



**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
(2020-2022) 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*

42ND Sitting

Monday, 7TH February, 2022

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

The Assembly convened at 10.36 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

REVISED MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022

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

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2022 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on January 26, 2022, as summarised in the attached Schedule 1;

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

AND WHEREAS the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, Cap. 73 :02, requires that the annual lump sum subvention recommended by the Minister with Responsibility for

Finance for each Constitutional Agency be included in the annual budget proposal for approval by the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Minister with Responsibility for Finance recommends lump sum subventions for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2022 as summarised in the attached Schedule 2;

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

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2022, of a total sum of five hundred and one billion, six hundred and seventy-eight million, two hundred and ninety-eight thousand dollars (\$501,678,298,000) excluding fifty one billion, two hundred and fifty-five million, and four hundred and twenty thousand dollars (\$51,255,420,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in Schedule 1, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly approves the recommended lump sum subvention for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2022 as stated in Schedule 2, amounting to a total sum of eleven billion, seven hundred and twenty-nine million, eight hundred and forty thousand dollars (\$11,729,840,000) which is charged upon the Consolidated Fund by the Constitution and for the sums voted for the Constitutional Agencies to form part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures of Guyana for the financial year 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the sum of \$126,694,310,000, equivalent to US \$607,646,570.98, to be withdrawn from the Natural Resource Fund for the financial year 2022 in accordance with the Natural Resource Fund Act 2021.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the House will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of Expenditure for financial year 2022.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Time schedule for budget Estimates – Day 1

Mr. Chairman: The House is now in Committee. Hon. Members, we will get ourselves together. It is going to be meticulous times ahead and the efficient use of the time is going to be at a premium. I would now like to draw your attention to the schedule, which was approved last Friday. Today, we were supposed to start consideration of the Estimates at 10.00 a.m. We are now at 10.41.30 a.m. We will maintain the time schedule allotted for each head.

Agency 07: Parliament Office

Current Expenditure

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,802,411,000

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if indeed \$25 million has been allocated to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition? If so, could the Hon. Minister provide us with a breakdown?

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Mr. Chairman, as far as I understand, under line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, the allocation of \$27.781 million is assigned to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,802,411,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$50,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, from Volume 3, I am seeing the description for the \$50,000,000 under Project Code 4000100. Is there any consideration here for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Hon. Member Mahipaul. Yes. There is a provision in the \$50,000,000 for the Parliament Office. A sum of \$5 million has been allocated for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Mahipaul: From the \$45 million that speaks to the:

“Provision of gates, baggage scanner, and purchase of furniture and equipment...”

Could that number be disaggregated, please? I would appreciate if it could be laid over, thank you.
[Inaudible]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, parliamentary language please. I know you have a lot of questions. We do not want to do that to you also. Hon. Minister, proceed.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The \$50 million is disaggregated as follows: \$5 million for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition; \$15 million for cameras, which is a project from 2021 that is urgent and needs to be included; electronic gates for \$10 million; baggage scanner for \$5 million; photocopying machine for \$7 million; computers for \$1.5 million; and furniture and equipment for \$6.5 million. Sir, that makes the sum of \$50 million.

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$50,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister and the staff of the Parliament Office. Hon. Members, we can now turn to Agency 08, the Audit Office of Guyana. Let us give a few moments for the Audit Office of Guyana to get into place.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, we have to sanitize each time we change persons here, if you do not mind.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Hon. Minister, maybe we could have the other agency set up on the other side, leaving a chair for you so you could just... If you want, you could stay in your seat and... We could get a few more chairs so that the change over time could be shorter.

Ms. Teixeira: No problem, Sir. My staff are here; they could arrange for the next set coming up to be there, if you do not mind movement going on while we are doing this.

Agency: 08 Audit Office of Guyana

Current Expenditure

Programme: 081 – Audit Office – \$1,025,956,000

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

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Cde. Chair. I have seen a minimal increase of about a one per cent lump sum to the Audit Office of Guyana, but with regard to line item 6262, Overseas Conferences and Official Visits, could the Minister provide with the allocated sum to the Audit Office of Guyana that will cater specifically for these overseas trips and official visits?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Hon. Member, for the question. The total comes up to \$8,819,000. The variants between this year and last year regarding the attendance at the Caribbean Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (CAROSAI) Congress to be held in Aruba and the Auditor General's tenure as the Chairman of the CAROSAI will expire in August 2022. It is important for the outgoing chairman to hand over the gavel to the incoming chairman. This has to do with the CAROSAI congress in Aruba and costs also associated with audit visits to carry out audits at the Washington and New York missions, and Toronto and Ottawa, also in 2022.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many overseas missions will be audited this year?

Ms. Teixeira: I think I said that; I responded. It is Washington, New York, Toronto and Ottawa. Ottawa is a mission and Toronto is a Councillors office.

Mr. Figueira: Being made known of the missions that are going to be audited, could the Hon. Minister say how many times for the year these missions would be audited? More so, why is it that only these particular overseas audits will be audited for 2022?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that the Audit Office of Guyana audits the larger missions annually and the smaller missions every two years.

Mr. Figueira: Did you say every two years, Mdm. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: It is for the smaller missions, Hon. Member.

10.51 a.m.

Mr. Figueira: It is known that all of the missions in the United States of America (USA) are audited. Could the Minister indicate how many officers are used to audit these missions in the USA?

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, I am advised that it is one staff member from the Audit Office of Guyana who audits these larger missions and it is the Auditor General himself.

Mr. Figueira: The Caribbean Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions conference that you indicated Hon. Minister that will be held in May, 2022, how many officers are likely to attend this conference?

Ms. Teixeira: There will be seven members of the Audit Office of Guyana will be attending the CAROSAI conference.

Mr. Figueira: Is there a projected cost for the seven members who will be attending the conference and, more so, what is the role each of these officers attending this conference will bring to it on behalf of the Audit Office of Guyana?

Ms. Teixeira: The cost will be \$4.8 million for the delegation to attend the conference.

Mr. Figueira: What is the function of the respective members of the delegation and the designation of those officers?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member, as I said earlier, Guyana and the Auditor General of Guyana was the Chairman of CAROSAI. Therefore, Guyana also managed the Secretariat of CAROSAI. The handing over is not only the chairman but the secretariat which is made up of the audit team from Guyana. That is why they are going to the meeting to do the handing over to the incoming chairman and the incoming secretariat. The country that is chairman, also manages the secretariat's functions. As you know, CAROSAI is a very important body, in terms of setting the standards for audit in the region and those are some of the standards we use in our audit system here in Guyana.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying to this House that the only role the attending officers are going to this function for is to partake in a handing over ceremony?

Ms. Teixeira: I think, Hon. Member...

Mr. Figueira: What are the functions the respective officers will play and what is the designated position these individuals hold?

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, CAROSAI is a very important body for the region and for the audit institutions of the region. It is the congress of CAROSAI that will be held for four days in which there will be different presentations by different audit institutions, speakers, *et cetera*. Therefore, it is required for Guyana as the outgoing, to have a strong delegation. Guyana has always played an important role in CAROSAI, as a result of our Audit Office of Guyana playing a very proactive role there.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6273 – Other Goods and Services Purchased: Is it the intention of the Audit Office in 2022, to purchase photocopying machines for the Audit Office of Guyana?

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member say...

Mr. Chairman: Is it line item 6273? Hon. Member, photocopies would come under Capital Expenditure. Could you hold the question for when we get to page 629? Do you have another question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman?

Ms. Teixeira: I am a little confused, Mr. Chairman. Line item, 6273, is for Water Charges.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I already alerted the Hon. Member with respect to when to ask that question.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister in the Audit Office state the actual amounts budgeted for 2021 to contract audits? How much did you actually expend versus what you have budgeted in 2022 to contract external auditors to undertake your works? I have a follow-up.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member may be familiar with the fact that the Auditor General does not expend money to contract external auditors. The agencies that have been audited pay for that service but, the Auditor General, under the Constitution, makes a determination whether he has the capacity to do it or whether he needs additional contractors to do so. There are no moneys expended by the Audit Office of Guyana in accessing or acquiring auditing services to assist the Audit Office of Guyana.

Mr. Patterson: Could I ask the Hon. Minister, with advent of the now Natural Resource Fund and the liability now passing to the Audit Office, what additional provisions has the Audit Office made to examine the expenditures of the moneys brought into the Natural Resources Fund?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Audit Office has been preparing to track oil revenues coming into the Government coffers or into the Natural Resource Fund. The Auditor General under the Natural Resource Fund Act has a role to play in terms of section 31:

“(1) An external audit of the accounts, records and other documents relating to the Fund shall be undertaken annually by the Auditor General who may engage an internationally recognised auditing firm to assist in the discharge of this external audit function...”

There are three paragraphs that deal with that in the Natural Resource Fund Act. The Audit Office is building its capacity to audit exploration, extraction and production of oil in the oil sector. This will be audited under the Natural Resource Fund and will be audited in accordance with the requirements of the Natural Resource Fund Act and the Audit Act. With respect to any technical expertise that might be required, that will be determined during the planning and extraction of the audit. Likewise, the Auditor General will determine at that time if such help will be in the form of external expertise or an international auditing firm.

With respect to the capacity as stated above, the Audit Office is equipped to audit the deposits and withdrawals of the Fund. Nevertheless, the office has already started improving the capacity with two of its middle management staff having obtained master's degrees in studies relating to oil and gas. With regard to other technical staff, more specifically, the engineers, the Audit Office has three Civil Engineers, one with a master's degree. It is anticipated that the Engineering Department would be increase its capacity and the numbers will be presented in the 2023 Budget.

As you know, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is the one that has to approve any changes in the organisational structure and the personal requirements of the Audit Office. I assume at that time, as appropriately determined by the Auditor General, he will bring such request to the Public Accounts Committee and I assume that the Public Accounts Committee will lend its support to such request.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chair. under Other Goods and Services Purchased, there is an allotted sum of \$66,459,000. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say if, from this sum, there is an allocation for the purchasing of software licence and the purpose of the software licence if they are purchasing?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. Under the sum of \$28.820 million, there is an allocation to allow for the purchase of software as required that the Hon. Member raised.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask how many software licence will be purchased and the purpose of the software licence?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised by the Auditor General that 30 such licences will be acquired.

Mr. Mahipaul: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say if the licence TeamMate and the Interactive Data Extraction and Analysis (IDEA) are two such licences to be purchased?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Mr. Mahipaul. Both TeamMate and IDEA, I think that is what you said, are included in the licences.

Mr. Mahipaul: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give a breakdown of the amount for TeamMate and an amount for IDEA, and the purpose of these two licences?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could you give us a minute?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, in terms of the software licences, \$9.6 million is allocated for IDEA and \$1.65 million to TeamMate. As you know, TeamMate is more relating to a paperless system and IDEA is a tool to assist with auditing.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chair, may I ask if we have been purchasing the licence TeamMate for the last six years?

Ms. Teixeira: We do not have the exact information, Hon. Member. It is probably around seven years the Office has been dealing with TeamMate.

Mr. Mahipaul: In view of using TeamMate to basically go paperless, may I ask why is it that we are not seeing a change in materials, equipment and supplies, if it is that we are supposed to be going paperless? Should the expense for the purchasing of paper, printer, inks and the likes not be significantly reduced?

Ms. Teixeira: I would take the liberty of saying, many times paperless is not paperless. We are trying to get a paperless Parliament, yet we are consumed with paper in here. I would not put that on the Audit Office of Guyana. They are in phase one of the project to move towards a paperless audit. As you are well aware, if you move around the country with eight Local Authorities, 10 Regional Democratic Councils (RDC), state or agencies, Government Ministries, you still have to be dealing with quite a volume of paper and this is a project that is in phase one.

11.06 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. Hon Members, we have 10 minutes allocated for this head, and we saved six minutes on the previous head – that is 16 minutes, and we are now at 20 minutes. I will allow a few more questions and then I would have to put this head.

Mr. Mahipaul: Comrade Chairman, is the Hon. Minister saying that after purchasing this particular software– which we have been doing for approximately seven years– we are still in phase one of its operations? Did I hear correctly?

Ms. Teixeira: I think the Hon. Member is quite aware– as a Member of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC– that processes such as this do take time. Phase one is still in progress; until the

various auditors and agencies are in sync and in relation to the way in which we are carrying out our accounting and audit systems.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Programme: 081 – Audit Office of Guyana – \$1,025,956 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 081 – Audit Office of Guyana – \$ 25,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Under project code 4000200 – Constitutional Agencies: From the legend, I see that this project entails provision for water filtration systems, bond, furniture and equipment. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate the sum of \$25 million, so that we could understand how much is allocated for each project?

Ms. Teixeira: The allocation of \$25 million is as follows: in 2022, the building of a water filtration system at \$1.5 million, building storage area for the audit documents at \$5 million and office furniture and equipment at \$18.5 million – totalling \$25 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say where is the bond going to be located or if it is the same headquarters' office?

Ms. Teixeira: I am tempted to answer by saying Sussex Street, but I have to inform the Member that it is in the same compound as the Auditor General's Office.

Programme: 08 – Audit Office of Guyana – \$25,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 09 Public and Police Commissions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions – \$156,622,000

Mr. Ramjattan: Just for clarification, I noticed the Subsidies and Contribution to Central Government from 137 revised in 2021, goes up to 156. Could it be explained to me because there is a \$20 million increase here? It is in Appendix T on page 830.

Ms. Teixeira: I think the Hon. Member may have forgotten that both Police and Public Service Commissions, expired in August, 2021. Less money was used from the allocation of \$151.5 million allocation in 2021, for the Commissioners and Chairman salaries and stipend. From 9th August, there was no Commission; so, these are the savings that led to the decline. In 2022, it had given back 1.56 million, which is basically almost 5 million of what they got in 2021.

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Commissions – \$156,622,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Commissions – \$2,500,000

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Commissions – \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let me thank the Minister and the staff of the Public and Police Service Commissions for taking us through that head.

Agency: 10 Teaching Service Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$120,454,000

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$120,454,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$4,000,000

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Minister and staff for taking us through those Estimates.

Agency: 11 Guyana Elections Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 111 – Guyana Elections Commission – \$4,041,996,000

Let me inform Members that we saved 15 minutes on the last two heads, and this would be brought forward. Mr. Patterson, please, go ahead.

Mr. Patterson: My first question, is if a work plan been prepared and approved by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) for the preparation of this budget?

Ms. Teixeira: I think the Hon. Member knows that Appendix T, on page 832, has a breakdown. If he wishes to ask a question, could he relate to that, so that I may be properly able to answer his question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: In Appendix T of goods and services purchased, I noticed it went up by \$250 million. Is that money being increased to do a proper voter's list this time for Local Government Elections (LGE)?

Ms. Teixeira: Do you want to hear the answer, Hon. Member? The issue of other goods and services purchased, increasing from \$250 million to \$575.9 million, relates to the preparation of Local Government Elections and the services that would be required for it. However, in regard to the question of a new voter's list, that is not a budgetary issue. It is an issue that the Commission and the Chairman have to make a decision on; and if they so desire, then budgetary matters would fall into place. At this point, there is no decision by the Commission to have— as the Opposition is saying— a new voter's list, which I am not sure what that means.

Mr. Ramjattan: That increase of \$250 million for other goods and services purchased... I mean, you have been very general there, as to its preparation for Local Government Elections. Could you state what it is really that would be disaggregated for us?

Ms. Teixeira: Under other goods and services, includes security services which would be increased because of the Local Government Elections. The equipment maintenance would go up sizably, because it has to with the preparation of the elections – cleaning, extermination, Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and other, where it goes from \$58 million to three and 11, which includes areas of rental of backup generators containers to store ballot papers and I am sure you would remember the containers. Do you not? The publication of advertisement in all print media and the public about the election process to create public awareness and for storage of all the sensitive election materials. Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, that is what the \$9,937,000 would be spent on.

11.21 a.m.

Mr. Patterson: The current voter’s list has many problems, Sir. For example, at the conclusion of the 2018 house-to-house registration which was aborted, approximately 22,000 young people had ‘pink slips’ and were unable to get on to the voters list. Could the Hon. Minister, and the agency say what provisions and allocations have been made to allow for these 22,000 persons to get on the list? What provisions are there to upgrade the list from the last house-to-house registration and now, for new registrants before the Local Government Elections?

Ms. Teixeira: As the Hon. Member is going into the elections, we would like to remind him that it took five months due to a series of deliberate attempts to steal the votes of the people in order to prevent the legitimate government from being sworn in. I do not believe that the question is a budgetary question. However, the areas of continuous registration, claims and objections as per norm, are provided for in the budget in regards to other direct labour costs which has to do with staff at GECOM working overtime and to be able to have in addition to that, the hiring of additional staff with regards to the election process, so that in terms of anybody who has been left off or were not registered, they have the right to go with the continuous registration claims and objections when that commences. I also wish to remind the Hon. Member that the Chief Justice of this country ruled that there must not be any attempt to scrap the National Registration Registrar of Registrants of Guyana.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, that was a lengthy explanation, but we are examining the Estimates and what I asked is it not a question? I have asked specifically, what is the allocation in the 2022

Budget? I did not ask for the inclusion of that or what the Chief Justice has ruled. What are the exact funds? I have follow-up questions.

Ms. Teixeira: I would like to ask the Hon. Member to repeat. There is a lot of noise. Also, I was not clear on what he was asking.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please allow the Minister the opportunity to hear.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I hope I could get back the time for the delay in tactics. I asked specifically about the young voters in 2018 who were not able to get on the Voters list and the young persons who have become of age. What are the specific amounts allocated in *Budget 2022* to allow those who were unable to be registered, Mdm. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: I wish I was the one allocating but I am not. I am just the conduit in this House, as you are well aware. I am not the Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission. That is not my specialty. However, in the budgetary provision, there are provisions for continuous registration, claims and objections. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** (*Inaudible*)] I could read it all out to you. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** Call out the lump sum.] There is no lump sum for the Local Government Elections

Mr. Chairman: Please allow the Hon. Minister to answer the question.

Ms. Teixeira: It is scattered through the chart of accounts, and you are well aware of this. The figures of Local Government Elections, in terms of the \$4 billion... [**An Hon. Member:** You are talking about registration.] I am not talking about registration, Sir. Could the Hon. Member look at other operating expenses? Do you see a figure there of \$650,710 million plus with the other interventions in the budget, would come up to total of \$783 million for Local Government Elections?

Mr. Patterson: I have asked about registration and the Hon. Member has pointed me to Other Expenses. I have asked her to disaggregate the other operational cost. Is GECOM saying that entire amount is only for? I have not asked about Local Government Elections. I am coming to that.

Ms. Teixeira: The GECOM has brought a budget based on what it knows. When the Commissioners and the Chairman make a decision of when Local Government Elections will be held, the process of claims, then objections and continuous registration will commence. It cannot

budget for that because no decision has been made in the sort of details that the Hon. Member wants. What it has done is budget for what would be the current normal situation with continuous registration. It made provisions for claims and objections. What the Hon. Member is asking for, is awaiting a policy direction because the calculations for some of the amounts that you require would depend on if and when, the GECOM makes such decisions.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, could I assume that the Hon. Minister is saying that GECOM has not decided or made a preliminary estimate of which quarter the Local Government Elections shall be held? Which quarter not the date, because obviously, that is how you will... Are you saying there is no decision from the GECOM from which quarter from 2022, there will be Local Government Elections?

