

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2011) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

149TH Sitting

Thursday, 3RD February, 2011

The Assembly convened at 2.04 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members we will resolve ourselves into Committee to consider further the Estimates of Expenditure.

ASSEMBLE RESOLVED INTO COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker: We will start with the Ministry of Home Affairs today.

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 511, Secretariat Services – \$1,930,581,000

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. I would just like to draw to the attention of the Government benches; I do not think there can be any quarrel with this, Item 6111 to 6117 which deals with staffing details. The figures that are there for Budget 2011, if we add them the grand figure of \$231,781 Million is incorrect. In fact it is approximately \$205 Million. I am sorry that the Minister of Finance is not here. If they are added, Sir, it would be obvious that there is a typo somewhere, but the grand total should be around \$205 Million rather than \$231 Million. So I draw that to attention for the benefit of everyone. Having done that, if I could proceed to Item 6116 “Contracted Employees” we see there is being a

reduction of 10 contracted employees. The question I have for the Hon. Minister, through you Sir, is whether the person who has day to day responsibility for the community policing can be found within that head, Item 6116 “Contracted Employees”.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is yes.

Mrs. Backer: A follow up respectfully sir. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the title of that person along with his or her monthly emoluments?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the title of that individual is called the Administrator of the Ministry Unit, Community Policing, and the emolument is \$194,768.

Mrs. Backer: One other question Sir. Could the Hon Minister indicate whether that is a full time position?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, it is.

Mrs. Backer: Did I hear you say it is, Sir?

Mr. Rohee: It is.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you so much. Mr. Chairman, under Item 6264 “Vehicle spares and service” – we are at the Secretariat Services here – could the Hon. Minister indicate to this National Assemble what is the size of the fleet of motor vehicles attached to the Secretariat Services?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman the number of vehicles attached to Community Policing is 19. What is it?

Mrs. Backer: To the Secretariat, not to Community Policing.

Mr. Rohee: To the Secretariat.

Mrs. Backer: Item 6264.

Mr. Rohee: One Vehicle.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, with your permission, could I have a re-committal to Item 6116. The Hon. Minister told us that the head of the Community Policing is within that head of contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister say the total amount of persons that are attached to the community policing groups within the Head Office?

Mr. Rohee: Just a correction Mr. Chairman. With respect to the vehicles attached to the Secretariat, we have one minibus, three pickups and I think about two cars. In respect of persons that are attached to the secretariat, paid employees, there are fifteen of them.

Mrs. Backer: What about under Community Policing?

Mr. Rohee: Fifteen.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much. Item 6284 “Other”, we see a proposed increase from \$4.8 Million to \$14.3 Million, could the Hon. Minister share with this National Assembly what expenses are covered under that head of “Other”?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, we have been doing quite a lot of advertisements over the past few days, advisories and so on, in the media. This covers payment for internet services, advertisements and the issuance of public advisories.

Mrs. Backer: A follow up please, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister then say to us, under this rubric “Other”, how much is actually budgeted for that area that you just spoke of Minister, is it the entire \$14.3 Million will go for advisories and adds and public services, if not, what portion of the 14.3 is budgeted to go towards those activities?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, it looks as though it is the entire amount.

Mrs. Backer: Just for completeness Sir, Item 6117 “Temporary Employees”, I see there was one last year, and one is continuing. What is that person employed to do, Sir?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, these are what we describe as relieve cleaners in the Ministry.

Mrs. Backer: I think the Hon. Minister made a mistake when he said these; it is one, but that will be all from that page Sir.

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 511, Secretariat Services – \$1,930,581,000; stand part of the estimates, put and agreed to

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 512, Guyana Police Force – \$5,713,511,000

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Through you Sir, could the Hon. Minister inform this House whether the statutory wages and salaries listed at Item 6011 is for the Commissioner of Police?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman the answer for that is yes, it is for the Commissioner of Police.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman is the Hon. Minister, through you Sir, aware that the Commissioner of Police having attained the age of 55 can no longer be properly paid under that statutory head, and would have to come under one of those head as per Constitution. The Commissioner of Police is no longer a Statutory Officer, having attained the age of 55 around three years ago. First of all, is the Hon. Minister aware of that, as such he can no longer be deemed a statutory officer?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I am very much aware of that. I think it rests with the President to determine whether the person holding this Office should have an extension of tenure.

Mrs. Backer: Is the Hon. Member saying to this House, Sir through you, that his Excellency the President has the authority – and I am sure the President will not agree with him – has the authority to bypass the Constitution? Is that what you are saying Minister?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I think I know better than to say something like that.

Mrs. Backer: So then Minister could you help us? What are you saying? It is either that the Commissioner of Police is still a Statutory Officer covered by the Constitution in which case he could properly be paid there, or he is not, in which case I am respectfully asking you if it is not proper then Sir for the Commissioner of Police to come either under 6116 “Contracted Employees”? There is no ceiling to that.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I do not think that is a matter for the Ministry of Home Affairs to decide, that is a matter of the Ministry of Finance. If the Member is saying that the Commission of Police is being illegally paid, then I think that point should be made elsewhere.

Mrs. Backer: Now that it has been drawn to your attention, and as the subject Minister, would you be prepared to enquire of you Minister of Finance what the case is, so that we can have it regularised if there is a problem, because, it affects all of us.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members...

Mrs. Backer: No Sir. I am waiting for the Minister to answer.

Mr. Chairman: What was the question?

Mrs. Backer: The question I had asked, is if the Minister would be prepared to...

Mr. Chairman: Well, I do not think the Minister is conceding that there is some problem.

Mrs. Backer: Oh, I see Sir. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: You are saying that there is a problem, but I have not heard the Minister concede that there is a problem.

Mrs. Backer: I appreciate Sir. It is like table tennis, we are in the middle of the table. I understand Sir. I will move on. I think the point has been made. Item 6111 "Administrative Staff", we see here that 156 people are employed under that head. Could the Minister say to us, - if the Minister would want to be kind enough to save some time- under 6113, 6114, and 6115 who are employed there. I suspect that it is the different categories of police. If he can assist the House, as to which band Item 6111 covers, and we can go down, Item 6113, Item 6114 and Item 6115, if not I can ask the four questions separately.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, in respect of Item 6111, which was referred to, are all officers of the Guyana Police Force. Item 6113 has to do with Sergeants and Chief Inspectors, and Item 6114 has to do with Constables and Corporals.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you so much Minister for allowing me to collapse those questions. What about Item 6115 Sir? You did not tell us about Item 6115, you told us about 6111, 6113 and 6114.

Mr. Rohee: So far as the Police Force is concerned Mr. Chairman, this has to do with subordinate employees of the Force.

Mrs. Backer: Minister, it is not here unfortunately anywhere in the details, but would you care to share with the National Assembly, and by extension the people of Guyana, approximately what percentage is the Guyana Police Force understaffed in terms of their authorized strength?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the established strength of the Guyana Police force is 4220 and the current strength is 3855, which if we do our mathematics properly, you will find that they are short of 375 ranks, which is roughly about 10%.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Item 6231 "Fuel and Lubricants", last year the budgeted figure was \$273.3 Million, but revised it is \$203.3 Million, and for this

year we have budgeted \$320 Million. Through you Sir, Hon. Minister in view of the fact that the Auditor General has indicated an overpayment of fuel as an old problem that still persists in the Guyana Police Force – this can be found of page 105 and 106 of the 2009 Audit Report, where they said that there are overpayments totalling \$16.002 Million with fuel – could you say that with this increase in fuel that we see very year, obviously because of operational activities, whether you are satisfied with the systems put in place to ensure that that leakage, not with fuel, but with money apparently does not continue, or at least there is proper accounting for whatever enhance expenses are incurred?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, there were two increases in the price of fuel last year in April and December. This accounts for the additional Money that was required. In addition to that there were additional vehicles that were acquired by the Guyana Police Force, thus requiring additional fuel. I do not know, nor have I seen what the Hon. Member is referring to in the Auditor General's report, and so am not in a position to reply to that specifically, but what I do know is that systems are in place. There is a cash payment procedure with respect to the purchase of fuel for the Guyana Police Force vehicles. I can assure this House that systems are in place and that there is a constant monitoring of purchases of fuel.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you Mr. Chairman. As a Member of the National Assembly I will like to refer the Minister, I know he is very busy with all the things he is doing, to page 107. It says here that the Audit Office recommends that the GPF takes action to introduce measures for strict control over the acquisition of fuel. It speaks about a sum, and I was wrong Sir, it is not 16.02, it is 15.83 that cannot be accounted for. When I say 15.831, I mean Million. Let us proceed if we could. "Vehicle spares and services", Hon. Minister, Item 6264, could the Hon. Minister, Sir through you, inform this National Assembly what is the strength of the working fleet of the Guyana Police Force? I am speaking of motor vehicles, not motor cycles or ATV's.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question is 401.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Sir. Item 6272 "Electricity Charges", we noticed that there is a projected decrease budgeted, a decrease of \$39 Million for electricity. While we are always happy to see prudence, we would want to know, in view of the increase of Police Stations and so on, if the Minister could indicate what accounts for the reduction of \$39 Million in the anticipated expenditure for electricity charges.

Mr. Rohee: I am informed, Mr. Chairman, that a reconciliation exercise was conducted, and that is what is responsible for the decrease.

Mrs. Backer: The Auditor General did not pick that one up. Item 6284 please Sir, under that nebulous rubric of “Other”, could the Hon. Minister please indicate to this Hon. House through you, what is the main trough heads that would catered for under Item 6284?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, this has to do with rental of radio equipment form Ainlim as well as payment for internet services.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Item 6302 “Training (including Scholarships)” could the Hon. Minister indicate to this National Assembly what part of the \$28.2 Million is targeted for scholarships as opposed to training?

Mr. Rohee: Scholarships are not catered for here, this is basically training.

Mrs. Backer: I hope that the Hon. Minister of Finance is listening, because we keep hearing that all the time, and perhaps Minister it may be that you can reword that head for “Training (including Scholarships)”. It seems to be that scholarships are always somewhere else.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, if I might, I believe the title of the subhead is quite clear, it says “training including scholarships”.

Mrs. Backer: You do not listen as usual Sir. Still on item 6302, does the Guyana Police Force presently have any person, who is pursuing a scholarship/s that will be needed when the Forensic Lab comes on stream?

Mrs. Backer: The answer to that is no, Mr. Chairman, but I can assure this Hon. House that we have done some studies in respect of staffing of the Forensic Laboratory.

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 512, Guyana Police Force – \$5,713,511,000; was agreed to and ordered to stands part of the Estimates.

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 513, Guyana Prison Service – \$1,010,889,000

Mrs. Backer: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Under “Administrative”, Item 6111, we see 21 persons. Could the Hon. Minister say what level of staff is covered under that head “Administrative”?

