



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

OFFICIAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2020-2025) OF THE
TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC
OF GUYANA HELD IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE, LILIENDAAL,
GREATER GEORGETOWN*

15TH Sitting

Monday, 28TH December, 2020

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

The Assembly convened at 10.11 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

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

[Virtual Participation]

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (38)

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

Prime Minister (1)

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

Vice-President (1)

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

[Absent]

+ Cabinet Member

* Non-Elected Speaker

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (1)

+ Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, M.P.,
Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs,
Ministry of Legal Affairs,
Carmichael Street,
Georgetown.

Senior Ministers (17)

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

+ Hon. Hugh H. Todd, M.P.,
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Lot 254 South Road,
Georgetown.

[Virtual Participation]

+*Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.,
Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance
Ministry of Finance,
Main & Urquhart Streets,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.S., J.P., M.P.,
Minister of Public Works,
Ministry of Public Works,
Wight’s Lane,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

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

+ **Cabinet Member**
* **Non-Elected Minister**

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

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

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

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

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

+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Vickram Outar Bharrat, M.P.,
Minister of Natural Resources,
Ministry of Natural Resources,
Lot 96 Duke Street,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

[Virtual Participation]

+*Hon. Oneidge Walrond, M.P.,
Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce,
Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce,
Lot 229 South Road,
Bourda, Georgetown.

+ Hon. Nigel D. Dharamlall, M.P.,
(Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam),
Minister of Local Government and Regional Development,
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,
DeWinkle Building,
Fort Street,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Collin D. Croal, M.P.,
(Region No. 1 – BarimaWaini),
Minister of Housing and Water,
Ministry of Housing and Water,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Vindhya V. H. Persaud, M.S., M.P.,
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Minister of Human Services and Social Security,
Ministry of Human Services and Social Security,
Lot 357 East and Lamaha Streets
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Charles S. Ramson, M.P.,
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports,
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,
Main Street,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Sonia Savitri Parag, M.P.,
Minister of the Public Service,
Ministry of the Public Service,
164 Waterloo Street,
North Cummingsburg,
Georgetown.

+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

Junior Ministers (4)

Hon. Warren Kwame E. McCoy, M.P.,
Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister,
Office of the Prime Minister,
c/o Colgrain House,
205 Camp Street,
Georgetown.

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

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

Hon. Susan M. Rodrigues, M.P.,
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water,
Ministry of Housing and Water,
Lot 41 Brickdam & United Place,
Stabroek,
Georgetown.

Other Members (14)

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.,
Lot 71 BB Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.
Mr. Alister S. Charlie, M.P.,
(Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo),
148 Lethem,
Central Rupununi,
c/o Freedom House,
41 Robb Street,
Georgetown.

Dr. Vishwa D.B. Mahadeo, M.P.,
Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
Lot 4 Public Road,
No. 66 Village,
Corentyne,
Berbice.

Mr. Sanjeev J. Datadin, M.P.,
Lot 60 Section ‘K’,
John Street,
Campbellville,
Georgetown.

Mr. Seepaul Narine, M.P.,
Lot 321 BB Seventh Street,
Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.
Mrs. Yvonne Pearson-Fredericks, M.P.,
Mainstay Lake/Whyaka Village,
Mainstay Lake, Essequibo Coast,
c/o Freedom House,
41 Robb Street,
Georgetown.
Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.P.,
Lot 340 East Street,
South Cummingsburg,
c/o Freedom House,
41 Robb Street,
Georgetown.
Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.,
55 AA Victoria Avenue,
Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.
Mr. Faizal M. Jaffarally, M.P.,
(Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),
Lot 16-30 New Street,
New Amsterdam.
c/o Freedom House,
Robb Street,
Georgetown.
Dr. Tandika S. Smith, M.P.,
(Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara),
Lot 290 Area ‘J’,
Tuschen, North,
East Bank Essequibo.
Mr. Lee G.H. Williams, M.P.,
Paruima Upper Mazaruni,
c/o Freedom House,
Robb Street,
Georgetown.
*Ms. Sarah Browne, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,
Lot 251-252 Thomas & Quamina Streets,
South Cummingsburg,
Georgetown.
*Mr. Vikash Ramkissoon, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Regent and Vlissengen Road,
Bourda, Georgetown.
Ms. Bhagmattie Veerasammy, M.P.,
Lot 32 Crown Dam,
Industry,
East Coast Demerara.

MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION (32)
(i) A Partnership For National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) (31)

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Joseph F. Harmon, M.S.M., M.P.,
Leader of the Opposition,
Lot 99 Mazaruni Street,
Guyhoc Park,
Georgetown.

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

Mr. Roysdale A. Forde, M.P.,
Lot 410 Caneview Avenue,
South Ruimveldt,
Georgetown.

Mr. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P.,
Lot 3202 Pricese 3,
Providence,
East Bank Demerara.

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

Dr. Nicolette O. Henry, M.P.,
Lot 2227 Ozama Street, North Ruimveldt,
Georgetown.

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

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

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

Mr. Christopher A. Jones, M.P.,
Opposition Chief Whip,
Lot 609 Conciliation Street,
Tucville,
Georgetown.

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

[Virtual Participation]

Mr. David A. Patterson, M.P.,
Lot 151 Durbana Square,
Lamaha Gardens,
Georgetown.
Ms. Coretta A. McDonald, M.P.,
Lot 202 N, Fourth Street,
Alexander Village,
Georgetown.
Ms. Catherine A. Hughes, M.P.,
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Lot 13 A, New Providence,
East Bank Demerara.
Mr. Haimraj B. Rajkumar, M.P.,
Lot 18 Public Road,
Johanna Cecilia,
(Region # 2 Essequibo Coast).
Ms. Amanza O.R. Walton-Desir, M.P.,
Lot 1285 EE Eccles Sugarcane Field,
East Bank Demerara.
Ms. Natasha Singh-Lewis, M.P.,
Lot 1110 Plot ‘B’,
Herstelling,
East Bank Demerara.
Mr. Sherod A. Duncan, M.P.,
Lot 590 Good Hope,
East Coast Demerara.
Ms. Juretha V. Fernandes, M.P.,
Lot 1282 Block EE,
Eccles,
East Bank Demerara.
Mr. Vincent P. Henry, M.P.,
(Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo),
Shulidnab Village,
South Central,
Rupununi.
(Culvert City Lethem)
Mr. Ronald Cox, M.P.,
(Region No. 1 – Barima Waini),
Mabaruma Compound.

[Virtual Participation]

[Virtual Participation]

Mr. Shurwayne F.K. Holder, M.P.,
*(Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam),
Lot 55 Henrietta,
Essequibo Coast.*

Mr. Ganesh A. Mahipaul, M.P.,
*Lot 14 Plantain Walk,
West Bank Demerara.*

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

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

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

Mr. Vincero H. Jordan, M.P.,
*(Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),
Lot 214 Lovely Lass Village,
West Coast Berbice.
C/o Christopher Jones*

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

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

[Virtual Participation]

Mr. Jermaine Figueira, M.P.,
(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),
Lot 136 2nd Street,
Silvertown,
Wismar, Linden.
Mr. Devin L. Sears, M.P.,
(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),
Lot 90, Section C,
Wismar, Linden.

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

Mr. Lenox R. O’Dell Shuman, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, St. Cuthbert’s Mission, Soesdyke Linden Highway.	[Virtual Participation]
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Officers (2)

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

Hansard Division Officers (20)

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Senior Editor (ag)
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Ms. Roseina Singh,
Reporter
Ms. Somna Karen-Muridall,
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Ms. Lushonn Bess,
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Mr. Parmanand Singh,
Pre –Press Technician
Mr. Saeed Umrao,
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Audio Technician

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Page

15TH Sitting

Monday, 28TH December, 2020

Announcements by the Speaker	1873
Questions on Notice - For Written Reply	1874-1880
Public Business – Government Business	1881-1896
Motion - to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 2 of 2019	1882-1897
Introduction of Bills & 1 st Reading	1898
BILLS – 2 nd & 3 rd Readings	1899
Motion - to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1 of 2020	1900-1913
Welcome – Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Co-operation	1914
Congratulations to the Hon. - Attorney General & Minister of Legal Affairs	1915-1917
Motion - to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 2 of 2020	1918-1951
Suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) & 54	1952
Introduction of Bills & 1 st Reading	1953
BILLS – 2 nd & 3 rd Readings	1954
Adjournment -	1955-1956

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Virtual Participation

Mr. Speaker (Participated Virtually): Hon. Members, my apologies for not being present in person today. There seems to be a ‘bug’ going around. I do not think it is Coronavirus disease (COVID-19); so, in order not to spread it further, I have decided to do the session virtually. A number of other Members are also virtual, including the Deputy Speaker and the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Thank you.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[For Written Reply]

Regional Procurement and Tender Administration Boards

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there is a question on notice for a written reply. Unfortunately, the wrong document was circulated. We now have to withdraw that document. The answer would be re-circulated. The House apologies to the Hon. Member, Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: (a) Could the Honourable Minister provide the names and job titles of every member of the Regional Procurement and Tender Administration Boards for all ten Administrative Regions?

(b) Could the Honourable Minister state what method was used to appoint members to the Regional Procurement and Tender Administration Boards in all ten Administrative Regions? Was it by an election or selection and who facilitated/conducted/supervised the method used to appoint members to the Regional Procurement and Tender Administration Boards for all 10 Administrative Regions?

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

(a)

**National Procurement and Tender Administration
Regional Tender Boards as at December 21st 2020**

<i>No.</i>	<i>REGION NO.</i>	<i>MEMBERS</i>	<i>DESIGNATION</i>
1.	<i>Region No. 1 Barima Waini</i>	(1) Tikaram Bisesar	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson)
		(2) Loiselle Robinson	- RDC Councillor
		(3) Martin DeSouza	- Education Officer
		(4) Edmund Innis	- Retired Accountant
		(5) Victor Boyer	- NDC Councillor
2.	<i>Region No. 2 Pomeroon-Supenaam</i>	(1) Devanand Ramdatt	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson)
		(2) Arnold Adams	- RDC Councillor
		(3) Sheleenic Feona Sukhdeo	- RDC Councillor
		(4) Urmila Diaul	- Chief Accountant Sub Treasury
		(5) Lionel Boodram	- NDC Chair
3.	<i>Region No. 3 Essequibo Islands-West Demerara</i>	(1) Jagnarine Somwar	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson)
		(2) Paul Narine	- RDC Councillor
		(3) Lindon Fowler	- RDC Councillor
		(4) Jaideo Sookhoo	- Farmer
		(5) Anjanie Narine	- Businesswoman
4.	<i>Reg Region No. 4 Demerara-Mahaica</i>	(1) Pauline Lucas	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson) - Development Support Officer, Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sport and Regional Councillor, RDC, Region No. 4
		(2) Clemsford Belgrave	
		(3) Arnold Sukraj	- Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Guyana Fire Service & Regional Councillor, RDC, Region No. 4
		(4) Suresh Singh	- Retired Regional Education Officer

		(5) David Williams	- Community Development Officer
5.	Region No. 5 Mahaica-Berbice	(1)	
		(2) Adrian Singh	
		(3) Lloyd a Angus	- RDC Councillor
		(4) Chitranjan Jaikisson	- Manager
		(5) Joseph Rooplall	- Businessman
6.	Region No. 6 East Berbice - Corentyne	(1) Narindra Persaud	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson)
		(2) Bibi Tazeela Beira	- Social Activist
		(3) Vincent Lonke	- RDC Councillor
		(4) Phillip Rose	- Educator
		(5) Intikab Ali Subhanallie	- RDC Councillor
7.	Region No. 7 Cuyuni-Mazaruni	(1) Kerwin Ward	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson) – Bartica Town Councilor
		(2) Erwin Ward	
		(3) Narisa Rahaman Sherif	- Businesswoman
		(4) Anthony Murray	- Bartica Town Councillor
		(5) Eon loyal	- RDC Councilor
8.	Region No. 8 Potaro-Siparuni	(1) Mitzy Campbell	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson)
		(2) Louis Armstrong	- Personnel Officer
		(3) Leah Warner	- Community Worker - Accountant

		(4) Jarvis John	
		(5) Carlus James	
9.	Region No. 9 Upper Takutu- Upper Essequibo	(1) Karl Singh	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson)
		(2) Bertie Xavier	-RDC Councillor
		(3) Sharon John	- RDC Councilor
		(4) Megan Thomas	- Town Councillor
		(5) Jagdesh Harrypaul	- Clerk to the Economic Fund
10.	Region No. 10 Upper Demerara- Upper Berbice	(1) Dwight John	- Regional Executive Officer (Chairperson)
		(2) Janella Bowen	- Administrator
		(3) Keisha Griffith	- RDC Councillor
		(4) Marvin Hartman	- Administrator
		(5) Dexter Harding	- RDC Councillor

(b) The appointments were made in accordance to Section 10 of the Procurement Act Cap.73:05.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Motion

Motion to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 2 of 2019

“Be It RESOLVED:

“That this National Assembly approve of the proposal set out in Financial No. 2 of 2020 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling four billion, one hundred and fifty million, two hundred and forty-two thousand, three hundred and ninety-one dollars (\$4,150,242,391) – Advances made from the Contingencies Fund for the period 2019-06-13 to 2019-12-31.”

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No.2 of 2019.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Dr. Singh: In accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly, the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2019, Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$4,150,242,391 for the period 13th June, 2020 to 31st December, 2019. I now move the motion.

Motion proposed.

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: Cde. Chairman, I seek clarity. The paper that we are asked to consider states ‘Financial Paper No. 2 of 2019’. Based on information, there was no such Financial Paper 2 of 2019, only Financial Paper No. 1 of 2019. I need some guidance on this. The Financial Paper No.1 of 2019 was for the provision of funds for the Elections Commission (GECOM). Any other paper would have been dissolved or dead when the House was dissolved.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, indeed there was a Financial Paper No. 1 of 2019, which was brought before this National

Assembly and was approved during the course of the year 2019. Subject to correction, I believe it was some time around June or July of 2019.

However, Financial Paper No. 1 of 2019 would have been brought to the National Assembly and approved. Subsequent to that, during the course of the calendar and fiscal year of 2019, that is to say during the period from June to December 2019, amounts totalling \$4,150,000,000, as indicated in this Financial Paper, were drawn from the Contingencies Fund. Various Contingencies Fund advances were issued for a variety of purposes during the course of fiscal year 2019, up to and until 31st December, 2019. Those Contingencies Fund advances that were drawn during that period are now reflected in this Financial Paper. I might add that, in keeping with the Constitution and the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA), those advances that were issued from the Contingencies Fund are required to be cleared. We are now bringing this Financial Paper for the purposes of clearing those advances.

Mr. Jones: My apologies to the Hon. Minister but his mask caused his words to be quite muffled. I was not too clear in terms of what he said just now. If he could please repeat, for clarity.

Dr. Singh: I will try again. Is this clearer?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. Singh: I was saying that, indeed, there was a Financial Paper No. 1 of 2019 which was brought to this House, if I am not mistaken, sometime in June of 2019. That I believe is the Financial Paper to which the Hon. Member is referring – Financial Paper No. 1 of 2019. After that paper would have been approved, advances were drawn from the Contingencies Fund during the period June 2019 to December 2019. A range of advances were drawn from the Contingencies Fund to meet a variety of purposes that are indicated in this second Financial Paper. The law requires advances drawn from the Contingencies Fund to be cleared subsequently. For a variety of reasons, which I think would be well-known to this House, including the political circumstances which prevailed during the latter half of 2019 and the first eight months of 2020, the Financial Paper that is required to clear the Contingencies Fund advances that were granted from June to December, 2019 was never brought to this House.

So, in keeping with the law and as required by the law, we are now bringing this Financial Paper to clear the Contingencies

Fund advances that were granted from June to December, 2019. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Jones, is that clear now?

Leader of the Opposition [Lt. Col Ret’d Harmon]: Mr. Chairman, could I ask a further question? Thanks for the clarity Hon. Minister. I am not a financial expert, but my understanding is that even though the funds would have been drawn down in 2019, it is now 2020 and, therefore, once the Parliament came to an end, one cannot name the paper ‘Financial Paper 2019’ when it is being brought in 2020.

