he has not received any such reports. Then you also have the generous amount of supplies being supplied to the schools upon request by the cleaners. It is giving that there is no shortage of janitorial and cleaning supplies at this school.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, let me just speak to the people in the gallery. They cannot shout, clap or cheer from the gallery. If Members are in the gallery and they want to contribute, they should come into the chamber. Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, you may proceed.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: We see a significant increase by 91, Hon. Minister. Could you provide a justification for this increase?

Ms. Parag: What is the line item?

Mr. Figueira: It is line item 6112, Senior Technical. Could you also provide us with the top three technical positions?

Ms. Parag: This caters for 23 Temporary Qualified (TQ) class three teachers to trained grade one/class one teachers. The primary level reflects an increase as a result of upgrades of 36 Temporary Qualified Mistresses/Masters (TQM). You have the secondary level that reflects 27 trained grade one/class one teachers, and you have the employment of five Education Officers at \$364,000.

Mr. Sears: With regard to line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service, I want to ask the Hon. Minister: does this line item cater or include the upkeep of the 'David G' boat that serves the Demerara River?

Ms. Parag: There are school boats, but there is no 'David G' boat. This line item caters for a 29-seater bus, a 19-seater Pit Bull, a 19-seater bus, a 4x4 pickup, two other 29-seater buses, a canter truck, two all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), a school boat and engines, and a boat and engine. There is no 'David G' boat.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman, indicator 9 states that the matriculation rate was at 23% in 2024, and it is projected to be at 50% in 2025. Could the Minister indicate to us what will be done to bring this 50% target for the region?

Ms. Parag: The Mathematics Intervention Programme is also at the schools in Region 10. This is one of the programmes they are seeking to use to ensure we tackle this issue.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, focusing on the indicator, as I was asking earlier regarding the percentage of pupils scoring 50% and over in all of the subjects at the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA), last year the target was 62%, and this year the target is 75%. Could the Hon. Minister share some of the challenges affecting our students or affecting the delivery from improving or moving this particular target from 75% to maybe 100%?

Ms. Parag: What I do know is that under the line items and the allocations for the regions, schools are being built and maintained, and policies and interventions are being made through the Ministry of Education, such as the Mathematics Intervention Programmes. The 'Because We Care' cash grant has returned to students in the sum of \$55,000 in 2025 to ensure they have uniforms and the necessary stuff for school. You also have teachers being given a grant so that the classrooms can have things available. Textbooks are being given directly to the classrooms, as well as to the

students. The interventions, through this Government, have been tremendous in ensuring that we move from one stage to the next. If we are going to move up from 75%, we will now be working with the Mathematics Intervention Programmes, remedial programmes and other such programmes. Trained teachers will be placed in all of these schools to ensure the quality of the education is moved from one percentage to the next. Teachers' salaries are also being raised.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, you may proceed.

Mr. Figueira: Sir, I do not have any other questions on education.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I now put...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you may proceed.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, if I can turn her attention to staffing details, I note a huge increase for 2025. Let me direct her attention to 6111, Administrative. I note there is an increase of about 77. Could you say when these positions were filled, whether you have any vacant positions currently, and when they are likely to be filled? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Hon. Member, this is an upgrade in status. It is not a filling of a vacancy. For example, the nursery level caters for 22 trained grade one/class one non-graduate teachers. The primary level reflects the graduate Headmistress/Headmaster (HM) transferred at \$360,000 and 41 upgrades from trained grade one/class one to a non-graduate Senior Mistress (SEM). Then, you have the secondary level, which reflects 13 trained grade one/class one teachers, and one graduate Head of Department (HOD) transferred at \$310,000.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$5,099,210,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$ 1,435,364,000

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: Hon. Minister, we have seen a significant allocation for 2025. Could you give a justification for this allocation?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much.

Mr. Figueira: I want a justification. I do not mind it increasing, but we want to know why. It is the taxpayers' money.

Ms. Parag: We have 10 Midwives, nine Staff Nurses, nine X-ray Technicians, six Dentist Extenders, three Orthopaedic Technicians, one Staff Nurse/Midwife, one Pharmacy Assistant, 13 Medical Laboratory Technicians, 76 Community Health Workers (CHO)s, four Multipurpose Technicians, three Rehabilitation Assistants, two Audiological Practitioners, two Medical Technologists and one Microscopist.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you.