Mr. Rohee: These are Superintendants of Prisons.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Minister. Item 6116, “Contracted Employees”, we see last year that there were seven people and now there are five, could the Hon. Minister please share with us what position these five people hold, and their emoluments, not their names Sir, just the positions they hold and their emoluments, of each of the five positions.

Mr. Rohee: I would like to correct the Hon. Member; we only have four actually Mr. Chairman. The positions are: Superintendant of Prisons, a Trade Instructor, Chief Prison Officer and another Superintendant of Prisons. The Superintendant will receive, because they are on contract, \$155,938; the Fourth Superintendant will receive \$123,907; the Trade Instructor \$77,764 and the Chief Prison Officer \$97,572.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Turning, through you Sir, to Item 6292 “Dietary”, we see a figure of \$195 Million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether this figure covers both staff and the inmates of the prison?

Mr. Rohee: No, this is for inmates only.

Mrs. Backer: Am I right then, Commissioner... Not Commissioner, I keep calling you Commissioner, I am sorry, it is not intentional. Are the Officers then Sir provided under head 6294, and if not would you be kind enough to indicate where there are provided for?

Mr. Rohee: The Officers are provided for under Item 6293.

Mrs. Backer: “Refreshments and Meals”, thank you.

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 513, Guyana Prison Service – \$1,010,889,000; was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 514, Police Complaints Authority – \$23,135,000

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 514, Police Complaints Authority – \$23,135,000; stand part of the Estimates, put and agreed to

Agency 51, Ministry of Home Affairs – Project Code & Title: 515, Guyana Fire Service – \$702,791,000

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Item 6264 “Vehicle Spares and Services”, could the Hon. Minister inform this National House what is the working strength of the Vehicles assigned to the Guyana Fire Service, of course that would include the tenders and everything? No motor cycles please Sir.

2.34 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question is fifty-four.

Mrs. Backer: Line Item 6203 – Training (Including Scholarships). Mr. Chairman, there is quite an increase from \$8.7 million to 17 million. Is this increase recognition of the fact that our fire men and women need to be better trained? And will this be sufficient to bring them up to speed, so to speak.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, with the new challenges that are opening up with respect to fighting fires, obviously this would require new areas of training for ranks of the Guyana Fire Service. This is representative of the significant increase of money that has been made available for this purpose.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, the same Line Item, Training (Including Scholarships), could the Hon. Minister inform this National Assembly whether there is any person employed by the Guyana Fire Service who is presently engaged in overseas training relevant to the enhancement of the protection of our buildings, relative to the office of the Guyana Fire Service.

Mr. Rohee: At this point in time, no, but this opportunity arise from time to time where ranks of the Guyana Fire Service are sent abroad for short course training.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister just for completeness share with this Hon. House when last such a person or persons benefitted from those opportunities he just spoke of.

Mr. Rohee: Well, there were five persons last year, I think, who went to French Guyana for training by the French authorities. And I think some time last year, again, another set of ranks went to Trinidad for training.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, Line Item 6242, I am sorry to go back to Maintenance of Buildings. We see that last year \$.345 million was expended – that is the revised budget. This year we see \$11 million being identified. Could the Hon. Minister share with this National Assembly the main building or buildings which will benefit from that enhanced figure?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, there are certain locations that have been identified to benefit from these resources. They include the Central Fire Station, the Campbellville Fire Station, Leonora Fire Station and the West Ruimveldt Fire Station.

Programme 515 – Guyana Fire Service - \$18,291,000 was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 516 – General Register Office - \$94,306

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chair, starting with Contracted Employees, we see there has been a decrease from 46 to 35, a decrease of eleven. Could the Hon. Minister share with us the highest and lowest paid employee captured there?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the highest paid will be the Registrar General and the lowest paid would be one of the Search Transcribers.

Mrs. Backer: What would be the salary?

Mr. Rohee: The first one will be \$229,191 and the latter would be \$36,229.

Mrs. Backer: Those persons would not benefit from our tax relief.

Line Item 6284 please, Sir, under the rubric “Other”, could the Hon. Minister share with this National Assembly what are the two main items covered under that head of \$6.39 million.

Mr. Rohee: This has to do with the binding of records which, I am sure is extremely important, and the payment of agency fees as well.

Mrs. Backer: Line Item 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships). Sir, could you share with the House what training the staff would benefit from or would continue to benefit from?

Mr. Rohee: This would be general training for persons working at GRO in terms of upgrading their skills in a number of areas required of staff at the General Registrar’s Office. Training for example of – not the staff – marriage officers and other areas like registration and things like that.

Programme 516 – General Register Office - \$94,306 was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital expenditure

Programme 511 – Secretarial Services - \$1,698,800

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, Line Item 1208500 – Provision for Citizen Security Programme, to be found at Profile Page 208. We see here, that this Citizen Security Programme has a life span, according to the project page, up to 1st February, 2012. Could the Hon. Minister say whether that date for completion is still the relevant date or if that has been extended because that will guide me!

Mr. Rohee: At this point in time there is no extension, that date remains valid. There may be a possibility for an extension up to July, but that decision has not yet been made.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chair, through you, No. 4 Hon. Minister, Remodeling Police Stations including Mahaica, Beterverwagting, Vigilance, Timehri and Plaisance. This is identical to

No. 4 of the corresponding Project Page for 2010. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the National Assembly whether the remodeling of those police stations will all be completed during this fiscal year or at least before the end of the project which is February next year?

Mr. Rohee: Well, as far as the Citizen Security Project is concerned yes, it will be completed so long as they fall under the CSP.

Programme 511 – Secretariat Services - \$1,698,800 was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 512 – Guyana Police Force - \$511,000,000 10:28

Mrs. Backer: Line Item 2600100 – Equipment – Police - purchase of equipment, arms and ammunition, to be found of Profile age 215. There is a figure of \$209 million. My question to the Hon. Minister is how much is being spent on handwriting and forensic equipment out of the \$209 million because they are included there.

Mr. Rohee: With regards to forensic equipment, \$11.4 million is to be spent on that. With respect to handwriting equipment \$11.8 million

Programme 512 – Guyana Police Force - \$511,000,000 was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 513 – Guyana Prison Services - \$108,500,000

Mrs. Backer: Line Item 1200600 – Buildings – Prisons, to be found on Profile Page 216. Could the Hon. Minister share with this National Assembly how much money is earmarked for the rehabilitation of the female dormitory at New Amsterdam?

Mr. Rohee: That would be \$5 million.

Mrs. Backer: And the fencing of the farm and residence at Timehri under the same head Minister.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, \$7.5 million

Mrs. Backer: Sir, on the same Line Item the description of the project says “the project includes” which gives me the impression that this is not necessarily an exhaustive list – this list of one to eight. My question therefore, through you, to the Hon. Minister: Is there any money budgeted here for a female prison or a remand centre for our young women under the age of 18?

Mr. Rohee: Not necessarily.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, through you, I know I cannot force the Minister to answer, to say anything, but I would think we could expect a yes or a no. The question is very simple: Within this figure of \$60 million is there any provision for a building or part of a building being dedicated to the lock-up or a holding centre (I hate that word holding-centre) for young

women in a similar way that there is a holding centre for our juvenile boys or males (whichever is correct) at Ruimveldt. That is the question.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member wishes to confirm what I think she knows, we have nearing completion the juvenile holding centre at Sophia where young people 14 years and above, both boys and girls, will be held pending trial and pending their dispatch to the New Opportunity Corp.

Mrs. Backer: That is very commendable, Sir, and we await that opening. Could I ask what will happen to those young girls under fourteen, as the one in the newspapers which said she was eleven and wandering (that is all I want to mention she was eleven and wandering). According to what you just said Minister she would not be accommodated here. So the question is this: Is there any provision here where those young women under the age of 14 will be housed while they are before the court?

Mr. Rohee: No, the Ministry of Home Affairs does not have the responsibility when it comes to that. I know that the Hon. Member Priya Manickchand has a facility to accommodate such young girls, and it is not far from the holding centre I referred to.

Mrs. Backer: She does not seem to be aware of it but we will take that, Sir.

The same head- 2400700 – Land and Water Transport – Prisons, Purchase of Vehicles. The question is, of this \$14 million dollars budgeted. How many vehicles will be purchased and the nature of the vehicles in this case?

Mr. Rohee: The vehicles that are to be purchased are a garbage truck, a canter, a 15-seater mini-bus – well, the Hon. Member is not interested in motor cycles so I will leave that one.

Mrs. Backer: Garbage truck?

Mr. Rohee: Yes, to remove garbage from the prisons.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, under the same head, with your leave I am going to Line Item 2600500 – Construction of Fence and Purchase of Agriculture Equipment and Tools. Sorry Sir, the one before, Line Item 2600400 – Other Equipment - Prisons. The legend just says baldly “Purchase of equipment”, but when we go to the profile page there are quite a few things included, including purchase of body scanners, baggage scanners etc. My question to the Hon. Minister is: Will these baggage scanners bring an end to the system that now obtains where when persons carry food for their relatives who are incarcerated the food is checked, bread is broken to ensure that nothing is inside? Will the baggage scanners alleviate that very humiliating – if I might use that word – primitive, backward, system that citizens have to endure on a daily basis when they take food for their loved ones who are in prison, many of whom are just on remand?

Mr. Rohee: Well, it is our responsibility to ensure that no unauthorised objects, such as cell phones et cetera, get into the prison. These body and baggage scanners are being purchased, hopefully I should say, to bring an end. Prisoners and persons bringing, or attempting, to

bring unauthorised items into the prisons tend to be very creative and innovative in getting past the body and baggage scanners. So I would not go so far as to say it will bring an end but it will certainly help us to bring closure, as far as possible, to this exercise.

Mrs. Backer: I now go to Line Item 2600500 – Agri. Equipment – Prisons - construction of pens and purchase of agriculture equipment and tools, Profile Page 219. We see every year money being voted and spent on this head. What I would like to ask is if the Minister, could he inform this National Assembly, in terms of percentage, (I don't want to tie you down to a figure) of how self-sufficient has the prisons become as a result of this agricultural drive that we see being going on for years. Are they 30, 20 or 50 percent sufficient if we can get an idea, Sir?

Mr. Rohee: I can say they are increasingly becoming self sufficient and that depends on what are the items we are talking about. In poultry I think they have increased significantly in self sufficiency; your favourite greens...

Mrs. Backer: Calaloo?

Mr. Rohee: Yes, they are tremendously self sufficient in those items. I think in certain areas they are increasingly becoming self-sufficient. But in terms of the overall situation, based on the agriculture business plan which has been adopted by the Guyana Prison Service and the Ministry of Home Affairs, there are certain targets which we are hoping to achieve in order to accomplish that overall objective.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you, Sir. Seeing that the Hon. Minister is such a nice mood would he be prepared to share with us approximately how many of our prisoners are engaged in this whole agriculture effort, which from our side of the House we find is commendable? How many prisoners are engaged in that activity?