Ms. Teixeira: The GECOM has stated that it is preparing a road map which will go to the Commission and the Commission will make the determination of when it would be ready to commence. Obviously, it will then inform the President of its readiness. That as far as I know, both in terms of meetings with the GECOM as well as in terms of the press reports, that it did reach that stage, to say what quarter of the year it would be willing to commence.

Mr. Patterson: Obviously, the GECOM has its work to do. I think in 2019, the printing of new identification (ID) cards there was US\$1 million to that. Could the Hon. Minister state what is the status of the printing of new ID cards? This is not for new registrants. This is replacements, *et cetera*. What has been allocated and what is the status of new ID cards?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that the GECOM has not made provisions for new National ID cards. At this point there are some issues that it has to resolve with the vendor, it has been using with a view of resolving that and being to commence the process. At this point in the budget there is no provision for a new National ID card, which is what you are asking about.

Mr. Patterson: No. Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister is trying to give the impression that I am asking about a new reformatted ID card. I am asking about persons who lost his/her ID cards, persons who have not been issued with ID cards, the youngsters that are coming in and want to take part in Local Government Elections and do not have ID cards. Where and what is the allocation for this amount, Mdm. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: It is because the Hon. Member said a new national ID card, there is no other way I could think that he was talking about a new national ID card. If he wanted to ask about the availability of printing of national ID cards for persons who need replacements who are now being registered, then that is a different question. We have to be careful about how we are asking our questions.

The allocation under Print and Non-Print Materials of \$237,760,000 that includes the printing of sensitive elections materials, tally sheets, *et cetera* and national ID cards. That is an ongoing process, Sir. There is nothing to prevent the GECOM from making national ID cards available to Guyanese now.

Mr. Patterson: Just for clarity, is the Hon. Member saying that National replacement ID cards are available right now?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, very much.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir, as far as I know, in the GECOM's centres, that is being done. I think it was advertised about a month ago, and it is ongoing, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: There was a lot of training and voters' education. We would like to know what is specifically allocated for that and when would that commence based on your allocation?

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6302 which deals with Training (including scholarships), \$135,744,000 have been allocated to train approximately 20,000 persons to manage the election day activities. This heading includes production of manuals for the training of the staff and other activities like meals and so on that would be needed. This specifically deals with training of election day staff.

Mr. Mahipaul: When I look at the expenditure for GECOM in 2020 and I look at what was budgeted for in 2021 and what was spent in 2021, I am seeing for 2022, a reflection of what was budgeted for in 2021. The fact that the revised sum for 2021, was significantly lower than what was budgeted for all the headings, is that because of not having Local Government Elections in 2021, the anticipation for it in 2022 is what would have caused the numbers to be reflecting the same, as what was budgeted for in 2021?

Ms. Teixeira: That is my understanding that the reduction in 2021 was related to the Local Government Elections which was not held. That money was returned and of course as you know, there were some budgetary savings by the termination of certain persons at a very high level in GECOM and of course, it is now hiring new staff. There was a reduction in the allocation of wages and salaries.

Mr. Mahipaul: Under Wages and Salaries, I see the same amount being budgeted for but there is a higher amount that was spent in 2021, when compared to what was spent in 2020. Is there adequate consideration here for wages and salaries when it comes to the staff for Local Government Elections, given this figure here \$1,103,253 as opposed to what was spent in 2021, which I assume is for the permanent staff but all the other staff that are expected for Local Government Elections?

11.36 a.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Hon. Member. There is provision under this heading in relation to \$583,590,000 for the payment of all categories of staff who will be hired for the election exercises of approximately 10,000 to 12,000 persons as temporary staff in the period of Local Government Elections. A little more than half of a billion has been set aside.

Mr. Mahipaul: My final question is, could the Hon. Minister provide the salary and other benefits of the top five officials at the Guyana Elections Commission and the lowest five at the Guyana Elections Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: The top five would include for example, the Chairman, Chief Election Officer (CEO) and Deputy Chief Election Officer (DCEO). I assume the bottom five would be persons who are cleaners and those in the GECOM apparatus.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I think I was very clear when I asked for the figure and the other benefits – the total amount that goes to the Chairman per month, the CEO per month, the DCEO per month and others. The top five, the amount that they get per month and the lower five, the amount they get per month.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, [*inaudible*] because we have to get the information. Kindly give me a few minutes.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right. We will stop the clock.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, be careful.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the salaries are as follows for the top five; the Chairperson – \$2 million, the CEO – \$1.4 million. There is no Deputy Chief Election Officer, no Assistant Chief Election Officer (ACEO) and no Logistics Manager. Those are the next three in the line-up of the top five. The lowest five are cleaners and handymen that are paid \$90,000 a month.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I just want to verify the accuracy of this information. I believe a question was asked last year where the answer for the Chairman was—I believe the *Hansard* could bear me out. If I am not accurate, I will apologise—that the Chairman was receiving \$2.7 million. Could I have some verification on that? The CEO was receiving more than \$1.4 also. I would like for some accuracy.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member asked for salaries.

Mr. Mahipaul: Also, other benefits.

Ms. Teixeira: The salary is \$2.4 million. Whatever allowances she may be entitled to are additional. I do not have those figures here. The salary of the CEO is \$1.4 million. After \$1.4 million is the gratuity as per norm in the public sector.

Mr. Mahipaul: I hear the Hon. Minister in terms of not having the other figures. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over in writing all the salaries and other benefits for the top five and the lower five staffing at GECOM?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I want the Hon. Member to note that of the top five, there are three vacancies. Those are advertised and GECOM will decide not only the selection of the candidate but also the salaries for those persons which may vary. I cannot provide that information on those persons. I can provide the information for the Chairman, the CEO and as you requested, the lowest five.

Mr. Mahipaul: Notwithstanding there not being three persons employed for these positions, these positions do exist. I am sure that they come with an expectation or with an amount or a cap. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us what is the benchmark with reference to the salary of the Deputy Chief Election Officer, the Assistant Chief Election Officer and the Logistics Manager? Also, what are the benefits they are likely to get?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, forgive me but I am sure that the Hon. Members who are so close to the former DCEO can find out what her salary and benefits were [*inaudible*].

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, on a point of order.

Ms. Teixeira: I can be sarcastic [*inaudible*]. Do not quote Standing Orders [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, I have given the floor to the Hon. Minister. Kindly allow her to answer and then I will come back to you if there is time.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is no Standing Order relating to sarcasm, my dear.

Mr. Mahipaul: You are imputing.

Ms. Teixeira: I am not imputing anything.

Mr. Mahipaul: We are not close to anyone.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the top positions of GECOM are fixed positions on the establishment but the salaries and benefits have always been negotiable. The positions are fixed, their jobs are fixed but in terms of their salary, that is based on the Commission making a decision on if they want an ex-candidate to be DCEO or CEO, then the salary and the benefits are negotiated. It is done on a case-by-case basis. At this point I cannot say, unless you are saying I must give you the names and the salaries of the previous Deputy Chief Election Officer, Logistics Manager and Assistant Chief Election Officer. We could provide that. I am sure the public will be interested in knowing that too.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have added three minutes. It is now 28 minutes since we have been considering this head.

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$4,041,996,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$120,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: My apologies, Sir. I thought you were going to put the question now. I see under project code 4000500, Constitutional Agencies – \$120 million.

Mr. Chairman: Did you say \$120 billion?

Mr. Mahipaul: I said \$120 million. If I said billion, my apologies.

Mr. Chairman: If I heard wrong, my apologies.

Mr. Mahipaul: I see the legend speaks to provision for buildings, furniture and equipment. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate this sum and specify where these buildings will be erected? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, concerning the \$120 million, I can provide that to the Hon. Member, but I believe the public has a right to hear it too. The construction of Port Kaituma Registration Office, \$45 million. The boat docking area at the boat house at Soesdyke, \$3 million. Construction of transportation shed at head office, \$4 million. Acquisition of two 5 drawer offices. Four land cruisers at \$44 million. Two boats at \$1.2 million. One all-terrain vehicle (ATV), \$1 million. Furniture such as 11 filing cabinets, at \$715,000. Two 200 horsepower outboard engines, \$5.8 million. One 40 horsepower outboard engine, \$1 million. Seven 2-door filing cabinets. Two table model printers. One money counter. Heavy duty binders, a shredder, guillotines—not the old-time guillotines, Mr. Mahipaul—the paper guillotines. In case you thought we were going to chop off people’s heads. Air extractors, 17 water dispensers, two heavy duty printers, multifunction photocopiers – they are multipurpose printers and copiers. There are several of them listed here as printers, photocopiers and colour printers. Projectors too so we do not have to use a bedsheet anymore. Eight refrigerators, four...

Mr. Mahipaul: [*Inaudible*] bedsheet?

Ms. Teixeira: My bedsheets are clean, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you need projector screens to substitute not that.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, of course. I will raise it with my friend here, the CEO, that GECOM have projectors but no projector screens. You are absolutely right, Mr. Chairman. I hope you have noted that, CEO. We cannot go again with bedsheets, especially used bedsheets.

Black water tanks which are to be used at various locations. Containers, of course, as you know they may need additional containers. Two 20- feet (ft) containers and one 40-ft container. Just to let our Hon. Members know that it would have additional containers in case there is a recount that all the containers are properly in order. Some of those are getting old as we saw the last time. This accounts for a sum of \$120 million. These can be shared with the Hon. Member, recognising that as a constitutional body, if anything were to happen it can also make changes in capital.

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$120,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, kindly let us to turn to pages 422 and 423, Agency: 55 Supreme Court. I draw your attention to a document that was circulated earlier this morning stating that we have an amendment to Appendix T: Budgets of Constitutional Agencies and Statutory Bodies for Supreme Court, Public Prosecutions, Rights of the Child Commission and Women and Gender Equality Commission. What we have here will substitute.

Agency: 55 Supreme Court

Current Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$3,505,206,000

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$3,505,206,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.51 a.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$1,250,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, there is an allocation here under project code 4000600, Constitutional Agencies of \$1,250,000,000. It states: “Provision for courts, quarters, furniture and equipment”. The *Legend* breaks it down as: “1.Payment of retention; 2. Provision for courts living quarters, bonds and furniture and equipment”. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate the sum, and also indicate where the courts, living quarters and bonds will be constructed? For the ‘payment of retention’, which project is it for and where is it located?

Ms. Teixeira: There are a number of items that are rolled over from last year that will be completed or those that are finished but are waiting for the defect liability period. There is the Mahdia Magistrates’ Court, Port Kaituma Magistrates’ Court – the living quarters and the Magistrates’ Court at Mabaruma. These are in different stages of construction or completion. There is the new Vigilance Magistrates’ Court and living quarters at Vigilance on the East Coast Demerara. That is expected to finish in February, 2022. Sorry, in September, 2022. That is my handwriting. I did not read my handwriting correctly, sorry.

There is the extension to the Court of Appeal building, Kingston, Georgetown, Region 4. There are consultancy services for the completion of the Bartica Magistrates’ Court and the external bailiff bond, benabs, generators and modifications to the building to accommodate domestic violence and probation rooms. I, particularly, read that because I believe these are issues of interest, particularly to the Members of Parliament (MPs) in relation to the provision of services for victims of domestic violence and interpersonal violence. There is also a consultancy completion of the Mahdia Magistrates’ Court, Phase 2, external bailiff bond, benabs, sanitary facilities, remaining perimeter fence, generator, driveway, walkway, parking and shed. Mahdia will also have a complete magistrates’ court.

Construction of a magistrate’s court – this is for consultancy services at Cove and John on the East Coast Demerara and the Mahaicony Magistrates’ Court as well. There is the inclusion of a Clerk of Court living quarters at Linden. I think Mr. Figueira might be happy to know that. The Clerk of Court living quarters will be completed and that should be by [*inaudible*] this month. The Hon. Member is not in the House, but you could let him know.

Construction of social workers’ testing observation room and gazebo at the Diamond/Grove Magistrates’ Court as a result of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Construction of a parking

shed, lunchroom, *et cetera* and the construction of the remaining fence on the western side of the compound at the Veen-en-Hoop Magistrates' Court. This will also be expected to finish in March, 2022. The rewiring of the Supreme Court Registry in Suddie was also catered for and should be finished as a six-month programme.

The new projects – construction phase – the Bartica Magistrates' Court; construction of the Mahdia Magistrates' Court, as I read before; construction of the Magistrate's Court at Cove and John; construction of the Magistrates' Court in Mahaicony; and the extension of the self-contained living quarters at the Lethem Magistrates' Court. This is the bailiff bond and the two self-contained living quarters for the Lethem Magistrates' Court, Region 9. This is both for consultancy and construction. Those who are from Region 9 may be happy to hear that.

Retrofitting of the old Magistrates' Court at Wales to a Magistrate Quarter and Library Research Centre. This is for consultancy and construction. Phase 2 also have the completion of the Clerk of Court living quarters at Linden. So that the supply of installation of elevator... I think members of the public might be happy to hear that elevators are being installed at the Georgetown High Court, the Essequibo Sub-Registry, Suddie and the Berbice Sub-Registry as well. The construction of the Magistrates' Court living quarter at Timehri. This is construction and consultancy that have been budgeted. The construction of the Magistrates' Court and living quarters at Friendship. Again, the figures aligned are for the construction and consultancy. The construction of the Magistrates' Court and living quarters at Anna Regina – Region 2; consultancy and construction. Construction of a storage requisite bond at Lenora Magistrates' Court – construction and supervision. Of course, that is at Lenora.

We also have a range of other items: the installation of a 150 kilovolt-ampere (kVA) diesel generator with automatic transfer switch at the Essequibo Sub-Registry and Magistrates' Court. The implementation of electronic litigation (E-litigation) programme for the Supreme Court of Judicature – Region 4; Phase 2 hosting of third-party software and zoom video conferencing and cloud infrastructure. This is approximately what has been budgeted for midyear, but the allocation is \$54,398,367. There are some other new projects that are on, in terms of, as I said, the living quarters for Vigilance and the extension of the Court of Appeal building in Kingston.

We also have a number of furniture and equipment, including things such as air conditionings (ACs), kettles, microwaves, typist chairs, executive chairs, electric dust blower, cordless drills, *et cetera*. The total comes up to \$1,250,000,000. I think that the Supreme Court has a very healthy capital budget to ensure that people have access to justice and that people across the country are more able to access the courts than before.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Someone could correct me if I was wrong. I thought I put the current expenditure just now. For completeness, let me put the question. We take the question that the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul asked, and the answer given by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, just a quick reminder that the Government has allocated 600 seconds to the Opposition to pose questions to these agencies. Respectfully, we will ask that the Hon. Minister layover items rather than reading them out which is burning into our seconds. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what also could be is that when the question is being asked, if it is not clear that a layover is wanted, then the Hon. Minister would do that.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I did ask just now, in that lengthy response, for the sum to be disaggregated, in terms of specifying what amount for what project. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay that over in writing for each project and the sum allocated, which would bring us to the \$1.25 billion?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir, we have the total breakdown here by item.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member is asking for you to lay it over?

Ms. Teixeira: I said yes. However, I want to make it... If the Hon. Member would let me speak...

Mr. Chairman: I would let you speak, do not worry about him.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Sir. Yes, just ignore Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Whilst the layover is important and I have no objection to that, the public is live streaming and listening, and they have a right to know as well. I would use my prerogative as the

person defending these budgets to also inform the public because the public needs to know. I have no objections laying over. I have asked the Clerk of the National Assembly, in these cases, to share with all of the Members of Parliament, not just the Member of Parliament who is asking.

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$1,250,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 56 Public Prosecutions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 561– Public Prosecutions – \$230,674,000

Programme: 561– Public Prosecutions – \$230,674,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 561– Public Prosecutions – \$7,500,000

Mr. Ramjattan: Just a clarification here, I know the capital expenditure has gone down to \$7.5 million. In view of the file there, is this going to be sufficient for the repairs of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Chambers?

Ms. Teixeira: May I remind the Hon. Member that a supplementary budget was approved earlier that provided for repairs, *et cetera* to the DPP Office as a result of the fire. There is no need to put that money in *Budget 2022*. In addition, in the review of the works to be done at the capital expenditure, they feel that this is sufficient because of the large expenditure to correct and restore the building.

Programme: 561– Public Prosecutions – \$7,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 57 Office of the Ombudsman

Current Expenditure

Programme: 571 – Office of the Ombudsman – \$56,970,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am just drawing your attention to the fact that we did go quite a bit over 19 minutes, in terms of the Elections Commission (GECOM). We saved six minutes at the Supreme Court, and we saved eight minutes. We are now almost back on even keel.

12.06 p.m.

Programme: 571 – Ombudsman – \$56,970,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let me thank the Minister and the staff of the previous agencies for taking us through their estimates. We are at pages 434 and 435.

Agency: 58 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal

Current Expenditure

Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$67,523,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, I have noticed under wages and salaries there is a reduction. Could the Hon. Minister say if this is due to staff lost or explain why there is a reduction there?

Ms. Teixeira: There is not an actual reduction in the number of persons who are working. It is a reduction in the total because last year they paid the 7% increase from their budget. This year it is now regularise. They had savings last year and used that money. I am advised that the wages are in accordance with everyone's salary. There is no reduction in staff, *et cetera*. They paid retroactive last year.

Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$67,523,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$800,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, the \$800,000 for the provision for equipment, the *Legend* does not specify the equipment. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide the list of equipment to this honourable House please?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. I will. For the \$800,000, I will circulate that information. I would also like to inform the public that the creation of the website for \$445,000 was to ensure that there is efficient feedback and updating in regard to appointments, *et cetera* and the work of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal (PSAT). Installation of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras - \$200,000 to allow the tribunal to install the cameras in the first quarter of 2022 so that it could function more effectively. One TCL remote and, also, installation of biometric time keeping in an effort to maintain accurate time keeping of the staff at the PSAT, purchase of a stream iron and purchase of router -\$80,000. This is because the current router is defective and unable to provide quality internet services to the office in its entirety which affects the efficiency of the PSAT.

Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Minister and your staff for taking us through those estimates.

Agency: 59 – Ethnic Relations Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 591 – Ethnic Relations Commission – \$171,482,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, under Wages and Salaries, I am also seeing a decrease from \$100,280,000 to \$97,732,000. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain this decrease, if it is because of staff loss or the same as what happened before?

Ms. Teixeira: For the reduction, you will notice that...just give me one second. The statutory wages were reduced because of the fact that we did not have a commission in place from April, 2021. That was the statutory wages. Under the [*inaudible*] wages and benefits, there is also... Sir, there were members of staff whose contracts came to an end and there was no commission to place to reappoint them or to hire new staff. That is the reason no one was terminated, their contracts came to an end, no commission was in place.