I refer to our own situation when we came into Office in 2015. We cleared advances for 2012, 2013, and 2014, but they were intituled Bills in 2015. What I am saying is that we are not denying that there were expenses which were incurred between May and December, 2019. What we are saying is that to call it ‘Financial Paper No. 2 of 2019’ might be a misnomer.

Dr. Singh: The numbering of the Financial Paper reflects the facts that it represents transactions that were incurred. This Financial Paper, in fact, would have been prepared on the 31st December, 2019 and would have awaited tabling at the next available opportunity as is required by the law.

The actual titling of the Financial Paper, whether it is numbered 2 of 2019, is immaterial. What actually matters is the title of the Bill. As the Hon. Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the Bill is anew to Parliament in 2020. As a result of which, Sir, if the Hon. Members on that side of the House who appeared to be more pre-occupied with making noise rather than reading the Bill, which has been circulated and states in section 1 that this Act may be cited as the Supplementary Appropriation No. 2 for 2019... because it is the second Supplementary Appropriation that relates to fiscal year 2019. It states that:

“This Act may be cited as the Supplementary Appropriation No. 2 for 202, Act 2020”.

The Bill is actually coming to Parliament in 2020. It is intituled a 2020 Act and, once enacted, it would be a 2020 Act. I trust that this clarifies the matter.

Lt. Col (Ret’d) Harmon: I quite understand the explanation of the Minister that it is going to be a 2020 Act. Thank you.

Dr. Singh: Just to confirm that is the case. It will be a 2020 Act as is reflected in the Bill that is circulated.

Mr. Chairman: We can now proceed to consider the Financial Paper.

10.26 a.m.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we are in the Committee of Supply, you have to actually put each and every line item. I think that it is customary that the Chairman puts it, we ask questions and then we move on.

Mr. Chairman: Yea, I know that it is customary. There was one page, so I was going to put the entire page. If the House so prefers, I could put it line item by line item. Hon. Member Ms. Gail Teixeira, you may have the floor.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Sorry, Mr. Chairman are you going line item by line item or are you going to put the whole page?

Mr. Chairman: I wanted to hear what you have to say before I [*inaudible*].

Ms. Teixeira: Okay. I wanted to ask a question on item 4 on Financial Paper No. 2 of 2019, if you would allow it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go line item by line item then. Just for some guidance, should I put every single line item to the vote?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, as it is one paper that is being put, normally we would go on the page that is current and or capital. In the budget we do it slightly different, so I do not think it is a problem if we go with a total once we are finish all the questioning because there are a number of questions, I believe, both sides have to ask about this paper.

Mr. Chairman: I notice quite a few persons were indicating ‘yes’ for us to put each line item to the vote.

Current Expenditure

Item 1: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support System – \$179,369,546

Item 1: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support System – \$179,369,546 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Expenditure

Item 2: 32-321 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Policy Development and Administration – \$40,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do not know who is responding but could the Hon. Member who is responding say how many households are connected to the two generators at the Port Kaituma grid?

Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]: Mr. Chairman, I am looking for my technical people to see if they could get the exact figure.

The Hon. Member who is asking the question was the Minister who managed this sector during the time when this money was expended without parliamentary cover. The issue here is that I think the Hon. Minister should be asking for what was the supplementary money spent. I do not know how we reached to Port Kaituma and we have not established what the \$40 million was spent to do. That is what we need to be establishing in the first instance.

Mr. Patterson: Obviously, I did not get an answer to my question. Could I proceed because the answering Hon. Member does not seem to have all the information? Could I ask the Hon. Member to confirm that all the tenders and the expenditure conform to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) requirements? Could I ask the Hon. Member to confirm same?

Bishop Edghill: In relation to the \$40 million on this line item, the Hon. Member, when he was the Minister of Public Infrastructure, transferred this money to the Power Producers and Distributors Incorporated (PPDI). That is what he did. This money was not spent by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, it was sent to PPDI, purportedly, to repair generators. The Hon. Member knows the answer and he should not be asking about tendering when there are no tendering documents in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure to support this \$40 million. This money was sent to another agency. It was not spent by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

Mr. Patterson: Once again, I have not received an answer. Could I ask another question? Are the generators in Port Kaituma functioning now? At least the Hon. Minister should know that.

Bishop Edghill: We are considering a paper that came at the end of 31st December, 2019. What we can say is, because of the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) interventions since coming to Office, all of the generators in the hinterland communities are functioning. When we took Office, Matthew’s Ridge was without power for months, Port Kaituma and Mabaruma were suffering and Kwakwani was

having electricity for four and five hours per day. The mismanagement by the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) led to that state of suffering in the interior. The generators are all functioning because of the intervention by the PPP/C since coming to Office.

Mr. Patterson: Once again, the Hon. Member has not answered a simple question as to whether the generators in Port Kaituma are functioning and operational in 2020.

I would proceed because, obviously, I know that the Hon. Member is efficient of technical support. In relation to expansion of the grid, could the Hon. Member say how many extra consumers were brought onto the grid in 2019?

My second question is: could the Hon. Member say whether this generator serves the hospital, the schools and all other administrative buildings in Port Kaituma and whether they are all functioning correctly now?

Bishop Edghill: I think I have some experience in the Parliament. We are questioning a provision of \$40 million that did not buy a generator. The impact or the output of this sum of \$40 million could not be measured by how many people got electricity because it was not a generator that was bought. This was money that was transferred from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure by the Hon. Member asking the question, purportedly, for the purpose of repairs to generators at Port Kaituma. In fact, when we assumed Office, all of the hinterland generators were behind schedule for maintenance and repairs by at least two to three years. So, the Hon. Member should tell the nation what he did with this \$40 million that was sent to PPDI.

Mr. Patterson: Once again, the Hon. Member seems preoccupied. Could the Hon. Member say, as of the 1st January, 2020, whether the community of Port Kaituma was in receipt of electricity? It is a simple no or yes. It is a simple question.

Bishop Edghill: As of the 1st January, 2020, the community of Port Kaituma was not in receipt of regular uninterrupted power supply.

May I further answer? The remedy to Port Kaituma, Matthew’s Ridge, Kwakwani and all the areas under the Hinterland Electrification Company Incorporated (HECI) came late 2020 after the PPP/C assumed Office and made the necessary interventions through an emergency budget.

Item 2: 32-321 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Policy Development and Administration – \$40,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stands part of the Schedule.

Capital Expenditure

Item 3: 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works – \$1,710,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Member list the scope of works for this sum stated here? It states, “emergency works”. Could the Hon. Member disaggregate the sums?

Bishop Edghill: The sums that we are discussing today, the sum of \$1,710,000,000, that went into this expenditure came under the Contingencies Fund advance. Under the Contingencies Fund advance, there are special provisions of how you could draw. It must be urgent and unforeseen. I have the full breakdown of which I will give to the House. I will read out every item. The Hon. Member asking the question was the Minister who presided over this sector and he used moneys from the Contingencies Fund advance to do things such as: for example, a feasibility study and design for rehabilitation of the Charity market wharf. A Contingencies Fund Advance was used for that – a misuse of public funds.

10.41 a.m.

I will go through the list for the Hon. Member so that his legacy will be on record: Riprap sea defence at Prospect, Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara – \$159,000,748; Emergency works, construction of heavy-duty timber bridge across the Bellamy Canal at Dantzig, Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara Region 5 – \$13,000,961; construction of riprap sea defences between Prospect and Broomhall, Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara – \$143 million; supply and delivery of boulders between Prospect and Dantzig, Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara – \$69 million; and supply and delivery of boulders between Prospect and Dantzig, Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara – \$75 million.

Mr. Chairman, I am going through this because I will show you that, after all of this expenditure, when we assumed Office, there was still flooding at Dantzig, Content and Prospect, Mahaicony. These are places where interventions had to be made. Let us go through the list.

We have emergency sea defence works between Fairfield and Prospect, Mahaicony – \$234 million; 6000 tonnes of boulders at Dantzig, Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara – \$90 million; and supply and delivery of 6,000 tonnes of boulders between Dantzig and Prospect, Mahaicony – \$90 million.

Lot 3: Supply and delivery of 6,000 tonnes of boulders between Prospect and Fairfield, Mahaicony – \$90 million. Stock piling was deemed as emergency works. This is what is going on. stock piling to spend money and to give contracts to people for emergency works.

Lot 4: Supply and delivery of 5,000 tonnes of boulders between Prospect and Fairfield – \$75 million; supply and delivery of geotextile filter fabric – \$8,120; supply and delivery of geotextile filter fabric – \$8,000,660; supply and delivery of geotextile material – \$8,504,000; supply and delivery of clay – \$15.6 million; supply and delivery of clay – \$13 million; supply and delivery of clay – \$10.4 million; supply and delivery of clay at Fairfield, Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara – \$5.6 million; supply and delivery of clay at Fairfield – \$1.9 million; and supply and delivery of clay – \$2.28 million.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot do the Auditor General’s work. If all this clay is being supplied to the same location and one is breaking it down so that it does not have to go to the NPTAB and one is awarding it at the ministerial tender board level, then Auditor General will deal with that in his report.

In relation to contract splitting: Emergency empowering of works between DeHoop and Cottage, Mahaicony – \$13.8 million; upgrading of access dam at Dantzig, Mahaicony – \$9.9 million; dewatering of canal along Dantzig access road, Mahaicony – \$1.4 million; transportation of punts from Uitvlugt, West Coast Demerara to DeHoop, Mahaica – \$2.5 million; and the upgrading of Carlton Hall Primary School compound, Mahaicony – \$2.8 million. This is what was urgent under this project – the compound of the school.

There was the supply and delivery of boulders at the Dantzig shoreline – \$4.5 million; supply and delivery of clay for emergency sea defence works along the Mahaicony shoreline – \$5.8 million; supply and delivery of clay for emergency sea defence works along the Mahaicony shoreline – \$5.8 million; supply and delivery of clay for emergency sea defence works along the Mahaicony shoreline – \$5.8 million; supply and delivery of clay for emergency sea defence works along the Mahaicony shoreline – \$5.8 million; procurement of concrete pavers for waterfront areas – \$5.9 million; feasibility study and design for the rehabilitation for the Charity Market walk – \$23.34 million; and feasibility study – \$23 million.

For emergency works from a Contingencies Fund advance: to the Hon. Member asking the question, there is the

construction of riprap sea defence at Belladrum – \$109 million; construction of riprap sea defences at Washington, Weldaad – \$210 million; construction of riprap sea defences at Cottage, Mahaicony, No. 5 – \$116 million; construction of riprap sea defence at Nooten Zuil – \$147 million; construction of riprap sea defences at Den Amstel – \$149 million; and the construction of riprap sea defences at Andrews, Essequibo; \$124 million. This gives a total of \$1,710,000,000. Thanks to the Administration to which the Member asking the question belongs.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you. Could the Hon. Member say to us what was the distance of the breach at Dantzig, Content and those areas? I know it. I just want to make sure that he knows what he is saying.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Member clarify which breach and at what month? I could tell him the size of the breach that we inherited in August, 2020. Which breach is he referring to that required these emergency works?

Mr. Patterson: I am not the one bringing this paper here. I am asking a simple question. I am asking for the record, what was the size of the breach?

Bishop Edghill: As the Minister now managing this sector, I have no institutional documentation to suggest that there was a breach that demanded emergency works to that extent. As a matter of fact, if you check the supplementary paper, where we are spending \$1,710,000,000, the programme for the sea defence works throughout the whole country for 2019 that was approved by the National Assembly before the passage of the no confidence motion, where all of these sums that are being accounted for were spent without the proper legal architecture in place, it was \$1.7 billion, \$300 million in emergency works above the parliamentary approval of \$1.4 million for a designated programme for the entire year. That is what we are talking about.

The experts, all of the engineers came to Parliament with a programme for \$1.4 billion, which the Parliament approved. You spent the \$1.4 billion, then you went on, after March 2020, to spend an additional \$1.7 million in what you call ‘emergency works’. Still, when the PPP/C inherited Government, after democracy finally prevailed, we had to make interventions in the same area.

This is not all. Before this \$1.7 billion was made, earlier in the year, the Hon. Member asking the question, gave a contract to a certain company for \$170 million to do works in the same area. This breach was obviously a breach that was

unending in the mind of the man who was managing the sector.

We know that we had a 500-meters breach that we had to address when we came into Office and that was dealt with expeditiously in an open manner known to the entire country. What we have inspected, because I have walked the entire shoreline, are four sections of 500 meters where works are ongoing and where we are putting in permanent structures. Four 500-meters sections are being remedied. The Hon. Member could tell us about the other breach that I do not know about.

Mr. Patterson: I think the Member will run out of steam because the breach was actually three kilometres.

Could I ask if the Hon. Member is aware that the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) prepared an impact assessment report in July, 2019, which was incorporated with the request for emergency fund? Is the Hon. Member aware of that impact assessment report which was included in the request for the Contingencies funding?

Bishop Edghill: I think all Hon. Members of this House knows that the CDC responds to disasters and that the CDCs responds to emergencies. The CDC will have to answer on its study. I am answering in this honourable House for the expenditure of \$1.7 billion that was expended based on a drawing from the Contingencies Fund as emergency funding. No amount in this \$1.7 billion was for funding to the CDC to bring relief to people who are affected by some disaster. I read out the list of the expenditure of how this money was spent.

Mr. Patterson: For the Hon. Member’s edification, the CDC issued an impact assessment of spring tide and the agencies were the CDC, Ministry of Agriculture, National Agricultural Research & Extension Institute (NAREI)...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it is question time.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, I know, Sir. I am just referencing my question to the report. Could the Hon. Member say what was the area of rice land inundated and the amount of rice farmers that would have been affected by the breach had it not been contained?

Bishop Edghill: I have learnt a long time ago that the art of obfuscating an issue is by circumventing and being circular. That is what we are having here in this questioning. I am answering for an expenditure of \$1.7 billion that was supposedly or purportedly spent by the Ministry of Public

Infrastructure which was managed by the political head of that Ministry, the Hon. Member Patterson, who is asking these questions.

10.56 a.m.

The Hon. Member would like to justify his actions in this Committee, by having me say how much lands were flooded and how many people were affected, that is a document that you should have submitted to the Ministry of Finance when you were requesting that supplementary provision. The Ministry of Finance did not provide that document, Mr. Patterson. Do not come today to obfuscate the issue by trying to be circular and circumventing the issue. The bottom line is that \$1.7 billion more than the voted provision of \$1.4 billion for 2019 was spent. It has to be brought to account; it was done under your stewardship.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Patterson: I am so glad the Hon. Member mentioned the document that would have to be sent to the Minister of Finance. These are lovely devices. I actually have the document here that was submitted to the Ministry of Finance. I released it publicly. For the records, just for your edification, it was 7000 acres of rice land that was under threat. One hundred and forty-four households were threatened.

Mr. Chairman: Ask your question, Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Member say if there was saltwater intrusion on these 7000 acres, how long would it take, after the water would have been cleared, for the lands to become usable again? Could the Hon. Member say that - the impact?

Bishop Edghill: I respectfully say that this hollowed Assembly must not be reduced to a place where we are seeking to score points.

Saline water on the land, depending on how long it remains on the land, will have effects for so many different years. If you could get the saline water off quickly, the lands would be usable within a particular time. We are not here to discuss, today, how long the water stays on the land and whether it is seven or 10 years. The Hon. Member is trying to justify an expenditure that he carried out by asking me questions. I really do not understand this circus that he is trying to put us through.

Mr. Patterson: Just for the Hon. Member’s notice and record, it says seven years. Seven thousand acres of land...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are asking questions.

Mr. Patterson: I did, Sir, but he did not answer.

Mr. Chairman: But now you are asking questions and you are answering them.

Mr. Patterson: Okay, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So, please ask your questions.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Minister confirm if the salient and saltwater intrusion on the land takes seven years for the land to become fertile and usable again? Could the Hon. Minister confirm? That is a question, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: I am the Minister answering questions on financial appropriations. I am not the expert. I am not the agricultural scientists and the expert. Those questions belong at another forum. We are speaking to the appropriation on how moneys were appropriated.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Member confirm that 7000 acres, at two crops per acre... The funds that would have been lost to the Region 5 farmers, if no intervention was made, would have been \$1.5 billion, annually. Could the Hon. Member confirm that?