Mr. Rohee: Well, agriculture is basically done at Mazaruni and at Lusignan, and to some extent at Timehri. There are large numbers of prisoners at Mazaruni and Lusignan who are engaged in agriculture projects and to some extent at Timehri. But fundamentally Mazaruni would be the major food producing location of the Guyana Prison Service.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. Mr. Chair. 2605000 – Purchase of Tools and Equipment, Project Page 220. Sir, this is a recurring problem. I know the Minister of Finance will see nothing wrong with this, but the description just says “purchase of tools and equipment” so we then have an obligation to ask, for \$4.5 million, what tools and equipment are budgeted to be purchased with this money?

Mr. Rohee: The tools are basically for the trade shops at all the prison locations having regard to the fact that administration is placing emphasis on the correctional side of the prison service. Most of these tools are to be used in the trade shops to produce items of use to the prisoners, and to be sold by the prisoners.

As regards to equipment, Mr. Chairman, we intend to purchase a camcorder, televisions and DVDs.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister share with this National Assembly, through you, how many trade shops there are in the various prisons? What is the total number of trade shops?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, each prison location has a trade shop. There are some elements of specialisation, but each prison has a trade shop.

Programme 513 – Guyana Prison Service - \$108,500,000 was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 514 – Police Complaints Authority - \$1,000,000

Programme 514 – Police Complaints Authority - \$1,000,000 was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme 515- Guyana Fire Service - \$184,500

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, Line Item 2400600 – Land and Water Transport- Fire, Profile Page 223. We see a total cost of \$80.5 million and five water tenders budgeted for, could the Hon. Minister share with us the cost of the water tenders and also the cost of the trailer pumps for the four areas listed herein.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the cost of the water tenders is \$31.5 million and the trailer pumps \$13 million.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, if that is so then that just gives us a figure of \$44.5 million, and the amount budgeted for this year is \$80.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister share with us where is the other \$35 million going?

Mr. Rohee: It is going to the Guyana Fire Service.

Mrs. Backer: No, no,

Mr. Rohee: May I be allowed; just be patient. It is not going anywhere; it is remaining with the Guyana Fire Service. I restricted my answers Mr. Chairman to the question. Now that the Hon. Member has asked where is the additional \$36 million it is for the purchase of all terrain water tenders for certain interior locations like Mahdia, Lethem and Kwakwani.

Mrs. Backer: Oh! Mr. Chair, the project profile says that trailer pumps will be bought for Mahdia and Lethem, interior locations. The Hon. Minister is now saying to us all terrain vehicles ... Are you saying now that these will also be bought for those areas in addition to the trailer pumps?

Mr. Rohee: Just for the sake of clarification Mr. Chairman, trailer pumps are being bought for Mabaruma, Kumaka and Port Kaituma. That is a different piece of equipment...

Mrs. Backer: No, you have Lethem here in your profile.

Mr. Rohee: ...as distinct from the all terrain water tenders, which is another type of vehicle that is being purchased for Mahdia, Lethem and Kwakwani.

Mrs. Backer: So, Minister you are in fact saying on the description of the project there was an omission. Is that what you are saying, Sir?

Mr. Rohee: I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that we want to do our best for the interior locations of the country.

Programme 515 – Guyana Police Force - \$184,500,000 – was agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Agency: 51 Ministry of Home Affairs

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 516 – General Register Office – \$20,000,000

Mrs. Backer: Sorry Sir, is this the Registrar General?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, just one question. Well, there is only one item under it - Profile Page 227, Line Item 1700200. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the end result of this \$20 million will be the full computerization of the registrar's head office? I am speaking about the Head Office, Sir.

Mr. Rohee: No, it would not be full computerization. It is now partial, but we will be moving towards the full computerization of the operations of the general registrar's office.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, could the Hon. Minister state whether his Ministry is in receipt of figures that are needed to ensure the complete computerization of this very important office.

Mr. Rohee: Yes, we are in possession of figures, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Backer: And in the spirit that we have begun with this afternoon, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share with us what that total figure would be.

Mr. Rohee: I am not in a position at this point to do so. Studies were done but regrettably I did not walk with those numbers.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister be in a position to say, with this \$20 million when it is spent to help, as he said, to enhance if not complete the computerization, to Guyanese citizens whether this will result in their application for birth, death and marriage certificates being quickened, from the time of application to the time of receipt.

Mr. Rohee: Yes, this exercise is basically aimed at accomplishing that objective – to produce electronic birth and marriage certificates, but not birth nor marriages electronically.

3.04 p.m.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister Sir, share with this Committee of Supply why it is that one can get a death certificate in two or three days and yet take months to get a birth certificate, because that is a concern that a lot of people have? A marriage certificate: one can get a marriage certificate fairly quickly, but with the birth certificate there seems to be a particular humbug. Is the Ministry looking at that?

Mr. Rohee: I think with respect to the death certificate, it is precisely because the family would like to dispose of the body quickly.

Mrs. Backer: It is not to dispose. Say to bury.

Mr. Rohee: Well, sometimes it is not buried. Sometimes it is done by – well it is not burning – ...

Mrs. Backer: ...cremation.

Mr. Rohee: Cremation. Thank you. But, on the other hand, records have to be checked, especially when it comes to the registration of births. Records have to be properly checked. If it is a late registration it takes a while too, because the mother of the child must ensure that the future of the child is secure.

Programme: 516 – General Register Office – \$20,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office – \$13,539,000

Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Riehl]: Mr. Chairman, through you, I would like to ask the Hon. Attorney General... I see under Staffing Details, line item 6116, there is one contracted employee and I see that one contracted employee is in receipt of a salary of \$7 million a year. Could you please state who is the functionary that is in receipt of that salary?

Attorney General and Minister Legal Affairs [Mr. Ramson]: Cde. Chairman, the gentleman who is the subject of that enquiry sits to my left. He is the new Permanent Secretary, former Deputy Commissioner of Police. He deserves of a salary much in excess of \$7 million.

Mrs. Riehl: There is no specific line item, but could the Hon. Attorney General explain the difference between the Main Office and his Chambers? I see the Main Office just has one employee and he said that employee is the Permanent Secretary. I just want a little explanation.

Mr. Ramson: For the purposes of clarity, Cde. Chairman, we have separated it, the two Departments of the Ministry and the Attorney General's Chamber. As you may recognise, it is two components of the Ministry that I represent. For the purposes of clarity and for accounting purposes, we need to ensure that the line items are consistent with what is expected at the budgetary level.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6281 - Security Services: I see there is one hundred and fifty per cent increase here, to \$3 million, from the revised 2010 which was \$1.1 million. Could the Hon. Attorney General explain the steep increase in the security services?

Mr. Ramson: Just to make sure that I heard the Member correctly. Is it line item 6281 - Security Services? Well, as you know, there was a situation where there was a change in personnel. My former Permanent Secretary left in the end of June. My current Permanent Secretary, who sits to my left, has not been making use of the security personnel on to now. But for this year, it is expected that he will make use of it so that it will account for the increase in the charges for security. A lot of investigations are done at our level so as to prevent any kind of allegation of corruption.

Mrs. Backer: Supplementary. Through you, Mr. Chairman, is this security, Hon. Minister, for the Main Office or is this for the residence of the Permanent Secretary?

Mr. Ramson: When I speak of the Permanent Secretary I speak only of his residence. He does not live there. The only security concerns me. I am the man in charge of that place. I am entitled of security there and where I live and the security personnel should be walking around with me.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, through you - the Hon. Minister having said that - could the Hon. Minister indicate whether the \$5.256 million there is for security services at the Permanent Secretary's residence? Sorry, it is \$3 million.

Mr. Ramson: Well, you have to be careful. As you know, you cannot try to confuse me. The money is allocated in the budget for his use and it is at his personal residence, and to which he is entitled, under the normal Public Service arrangement.

Mrs. Backer: We know that.

Mr. Ramson: So why did you ask?

Mrs. Backer: Because we want to know if you know, Hon. Minister.

Programme: 521 – Main Office – \$13,539,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration – \$46,860,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister, through you, Sir, inform this Committee as to who the contracted employees are, not their names, of course, in terms of their designations - the eleven contracted employees?

Mr. Ramson: I am advised that the persons who are identified in the number nine are accounted for as Accounts Clerk II, Typist Clerk I, Office Assistant I, Telephonist I – if you notice I did not say “*Telephone-ist*”; some of you say “*Telephone-ist*” - Legal Clerk II, Vehicle Driver. You will notice that I am being frank and fair with you; one of them has since been removed from the roster for lack of application. So, there are eight now.

Mrs. Backer: Through you, Sir, the Minister, having said that they are now eight, we see that what is budgeted for is eleven. So could the Hon. Minister share with us who are the three contracted workers that his Ministry intends to employ during this year - three additional employees?

Mr. Ramson: Well, as you know, the Ministry of Legal Affairs is an evolving entity. Once I am the head of it, we have to move forward, and I am in the process of identifying people who will augment the productive capacity of my Ministry.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, in the spirit of augmenting the productivity, could the Hon. Minister share with us what positions those three persons are likely to fill?

Mr. Ramson: As the occasion arises, I, in the exercise of my discretion, absolute and otherwise, would identify the position subject to the approval of the Ministry of Public Service.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration – \$46,860,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$75,025,000

Mrs. Riehl: Mr. Chairman, through you, I would like to ask the Hon. Attorney General... Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see it is budgeted for four contracted employees. I see the figure for contracted employees, \$30,000,328, which is a percentage of about over sixty per cent, or thereabout, of the total wage bill which is \$49 million. Could you please say who those four functionaries are in receipt of that huge percentage of the budget?

Mr. Ramson: Cde. Chairman, I can assure you that two of them are at the highest level of the Legislative Drafting Division in the capacity of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and the Deputy Chief Parliamentary Counsel. The other two, one I inherited as the personal assistant to myself and there is another person who is an Administrative Assistant who is also part of the four.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$75,025,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$15,041,000

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$15,041,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 525 –Deeds Registry – \$67,128,000

Programme: 525 –Deeds Registry – \$67,128,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 –Main Office – \$1,003,855

Mrs. Riehl: Project 1501100 - Justice Improvement Programme. This was a programme which was due to come to an end in 2010, and I see here that this is a provision for that

programme going over into 2011. Could the Hon. Minister say what the position is here with the Justice Improvement Programme? It was slated to finish in 2010?

Mr. Ramson: Certainly, as the Member is fully aware – I will give two of my distaff members, support staff at my side, an opportunity to get settle, like yourself – this programme had some earlier hiccups prior to my coming on board. We have since had the opportunity to accelerate some matters and we anticipate that in the not too distant future, perhaps by the end of March, with a possible extension, small extension, that programme is likely to come to an end. The Member will appreciate that we have done, and have provided to this National Assembly, adequate and concrete proof that work has been done.