I wish to advise you that I am sure you have noticed on the Order Paper that the Committee on Appointments has [*inaudible*] a list of entities for the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) and, hopefully, after Budget, we could get the two-thirds majority required so that we could move to

the second phase of getting nominees for the ERC. I am encouraging Members of Parliament that, at the Committee on Appointments, we reach unanimity, and we are expecting and hoping that in, the Parliament, we will get the two-thirds of the support for the list of entities so that we could then go to deal with nominations and come back to the House, hopefully, before June with the nominees to have your support.

Mr. Mahipaul: Before I go to the two other questions I have, I did hear, and I stand corrected, the Hon. Member speaking to statutory wages and salaries in the decrease. My book is showing an increase from \$5.8 million to \$18.8 million. Just to make that observation as I move to Transport, Travel and Postage. I see a significant increase from \$2.8 million to \$10.5 million. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say if this is specifically for transport or to disaggregate it and specify what amount is for transport, what amount for travel, and what amount for postage?

Ms. Teixeira: Under Transport, Travel and Postage, there are the following amounts of moneys. There is nothing for overseas conferences, no official visits. There is a Postage, Telex and Cablegrams which are at \$24,000. Vehicles, Spares and Service - \$1,156,597 and Other 6256 – for \$5,044,200.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, may I draw your attention to the very table on page 881 – Other Recurrent Charges. If we are to look between 2020-2021, we had decreases in some instances. However, I notice for 2022, there is a budgetary allocation of \$44.136 million. Could the Hon. Member explain to the House what constitutes Other Recurrent Charges? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: The Other Recurrent Charges include the materials, equipment and supplies, fuel and lubricants, rental of buildings, and maintenance of infrastructure. This is what the ERC requested as far as I know. There is no deviation from what they asked for in 2022. However, the reason being, as with all the constitutional bodies, has been the fact that there is COVID-19 and their outreach programmes, *et cetera* have all been impacted on. There is a reason for the decline in 2021 and there is an increase for 2022, *vis-a-vis* 2021. As you could see in 2021, they were given \$80 million, and they only spent \$32 million. The revised 2021, they only spent \$32 million for Other Recurrent Charges. This time, in 2022, they have given it a \$12 million increase from the expenditure of the revised 2021.

Ms. Ferguson: Perhaps, the Hon. Member could shed some clarity here. In her explanation, listing the Other Recurrent Charges, she did factor in that fuel and lubricant are also catered for in this particular item. If one looks, I think, two steps further down, there is fuel and lubricant being catered for. Is it that we are double dipping when it comes to Other Recurrent Charges? Perhaps, you could explain, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I just clarify for the Hon. Member. In Appendix T, there are Other Recurrent Charges coming up to \$44.135 million, that covers all the items below until you reach to capital. In other words, the \$44 million is the total amount for the items listed below: material, equipment, fuel, rental of buildings, maintenance of infrastructure, transport travel, postage utility charges, *et cetera* other services and so on. That comes up to the total...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you may have to speak directly into the microphone. We are hardly hearing.

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry. I could repeat. If you look at Appendix T, Hon. Member Ferguson, the Other Recurrent Charges, the total you see of \$44.135 million reflects the total of all the items below. That is grossed up to one total of \$44.135 million.

12.21 p.m.

These includes materials, equipment and supplies, fuel and lubricants, rental of buildings and maintenance of infrastructure, transport, travel and postage, utility charges, other charges, other goods and services purchased, other operating expenses, education subventions and training, rates and taxes and subventions to local authority and subsidies and contributions to local and international organisations. All those items come up to \$44 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: I see under education subventions and training, an allocation there of \$1.320 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what programmes will be dealt with here in terms of the training? Who are likely to be trained and in what field?

Ms. Teixeira: The amount of money here relates to \$1,320,000. Considering they have to also be guided by the new Commission, when it comes in, the proposal is in anticipation of the local government elections (LGE) and the role that the Commission plays in terms of ensuring there is peace, harmony and less conflict. There will be a lot of issues which has to do with monitoring the

local government elections. This will be training persons for the role of monitoring the local government elections and the cost which may be involved in relation to developing the capacity of staff to be able to deal with that particular issue.

Programme: 591 – Ethnic Relations Commission – \$171,482,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we can now turn to pages 442 and 443 – Judicial Service Commission. Thank you, members of the Ethnic Relations Commission, for assisting our Minister in taking us through those estimates.

Agency: 60 Judicial Service Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 601 – Judicial Service Commission – \$10,020,000

Programme: 601 – Judicial Service Commission – \$10,020,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 61 Rights Commissions of Guyana

Current Expenditure

Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$ 130,698,000

Rights of the Child Commission

Mr. Chairman: Let us give a few moments so that the staff can get in place to assist the Minister. The clock is not running, Mr. Mahipaul.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could we have some guidance from you? Although it is reflected on pages 446 and 447 as one heading, you actually have in Appendix T, three appendices – one for each agency. I just need guidance on how you will deal with it because there are three commissions. In case I need someone near me, it just would be easier if we do them one by one and then move that the whole budgetary item be put to the vote. I am not sure how you want to do it.

Mr. Chairman: I am putting the whole head but in considering the three commissions, we are going to take the Appendix T as stated – one at a time.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you say which one you will go first with?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, for those asking questions, if you could confine the questions to the different commissions, that would be very helpful to all. Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, you have the floor.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, my apologies. I think I recognised the amendment that was submitted. It is correct based on what I saw in the Estimates. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: It was corrected. That is okay. Let us take the next commission.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure which commission we are on. Could you please advise? Is it Rights of the Child Commission?

Mr. Chairman: It is Rights of the Child Commission. The next one is the Human Rights Commission and then the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

Ms. Teixeira: There is the Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC).

Human Rights Commission

Mr. Mahipaul: Under the Human Rights Commission, there is an increase there in Wages and Salaries. Could the Hon. Minister say if this is to increase staff and could she provide the designation and remuneration packages of the staff?

Ms. Teixeira: The increase, Hon. Member, relates to the 7% increase in salaries. There has been no change in the staff numbers; it is an increase of 7%.

Women and Gender Equality Commission

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. We will now go to the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

Ms. Teixeira: That was the Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor. Let us give them a few moments to get in place.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, just before I put my question to the Hon. Member, may I acknowledge the Hon. Mdm. Indranie Chandarpal? It is nice seeing you, Ma'am. I wish you all the best for 2022. I now turn our attention to page 885, Appendix T – the Women and Gender Equality Commission. Under Wages and Salaries, I recognise that there is a decrease between 2021 and that of 2022. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason or reasons for the decrease in wages and salaries?

Ms. Teixeira: The decrease between 2021 and the revised 2021 is because they do not have an Investigative Officer.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I want clarity based on a question that I asked just now. The Hon. Member was kind enough to say that the increase in 2022 is catering for the 7%, but was that not paid in 2021? The number here for 2021 should have reflected the 7% because it was paid in 2021 as an expense. So, if there is an increase in 2022, it cannot be for that 7%.

Ms. Teixeira: Which head are we talking about? Is it the Women and Gender Equality Commission or are you going back to the previous one?

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, for clarity and not to mislead the House, I am actually dealing with the Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, you can ask it because we are still on the Agency, Rights Commissions of Guyana.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am saying, Sir that I asked why there is an increase in Wages and Salaries for 2022. The Hon. Minister was kind enough to say that caters for the 7% salary increase. However, my understanding is that percentage was paid in 2021. So, the actual figure here or the revised 2021 figure reflects the 7%. It has it as \$18,866,000. Why is there that increase in 2022 when the 7% is already in the figure for 2021? My question stands: is it because there is a staff increase? If so, by how many staff, what are their salaries and their entire remuneration packages and their designations.

Ms. Teixeira: Just a minute. Mr. Chairman, first of all, in relation to the 7%, he is right to say that it was paid out in 2021 but the increases have to be catered for in the Budget of 2022. It is not a one-off payment. If someone was getting \$70,000 and they got their retroactive in 2021 of \$4000 times 12, that is \$48000. In 2022, one has to cater for the \$74,000, the increase in salary. That is one issue – the 7% was not a one-off payment.

Secondly, I am advised by the Human Rights Commission's staff that they are hoping to hire two more persons who they have included in their projection. They have a number of staff to also replace. So, they are looking to hire three staff who have to be replaced.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, just for clarity, I want to ensure that I get this correctly. This 2021 figure of \$18,866,000 caters for that 7% which was retroactive from January. So, because there was no increase announced for 2022, then the Wages and Salaries ought to be the same \$18,866,000. The remainder of the money will cater for the three staff the Hon. Minister referenced in a projection to hire. My question stands – what are the designations of the three staff and what are their projected salaries and remuneration packages? That is what I want to know. I want the Minister to clarify if I am accurate – that the \$18,866,000 for the 2021 expenditure will remain for the current staff in 2022 because there was no salary increase announced for 2022.

Ms. Teixeira: The \$18 million caters for the staff presently on board, as well as vacancies to be filled for a Driver, Receptionist and Handyman. The \$24 million will allow them to hire the three additional persons.

Mr. Mahipaul: It is \$24 million, Ms. Gail Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: It is \$22 million. I beg your pardon.

Mr. Mahipaul: [*Inaudible*]

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, I have heard that. This is what I am advised of by the Human Rights Commission – the 7% are for the staff. Remember, they have to now sustain the 7% as well as hire new people.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I do not want people to go away with what the Hon. Minister is saying. I think she is confusing us. This number in 2021 – the \$18,866,000 – is reflecting the 7%. So, in 2022 the 7% is included for \$18,866,000 for the current staff.

12.36 p.m.

The increase, which is \$22, 866,000, caters for the three additional staff. To say that there in need to sustain the 7%...it is already there in the \$18 million, which was paid, retroactively, from January, 2021. I just want to put that clarity on the table, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I just want to caution you. It is not nice to say that the Minister is confusing you. You could say that it is confusing. You do not say that you are confused. Hon. Minister, could you please clear up the confusion?

Ms. Teixeira: I believe I can. Whether the Opposition will accept it is a different issue. The Human Rights Commission asked for \$18,866,000 that would cover the 7%, the staff and the projection...

Mr. Mahipaul: They did not [*inaudible*].

Ms. Teixeira: Could you let me speak?

Mr. Chairman: I would let you speak, Minister. Ignore him. He is trying to confuse you.

Ms. Teixeira: Due to the generosity of the Ministry of Finance, they give the Commission an extra \$4 million, which it did not ask for. The Ministry of Finance felt that, as the Human Rights Commission, they should get additional support. So, if they want to hire more people, they can.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, according to the Hon. Minister, the Human Rights Commission asked for \$18,866,000, which is to sustain what they have. The Minister is now saying to us that the Ministry of Finance gave them an additional \$4 million and basically said to them to go and hire more people. Is that what the Hon. Minister is saying to us?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Minister has said what she has said. It was very generous. Something has happened, and we should look to that to see how we can get more money. Hon. Minister, I give you an opportunity to make one final comment on this since we have to move over to the Indigenous People's Commission after.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I find it funny that the Opposition Members have problems with additionality, but that is okay with me. The second issue is that I want to remind the Hon. Members that these are constitutional bodies and, therefore, they receive a lumpsum after we have approved in the House. When they get their lumpsum, they have the right, of course, under the procurement laws and financial rules, to realign money as they need it. So, in case of fuel and lubricants, if they need more or there are hiring expenses, they can switch money around. I would hope this House would not begrudge the Human Rights Commission an additional \$4 million. Would you? Seriously, I do not believe my honourable friends on the other side would begrudge the Human Rights Commission an additional \$4 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, there is another Commission under this head. It is the Indigenous People's Commission. Could we take any comments or questions?

Indigenous People's Commission

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, yes, that is agency 61, the Indigenous People's Commission. There was no amendment to that. Regarding wages and salaries increase, we are seeing the increase from \$8,749,000 to \$11,261,000. Would the Hon. Minister state whether this is to cater for additional staff and, if so, what is the remuneration packages and designations of those staff?

Mr. Mahipaul: Are you exhausted?

Ms. Teixeira: I could never be exhausted, Sir, especially with you. Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member always puts *his foot in his mouth*. Mr. Chairman, just give me a minute. I might be getting a little overwhelmed in terms of the number of papers before me. The Hon. Member asked a question to do with the seeming increase from \$8.7 million to \$11,261,000. Is that correct Hon. Member? The amount budgeted was \$8.749 million. However, the total expenditure for 2022, based on the 7% increase in salary in 2021, would be \$9,333,000. The increase of money, again, in this heading, \$2.3 million for salaries, also seems to be as a result of the generosity of the Ministry of Finance.

Just one more thing. Again, I repeat, these bodies can move money around, once they get their lumpsum. They would, therefore, be looking to probably put it under line item 6294, Other, and catering for workshops, *et cetera* for the Indigenous People's Commission (IPC).

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Sir, I am a bit confused and so I wish to seek clarity. The Hon. Minister was kind enough to say that with the 7%, the salaries would go to \$9.3 million, which is the number one would have expected to see in the 2021 revised budget because the 7% was paid from that year, 2021. In the revised budget for 2021, one would have expected to see the \$9.3 million, but what we are seeing here is \$8.7 million. I need clarification on that. I also heard the Hon. Minister say that the increase to \$11.2 million, which is an actual increase of \$2.3 million, comes from the generosity of the Ministry of Finance. I am not sure if I am out of order, but guide me, Sir. What is requested from this agency and the Ministry wanting to be generous with the taxpayers' money to give it to this agency as opposed to being generous, perhaps, with Region 4 that had a decrease in their allocation for line item 6211 or the Office of the Leader of the Opposition (OLO), which asked for an increase...Is the Minister trying to say to us that the generosity is only extended to a few agencies?

Ms. Teixeira: The money that is under this head will also go towards the stipends for the Commissioners. The Commissioners are still in existence. They still have a chairperson. So, the additional cost for that will go to the payment of the Commissioners.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much, Cde. Chairman. I am happy that it was not really a generosity, as mentioned, but rather the stipend for the Commissioners under this head. I do hope that the Hon. Minister will extend to the Ministry of Finance that it should be generous to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. Thank you, Sir.

Women and Gender Equality Commission

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for acknowledging me. May I turn our attention to page 885 – Women and Gender Equality Commission (GWEC)? Let me give way to the right honourable, Ms. Chandarpal. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, Fuel and Lubricant: I noticed that for 2020, we had \$138,000; for 2021, we had \$331,000; the revised figure for 2021 remains the same; but I noticed that for 2022, we have \$34,000 allocated, which is a significant reduction over the last 18 months. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for this lesser amount and whether the Commission would be able to effectively carry out its constitutional mandate with such a limited sum? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you for the question, Hon. Member. The amount for fuel and lubricants under the Women and Gender Equality Commission was reduced, and it comes back to what was the revised amount in 2021 because there is no driver that this Commission has. There are three vehicles under the Human Rights Commission that have drivers and there is the secretariat to assist the Women and Gender Equality Commission and the Rights of the Child Commission in whatever are the core responsibilities. So, the figure of \$331,000, which was budgeted for, was not utilised. Only \$34,000 was utilised and, therefore, that was put back into 2022. Just to let you know, there is no driver. When they hire driver and there is any issue that the Commission has, they can move money around, within the lumpsum, to fill any gaps. They can also, on a number of core issues, go to the Human Rights Commission to get additional support. As I said, there are three vehicles and drivers which the Women and Gender Equality Commission, Rights of the Child Commission and the Indigenous People's Commission are supposed to have available for their work and their outreaches.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$ 130,698,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$200,000

Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 62 Public Procurement Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 621 – Public Procurement Commission – \$ 196,443,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Under Statutory Wages and Salaries, just a clarification, does this amount cater for the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and other Commissioners? Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to clarify? I see that from the \$35,700,000, nothing was spent there for 2021. I am asking if this caters for the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and other Commissioners.

Ms. Teixeira: The amount of \$35,700,000 relates to allocation put aside for the Commission in the anticipation that would have been established. That includes the Chairman and four other members of the Commission. So, in this year, the exact money has been put back, and I think we have greater hope this time because the Public Procurement Commission's (PPC's) nominees have been unanimously agreed upon by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). We hope to bring a motion, after the budget, to get the two-thirds majority.

12.51 p.m.

This is an important body that we would like to see up. So, we have catered, in the budget, for the new Commissioners coming on stream.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am happy for that clarification, and I am aware of the work the PAC is doing with reference to constituting that Commission. I am a serving Member with the Hon. Minister on that Committee and so I am well aware. Could the Hon. Minister now explain the increase, in terms of wages and salaries, from \$76.1 million to \$101.5 million? That is somewhere around a \$25 million increase in wages and salaries. If it is to cater for additional staff, would the Hon. Member be kind enough to state the number of staff, their designations and remuneration packages? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Again, this is in anticipation that the PPC would be appointed. As I explained earlier under another constitutional body, where there was no Commission, staff, who were contracted and whose contracts came to an end, had moved on. Therefore, the \$76 million related to a number of staff members whose contracts expired in 2020/2021. That is why that figure is lower. The exact money has been put forward, at \$101,470,000, so as to allow the new Commission, when it comes on stream, hopefully sooner than later, to be able to rectify the vacancies that exist in the staffing of the Commission right now.

Mr. Mahipaul: I just want some clarity. This \$76,120,000 paid staff who were on contract, and it also has in it staff whose contracts came to an end in 2021. Am I hearing correctly that there is no existing staff at the Public Procurement Commission? If I am incorrect, and if there is existing staff there, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say: how many staff were paid in 2021 with this sum of \$76,120,000, how many staff are there right now, current date, and what is the expected

number of staff for the Public Procurement Commission to take the salary to \$101,470,000 in 2022?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Hon. Member. The PPC created an establishment of 23 positions. In 2021, the positions that were occupied were 23, but over the year, people's contracts expired at different times. Some were hired in 2019 and their contracts expired in 2021, *et cetera*. And so, throughout the year, there was attrition. At the end of the year, we were left with seven staff. They have an establishment of 23. When the new Commission comes in, it could examine the filling of those vacancies. That is why provision was made to allow the Commission to have money to do that.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister to lay over, in writing, the designations and remuneration packages of the 23 staff who existed in 2021, please? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes.

Programme: 621 - Public Procurement Commission - \$196,443,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 621 - Public Procurement Commission - \$3,385,000

Programme: 621 - Public Procurement Commission - \$3,385,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let me thank the Minister and her staff for taking us through those estimates. Hon. Members, it is now 12.57 p.m., according to my clock. We have saved, up to now, 19 minutes that would be rolled over to the other heads.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: This is a good time for us to take the suspension. Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, use the microphone.

Ms. Teixeira: According to the schedule, the break is from 12.10 to 1.00 o'clock. So, I am not sure how you are saying that we saved time. Anyway, I am not objecting.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will take a 50-minute break for lunch and then resume. For the Minutes, we had a late start this morning and so we are now applying that lateness to the schedule. Thank you.

Sitting suspended at 12.58 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 2.11 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. Please be seated. We will go into the Committee of Supply to continue consideration of the estimates.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are going to start with the Office of the President, the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, Hon. Gail Teixeira, and her staff. We are at pages 68 and 69, Office of the President, and we are starting at 2.13 p.m.