Bishop Edghill: The issue that we are dealing with here is about the appropriation of \$1.7 billion. I would like to state that I strongly object to an Hon. Member, who presided over the mismanagement of this sector, using the National Assembly in this consideration of this Financial Paper, to justify something that he will have to answer to the Auditor General (AG) for. He will have to answer for the contract splitting. He will have to answer for the lack of procurement process. He will have to answer for that. What we are dealing with now is the \$1.7 billion and I strongly object to this line of questioning. Mr. Patterson, the Hon. Member, is free to take this conversation where he wants to take it, but he should not use these hallowed halls to score political points to justify something that he himself has to answer for.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, just a moment please. You are not allowing me the intervention before you speak. I am going to give you one more question on this item. Other persons want to ask questions, also.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification from you: Are you saying, as the Chairman of the Committee of Supply, that you will limit the number of questions a Member can ask, even if it is the substantive shadow Minister? Are you saying that, Sir? This is just for my clarification.

Mr. Chairman: I am saying that we have had a number of questions from you, and they are going in a direction that does not pertain to the use of this \$1.7 billion. I am giving you one final question on this item and allowing other persons to get an opportunity to ask a question. I am also appealing to the House because it is very noisy listening to the House at this time, so please.

Mr. Patterson: It is unprecedented that we are constrained by the number of questions in the Committee of Supply. Okay, Sir, if you have limited... Could the Hon. Member confirm that, by this timely intervention by the Government, over 7000 acres of rice land was saved, that 148 families’ livelihoods were spared and over \$1.4 billion, annually, was spared for the residents of Region 5? Could the Hon. Member confirm that?

Bishop Edghill: This Hon. Member could confirm that, by the negligence of the Hon. Member asking the question, people in the area suffered. When we came to Office, we had to make the necessary interventions even though \$1.7 billion was already expended. I am confirming the negligence of the APNU/AFC Administration, as it relates to the management, maintenance and upkeep of sea defences in that area where this money was purportedly to have been spent. I am confirming negligence.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. Is there any other Member who would like to ask questions on this project code?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, if there are no other Members, could I obviously continue? The reason you restricted it was because you said that other persons wanted to ask questions.

Mr. Chairman: On the other hand, Hon. Member, you made a statement that I was ‘limiting’ questions. It was a very profound statement about limiting questions. One of my observations is that the questioning on this particular project code is going a bit beyond the boundary, in other words, what

the money was used for. If you want to do the economic analysis of the expenditure and the benefits to people, that is another issue. I will give you one more question and then I will put the question.

Mr. Patterson: We are live, Sir. I just want to put on the records that the contingency spending, as the Hon. Minister of Finance explained, is for emergency works and there are three criteria and included in the...

Mr. Chairman: What is the question?

Mr. Patterson: I am sorry, Sir. You said that I am going beyond.

Mr. Chairman: I will not allow you to make a statement. I think all of us are quite aware of what the Contingencies Funds are used for and we do not need to restate it here. You could restate it when we have some other policy intervention.

At this time, is there another question pertaining to the \$1.7 billion that is being sought, a question with respect to what it is being used for or was used for? Thank you very much.

Item 3: 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works – \$1,750,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Expenditure

Item 4: 42-422 Ministry of Communities – Sustainable Communities Development – \$2,176,997,945

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, under this project code 1903200, Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA), there is \$2,176,997,945. Could the Hon. Minister explain what were the lands that were transferred by National Industrial & Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) to the CH&PA and what were they expected to be used for? If they were sold, how much were they sold for and if they were not sold, what were they used for?

I want to also inform the House that in the same 2019 Financial Paper No. 1/2019, was allocated an additional \$700 million through CH&PA, on top of the voted provision of \$780 million. The \$2,176,997,945 is an enormous increase on what was already in the CH&PA. Could the Hon. Minister advise us on what were the reasons for this and what were the usages of the money, the \$2,176,997,945? Was this concluded by the end of 2019?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister answering for the Ministry of Communities.

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This sum represents the lump sum payment that was made to NICIL upon the request of the then Minister of Finance, to the then Minister of Communities, Minister Bulkan. The payment was part of a valuation that was done for lands that were supposed to be transferred to CH&PA by NICIL. However, even at this point in time, for many of those lands, the transactions have not been completed. We are still in that phase.

11.11 a.m.

I also want to bring to the House’s attention a letter that was found as part of the records. The letter was written by the Minister of Finance and this is what the letter states:

“Repayment of Syndicated Bond

I am in receipt of a letter dated 2019.10.15 from Mr. Colvin Heath-London, Executive Head of the Special Purpose Unit, NICIL, on the subject for ease reference...

Essentially, Mr. Heath-London has solicited my intervention in a matter involving CH&PA, where NICIL is owed \$3,245,963,400 for lands already transferred to CH&PA. These funds are needed urgently, so that NICIL can meet its November and December payments (\$2,176,997,945) of the Syndicated Bond (SB) that was raised to finance GUYSUCO. It should be noted that NICIL has no other sources of revenue to meet this large payment, failure of which will activate the Government guarantee of the SB.”

This letter was copied to the then President and the Minister within the Ministry of Communities.

To answer the question that was asked, and I repeat, the payment was done on 22nd November, the request was made on 21st October. The number of lands had been identified, but I can say clearly that the transactions for completing the vesting of them, for many of those lands, were not completed as yet.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could we ask the Hon. Member if any of these lands relate to Ogle and the disposal of lands in Ogle by NICIL?

Mr. Croal: No, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, if I may...

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you may, but I did not catch the voice.

Ms. Ferguson: This is Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson. I just want to make a point with regard to the response given by the Hon. Member, Mr. Collin Croal, when he said that the vesting order is supposed to be completed and that the lands are to be handed over from NICIL to CH&PA. I just want to say, many of the lands that were controlled by Guyana Sugar Corporation Incorporated (GuySuCo) were actually transferred to NICIL, and many of the lands were lands that were acquired during the PPP/C...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, on Point of Order, this is a discussion on a Supplementary Order Paper. Questions are asked and the Ministers answer. I think the Hon. Member has an identity problem right now as she seems to still think that she is the Minister answering on the issue.

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Member, I do not have an identity problem. I need to put the facts out there...

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

Mr. Jones: Comrade Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: There are other opportunities for you to put the facts out there. You have to ask a question.

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Chairman, the Hon. Member is disrespectful.

Mr. Chairman: You have to ask a question under this head. Hon. Mr. Jones, is it Mr. Jones that I am hearing?

Mr. Jones: Comrade Chairman, with reference to the Hon. Chief Whip’s Statement, that the Hon. Member has an identity problem, I request that she withdraws it immediately because it is an insult to the Hon. Member in this Committee. It is uncalled for, absolutely uncalled for.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, can we now confine ourselves to asking questions with respect to the sums being sought? If the explanation given does not satisfy you and you have additional information, you are free to let persons know what that information is, but this session is about asking questions for the sums sought.

If there are no other questions for the Hon. Minister, Mr. Croal, I will put the question.

Item 4: 42-422 Ministry of Communities – Sustainable Communities Development – \$2,176,997,945 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Expenditure

Item 5: 43-433 – Ministry of Public Health Family Health Care Services - \$ 13,874,900

Ms. Teixeira: The \$13 million is being requested for vaccination when money was budgeted just a few months before in the 2019 Budget. Could the Hon. Member say whether this, in fact, addressed the two issues: firstly, the shortage of vaccines in the Ministry in 2019 and early 2020 and, also, if the Ministry had reached the isolated areas, Apoteri and other areas, that had not vaccinated the children for two years?

Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Hon. Member. The sums that are being sought for \$13 million is really, as was stated, for the *mop up* of persons who did not get their vaccines, especially in Regions 1,7, 8 and 9. Apparently, the technical officers at the Ministry did an assessment in the third quarter of 2019 and found that the vaccination rates in these regions, Regions 1,7,8 and 9, were way below the targets. What they were trying to do was to be able to go into those regions and try to increase the rates of vaccination.

However, one of the things that you would have in the Ministry’s normal budget is adequate sums of money to be able to take care of the vaccination programmes across the country. Therefore, this additional sum, I am not sure why it was necessary.

Item 5: 43-433 – Ministry of Public Health Family Health Care Services- \$ 13,874,900 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Expenditure

Item 6: 76-762– Region 6- East Berbice/Corentyne-Agriculture- \$30,000,000

Item 6: 76-762– Region 6- East Berbice/Corentyne-Agriculture- \$30,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Question:

“That the Committee of Supply approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 2/2019 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$4,150,242,391 for the period 2019-06-13 to 2019-12-13.

put, and carried.

Assembly resumed.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/2019 and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Orders Nos. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill, Bill No. 2 of 2019 – Bill No. 17 of 2020 to be introduced at this stage.”

[Prime Minister]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, we will have to seek the suspension of Standing Orders No. 13 (n) and 54 so that we can take all the stages of the Bill today.

Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips]: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill No.2/2019, No. 17/2020 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph (2) of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, Bill No. 2 of 2019, Bill No.17 of 2020 for consideration by the National Assembly and I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read for the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

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

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL – Bill No. 2 of 2019 – Bill No. 17 of 2020

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December,

2019, 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.”

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

Question put and carried.

Bill read for the first time.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation Bill No.2 for 2019, Bill No.17 of 2020 be read a second time.

11.26 a.m.

BILLS – Second and Third Readings

Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 2 of 2019 – Bill No. 17 of 2020

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2019, 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.”

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

Question 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 as printed.

Motion to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1 of 2020

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2020 - Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling seven hundred and ninety-two million, three hundred and thirty thousand, nine hundred and twenty five dollars (\$792,330,925) - Advances made from the Contingencies Fund for the period 2020-10-01 to 2020-12-21.”

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

Mr. Speaker: We shall now resolve ourselves into Committee of Supply to consider the next Financial Paper. We are at *Financial Paper No. 1/2020*.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Motion proposed.

Current Expenditure

Item 1: 16-162 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs — Community Development and Empowerment — \$53,855,737

Mr. Henry: I would just like to ask the Hon. Member of the House to explain what consists of and amounts to the \$53,855,737, and its urgency to be part of the proposal here.

Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Ms. Campbell-Sukhai]: The additional request of \$53,855,737 is an additional provision being requested to bring up to date the hinterland student population uniform assistance with that of the national amount of \$4,000.

Mr. Henry: I just want to ask the Hon. Member to clarify that these sums or these uniforms, *et cetera*, were already catered for, ordered and already distributed, and that all we are doing now is allowing for this money to be taken out of the Consolidated Fund to pay for expenses already passed.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: There has been an exercise over the last week whereby, in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, the provision that is being requested was distributed to parents as a school uniform assistance. I would like to repeat that this sum is being brought up to the level for hinterland students to enjoy the same amount of support that other students would have been receiving as assistance.

Mr. Henry: I would like to clarify that this amount was for supplies already presented and that there was no amount from

this sum for the chartering of aircraft to go into the various Regions, *et cetera*.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The sum requested here is purely for the school uniform assistance to hinterland students.

Deputy Speaker [Mr. Shuman]: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, and she could submit this in writing, which are the communities and that would have benefitted from this further allocation?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I will repeat; all the schools in Regions 7, 8, and 9, with the exception of the Bartica Secondary School, have received the \$4,000 school uniform assistance that was provided by the Government. Bartica, I must add, usually collects the uniform voucher under the Ministry of Education’s distribution.

Mr. Shuman: I would like to ask if the Hon. Minister would be so kind as to lay this over to the House, please.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I will so do.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say how many children in total are recipients of this allowance in Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9 – the whole number? Could she give a breakdown as to how many children are receiving it in Region 1, Region 7, Region 8, and Region 9?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I will provide the figures, but I have already approved to lay over the numbers in a short period. Region 1 – 1,833; Region 7 – 569; Region 8 – 751; and Region 9 – 812. Those are for the nursery school children. For the primary school children: Region 1 – 7,719; Region 7 – 2,110; Region 8 – 2,224; Region 9 – 6,214, a total of 18,267 for those areas. With respect to secondary school children: Region 1 – 3,329; Region 7 – 562, Region 8 – 1,369; Region 9 – 2,563, a total of 7,823. With respect to the total, it adds up to 31,055 students. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we were offline. I understand that we are back online.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I am confirming that the Hon. Minister said that the total amount of students in receipt of the uniform allowance is 31,055 students.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Agreed, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, 31,055 students multiplied by 4,000 gives you \$124,220,000. The amount that is requested is \$53,855,737. Earlier, from October to December, 2020, we approved a total of \$71,768,000. From January to September,

under the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs, this line item carried a sum of \$17,711,000, giving a grand total of \$143,334,737. The difference from the number of students that the Hon. Minister referenced, 31,055 students, when you minus \$143,334,737 from \$124,220,000, there is a difference of \$19,114,737. Could the Hon. Minister say where this extra money is and what it was used for?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The extra money of \$1,403,888 added to the \$17,711,000 was for unpaid sums that the APNU/AFC Government had due from the previous year – suppliers from the previous years. That is where the difference will be. The allocation or the supplementary provision we are asking for, like I said, is to bring on *par* the hinterland students receiving \$4000 as all other students.

11.41 a.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I am still...

Mr. Chairman: Sorry Dr. Henry. Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, proceed.

Mr. Mahipaul: I heard the Hon. Minister say that they are asking for this money, but to my knowledge, based on the submission of this paper, this money has already been spent, and they have just come here for approval. I am saying to the Hon. Minister that, from my calculation, the amount of money that is being given to students in the hinterland communities, Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, amounts to \$124,220,000, based on what she would have said. If you multiply 31,055 students by \$4,000, it gives you \$124,220,000.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mahipaul, I think you made that point before. So, give her an opportunity to answer again.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I heard the Hon. Minister say that the extra money is \$1,403,888. I am saying Sir, from my calculation, it is \$19,114,737. I am asking the Hon. Minister: what was the extra \$19 million used for since this money has already been spent? Clearly, it is not on more children.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I believe the Hon. Member’s memory is short. From January to August, the budget catered for \$17 million plus for the APNU/AFC Government. Those moneys, according to our record, were paid to suppliers who were owed for the previous year’s supply. Therefore, what remained or the voted provision in the PPP/C’s budget was \$71,768,000. We are asking for \$53,855,737. That brings us exactly to the calculation of 31,055 students by \$4,000, which will give you \$124,220,000. The excess is \$1,403,888 and

that was used for unpaid balances on APNU/AFC’s debt which we inherited.

Dr. Henry: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what is the expenditure, to date, for the sums that were appropriated in the 2020 Budget for that activity? Based on that response, I would then follow-up.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: From my records and from the information I have here, we are actually dealing with a supplemental and it only caters for the period October to December.

Dr. Henry: Is the Hon. Member therefore admitting that, in their haste to present what they considered to be an emergency budget, there was such poor planning that this activity was not even catered for in the 2020 Budget? Is that the admission we are hearing?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: In response to that query, all I would say is that the APNU/AFC Government failed the students of the hinterland, and for a number of years they did not provide adequate supply of school uniforms to those children. In fact, my travels across the four hinterland areas brought to my attention that many of the schools, during 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, did not receive adequate number of school uniforms. In fact, for 2018 and 2019, they hurriedly made attempts to deliver in March, just one week before elections.

Dr. Henry: Could the Hon. Member please indicate what method will be used in terms of expending these moneys before 31st December, 2020 or is it, as I am hearing, it may have already been expended and they are just using us here to cover that up?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: We have just completed questions on a previous Financial Paper and, similarly, the same process applies to this issue. This is my response.

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

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member?

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, do I have your attention?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Hon. Member. Go ahead, Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Earlier the Hon. Minister said that the \$1,403,888 will be used to clear expenses that the Ministry currently has with reference to the sewing of uniforms or

some expense; an expense it is being used to pay for. Could the Hon. Minister layover in writing to this House the outstanding expense? First of all, could she say what is the remaining expense and could she layover to this House how much money was spent for each person who is in receipt of these expenses?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I will be only too willing to lay that over at an appropriate time.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am happy that the Hon. Minister will layover a breakdown of the expense, but could she give us a number reference for the total expense that has been incurred to this date?