Ms. Parag: It is 140 in total under the health programme.

Mr. Figueira: That is very good. We welcome that. Under the indicators, Hon. Minister, it states:

“3. Number of trained health workers recruited.”

We saw in 2024, there was 56 and in 2025 there is a decline. Could you give a justification for the decline of the recruited workers? Also, are there any additional specialists for this area as well?

Ms. Parag: Who are the specialists you are speaking about?

Mr. Figueira: They are for services. They are Urologists and those types of specialists. Is this going to cater for recruited staff as well?

Ms. Parag: You will have four different types of training. You will have more for Community Health Workers, Pharmacy Assistants, Laboratory Technicians and Patient Care Assistants (PCAs). The central Ministry, through the Linden Hospital Complex, will deal with the specialists.

Mr. Sears: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if any senior medical personnel have been contracted under this line and what these positions are.

Ms. Parag: The positions are: two Medexes, two Health Visitors, two Midwives, two vehicle Drivers, one Coxswain, and one Staff Nurse/Midwife.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6281 – Security Charges: Hon. Minister, is the allocation for all of the existing health clinics and hospitals in the region? Is it also going to cater for the new health centres?

Ms. Parag: It is for all the health facilities, and yes, we will cater for new health centres, except the Linden Hospital Complex.

Mr. Figueira: It is noted.

Mr. Sears: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Would the Hon. Minister disclose to this Committee if there is a known drug shortage at any of the medical facilities in Linden?

Ms. Parag: There is no shortage of drugs and medical supplies.

Mr. Sears: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Looking at the indicators, in terms of the incidence of infectious diseases, we know that in 2024, it was still at 1%, and the target is 1% again here in 2025. There have been reports – maybe unconfirmed reports – that there has been an increase in Dengue Fever. Could the Hon. Minister confirm this?

Ms. Parag: The RHO has advised me that Dengue Fever is a vector-borne disease.

Mr. Sears: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Parag: There has been no increase.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you may proceed.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I would love to educate the young Member who is over there and thinking that the questions are stupid. It is an infectious disease that deals with Tuberculosis (TB) and other things. That is the department being dealt with. It does not deal with vector-borne diseases. **[An. Hon. Member: (Inaudible).]** There is a difference. That is right but you would not understand that.

Mr. Sears: This is my final question under current expenditure. If you look at 6292, Dietary, my question to the Hon. Minister is this: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that dietary provisions are made... *[interruption]* May I continue? The question to the Hon. Minister is: Could the Hon.

Minister confirm that only the Upper Demerara Hospital, Linden Hospital Complex and Kwakwani Hospital benefit from this line item, Dietary?

11.13 p.m.

Ms. Parag: The Linden Hospital Complex does not benefit from this particular line item. It will be the Upper Demerara Hospital and the Chronic Disease Clinic.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, are there any considerations or provisions that could be made – I am laying this out for consideration – for our far-flung clinics since patients cannot come out to seek medical attention from one of the hospitals? In some cases, some of those clinics will need dietary provisions for patients. Would the Hon. Minister consider?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. The ‘dietary’ that is at the health centres is for the inpatients at those centres. Medical outreaches are being done on a monthly basis in far-flung communities to provide medical attention for those persons who are in those remote areas.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$1,435,364,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$62,037,000

Mr. Figueira: Sir, I only have one question for this programme. For the line item 6116, Contracted Employees, we see an allocation of \$5,395,000 for one contracted employee. Could the Minister state the post for this contracted employee?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is for one Agriculture Officer.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, just one question for this programme as well. With regard to line item 6291, National and Other Events, could the Hon. Minister state, under this line item, how much money, if any, is provided to the monthly farmer’s market?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, this is what it caters for: the regional agricultural events and national observances – the Regional Agri-Health Fair and Market Day, the Regional Agricultural, Technological and Development Expo and the Linden Business Expo, Agricultural and Food Village.

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$62,037,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$239,000,000

Mr. Chairman: Please let us turn to page 545. Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, proceed.

Mr. Figueira: Sir, I have no questions under Regional Administration and Finance.

