

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

166TH Sitting

Thursday, 22ND September, 2011

The Assembly convened at 2.15 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

PROJECT DOCUMENT FROM UNDP

Mr. Speaker: I would just like to announce that I have just received a project document from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the National Assembly. It is a project where the partners are UNPD, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and, of course, the Government of Guyana. Parliament is the beneficiary of that programme. It has been a long process for the planning and preparation of the document and even longer, still, waiting for its signature and approval, but finally it is here. It is a two-year programme and it covers a very wide range of issues for the improvement of the work of the Assembly, including assistance for the Committees Division, training for the staff, assistance for the Hansard Division, improvement of our website and Information Technology (IT) Department, and so on. The value of the programme is US\$460,000 and the UNDP and UNICEF are contributing US\$250,000.

So I look forward in the next phase, in the next Parliament, that we will have continuing programme to assist in the improvement of the work. Of course, we have continually, non-stop programmes which are available from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, in

terms of training, seminars, for both Members of Parliament and staff, which are ongoing, and sometime we do not have the capacity to make use of them, but the greater we build that capacity to make use of these programmes the better it will be for us. I just thought that I will let you know that, because it will probably appear in the newspapers tomorrow, and we just had the function in the Members' lobby. Thank you.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTIONS

FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 5 OF 2011

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5 of 2011 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current Estimates totalling \$1,366,973,851 for the period 2011-08-31 to 2011-09-14.”

[Minister of Home Affairs]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Papers No. 5 and No. 6.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Mr. Chairman, in accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the motion for proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 5 of 2011 Supplementary Estimates Current...

Mr. Chairman: And it is for Financial Paper No. 6.

Mr. Rohee: Is it for Financial Paper No. 6? And Financial Paper No. 6 - Supplementary Estimates, Current and Capital, for the period 31st of August, 2011 to 14th September, 2011.

Mr. Chairman: And for Financial Paper No. 6, in the sum of \$1,951,698,983 for the period ending 2011-12-31.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 1 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture –Ministry Administration - \$25,871,000

Item 1 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$25,871,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2 46-461 Georgetown Public Hospital – Public Hospital - \$343,000,000

Item 2 46-461 Georgetown Public Hospital – Public Hospital - \$343,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services - \$993,229,521

Item 3 47- 474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services - \$993,229,521 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 74-744 Region No. 4: Demerara/Mahaica – Education Delivery - \$4,873,330

Item 4 74-744 Region No. 4: Demerara/Mahaica – Education Delivery \$4,873,330 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We can now turn to Financial Paper No. 6 of 2011.

FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 6 OF 2011

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 6 of 2011 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1,951,698,983 for the period ending 2011-12-31.”

[Minister of Home Affairs]

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance –Ministry Administration - \$1,200,000,000

Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Ministry Administration - \$1,200,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$350,000,000

Item 2 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$350,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 44-442 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport – Culture - \$35,000,000

Item 3 44-442 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport – Culture - \$35,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 48-482 Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security – Social Services - \$20,000,000

Item 4 48-482 Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security – Social Services - \$20,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 1 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister’s Secretariat - \$600,000

Item 1 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister’s Secretariat - \$600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2 07-071 Parliament Office – National Assembly - \$25,098,983

Item 2 07-071 Parliament Office – National Assembly - \$25,098,983 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$53,000,000

Item 3 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$53,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Public Works - \$268,000,000

Item 4 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Public Works - \$268,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: This completes consideration of all the items.

Question

“That this Committee of Supply approves the proposals set out in Financial Papers Nos. 5 and 6 of 2011 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1, 366, 973, 851 and \$1,951,698,983 for the period ended 2011-08-31 to 2011-09-14 and ending 2011-12-31.”

put, and agreed to.

Assembly resumed

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Papers Nos. 5 and 6 of 2011 - Schedule of Supplementary Provision on Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1, 366,973,851 and \$1,951,698,983, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have to approve the Appropriation Bill through all its stages at this time. Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, I am inviting you to move the suspension of the Standing Orders to do so.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders No. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 of 2011) - Bill No. 21 of 2011 be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, in accordance to paragraph (2), article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2011) - Bill No. 21 of 2011 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly and ask that it be read for the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL AND FIRST READING

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

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 3 FOR 2011) - BILL NO. 21 OF 2011

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2011, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Home Affairs*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the first time.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph (2) of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2011) - Bill No. 21 of 2011 for consideration by the National Assembly and I move it be read a second time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 3 FOR 2011) – BILL NO. 21 OF 2011 2011

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2011, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Home Affairs*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2011) - Bill No. 21 of 2011 be read the third time and pass as printed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the third time and passed as printed.