Agency: 01 Office of the President

Current Expenditure

Programme: 011 – Administration - \$965,331,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see the sum has moved from \$138,865,000 to \$170,098,000, and I see an increase in the staffing from 70 to 75. May I ask the Hon. Minister to tell this Committee the designations of the five additional employees and their remuneration packages, please?

Ms. Teixeira: For line item 6116, Contracted Employees, it is \$170 million covering 70 employees that have moved up to 75. There are three new staff members: Field Training Manager at \$300,000 per month, Personal Assistant at \$200,000 per month, and a Principal Assistant Secretary (Finance) at \$366,621. In addition, two staff were transferred from line item 6117 to contracted employees. These were the Accounts Clerk II at \$75,053, and the Pool Attendant at \$7,000. They chose and preferred to become contracted employees. That is the five additional persons, Hon. Member Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you to the Hon. Minister for her explanation in terms of accounting for the five. I did hear her say that two moved from line item 6117. May I ask what the status of the other one from line item 6117 is? The Hon. Member accounted for two, but may I ask about the other one?

Ms. Teixeira: The person resigned, Hon. Member Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I see a sum there of \$90,000,000. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate this sum and tell us what kind of work will be done at the respective buildings?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Hon. Member. This is a decrease from \$129.7 million to \$90 million. Maintenance of buildings, these are not capital works. Payment relates to works being done at the Office of the President (OP) complex and includes maintenance of five buildings. So, the maintenance of the five buildings at the Office of the President complex, \$25.8 million and the Castellani compound, \$30.7 million. That includes maintenance of the Castellani villas, the gym, the swimming pool and the changing areas, the Presidential Guard offices, and the security uniform section. The third grouping is the maintenance works to the State House, \$20.5 million, and to the Special Projects Unit as well. In addition, there is the Valerie Rodway House, \$7 million, and the Stephen Campbell building, \$6 million. This is the disaggregation for the \$90 million for 2022.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chair, I heard the Hon. Member say that it is a reduction from \$129,738,000. The book that I am looking at shows a reduction from \$142,738,000. May I ask if my copy is correct?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, you are correct, Hon. Member. There is a typing mistake in the preparation of the document today.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: I see also \$90,000,000 there, a decrease from \$97,100,000, but the \$97,100,000 is actually an increase from what was budgeted in 2021, which was \$68,600,000.

2.19 p.m.

May I ask the Hon. Minister to disaggregate the \$90 million for this budget, and specify the type of works to be done there?

Thank you, Hon. Member. As you know, we are going on a very aggressive campaign to have international and regional visitors, investors and so on and so we want the Office of the President and the buildings around it to look in tip top condition. We expect a number of very, very important visitors' (VVIP) visits this year and high-profile investment meetings. Therefore, the maintenance of other infrastructure is a critical component of enhancing the image of the primary institution, in terms of the Office of the President.

The breakdown for the OP complex for \$50 million, includes painting of the driveways, painting of the curbs and bridges, painting of gates, maintenance of lawns, trimming and pruning of trees, landscaping, replacement of security lights, maintenance of drainage and maintenance of pavers. The Castellani House compound – \$20 million. Works include cleaning of the tiles around the pool, maintenance of the lawns, trimming and pruning of the trees, maintenance of the perimeter fence, rehabilitation of the walkway for flood prevention and replacement of security lights. State House – \$20 million. Works include maintenance of the lawns and the rose garden, landscaping, replacement of the security lights, rehabilitation of the pathway and maintenance of fence and gateways.

Mr. Mahipaul: From my calculation, based on what was said, the Minister accounted for \$50 million for the Office of the President, and spoke to the painting of the perimeter fence. I know the perimeter fence is painted, I pass there every day, and so I do not know if it is necessary to paint it over now. I also heard the Hon. Minister speak about of \$20 million for State House which will give \$70 million. May I ask where the other \$20 million will go?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Hon. Member, you missed the Castellani House. It is \$50 million for the OP complex, \$20 million for the Castellani House compound and \$20 million for State House. You [*inaudible*] with your \$90 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6284 – Other: There is a significant increase there to \$135,000,000 with the heading just being Other. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate this sum so that we can understand where the \$135 million will go to?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The sum of \$135 million under line item 6284 relates to the payment for *the Official Gazette* – \$82 million; State House and OP for – [inaudible] carpet \$5 million; waste disposal – \$2.5 million; signs and banners – \$2 million; cable services – \$2.5 million; consultancy fees – \$27.8 million; radio and television at time one services rendered – \$1.5 million; fibre optics – \$1.5 million; liability to the Department of Information (DPI) – \$7.2 million; and miscellaneous expenses – \$2 million. The consultancies that I have listed here relate to a number of consultants who will be looking at sector strategy and development plans relating to the Government.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6294 – Other: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate this sum of \$52 million?

Ms. Teixeira: This also relates to the issues relating to national development priorities, \$15 million, with regard to consultancies and technical expertise to advise us in the area of the development strategies and development. We have other costs involving issues relating to provision of food, *et cetera*, and groceries for both the Office of the President and State House, gifts, purchase of utensils, packages of relief, dietary supplies and miscellaneous expenses. This is for OP and State House.

Programme: 011 – Administration – \$965,331,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 011 – Administration – \$511,000,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1214100 – Office and Residence of the President: In 2020, we spent \$25,700,000. In 2021, we spent \$65 million. In 2022, we are projected to spend \$120 million. The Legend for 2020, 2021 and 2022 seem to be the same. It speaks to the upgrade of the electrical system at State House and the Office of the President and the provision for building and shed at the Castellani House.

My memory tells me that since 2020 we have been spending money on the upgrade of the electrical system. I remember that the Hon. Minister was kind enough, last year and the year before, to disaggregate the sums of \$65 million and \$25,700,000, respectively. This year, I see, again, there is consideration for upgrade of the electrical system from the sum of \$120 million.

May I, first of all, ask how much money is allocated in this budget for the upgrade of the electrical work, if this will complete that project dealing with the electrical work, and if she can provide us with a total sum that was spent on the electrical work at the Office of the President and the residency of the President?

Ms. Teixeira: The upgrade of the electrical system, we are now in phase two and \$25 million is set aside for this year. This, it is believed, will complete the removal of the old wiring. However, there will be, in the future, additional work on electricity, as new equipment and new offices are added to upgrade or to add additional capacity. This phase, I am advised, will complete the removal of the old, outdated wiring.

Mr. Mahipaul: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say how much money we will be paying for retention and what are the projects related to this description? Also, with reference to provision of building and shed at the Castellani House, would the Minister be kind enough to state the purpose of this shed and the dimensions of the shed?

Ms. Teixeira: With regard to the question of the retention, we have a rollover project and the retention for the construction of the information centre in the OP compound is \$843,000, and the concreting of Stephen Campbell compound, opposite OP, is \$1,444,000. Those two amounts are for the retention.

With regard to the construction of the parking shed, this is at the Castellani House. It is \$20 million. As you know, with regard to the parking area, the vehicles would be kept under the shed. The extension of the building for the Presidential Guard Unit is \$72,713,000, and this is also in the Castellani House compound.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project Code 1701700 – Minor Works: I see the figure remains the same as it was in 2021. I am aware that this is the line item to which the President would normally exercise his liberty of assisting and so on. May I ask, given that this amount... [**Bishop Edghill:** It is his

prerogative.] ...Yes, his prerogative; a very good word. May I ask if we can be told about the expected spending and how it is being broken down? Taking into account that it happened in 2021, along what line does it go?

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, this is funds, as you are well aware, is at the discretion of the President, whomever he may be, whether it is Mr. Granger, Mr. Jagdeo or Mr. Ali. This is used for the purposes of educational trust development projects and humanitarian activities, such as laptops, scientific laboratories, playgrounds, special help to members of the public in special circumstances, *et cetera*. This is the spread. It is hard, sometimes, to detail, because in the case of humanitarian assistance to people, you might get a hundred people one year and you get a thousand people the next year. So, it is hard to put that but the figure of \$245,000,000 remains the same with no increases.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I trust there will be some generosity there to consider giving the Office of the Leader of the Opposition some more money. Project code 2405200 – Land Transport: I know that we spent \$95 million in 2020 for the purchasing of vehicles. In 2021, we spent \$67,600,000, and I see here in 2022, we will be spending \$71 million for the purchasing of vehicles. May I ask the Hon. Minister to state what type of vehicles we will be purchasing, the purpose of the vehicles, and if it is to replace existing vehicles or will be added to the current fleet of vehicles?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Chairman. There are eight vehicles – one Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) for the Presidential Guard, two vehicles for the Presidential Guard, one pick-up for the Presidential Guard and three vehicles for the Office of the President.

Again, Mr. Chairman, in terms the visits of the VVIPs, investors, high profile meetings, and work that is going on in terms of raising Guyana's international and regional profile with visitors here, we want to make sure that our fleet of vehicles is up to standard, and we are able to not embarrass our country with any old and dilapidated vehicles. So, this is adding to the fleet.

2.34 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: In view of this being added to the fleet and given that there is no projection based on what I have observed while we were examining the current expenditure in terms of staff to drive

these vehicles, may I ask the Hon. Minister how they intend to employ drivers, or would these dignitaries be driving themselves.

Ms. Teixeira: These are vehicles to be used by the Presidential Guards and where there are dignitaries, *et cetera*, who may be with the vehicles, the drivers may be police. It does not require hiring drivers for these vehicles. They would either be used by drivers who are already in the system who are Presidential Guards, and or by police.

Programme: 011 – Administration – \$511,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 012 – National Policy Development and Presidential Advisory Services – \$1,609,387,000

Mr Mahipaul: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see that the number has moved from \$304,466,000 to \$386,284,000, and the staffing has moved from 89 to 95. May I ask the Hon. Minister to provide the designation and the remuneration package for this increase of six staff?

Ms. Teixeira: The moneys allocated here include the 7% for those who were in the system as well as the movement from 89 to 95 members of staff. These are six new members of staff: Senior Project Officer at \$350,000; Co-ordinator, Youth Advisory at \$350,000; Special Project Officer at \$350,000; Special Assistant to the President at \$650,000; Deputy Commissioner at the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC) at \$749,000; and Commissioner, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Guyana Lands and Survey Commission at \$1,070,000. As I said, the 7% is added for the variation for 2021.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, it is actually a supplementary question to the one posed earlier by my colleague. Could the Hon. Member state whether these positions, which she alluded to earlier, were publicised and when? Perhaps, could you layover to us the copies of the advertisements for the various positions?

Ms. Teixeira: No, these have not been advertised as far as I know. These are positions that are specific with regard to the President. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have moved over to line item 6116.

Mr Mahipaul: Line item 6284 – Other: I see a significant increase from what was spent last year, which was \$69,994,000. We are now projected to spend \$190 million under Other. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give a breakdown of the \$190 million?

Ms. Teixeira: Again, Hon. Member, the moneys herein are put with regard to consultancies, with regard to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), a number of developmental strategies, local content, and medium- and long-term economic proposals. As you are well aware, we are on a very aggressive campaign to raise the profile of our country, and to make sure that we are prepared and that we have the technical support to guide us in policy making and developing the new strategies and developmental strategy of our country.

Mr. Mahipaul: Let me assure the Hon. Minister that I am well aware that cost of living is extremely high. Line item 6294 – Other: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to...

Ms. Teixeira: Are you angling for consultancy on that basis?

Mr. Mahipaul: I did not hear you. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give a breakdown of line item 6294?

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6294 deals with a number of activities that are perfunctory in the Office of the President – dietary supplies, miscellaneous expenses, carpet cleaning, rental of venues for meetings where required, gifts, *et cetera*. These are basically, for example, groceries for Cabinet meetings because we no longer cater. We make our own meals. Well, we do not make them, but there are persons who cook for the Cabinet meetings, thereby saving quite a bit of money from the Office of the President's budget.

Ms. Ferguson: I turn our attention to line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals: Mr. Chairman, we were told that the Coalition spent trillions in meals and beverages, but I notice, for 2022, there is an increase to \$10 million, which is an increase of close to \$3 million. In 2020, it was \$2.4 million; and in 2021, it was \$8 million and there was a revised sum of \$7 million. I notice that, for 2022, a

whole lot will be spent on meals and refreshment. Could the Hon. Member explain to the House and the taxpayers what these refreshments and their meals are?

Ms. Teixeira: I think the Hon. Member is getting confused between millions and billions. The amount of money that was spent on dietary by our friends on the other side of the House, when they were in Government, is in the billions. This line item is dealing with an increase from \$8 million to \$10 million, which is \$2 million. This involves refreshment and meals for stakeholder engagements, staff meetings and any other type of meetings the President may have, or Cabinet subcommittees and or meetings for staff and senior staff that would relate to snacks. In fact, this is not dietary, but it is refreshment and meals. To the Hon. Member, do not get billions and millions mixed up. You spent about over \$4 billion or \$7 billion on dietary and [*inaudible*].

Ms. Ferguson: Do not let us go there, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: You introduced it comrade; you started it. I did not. Hon. Mr. Mahipaul, if you are fishing for consultancy then apply.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister please layover the work programme for the President’s youth advisory council?

Ms. Teixeira: Sixty million has been allocated for the President’s youth advisory council, which the President would be launching by the end of the first quarter. The secretariat was established, a technical co-ordinating committee had been established in 2021, and they have completed the terms of reference (ToR). As I am advised, the President’s youth advisory council would be established in the first quarter of 2022. The President will be meeting with the youth arms and youth of the various political parties to encourage them to participate in the President’s youth advisory council.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just a clarification, is it that the Hon. Minister is saying that the President’s youth advisory council is yet to be established?

Ms. Teixeira: I made it very clear, madam, that the technical work has been completed, and they are now ready to move to the establishment of the President’s youth advisory council at the end of the first quarter of this year.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Would the Hon. Minister be so kind to layover whatever technical work has been completed? I am guessing a report would be involved in that technical work, could that be laid over please?

Ms. Teixeira: No, I would not promise to do that, madam. This is the President's youth advisory council, and I believe, when that is launched, all that information, how it will function, and its mandate would be exposed. There cannot be a workplan before the council is established. The council will make its own workplan.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Under the same line item 6321, if we go to page 602, it shows that, for the office of the Commissioner of Information, there is an increase of over \$10 million for this particular... and I am trying to understand the rationale behind this. Could the Hon. Minister please explain?

Ms. Teixeira: The office of the Commissioner of Information is occupied again. This includes salary and allowances.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Is the Hon. Minister stating that there was no Commissioner of Information and that there is now a Commissioner of Information?

Ms. Teixeira: As you may recall, the former Commissioner of Information, in the 2015 period, was unceremoniously declared terminated in the House in the November 2018 Budget reading. The honourable Commissioner of Information has been *re-ensconce* into the office of the Commissioner of Information last year, not for the entire period of the whole year. There were costs for last year, partially, for the period that he was appointed and that continues to now. You would recall that there was a Commissioner of Information (ag) who was there after the Commissioner was terminated. That person was also receiving the same salary and benefits as the present person. That person concluded their engagement with the present Government in November, 2020.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister please confirm that there is a new Commissioner of Information, and say whether or not there was an advertisement for that position?

2.49 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: The Commissioner of Information is covered by the Access to Information Act. He is appointed at the pleasure of His Excellency the President.

Mr. Duncan: Was he appointed?

Ms. Teixeira: Obviously, I said that. Instead of heckling, you should listen, Mr. Duncan. I said that he was appointed last year and that he continues this year. If you wish to know the name, why do you not ask the name? The person is senior retired Judge, Mr. Ramson.

Ms. Teixeira: Do you not understand what *re-ensconce* means?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: The Hon. Minister has indicated that Mr. Ramson Snr. has been rehired as Commissioner of Information. Could the Hon. Minister please layover the emoluments and salary for this particular Commissioner?

Ms. Teixeira: [*Inaudible*] salary, benefits and allowances. Divide that by 12. Can you not divide by 12? The sum of \$40 million divided by 12 months comes with the total for salary and benefits. Your math is not good at all.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if you are hearing the Hon. Minister, but I am certainly not hearing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister...

Ms. Teixeira: This layover and this layover...

Ms. Ferguson: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Just be quiet. There is \$40 million for the office of the Commissioner of Information. Forty million dollars has been allocated for that position. There are 12 months in the year. Divide \$40 million by 12 months and you will come up with the salary and benefits per month for the individual.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, if I am understanding the Hon. Minister accurately, the \$40 million is not for the office of the Commissioner of Information. It is for the Commissioner of

Information himself and that there will be no other staff who will be assisting this Commissioner and his work.

Ms. Teixeira: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. I did not hear that last comment. I am trying to coordinate here. I cannot listen to two different things out of two different...

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

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Thank you, Sir. I am requesting from the Hon. Minister whether or not the \$40 million is, in fact, for the office or for the Commissioner, and whether there are other staff who would be assisting the Commissioner in his duties as the Commissioner of Information.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the microphone.

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry, the \$40 million is allocated as follows: \$1.5 million per month for the Commissioner, with gratuity and vacation allowance which are calculated statutorily. That comes up to \$23.8 million per annum. The balance then goes to the office supplies and materials and the office for the Commissioner of Information.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: At least we got some clarity that the \$40 million was just not for salary. Could the Hon. Minister please indicate whether or not the Office of the Commissioner of Information has any plans to, probably, have a website so that we could have easier access to information in this information age?

Ms. Teixeira: I am afraid that I would not be able to answer that question. It may be a good idea, too, for that question that the Opposition could raise... We could ask him. I am not able to answer at this point. I do not know.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state whether or not the Commissioner of Information has put to the Minister a workplan for the year?

Ms. Teixeira: As far as I know and I am advised that the Commissioner of Information would have given his workplan to the President in accordance with the Access to Information Act, which states what are the stages and the things he should do on an annual basis, *et cetera*, and what the agencies must do on an annual basis.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Minister please layover that workplan since it is access to information and so, in keeping with all of that, it may be wise and helpful for us to know what the workplan is for this particular Commissioner?

Ms. Teixeira: The Access to Information Act states the following... and that is what causes the workplan. First of all, it stated that agencies must provide the Commissioner of Information with staff, their policy documents, *et cetera*, which are gazetted. Anybody wanting to know what the holdings of a particular Ministry or agency is, they would see what those are.

Secondly, the public has a right to ask the Commissioner for information. Once it is not public, he would then make a determination on that. It is not allowed under the Act to ask for information that is already published.

The Act also decides on certain information that might be required and it is based on request from the public. It is very hard to have a work programme in terms of what you are thinking about. The work programme is in accordance with the Act. The Act gives the Commissioner the power to decide if someone is asking for, let us say, Mdm. Sarabo-Halley's medical records. The law does not allow for that. If someone were to say that they want to know whether a Ministry has certain policies which are not made public, the Commissioner of Information will determine, once they are not of security issue or are in the middle of commercial investments negotiations, whether they would be able to access that information.

Were someone to ask the Government, through the Commissioner of Information because he is the one who channels all the requests to the various agencies, about the status of negotiating with a particular company on a particular issue. Once the negotiations are not concluded, they cannot ask for that information. I suggest that... If you get familiar with the Access to Information Act, you would have a very clear idea of what the work programme of the Commission of Information should be.