Mr. Sears: Under Administration, Mr. Chairman, the project entails provision for an administrative building. We know that there is a sum here for \$235 million, but in our interactions with the Councillors at the Regional Democratic Council, they did state that the original estimate that was submitted was well over \$600 million. Could the Hon. Minister share if this amount was what was submitted by the Councillors at the RDC?

Ms. Parag: Yes, this was the building that was started by the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance for Change (APNU/AFC) and abandoned. This Government is ensuring that we place money to start the construction of an administrative complex to house all five programmes with over 150 staff members in the new complex. It will benefit 6,500 residents.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, might I remind this honourable Committee – before I pose my other question – that it took well over four years and constant representation by our Councillors and our Members of Parliament (MPs) in this House so that this project could be realised in 2025. My question then to the Hon. Minister is this: What are some of the facilities? You mentioned five programmes are going to be housed there. We know that there is an agriculture department, which is housed down in Christiansburg. Are you saying that will be housed here at the new RDC building?

Ms. Parag: Staff from all five of the programmes. Those are public works, agriculture, health, education and administrative.

Mr. Sears: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Now, Mr. Chairman, like we have seen in the past....the case in point is the Bamia Primary School. It was solely awarded to a contractor. Will this project be going to tender? If it is going to tender, currently the tender board is expired. What...

[Bishop Edghill: It is a national board project (*Inaudible*) Hold on, man. I am asking, will this process, in terms of awarding this contract, be open? I am just asking.

Ms. Parag: This is going to be an open tender. Might I remind the Hon. Member...Perhaps he does not know. He is very new too. A lot of the regions did a lot of sole sourcing from 2015 to 2025; quite a few.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira?

Mr. Figueira: Sir, I have no question on this line item. Could we go to Public Works?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I want to put this head.

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$239,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 802 – Public Works – \$160,600,000

Mr. Figueira: Project code 1101000 – Bridges: Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us, for this allocation, where in Wismar this bridge would be built?

Ms. Parag: It will be the bridge at Blueberry Hill for rehabilitation. **[Mr. Figueira:** Thank you.] It is going to benefit 15,000 persons.

Mr. Figueira: I am happy about that. I did recommend that be done. Project code 1401400 - Roads: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many roads will be built for this allocation of \$100 million?

Ms. Parag: You will agree with me, though, Hon...

Mr. Figueira: It is not in the legend.

Ms. Parag: You will agree with me that many roads have been built in Region 10 under this Government.

Mr. Figueira: Of course, yes; it is true.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. He has acknowledged. Continued rehabilitation of Caesar Street in Wisroc, Wismar; upgrading of carriageway with asphaltic concrete material on Purple Heart Street; continued rehabilitation of First Street, South Amelia's Ward; upgrading of carriageway on Fourth Corner, Cross Street, Amelia's Ward, and Chumney Road from Danjou Hill, First Corner, following the circle. Mr. Chairman, I just want to mention that the upgrading of the Purple Heart Street will benefit approximately 35,000 residents. We have the beneficiaries for the South Amelia's Ward, 15,000 residents; 1,000 residents for the Fourth Corner, Cross Street, Amelia's Ward; and 1,000 residents for Danjou Hill, First Corner, following the circle.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira?

Mr. Figueira: Sir, I have no more questions for this line item.

Programme: 802 – Public Works – \$160,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 803 –Education Delivery – \$578,115,000

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Project code 2404300 - Land and Water Transport: We see a provision here, Hon. Minister, for \$64,400,000 for boats and engines. Could the Hon. Minister state for us the boats that will be purchased, which area in Region 10 it will service and the capacity of the boat?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It is a procurement of a 15-foot boat for De Veldt Health Centre, Riverview and Falmouth Health Posts. It will cost \$3,600,000, and it will benefit approximately 1,510 residents. It will enable the Community Health Workers to provide effective home visits, mop-up vaccinations, *et cetera*, to residents across the Sand Hills community.

Mr. Figueira: Hon. Minister, actually, I am at Education Delivery and you mentioned the transportation for the health sector.

M. Parag: Sorry. Well, that is one thing that we do not have to repeat.

Mr. Figueira: I could appreciate that. So, for the allocation for the boats, the same question applies.