Mrs. Riehl: Just a follow up in that area, Sir. I see the legend states that the project entails, “Enhancing the institutional capacity of the Judicial Service Commission.” Could the Hon. Minister please explain what it means? I know the Judicial Service Commission is made up of the highest legal functionaries in this society. I do not really understand what enhancing of the institutional capacity of the Judicial Service Commission is, among other items there, but it is only that one head.

Mr. Ramson: Cde. Chairman, may I, with your leave, indicate that there is a certain move to change the Secretariat... Well, it was proposed in the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Programme that there is a change from one set of Secretariat to another Secretariat, but in the meantime we are in the process of providing the equipment and other essentials before whatever final decision can be made in that regard. So with the institutional capacity there are some preparatory works which have to take place.

Programme: 521 –Main Office –\$1,003,855 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 –Ministry Administration – \$6,500,000

Mrs. Riehl: Sorry Sir, are you in the area of Ministry Administration? Mr. Chairman, the light on the microphone was on, but I wish to ask a question on project 2401100 - Ministry Administration. The legend states: “Purchase of vehicle.” There is nothing here. Who is this vehicle will be purchased for?

Mr. Ramson: That is a very simple question. The Ministry did not acquire a vehicle since my return to the office.

Mrs. Riehl: It is for you.

Mr. Ramson: It would not be for me; it belongs to the Ministry. I have several cars of my own, if you do not mind. It belongs to the Ministry and it is only appropriate that the Minister be given appropriate transportation. He is not to go on a donkey cart and it is a second-hand vehicle. I am not accustomed to second-hand vehicle.

Programme: 522 –Ministry Administration – \$6,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor – \$2,000,000

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor – \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 525 –Deeds Registry – \$3,500,000

Programme: 525 –Deeds Registry – \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 55 Supreme Court

Current Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$332,912,000

Mrs. Riehl: Contracted Employees, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Attorney General, line item 6116: I see it is budgeted here for fifty-five contracted employees, receiving \$50 million. What categories of employees come under contracted employees here?

Mr. Ramson: I am taking the opportunity in the absence of the Chief Executive Officer who is responsible for giving me the appropriate instructions at the appropriate time... I do not see her here, perhaps she is not interested, but I can assure the Hon. Member that I have information here which ought to satisfy her question. There are fifty-four clerical employees, two Confidential Secretaries – I believe it is confidence tricksters - and one Judicial Officer. It is not an increase; it is a decrease.

Mrs. Riehl: Yes. I did say that it is a decrease.

Mr. Ramson: We are trying to be very frugal.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6281 –Security Services: It can be seen that it is budgeted here for \$18 million, even though the revised figure for 2010 was \$11 million. Does this mean that the Minister intends to beef up security, because, as we know, the fence of the Supreme Court building, very ornate old fence, a huge portion of it was ripped away by vandals or thieves, or something, during the night? Are you aware of this, Hon. Attorney General? It is the Supreme Court building or the Victoria Law Court, as we would say, where there is supposed to be security in place. That is a very expensive old grille fence.

Mr. Ramson: I can assure you, Cde. Chairman, that apart from the...I gather, from my viewing of the increase, and my overall knowledge of the operations of the Supreme Court, that the Supreme Court includes areas of the magistracy which would require additional security. As it is now, there is security only in relation to Georgetown, but as it is known, the operations of the Court have been decentralised, and the judicial machinery, so it is now requisite that additional security to be placed in Essequibo and some of the other areas, including Berbice. So that accounts for the increase.

Mrs. Riehl: A supplementary, Sir, on this same one. I know that decentralising the Courts has been in place, in Berbice and all about, for the longest while, but I wish to ask again, if in the light of theft of that thing, whether there is any intention, in any of these figures here - Security Services, Electricity Charges - line item 6272 - of actually beefing up the security around the Supreme Court building in Georgetown. Because, I understand, another portion from the area of the Family Court was also ripped away more recently. The need for this is very acute. That is why I am asking the question.

Mr. Ramson: Actually the Hon. Member's question is self indicative of the answer, because, as she knows that there might be some unlawful incursions, and if what she is saying is correct, the increase is to cover that, so we should be given credit for foreseeing it.

Mrs. Riehl: I am asking whether this...

Mr. Ramson: It may very well be so; it includes her observation.

Mrs. Riehl: I cannot use observation with the figure, Sir.

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$332,912,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 552 – Magistracy – \$349,186,000

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6116 –Contracted Employees: I see there is a number of thirty-eight last year and it is intended to increase to forty-one. Do the magistrates generally come under this head, Sir - the contracted employees? If so, what is percentage or what number?

Mr. Ramson: Yes, there are five contracted magistrates currently and I believe that there are twelve of them in all now.

Mrs. Riehl: Follow-up. The seven, then, are on the general...

Mr. Ramson: ...general pay roll.

Mrs. Riehl: So, it is five contracted employees and seven are under the...

Mr. Ramson: Yes.

Mrs. Backer: Through you, Sir, am I correct in saying then the total complement of magistrates, at the moment, is twelve, Sir? We want to get that very clear.

Mr. Ramson: From reading the overall documentation it would appear that there are twelve sitting magistrates. Currently there are twelve magistrates, five of whom are contracted employees.

Mrs. Riehl: Another follow-up, please, Sir. Do those twelve magistrates make up the entire complement of magistrates for Georgetown, for the whole Guyana - for all the magisterial districts? Is it twelve?

Mr. Ramson: Well, let me put it this way. The budget is aimed at meeting the likely cost of persons who are currently employed, and if there is any shortfall in the full complement of magistrates that will be addressed as the occasion demands. So I am not in the position to advise the Hon. Member on what the full complement is. Maybe, by the time we get back here next year twenty-five will be appointed, hopefully, so as to ease the backlog.

Programme: 552 – Magistracy – \$349,186,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$41,500,000

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$41,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 552 – Magistrates’ Department – \$81,500,000

Programme: 552 – Magistrates’ Department – \$81,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 56 Public Prosecutions.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$77,133,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Sir, through you, could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Committee of Supply the positions that the seven contacted employees hold?

3.34 p.m.

Mr. Ramson: I thank the young lady to my left here. That is how I like it to be done. They must complement my service to this Committee of Supply. To the question that was asked - I am glad that she alerted me because I did not pay attention to it - there are an Accounts Clerk II, Typist Clerk II, Administrative Officer, Legal Assistant and a cleaner. Those are the contracted employees, in addition to two State Counsels.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6111 – Administrative: We see a drop, under Staffing Details, from twelve to nine. Could the Hon. Attorney General indicate who occupied those nine positions? What are the positions occupied therein?

Mr. Ramson: There are nine employees, consisting of the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), a woman, Assistant DPP, a woman, a Senior State Counsel and six State Counsels. Those are the persons who comprise line item 6111.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6284 – Other: We see a figure, \$2.95 million. Could the Hon. Member inform this Committee of Supply what are the main items covered under that generic term “Other”?

Mr. Ramson: Actually the “Other” is in relation to the expenses of when the occasion arises for the State Counsel to leave for Essequibo and Berbice. It all depends on the time which is necessary to be spent to conclude whatever engagements they have been sent for. Earlier in 2010 – I think there is a justification for an enquiry - funds were through a line item to facilitate other payments. That may account for the Hon. Member curiosity with respect to this, albeit unknowingly.

Mrs. Riehl: Through you, Mr. Chairman, Hon. Attorney General, back to Administrative - line item 6111. I see although there is a decrease, under Staffing Details, from twelve to nine, and the functionaries were – Deputy Assistant, State Counsel, etc, I see you have an increase to \$33 million in 2011 from the actual in 2010 of \$28 million. Could you explain that increase, when there is a decrease in staff and an increase in emoluments?

Mr. Ramson: What is the enquiry?

Mrs. Riehl: It is line item 6111.

Mr. Ramson: And what was the increase from?

Mrs. Riehl: Well, the actual in 2010 was \$28 million and it is now up to \$33 million.

Mr. Ramson: I can assure the Hon. Member, deservedly so is the Deputy DPP. Her salary had to be backdated to accommodate whatever was given to her by some form of warrant. I think it is an administrative arrangement. I might be right Cde. ... A warrant had to be issued for back dating the raise in pay of the Deputy DPP after she was appointed, as opposed to acting. There was some kind of administrative warrant. It is not a real warrant, as you know. That accounts for the increase. We are trying to empower all these persons who are qualified.

Mrs. Riehl: It is long overdue for that particular individual. Hon. Attorney General, through you, Mr. Chairman, I wish if you could explain these figures, because in most of the other agencies there is no statutory wages and salaries, but in this one, under Public Prosecutions, I see, under line item 6011, there are statutory figures here. Could you explain just for my understanding?

Mr. Ramson: What do you want me to explain?

Mrs. Riehl: There are statutory benefits and allowances, statutory wages and salaries. Could the Hon. Attorney General please explain what categories are those persons?

Mr. Ramson: In the same way that we have to ensure that the Deputy DPP is given due recognition for her services, I assume it is as axiomatic that the Director of Public Prosecutions herself would have the benefits that awarded to her for her sterling contributions to the nation. That accounts for it. We do not give the money away; it is the office that carries it.

Mrs. Riehl: I see, alright.

Programme: 561- Public Prosecutions- \$92,683,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditures

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions - \$2,000,000

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions- \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 14 Public Service Ministry

Current Expenditure

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$359,538,000

Mr. Basil Williams: Line item 6302 –Training (including Scholarships): In this case, could the Hon. Minister tell us which part of this amount speaks to scholarships?

Minister of Public Service [Dr. Westford]: Of this amount, forty-five is for scholarships and the remainder for training.

Mr. B. Williams: Of the forty-five per cent, what percentage is in Cuba?

Dr. Westford: It is none of them.

Mr. B. Williams: So Cuban scholarships are not included under this line item?

Dr. Westford: No.

Mr. B. Williams: Excellent.

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$359,538,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$10,400,000

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$10,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 23 Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Current Expenditure

Programme: 231 – Main Office - \$446,063,000

Mr. Scott: Line item 6281 – Security Services: There is an increase to \$36 million for this year. Could the Minister say, after observing that there was a readjustment in 2009, having seen that the actual amount was \$23 million, what he used to justify going upwards, again?

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce [Mr. Prashad]: This increase caters for the increased security at National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and also the Guyana International Conference Centre because it is under the Ministry of Tourism Industry and Commerce. So the Ministry caters for increased security services there, both at the Guyana International Conference Centre and the National Exhibition Centre, Sophia.

Mr. Scott: Could the Minister say what the national events are in line item 6291 – National and Other Events?