Programme: 012 – National Policy Development and Presidential Advisory Services – \$1,609,387,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 012 – National Policy Development and Presidential Advisory Services – \$112,800,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 3301100 – Lands and Surveys: I see an allocation there of \$100 million. The Legend is directing me that this is for:

- “1. Opening of new lands for agricultural, industrial, housing and other developmental purposes and
2. Land regularisation”.

May I ask the Hon. Minister where are the lands for agriculture, industrial, and housing, which will be opened? Could we have a definition of ‘other developmental purposes’, and where would land regularisation be? Could the sum be disaggregated for the benefit of the rabble-rousers on that side of the House?

Ms. Teixeira: We have a very extensive capital programme with the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. There is \$68 million to do with lands. This is for geotechnical surveys, cadastral surveys and so on. I will give a breakdown of that. There is a sum of \$31.7 million for furniture, software, cyber security software, *et cetera*.

The breakdown is as follows: land registration survey is \$14.9 million at Mon Choisi, West Coast Berbice, Region 5; creating geoid model for Guyana and geodetic reference framework preparatory survey; the occupational and cadastral survey for Kairuni Highway; cadastral survey for second depths at Hogstye, Berbice; and state lands south/east of West Indian Housing Scheme to be subdivided into residential lots, approximately 11 acres, which is to do with Bartica. My friend on the other side might be happy to hear that.

This is also to do with regularisation of land. There is the cadastral survey of approximately 50 acres at Aranaputa Valley; commercial area and layout of 120 half-acre commercial business lots in Lethem; land administration exercise at Laddersville, Berbice River; cadastral survey subdivision of 626 acres at high level canal, Region 3; cadastral survey at Chan-A-Sue Estate, Mabaruma, Region 1; update inspection monitoring; geo referencing of government lands at

Somerset and Burke, Region 2; and occupation and cadastral survey of state lands adjoining Dr. Charles Estate, Plantation Coverden. Those come up to the \$68 million.

These are other works that may not be reflected here, but the work programme of the agency has to do with the regularisation of lands, *et cetera*. With regard to the \$31.7 million, as I said, these are for a number of items such air conditioners, tablets, biometric devices, network switches, and those kinds of things to do with capacity for the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission.

Programme: 012 – National Policy Development and Presidential Advisory Services – \$112,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$ 299,119,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see an increase to \$12,717,000 and I see that the staff remains the same. Could the Hon. Minister justify this increase, please?

3.04 p.m.

The Ministry of Finance had not catered for the 7% in the 2021 Budget. This has been rectified in the 2022 Budget. As you know, where agencies did not have moneys to pay the 7% increase, the Ministry of Finance paid that from line item 6141. The \$12,717,000 reflects the 7%, now, accurately.

Mr. Mahipaul: My last question on this programme is in relation to line item 6271, Telephone and Internet Charges. In 2021, \$805,000 was spent to cater for telephone and internet charges. The figure that is now budgeted here is \$35,978,000. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain that big increase?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you explain that big increase?

Ms. Teixeira: At line item 6271, there is an increase. I am sure you recognise this is the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and the Defence and National Security. This is to enhance the capacity in terms of telecommunications, connectivity, internet, wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) and cell phones, *et cetera*. This is a security and defence secretariat of the Office of the

President. I am sure the Members on the other side are aware of this organisation. I am advised that there is an extension to that building so this also increased the use of various telecommunications.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, this is an increase from 2021 where there was \$805,000. The sum of \$805,000 was spent in 2021, notwithstanding that the budgeted amount in 2021 was \$990,000. I am not mixing up my zeros. We are now, in this House, seeing a request for \$35,978,000. I believe we need some more clarity because the line item speaks to telephone and internet charges. It means that somewhere else telephone charges are going up and somewhere else internet charges are going up. We need to know where. If I may, in the staffing details, there is no increase in staff. Who is benefitting from this huge sum which caters for telephone and internet charges? I know we had a time when a Minister used to get \$1 million phone bill. I do not know if that is the case here.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, before I answer the question would I be allowed to answer what was said about me in the House? I would like to have the opportunity to be able to make very clear this misrepresentation. It was what the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T) Limited issued to advisors in terms of a credit line so that the advisors' phone would not be cut off if it went above the \$5,000 range which was the case in those years. The Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company Limited could not have offered anything between \$5,000 data coverage and \$1 million. I have never, in all my life, used anything like that, ever. You can check all my GT&T records. You can ask the Commissioner of Information to provide it for you. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, this is constant misrepresentation... I have never used \$1 million, never, ever, once or over decades. Could I now move to the question that I am being asked?

Mr. Chairman, this is the defence and security secretariat of the Government of Guyana. I sat in this House, and I have never heard anyone ask questions on this head when it was set up in the 2015 period because it has to do with the overall defence territory and otherwise, and intelligence and information gathering. Therefore, telecommunications, internet, telephones and other forms of communication are critical. Whether it is that one finds that the problem was small amounts before, it may have been offered under health or under other heads in other sectors. The agency or the unit has connections internationally, locally and regionally in terms of the work that is assigned to it and what it was designed to do.

Therefore, I cannot accept the criticism that this is extravagant. If we wish for our security forces in this country to do their jobs properly, they need to be able to access each other, they need to be able to access overseas and various intelligence agencies and partnering agencies globally. This amount of money is adequate and appropriate to this particular agency.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, the nation needs to know what really is the intention of telephone and internet charges under this line item which caters for this steep jump. We want to know, as taxpayers, if they are going to tap our cell phones and if they are going to mind our business, because that is going to be against the Constitution which speaks to this freedom that we are enjoying. We need to know if they are going down the road of purchasing Pegasus, for example, or other spyware that can basically invade the privacy of the people of this country. Could we ask for that guidance, at least, if it will be a manner of getting into the personal business of the people of this country? As the Hon. Annette Ferguson is saying, like [*inaudible*]?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I understand the paranoia of our friends on the other side as they know what they did when they were in Government. I understand the paranoia of thinking that people are spying on them. We do not have time with you. We have *bigger fish to fry*. However, this has to do with telephone, internet, *et cetera*.

Just to remind the Hon. Member that, according to the laws of this country – one of them which is called the Interception of Communication Act – if any security entity in Guyana wishes to tap anyone's phone or intercept it they have to go to the court and the court have to give permission. The issue is that the laws of Guyana provide for interception for crime fighting, *et cetera*.

By the way, who brought in the sedition laws again? It is you. The sedition laws were removed in this country in 1997. It was brought back into the Cybercrime Act, a retrogressive act. It will be removed at the appropriate time. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Mahipaul, before you ask the next question, we have just exhausted the hour for this head, but we have 19 minutes saved from the earlier head.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I want you to note that this is a current expenditure, and it caters for five staff, which is to pay telephone bills and internet charges. To

know that it has jumped from \$805,000 to \$35 million is worrying. On that note, I reserve my other questions.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the staff of this body are five paid staff. This is national security. These are five staff who are civilian. The rest comes from the security forces of our country, and they are paid through those agencies. This is not about five people. I would assume that you would not conceive that the security and defence secretariat of this country would be manned by five persons alone. How ludicrous. This is to do with our territorial sovereignty, crime fighting and intelligence gathering. Certainly, there are five staff who are civilian. The rest comes from the Disciplined Forces of Guyana. Thank you.

Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$299,119,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$47,540,000

Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$47,540,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$359,724,000

Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$359,724,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$23,500,000

Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$23,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 015 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$1,585,745,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister state whether any salaries are being paid from this line item?

3.19 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: This figure of \$60 million, which is \$20 million less than last year, is payment for consultancy for the new Blue Economic Initiative and consultancy fees for the Local Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), *et cetera*. It is all consultancies; nobody's salary is paid from here.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I will go on to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Appendix T, which deals with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Could the Hon. Minister explain the \$20 million increase for fuel and lubricants under this heading?

Ms. Teixeira: The increase for fuel, *et cetera*, for the EPA, is increased fieldwork.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state whether she said increased fieldwork? Is that what I heard?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Hon. Member.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I am just confirming, thank you. Could the Hon. Minister further explain the almost double increase in rental and maintenance under the same line item?

Ms. Teixeira: The increase has to do with a new building and the maintenance of the other facilities.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: If I heard the Hon. Minister, she said a new building. Could the Hon. Minister state what is the purpose of this new building that is being rented and where it is being rented?

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry, I may have misguided you. This is the old building of the EPA that was built in 2018 that is having some structural problems. This money is to do with the maintenance of the building. These are not capital works; these are maintenance works.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, there is \$48 million set aside for training under this Agency. Could the Hon. Minister inform the House what training would be undertaken this year?

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, this has to do with training, as you correctly pointed out, with what is called real-time remote monitoring and the training of the staff to be able to use the equipment.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state whether this would be general training for all staff or particular staff would be going ahead with this particular training?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that this is across the Agency.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Pardon me, Hon. Member?

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry, I am advised that this is across the Agency for all staff.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: The final question on this point: Could the Hon. Minister please say if it is possible for her to layover the work programme of the EPA for this year?

Ms. Teixeira: I believe that would be a decision of the EPA Board, which was established in October. I cannot make a decision for a board. The EPA has a board that is established, and that Board would decide whether it wishes to layover. It has recently been re-established, I believe, and therefore, it would have to determine that. I cannot commit a board to release its work plan, sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Before the Hon. Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley, continues, Hon. Members, please look at the use of unparliamentary languages. One Hon. Member repeatedly used one three times. Do you have a problem Hon. Member Mr. Henry? I see you are raising your hands to the heavens.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I just was wondering if you would have chided over there also. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I chide everyone, Hon. Member. Hon. Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister say whether I would need to go to the Commission of Information to get the information from EPA? Would that be the best route to take?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, that is not for me to advise the Hon. Member on. If she is familiar with the Access to Information Act, she could utilise it or, as I said, the EPA Board has been putting out their reports in this House, so you could see what they have done. If the Board agrees that it should make its work plan available to the public, then it could put it on their website, which

is what everybody wants to do. But I do not think that I could commit in this House on the work programme of a statutory body without the approval of that Board.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is it a precondition for the public money going to them that they do a work programme?

Ms. Teixeira: No, Hon. Member. As far as I know, it is not. What I do know is that the statutory bodies and constitutional bodies prepare their budgets with the justification for what they want and what they need. I am not aware of a work programme or work plan going to the Ministry of Finance when the budget is being dealt with. I know that there is a justification. Why do they need more money under what heads and what will they do in the year with it? It is not a work plan. It is the justifications under the chart of accounts.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is it not true that the Hon. Minister has to get what they would do for the entire year before they could get the amount of moneys?

Ms. Teixeira: I think we are quibbling over words. I said that their submission has to include justifications for their request. That is different from a work plan or a work programme. A work plan or programme would have 12 months of the year. It will have what you are doing by quarter and what you are doing by each month. That is not what they are required to submit. They are required to submit the financial request that they are making – if it is that they are going to do training, what kind of training, how many people they are going to train within that year and the justification for it.

Mr. Duncan: That is a work programme.

Ms. Teixeira: That is not a work programme my dear. If you think that is a work programme, you really need to think again.

Programme: 015 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$1,585,745,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 015 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$1,685,780,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: There is a sum here, but the legend has nothing. Could the Hon. Minister please provide some guidance as to what this \$1.6 billion would be for?

Ms. Teixeira: Under the Guyana/China Agreement, they would be building the recreational centre/park at what we called the Joe Vieira Park. This is a major intervention with the Guyana/China partnership to build \$1.2... This is a \$1.2 billion project. Why is it that you have to bring us down to minutiae? This is a grand design that will utilise a large portion of land to beautify, and the idea is to keep doing that in other regions as well. But this one has come on stream because of the Guyana/China friendship and the way in which we have worked with each other for decades. This is the contribution of China: this is a grant of \$1.2 billion. If you could find someone else with another grant to do Ruimveldt tell us. But we are dealing with this one, that is, money available. The Government will be providing the cost for the land clearing, the paperwork and things like that, and the Guyana Power Light Incorporated (GPL) in terms of light and water, and the China in terms of the design, layout, and construction.

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

Ms. Ferguson: Not as yet, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you, Mr. Chairman, I turn the Hon. Member's attention project code 3401500, Environmental Protection Agency. I notice here we have \$100 million set aside for the provision of furniture, equipment and the payment of retention. In *Volume 3*, under Profile 13, it does not state much. Could the Hon. Member explain to us what this \$100 million will cater for? And, at the same time, I would request that you hand over or layover the document to cover the \$100 million. This is taxpayers' money, and we must be held accountable for it. It must be accounted for.

Ms. Teixeira: The \$100 million, the largest portion of it will be spent. The sum of \$94.9 million will be spent on digital environmental monitoring and the reporting and verification of the framework for all offshore petroleum mining and forestry activities. There will be two main functional areas – geographic information system and remote monitoring sensor instruments and dashboards. There are details in relation to this coming up to \$74,976,000. It would not only be

exclusively dealing with oil and gas, in terms of looking at surveillance and at the Floating Production, Storage and Offloading (FPSO), but also tracking the flares, *et cetera*. This is not exclusively to be used just for oil and gas. That is \$74 million out of \$100 million.

The balance has to do with some scientific and laboratory equipment that would be needed by the EPA, as well as furniture, printers and materials like that. I thought the most important of the largest section has to do with the areas regarding the geographic information systems and remote monitoring sensors.

Programme: 015 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$1,685,780,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 016 – Police Complaints Authority – \$55,637,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.34 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 016 – Police Complaints Authority – \$993,000

Programme: 016 – Police Complaints Authority – \$993,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: This concludes the consideration of this agency. Hon. Members, let us thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Office of the President, and the staff of all the different agencies, for taking us through these Estimates. We have exhausted all the time savings. Now, we are starting back from scratch. Hon. Members, let us make way for the Guyana Defence Force (GDF).

Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force

Current Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$14,823,832,000

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$14,823,832,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Guyana Defence Force – \$2,807,182,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1200100 – Buildings: I understand that this is the Guyana Defence Force. I would just like to know if this project code covers work in the main branch – the Guyana Defence Force, Camp Ayanganna? [**Mr. Dharamlall:** Why do you not sit down? [*Inaudible*]]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister Dharamlall, the use of that unparliamentary language is out of order.

Mr. Duncan: Most gracious, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks for that recognition, Hon. Duncan. Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. The allocation as in the Budget, the majority of it is for Region 9 and some others like the Air Corps and some in Lethem, Region 9, and other areas, but most of it is Camp Ayanganna.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 2404600 – Air, Land and Water Transport: Is it possible for the Hon. Minister to lay over the description of the items – Sir, I trust you are recognising that I am not going in detail – at least the description of the items, under this project code?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I would not lay over the details. I, however, will advise the Hon. Member that it includes a number of land, air and water transportation – like an ambulance. As you know, the final payment on the OPV was approved – land cruisers, double cabs, smart caps, outboard engines and three-wheel bikes, *et cetera*. We will make the final payment on the OPV.

Mr. Mahipaul: I hear the Hon. Minister. I understand the sensitivity here. I also understand that this is taxpayers' money. I also recognise that this is an extremely large sum and, because of the sensitivity, you would recognise that I am not even mentioning the sum that is before me. I am not even mentioning the description of the items before me. The question begs as to whether it is prudent spending, in my view. That is why I am asking if we could, at least, have a breakdown of

the amount that would be spent on each item. It specifies here the items, which I will not go into detail with, but just to know the amount that is associated with each item.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I shall be unable to give a breakdown of the details as requested. This is security; it is our army and, yes, there is accountability – the Auditor General does it and the Public Accounts Committee reviews and there is internal audit. The concerns that Members are raising could be covered by those areas. The fact is that our army, our Guyana Defence Force, we need to make sure that they are properly equipped and trained to do the job that they have according to the Constitution, which is to defend our territory and to ensure that we live in a secure environment. Thank you.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I agree with the Hon. Minister in what she is saying there. We need to ensure that the Guyana Defence Force is properly equipped to do the work it has to do. Nobody is questioning that. What we on this side of the House would like to know is if this equipment that will be purchased will be new equipment, second hand, third hand, fourth hand or fifth hand. I do not think that the country could not know if it is new or used equipment. At least that can be clarified.

Ms. Teixeira: The response to the Hon. Member is that they are all new.

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

Mr. Jones: Project code 2800200 – Agriculture Development: we see it states here, “Provision for processing plant and equipment.” Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this equipment is to be used by the Guyana Defence Force’s agriculture farm at Garden of Eden? If not, where? Could she state the sum for the processing plant and what are the other equipment that would be purchased?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. It is at the Garden of Eden. It is the development of a 28-acre plot of land for permanent crops as well as the processing plant and equipment, shade house and poultry rearing. These funds relate to the provision of the construction of the processing plant and equipment that is in, I think, the second and final phase.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 2800100 – Pure Water Supply: In 2020, we spent \$12 million there. In 2021, we spent \$29.950 million. In 2022, we have a budget sum of \$20 million. Is this to

complete what was started in terms of provision for water supply? Where is this? Where are we improving the water supply?

Ms. Teixeira: The allocation for this is part of an ongoing process – and I believe it may have to be done next year as well – to bring the water, tanks, pumps, installation of water filtration systems at various locations for the Guyana Defence Force in every region of Guyana. For this year’s allocation... we had one previously and I am sure that this will continue until we have been able to bring the systems across the country to a good standard.

Ms. Ferguson: Through you, Mr. Chairman. On this very project code 2800100, Pure Water Supply, when I look at the profile number 281 in Volume 3, it states here that this is a new project totalling \$20 million. The Hon. Member in her explanation to my Colleague stated that it is an ongoing process. Our understanding here is that it started perhaps in 2020/ 2021 and continues in 2022 and onwards. The profile is saying something different. Perhaps, the Hon. Member could shed some clarity where this particular project item is concerned. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: From what I am hearing, is it a new programme in an ongoing process? The Hon. Member mentioned new project and you said ongoing process. I just want to get clarity for me so that when I put...

Ms. Ferguson: No, no. I do not know if I heard the Hon. Member accurately. It is the Hon. Member who said to Hon. Mahipaul that it is an ongoing process or project. When I checked the Volume 3, the status here has it as “New”, funded by the Government of Guyana, which will cost us \$20 million. It states here, “The project entails upgrading of water distribution systems.” All I am asking the Hon. Member is to clarify what she said to Hon. Mahipaul and what I discovered in the Volume 3.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister, new project, ongoing process, combination of both.

3.49 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, at the various locations of the GDF, there are different qualities of water distribution. In some cases, they are using from the creek. In some cases, they are using from water tanks. In some cases, they are more developed with filtration systems. So, the project is an ongoing one in the sense that new areas are added as other areas are completed. It is ongoing but when

those areas are completed, movement is to new areas which have not had the same attention to do with water distribution – clean water and access to clean water – for the different locations of the Guyana Defence Force. It is both – certain areas were finished in 2021; certain areas will be finished in 2022; and in 2023 there may be other areas that have not been reached as yet and this process has to continue.