Mr. Chairman: Do you need that in writing to be laid over?

Mr. Mahipaul: No, Sir. I am asking for the total on the floor, but I am asking for a breakdown in writing for the individuals who are being contracted to do the work.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you in a position to give the total?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I do not have the document here with me, but I will give you the breakdown: \$71,768,151; unpaid accounts – \$1,403,888; and requested supplemental allocation – \$53,855,737. I do not have the total here, but since you are recording, you can do the maths.

Mr. Mahipaul: That is not what I asked the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member said that the extra money of \$1,403,888 – this is after you minus the money which was allocated for the students and how many students got – was used to offset expenses which were incurred by the APNU/AFC. I am asking for a breakdown of the contractors who were contracted to sew these uniforms or whatever purpose the money was used to clear whatever expense. I am asking on the floor, also, for an answer to whether there is a total amount of arrears that is outstanding or whether it was just the \$1,403,888 to be cleared. That is what I am asking. I am not asking how much you have budgeted and what not.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I have agreed to layover the information. I do not have the breakdown or the suppliers’ or contractors’ name, and I have never referred to it as moneys to be paid for sewing.

Mr. Mahipaul: It is very unfortunate and unacceptable to know that the Hon. Minister made a statement saying that \$1,403,888 was used to pay an outstanding amount and she cannot provide to this House the total amount that is outstanding. I am not asking for a figure, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, I will move on to the Hon. Member, Ms. Hastings-Williams.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The question the Hon. Member is asking has nothing to do with the line item or the supplemental that we are working on currently.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, I think you have exhausted this line of questioning. Let us see what the Hon. Minister will provide you. I am now recognising the Hon. Member, Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While the moneys have been expended, to my knowledge and to this date, Kako Primary School and Imbaimadai Primary School have not received the cash grant. Could the Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs say to this Committee whether there is a plan as to when exactly these schools will be in receipt of their cash grant? Thank you. **[Mr. Hamilton:** We are not dealing with the cash grant.] I am talking about the \$4,000 uniform assistance money. The same money.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Indeed, if the Hon. Members were listening...

Ms. Hastings-Williams: They never received it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Hastings, please. You asked a question. Allow the Minister to answer.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I did say, when I started the contribution on the floor, that, over the past week, an exercise was being done to provide to the hinterland students the \$4,000 per child school uniform assistance. That means the issue is still active.

Item 1: 16-162 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Community Development and Empowerment - \$53,855,737 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$186,322,348.

Mr. Ramjattan: With respect to the itemisation of the dams and where they are, since you said there are a number of

dams in Regions 2, 3 and 5 for which this money was spent, could the Hon. Minister provide where these dams are in Regions 2,3 and 5? How much was spent on the various dams to bring the total up to \$186,322,348? In relation to Region 5, I would just like to have the drainage works. Itemise for me how much was spent on the very final item.

11.56 a.m.

I think it was Grove/Diamond and the Dantzig, Region 5 areas. Breakdown for me the 186 million and where it was spent. Could that be provided? If not today, sometime.

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Mustapha]: Firstly, I would like to say that when I became Minister of Agriculture, I conducted a number of outreaches across the country. Many persons and many farmers complained of the dilapidated structures in these agricultural areas. Many rice crops and cash crops were threatened. As a result, we had to do emergency work. I will provide the Hon. Member with a detailed expenditure of the \$186 million.

I would also like to say that the largest agricultural scheme, the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary/Agricultural Development Association (MMA/ADA), for which the former Government, APNU/AFC increased land rental and drainage & irrigation (D&I) charges by almost 600%, they failed to execute any work in that scheme. As a result of that, rice crops were threatened and we had to conduct emergency work. We have since reduced land rental and D&I charges from \$15,000 per acre to \$3,500.

Mr. Chairman, for the convenience of this Parliament, I can itemise it. For Dantzig, we did an internal dam to prevent salt water from going into the cultivation area at a cost of \$10,130,000. It was done by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA). We did emergency work at the MMA/ADA scheme. There was mechanical cleaning at a cost of \$90,808,000 and a number of canals were cleared in this scheme. In the Abary area, we saved 37,000 acres of rice; in the Abary/Mahaicony area, 22,000 acres; in the Mahaica/Mahaicony area, 26,000 acres; and 6000 acres in the Hoop Van Better area.

We also did a number of canals, amounting to 727.5 miles of canals in the MMA/ADA scheme. If you traverse that scheme now, farmers are going back to the land in droves. We have demand for land in that scheme, whereas before August, many farmers had left the scheme because of the dilapidated infrastructure on the canal. We also did emergency repairs to access dams in Black Bush Polder, Good Hope, Number 3,

main access dam in Gibraltar/Fyrish. We did repairs to dams in Region 5. We graded and shaped dams in Leguan, Wakenaam and Grove/Diamond amounting to \$30,271,000. The works on those dams were necessary for farmers to bring out their produce.

Also, with the high tides that we had and the neglect of these sluices, we had sluice doors that collapsed in Leguan, Wakenaam, Diamond and Number 51 Village. We had to do emergency work to repair the sluice doors there. Those were some of the emergency work that we did so that farmers and residents could have benefitted from the \$186,322,348.

Mr. Ramjattan: Since he made more of a speech there, Sir, I want to ask how much subvention, as a result of not wanting to take the increases from MMA/ADA, the State now has to pay for all these emergencies? You do not want the rice farmers to pay. You want the State to pay.

An. Hon. Member: Why do you want the farmers to pay?

Mr. Ramjattan: Well, because they make a profit.

Mr. Mustapha: As I said, we have reduced that fee from \$15,000 to \$3,500, which has increased production. We are looking at the budget plan for 2021 and we will know that figure shortly. I want to say that the APNU/AFC always tied subventions to these organisations, whereas, it is important for us to look beyond the balance sheet when we look at these important agricultural schemes so that we can get more production and bring in more foreign exchange into our country.

Item 2: 21-212 Ministry Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$186,322,348 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force - \$6,525,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say how many motorcycles will or has been be purchased with this amount?

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Benn]: Fifteen motorcycles were purchased for the amount stated and they are operational beginning today.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Mr. Chairman, I thank you and I trust that you had a very happy holiday with your family. I respectfully refer the Hon. Minister to item 3, agency code 51-512, Land and Water Transport – Police. There is a request for in excess of \$6 million from the Contingencies

Fund to facilitate the procurement of motorcycles. According to what is stated in the legend, the purchase is to bolster the Guyana Police Force’s (GPF) response to the upsurge in armed robberies during the Christmas season. My first question to the Hon. Minister, albeit that he is a non-elected Member in this House, is: do you recall that only in September of this year, a matter of a few days ago, moneys were allocated under this line item to the Guyana Police Force? This is a question just for clarity.

Mr. Benn: I do not recall the specifics, at the moment, to which the Hon. Member is referring.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Minister provide the Committee with the percentage of armed robberies that occurred during this period which informed him of the need to purchase these motorcycles and where they were distributed?

Mr. Benn: There has been a general increase in armed robberies of the order of 20-25% during this year against the 2019 year-to-date. The motorcycles have been distributed between the traffic ranks and the general patrols of the Guyana Police Force.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I believe this question may have been asked by my Colleague, but I may have missed the answer. Could the Hon. Minister state what is the make, model and year of these motorcycles that were purchased and can you say how many motorcycles were purchased out of the \$428 million that was allocated? Could you also state how many motorcycles, which were purchased from 2nd August to now, are functioning?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think the question with respect of \$400 million has passed. We are dealing with the item before us.

Mr. Benn: The motorcycles are Honda and they are, I believe, this year’s production.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira?

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, Mr. Figueira is not on the floor. It is Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul. Could the Hon. Minister say which regions the 15 motorcycles are in?

Mr. Benn: The motorcycles are mostly identified for Region 4 – the capital region, the East Bank and the East Coast of Demerara.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say if it is Region 4 alone that has an increase in armed robberies? I am guided that Region 3 needs motorcycles also.

Mr. Chairman: I think the proper question would have been: are these moneys being used to purchase motorcycles for Region 3?

Mr. Benn: I did say that the motorcycles were mostly identified for the capital region, the East Bank and the East Coast of Demerara, mostly.

Mr. Mahipaul: It is not most motorbikes were purchased; 15 were purchased. I would like to know how many are in Georgetown and how many are elsewhere. The answer “mostly” does not answer the question. We are using numbers.

Mr. Benn: I will get the details and lay it over for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Hon. Minister, could you say how the tender process was done? Was there an advertisement placed in the newspapers? If so, could you provide me with a copy of the newspaper, please? I would also like to know when the advertisement for the procurement was first placed, when the tender was closed and how long this particular tender process took. I would also like to know who won the tender for the procurement.

12.11 p.m.

Mr. Benn: I will lay over to the Hon. Member the information she seeks.

Ms. Ferguson: Under the very line item, in his earlier remarks, the Hon. Member alluded to the fact that the motorcycles were distributed, I think, sometime last week and they will become operational in the various areas effective today. The question to the Hon. Member is: in the absence of those motorcycles being made available to the various areas, what was used to ensure that the areas were properly patrolled? Was this an ideal time to have those motorcycles procured? Why not in the budget that was presented in September, 2020?

Mr. Benn: The Guyana Police Force identified for us the urgent need for motorcycles, given the fact that many of its motorcycles are in a dilapidated non-operational state in its mechanic shops. The motorcycles were acquired on an urgent basis and became operational today.

Mr. Holder: The Hon. Minister stated that there was a general increase in armed robberies in 2020 – roughly 20% to 25%. Would the Minister agree that there was increase in crimes from 2nd August to present? What was the percentage increase from 2nd August to present?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not think that question pertains to the allocation.

Mr. Holder: In the Legend, there is a reason stated:

“To facilitate the procurement of motorcycles to bolster the Guyana Police Force’s response to the upsurge in armed robberies during the holidays season.”

The sitting Minister stated, moments ago, that there was a general increase in armed robberies – 20% to 25 %. He seeks to justify the purchase of these motorcycles. I am asking if he agrees that there has been an increase in crime from 2nd August to present and what percentage?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Minister answered but I will make the observation again that the Minister was quite specific. Now, you are asking a more general question. Hon. Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Benn: Crime increased in Guyana beginning exponentially in December, 2018 when there was a no-confidence vote passed in the Parliament.

Ms. Ferguson: Shame on you.

Mr. Benn: There was an attempt to steal the whole country.

Ms. Ferguson: Shame.

Mr. Chairman: Order!

Mr. Benn: Here are the perpetrators of the travesty disputing with me the purchase of 15 motorcycles to deal with crime in the capital region. I have identified that the motorcycles have been purchased. They became operational today. If the Hon. Members could give me their *Whatsapp* numbers, I will give them a video showing the motorcycles going out in the fields.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chair...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead. I am not getting the feed and so I cannot recognise who the person is.

Mr. Holder: Member of Parliament (MP) Holder.

Mr. Chairman: Member of Parliament Holder, go ahead.

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister stated that crime has increased from the passage of the no-confidence motion. So, we know that there is a big crime situation, according to him. How does this item fit into the category, therefore, of unforeseen, urgent and unavoidable, given that, days ago, you just passed a budget to deal with these issues and you have known about this crime increase since 2019? How does it fit into this category for you to *dip your hands* into the Contingencies Fund? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please. We are in the House. If you want to take the shouting march elsewhere, you can do so.

Mr. Benn: I referred to a specific request of the Guyana Police Force and this was a response to that request. I do not know if the Hon. Member is suggesting that the particular identified need of the Guyana Police Force with respect to crime fighting and its anti-crime patrols should be ignored by this House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think we are getting into a different presentation right now. Is there any other Member who wants to raise a question to the Minister?

Item 3: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force - \$6,525,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4: 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$414,200,000

Mr. Patterson: I am just confirming that we are on Item 4 – Guyana Defence Force (GDF). I am not too sure who will be responding on behalf of the Government. Could the Member responding explain what is the urgent and unforeseen nature of the maintenance of the King Air 350 Beechcraft?

Dr. Singh: As the Hon. Member would see, the allocation to the Guyana Defence Force, in fact, is for two broad purposes. The first is to facilitate maintenance and to operationalise the Beechcraft aeroplane and the second is to acquire a Bell helicopter. In both instances, the acquiring and the bringing into operation, these two pieces of critical hardware and are viewed as important to strengthening the operational capacity of the Guyana Defence Force, particularly for aerial activities.

Mr. Patterson: This King Air 350 Beechersft has been with the GDF since August, 2017. The question is: why was no appropriation made in the 2020 Budget? According to public

record, the 2021 budget is in another 38 days. Why the urgency in bringing this here now at this particular time?

Dr. Singh: The Budget for 2020 having been approved, a number of specific activities were earmarked for implementation using the budgetary allocations provided in 2020. In this specific instance, the acquiring and bringing into operation of these two aircraft were identified to be activities that were not anticipated at the time when *Budget 2020* was enacted, but were deemed to be critical for the aerial capacity of the Force.

Mr. Shuman: I do not know which Minister will be answering this question. I note that there is a significant amount to facilitate the maintenance. There is also training for the engineers. I would like to ask the Minister why there is not funds allocated for the training of pilots since the equipment will now become a vital component of the Guyana Defence Force?

Dr. Singh: We do have provision both for training of engineers and for training of the pilots.

Mr. Shuman: Could the Hon. Minister say how much of the allocation asked for would be spent on training of pilots to pilot this aircraft and how many crew members will benefit from that training?

Dr. Singh: I am not currently in possession of that disaggregation, but I would be happy to provide it at a subsequent time.

Mr. Holder: When I look at the legend, I see:

“To facilitate the training of four engineers for the King Air 350 Beechcraft.”

This is to the tune of over \$23 million. I would like the Minister to just confirm that we are training four engineers for one aircraft.

Dr. Singh: That is correct.

Mr. Holder: I am seeking some clarity. Is it the trend to have four engineers per aircraft? Does each aircraft in the GDF has four engineers? I am trying to understand that because I am an engineer myself.

Dr. Singh: No, Mr. Chairman. As some Hon. Members might be aware, both engineering and pilot training is specific to aircraft type and so what we are providing here is specific training to the aircraft type concerned.

12.26 p.m.

Mr. Shuman: I previously asked a question of which I would be much obliged if the Hon. Minister could layover to the House, please, the answer to my question.

Dr. Singh: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to provide the information on this.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, could you please identify for me what criteria was used to identify the four engineers who were selected to undergo the training, their educational background, flight experience if possible, and the duration of the training?

Could you also say whether this training will be done locally and how many courses will be taught?

Could you also tell us about some of the courses on the training manual and say how many months have elapsed since the training commenced?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the engineers were identified by the leadership of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) Air Corps and the leadership of the Guyana Defence Force. They will be trained on relevant material in relation to maintenance and operations of the aircraft concerned.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Member state whether there has been a change in policy as it relates to training, in that it is not coming through the Ministry of the Public Service?

Dr. Singh: This is not training done by the Ministry of the Public Service as it relates to scholarships *et cetera*. This is specific training for the aircraft type concerned. It is being provided to engineers who have been identified by the Guyana Defence Force and the GDF Air Corps, and it is specific to the operations and maintenance of these aircraft types.

Mr. Holder: The amount under consideration is \$23,321,640 to train four engineers. If that is divided that by four one will get \$5,830,410. Will this training be done locally or overseas since the amount seems high?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the training will be done overseas.

Item 4: 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support – \$414,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this concludes this Financial Paper. I want to resume the Assembly and we shall come back after lunch to complete the Financial Papers.

Assembly resumed.

Welcome to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I want to recognise that the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Mr. Todd, has joined us and has been with us virtually all morning. My apologies for the omission, Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation.

Hon. Members, before we take our suspension, I would like to, at this time, offer special congratulations to one of our Members.

Congratulations to the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

Joining us in the Dome today are two lawyers who have been at Law School with the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Mr. Nandlall. I want to recognise them: the honourable Dhanwantie Sukhdeo and the honourable Ms. Marcia Nadir-Sharma.

I want to offer the House’s congratulations to the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, the Hon. Anil Nandlall, on his receipt of ‘SILK’ on 16th December, 2020, from his Excellency President Irfaan Ali.