Mr. Prashad: These are participation in Famtrip, Mashramani Celebrations, Pakaraima Mountain Safari, Rupununi Rodeo, Bartica Regatta, Linden Town Week, Motor Racing, Wakenaam Night, Mahdia Expo, Jamzone Summer Weekend, Orealla Regatta, Rockstone Fish Festival, Tourism Awareness Month, Rupununi Expo and Rodeo, Leguan Night, Lake Mainstay Regatta and others.

Mr. Scott: Line item 6321 – Studies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There has been an increase in some organisations. Could the Minister say what justified some of being given an increase while others have not been given an increase?

Mr. Prashad: This is the five per cent increase in salary across the board for the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Guyana National Bureau of Standards, the Guyana Consumer Movement, the Guyana Consumers' Association and the Consumer Advisory Bureau.

Mr. Scott: Well, I have seen an increase in the subsidies for the Guyana National Bureau of Standards and the Tourism Board, but over the past two years the amount for Consumer Advisory Bureau (CAB) has been \$500,000 and it remains the same, as well as the Consumers' Association. Although the Guyana Consumer Movement has been given \$400,000 for the past two years it seems to perform the same function. Why is there the difference between \$500,000 for two organisations and \$400,000 for one?

Mr. Prashad: The ideal thing is for those consumer bodies to really be self-sufficient. The Government gives them a grant. Government really should not be funding these organisations to be honest. This is a grant which is given to them, and it is deliberate. The disparity with the Consumer Movement of \$400,000 is that it came on board late. The Consumers' Association, which has been around a very long time, and the Consumers Advisory Bureau get \$500,000 each.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: We see that last year a figure of \$2 million was budgeted and the revised is, in fact, exactly one hundred per cent increase. For this year, we see that the budget is \$5.6 million. Could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles are attached to the Main Office of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce?

Mr. Prashad: This increase caters for maintenance costs for four vehicles, due to increased travel especially to interior areas, where tourism activities takes place.

Mrs. Backer: I just want to get it clear, so the Minister is saying that there are four vehicles attached to the Main Office?

Mr. Prashad: Yes.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): We see a small figure of \$200,000. What is this small figure likely to do, Sir?

Mr. Prashad: This is just training for regular staff at the Ministry. It is not training for the Tourism Authority. That comes separately. This is just for the Main Office staff - minor training.

Mrs. Backer: Yes. But what does it entail?

Mr. Prashad: It is training of Secretaries in office procedures.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see there are thirty seven contracted employees of a total staff of forty-one. Perhaps I should take it the other way. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what position is catered for under administrative, which is at line item 6111 and also line items 6113 and 6115 where there are one, one and two employees. What positions do those employees hold, and their salaries?

Mr. Prashad: Line item 6111 caters for a Deputy Permanent Secretary and the salary is \$229,191.

Mrs. Backer: What of line items 6113 and 6115?

Mr. Prashad: Those are for one electrician and one machine operator.

Mrs. Backer: What about the last question? I asked three questions, but perhaps I was a bit unfair. Line item 6113, there is one person this year. What is that person's position going to be? Then there is line item 6115.

Mr. Prashad: It is an electrician and, at line item 6115, there will be one cleaner and one labourer.

Programme: 231 – Main Office- \$446,063,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 232 – Ministry Administration - \$66,675,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see that there are nine contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister indicate their designation and just the salary of the highest paid and the lowest paid, but all nine designations?

Mr. Prashad: The designations are one Electrician, two Drivers, two Telephonists, one Typist Clerk, one Accounts Clerk, one Handyman, two Office Assistants. The highest salary is \$74, 470 and the lowest is \$37,903.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6111- Administrative: We see that there are five persons there Sir, could we have the designation of the five and then the designation of the one person at line item 6113?

Mr. Prashad: The designations of the five persons are one Principal Assistant Secretary, one Assistant Secretary, one Senior Personnel Officer, one Accountant and one Senior Registry Superintendent. At line item 6113, it is an Assistant Accountant.

Programme: 232 – Ministry Administration - \$66,675,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 233 – Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs - \$62,427,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: We see a decrease, in the Staffing Details, from twelve to eight. Could the Hon. Minister share with this Committee of Supply the contracted employees, in terms of their positions, also the same for the one administrative person, at line item 6111?

Mr. Prashad: Under line item 6111- the appointment of a Director, and at line item 6116 there is a Commerce Officer, Confidential Secretary, one Inspector and six Research Assistants.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6284 – Other: We see a sum of \$6 million and, in fact, that subhead which is Other Goods and Services Purchased is the only item. Could the Hon. Minister share with this Committee of Supply the main items under that head?

Mr. Prashad: This additional increase of \$1.1 million caters for the designing, printing and distribution of additional brochures and booklets for the Consumer Affairs Division.

Programme: 233 – Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs - \$62,427,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 231 – Main Office - \$27,000,000

Mr. Scott: Project 4100100 – Tourism Development, “Purchase of vehicle and establishment of tourism centre”: Could the Minister say what type of vehicle is being bought?

Mr. Prashad: It is a Nissan.

Mr. Scott: Is it a Nissan Pathfinder?

Mr. Prashad: It is a Nissan pickup - \$4.5 million.

Mr. Scott: It is a pickup. How much would the tourism centre cost?

Mr. Prashad: We are catering to establish a centre at the Ogle International Airport - the new airport.

Mr. Scott: Is it for \$500,000?

Mr. Prashad: That amount is for the start-up. That is small, but we are going easy for the time being.

Mr. Scott: Under project 4402000 – Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, “Provision for institutional strengthening – CDB”: The Ministry has \$90 million. What is that for, in details please? What does institutional strengthening really mean?

Mr. Prashad: This is for the setting up of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission and the recruiting and training of the various posts to set up the Commission.

Mr. Scott: So I can say then that the Consumer Protection Commission was not up and running before. Is that so?

Mr. Prashad: It is not fully the secretariat.

Mr. Scott: Yet, the Ministry has put aside \$400,000 plus last year. Did you not, Sir?

Mr. Prashad: No. Last year \$3.6 million was spent.

Mr. Scott: Was it for a Commission that is not yet up and running?

Mr. Prashad: That was for the start-up of the secretariat. The recruiting will take place this year.

Programme: 231 – Main Office - \$27,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 232 – Ministry Administration- \$13,600,000

Programme: 232 – Ministry Administration - \$13,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 233 – Commerce, Tourism, Industry and Consumer Affairs - \$423,785,000

Programme: 233 – Commerce, Tourism, Industry and Consumer Affairs - \$423,785,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Members. We can now move on to the next matter. I understand that officers for the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs are not here. I can see that the officers for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are here. I do not know if the full complement is here. But if the full complement is here and you have no objections we can take the Ministry of Foreign Affairs now and then deal with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs later. If that is okay I suggest... *[Power outage]*.

Agency: 04 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Ministry Administration - \$743,001,000

Mrs. Riehl: I wish to ask the Hon. Minister under line item 6111 – Administrative, what categories of employees are covered under that head?

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: It is the Foreign Service Officers.

Mrs. Riehl: Does that mean the Ambassadors?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is Programme I. Ambassadors would be under Programme II.

Mrs. Riehl: Who are those Foreign Service Officers? How many does the Ministry have? Does the Ministry have thirty-six Foreign Service Officers?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Out of the thirty-six, there is about twenty Foreign Service Officers and some other administrative staff under this head. I can provide you with a complete list shortly.

Mrs. Riehl: Contracted Employees: I see the Ministry has fifty-two and budgeted for forty-two. Who are those forty two contracted employees in this Ministry? The categories can be given just as they were for the administrative.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: These would be different categories. They are the Director General, Protocol Officers, Foreign Service Officers, System Development Officers and Office Assistants are among those.

Mrs. Riehl: Okay. So the highest paying, I would assume, is the Director General. Would I be assuming correctly?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: You have assumed correctly.

Mrs. Riehl: I go to line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence. Before I move off to that one, the Minister said Foreign Service Officers. That is line item 6116. So there are some Foreign Service Officers under contract and some under the general employment - the twenty which was given. Is that correct, Hon. Minister?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. There are just two officers on contract.

Mrs. Riehl: Now, for Local Travel and Subsistence, the Ministry has budgeted for \$27 million. \$24 million was used last year. Is there any reason for the increase in the budget, for local travel? This is not for your Foreign Ministry, so I am asking why the...

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry has signed several agreements with Brazil, including the Frontiers Committee, the establishment, and it is expected to have several meetings this year in that regard at the Lethem border. So that would come under local travel.

4.04 p.m.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage, \$23 million is budgeted for, as opposed to \$12 million, almost one hundred per cent increase. Could the Minister explain that steep, almost one hundred increase?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Under this head, the Ministry catered for posting personal effects as they relate to posting and reposting of staff from overseas missions. It hopes to have some of that this year.

Mrs. Riehl: Does that mean that you intend to reshuffle some of your Ambassadors?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I do not have the authority to do that. That is in the domain of the President, but certainly at the level of the Foreign Service Officers, it is yes.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: There is an increase there too. Last year \$19,306,000 was. \$23,700,000 is now budgeted for. Is there any reason for the increase there?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. The Ministry would have the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) Secretariat up and running this year. In addition to that, the Ministry would have had some reconciliation with the Guyana Power and Light Inc.

Mrs. Riehl: Follow-up: Would the UNASUR Secretariat be in the same building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. It will be.

Mrs. Backer: Under line item 6284 – Other: We see that there is a provision for \$15 million. Last year \$14.8 million was spent. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the main items are that will be captured under that head?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That would be bank charges for remittances of funds to overseas missions, internet service and in relation to the VIP lounge at the Airport.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6294 – Other: \$41 million was last year and spent \$133.4 million. This year the budget has gone back down to actually the same figure budgeted for in 2010. Could you explain to this Hon. House the reason for that steep rise, and are we likely to have another rise this year?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No. There would not be another rise this year. This was for the UNASUR Summit. If you would recall, we passed some provisions here for the Summit.

Mrs. Backer: When we were preparing Budget 2010, it then follows that the Government of Guyana was unaware that it will be hosting UNASUR at that time.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We were not unaware, but we have to budget according to how many heads were coming. It would be very difficult to estimate that. As you recall, I had said that the last time. We felt that it would be better to wait until we have all those costs. Perhaps now that we have hosted a UNASUR Summit we can be better able to estimate that. I should also mention that we had some unscheduled visits under this very line item, including the visit of the Kuwaiti Prime Minister. That was also included here.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister, just for completeness, indicate to us if the \$41 million budgeted for 2010 included any figure whatsoever for the Summit?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. There were some preparation meetings before the Summit and so some of them were definitely included in this. It was along some other line items as well.