COMMITTEES BUSINESS

MOTION

ADOPTION OF REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2011

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly adopts the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Public Utilities Commission (Amendment) Bill 2011 – Bill No. 17 of 2011.”
[Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications - Chairman of the Special Select Committee on the Public Utilities Commission (Amendment) Bill 2011 and the Telecommunications Bill 2011]

BILL – THIRD READING

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2011 – Bill No. 17 of 2011

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Public Utilities Commission Act.”
[Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications]

MOTION

ADOPTION OF REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL 2011

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly adopts the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Telecommunications Bill 2011 – Bill No. 18 of 2011.”
[Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications - Chairman of

the Special Select Committee on the Public Utilities Commission (Amendment) Bill 2011 and the Telecommunications Bill 2011]

BILL – THIRD READING

TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL 2011 – Bill No. 18 of 2011

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the establishment of the Telecommunications Agency and for a regular, coordinated, open and competitive telecommunications sector and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.”
[*Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Public Utilities Commission (Amendment) Bill in the name of the Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I wish to advise respectfully that we, on this side of the House, will not be proceeding with this Bill at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker: That is the Report. You are not proceeding with the Report or the Bill.

Mr. Rohee: My apology. It is neither with the Report nor the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: It is neither with the Report nor the Bill.

Mr. Rohee: That is correct.

Mr. Speaker: Ok. So those are deferred. Then we have the next motion which is the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Telecommunications Bill and the third reading of that Bill. Are those being deferred as well?

Mr. Rohee: Yes Mr. Speaker. I wish to so advise.

Mr. Speaker: The adoption of Report of the Special Select Committee on the Telecommunications Bill 2011 and the third reading are deferred.

Motions and third readings of Bills deferred.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Members. That brings us to the end of our business for today.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I wish with your leave, if you would so permit, before you bring the sitting to a close, now that we are at the, I believe, the last sitting of this session...

Mr. Speaker: Well thanks for notifying me, Hon. Member. So we...

Mr. Rohee: I believe that you are very much aware of this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I am hearing this for the first time. I read it in the newspapers.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, would you permit us to say something at this point in time?

Mr. Speaker: Yes. I understand Ms. Teixeira wants to say something.

Mr. Rohee: Yes Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: ...wants to support your motion for an adjournment to a date to be fixed.

Ms. Teixeira: Our agenda is now exhausted and so we will be concluding today as the final sitting of the Ninth Parliament. It would be remiss of us, on the Government side of the House, if we did not officially and publicly recognise the achievements of this Ninth Parliament. When the contemporary of this history is written the critical role, and significance, of the Eighth and Ninth Parliaments to the development of Guyana parliamentary democracy and inclusive Government model will be given its rightful and dominant place. Following on the tremendous and defining work of the Eighth Parliament, in regards to radical and progressive constitutional reform and parliamentary reforms, bringing Guyana in sync with the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles of Parliamentary Democracy, the Ninth Parliament, Sir, has demonstrated the political will of the Government to implement and to further enhance this inclusive model. In fact, we must recognise that no other country in the Caribbean region has gone to this extent in constitutional parliamentary reforms.

This, the Ninth Parliament, has entrenched scrutiny over the Government and strengthened the mechanisms for accountability and transparency, as well enhanced the mechanisms for parliamentary party dialogue in the interest of the nation. Sometimes there were successes and sometime we did not succeed. For example, in the Local Government Reform Bills

which were put on hold on the request of the Leader of the Opposition and the inability to reach agreement on the list of entities to consult on the Ethnic Relations Commission.

There were also two amendments to the Constitution. One was dealing with the recall of Members of Parliament and the Parliamentary Standing Committee to have oversight on the disciplined forces. Sir, it is now seven years since these reforms have been brought into existence and this entire House, including you and the indispensable support and the Parliament Office and staff, should be proud of these achievements, and the Opposition as well.

I would just like to list some of our achievements because I think that they are significant enough, Sir, that they should be recognised, and there should be kudos for all of us in this House, on sides, yourself and the Parliament Office. The new Parliamentary Committees, such as the Sectoral Committees, all functioned and reported to the House. The Standing Committee on the disciplined forces was established and functioned. One hundred and forty Bills were enacted, covering the financial sector, the judicial sector, the security sector, the social sector and the productive sector, as well as important landmark Bills, as Broadcasting and Access to Information, have been on the political agenda for quite a while.

One of the significant issues, Sir, is that we have brought statutes with reference to the payment of parliamentary political parties scrutineers for the house-to-house registration, following on the practice established in the Eight Parliament of partial funding for political parties from the national revenue for scrutineers and polling agents.

Over three hundred and fifty-eight questions were asked by the Opposition and all were answered. This is one hundred per cent performance and satisfactory, excellent performance, in comparison with other Parliaments. I had the luck of going on to the mother Parliament of the Commonwealth, as it is called, the United Kingdom Parliament website, and when one checks the number of questions that are pending for quite a long time, a one year or more, I think we have done extremely well, Sir, in compliant with the new Standing Orders and an expression of the willingness to have public disclosure and accountability.

Over one hundred and seventy resolutions, including thirty-one opposition motions of which ten were amended and accepted by this House, five were withdrawn by the Opposition before the vote, and five were negative, and the balance withdrawn or disallowed. This again, Sir, is a reasonable percentage in relation to other Parliaments.