I have known this young man for many decades. There was a very special group of law students in 1997 who were lobbying to get into the Hugh Wooding Law School. During that time, I became acquainted with quite a few of those young students. Today, 23 years later, we have seen many of them achieve the highest position in the legal paternity.

In this regard, the Hon. Mr. Anil Nandlall was recently conferred with the status of Senior Counsel. One of his Colleagues had already achieved that status, the Hon. Member, Senior Counsel Mr. Roysdale Forde, who is also with us.

Also, with him, in that batch, were several other prominent persons who are lawyers today, including former Minister and former Member of Parliament, Ms. Bibi Shadick and Counsel Mr. Lyndon Amsterdam. We also have, sitting in the House, alongside the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Minister Oneidge Walrond, and his Colleagues

the Hon. Ms. Priya Manickchand and Mr. Sanjeev Datadin. It is an honour for me to have known all these then very young people to, today, offer warmest, heartiest congratulations to our Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

Also joining him, a few days ago with the attainment of ‘silk’, are Attorneys Mr. Timothy Jonas and Ms. Jamela Ali. Our congratulations to all of them.

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: I wish to join with you on behalf of, and I believe I can fairly say, all the reasonable sensible Members of this House, to offer warmest, heartiest congratulations to the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, our Comrade and Friend, Mr. Anil Nandlall, on his attainment of ‘silk’.

I think that there is little else any professional aims for but to be at the pinnacle of his or her profession. I think that there are different opportunities that arise where people could access a platform upon which they get to exhibit their skill, learning and care for humanity. Minister Nandlall may want to express particular thanks to various Members of this House, for giving him different platforms upon which he could exhibit those skills. Particularly in the last five years of showing how he could use his learning and his profession to right wrongs, to bring good to people’s lives and to restore an entire country.

For that we, in this nation, are all grateful. We thank him. We ask him to remember, respectfully and humbly, that growth never really stops, that there is so much more that he can do and so much more that he can be. We assure him of our comradeship and partnership in that journey as he goes along and to tell him that he can lean on us for any support that he needs. We expect that this country is going to see far more from this young Attorney General, new Senior Counsel, in years to come.

With God’s guidance and our friendship, we offer you our warmest congratulations.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much. I open the floor, for a few moments, to anyone else who may want to offer congratulations to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Shuman: To the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, I simply want to offer my sincerest congratulations to him on being conferred ‘silk’. I trust that, in the discharge of his duties, this further enhances his ability to represent all of Guyana, equally and equitably.

I think that Guyana can only benefit from the three young professionals, inclusive of the Attorney General, who have recently been conferred ‘silk’. I know that this is something that has been denied for whatever reasons. I would say, maybe, for political purposes, as was for Mr. Jonas. I am happy to see that there is a state of restitution in conferring this honour on the Hon. Attorney General and the other two candidates. I wish him well in his future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Deputy Speaker. The Hon. Member the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Mr. Anil Nandlall, I now invite you.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Thank you very much, Sir. I am deeply humbled by Your Honour’s recognition of the conferment of ‘silk’ upon me and for using the platform of the National Assembly to offer your warm congratulations.

I would like to thank my Colleague and Comrade, Ms. Priya Manickchand, for her very charitable and generous compliments, I would also like to thank the Hon. Deputy Speaker for his gracious remarks.

It is, in my view, a blessing, a divine intervention, for one to be allowed to serve one’s people and one’s country, in particular, by the utilisation of one’s education and training. The position of Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, as well as being a legislator in this House, combined to provide me with that unique platform for the utilisation of what I know in law, and the knowledge that I have acquired by legal training, to serve my people and my country. That is always an opportunity for which I will remain grateful. I want to recognise and thank all those who have offered me this opportunity to serve in this capacity.

The attainment of ‘silk’ is indeed the high watermark of any lawyer. It recognises that one has distinguished one’s self in the practice of law and that one has acquired some degree of erudition and learning. It is indeed an honour.

12.41 p.m.

It carries with it certain responsibilities which I will endeavour to continue to discharge. Anyone who has any fleeting understanding of the law will know that the law is vast. It is a jealous mistress, but a generous mistress and one can only continue to serve at the altar of the law. Every single thing that I have achieved in life, I have achieved it because I am a lawyer. I will continue to be faithful to the law and I

will continue, with God’s health and best wishes, to serve the people of my country to the best of my ability.

I thank you very much, Sir. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Members, this is a good time to take the suspension. Let us endeavour to return at 1.30 p.m. to complete the other Financial Paper and to proceed with the election of the Chairpersons of Committees.

Sitting suspended at 12.42 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.41 p.m.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: We have to put the final figure for Financial Paper No. 1 of 2020.

Question:

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set in Financial Paper No.1 of 2020 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$792,330,925 for the period ended 21st December, 2020.”

put and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Dr. Singh: I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved the proposals set out in Financial Paper No.1 of 2020, and I now move that the Assembly dot agree with the Committee in the said resolution.

Motion put and agreed to.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now look at Financial Paper No. 2 of 2020.

Motion to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 2 of 2020

Be It RESOLVED:

“That this National Assembly approve of the proposal set out in Financial No. 2 of 2020 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling Seventeen billion, four hundred and three million, four hundred and thirteen thousand,

four hundred and ninety dollars (\$17,403,413,490) for the period 2020-01-01 to 2020-12-31”

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

Motion proposed.

Current Expenditure

Item 1: 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Policy and Administration - \$6,000,000,0000

Item 1: 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Policy and Administration - \$6,000,000,0000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Expenditure

Item 2: 16-162 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Amerindian Development Fund - \$130,000,000

Mr. Henry: On a matter of clarification – was the sum of \$130 million appropriated under the amount of \$800 million for the Amerindian Development Fund, previously?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: You were very muffled. I did not hear the question.

Mr. Henry: I will rephrase the question. I am just finding out if the amount of \$130 million that is being asked for today has already been expended out of the \$800 million under the Amerindian Development Fund.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The Hon. Member would have sat in the budget debate just a few months ago. Indeed, the \$800 million forms part of the Community Development and Empowerment Programme. In addition, the Ministry is seeking, according to the Legend before him and the Committee, \$130 million more to address additional sums for the procuring of tractors for Amerindian villages.

Ms. Fernandes: Could the Hon. Minister kindly indicate for what was the voted provision of \$800 million used?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: With all due respect, every Member sat in the budget debate and would have heard for what the \$800 million was assigned. The \$800 million is not the question here, at this point.

Ms. Fernandes: Could the Hon. Minister please indicate which villages would have benefited from these moneys and what proportions were given to the villages that benefitted?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I do not understand what the Hon. Member wants to know. Her question is not relevant to the \$130 million.

Ms. Fernandes: We are examining an amount before us of \$130 million. The document provided to me also have a voted provision of \$800 million for the Amerindian Development Fund. I do not understand why the Hon. Minister believes that it is not relevant to seek clarification or question as it pertains to figures being presented to me, right here. I am not bringing up something that we did not deal with before.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The \$800 million that appear there is not in question. That has been debated and a long list of projects including capital items was presented to this House, published in the newspaper, widely, and was also carried by the media, extensively.

Ms. Fernandes: I will move on. But I would make note that the reason I believe that the answers to those questions would be available by the Minister right now is because, as proposed in the Budget that was presented and the expenditure in Volume Two, the indicators that we have there were stated to be used to measure how those moneys were spent. I would assume that if those moneys were already spent, because we are asking for more, that we would already have the answers to those questions as it regards the indicators that were put forward by the you.

Moving forward. As it states here, the \$130 million is being requested for the provision of additional resources to facilitate payments to the procurement of tractors and trailers for hinterland communities. Would the Hon. Minister be so kind as to indicate which communities will be benefitting from these resources?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I beg to layover the list in one-week time.

Mr. Henry: In the interest of transparency, accountability and information to our Indigenous people of Guyana, we would like to say that the Hon. Minister is requesting this sum of money to purchase tractors and trailers.

1.53 p.m.

If my memory serves me correctly, the money was already appropriated under the \$800 million for the Amerindian Development Fund. It means that money was already spent. We need to know what was the \$800 million spent on, the activities, the amounts and what benefits were there?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the \$800 million is not interesting now; it is the \$130 million. Could you ask the question with respect to that amount and if you do not have a question, I will move one to Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much, Sir. Mr. Chairman, if my memory serves me correct, when we were considering the \$800 million, the Legend in the Budget stated that part of that sum will focus on tractors and trailers for hinterland communities. My question is: why is there a need for an additional \$130 million to purchase more tractors and trailers, which communities will be in receipt of these tractors and trailers, why is this deemed urgent at this point in time and why could it not be in budget 2021, which is expected, according to the Hon. Minister, in February?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The Hon. Members of this House should know very well that Guyana has reeled from the impact of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Amerindian villages have suffered too. Our Government made a commitment in our manifesto to support agricultural development in the hinterland and, particularly, to Amerindian villages. In so doing, to ensure that we do not have issues with food security and that we provide support and deliver on our commitment, we are seeking \$130 million more. This is to ensure that we have adequate numbers of tractors to provide to Amerindian communities to support the agriculture sector, the logging sector and transportation of good and services. It is also for us to be assured that our Government is not delaying or bypassing the needs of the Amerindian villages and the population that resides in those villages, unlike what occurred in the last five years. I have already assured this House that I would layover the list in a week’s time.

Ms. Fernandes: The Hon. Minister indicated that she would layover which communities will benefit from these resources. Could the Hon. Minister say what criteria was used to determine which communities will benefit from these resources?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: All Amerindian communities will serve to benefit. However, there are some that need support, currently, in relation to getting back to agriculture. There are other communities that are involve in logging. There are other communities that will need tractors based on the difficult terrain where other types of vehicles cannot be used. If one wants to use the correct jargon to describe that... I am trying to break it down to the simplest form so that the Hon.

Members could understand. Yes, there is a need, there are criteria and we will deliver.

Mr. Mahipaul: Let me see if I could attempt to be simpler than what I am asking. From the \$800 million, tractors and trailers were already purchased or, at least, were budgeted to be purchased. We would like to know how many tractors and how many trailers will the \$130 million purchase? I know the Hon. Minister endeavours to give us the list for each village, which we will be getting, but could the Hon. Minister give us a number in terms of the total number of tractors and trailers to be purchase?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: That is a very good question. Our Government has committed that, in this year, we will purchase 100 tractors and 100 trailers. In addition, for the second part of the Hon. Member’s question, the \$130 million will procure 30 tractors.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister, since she seems to understand questions that are very simple, whether there are 100 Amerindian communities in Guyana. I heard her say that her Government is catering for every Indigenous community for tractors and trailers, so I am asking if there are 100 Indigenous Communities in Guyana and, if there are more, why did they not cater for more?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: All Amerindian villages in this country need Government support to advance various sectors in their location. However, our Government will be providing 100 tractors to 100 villages.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, I just have one question. If I am correct, today is the 28th of December and we have three more days to the end of the year. The Hon. Minister is coming to this House on the 28th December requesting more funds from the Consolidated Fund. As far as I can recall, the finances normally close around mid-December. I am requesting from the Hon. Minister to say whether or not she intends to spend this sum of money in the next three days?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The People Progressive Party/Civic Government is a very effective and efficient Government and I assure this House that our Government will deliver.

Mr. Holder: The Hon. Minister failed to answer that question. We are saying that it is the 28th of December, there are three days remaining for the year and we are asking if you are going to buy 30 tractors in the next three days.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I thought the Hon. Minister did answer it. She said that they have an efficient Government and assured that it will deliver.

Ms. Ferguson: Sir, that is not an answer.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state what procurement process will be utilised to ensure that this happen so efficiently in three days?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I have assured this House that the PPP/C is a very effective and efficient Government.

Mr. Holder: Could the Hon. Minister state what procurement method will be used or was used?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: This is another very good question. Unlike the A Partnership For National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government, our Government has used an open tender process.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister say whether or not this process has already begun, or they are waiting for this sum to be passed before it starts?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: We have advertised. The process has been very transparent, and our Government is accountable.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister say at which stage the procurement process is at this particular moment?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is also capable of working. In fact, if one goes to the newspapers, there was an advertisement. You could find it.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I am sure I was quite clear with the question. I was not asking whether there was an advertisement. I am asking at what stage is this procurement process, at this particular point. Is the Hon. Minister saying it is at the advertisement stage at this point?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: We had an open tender, the tenders were opened, it was evaluated, and it is about to be awarded.

Ms. Fernandes: I find it quite astonishing that the Hon. Minister would stand repeatedly and speak of the efficiency of the PPP/C and not one question asked so far had a direct answer. I cannot see where there is efficiency when we have...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please ask your question.

Ms. Fernandes: Pardon me, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Could I ask what is your question?

Ms. Fernandes: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I did not hear you.

Mr. Chairman: I am asking for a question and not a statement.

Ms. Fernandes: I am so guided by the speakers that proceeded me, but I will take my direction from you at this point, thank you.

Given the fact that the Hon. Minister had indicated that the procurement process has gone along to the point that tenders are opened already, I believe with the efficiency that has been claimed by the Hon. Minister that she would be able to tell us what regions will benefit from these items.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: In my response to that, I would say villages within Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 will benefit.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I had Bishop Edghill waiting before you.

2.08 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: I was just bringing to your attention that, the Financial Paper is for a period from 1st January, 2020, for activities all the way to 31st December, 2020. The question about three days is inappropriate. It is not a Contingencies Fund advance; it is a supplementary. Provision is already made for a particular item and there is an addition for increased activity. That is what this paper is representing and that is what I want to bring clarity to the House about.

Mr. Holder: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, when will the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board meet to award this contract? We are told that it is at the evaluation stage - she just said that it is at the evaluation. I would like the Minister to say to this House when exactly will NPTAB meet. If they do award the contract, let us say it is tomorrow, will that contractor be able to deliver efficiently by the 31st December?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I do not work with the Ministry of Finance. I do not instruct the NPTAB. Every contract that is signed will have a period dedicated to delivery.

Mr. Duncan: On a Point of Order, section 40 (a): There are a number of the PPP/C Ministers who are not wearing their masks in the National Assembly, including the Hon. Attorney General who just received SILK. We want him to have a long life to enjoy himself. They are in breach of the COVID-19

protocol and we are in fear of our lives on this side. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not see that as a Point of Order, but I thank you for the observation. Hon. Members, please, we have to set an example. The wearing of masks and social distancing are two of the measures we employ to effectively address COVID-19.

Mr. Holder: Again, it is mind boggling that the contract has not been awarded as yet and the Minister is saying that, within the next three days, whoever it is awarded to will be able to have these 30 tractors here ready in Guyana. It is just mind blogging to my thoughts. The only way that would be possible is if the contractor already knows that he will get that contract and he probably has that equipment in the country already. I would like to ask the Minister, if that is the case?

Ms. Teixeira: On a Point of Order: It is clear that the Opposition MPs are not doing their homework before they come to this House. Former Ministers of that Government would have known that the Budget expenditure of 31st December did not mean that all the items arrived in the country before 31st December, including the delivery and construction of buildings, roads *et cetera*. The young MP is being misled by people on his side of the House in terms of the budget and what is a supplementary Financial Paper.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: With all due respect, a question was not asked. It was a statement indicating or insinuating that the process is flawed.

Mr. Holder: I respectfully submit that it was the very Minister who stated that we are at the NPTAB process. My questions were fielded based on the statements that the Hon. Minister made.

Item 2 16-162 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Community Development and Empowerment – \$130,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$407,613,490

Mr. Ramjattan: Are we on the item with GuySuCo, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: We are at the Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services.

Mr. Ramjattan: I do not know if you are separating them. Ministry of Agriculture, the \$4 billion, could the Minister indicate whether he could provide an itemised account of how

this additional \$4 billion will be spent by GuySuCo or what it is going to GuySuCo towards?

Mr. Mustapha: These moneys are budgeted for critical capital works in GuySuCo that were neglected for the last five years. I could go through the items and I could lay it to the Hon. Member, some of the works that are earmarked to be done with this \$4 billion. For example, if you go around the three operating estates, they are at, at least, about 60% capacity. So, one has to recapitalise, put in critical parts, for example, the entire punt fleet at the Albion Estate needs to be upgraded. The entire roadway in Albion needs to be upgraded. All these things were neglected because the intention of the APNU/AFC was to close the sugar industry. We were saying that we want to ensure that we recapitalise, and we mechanise it back to where it was.