Mrs. Riehl: Hon. Minister, line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations, could you say the number of organisations that you give subsidies and contributions to? I know there must be a list.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There is a very long list of them so I will direct you to page 391 of Volume 1 of the Estimates Current and Capital Revenue and Expenditure.

Programme: 041 – Ministry Administration - \$743,001,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Relations - \$1,712,145,000

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6311 – Rates and Taxes: I see a budgeted sum of \$1 million. Could you say, Hon. Minister, for which overseas building rates and taxes will be paid for?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There is a plot of land in Brazil which, hopefully, Guyana will be able to, at some point in time, build its embassy on. This is taxes for that particular piece of land.

Mrs. Riehl: How big is the land please?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I cannot give you the exact size but I can certainly give you a photograph of the site if you wish.

Mrs. Riehl: Which city is it in?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: All embassies are based in Brasilia; so it is in Brasilia.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6331 – Refunds of Revenues: It is just half a million dollar, but what does that category entail?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are times when persons might apply to our missions for passports then later on come back and say that they do not need them. They might have to refund moneys to them.

Mrs. Riehl: I thought so. I thought it might have been something in that area, but what happens when people do pay for passports? What happens to those moneys? Are they remitted?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. Those moneys are paid directly to the Consolidated Fund.

Mrs. Riehl: I will have to ask Mrs. Lawrence about those.

Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings - \$434 million: How many buildings are being rented for embassies around the world? Do you have a number, Hon. Minister?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I can provide that to you, but there are fifteen missions overseas with Kuwait now and I can tell you that the Government owns the buildings in London, Washington and Ottawa. Basically, it pays rental for the others.

Mrs. Riehl: Out of the fifteen, the Government owns three so it will be paying rental for twelve. Will that be accurate?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. That will be accurate, including in this amount as well is the rental for our home-based staff that are posted overseas.

Mrs. Riehl: Is that for living quarters for the staff?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That is correct.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6281 – Security Services: We see an increase of about \$5 million from \$16 million to \$21 million. Could the Hon. Minister share with this Committee of Supply what buildings are serviced under this head?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would be the missions. As you know, a Consulate General in Boa Vista and a mission in Kuwait have been established so that there would have been some increases as well.

Mrs. Riehl: Under the same line item, Madam Minister, are you saying that \$21 million is budgeted for security for all of our missions worldwide?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. There might be several missions in one building, let us say New York. So the security cost might not be that high. This is about it.

Mrs. Riehl: That is good compared with our local security cost.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Relations - \$1,712,145,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 043 – Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$88,863,000

Mrs. Riehl: Under line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: I see a figure \$3.5 million. Would I be correct to say that it has always been one building for the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Why are there two different charges for electricity when one building is occupied and for all purposes the two are now merged? Would the Minister explain?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We have been speaking with Guyana Power & Light Inc. (GPL) and, hopefully, this year there will be one meter. There are two meters at the moment and we will try to rectify that this year so that there will be one electricity bill. Under this, I should mention as well, there are times when the Ministry might have a Voluntary Service Officer (VSO) and might be renting an apartment for that officer, so electricity will have to be paid for. Those VSOs come under the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation so this line item will also cater for that kind of payment. It is not just electricity in the building.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I know the Ministries have merged again, but do you keep your lines clear, Minister, that there are eight contracted employees?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. The Ministry Foreign Trade and International Cooperation will be dealing with foreign trade matters. So there are Foreign Trade Officers and so on. While the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation budget comes under Programme 043, there has not been a merger, so to speak. There has been a Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation and a Director General for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, there is one Minister.

Mrs. Riehl: Are there two Permanent Secretaries (PSs)? Is that what you are saying, Hon. Minister?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are two Ministries. It is a Director General for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Who would those eight persons be? The emolument here is \$15.9 million for those eight employees.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We have the Permanent Secretary, the Accountant, the Systems Administrator, an Office Assistant, a Clerk II General, a Driver and a Cleaner.

Programme: 043 – Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$88,863,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Ministry administration - \$8,800,000

Mrs. Riehl: Project 1200500 – Buildings, in which the legend states, “Upgrading of monument site and rewiring for building”: Please explain, Hon. Minister, what Point 61 is.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That is the reference point for our maritime boundary with Suriname.

Mrs. Riehl: How much is for the rewiring of the building and the monument site?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry will go out to tender but this is the figure for both. It is estimated that it might be about \$2 million and the remainder will be spent on the works which have to be done at the site of the monument.

Mrs. Backer: Just for general information, “Upgrading of monument site at Point 61”, does that presuppose that there is already some monument there because of the upgrading?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. There were allocations last year and the structure is there. What is hoped to be done is to build a walkway and a shed for persons who are visiting there, to do some landscaping and make the area really nice as a monument should be.

Mrs. Backer: Is it anticipated, Minister, that this upgrade will finish during this year?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We anticipate that.

Mrs. Riehl: Project 1200500 – Buildings: I see \$18.3 million budgeted for installation of heating and cooling systems for Washington and the rehabilitation of buildings in London. Could the Minister say how much is for the cooling system and how much she budgeted for it?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We made an entire submission. Certainly, we will be tendering, so I would not be able to give you a cost at this point in time. It is one building, basically.

Mrs. Riehl: I thought that one is for the London embassy and the cooling system is the for Washington mission.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Sorry, I mean it is one block figure and not one building.

Mrs. Riehl: Does it mean that the Washington embassy does not have any cooling system, or are you putting in a new one, Hon. Minister? The Minister is not saying the replacement. She is just saying installation of heating and cooling system for the Washington embassy.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is basically a replacement.

Mrs. Riehl: Project 2400300 – Land Transport: The legend states, “Purchase of vehicles for overseas missions.” These are vehicles for Brazil and Ottawa. What type of vehicles do you intend to purchase, Hon. Minister? Is it one each?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is one each. One is for the Boa Vista mission and one is for Ottawa. The one for Ottawa is going to be a car. We will see how far our money can stretch, but it will be one that is befitting of the work we will have to do with it.

Mrs. Riehl: What will the one for Brazil be – an all-terrain vehicle?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We do not expect that the consulate will have to go into places that require four-wheel drive vehicles, but a lot of the vehicles are coming with four-wheel drive. If our money can buy one like that, certainly we would.

Mrs. Riehl: Project 2501100, Office Equipment and Furniture, \$7,000,000: Which missions will benefit from the furniture and equipment? The legend does not state.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Right now we are looking at all of the missions and we would prioritise. We expect that six of our missions will benefit from this, including Boa Vista and Kuwait because these are new missions.

Programme: 041 – Ministry Administration - \$8,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Relations - \$43,300,000

Programme: 042 - Foreign Relations - \$43,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 15 Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 151 - Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$1,500,000

Programme: 151 - Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$1,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 16 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 161 – Amerindian Development - \$343,204,000

Dr. George Norton: Under line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister explain the increase of \$5 million?

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Ms. Sukhai]: Mr. Chairman, the increase caters for three additional guards at the student dormitory. You would know that there is, in operation now, the new student dormitory at Liliendaal.

Dr. G. Norton: We notice that there has been a decrease in line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships). Could the Hon. Minister explain what type of training this is?

Ms. Sukhai: What is usually catered for under this heading is the provision for training in governance of the village councils - the National Toshi Council. The Ministry will also be expending, under this head, for training materials for scholarship students, particularly those who will be working on their School Based Assessments (SBAs) at President's College, the Guyana Technical Institute and other schools which they attend in the City.

Dr. G. Norton: A follow-up on this particular item: Does this cater for the training of the Hinterland students *per se*?

Ms. Sukhai: In effect, yes. They attend school. What will also be expended for here is to subsidise Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (CSEC) Examinations. Maybe the line description should have been expanded to explain a bit more. The training will result in that the Ministry will support the National Toshi Council Executive in relation to capacity building and some village councils with respect to governance.

Dr. G. Norton: Under Staffing Details, line item 6111 – Administrative: There has actually been an increase in the persons employed, but a decrease in the amount allocated, quite unlike what happens in the other areas. Could the Minister explain this?

Ms. Sukhai: The decrease is as a result of the Welfare Officer moving from that line item to 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled.

Dr. G. Norton: Thank you very much. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: We had an increase in wages and salaries of approximately \$3.5 million while there was a decrease of two persons.

Ms. Sukhai: This caters for the five per cent increase in gratuity and allowances.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister give us the designations of those two additional employees?

Ms. Sukhai: They are not additional employees. This is an increase in gratuity and allowances for employees under this line item. If you wish me to expand on these employees' allowances that are catered, for under this head, it caters for increased gratuity and allowances for our Confidential Secretaries, thirteen Community Development Officers, one

Project Coordinator and three Drivers. It is for the increases in the staff allowances and gratuity, under line item 6116.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister give us the designation of the Senior Technical that is employed now?

Ms. Sukhai: The Senior Technical is the Student Welfare Officer.

Programme: 161 – Amerindian Development - \$343,204,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 161 – Amerindian Development - \$143,150,000

Dr. G. Norton: Under project 1400100 – Amerindian Development Fund: Could the Hon. Minister say how many portable sawmills?

Ms. Sukhai: One.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say where this portable sawmill will be placed?

Ms. Sukhai: This portable sawmill will be supporting the Livelihood Project with respect to the forestry sector in Muritaro.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say where the *nut-parcher* and grinder will be placed?

Ms. Sukhai: They will be in the Mabaruma Sub-Region at Kamwatta, both the *nut-parcher* and grinder.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say how many chainsaws are earmarked?

Ms. Sukhai: The Ministry will be providing seven chainsaws this year to various communities. Would you like me to list them?

Dr. G. Norton: Yes.

Ms. Sukhai: The chainsaws will be sent to Saint Dominic, Cashew Island, Chinowieng, Wax Creek, Krubanang, **Shea Mouth** and Paramakatoi.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say how many solar systems are earmarked for this?

Ms. Sukhai: The Ministry will be providing ten panels and accessories to ten communities this year.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say where the village office would be?

Ms. Sukhai: The village office will be constructed this year in Karau village, Region 10.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say where the community centres will be built?

Ms. Sukhai: The construction of the community centres will be in Achiwuib and Rupunau, Region 9.

Dr. G. Norton: Where will the guest house be?

Ms. Sukhai: The Ministry will be supporting the construction of three guest houses in Santa Crus, Jawalla and **Toashida**.

Dr. G. Norton: Where will the benab be?

Ms. Sukhai: The benab will be done at Karasabai.

Dr. G. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say how many tractors, trailers and ploughs will be purchased?

Ms. Sukhai: There will be four tractors purchased and five sets of ploughs.

Dr. G. Norton: Which villages will these be for?

4.34 p.m.