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

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$2,807,182,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister, the members of the Guyana Defence Force and staff, for taking us through that item. Now it is the turn of the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, in her own right.

Agency: 06 Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance

Current Expenditure

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$156,942,000

Mr. Jones: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister explain this? The revised budget speaks to \$3.905 million and we see a request now for \$100 million dollars. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** *[Inaudible]*]

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Mahipaul cannot resist teasing me. I do not know why he has this penchant for always teasing me, but I take it in good stride.

Line item 6284 – Other – has \$100 million. Yes, it is an increase and I am very happy that our Ministry is being given additional resources. It is a young and new ministry. This has to do with raising the profile of our Ministry in terms of parliamentary affairs and governance, which is a particularly important area for the Government of Guyana. As I said, it will include improving our international profile and having our presence at international conferences. We have a lot of work to do with the preparation of our reports to various international levels and treaties that we have ratified, as well as acquiring technical support to do that. It also includes capacity building in terms of not only our staff but in looking at various agencies in order to deliver – whether it is on treaty

commitments or looking at our parliamentary agenda. We intend to participate in all international organisations and regional organisations dealing with governance.

Just as an aside, we are the only Ministry in the Caribbean region at this point – I do not think there is any other in this hemisphere – dealing specifically with governance. We are very happy to be able to learn and participate with the organisations dealing with governance, as well as in conferences. Part of the \$100 million, too, is in terms of a bilateral and international agenda to lend support to the President and the Government for the areas that we already said would have an active and aggressive campaign to raise the image of our country and ensure that we are taking positions that are strong for climate change, oil and gas and the environment, *et cetera*, to make sure that these fall in line with the Government's agenda and strategy.

We have also the issue of Guyana's regional integration, in terms of the commitments it has made to do with food security and climate change. We will be part of that process to ensure that we are monitoring it and making sure that Guyana is keeping to commitments made and playing a vital role in integration. We will work closely with other ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, the Office of the President and related agencies. The whole intention, Sir, is to ensure that Guyana will take up its leadership role at these forums of governance, in particular, human rights and anti-corruption. This is a particular area of speciality of the Ministry – anti-corruption.

Mr. Mahipaul: Let me thank the Hon. Minister for her detailed explanation as it relates to this huge increase from \$3.9 million to \$100 million. What I did not hear is the sum being disaggregated to specify how much money is for whichever item she elaborated on. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to now tell us the amount of money that is associated with each item she just provided to us.

Ms. Teixeira: Now that we have been allocated these funds, once the budget is passed, we will then sit and work out the allocation of the funds.

Mr. Mahipaul: In English, Ms. Gail Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: What do you mean by, "in English"? I spoke English. What do you mean?

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$156,942,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$10,200,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1220000 – Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the address where this guard hut and sanitary facility will be constructed?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, it is at Lot 105, New Garden Street, Queenstown which is the home of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. We are between Laluni Street and Anira Streets, in case you have not come to visit us as yet. That is where the money is. [**Mr. Duncan:** Is it only for Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul?] I am offering Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul, not you. I do not want you near my Ministry.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chair, when I look at the Current Expenditure in terms of staffing detail, I see that we have purchased furniture and equipment in 2020 for this Ministry at \$6.486 million and \$9 million in 2021. Mind you, for those years, only one programme had staff. That was the Policy Development and Administration which had seven staff. I see now that there are eight staff added. We did purchase equipment and furniture before, may I ask if this \$6 million now is to purchase additional equipment and furniture for the existing staff or is it for other purposes?

Ms. Teixeira: Maybe, if I read to the Hon. Member what the items are...It states, rollover project of the solar batteries and inverter. We have tried to make the Ministry's building solar-powered with backup instead of a generator. So, we started the project last year. The rollover now is in terms of the inverter and the installation, high powered performance computers (PC), security cameras, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) devices, high powered UPS back-ups, air conditioning (AC) units, fire extinguishers, a small conference table and a laptop. They are not the furniture like what we bought last year, which were desks, tables, shelves, cabinets and stuff like that. This is more relating to the energy backup system for us and security. It includes, as I said, fire extinguishers, one laptop, a small conference table and chairs. It is not furniture in that sense as you may be thinking.

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$ 10,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$ 10,198,000

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$ 10,198,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$0

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$0 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.04 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$98,821,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, line item 6116 has an allocation of \$20,954,000. I see from the staff legend that it caters for four new staff. May I ask the Hon. Minister to provide us with the designation of the four new staff and their respective remuneration packages, please?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. These persons were hired during 2021 and were paid from the Ministry of Finance. They have now been included in our budget. There was no provision in our budget in 2021 to pay for the staff, although we had the positions created by the Ministry of Public Service.

There are four members of staff. The Special Projects Officer at \$374,500 per month, \$10,000 – duty allowance, \$5,000 – telephone and travel – \$5,000. There is a Governance Officer at \$333,770, \$10,000 – duty allowance, \$5,000 – telephone and \$5,000 – travel. There is a Researcher at \$340,837, \$10,000 – duty allowance, telephone – \$5,000 and travel – \$5,000. There is a

Research Officer at \$130,540,10,000 – duty allowance, \$5,000 – telephone and \$5,000 – travel. Those are the four members of staff presently under line item 6116, Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask for these four employees of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, what was the method of employment? Was there a public advertisement? Were they interviewed? Were they selected from amongst a group of persons who applied for this position through public advertisement or were they selected?

Ms. Teixeira: Two persons were transferred from the Ministries they were in. One is on fixed establishment, one is on contract and all the persons who were brought into the Ministry for all the positions were interviewed; we collected applications from the Ministry of the Public Service. We have looked at different agencies and tried to see where we could bring people in. One person is from the Ministry of Home Affairs and in the Parliamentary area one person was a staff of the Parliament Office to try to bring in the technical expertise that we needed. There was not a public advertisement, but they were in each of these positions when we got into Office and the Ministry was created. We had a lot of applications by people looking for jobs and we found that the number had adequate qualifications. They were brought in to be interviewed, to be assessed and to hopefully bring them in as new members of the staff.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I need some further clarity. Earlier, the Hon. Minister indicated that these four staff members were being paid by the Ministry of Finance. In her explanation just now, we heard that one of them fall under the fixed- establishment and another was transferred from some other Ministry, I think I heard the Parliament Office. Was that staff not being paid from the Parliament Office and if one of them fall under the fixed- establishment, how is it that it is reflecting here as contracted employees?

Ms. Teixeira: Under programme 062, we have a member of the Parliament Office who was transferred to us with the support of the Ministry of Public Service. The person remains under programme 062, as a member of the Public Service Establishment at the salaries that are commensurate with the new positions created in the Ministry with the approval of the Ministry of Public Service . The other person's salary that he/she was getting at the Parliament Office is at the same level in the new Ministry. The person has not lost.

Under programme 063, there are four persons here. Two of the formers were in other ministries who expressed interest in coming over to us. They were on contract and when the contract expired, in the process they were interviewed, and they were brought on staff. They all came with good recommendations from the agencies where they previously worked in the government sector. Two other persons were brought in with applications and interviews. They were accepted as members. Mr. Mahipaul, all the four who falls under this line item 6116 are contracted employees. One came from the Ministry of Public Service elected to come on board as a contract instead of the Public Service.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, let me thank the Hon. Minister for clarifying because earlier I heard her saying that from the four, one is on the fixed establishment. I am happy that she clarified that the one who the Hon. Minister was speaking to had to do with the one that received a transfer to Parliamentary Affairs, programme 062. I still want some clarity on this programme 063 where the Hon. Minister indicated that these four staff were there since 2021 and they were paid from the Ministry of Finance.

I do hear that two of the persons were in other Ministries. Is the Hon. Minister saying to us that the two staff members were at the Ministry of Finance and seconded to her Ministry and is now fully employed at her Ministry or were they from other ministries and were being paid from the Ministry of Finance?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, I am sorry. I forgot to answer that aspect of the question. As a new Ministry, when we started out, we had no staff and a small budget. We started hiring people, but not all were hired at one time and because there was no provision in the 2021 for the payment of the staff but there was the approval of the PSM for the organisational structure of the Ministry and the positions that were approved in the Ministry, we were allowed to go ahead and hire. Once we were able to do that and all our staff on contract, except one, we then advised the Ministry of Finance. It was paying the staff out of line item 6141 which is Revision of Salaries until we can have a budget in 2022 that reflects all those staff. They did not come over all at once. There was one who came in January, one came in March, one came in April and one came in August, so that as they came on, the Ministry of Finance issued a warrant that would allow us to pay. We could still hire but they would give us a warrant and, in the new year, those persons would be put on our establishment on the budget line item.

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$98,821,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$2,240,000

Mr. Henry: Project code 2512200 – Furniture and Equipment: The money is small but I just want to ask if not in this item where could we find moneys that would be able to provide internet equipment to the Regions 1,7 and 8 Parliamentarians who have to make contact with your Office? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, that was a question which would have been best directed when the Parliament Office came up but I am sure that the Hon. Member can consult with the Clerk of the National Assembly. There is something in place to deal with that.

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$2,240,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let us say our gracious thanks to the Hon. Minister and her staff for taking us through her Ministry's estimates. Congratulations, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Teixeira: Always a pleasure.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is now time for the Office of the Prime Minister. Let us give the Hon. Prime Minister and the staff an opportunity to get in place. Hon. Members, since we had a very extended lunch break, I would not take this afternoon break that is scheduled; I will go through.

Mr. Mahipaul: We have to agree on that.

Mr. Chairman: You did not seek my agreement when we struggled for a quorum at half of an hour but I understand that the bell is not ringing at some parts of the Arthur Chung Conference Centre. We are going to take a break but not now. We are starting at 4.18 p.m.

Mr. Duncan: Most gracious, Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Sir. Godfatherly like too.

Agency: 02 Office of the Prime Minister

Current Expenditure

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$477,017,000

4.19 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, you know, one of the strangest things we have unearthed thus far is the fact that there is significant increase in these agencies under line item 6284 and the description there is simply “Other”, nothing else.

Now, we are seeing, under this same line item, for our goodly Prime Minister, Hon. Brigadier (Ret’d) Mark Phillips, an amount from \$77,845,000 to an amount of \$200,000,000. Could the Hon. Prime Minister be kind enough to break down this \$200,000,000 and give us the figure that is associated with each item under this line item?

Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips]: Mr. Speaker, I will take the advice of the Members of the Opposition and take my time, since being the Prime Minister with a substantial portfolio – so many agencies.

In attempt to answer the question from the Hon. Member, this is the year of the commencement of many mega projects in Guyana that fall under the Office of the Prime Minister. The increase in the money from \$77 million to \$200 million is to cover the payment for consultancies... **[An Hon.**

Member: [Inaudible]] I am sorry; could you hear me?

Mr. Chairman: You are very popular, Prime Minister.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: I will read it over quickly for you. The payment for consultants for megaprojects that fall under the Office of the Prime Minister, beginning in 2022. As you know, some of these projects will be concluded in 2024 and some will go beyond 2025.

Procurement of the services of consultant – the Prime Minister provides oversight to several sectors that require great technical skills. As a result, consultants in this sector are highly skilled and remuneration is commensurate. The first amount is \$39,000,600.

Procurement of services for advisors – because of the weight and highly technical areas given policy oversight by the Prime Minister, there is a need for sufficient advisors, \$26.4 million.

There is provision of sums to cater for the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project (AFHP) – consultancy, advisors, advertisements, *et cetera*. The project will cater for Guyana moving towards clean, reliable and affordable power supply. This will cater for more cheap and reliable electricity, \$130.296 million.

Stipend for Ministerial Tender Board Members – to provide monthly stipends for Ministerial Tender Board Members, so approved by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) for payment. There is \$504,000 there. I think that answers your question, Hon. Member.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Cde. Chair, regarding the services of these advisors, what systems will be used to procure their services? Would it be a public advertisement and they will be asked to advertise and so on? Would you single-handedly select who he believes are competent in your eyes to do the job? If I may add, how many advisors are we looking at to be catered for under this line item?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I wish to assure the Hon. Member that proper procurement procedures will be followed. I also wish to assure the Hon. Member that everyone who is taken on board as an advisor or consultant will have to have the commensurate qualifications for the job. [**An Hon. Member:** *[Inaudible]*] As many as is required.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the Hon. Prime Minister has an allotted amount that caters for advisors so there must be an amount that he is looking at, not as many as possible.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: In the first instance, Hon. Member, we have budgeted for five such advisors and consultants.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much, five. I want to turn the Prime Minister's attention to line item 6116, Contracted Employees. I am trying to comprehend how there is a reduction in the sum allocated there, from \$84.2 million to \$82,5 million when there is an increase in the contracted employees. Would the Hon. Prime Minister be kind enough to explain the reduction, notwithstanding an increase in the staffing?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The answer is that there were three employees who resigned from their positions and they were paid at a fairly high scale in the public service. That is the reason for the reduction.

Mr. Mahipaul: From the 29 employees, three resigned, which took it to 26 employees. The three employees who resigned were paid, according to the Prime Minister, at a fairly high salary. This means, in my view, those three employees had to be replaced and, additionally, another employee was added. Would the Prime Minister be kind enough to say the designations and the remuneration packages of the three who replaced the three who resigned, and for the additional one, the person's designation and remuneration package, please?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: There were some replacements and those replacements were at a lower salary scale, which is what resulted in the difference in what totals here.

Mr. Mahipaul: No, Prime Minister. Cde. Chairman, my initial question was that there was a reduction in the moneys allocated for this line item, but the staffing details is showing an increase. The Prime Minister explained that there were three persons who resigned and were paid high salaries, but the number that is stated is 30 employees for 2022. From the direct cite here, it means an increase of one. Given what the Prime Minister has said, it means that it is really four persons. For the three employees who resigned, I am asking, first, were those positions filled which brought it back to the 29 employees plus the addition of one, which has it at 30 employees? Could he provide us with the designations and remuneration packages of the four new persons? Now, I am hearing, he is saying that there are some other staff who resigned. Could he clarify these 29 employees to 30 employees for us, clearly, so that at least we could move on?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Perhaps I will take this opportunity now to speak a bit slower and clear up this issue for the Hon. Member. The high-priced employees who resigned were not replaced in terms of their positions being filled by anyone else. We employed additional employees, which were required at a lower level to perform lower-level functions. When you look at the net, it shows the difference. I am happy that I was able to clear up that matter, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Hughes: Line item 6281 – Security Services: A massive increase from 2020 from \$3,823,000 to 2022 more than \$20 million. Could you explain that increase?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I do not know, Mr. Chairman, where the Hon. Member...

Ms. Hughes: Sorry, Prime Minister, I am not hearing so clearly.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: In 2021 and 2022, basically, it is the same money that we are spending, according to the figures here.

Ms. Hughes: From 2021...

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Perhaps I may have to volunteer some information for clarity, Hon. Member.

Ms. Hughes: I cannot hear you, sorry.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Do you need me to volunteer some additional information for clarity?

Ms. Hughes: Sorry, Prime Minister, I am not hearing you clearly at all. I do not know if maybe you could take off your mask.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Hughes, could you repeat what you were asking him?

Ms. Hughes: Do you want me to repeat the question?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Yes.

Ms. Hughes: I am trying to get an explanation for the large increase in security costs. That is line item 6281, Security Services.

Mr. Chairman: It is line item 6281, Prime Minister. It has increased; yes.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Under line item 6281, the amount of money that we spent in 2021 is similar to what we will be spending in 2022. In 2020, you will see \$3.8 million, which basically represents a three-months period.

Ms. Hughes: Have you increased the locations that these security moneys is being placed at? Or rather, what are the locations that this year's allocation will cover?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: There is no increase in the locations and that is why the figure remains the same.

Ms. Hughes: I also asked what the locations were.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The offices and the Prime Minister's residence are the places that have security.

Ms. Hughes: Okay, thank you. Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I see a zero there. There is no question to ask.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Is there a question, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chairman: No. There is no sum and the rule is that if there is no sum, there is no question. Anything by zero is zero. Hon. Member Ms. Hughes, there is no sum.

Ms. Hughes: It is in Appendix T.

Mr. Chairman: There is no sum there, so there is nothing to approve. We are approving zero.

Mr. Mahipaul: This is where the Prime Minister is thieving the money from. Now, we find it.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mahipaul, unparliamentary language. Please, you are accusing the Prime Minister of thieving.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I wish to advise the Hon. Member that there is no requirement for this Prime Minister to steal from the [*inaudible*].

4.34 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you, if I can take the Hon. Member back to line item 6284, Other. Earlier in his explanation, he did lay out who were the persons under this particular item. Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House whether advisors are catered for under this particular line item, Other? Are they currently being paid from this particular line item, the sum of \$200 million?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Could you kindly repeat the question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Ferguson: I am asking you, Hon. Prime Minister, whether it is customary for ministerial advisors to be paid their benefits or emoluments under line item 6284, Other?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: It is a project so it is approved for payment under this line item.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, did you hear that?

Mr. Chairman: No. I did not hear it. There was a bit too much of excess sound. The other issue is that 'super' is so far away.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: It is allowable for the payment to be done under this line item, because of the project of the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project.

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say to this House the qualifications of these advisors and if he can provide a breakdown or a disaggregation of the emoluments or benefits for these four advisors? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, you may have answered the second part earlier as it relates to the qualifications of these advisors hired or to be hired.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: We are now starting the process and whatever the qualifications that are needed will be advertised as we seek to recruit the necessary consultants for these projects.

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister's Secretariat – \$477,017,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister's Secretariat – \$51,778,000

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister's Secretariat – \$51,778,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$5,462,902,000

Mr. Patterson: Line item 6294 – Other: Once again, could the Prime Minister disaggregate the sum?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, there is no need for concern with the \$5.002.061 million. If you could recall, in his Budget Speech, the Senior Minister within the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, did mention that there is requirement for other cost of living measures. That is money there for ministerial intervention, after consultation, to help ease the impact on the most vulnerable in our society. Mr. Chairman, I wish to read the exact part of the Budget Speech...

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, sorry to...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, please continue.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:

“...Mr. Speaker, our Government regards the issue of cost of living as a matter of pressing concern. As already discussed, it is the direct result of global factors such as COVID-19 and the attendant disruption to the supply chain, as well as domestic factors such as the flood which caused a temporary disruption to production. We have already implemented a number of measures to try to mitigate the effects of these shocks.

Given the complexity of the factors driving price increases and the limited policy instruments available to mitigate these increases, we intend to engage in further consultations with the communities most affected both on the coast and in the hinterland on possible interventions to help ease the impact on the most vulnerable in our society. To this end, we have allocated a sum of \$5 billion to meet the cost of the interventions to be implemented following these consultations...”

Mr. Chairman, I thought it necessary that I read this part of the Speech.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to have another... Could I ask the Prime Minister to layover the disaggregation of this \$5 billion? Sir, it has to be computed somehow. Could I ask the Prime Minister to lay that over Sir before he [*inaudible*]?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I wish to submit that there is no need for us to layover. I think I have already answered the question. The sum of \$5 billion is for the intervention that was explained.