For example, when the three estates were closed, they said they would concentrate production at the Albion, Uitvlugt and Blairmont Estates. What did they do? From 140,000 tons, they reduced it to 92,000 tons. This year it is 89,000 tons. We will ensure that we increase production because we already started putting critical parts in these estates. Also, as I am speaking here, works are ongoing in the three estates that they had closed – the Rose Hall, Skeldon and Enmore Estates. As a matter of fact, we have already employed the approximately 1,000 persons that they dismissed when they were in Government. In the new year, we will employ another 3,000 workers and I am optimistic that the first crop of 2022 will produce sugar once again from those estates.

Mr. Ramjattan: The Minister has gone on but has not answered the question about whether he will say to this honourable House how the \$4 billion will be spent? Which estate will get \$1billion and so on? He has not said that.

Mr. Mustapha: If I could say that \$2.1 billion is earmarked to be spent at the Albion Estate; \$518 million at the Blairmont Estate; \$60 million at the Uitvlugt Estate; another \$10 million at the Skeldon Estate; \$746 million at the Rose Hall Estate; \$533 million at the Enmore Estate; and \$60 million at the Head Office, giving us \$4 billion.

Mr. Ramjattan: In relation to the \$3 billion that was provided for previously - a voted provision - where was that spent? You had indicated that one was spent on those similar estates. Could you do a breakdown as to the \$3 billion?

Mr. Mustapha: We started to expend money on the closed estate, those vested estates, and we will continue to spend from this sum. This is because there are a number of activities

as I have said. We had to do a number of activities. I could layover the expenditure to the Hon. Member. I could go through line item by line item, hundreds of line items, or lay it to the Member and show him the amount that we have expended in the \$3 billion.

Mr. Ramjattan: On the expenditure for GuySuCo and having so much talk about it, is it true that \$21 billion is going to be spent for the 2021 Budget?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I do not think that is a question pertaining to the line item.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I cannot say.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Minister state if this \$4 billion that will be infused into the three estates make them profitable? If so, what is the estimated profit margin for each of those estates?

Mr. Mustapha: In 2016, or the last crop of 2015, when the APNU/AFC went into Government, they boasted that they have turn around the sugar industry because of the work we did, when we were in Government. They said that they turned around the Skeldon Estate. So much so that they brought the estates down on their knees. We are working, as I said, to recapitalise and to bring the estate to a break-even point. I am sure that we will bring the estate to a break-even point. There are opportunities right in the Caribbean to export over 200 tons of refined sugar, which we are trying to do, and we will do that and create more employment for the Guyanese people.

Mr. Figueira: I believe the Minister has failed to answer the question that I would have asked. The question is, if I may remind the Minister: the infusion of this \$4 billion into the several estates that you would have made mention, would it make those estates profitable and, if so, what is the estimated projected profit margins for each estate? It is a very simple question.

Mr. Mustapha: This \$4 billion will help to take us onto the road of profitability. This is the work-in-progress and we are working to go there.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how much of the sugar production will be sold to the world market at half the price at production cost? When you get your 300,000 tons...

Mr. Mustapha: I could layover that answer to the Hon. Member.

2.23 p.m.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state when he was made aware that these works were necessary? Sorry, the Hon. Member asked me to repeat. Could the Hon. Member state when he was made aware that these capital works that complied all of this was necessary?

Mr. Mustapha: When we took over and we did examinations across the estates ...We set up a new Board of Directors, we have new management in place, and we are doing an occupational survey across the estates. We are doing a needs assessment with these estates. As a result of that, the entire undercarriage at the Albion-Port Mourant Estate, all the chains will have to be changed. The boiler at the Uitvlugt Estate has to be changed. Those things were known to the APNU/AFC, but they never put money to do those works.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: If I am hearing the Hon. Member correctly, he stated that - one, we knew that it was necessary when we were in Office. He also stated that when he got into Office, he recognised it was necessary. My question to him then is, why was it not brought in the 2020 Budget and why it is now being brought three days before the end of the year?

Mr. Mustapha: As I have said, this is a work-in-progress. A number of works were already done. Now is the out-of-crop season. If the Hon. Member understands the sugar cycle in our country, then she will know that now is the critical time to do the work. Now is the out-of-crop time where the factories are not operable. Now we have the time to do the work. I cannot wait for the budget next year.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I am young, but I am not dumb. One budgets for what one intends to do. So, if it is the case that you know this is the time of the year that you are supposed to do something, you had a budget a month or so ago and you should have put it in that. To suggest that you wait until it is time to do it, to now ask for it three days before the end of the year, I think is a bit ludicrous. Would the Hon. Member maybe want to rephrase what he just said?

Mr. Mustapha: It seems that the Hon. Member is not comprehending what I am trying to say. I am just saying that works started since we had that \$3 billion dollars that was in the Budget. Now there are other works that need to be done and we have to continue them. This is a work-in-progress, as I have said; not a work that starts and stops.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I turn my attention to the current expenditure under line item 6321, Subsidies and

Contributions to Local Organisations. I see there is provision for an:

“...expanded work programme of NDIA in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10.”

The ballpark figure there is \$407,613,490. Could the Hon. Minister please give us a breakdown as to how much money will be spent in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10, separately? No, I want to hear it.

Mr. Mustapha: I can lay that over. It is 128 items with different works across the regions that the Hon. Member mentioned just now. I can itemise it and give him the cost, also. As a matter of fact, these are extended work that we have. Based on the outreaches and the proactiveness of the Ministry of Agriculture and Government, we are having these kinds of requests from communities. As a matter of fact, 13 works alone have to be done in Linden, where they neglected over the years. Only in the last two weeks I came from Linden and people requested work there.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. Do you accept him laying it over?

Mr. Mahipaul: I am happy that the Hon. Minister will lay over the full detail of the work, but my question was on the amount of money from the \$407,613,490 that will be spent in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10, separately. I am trying to get an answer as to the amount of money that will be spent in each region.

Mr. Mustapha: I am saying that I will lay it over. I have the cost associated with these works that have to be done. I will give the Hon. Member the cost for each work and he will know.

Mr. Mahipaul: I do not want to know the work that will be done in each area. I want to know the amount that will be spent in each region. That is simple. Tell me that you are spending \$100 million in Region 1 and \$100 million in Region 2. Tell me that figure. That is what I want to know. How much money you are spending in each region?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I will call the areas now and the Hon. Member can calculate the amount. I will go from one to 128 items. These are: the emergency repair of Bamboo Bridge in Cane Grove – \$985,080; request for GH revetment for the main bridge at Kortberaad, East Bank Berbice – \$6,420,000; emergency work, mechanical cleaning, excavation and irrigation of canal at Bush Lot, Corentyne Berbice – \$3,850,000; emergency work, mechanical cleaning

and irrigation of canal at John, Port Mourant; mechanical weeding, cleaning and desilting at Linden, Rockstone – \$387,000. Calculate, I will give you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think your commitment to lay it over is noted.

Mr. Mustapha: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: I was going to make the observation before you went to itemise it. To the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, it would be unfair to ask the Minister now to add up every region at this particular time. I accept that you will lay it over and we will get the totals.

Mr. Mahipaul: I would just like to know if the community of Den Amstel in Region 3 is included in this operation. I know that there are a number of residents in Den Amstel who are requesting assistance.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is the community of Den Amstel included?

Mr. Mustapha: I have to check the list here, Mr. Chairman, but I think, yes, communities in Region 3 are included.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. You will get the complete list shortly Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the people of Den Amstel are expecting an answer from me, today. I will be happy if the Minister can just say. I know there are communities in Region 3 such as Zeelugt and Tuschen that are included but I want to know if Den Amstel is included.

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, manual monthly maintenance of drainage and irrigation channel in Den Amstel and Fellowship Water User Association (WUA) – \$1,783,000. There are all parts of the country.

Mr. Duncan: The *Demerara Waves*, on the 5th August, 2020, quotes the Hon. Minister as saying:

“The reopening of the estates will depend on when we finish studies...”

Certain technical assessment studies.

“...and see what exists in the Government because, right now, you have a pandemic in the country and the world reality is different...”

I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether these moneys requested will be spent before these technical assessment studies have been done, and if the studies have been done?

Mr. Mustapha: I never said that; I do not know what the Hon. Member is referring to. I said we have done occupational surveys and technical studies and, as a result of that, we have discovered all these abnormal problems in the estates. That is why we are going to fix them. I did not say that we are doing it now; we have done that already.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I draw your attention to the Standing Order with respect to quoting from media publications.

Mr. Duncan: Mr. Chairman, I am quoting from *Demerara Waves* of 5th August. I would like to quote *Demerara Waves* – quoting the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister said that he is not aware of that. I drew your attention to the fact that, with regard to newspaper references, there is a Standing Order for that. Could we move on please?

Mr. Ramjattan: Could I ask the question of the Minister, whether he could lay for us the technical assessments that he said were completed and what is the basis for the spending?

Mr. Mustapha: I can lay over to the Hon. Member what needs to be done in these estates, what we have discovered and give him all the defects, including those assets that were given to families and friends; those estates such as the Rose Hall Estate that were given away to their cronies.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Hon. Minister determine what technical assistance was done with regard to coming up with the figures to ...?

Mr. Chairman: Is it ‘technical assistance’ or ‘technical assessment’?

Mr. Figueira: It is ‘assessment’. Thank you, I am so guided. What technical assessment the Ministry of Agriculture did to determine the work programme that is required by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) for the food enhancement in each of these regions. What assessment was done?

Mr. Mustapha: We had a technical team visiting estate by estate. I just answered that question. That is why I am saying that some people lack comprehension. I just referred to Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan saying that I can lay all those defects

and issues we found at these estates that need to be corrected – technical, that is what I am referring to.

Mr. Figueira: I think that the Minister is somewhat misguided. The Minister is not referring to the question that I asked. I spoke nothing about the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo). I am speaking about the NDIA for all of the regions.

Mr. Mustapha: I am sorry.

Mr. Figueira: You said that the NDIA is putting together a work programme to enhance food security in each of these regions identified. For all of us to comprehend what you are saying, my question still remains – what assessment has the Ministry of Agriculture done to determine what is required by the NDIA to enhance food security in each of these regions? Each of these regions have their differences with regard to what is needed to ascertain food security. For example, in Region 10, more than 70% of the foods are imported. How do you know what is needed in Region 10? What level of assessment would the Ministry of Agriculture have done?

Mr. Mustapha: We did a budget and we had a particular sum budgeted for these works. Based on our outreaches across the region – I went to the Hon. Member’s region and I did not see him around, but I had a very good turnout – people raised a number of issues. As Bishop Edghill would have explained earlier, these are continuations and extensions of our work programme because they were budgeted under the current sum. As a result of that, based on our assessment, when we went around with our engineers and technical people – I normally take all the technical people with me from the Ministry of Agriculture – we came up with these extension works to enhance the sector that was responsible for food security. For example, when we do the canals and the structures within them, we provide more lands, drainage and irrigation for cash crop farmers. As a result of that, they will produce more food. This is linked directly to our food production based on our work programme and the time we are in now with this pandemic.

Mr. Figueira: The Hon. Minister said to this House, that the programme is to enhance food security in the regions of this country and he made reference to him making a visit to Linden. Linden is not Region 10. The work that you are proposing to do with the NDIA does not significantly impact the farming communities of Region 10 because not every area in the region has drainage where farming happens. My question is, what assessment have you done for Region 10 to determine what is needed to ensure food security?

2.38 p.m.

As it is, if I can inform you Hon. Minister, more than 70% of the foods in Region 10 are imported. I applaud your efforts to enhance food security in the Region but, what assessment has been done? What happens in Linden does not happen in Kwakwani. We need to know what assessment you would have done to determine food security in the Region. I would really appreciate if you, the Minister, would have visited West Watooka. If you did visit on your trip to Linden, you would have recognised that the farm access road in West Watooka is in a deplorable state and it requires some level of assistance.

Mr. Mustapha: I am saying, again - I used Linden as an example - but we have been traversing the length and breadth of this country. What the Member fails to understand is that, when we do these works... For example, we went to Bamia, there was need for drainage and irrigation; we gave seeds, we helped with fertiliser and we gave other needs. We extended our extension services. If you go to West Watooka today, the farmers are elated now that they have drainage and irrigation for the first time in that area.

We went to Nottinghamshire, the same thing again. We will enhance the drainage system there. We will extend from the Ministry of Agriculture all the benefits. For example, we re-started the seed programme; we re-started the ants bait programme for the acoushi *ants*. Those things were stopped under their Government and we are extending it across the country, especially places like Linden where they have to import 70% of the food. In another five years from now, Linden will be self-sufficient under the PPP/Civic Government.

Mr. Holder: It has been reported to me in Region 2 that the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority excavator is working along the main road cleaning the trenches. It has mysteriously skipped the community of Dartmouth, which is regarded as one of APNU/AFC strongholds in that region. I am asking the Minister why is that so and if there is any provision in this sum that caters for the APNU/AFC’s stronghold of Dartmouth?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, although that question is not related to this Supplementary Paper, I think if the Member was representing his constituency effectively, he could have picked up the phone and call the Minister to say that this area was skipped. But he never did that. He came to Parliament and I have no knowledge about it. The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is here,

he is listening, and he will take action, immediately. He will find out.

Item 3 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$407,613,490 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$4,000,000,000

Item 3 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$4,000,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 31-312 Ministry of Public Works- Public Works – 6,000,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Firstly, would the Hon. Member be willing to lay over the list of roads for which this \$6,000,000,000 will cover? Secondly, were these roads advertised at the NPTAB level or at the ministerial level? If so, has NPTAB issued awards for these contracts as yet?

Bishop Edghill: Since assuming Office, one of the biggest issues that have affected the lives of people across this country is the deplorable state of their roads. The requests have been often, whether they are coming from the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) or the regions. Region 10 has been requesting my Ministry to look after their roads, which is a good thing.

We have gone out using the procurement process to fix at least 100 roads. Because of the size of these roads, some of them can be awarded at the ministerial level and some have to be awarded at the national board. The Procurement Act has been strictly followed to ensure that we get this result. Out of those 100 roads that I have listed, Sir, this supplementary that is being sought is merely to pay the advance for mobilisation to get these contracts on the road. The Hon. Member will be fully aware that we had an emergency Budget which was read late. I am sure he has been following that we have gone through the full gammon of the procurement process, getting the roads designed, getting the engineers’ estimates prepared, getting the bids in and the evaluation for the awards. We are at a stage where, out of the 100 roads that we have listed... These are not urban roads and hinterland roads; these are just miscellaneous roads. Urban roads are the roads that we do in the townships and there is a significant sum that is being expended on that.

Hundreds of millions are being spent on hinterland roads. These are just ordinary community roads, and they are a sum of 100. The \$600 million that is being sought is for the payment of the mobilisation advance for 48 of these roads. The Hon. Member would like to know the sums for the award of these roads, and I could give an example. The rehabilitation of Marias Lodge, second alley, that is in Region 2. The cost of that road is \$63,741,000.

From this \$600,000,000, we are paying the mobilisation advance of \$12.7 million. The rehabilitation of the road at Bedford Street, Queenstown, which is another road in Region 2, that is \$34 million. Of course, one knows that has to be awarded by NPTAB. The \$600,000,000 is being requested to pay \$6.9 million as a mobilisation advance. I will give an example: in Region 3, the rehabilitation of Coca Street and Charles Street at Parika, the cost of the road is \$77,328,000 and the mobilisation advance will be \$15,465,000. There is another road at Independence Street, which will cost \$81,676,500, the mobilisation advance from this \$600,000,000 will be \$16 million. Let us now go to Region 4. Rehabilitation of Charlotte Street, Enterprise, the road will cost \$23 million and the mobilisation advance will be \$4.6 million. We could go on to Well Road, Land of Canaan. The road costs \$40 million, the mobilisation advance will be \$8,197,000. I am just randomly choosing some roads as I go along. Region 5, rehabilitation of Mandir Street in Cane Grove, the road will cost \$62 million and the mobilisation advance will be \$12.4 million. The rehabilitation of C-field, first Cross Street and the rehabilitation of road network, Plantation Hope. The works would cost \$44,417,000 and the mobilisation advance will be \$8.83 million. We can go on to Region 6, but I am just giving a sample of what we are talking about, the extensive work.