There has been noticeable greater compliance by Ministries and agencies in relation to the submission of their annual reports. Several hundreds are now lodged at the public records at the Parliament library. Policy documents were submitted, and we will continue to make efforts to improve the submission of annual reports by the different Ministries and State agencies to this House. We have been in compliant with the submission of Treasury Memoranda, in accordance with the revised 2006 Standing Orders, following each report of the Public Accounts Committee in relation to their report on Public Accounts. We have been in compliant with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA), enacted in the year 2006, in relation to Annual Mid-Year Financial Reports - 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 being the most recent.

We have also submitted to Special Select Committees over seventeen Bills, as well as a number of other Committees have been looking at non statute issues such as HIV/AIDS and Political Parties Campaign Financing. We have completed a manual to guide operations of the parliamentary committees, especially the new Committees of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committees and others which were established by the Constitution.

We must recognise the work that has gone on in the Parliament Office. The establishment of the Parliament's own Hansard Division and the use of new age media, to assist in the working and efficiency of Parliament, to assist Members of Parliament in carrying out their responsibilities. The establishment of the Parliament's Facebook site, which, I believe, was your innovation and the use of it by the first Committee, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Access to Information, need to be noted. The involvement of the public in submitting memoranda to Parliamentary Special Select Committees on Bills and also non legislative issues are something, again, of note. The attendance of the media at the meetings of the Public Accounts Committee is a healthy sign, an indicative of openness and transparency, and the Government compliant with these reforms. We encouraged the media to attend the other Sectoral Committees which they have only been attending when a Minister appears before them.

The employment of additional staff, and training of all staff, has enabled the Parliament Office to function at a qualitatively higher level and we wish to congratulate them all on those achievements.

If there is one telling sad indication of the fragility, or frailty, of the Opposition political leadership of this country, it is the fact that the PNCR - 1G did not attend the first sitting of

the Ninth Parliament, five years ago, only having Mrs. Backer and Mrs. Riehl to ensure that Mrs. Riehl was nominated as the Deputy Speaker, after which Mrs. Backer left. It was the Prime Minister who seconded her nomination. Now, regrettably, at the final sitting, the entire Opposition is absent, apparently, finding it too difficult to work during the recess, to carry out important business of the nation, yet having no qualms of uplifting their parliamentary salaries in this period and these are the parties which have ambitions of leading this nation. I trust and have faith in the intelligence of the Guyanese public who have always shown their capacity to see through ruses and shenanigans.

Certainly, we have seen where there are weaknesses and vulnerabilities and where there is need for more work to be done, and these will be addressed, I am certain, Mr. Speaker, in the Tenth Parliament, as we have evolved in this parliamentary democracy model, an inclusive model which this country has adopted. The Guyana Parliament, Sir, as you began in your opening today, benefited also from international support, and regional support. We have benefited support from the British and Canadian High Commissions; we have benefited from the Chinese and Indian Governments; we have benefited from the Millennium Challenge Threshold Account through the United States of America administration; we have benefited from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the UNDP and the UNICEF. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as we closed this Parliament, we will be having assistance with the programme you announced at the beginning of this session. Regrettably, the delays dealt with, particularly in 2011, with a slothfulness of release of funds from headquarters of the United Nations and, therefore, there are a number of delays, but I am proud and glad that this programme will now commence.

Mr. Speaker, your staff have been involved in the design of the new country cycle of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2012/2016. There is a large section which has to do with Parliament, and improving its capacity, and strengthening it in the works it has to do. Our Parliament has also been visible, not only in our own national framework, but also at international conferences. You, Sir, have led joint Government/Opposition delegates to annual conferences and other meetings of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

This Parliament has a lot to be proud of and so, Sir, we should congratulate ourselves. Whatever we did not conclude, should have been concluded, should have done better, I am

certain, as I said earlier, that in the next five years around, we will be doing so, on this side of the House, as the Government of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to have this opportunity to thank you and your staff for all the good works they have done; to thank the Members of Parliament, on the Government side, for their hard work. It was a hectic, busy, exciting and energising, and sometimes frustrating, five years, but we are proud of what we have done. I thank the Members of Parliament, on the Government side, for their tremendous contribution to the work that was done on the Government side. I also want to recognise the work of the Opposition parties, and Members of Parliament, and look forward to seeing them, on that side of the House, after our 2011 elections. We look forward to the Tenth Parliament, and we look forward to moving this country of ours, this blessed and beautiful Guyana, strengthening the path of democracy and development and to make Guyana a model for the entire region, and the world.

Thank you very much Sir. [*Applause*]

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members. Upon taking the adjournment now, I should like to wish all Members of the staff, all Members of the National Assembly, Government and, notwithstanding their absent, the Opposition all the best in your future endeavours. I should like to take this opportunity to publicly recognise the work of the Clerk and the Parliament Office staff and to thank the press for their constant attendance, even though the cameras disappeared once nightfall comes, but the other staff remains here, despite our very long hours. I would like to thank them for bringing the work of the National Assembly to the public, which is very important. To remark, on the very few occasions, if any, I only recall one complaint of bias on the part of the press - one complaint. There is always talk, but no official complaint has been brought to us about bias in the press which would require us to deal with it. So thank you very much.

Adjourned accordingly at 2.44 p.m.