Mr. Ramjattan: This is obviously something that ought to be a contingency. A ministry awaits that when it has whatever the contingency is. The Ministry is now taking under the line item 6284, Other, something that is normally under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) for purposes. What is this?

[The Hon. Member displayed a document.]

You do not have anything that you are going to make purchases within a recurrent expenditure. How could you... Why not \$25 billion? This is wrong.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I did not hear a question, but my answer remains.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Member, I saw ...

Mr. Ramjattan: I would just like to ask one more question, Mr. Chairman. Is this going to go towards transferred payments like for the flood relief and how much would a person get?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I think the important word there is 'consultation'. He said the intervention will be done after consultation.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am trying to hear Dr. Cummings.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: I noticed under this line item the money that was spent is \$28,883,000. In 2021, there was increase of \$30 million but it was revised in 2021 to \$12,966,000. I notice now it has dropped even further to \$7 million. What is the reason for the drop? Is it that you are going paperless? In 2021, which we just finished, you had \$30 million but you spent \$12 million. Was it vired to some other area or do you have enough now that you only need \$7 million to be used under this line item?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: It is quite an interesting question by the Hon. Member. It reflects the size of the times that we are living in. It is a combination of ... We have in stock some items from previous purchases. Secondly, we are going more paperless in the world today and, thirdly, many of the things that we are doing such as the activities are virtual like meetings. It is virtual. There is no need for preparing a lot of hard copies for anything. There would be virtual meetings and we would throw up the power point or whatever presentations, so that led to the savings there.

Mr. Holder: I want to go back to line item 6294, Other, and ask the Prime Minister a direct question. Is this sum of \$5 billion catering for direct cash transfers and distribution of hampers? I heard the Prime Minister talk about the cost of living. How do you determine the beneficiaries and which communities will benefit from these sums? If you could list, Hon. Prime Minister, these communities or lay them over for us, we will appreciate that.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am looking at line item 6294, and I am not seeing any \$75 billion.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister...

Mr. Holder: I said \$5 billion, Mr. Chairman. Apparently, the Prime Minister is not following. It is \$5 billion. It is the same line item which was interrogated minutes ago.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I do not have a hearing problem because I am now hearing \$5 billion. My answer that I gave before stands.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister.

Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$5,462,902,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.49 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$ 100,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I see for the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) there is a \$100,000,000 provision for the building, furniture, equipment and payment of retention. I would like to know about the construction of the multipurpose building and bond at Thomas Lands, and what is the payment and retention for?

Could the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate this \$100,000,000, so that I could understand how much is for payment and retention, how much is for the construction of the multipurpose building and bond, and how much for the provision for furniture and equipment?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, my answer to the question from the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul—retention consultancy for the Civil Defence Commission final payment, \$575,000; final payment and retention, contractor for CDC headquarter building, \$8,168,828; retention CDC guard huts \$441,362; construction of multipurpose building phase 1, \$70,814,810; and the remainder is the equipment for the emergency operation centre.

Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$100,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 023 – Power Generation – \$3,529,119,000

Mr. Patterson: I want to ask the Hon. Prime Minister about Linden Mining Enterprise (LINMINE) community power where there is an increase of \$7,000,000. Could the Hon. Prime Minister explain how it arrived at only \$7 million? It is not a follow-up question, but I need to know the increase for 2022.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: When we look at the increase in consumption for 2020 and 2021, there was a 6% increase so, in planning for 2022, we utilised the same percentage to increase the allocation for 2022.

Mr. Patterson: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister for that however, I anticipated the answer. During the budget debate, there were many lauded things that happened in Region 10, including call centres, housing developments *et cetera*, and it extended it to other communities. I am asking the

Prime Minister, if there seems to be something strange [*inaudible*] between the work it did and the consumption. It was only 6% for all the great work it claimed it did in Region 10.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I think the Hon. Member is taking me to a medium-term approach in planning for Linden. The fact is, many of the housing projects and those other projects that he mentioned, would come on stream at a time when all the energy efficiency measures that we are putting in place would start showing positive impact on the society in Region 10.

Secondly, if the Hon. Member could recall, we have renewable energy projects planned for Linden, and those projects would come on stream to cater for all the concerns pertaining to energy increase in demand, raised by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: I thank the Prime Minister for [*inaudible*]. Is the Prime Minister confirming that in 2022, none of these projects, such as the housing and things like that would be coming on stream? Is that what the Prime Minister is informing this House?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: It is a process and by the time those houses are ready to utilise electricity, we will have adequate electricity for the system.

Mr. Patterson: My last question, I am trying to be very courteous to the Prime Minister, could you state for the records, what renewable energy projects would be on stream for 2022 to supply these houses so that people could know, you just do not get up and speak [*inaudible*]?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The 10 megawatts project for Linden will come on stream in 2023; and I repeat, 2023.

Programme: 023 – Power Generation – \$3,529,119,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 023 – Power Generation – \$24,379,870,000

Mr. Patterson: Project code 2606700 – Hinterland Electrification: Could the Prime Minister disaggregate the \$200 million allocation for 2022?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I should start with the disaggregation which is the construction of distribution network for Kato hydropower project, a project that started long before 2020, that we more or less came into office and did some corrective work to rescue that project. I wish to advise that project is back on stream now, and it is our intention to deliver to the people in the shortest possible time. The cost of that project is \$25 million. The next one is the procurement of one 625 kilo-volt-amperes (KVA) generator for Port Kaituma at \$30 million; procurement of one 900 KVA generating set for Mabaruma, \$32 million; expansion of grid from Oronoque to Four Miles, Port Kaituma, \$36.5 million; extension of electricity to villages of the [*inaudible*] and Pakera, Matthews Ridge area, \$15 million; extension of distribution network in Kwakwani, Region 10, \$11 million; upgrade of electricity grid in Barimanobo and Rocks community in Mabaruma, \$10 million; secondary electricity network extension in Campbelltown and around Mahdia, \$30 million; construction of fence around main water source in Kwakwani, \$4 million; procurement of in-line fuel meter for Mabaruma, \$2 million; procurement of Baldor motor three- phase pump for Kwakwani, \$2 million; procurement of 15 kilowatt generator for Kwakwani, \$2.3 million— a lot of money being expended in region 10— procurement of motorcycle for Kwakwani, \$200,000, and that should give us a total of \$200 million.

Ms. Hughes: Project code 1219100 – National Data Management Authority: Provision for equipment.

Mr. Chairman: I do not think we are there yet.

Ms. Hughes: My apologies, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Project code 2610600 – Gas to Power Project: Could the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate the \$20.8 billion?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I wish to answer the Hon. Member by stating the \$20.8 billion that you are mentioning in your question is for the Gas to Power Project; and that will cover the phase one construction of the power plant at Wales.

Mr. Patterson: That is self-evident, self-obvious and it is there in the legend. I did not ask what it is but the Prime Minister, his advisors and all the great persons he has with him, would have done some amount of calculation to say what is the land clearance, what is the foundation and

what are the generations? I do not know how they arrived at it and so I am asking the Prime Minister to disaggregate this \$20.8 billion. We know what the project is because it is listed there.

5.04 p.m.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I wish to assure the Hon. Member that the disaggregation of this \$20.8 billion will be submitted to the House.

Mr. Patterson: Is the Hon. Prime Minister saying to this National Assembly, that the \$20.8 billion, the single largest budgetary item in his portfolio, he has no information to provide to this Assembly?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: There is a provision for the laying over of information. What I am saying to the Hon. Member is that that will be done.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, one would normally ask the Prime Minister or any other person within what time period to lay over. Could you just enquire from the Hon. Prime Minister when could we expect that?

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking me to ask the Prime Minister when he is going to lay over or if he would lay over?

Mr. Patterson: I was going through you, Mr. Chairman, with the hope that you will get a more positive and favourable response, using your high Office.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister are you prepared to lay over at a later stage?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I will lay over at a later stage but with a high degree of expediency.

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

Mr. Patterson: We have project code 2610100 which is the construction of hydro facilities at Mocha, *et cetera*. I see it is an Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) project. There is only \$300 million there. Could the Prime Minister disaggregate the four or five items that is here for 2022?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: To the Hon. Member, I wish to inform that the \$300 million listed here is for the construction of the Kumu and the Moca Moca hydro projects.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I am seeking your intervention here. It is listed in the profile document what it is for. I did not ask what it is for. I asked him to disaggregate the amounts. Therefore, we could know what to expect for the peoples' money. That is all we ask. It is listed there in the capital profile.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, let me assure the Hon. Member that it will be laid over.

Mr. Patterson: It is quite obvious that the Prime Minister is wholly unprepared for any of these questions here. He has a staff here, but I will move on. Could I ask, under project code 2610100, if this the same ISDB funding that was procured under the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) tenure, that you are now executing?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, there are two questions there. The first was if you are wholly unprepared and the second was the issue of the amount.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I wish to assure the House that I am always prepared and always ready. The answer to the second question is the Islamic Development Bank.

Mr. Patterson: It is listed here that it is the ISDB. I asked the question – is it the same project for the loan that was put up by the APNU/AFC that he is now executing? It is listed here, provision of hydro power interventions – ISDB. That is all I am asking.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Under the Hon. Member, there was a proposal for three hydros. We have since modified it to two hydros. It is from the same funding agency, the Islamic Development Bank.

Ms. Ferguson: The very project code that we are considering, power generation project 23, there are a slew of projects under this particular head. Could the Hon. Member state to this House and to the Guyanese at large, which projects will be funded from the Natural Resources Fund (NRF)? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, is there any funding here from the Natural Resources Fund?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: That is not a question for the Hon. Prime Minister.

Ms. Ferguson: I must support the point alluded to by my Colleague, Mr. Patterson. It seems to me that the Hon. Member is not fully prepared.

Mr. Chairman: The question.

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Member state for this House and the Guyanese populace, which projects under this particular project code is actually foreign funded projects?

Mr. Chairman: From listening, I think that question was answered twice by the Hon. Prime Minister.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, to answer the question posed by the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, the foreign funded programmes are project codes, 26095100 – Renewable Energy Improvement Power System Project; 2609800 – Energy Matrix Diversification Programme; 2610000 – Solar System Project; 2610100 – Small Hydro Projects, – a total of six.

Mr. Patterson: During the budget debate and publicly, the Government side was saying that when we examine the estimates, we will be able to ascertain which particular projects are funded by the NRF. There is a quote. I could pull it back right now. Is the Gas to Shore Project funded from the NRF?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I already answered. Any question pertaining to the NRF, as Prime Minister, I am not prepared to answer those questions.

Mr. Patterson: Alright. I hope the Guyanese people are listening. At the launch of the Gas to Shore Project, there was a 'Wales Development Authority'. Is this agency under the Office of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Chairman: Under which project code are we asking this question?

Mr. Patterson: The same power generation – gas to power.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I am not aware as to where the Hon. Member is going with this. However, the budget states clearly that the Gas to Power Project – \$20.8 billion is allocated under the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Patterson: Under the same project code, could the Hon. Prime Minister state whether this project will be executed by any ‘Wales Development Authority’ or exclusively by the Office of the Prime Minister? Any part of this \$20.8 billion allocation.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: I like sticking to the facts. In the budget there is \$20.8 billion that is under the Office of the Prime Minister for the Gas to Shore Project. I already stated that this money will be utilised for the first phase of the power plant construction and that will be at Wales. Those are the facts.

Mr. Patterson: It has been stated that additional studies on the Gas to Power Project have to be executed. This project code pertains to the Gas to Power Project. Could I ask the Prime Minister if the studies been completed? If they have, would he be willing to lay them over to the National Assembly? Are any moneys included within this \$20.8 billion for the studies?

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: In the interest of being accurate in responding to the question, I will ask that the Hon. Member pose the question in writing, and it will be provided, as a layover.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Prime Minister needs some time.

Mr. Patterson: I have asked the Prime Minister a question and the Prime Minister responded that I have to put it in writing. However, this is the area where you ask questions and if the Prime Minister does not have the answer, he could volunteer, like he has done before to lay it over.

Ms. Ferguson: Exactly.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I seek your guidance on this because you have to guide us and the Prime Minister on the procedures on the estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. Hon. Prime Minister.

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, layover is the proper term, and I will confer.

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

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I must say how surprised I am with the responses provided by the Hon. Prime Minister of this nation. Hon. Prime Minister, this is your budget.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please ask the question. Do not lecture the Prime Minister.

5.19 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: The question that I am putting to you, Prime Minister, Hon. Member, is that you are in contravention of the Natural Resource Fund by not providing this National Assembly and the people of Guyana with the requisite information we are seeking.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, you have been accused of being in contravention of the NRF.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I think to be decent in answering I will ask the Hon. Member to have a second reading of the Natural Resource Fund Act.

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

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Patterson before you ask that question, I am going to have to caution the Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul about all the unparliamentary language he is using today. You are testing my patience at this time. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you have the floor.

Mr. Patterson: Are you finished with Mr. Mahipaul, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: A long time.

Mr. Patterson: It is obvious that the Prime Minister also known as (aka) Superman cannot fly here today, but that is all right. I will ask an easy, simple question on the same project code 2610600, Gas to Power Project, which is \$20.8 billion. Could the Prime Minister say what is the method of procurement that he is going to use? What is the timeframe that he has to spend this – the procurement timeframe – as well as the execution timeframe in which the \$20.8 million will be expended in 2022?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I wish to assure the Hon. Member that at the opportune time the House will be informed as to the procurement and all the necessary procedures. This is not the time.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I would not detain the Committee any longer. Just to confirm that the Prime Minister is here defending his estimates... [**An Hon. Member:** Unprepared.] Not only unprepared but is also unwilling to say listen to me, there is \$20.8 billion which we are going to approve because it has the majority. He does not even have a time stamp...

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a question?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Prime Minister has been answering. One cannot say he has been unwilling.

Mr. Patterson: I never said unwilling.

Mr. Chairman: Whether you like the answer or not is a different question.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I said unprepared. I never said unwilling.

Mr. Chairman: Even to that he has been answering. Unprepared is a relative term. The Prime Minister has given us the answers so far to all your questions.

Mr. Patterson: That is all right. Could I ask then on behalf of the Guyanese public that is waiting with a bated breath, if the Prime Minister could put a timeframe as to when he will lay over all the outstanding issues?

Mr. Chairman: Prime Minister, is there a timeframe for when you will layover what you had said you will?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I wish to assure the House that with the highest degree of expediency all the information will be compiled and presented to the House. I wish to also assure the House that all public procurement procedures will be followed by my Government.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I have a question. I heard during the Prime Minister's, the Minister of Finance's, the Minister of Public Works' and the Minister of Home Affairs' speeches, they all made reference to Amaila Falls. Could I ask the Prime Minister where is it budgeted – the Amaila Falls that they all referenced?

Mr. Chairman: I want to believe I heard the Prime Minister mention Amaila Falls when he was giving a breakdown before this head. Let me ask the Prime Minister. Where is Amaila Falls mentioned, Hon. Prime Minister?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, he gave the breakdown about consultancies *et cetera* and from capital [*inaudible*], advisories...

Mr. Chairman: Where is Amaila Falls mentioned?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I wish to be advised by the Hon. Member, if Amaila Falls is mentioned on the page here? If it is not mentioned on the page, I do not feel that I should be dealing with it here. I should be dealing with what is here.

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

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I do not believe the answers that were provided by the Prime Minister are acceptable to the Guyanese people. This project code 2610600 – Gas to Power Project: This is the largest tax funded project in the history of this country. It is the largest. The people of this country deserve answers. When one looks at the said project, in Volume 3, the total project costs as \$104 billion. My question to the Prime Minister, is this the final cost for the Gas to Power Project? Is this the total cost as stated there of \$104 billion?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please desist from using unparliamentary language.

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am looking at this document and I am still to see any project with \$104 billion. Project code 2610600 – Gas to Power Project: The figure is \$20.8 billion, provision for power project.

Mr. Chairman: Let me just ask the Hon. Member Mr. Holder to clarify. He is asking for the total cost of a particular project. Mr. Holder, do you want to clarify?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member is importing information.

Mr. Patterson: I am in his stead, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I just want him to clarify so that the Prime Minister could properly respond to him.

Mr. Patterson: He has ceded to me, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you want to tell the Prime Minister where you got that figure from?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, it is in Volume 2. I will allow Mr. Patterson to continue.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman to help the Hon. Member, there is a document here that states \$104 billion but I already mentioned that the \$20.8 billion is for the first phase of a multiyear project.

Mr. Patterson: I am referring to Reference: 32, Agency Code Number 2, Sector Code Number 05 in Capital Projects, Volume 3, at 9.1. Total Project Cost: There is a definitive sum of \$104 billion. At 9.3. Amount Budgeted For 2022: there is \$20.8 billion. Could the Prime Minister say what is the full scope of this project as his Ministry would have been included? What is the full scope of this project for the \$104 billion?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the answer will be laid over.

Mr. Ramjattan: One final question for me. In relation to Volume 3, all those projects that are new like the Gas to Power Project you indicated, I do not see any new project here for Amaila Falls. Does that mean that there are no moneys for Amaila Falls in 2022?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the Amaila Falls is being constructed under a build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) system. We are not dealing with the capital cost of that project.

Programme: 023 – Power Generation – \$24,379,870,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Hon. Members: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please desist from using unparliamentary language.

Hon. Members: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us get the Prime Minister's staff to come in place.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation – 2,034,546,000

Ms. Hughes: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could we get an explanation for the increase? What specific Information and Communications Technology (ICT) related training is being provided under that line item?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman to answer the question from the Hon. Member Catherine Hughes, concerning specific ICT training – ICT innovation camps. These are specific academic camps where children will learn to become innovators training in basic Information Technology (IT), animation, graphics, coding, programming, robotics and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) among others will be done. These ICT innovation camps will be held in Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara.

Secondly, community level ICT introductory training that will target all selected regions. Topics include introduction to computers, introduction to internet and web and Microsoft Office suite, Girls in ICT training which is a collaboration between the University of Guyana and the Industry and Innovation (I & I) Unit. It will take the form of Girls' Code Camp where girls will be trained in programming and coding.

Intermediate and advanced level training. These are mid and upper tier training that will include more advanced level content including web development, graphics programming, coding, upper tier. These specialised training will be delivered online. Content such as JavaScript, Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), frontend frameworks, Structured Query Language (SQL), Transact-Structured Query Language (T-SQL) will be covered.

5.34 p.m.

Fibreoptic training. Scholarships will be provided for 10 persons to undergo specialised training in fibreoptic installation and maintenance.

The next training is staff development project management training. This activity will look at the training and certification of three staff of the Industry and Innovation Unit in project management

through the Project Management Professional (PMP) training. That should last for six months. Training of trainers in remote and riverine communities. There will be three training of trainers workshops for remote locations in Guyana. The training will look to train persons to become the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) trainers within their communities.

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, very much, Hon. Prime Minister. Could you give me an idea of how the training is going to be provided? Actually, what I mean is, by whom? I do not know if you are doing this in-house, or what the plan is.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The training would be provided by our staff. In other words, it would be done in-house. In some training, staff will be deployed to the different communities to conduct the training. In some cases, they may use virtual and hybrid formats for training.