Mr. Chairman, while I am on feet, I will be happy to announce to the Committee that, in this emergency Budget that was passed, works were undertaken. Every region is receiving attention from the Ministry of Public Works as it relates to the upgrade and rehabilitation of roads without exception, in a non-discriminatory manner. Through consultations with the NDCs, the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) and the local people, roads have been selected as priority one and priority two. These 100 roads that are being done are the priority one requested by the communities. In 2021, we will have to come with a new trans of roads. This \$600,000,000 is to accelerate services to ensure that the livelihoods of our Guyanese people are improved in a timely manner.

Thank you, very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Patterson: Actually, my first question was whether the Hon. Minister could lay over the list. He has not responded to the affirmative on that.

Hon. Member, I could also say that the roads countrywide and regionally were something done in a non-discriminatory manner under the APNU/AFC Government, so there is absolutely nothing new.

However, I am moving on. It is customary and it is practice that when one gives an advance, firstly, one will have the corresponding advance form, I am asking the Hon. Member. The FMAA Act states:

“any money undisbursed on 31st December should be returned to the Consolidated Fund.”

Is the Hon. Member saying to this Committee that these 48 contactors will be able to get bonds, [*inaudible*] sign contacts with the bank before they could get the bonds and all of the necessary paperwork within the next three days? That is the question I am asking.

Bishop Edghill: I could assure the Hon. Member and this honourable Committee that every financial transaction that will be done, as they relate to the award of contracts of any nature by the PPP/C Government, will be in strict adherence to the law. This is because we believe in good governance.

Secondly, we will not be awarding contracts and then signing agreements after, as have been the case in the past. We will not be signing contracts. Until now, the works have not been completed. I am currently fighting to get contracts that were signed on 31st December, 2019, implemented in 2020. Some of the works have not yet been completed. One cannot even find the contractor on the site for some of them.

I will assure this honourable Committee that my Permanent Secretary (PS) and my staff have all been briefed and instructed that the issues that arose in the 2019 audit of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure about moneys being spent without proper authority will not be a repeat under my watch, in the Ministry of Public Works. Thank you very much.

2.53 *p.m.*

Item 4: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works — Public Works — \$600,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – \$2,500,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, for guidance, are we dealing with number five?

Mr. Chairman: We are dealing with item five, yes.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister please indicate to this Committee how many households are already in receipt of their COVID-19 Cash Grant?

Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Dr. Persaud]: As you know, it is a continuous process. To date, we have a total of 153,376 households.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could you say that again?

Dr. Persaud: We have a total of 153,376 households.

Mr. Mahipaul: If I heard the Hon. Member correctly, it is 153,376 households. Thank you. Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many persons are yet to receive from the first disbursement, outside of this request that is being made for \$2,500,000,000?

Dr. Persaud: The nine regions have been catered for. What is ongoing is Region 4. The Member would appreciate that physical verification is occurring, so that remains to be done in Region 4.

Mr. Mahipaul: Is the Hon. Minister saying that nine regions have been completed?

Dr. Persaud: Nine regions have almost been completed. The remaining region is Region 4, which is ongoing. Of course, the Hon. Member is aware of the second phase, which involves the pink slips. Also, there is the ongoing process within those regions to mop up – going back to homes that may have been missed in the first round.

Mr. Mahipaul: What was the target, in terms of the number of households, with reference to the first disbursement?

Dr. Persaud: The target was all primary households. The Hon. Member is well aware that, because of the lack of recent data, this requires physical verification.

Mr. Mahipaul: Let me see if I can be a little clearer. Some 153,376 households already got this money. There is a capped amount of money for this project. What is the total number of households you were targeting with the first disbursement?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think you would appreciate that you should ask questions with respect to this \$2,500,000,000 disbursement.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, with all due respect, my follow-ups will be linked to the \$2,500,000,000. Any person would know that this \$2,500,000,000 will just be targeting 100,000 people. So, I am trying to know if the money is sufficient for the number of people that we know have complained, thus far, of not receiving their COVID-19 cash grant, which is way over 100,000.

Mr. Chairman: Is the money sufficient, Hon. Minister?

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I repeat to the Hon. Member that the last census was in 2012 and it has not since been updated. It was used as a baseline. However, because of the absence of data, it was a process that involved the regions going out and physically verifying those homes so that we could have the payments being made. You would appreciate that it was not sufficient, because here I am asking for more money through the supplemental.

Mr. Mahipaul: I understand that, but what I am trying to find out is a definite number. The first disbursement was \$8,556,590,000, which captured old age pension and social assistance. I am trying to ascertain, by not asking how much was actually separated for old age pension, the direct number that you were targeting from your first disbursement of \$8,556,590,000.

Dr. Persaud: Some \$4.5 billion was allocated, in the first instance, and now we are asking for \$2,500,000,000. That was taken out of line item 6343 in the budget, which includes the pension. Other than reiterating what I just said about physical verification, it is impossible for me to give you a finite number.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, would this allocation be catering for all of the persons who are in receipt of their pink slips?

Dr. Persaud: It is still in the first phase with regard to Region 4. As the ‘remarks’ column indicates, it is to facilitate the current process, which is in Region 4. This would not include the pink slips because we are still in the process of doing the first phase within Region 4.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, I am aware that you are very much cognizant of the concerns the population has been raising in regard to what defines a household. With this allocation, would the same definition in the first phase be applied for those persons who will be in receipt of this disbursement? I

think you would agree with me that one household probably has three families, in some instances. Does the same definition apply, as was put in the first phase?

Dr. Persaud: It was the primary households that were intended for the first phase. Even if it is a home and there are three other households, they should receive the pink slips and they would be captured in the second phase of distribution.

Mr. Mahipaul: From my calculation, the National Assembly is targeting 280,000 households. The Minister was kind enough to say that nine regions are almost completed. The fact that she drew that conclusion to say “almost completed” means she has figures. I am kindly asking the Minister to provide to this honourable House, for the nine regions, the total number of persons who have received, the total number of persons who are in receipt of their pink slips and if there are cases where persons are to be visited to receive pink slips. I can tell you that, in La Parfait Harmonie, a number of residents have not received their moneys and have not received pink slips either. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to break down per region the total amount of moneys that were distributed in each region, the number of households in receipt of those moneys, those to be revisited, and those that are expected to be revisited?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you expect the Minister to have all of that information at this time?

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, Sir, because it is our money.

Dr. Persaud: I can give you a breakdown by region so far completed.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could you lay it over? Sir, if she would be kind enough to lay it over, I will accept that.

Dr. Persaud: I want to make this point. This \$25,000 cash grant alleviated a lot of hardships, because nothing was done before. The former President, Brigadier (Ret’d) Granger, called it a good development because he received his \$25,000 cash grant recently. Mr. Chairman, the Member will completely understand that this process will be ongoing for some time because of the number of households. I will give you the breakdown, Hon. Member. Region 1, 8,124; Region 2, 13,675; Region 3, 44,097; Region 5, 20,856; Region 6, 35,009; Region 7, 7,052; Region 8, 3,064; Region 9, 7,503; Region 10, 13,996, giving you the total figure that I gave you of 153,376. Total grants accrued is \$3,834,400,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. We also believe that this is a good gesture. In fact, the A

Partnership for National Unity/Alliance for Change was about to give \$100,000 to each household. It is not that we do not support the money going to the citizens. It is that the mechanism and the manner in which they are doing it is very much unfortunate, side-lining a number of persons. But let me get to my question. The Hon. Minister was kind enough to give us a breakdown of every region and the amount that they received. I also asked about the number of pink slips in each region. How many persons in Regions 1 to 10, excluding Region 4, are in receipt of their pink slips? You said that Region 4 is still ongoing.

Dr. Persaud: I want to say that there is a mechanism. I will familiarise the House and the Member with the mechanism, how it works and how it has been working. What is important is that there has been a continuous auditing of this process. I want to make that point. And there will be an audit, post process.

Let me tell you, Mr. Chairman, if you permit me. At the regional level, the list of households is compiled and certified by the REO. Based on this list, the REO submits a request for support from the Government. So, it is not just *ad hoc* receipt of cash payments by REO and village leaders. The request, once verified, is processed and funds are subsequently transferred to the REO. The REO is tasked with ensuring a transparent accounting system is in place to document and record distribution of grants. A distribution team is assembled to participate in the distribution of the cash grant. The distribution team, inclusive of regional representatives, will deliver cash grants to households, as per the pre-determined schedule, observed by village leaders and elders where applicable. At each household, the distribution team is responsible for filling up the requisite household data form, making the cash payment and filling out receipts to indicate that payment was made. The householder provides the final sign off. Where multiple households exist at one building, the principal household will receive the grant, while the remaining household would have to fill up the query form, which is the pink form to which you referred. That will be reviewed in the second phase of the programme.

3.08 p.m.

Cash reconciliation is done by the Regional Executive Officer’s Office at the end of the distribution exercise and a report is submitted to the National COVID- 19 Task Force through the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. The regional distribution teams, which are identified by the respective regions and the Ministry of Local

Government and Regional Development, were issued COVID-19 distribution badges as forms of identification (ID). They are then accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Finance, community leaders, as well as Police Officers, who visited homes to execute the programme. Of course, the primary householder has to produce a valid form of ID in the presence of the team. The Distribution Clerk will complete the white form in the presence of the other officers and then issue the \$25,000 envelope to the primary householder as well as the receipt stating the same. If the team visits a home and the primary householder is not at home, that information is collected, and they will revisit or make arrangements to do so at a later date. At the end of the distribution exercise, receipts of payment, which were submitted by the respective teams doing the distribution, are audited, firstly, by the regional authorities then by the Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance. This is to ensure full transparency and accountability so that any discrepancy is investigated and dealt with. Further, the Auditor General has been asked to audit the entire cash grant delivery. To answer your question about the pink slips, there are \$16,375 pink slips to date.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for that comprehensive response, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Figueira: I must commend the Minister for her presentation and for giving some additional clarity on the method, but the method was guided by the 2012 census. Is that not so? So, the reality is that most of the regions since 2012, especially the communities that make up the regions, have grown exponentially. Now, one would assume that your guidance was guided by the census data, which does not reflect the reality of each region. You mentioned that most of the regions have been completed so far. The question is: how are you going to capture the communities that grew and those that were birthed out of squatting, where the very said workers you would have identified did not visit? So, I am scared. I agree with you that a lot of people are being affected and they need this money. So, what mechanism would you add to what you would have put in place already to capture all of those communities, especially the people who are in need?

Dr. Persaud: Thank you. I emphasise physical verification. Teams are walking in the communities, home to home, visiting, verifying and making a list, whether one is squatting or whether one is not. Once it is a primary household, they will be captured in this. Your point is well made and that is why physical verification is being utilised and not only the

2012 census data. Your point was made about growth and movement, house to house.

Mr. Figueira: I agree, Hon. Minister, but, again, I must say that the work being done by the people on the ground, on behalf of the Ministry, is guided by the census that derived from communities. Unfortunately, some of the people who are doing the work are not visiting communities that the census did not capture. There are a number of communities in Linden, and I can verify that the staff did not go to those communities. So, we are saying that the programme must cater for those realities that exist in each of the regions.

Dr. Persaud: If, at all, any community was inadvertently missed, that community has the option of going to the NDC Office and have it addressed. We do want to capture everyone because COVID- 19 has hit and hit hard. It is a harsh reality that so many people have to deal with. So, this is the Government’s way of reaching out to the people and doing it within this short period that we have been in Government. We are making sure that people have disposable income in their hand, whether it is to feed their family or whatever it is they need to do. So, those persons who may have been missed, if at all it happened, can go to the NDC Office for it to be addressed.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Minister was kind enough to give us the figure for the number of persons with pink slips – 16,375. Could the Hon. Minister please break that down in terms of region?

Dr. Persaud: I am sure the Hon. Member knows this, but maybe he wanted to ask the question because he likes to hear me speak and maybe he likes my voice. I will remind him that it is an ongoing process. So, pink slips will be generated in an ongoing manner. So, I cannot give you a finite number in terms of every region because the process is still ongoing. I was able to give you what we have to date, and this excludes Region 4. That much I can tell you.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Hon. Minister gave a finite number of total pink slips that were distributed in Regions 1 to 10 to date, excluding Region 4. So, I am asking you to give a finite number, to date, of the breakdown of these 16,375 pink slips per region. You have to have generated the figure by counting the regions.

Dr. Persaud: I will lay that over to the Hon. Member and I will give it as to date. As he would appreciate, I am here right now. So, I would get that to you.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley.

Ms. Ferguson: It is not Ms. Sarabo-Halley. It is Hon. Member Ferguson.

On this very line item, I heard the Hon. Minister earlier mention there is an advance team visiting communities or areas to get a sense as to probably the make-up of the houses. I know they have started in some areas in Region 4. Could the Hon. Minister say or clarify whether the team or teams has or have visited South Georgetown, West Ruimveldt, East Ruimveldt, Albouystown and Agricola to get a sense of the number of households within those communities? Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: I very clearly said that Region 4 has just commenced. So, we will get there, Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Did I see Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, on his feet earlier?

Mr. Patterson: Correct. Mr. Chairman, a simple question. Could the Hon. Member say to this Committee what is the administrative cost for this distribution exercise, how many staff were hired and would the Hon. Minister be willing to layover the list of staff and their emoluments for this distribution exercise?

Dr. Persaud: I will be happy to provide that to the Hon. Member, as he asked for it.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much.

Dr. Persaud: As in lay it over to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, but I just want confirmation of whether the administrative cost comes out of \$4.5 billion and the \$3.5 billion or was it separately done?

Dr. Persaud: The answer is yes.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Hon. Minister indicate, based on the administrative staff, the highest and lowest emoluments for those said individuals?

Dr. Persaud: That will be captured in the document which I promised to layover for the Hon. Member previous to this Hon. Member asking.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, my final question on this line item. The Minister indicated that the manner of distribution is a house-to-house visit, and that is when the primary or principal householders will get the \$25,000. I am putting it to the Hon.

Minister in a question format that this did not happen in Wakenaam at Marias Pleasure, Meerzorg and Free and Easy. This complaint was made to the Regional Executive Officer of Region 3. I am asking the Minister what action is being taken to correct these mishaps. I am also putting to the Minister that more persons received COVID-19 cash grant in places like Leonora, Wakenaam and Leguan than the actual householders that are in those communities. How is it that the Minister will address it?

Dr. Persaud: The Hon. Member is now raising that here and I am sure if there are any discrepancies, they would be captured through the continuous audit and after. If there are any complaints or any inadequacies, those will be addressed by the various personnel dealing directly with it, which would be in the regions.

Mr. Jones: Could the Hon. Minister confirm, based on my breakdown per region in terms of moneys from the COVID-19 relief fund that are missing, if this has occasioned His Excellency the President calling...

The Minister is asking me to repeat. I am asking, based on my breakdown per region, moneys are unaccounted for the COVID- 19 relief fund, could the Hon. Minister indicate if this is the reason for His Excellency calling for the Auditor General to audit same?

Dr. Persaud: I am not aware of any such thing, but I believe that an audit is always a good thing. I believe that and I am sure the entire Government believes that. That is why the auditing mechanism was built into what we were doing from day one, and it is good to audit after because we always want to ensure that our systems are transparent and accountable.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, one more question, please. Thank you very much. Earlier, the Hon. Minister said that, in total, we are capturing 280 households, which is \$180,000 from the fist disbursement and \$100,000 from the second disbursement. If I am incorrect, could the Hon. Minister say what is the total number of households we are trying to capture? We had \$4.5 billion and now the \$2.5 billion. I can understand that the \$2.5 billion is for 100,000 households. From the \$4.5 billion, how many households are we capturing or expecting to capture? We must have a figure in mind.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am just getting...