Ms. Parag: We have a boat with a shed. It is 22 feet by 6 feet, and it is going to be a 30-seater. It is for Maria Henrietta and Atonement, Berbice River and it is to transport learners to Maria Henrietta Primary School and to Atonement Primary School. The beneficiaries are 30 learners and two teachers. We also have an outboard engine of 75 horsepower.

Mr. Sears: Mr. Chairman, under Education Delivery, which speaks to the project, it includes provisions for schools and educational facilities. There is a sum that is allocated for 2025 of over \$400 million. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister with regards to the Wiruni Secondary School, what percentage is completed at this point? **[Bishop Edghill:** Wiruni Secondary school. Repeat that. Wiruni is getting a secondary school.] Primary school. **[Bishop Edghill:** Wiruni secondary.] Yes, I am just asking the Hon. Minister with regard to that. What percentage?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. It is about 80% completed and the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, as you can see, is very excited. It is because he knows that a school did not exist there before. So, we are getting a school and it is going to be completed for the new term, September.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira?

Mr. Figueira: I have no more for that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I now put the question. I am happy to see that Bishop Edghill has learned the geography of Guyana.

11.28 a.m.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$578,115,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$217,450,000

Mr. Figueira: Project code 2505600 – Furniture and Equipment: Could the Hon. Minister say, out of this allocation, what testing equipment will be purchased?

Ms. Parag: A cardiotocograph (CTG) machine will be purchased, a smart board, a small refrigerator, a large refrigerator, a medication refrigerator, combination sitting chairs... The

medication refrigerator will be for Hururu, Ebini, Vivian Paris, Latisha Holder, Bamia HC, West Watooka, Ituni, Wiruni and Sand Hills. You will have filing cabinets, and you will have combination sitting chairs and a 1-2-3 suite for the staff and doctor's quarters.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$217,450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$47,890,000

Mr. Figueira: Project code 1902200 – Agriculture Development: Could the Hon. Minister state, with regard to this allocation, what development initiative will be instituted? Additionally, would it cater for the upgrade of the farm-to-market road at West Watooka and at Millie's Hideout?

Ms. Parag: Yes, it will cater for the upgrade of the farm-to-market access road in asphalt for West Watooka. The beneficiaries would be 1,000 residents and farmers. This investment is going to provide easy transport for farmers and farm produce from farmlands to residents in Linden and Georgetown. It will open 30 acres of farmlands for cultivation. You also have the upgrade of the fair weather farm-to-market access road at Kimbia. That is going to be \$13 million and approximately 1,000 residents and farmers will benefit. That would also ensure the opening up of farmlands for cultivation.

Mr. Figueira: A follow-up: would the allocation cater for the clearing or provision of any assistance for the clearing of lands to lease holders at Millie's Hideout?

Ms. Parag: This is for access to the farm-to-market road.

Mr. Figueira: It says agriculture development.

Ms. Parag: Yes. This is it. We are going to open up the road. We will ensure that the road will be asphaltic. You will have easier access. It will actually open up 30 acres of farmlands for cultivation – the access to the 30 acres.

Mr. Figueira: Is that at Millie's Hideout or West Watooka?

Ms. Parag: This is at West Watooka and Kimbia.

Mr. Figueira: So, there is no provision here for the upgrading or clearing of lands at Millie's Hideout?

Ms. Parag: We do not have that in this budget.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the final question to the Minister for this evening. She has had a very long day and has acquitted herself very well.

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$47,890,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Let us thank the two Hon. Members from Linden, Region 10, for efficiently and effectively examining this agency in the one hour allocated and to say to the Minister...

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues, as well as the staff of all 10 Administrative Regions for their support and their work towards this budget for the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in all 10 regions. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: We join with you, Hon. Minister, in thanking all of them. Thank you very much, staff of Region 10 and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: What a day and a night. Hon. Prime Minister, proceed

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do adjourns to 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 5th February, 2025”

[*Prime Minister*]

Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Assembly be adjourned to 10.00 a.m., tomorrow.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members and staff and all the support staff, have a safe trip down. The House stands adjourned to 10.00 a.m. tomorrow.

Adjourned accordingly at 11.35 p.m.