Ms. Sukhai: Paruima, Parabaruru and Konashen. It will serve Konashen and Parabaruru because Konashen's community usually goes to Parabaruru to travel down, St. Ignatius and their satellites. Ruperti and Woweta and Crowdar will receive a plow because Crowdar already has a tractor. They are awaiting the plow.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, I still have a few more questions to ask. Under line-item 2403000, could the Hon. Minister say how many boats and engines are there and where are they supposed to be?

Ms. Sukhai: There will be six engines and one boat. The first three engines, which are 40 horse power, will go to Region 1 CDO, Region 2 CDO and Karasabai. The two 25 horse

power engines will go to Arukamai and Paruima. The one 15 horse power engine will go to Haimarakabra and the construction of the boat will go to Santa Crus.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say what type of vehicle they are going to purchase and for which location?

Ms. Sukhai: As you would know we have students at the new student dormitory and we will be complementing the support which we give to our scholarship students by providing them with a 30-seater bus which will transport them to and from school, to and from lessons and to and from events which they usually participate in. we will also be acquiring three all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and one will be provided for the Moruka Sub-Region, one for Rukumuta and one for Chenapau. We will also be supporting the work in Central and South Rupununi and two double-cab pickups will be bought for supporting those districts. We expect also to purchase one reconditioned motor car for our main office.

Dr. Norton: To follow-up, this would bring your fleet, excepting the ATVs, to how many vehicles?

Ms. Sukhai: Is this excluding ATVs? This will bring the fleet of vehicles to 20 which will be at the head office and also in the fields.

Capital Expenditure

Agency: 16 – Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

Programme: 161 – Amerindian Development – \$143,150,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration – \$13,063,147,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Would the Hon. Minister kindly indicate at line-item 6242 why there is this increase of \$5 million? What is he proposing to do?

Hon. Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mr. Speaker, this is principally additional maintenance works on our building. This is the principle location at Main and Urquhart Streets.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, thru you, could the Minister kindly indicate why there is 100% increase at line-item 6261?

Dr. Singh: This is as a result of increased monitoring activities.

Mrs. Lawrence: I would be happy if the Minister could indicate to the House what extra areas he is going to monitor in 2011

Dr. Singh: Principally two areas. In the first instance we anticipate that there will be heightened monitoring of project implementation. This is relation to the Public Sector Investment Programme. Secondly, there will also be increased activities at the Valuation Division.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line-item 6264, could the Minister indicate the number of vehicles in the Ministry's fleet?

Dr. Singh: There are 20 vehicles.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Minister indicate to the House the years of the five oldest vehicles?

Dr. Singh: I am advised that the oldest vehicle is in the vicinity of 12 years of age.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, thru you, would the Minister indicate to this House whether the thoughts going into setting aside \$8 million for vehicle spares and service is prudent or not?

Dr. Singh: It is a matter that is engaging our attention. The delicate balance between maintaining vehicles in our current fleet as against replacing or purchasing new vehicles and we do recognise that our fleet is aging considerably. In fact when we come to the Capital Budget the Hon. Member will see that, taking account of exactly the same concern that she clearly has, we are doing some replacement and acquisition of new vehicles to address exactly the same issue – the fact that the vehicles are getting on in age and that the maintenance cost is increasing.

Mr. B. Williams: Line-item 6141, could the Hon. Minister say if this sum of \$3.4 billion is intended for increase in wages and salaries for Public Servants this year?

Dr. Singh: It is amongst other related expenses.

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration – \$13,063,147,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration – \$5,216,356,000

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration – \$5,216,356,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration – \$17,420,771,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Item 1402400, the profile indicates that it is rehabilitation and maintenance of community roads. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether Princess Street, Adelaide Street, **House** Street and James Street, Albouystown, are part of the project?

Dr. Singh: Those particular streets are not being done under this allocation principally because this allocation is used primarily for very minor works in community roads. Those streets, if I heard correctly, would typically and ordinarily be finance under the Urban Roads Allocation which, incidentally, is appropriated under the Ministry of Public Works.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say if the Burma Road is included under this head?

Dr. Singh: The Burma Road is not provided for under this allocation. The Burma Road, given the scale of works and the type of road that it is, would be typically financed under a different allocation.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, are we also continuing to page 402?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, page 401 and 402.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you. Line-item 4501100- Youth Initiative Programmes- Profile 35- would the Minister kindly indicate whether, under Community Driven Infrastructural Projects, Agricola, Albouystown and Sophia are included here or not?

Dr. Singh: We do anticipate one project being done in Agricola under this allocation, but based on my perusal of the list before me I do not see the other two locations. I think Sophia was one and Albouystown was the other, if I remember correctly.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Under the same head, I note that one of the benefits would be to improve recreational facilities and I would like to know whether the St. Steven's Ground is targeted here.

Dr. Singh: The answer to that is "no". I might, while I am on my feet, Sir, and with your permission, elaborate on the answer that I gave earlier and that is to say that while there is no Albouystown project this year; one was executed under this allocation last year, in 2010.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, line-item 2601200- Statistical Bureau- the sum of \$24 million as provision for census- is this population census Hon. Minister? What census is this?

Dr. Singh: It is a national population census and I might add that I believe that I had announced it publicly somewhere else. I do not think that I said it in this Hon. House but we do expect that that the next national population census will be held in 2012 in accordance with the 10-year cycle. Members would recall that the last national population census was held in 2002.

Mrs. Backer: Item 4400500, this is on page 201- Student Fund Loan- the profile page 29 informs us that \$450 million dollars was budgeted for this project. Could the Hon. Minister share with us the number of students he anticipates will benefit from this provision for loans?

Dr. Singh: I believe that the Hon. Member is referring to the Student Loan Fund. That is not what you said. [**Mrs. Backer:** It is, 4400500.] You did not say "Student Loan Fund" but never mind. The number of persons that will benefit under the Student Loan Fund Allocation is currently estimated to be 3,220.

Mrs. Backer: Is this 3,220 from the University of Guyana?

Dr. Singh: They are all university of Guyana Students. That is correct.

Mrs. Lawrence: Page 401, item 4400700- Poverty Programme- would the Minister be kind enough to tell this Hon. House whether, coming out of this \$717.1 million, there is any plan for a library for south of Georgetown?

Dr. Singh: I would have to answer in the negative in that regard and I would say that, typically, that would be financed through an allocation under the Ministry of Education.

Mr. B. Williams: Item 4400700, Poverty Programme- could the Hon. Minister say what communities he is targeting with this sum of \$117 million for poverty alleviation?

Dr. Singh: This programme is intended to finance interventions in communities throughout the country and these interventions are typically implemented through either Line Ministries or Sector Ministries – depending on the nature of the project – or the RDCs or the NDCs. The projects are typically demand driven and depending on the nature of the project would be implemented through the relevant Agency or Region.

Mr. B. Williams: To follow-up, it says “the most vulnerable groups”. You must have an idea as to what these groups are and which geographical Regions.

Dr. Singh: Again, as I said, it is a programme that is demand driven so it really depends on the interventions that are requested through the NDCs, RDCs, etc.

Mr. B. Williams: As a follow-up question, is Caneville included in this?

Dr. Singh: No particular community would be included *ex-ante*. If a particular project is requested by a community and is evaluated and cannot be finance elsewhere then it would be considered accordingly but, *ex-ante*, no particular community is identified.

Mr. B. Williams: As a follow-up question, how will a community know that this fund exists so that they could apply for it according to what you are saying?

Dr. Singh: Community groups throughout the country are in constant engagement with their Local Government entity, NDCs and RDCs. There are constant engagements, whether it is Cabinet outreaches or Ministerial outreaches that allow for this kind of engagement as well as Parliamentary Representatives.

Mr. B. Williams: This is the final intervention that I am making on this point. The description says that the project entails provision for special support to the most vulnerable groups so it could not be all of the communities in the country. You are targeting special

groups so which Ministry or which body is responsible for identifying these groups or how are these groups identified? They could not be in the normal course.

Dr. Singh: As I indicated, communities across the country, irrespective of their location, are eligible. The projects will be evaluated upon request. Mr. Chairman, I believe that what I am saying is eminently clear to the Hon. Member unless he wishes to distort it. I think that what I am speaking is perfectly clear. I am speaking English language. The description of the project is very clear. Projects are submitted through their respective, as I indicated, NDCs, RDCs, etc. They are considered and once approved they are implemented through these agencies.

Mrs. David-Blair: Mr. Chairman, the Minister just said “even Parliamentary requests”. As a representative of my constituency, in my Budget Speech, I made request for a library for the children of Bartica. Can the Minister say to me now, or to this Assembly, if it warrants this?

Dr. Singh: Let me say that first of all I cannot say now because the requests are not considered in that manner, but I should also say that typically the interventions are relatively small so if one community came to say “We want a library” once can, I think, quite easily imagine that by the time we build two libraries the entire allocation would be exhausted so typically they are relatively small interventions.

Capital Expenditure

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration – \$17,420,771,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting – \$10,200,000

Capital Expenditure

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting – \$10,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this completes consideration by the Committee of Supply of the estimates of expenditure for the year 2011.

Assembly Resumes at 4:55 p.m.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply considered the estimates of expenditure for the financial year 2011 and approved of them as printed.

Motion to approve expenditure for the year 2011 of a total sum of \$146,879,654,000, excluding \$14,550,502,000 which is chargeable by law as detailed there in and summarised in the schedule and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to may further provision in respect of finance

Motion is proposed and carried

Mr. Speaker: We will now move to the Appropriation Bill.

Hon. Acting Prime Minister [Mr. Rohee]: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I wish to move that the Standing Orders 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2011 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to

Dr. Singh: In accordance with Paragraph 2 of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended that the Appropriation Bill 2011, Bill No. 1 of 2011 be considered by the National Assembly and I now present the said Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read the first time.

Question put, and agreed to

Appropriation Bill 2011, Bill No.1 of 2011

Dr. Singh: I move that the Appropriation Bill 2011, Bill No. 1 of 2011 be read the second time.

Question put, and agreed to

Appropriation Bill 2011, Bill No.1 of 2011

Dr. Singh: I move that the Appropriation Bill 2011, Bill No. 1 of 2011 be read the third time and be passed as printed.

Question put, and agreed to

Appropriation Bill 2011, Bill No.1 of 2011

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Members. That completes our consideration of the matters relating to the Budget and the Estimates.

We have two other items on the Order Paper: the Customs and the two pieces of legislation. Since it is almost 5:00 p.m I recommend that we take the suspension now and then consider the other matters on the resumption.

Assembly in recess

Assembly resumed at 4:55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. Please be seated. I would like to invite Hon. Minister Dr. Ashni Singh to move the Motion in relation to the confirmation of the Customs Duty Amendment Order.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, with the Minister's leave, I would like to place on record that when I began my questioning of the area of my remit – I am just looking for the correct pages which would be 196 and 197 – I had alluded to the fact that the additions were inaccurate. It turned out that it was my addition that was inaccurate and I just wanted to apologise for any embarrassment that the staff might have been suffered as a result of that and, in fact, the figures are right, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much.