Dr. Persaud: I have answered this time and time again and those figures emanated from the Member opposite me and not myself.

Mr. Mahipaul: They thief the money.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, be careful.

3.23 p.m.

Mr. Holder: I would like to ask if the Hon. Minister is aware that there was widespread discrimination with regard to the COVID-19 relief distribution and what her Government intends to do to ensure that it does not happen when they distribute this \$2.5 billion.

Dr. Persaud: Again, I would like to say, very clearly, that we would like to capture all the primary households in Guyana. If persons were missed, there is a mechanism that is in place where they could be addressed. It is either by the pink slip or by heading to the NDC Office and ensuring that they are captured. Hon. Member, if you know of any such instance, please ask them to do any one of these.

Mr. Holder: Is the Minister aware, and I do know of hundreds of cases of discrimination, that that there was heavy discrimination in communities perceived to be A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change supporters? Is the Minister aware that People’s Progressive Party/Civic activists were used in the distribution of the COVID-19 relief fund?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think that question is best submitted for a response; you need to ask a question pertaining to the \$2.5 billion.

Mr. Holder: I have a follow-up question.

Mr. Chairman: You are now asking about allegations of widespread discrimination.

Mr. Holder: I mentioned that because there is a follow-up to ask: could the Minister say what will be put in place or if...

Mr. Chairman: Did you previously ask that?

Mr. Holder: In this round, during the distribution of the \$2.5 billion, party hacks will still be used? It is a direct question.

Dr. Persaud: I was at pains to detail how the team was comprised and where it emanated from to carry out the whole \$25,000 cash delivery. I explained how the teams were comprised and constituted. I want to say that to make such allegations, you must have evidence of this. If there are persons who were missed, I think you would help the persons better if you take the persons to the NDC office or you get them into the system, rather than just, you know. As a Member of Parliament (MP), that is what you should be

doing; taking them so that they can get their concerns addressed. There is no need to discriminate against anyone; a commitment was made.

Mr. Holder: I am extremely happy with the statement that the Minister just made. Her Colleagues also need to know that. Would the Minister agree that tenants, persons who do not have their own home and are renting homes, would fall in the category of persons that are considered being most vulnerable?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, you have been very lenient. A lot of the questions being asked are really relevant to questions to Ministers under a different section of the *Order Paper*. This is a Financial Paper and I agree that you must be as broad as possible, but we are getting into what is Opposition Members’ Day business, when they can pose their questions and the Ministers have to answer. This is not what we are dealing with here; we are dealing with \$2.5 billion for the cash grant. The Member has a right and every Member has a right to raise questions for the Minister which she can answer in more details on another Order Paper. The same Opposition who said they want the Committee Chairpersons to be elected and were threatening...it is waiting. We are supposed to be doing that now.

Dr. Persaud: I am not quite sure what I should be answering to. Mr. Chairman, if you can guide me, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Holder: Let me be much clearer. The Government is about to embark on the distribution of \$2.5 billion COVID-19 relief. I am asking if tenants, persons who are living in rented apartments, are considered by the Minister to be in the category of most vulnerable. Why, therefore, were they not considered most vulnerable in the first place? We came to this Parliament during the budget debate and we asked these very questions, but the Government failed to pay any heed to them.

Dr. Persaud: The cash grant delivery has phases; this is the first phase. Those persons who are not primary householders will all have a pink slip and will be captured in the second phase. To me, COVID-19 has impacted on many people, vulnerable people across the board in many different ways, and they will be captured when the pink slip phase gets going.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister a question.

Mr. Chairman: Before you do that, Hon. Minister, I want to make the observation that several of the Members asking questions have been asking the same question over and over. Repetition is one of the things we do not do under the Standing Orders.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I ask the Minister whether she has received any complaints, any report from any Member of Parliament in this House of discrimination going on in the cash relief? Has any Member of Parliament called you and said that there is a problem to do with discrimination, come and investigate it?

Dr. Persaud: No Member of Parliament has called me personally to say that there is any specific instance. No one has called me.

Mr. Mahipaul: For clarity, I wish to say that I have made numerous complaints to the REO’s Office and to the person who is responsible for the Region 3 distribution, Ms. Angelie Seebarran. I have made numerous complaints to her about discrimination.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think we have exhausted the questions with respect to this particular allocation and we are getting into areas now best asked by questions to the Minister.

Item 5: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Security - \$2,500,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

Item 6: 45-452 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing Development and Management - \$2,000,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: Would the Hon. Member be kind enough to lay over a detailed submission, firstly, on areas, scope of work and disaggregated costs for each activity to be catered for by the \$2 billion now being sought? Secondly, have proposed works been tendered? If so, what method? Thirdly, what mechanism is in place to ensure moneys are expended by 31st December, 2020? Fourthly, what percentage of the initial budgeted sum of the \$1.7 billion has been expended to date?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, this Hon. Member would read what the \$2 billion expense is intended for. It is for infrastructural work for a number of new as well as existing housing schemes in Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6.

I will answer all four parts of the question, but I must give a little background. When we took over this past August,

having assessed what was happening at the office, we took over an office whereby we found allocations were made, even this year, for areas that Central Housing & Planning Authority did not own and for areas that you cannot necessarily identify where those allottees can go and construct. There were non-existent infrastructures. Hence, we derived the budget of the of the \$1.7 billion.

As part of our aggressive housing drive and as part of our commitment to our 50,000 within the next five years for which they are 70,000 in the system, and bearing in mind that, in the last five years, there has only been an allocation of 7,534...This year, to which I referred before, the period between January to August, there was an allocation of 1,987 for which you can say is non-existent lots but just areas. Hence, the infrastructural work that we had in the emergency Budget and this additional \$2 billion is part of our expansive drive to respond, in a speedily manner, to the heavy demand that is out there of persons who were not satisfied adequately within the last period.

The works have been tendered and there are two levels for which there have been the awards. It is at the Central Housing and Planning Authority Board for which they have a ceiling of \$20 billion. Works above that go to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). Those are the two levels for which the works were awarded. They were all publicly advertised. The areas that you are referring to will include: Region 3 – Anna Catherina, Met-en-Meerzorg, Stewartville; Region 4 – Little Diamond, Great Diamond, Annandale, Mon Repos, Providence, 1768 and 1767 Cummings Lodge, Prospect, La Bonne Intention (LBI), Vigilance, Bladen Hall; Region 5 – Experiment; Region 6 – 79 and 75 villages, Ordnance Fort Lands, Williamsburg, Hampshire.

3.38 p.m.

You also have in existing areas and Schemes of Region 3 – Zeelugt, Uitvlugt and Parfaite Harmonie; Region 4 – Farm Phase I and II, Covent Garden, Providence, Prospect, Perseverance, Peter’s Hall, Herstelling, Good Hope, Mon Repos, Hope South and Hope Estate; Region 5 – Hope/Experiment and Block B; Region 6 – Ordinance/FortLands, Kilcoy and Chesney; Region 9 – Tabatinga; and Region 10 – Amelias Ward.

Mr. Chairman, if you need me to go further, I can but I think I will start with those answers.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member had asked that you layover the details.

Ms. Ferguson: I know that the Hon. Member alluded to the APNU/AFC distributing in the year and the areas not being identified. I want to remind the Hon. Member that the People’s Progressive Party/Civic Government did exactly...

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking a question or are you making a statement?

Ms. Ferguson: I am also making a statement because the Minister made a statement.

Mr. Chairman: I would not allow the statement. I would ask you to ask the question.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker...

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead with the question.

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Member state whether some of the areas he alluded to – Annandale, Experiment, La Bonne Intention (LBI) – have designs in order?

Mr. Croal: All of the areas that I have read out have their layouts in order for which we are doing work. If I can have a follow-up answer...

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Member state whether these areas were designed pre 2nd August, 2020?

Mr. Croal: I am not aware, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Ferguson: Sometimes, I find it very disturbing and amusing when we as legislators would come to the National Assembly to tell a whole set of untruths. The Hon. Member is quite aware that all the documents are with the Central Housing and Planning Authority for Experiment, La Bonne Intention, Annandale and Met en Meerzorg. You cannot come to the National Assembly to state that you are unaware of these areas being designed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not think that we are in a position to talk about untruth from either side. Hon. Minister, I give you a final chance to answer.

Mr. Croal: I do not think that the former Minister should be one that can debate on housing programmes, housing infrastructure and our housing plan for the people of Guyana. If you compare pre 2015 PPP/C programme to what they have done within the last period and what we have planned

for this nation, I do not think that Hon. Member should debate.

Having said that Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member can never deny that they have made allocations for areas for which CH&PA did not have ownership and for which we are currently rectifying through many mechanisms.

Ms. Ferguson: The Hon. Member should not speak. When we came to Office in May, 2015 – and I am just going to allude to one area for now because I do not want to take up much more time –Cummings Lodge was never handed over...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not think you are providing a question now. You are making a statement.

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Minister state whether Cummings Lodge was designed before May, 2015?

Mr. Croal: Which one of the Cummings Lodge is the Member speaking about because there is 1767 and there is 1768?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister is seeking clarification.

Ms. Ferguson: I am speaking of both, Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Member is speaking about both.

Mr. Croal: The area of 1767 was... and the area of 1768 was completed under us.

Mr. Duncan: Hon. Minister, I am going to ask whether any of this sum will go towards alleviating some of the woes of the Success squatters because the Ministry did meet with them and promises were made.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, were the Success squatters included?

Mr. Croal: The area of Success, which is under question, is under the purview of GuySuCo and NICIL.

Mr. Duncan: The Minister and team did meet with the squatters from Success at the Graham’s Hall Primary School on the East Coast. Promises were made that the Ministry would be looking into housing for them. I am wondering whether part of this sum will go towards house lots for the squatters from Success for whom the Government tear-gassed and shot at with pellets, among other things.

Mr. Croal: In fact, I did meet with the delegation twice, not once. The Government’s allocation for housing programmes has many requirements and needs which include categories of relocating squatters.

Mr. Duncan: Hon. Minister, is that specific to the Success squatters? Is the relocation of the Success Squatters part of the budgetary allocation here?

Mr. Croal: I am referring to beneficiaries of allottees of allocation which would include persons who are required to remove from areas that they are not desired to be in.

Mr. Duncan: Hon. Minister, does that extend to Conservancy Dam in Canal No. 1 to which His Excellency recently gave water and light?

Mr. Croal: There are about 13 squatters in Canal No. 1 for which we have no intention of removing those persons from there.

Mr. Duncan: Are you telling this House that the Government has no intention of moving the squatters from the Conservancy Dam in Canal No.1 and that there is no provision being made by the Hon. Minister and the Government for the squatters at Success?

Mr. Croal: I am not saying so. I am saying that the Conservancy Dam at Canal No. 1, the area for which those persons are located for over 30 years and more and not directly on the Conservancy... They are on the east of the Conservancy. It is not directly affecting the Conservancy and the dam of the Conservancy. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure as well as the team from the Central Housing & Planning Authority visited that area and they have already identified that the area is not affected by those persons at Canal No. 1 to which you are referring.

For the area at Success for which you keep alluding, GuySuCo is requesting that area for its sugarcane programme. And so GuySuCo will be responding, and they are dealing with that matter.

Mr. Duncan: Is the Hon. Minister saying to this House that the 25 squatters located in the Conservancy Dam area – the very name and nature of the area tells us what it is about – less than 15 feet away from that main body of water, would not be affected? Is that what the Minister is saying?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am at a loss with respect to that particular question. I heard the Minister talk about 13

families. I do not know where 25 came from. Hon. Minister you may respond.

Mr. Duncan: I said 25. It was the Hon. Minister who said 13.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, that is what I am saying.

Mr. Duncan: I will be guided that 25 is the correct number.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know.

Mr. Duncan: Unless the Minister has not been there recently.

Mr. Chairman: I am asking the Minister to respond to you, but I told you what I heard him say before.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I did not get the question clearly.

Mr. Chairman: Could you repeat, Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan?

Mr. Duncan: Hon. Minister, we are trying to get the exact figure for the number of persons who reside illegally at Canal No. 1 in the Conservancy Dam area. Conservancy Dam!

Mr. Croal: I cannot confirm the exact figure because I am not aware who is living there illegally.

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

Ms. Ferguson: I have one last question for the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Member state whether provisions from the \$ 2 billion for the 20 lots, I think, which had already been identified for the 30 remaining residents at Broad Street...

Could he state whether any of this provision of this \$2 billion will be used to ensure that the lands in Cummings Lodge are made available to the 30 residents from the Broad Street area?

Mr. Croal: The relocation of those Broad Street residents, which was a commitment from the last Government, is on-going and we are continuing with that programme.

Item 6 45-452 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing Development and Management – \$2,000,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 7 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$1,765,800,000.

Item 7 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$1,765,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Assembly resumed.

3.53 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before we take the Appropriation Bill, I would like to make an announcement. Circulating is the answer to the question which the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, had asked at the beginning of the session, today. We had said that the wrong answer was inadvertently circulated. The correct answer is now being circulated or has been already circulated.

Dr. Singh: I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2020, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Motion put and agreed to.

Suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (Bill No. 1 of 2020) – Bill No. 18 of 2020 to be introduced at this stage.”

[Prime Minister]

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 1 of 2020) – Bill No. 18 of 2020, to be introduced at this stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Dr. Singh: Mr. speaker, in accordance with paragraph (2) of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.1 of 2020) – Bill No. 18 of 2020 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present this Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the first time:

Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 1 of 2020) – Bill No. 18 of 2020

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2020 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.”

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

Question put and carried.

Bill read the first time.

Dr. Singh: I move that the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 1 of 2020) – Bill No. 18 of 2020 be read a second time.

Bills - Second and Third Readings

Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 1 of 2020) – Bill No. 18 of 2020

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2020 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.”

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

Question put and carried.

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill Considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I understand that the Government will not be proceeding with the second reading of the two Bills that were slated for today. Is that correct Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Members, this will conclude our business for today. Before I sign off, I want to remind Members of Committees that we will meet immediately after the adjournment. We will take a 10-minute break so that the persons who are not [inaudible] in the Committee of Selection can meet in the Dome.

Hon. Members, this being our last sitting for the ‘fast ending’ year 2020, I take this opportunity to wish you and your families, our staff and their families, the media and their families and all of the support staff that we have had, a very safe, healthy and prosperous 2021.

Would the Hon. Leader of the Opposition like to say a few words? Hon. Prime Minister hold a second, please.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: I defer to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon: Thank you very much Prime Minister.

When we met on 23rd December, 2020, in this honourable House, I did make some remarks and did, in fact, wish the entire House – that is to say the Members of the Government as well as the Members of the Opposition – a happy Christmas and a warm and healthy holidays.

I now repeat that, and I would like to add. To all Members of this House, the Speaker, the Clerk of the National Assembly, the staff, the Prime Minister, the Government’s side and my own Colleagues, I wish you all the best for 2021. We expect that it is going to be another challenging year, but I believe that we are a resilient people, and that we will be able to withstand all of the adversities thrown before us. I do look forward to a very healthy and happy 2021.

We must recall and remember that the COVID-19 is not a joke and the requirements for safety: wearing of masks, washing of hands, sanitising, social and safe distancing and avoiding of crowds.

I am perturbed at what does not just appear to be issues with respect to compliance but that there are advertisements in the newspapers, on the radio and television about events which are slated to go beyond the curfew, actually almost starting at curfew time.

I urge the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Health to enforce these measures. They are not only for the benefit of one group of people because all of us are affected. When we slacken up on our enforcement, we are increasing the possibility of the spread of this pandemic all across this country.

I want to say that, on behalf of the Opposition, I trust that we will observe those requirements as it is very important for all of us, and I wish you all the best.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I stand to wish you and your family a happy and prosperous 2021. To the Deputy Speaker, to the Clerk of the National Assembly, all staff of the Parliament Office and their families, a happy 2021. To the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Members of the Opposition, a happy and prosperous 2021. And. to Members on my side of the House, a happy and prosperous 2021 to you and your families.

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“I move the adjournment of the National Assembly to a date to be fixed.”

[Prime Minister]

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: At this stage, I move the adjournment of the Assembly to a date to be fixed.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: The National Assembly now stands adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Adjourned accordingly 4.04 p.m.