Applause

Dr. Singh: I rise to move that the National Assembly confirms the Customs Duty Amendment Order 2011, Order No. 1 of 2011 which order it would be recalled I made on the 14th January, 2011, and caused it to be put in the gazette on the 15th January, 2011, and indeed which order I subsequently tabled in this Hon. House. My remarks on this order will be extremely brief because the substantive content of the order was already addressed in the Budget Speech and that is to say specifically that it would be recalled that there is a section in the Budget Speech that addresses the matter of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union and CARIFORM. Agreement emerged from negotiations between these two groups of countries and which were concluded on the 16th December, 2007.

6.02 p.m.

Dr. Singh: Under the terms of that Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), CARIFORUM negotiated a three year moratorium, from 1st January, 2008 to 31st January, 2010, before effecting entry into force of the tariff liberalisation commitments under EPA. As a result of which CARIFORUM countries are scheduled to commence their liberalisation under the schedule agreed from January 2011. As I indicated in the Budget 2011 Speech, Guyana's reservations as they relate to this agreement were widely ventilated and are well known and, in fact, led to the inclusion in the agreement of a clause that requires now mandatory review.

Suffice it to say, Guyana has now proceeded in accordance with that agreement to prepare the necessary tariff adjustment schedule under which adjustments...in summary, 17% of our import tariff lines from the European Union (EU) are excluded from liberalisation, 60% of our import tariff lines will be liberalised immediately and that is from the effective date of this order. The remaining 23% of imports will have their duties phased out over 5 to 25 years. It may be noted that in the order currently before us there is, in fact, a reference to the phasing of the tariff adjustments. In fact there is a table that summarises the different categories of goods and the year in which different rates will come into force. An annex is included in the schedule which is being amended, pursuant to the order that has been tabled.

I do not intent, at this point in time, to say much more except that Guyana now has the distinction of being the first CARIFORUM country. I am advised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs who confirms that this is the case have taken the necessary legislative steps to implement the EPA. Against that background and with that brief introduction, I move that Order No. 1/ 2011, published in the 15th January Extraordinary Official Gazette, be confirmed by this National Assembly.

Question put, and agreed to

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

FISCAL ENACTMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2011 – Bill No. 2/2011

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Income Tax Act and the Corporation Tax Act.” [*The Minister of Finance*]

Dr. Singh: As with the previous item, it is equally my intention to be brief in addressing the current matter before us. The Fiscal Enactments (Amendment) Bill 2011 – Bill No. 2/2011 is a very simple and straightforward Bill and it has its roots firmly planted in Budget 2011, the Estimates which this Hon. House passed just about an hour ago. It would be recalled that in Budget 2011, certain fiscal measures and announcements were made. In particular, two specific fiscal measures announced, apart from the EPA Order, require legislative amendment.

Firstly, the proposal that the personal Income Tax Threshold, as it is popularly called, is raised from \$420,000 per annum to \$480,000 per annum – effectively \$40,000 per month. It would be recalled that this measure was itself the subject of considerable discussion during the course of the Budget debate. I would not expound further on the merits of this proposal except to say that as indicated in the Budget speech, it does have the effect of bringing 38,000 tax payers out of the income tax net which is an advantage, I believe, that commends the provision very loudly to this Hon. House.

It comes on the heels of steady increases in the Income Tax Threshold. I alluded a few days ago to the fact that just a few years ago the income tax threshold was \$18,000 and in the space of just a few years we have, in fact, doubled and moved beyond the doubling of this threshold. That provision, as I indicated, I believe commends itself to the Hon. House and I trust that it would enjoy unanimous and strong support. That provision speaks, specifically, to three amendments to the Income Tax Act which is required to give effect to this measure.

The second measure that is the subject of this Bill relates to the rate at which Corporation Tax is charged. In order to give effect to the announcement made in the Budget for this year, the current Bill proposes an amendment to Section 10 of the Corporation Tax Act. That is to say specifically, to make the following changes: Whereas previous to this amendment all commercial companies would have paid corporation tax at a rate of 45% of their chargeable profits and non-commercial companies would have paid corporation tax at a rate of 35% of their chargeable profits, the current Bill gives effect to the announcement and proposal contained in the Budget 2011 to reduce those rates or to amend the rates applicable, as follows: the re-enacted section 10 will now provide for, effectively, three rates of Corporation Tax to be charged. A rate of 45% chargeable profits to be charged in case of a telephone

company, a rate of 40% of chargeable profit to be applicable to commercial companies other than telephone companies and a rate of 30% of chargeable profits to be applicable to any other company that would be non-commercial companies. The effect in summary, and this I think, too, was also ventilated throughout the Budget Debate, would be to reduce by five percentage points, which I indicated in my wrap up to the Budget Debate is not the same as five percent, to reduce from 45% and 35% to 40% and 30% the rate of Corporation Tax applicable to companies other than telephone companies.

As I indicated in the Budget 2011 Speech, this measure has the impact of permitting companies to retain the rate of a significantly larger share of their profits before taxes to reinvest and, therefore, potentially to expand to increase efficiency, create jobs and all of the attendant benefits that would accompany higher retained profits. As with the other measure, I believe this one was also the subject of considerate discussion during the Budget Debate and I will not say anything further on it, except to say that I believe they both represent very, very strong and favourable interventions and I urge my colleagues, on both sides of this House, to support these proposals unanimously.

With those words, I commend the Fiscal Enactment (Amendment) Bill 2011 – Bill No. 2/2011 to this Hon. House and at the appropriate opportunity it is my intention that the Bill be read the second, third time and be passed.

Mrs. Lawrence: The People's National Congress Reform 1 Guyana (PNCR-1G) has indicated, through its Members represented in this House several times over in their presentation on the 2011 Budget that all Guyanese must be beneficiaries of the economic gains accrued. Therefore, we concur with the amendments as set out in the Fiscal Enactment (Amendment) Bill 2011. We welcome the increase in the Income Tax Threshold from \$420,000 to \$480,000. However, it must be reiterated that we would have been happier to see the personal tax rate brought down to the same 30% as the non-commercial companies. It must be noted that this is the first time in Guyana that the basic personal tax rate is higher than any corporate tax rate. We hold a strong view that no worker should be earning less than \$40,000 per month and personal income tax rate ought not to be more than the corporate tax rate.

We would also wish the Hon. Minister to tell this National Assembly about the Government's plan to have a comprehensive tax review. We would also like to see the issue of indexing of

the personal tax rate being considered. We cannot continue with the lower salaried worker paying the same 33.3% of as that of the highest salaried worker.

Like the working class, our businesses must struggle with various challenges each day. Therefore, we believe that they, too, must share in any economic gains of our country. Hence, like the increase in the personal income tax threshold we, of the PNCR – IG, have absolutely no hesitation in granting a 5% reduction of corporate tax rate to our business community. We, however, feel that since the rate of Corporation Tax for commercial companies has been reduced, so must the minimum corporate tax rate which is presently about 2%. We feel that it should be reduced, perhaps, to 1.75%.

The PNCR –IG in giving its consent to this Fiscal Enactment (Amendment) Bill 2011 calls for a speedy approach to a comprehensive tax reform.

Dr. Singh: I will offer the following by way of response and I will try to be as brief as I possibly can. Let me say that in arriving at the combination of measures to be implemented, an appropriate balance has to be struck by a number of competing imperatives. I do not think that anybody could quarrel with the objective of endeavouring to bring relief to the most vulnerable of our workers and in this regard I refer to low income workers. In fact, it is important to make the point that as a result of the change being made to the Income Tax Threshold, a taxpayer who earns \$40,000 per month will, in fact, pay \$20,000 less in income tax in a year and that is not an insubstantial sum. If one's income is \$40,000 and one pays \$20,000 less as a result of the adjustment, one gets an effective increase of half of a month of one's pay as a result of this adjustment. That is not an insignificant or insubstantial adjustment. That is how much a person will benefit in a year.

The point must be made that these decisions are informed by, as I indicated, a number of imperatives, steady and successive adjustments, bearing in mind objectives that will include bringing progressive relief to our workers, creating an environment that is attractive for doing business, creating an environment that ultimately redounds to the workers because an environment that has tax rates that are reduced, such as we have reduced ours, is one that ultimately is more worker friendly, is one that is more conducive to investment and expansion, is one that is conducive to creation of jobs and, therefore, is worker friendly. I would, perhaps, differ with the Hon. Member in suggesting that there is a dichotomy between the worker and the Corporation Tax adjustment. Ultimately, the Corporation Tax adjustment does redound to the working environment in the manner on which I outlined, to the extent

that it allows our companies to expand, invest, grow and create jobs then it is not only a business friendly intervention but also a worker friendly intervention.

The measures taken as a package are, in fact, in the considered opinion of the Government and, indeed, clearly in the considered opinion of several stakeholders including the private sector and organised labour, taken as a package the interventions that we have announced and are now legislating are, in fact, a very comprehensive sets of measures that have met the test of being both worker and business friendly and therefore, ultimately a very good thing for our economy as a whole. In saying that, I would make the point also that one of the imperatives that one has to constantly bear in mind is, of course, other macro-economic aggregates including the overall fiscal position. I would not wish to belabour the point except to say that I thank the Hon. Member for expressing the support that she did for the measures. If I heard her correctly it is the Opposition's intention to support the passage of the Bill and I thank them for that.

I would not want to detain the House because my colleagues have been working very hard for the past two weeks. You, Sir, has been working very hard for the past two weeks. You have been impeccably patient with us. You have exercised your customary grace and charm and you have brought us back on the straight and narrow when you saw persons on both sides of the House drifting. This will probably be close to my final words on Budget 2011. Permit me to first of all to ask that the Fiscal Enactment (Amendment) Bill 2011 be read a second time. Since I will only speak again when I ask that the Bill be read a third time, permit me to thank you for your patience for shepherding us through the passage of Budget 2011.

The question was put and carried.

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee

Bill considered and approved

Assembly resumed

Bill reported without amendments, read the third time and passed

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members that brings us to the end of our business for today. I would like to express my thanks to all members of the House for their cooperation through this long and

tiring process. I would like to congratulate Members on their contributions and on the eventual passage of the Budget and the Estimates. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the press who has been here, as usual, with great diligence. There were two minor issues, one of which I dealt with personally – between the editor and myself - and another minor issue mentioned by Mrs. Backer. Apart from that, I think that we can say that the reports were fairly reasonable. I would like to thank our Parliament staff. As I have always said, there are many members of staff, apart from those whose faces you see in the House, who have to remain until we are finished. It was very tiresome for them as well. I would like to thank them as well for their support during this process.

The Minister of Education [Mr. Baksh]: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House stands adjourned to a date to be announced.

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 6.25 p.m.