Ms. Hughes: In the documents, you actually talked about including the private sector as a way of building capacity. Therefore, I want to ask you whether there are any private sector companies that are going to be contracted to promote the ICT training?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Unfortunately, I am disappointed in the Hon. Member. At this stage we would not have any private sector companies contracted for the training.

Ms. Hughes: I think it is very sad that you would not be supporting the private sector in the delivery of some of the training. Anyway, I would like to go on to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. We see a movement from \$460 million to \$1.9 billion. Could you give us an explanation and breakdown of that category?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Did the Hon. Member talk about \$560 million? What was the sum you were inquiring about, Hon. Member?

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Prime Minister, it is line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: That is the recurrent expenditure for the National Data Management Authority (NDMA).

Ms. Hughes: Could I have a breakdown of exactly what will be included in that?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The breakdown is \$928,866,000 for Employment Cost and \$1,221,134,000 for Other Recurrent Charges. That is in Appendix T.

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Could you explain the movement of Employment Cost from \$870,057,000 to \$928,866,000? Maybe the number of staff or salary increases or whatever.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The sum represents the 7% salary increase to employees.

Ms. Hughes: Could you state how many employees there are currently?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The number of employees at the NDMA is 187 in total.

Ms. Hughes: Could you give me the salaries of the highest paid and the position and the lowest paid and the position? Thank you.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The highest paid position obviously is the General Manager, and the lowest paid position is the Housekeeper. The General Manager is at scale 14 and the Housekeeper is at scale 9. [Mr. Mahipaul: We did not ask for scale. We ask for the amount.] The Government scale is readily available.

Ms. Hughes: Under Appendix T, Other Goods and Services Purchased, could you give us an explanation of the expenditure associated with the Other Goods and Services Purchased? We see it currently at \$871,843,000. What would those goods and services be?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Could the Hon. Member, please repeat the line item?

Ms. Hughes: It is for the NDMA. It would come under line item 6321. It is listed in Appendix T, Other Goods and Services Purchased. It is \$871 odd million.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: It would be for connectivity charges; one-way maintenance contract for the legacy infrastructure – \$77 million; data services; Digicel – \$66,600,000; AB satellite space segment – \$197,160,000; fibre optic infrastructure connecting NDMA sites on the East Bank Demerara and the West Coast Demerara to 100 clients, including camera, *et cetera* from National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and education facilities – \$23 million; Entertainment Networks (E-Networks) dedicated internet access – \$149 million; Guyana Telephone and

Telegraph Company (GTT) dedicated internet access – \$149 million; GTT service for Orealla – \$1.4 million; licencing charges – \$2,000,280,000; another license fee – \$220,000; renewal of off premise cloud infrastructure – \$21 million; renewal support licence – \$250,000; implement cPanel web host management platform – \$900,000; implement monitoring tools for website uptime and performance – \$600,000; acquire Network Virtualization And Security Platform (NSX) licence for virtual host located at Liliendaal and Castellani Data Centre and training – \$24 million; Rackspace manage security service – \$9,240,000; Rackspace management web hosting – \$7,750,000; and renewal of fort guard fort care support contracts – \$9,600,000

Mr. Chairman, with your permission I could read out the information. It would take about 20 minutes.

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, could I just ask you to lay it over in the interest of time?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much. You could layover the information Hon. Prime Minister. Just to inform those Hon. Ministers who promise to layover items, the Clerk of the National Assembly has been taking notes and will formally write every Hon. Minister.

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Prime Minister, I am wondering whether you could advise me, Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations, could you tell me what provisions you might have made for the payment of membership dues and subscriptions to various international and regional organisations and what those might be that you have a relationship with currently?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: That is done through the Telecommunication Agency. If one notes here, there are only zeros there. That is taken care of through the Telecommunication Agency.

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for the clarification. It is still Programme: 024 Telecommunications and Innovation. I see an increase in subsidies for the same local and international organisations as listed in Appendix T – more than \$401 million. Again, could you say which international organisations – regional or international – that expenditure might be assigned to?

5.49 p.m.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the \$400 million is for transferal to the universality fund.

Ms. Hughes: Could I ask the Hon. Prime Minister to clarify then, have you not budgeted any funds for the payment of your membership and subscriptions to the regional and some of your international organisations, such as the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, the ITU and the other one?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, such payments will have to go through a process which entails us getting Cabinet's approval to effect such payments.

Ms. Hughes: In fact, are you saying you have not budgeted for it? Just for clarification.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The payments will be done through the Telecommunication Agency and with the Ministry of Finance's approval from Cabinet.

Ms. Hughes: Continuing with the Telecommunication Agency, I see 100% increase in your rental and maintenance of buildings. Could you explain it? It goes to \$24 million from \$12 million.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The amount listed represents an increase in rental. We have gotten notice from the owners of the building for increase in rental for 2022 and we, therefore, made provisions for it.

Ms. Hughes: Clarification: that increase in rental, the 100% increase in rental, is it for the same premises or are you moving to a new location?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Because of the nature of the contract, the sum will represent the payment for the increase in rental and the rest will be a contingency in case the owner of the building decides to further increase the rent and, therefore, we may have to make a decision to seek alternate location for that agency.

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, I was simply asking if it was the same location to...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Hughes, please let me recognise you.

Ms. Hughes: Apologies, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: To answer, yes. It is the same location.

Ms. Hughes: Employment cost – Guyana Telecommunication Agency, could you explain the budget for 2022? We have moved from \$128,912,000 to \$188,973,000 if we could get an explanation as to what those expenditures would be aligned to?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The increase in employment cost that is reflected is to cover an increase in employment for 19 new staff that will be employed in 2022 in the course of this year.

Ms. Hughes: Could you give me a breakdown of the 19 staff, the positions and an idea of the breakdown of the emoluments?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I will have to lay over the breakdown as requested by the Hon. Member.

Ms. Hughes: Not a problem laying over, Hon. Prime Minister.

Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation – \$2,034,546,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation – \$2,653,856,000

Mr. Patterson: Project code 1219100 – National Data Management Authority – Under capital there is \$2.6 billion. Could I ask the Prime Minister if this will be funded from the Natural Resource Fund, this \$2.6 billion?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: This is funded from the allocation under the Office of the Prime Minister. That is the only answer I could give on this question.

Mr. Patterson: Follow-up question, just to be pellucid. Is the Prime Minister saying that he and his other Ministers will be unable to tell the people of Guyana where the Natural Resource Fund moneys are allocated? Is that the response?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you ask a question with respect to the line item which the Prime Minister is responsible for?

Mr. Patterson: Could I ask the Prime Minister if any of his allocations is being funded under the...?

Mr. Chairman: You have to ask on a line item.

Mr. Patterson: Programme 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation total amount is \$6.6... the whole project code. I am asking if any of these project codes are being funded from the Natural Resource Fund.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I find it difficult that I would have to answer this question. I want to make it simple to all of the Members and all the people of Guyana, that all the money from under the Office of the Prime Minister and from this Budget is coming from the Consolidated Fund. Does that make sense? It is coming from the Consolidated Fund.

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Prime Minister, project code 1219100 – National Data Management Authority, same project code. Could you give me an idea? It states provision for equipment. Could you give me an idea, let us say, of the large ticket items in that equipment, what exactly is it?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, the large ticket items.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I will give the entire breakdown just to be on the safe side. Expansion of backup site Liliendaal - \$30 million; network fibre equipment - \$27.3 million; upgrade internet infrastructure - \$43 million; safe city expansion request frequency, spectrum integration - \$23,598,500; integration of safe city - \$37,021,500; LTE tower upgrade - \$573,725,000; procurement of additional safety handsets - \$411,350,000; and additional network coverage provision - \$1,501,361,000. That gives us a grand total of \$2,647,356,000.

Ms. Hughes: Were any Very-Small-Aperture Terminal (VSAT) dishes included?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The answer is no.

Ms. Hughes: Project code 2509600 – Furniture and Equipment – could you say where this furniture and equipment is for?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Kindly repeat the question, Hon. Member.

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Prime Minister, did you ask me to repeat?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Yes.

Ms. Hughes: It is project code 2509600 – Furniture and Equipment – where is the furniture for?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Where is it for?

Ms. Hughes: Where is it being located? I speak properly unlike you.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Is the Hon. Member asking where are we purchasing the furniture from?

Ms. Hughes: No. I asked, where is it going to be located? Which location? This is under programme 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation. I know you have a few physical locations. Which physical location is this furniture going to be located in?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The furniture purchased will be located in the offices occupied by the staff of the Industry and Innovation Department that falls under the Office of the Prime Minister.

Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation – \$2,653,856,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.04 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$770,756,000

Ms. Hughes: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I see an increase from \$55,743,000 to \$67,801,000. We see an increase in two members of staff. Could you tell us the two positions and emoluments that go with the additional contracted employees?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The employees are: a Technical Officer at a salary of \$301,212, a duty allowance of \$30,000, a telephone allowance of \$10,000 and a transportation allowance of \$20,000; next, there is a Communication Information Technology Officer with a salary of

\$208,971, and a duty allowance of \$15,000; a Community Engagement Officer with a salary of \$203,300; and an Office Assistant with a salary of \$74,900 and a duty allowance of \$10,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, just let me bring to your attention that we started consideration of this Agency at 4.18 p.m. There was one hour allocated for it and that would have taken it to 5.18 p.m. There were 52 minutes of savings from the previous agency, so we will conclude the consideration of this Agency at 6.10 p.m. This is according to my computer's time, which is what I have been keeping. It is now 6.07 p.m. Hon. Member Ms. Hughes, you have the floor.

Ms. Hughes: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could you explain the increase?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The increase will cater for the rental of a new office space location to accommodate the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA).

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Could I ask where that location is?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: It is still to be assigned, Mr. Chairman. It is for the rental, but we are still looking for a place to rent.

Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$770,756,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$150,000,000

Ms. Hughes: Project code 4502900 – National Communication Network: Could you give me an idea of how many additional community stations you propose to establish and in which locations?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: We have four relay stations planned to come on board during the course of 2022 at the following locations: Kato, Kwakwani, Port Kaituma and New Amsterdam.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Member Ms. Hughes, I will allow you one more question in spite of the time reaching...

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is my last question. I know those are relay stations but, in the information, you mentioned increasing community stations. Is it that you have not budgeted for an increase in the community stations as opposed to relay stations? Thank you.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: For 2022, that is just for four relay stations. In the future, we will consider the community stations as mentioned by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister.

Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$150,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will take the Ministry of Legal Affairs now and then we will take a short 30-minute break after that. Let me thank the Hon. Prime Minister and all his staff of the many agencies for taking us through the Estimates. He is a super Prime Minister.

Hon. Members, please turn your attention to pages 408 and 409. Yes, it is your Agency 52. Are you ready, Hon. Attorney General?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$ 139,904,000

Mr. Forde: Mr. Chairman with respect to Programme: 521, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, the Staffing Details indicate that eight more persons would have been contracted as employees of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. This increased the budgetary allocation to \$13,717,000. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the designations, emoluments and the dates of employment of such persons?

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There are: one Telephonist, one Support Systems Officer, two Cleaners, one driver, one Procurement Officer, two Handymen and two

Office Assistants. I do not have the dates when they were hired. I can produce that subsequently. Do you want the emoluments too?

Mr. Forde: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: For the Telephonist – \$74,900; one Support Systems Officer – \$128,400; two Cleaners – \$74,900 each; one Driver – \$74,900; one Procurement Officer – \$118,484; two Handymen – \$74,900 each; and two Office Assistants – \$74,900. Actually, I have the dates, I will pass it over to you. I do not think that the dates are important.

Mr. Forde: Mr. Chairman, line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister indicate which buildings are covered and provide the details in relation to such buildings?

Mr. Nandlall: Unfortunately, Sir, the Attorney General's Chambers and the Ministry of Legal Affairs have a solitary building. It is located at Carmichael Street. My friend is aware of the location and address. There will be repairs to the stores – minor repairs and painting of the interior walls; replacing of broken windows; and recapping of a driveway.

Mr. Forde: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the items covered under this line item?

Mr. Nandlall: Just give me one moment. This is provision for a firewall to monitor and protect the network against malware, ransomware and other threats. There is a multi-van load balancer to combine three internet services; category 6 cables (Cat 6) to improve operational efficiency; 100 Base-T Management and 8-Port Ethernet to bolster security; replacement of integrated fire alarm system to alert staff of possible fires in the building; and replacement of industrial wall mounted fire hose, wheel, anchor bolts, connectors, *et cetera* to protect the buildings against fires.

6.19 p.m.

Mr. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Hon. Member, line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: Could the Hon. Member state whether the provision highlighted here caters for the printing of law books personally for the Attorney General (AG)?

Mr. Nandlall: No, Hon. Member. That is budgeted under a different programme. This deals with newspapers and that type of periodicals.

Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$139,904,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$287,500,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1201300: For the construction of the fence and the rehabilitation of the roof, is this at the Attorney General's Chambers on Carmichael Street?

Mr. Nandlall: Hon. Member, as I said, the AG's Chambers and Ministry of Legal Affairs operate out of one location. The fence is there; the shed is there; the concrete is there; and the building is there.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1501500: There is the sum of \$250 million. I know it is the provision for institutional strengthening and justice reform through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) programme. In the third volume, there are details in terms of every aspect of what it covers, and it is an ongoing programme. For my benefit and the country's benefit, would the AG be kind enough to just elaborate on this allocation so that we can understand clearly about it? Thank you.

Mr. Nandlall: In my speech, I detailed a series of activities, but I want to thank the Hon. Member for affording me another opportunity. We have the prosecutorial programme where we will be training persons at the University of Guyana (UG), who are in possession of a Bachelor of Laws Degree, to prosecute. We retained a consultant who has prepared lecture notes and syllabus. In the newspapers now there ought to be an advertisement inviting suitably qualified persons to apply.

Thirty-five persons will be paid for under this head to attend that programme and then another 35 before the year is out. When they graduate out of that programme, they will then be inducted into the State prosecutorial programme and will be prosecuting in the Magistrate's Court. That is one initiative.

Then, to further enhance the prosecutorial ability of the State, the programme will donate to the Guyana Police Force (GPF) a quantity of computers and printers that is expected to aid the police in stopping the practice of using handwritten statements in court processes, in the Magistrate's

Court in particular, and to have their statements type written. That is another component of the programme.

Then, we have the restorative justice bill, which would be brought to the Parliament, and that will bring in a new component in our jurisprudence. We have trained the judiciary; we have trained the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Office; we have trained police prosecutors; and we have trained officers in the Social and Welfare Department to acquaint them with the basics and principles of restorative justice, a new concept that we are introducing in our legal system. The bill will set up the infrastructural framework and the governing structure. There is going to be an office established. There is going to be a coordinator of the rehabilitation programme. We have to equip that building as well and we have to hire staff to work. So, that is another item under the project.

A fourth item under the project is that we are working in collaboration with my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Human Services and Social Security, to address the question of domestic violence. We are going to identify locations right across the country and establish domestic violence centres where persons can go and access legal services, medical services and counselling, and also access members of the Guyana Police Force at these various centres across the country. It is a pilot project. We hope to replicate that if it is successful. Sir, that is the fourth element of the programme.

The fifth element of the programme has to do with commissioning a review of the Sexual Offences Act, along with that Ministry, again, and a Domestic Violence Act. These are two pieces of legislation that are now old on our books and the problems of sexual abuse and domestic violence abuse continue to preponderate in our society. We are going to commission a review of those legislation. We also have a public awareness programme attached to this project to educate our people about these initiatives. We are going to have consultations done across the country in relation to both pieces of legislation as well as to popularise the concept of restorative justice.

Sir, we have a project that is currently...the procurement process has begun to identify a suitably qualified consultant to draft sentencing guidelines. As you know, Sir, sentencing guidelines, I believe, are very much required in our country because large sections of our population are complaining about inconsistent sentencing, if not erratic, by judicial officers.

Sir, we also have a bail bill that will be brought here. That consultancy has been concluded. It is a bill that requires a lot of consultation with the stakeholders, for example, the judiciary and the

practicing bar. That is also in the pipeline. [Mr. Mahipaul: *inaudible*] The mental health bill is coming under the Ministry of Health. I know it is anxiously being awaited in this House and it is very much needed. Sir, in a nutshell, those are the main items that this monetary allocation will be spent on.

Mr. Mahipaul: I want to thank the Hon. AG for his work and for continuing to progress from where the former Attorney General, the Hon. Basil Williams, left off.

Mr. Nandlall: Vey much so, Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask under project code 2401100, Land Transport, what kind of vehicles would be purchased and for what purpose?

Mr. Nandlall: It is not a Ranger Rover, Mr. Ramjattan. Sir, these are two vehicles that will be added to the fleet of the Attorney General's Chamber and Ministry of Legal Affairs. Sir, the Minister of Finance can confirm that, last year, we requested and obtained the permission from the Accountant General to sell two vehicles and the moneys were transferred to the Ministry of Finance. We are replacing those two vehicles with two other vehicles. We believe that once the vehicles reach a certain age, they should be disposed of and we should get vehicles so that the work of the Ministry can be carried out in a more effective and efficient manner, and the State can save a lot of money because a lot of money is spent on repairing old vehicles.

Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$287,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 523 – Attorney General's Chambers– \$460,307,000

Mr. Forde: Mr. Chairman, I draw attention to line item 6116, Contracted Employees. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the designations and emoluments for the additional two contracted employees?

Mr. Nandlall: The two posts are that of a Senior Legal Advisor and a Personal Assistant. Do you want the salaries too? The Senior Legal Advisor's salary is \$430,000. Permit me to say that this is an officer who was seconded to the Ministry of Legal Affairs from the Ministry of Local

Government and Regional Development as a Legal Advisor to that Ministry under the previous administration. Sir, she was seconded on the same terms and conditions under which she was contracted under the previous Government. The Personal Assistant's salary is \$321,000.

Ms. Ferguson: Through you, Mr. Chairman, could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6224, Print and Non- Print Materials? Could the Hon. Member confirm whether law books would be printed here? If yes, would these books be personal to the Attorney General and what would be the cost for printing these books? Thank you.

Mr. Nandlall: The Hon. Member is obviously not acquainted with the cost of printing books. Sir, obviously, when you look at this budgetary sum, it cannot be for printing books. It is for procurement of books.

6.34 p.m.

The Attorney General's Chambers is proud to say that it purchases, regularly, law books. That is the way we are able to discharge our functions competently. This is an allocation for books that will be used by lawyers at the Office of the Attorney General.

Mr. Ramjattan: I noticed an explanation for contracted employees with about 440, and then another sum, but I see that contracted employees' actual salaries increased to \$178,730,000 when it was \$146,235,000. That is line item 6116. That is almost a \$30 million increase, but what was explained was just about \$6 million.

Mr. Nandlall: I have already given the information in relation to the additional persons and their remuneration packages. I am told that one should add to that the increases that were granted to public servants which these contracted employees benefit from. It was granted to public sector employees, and that captures contracted employees in the public sector as well.

Ms. Ferguson: Let me just take the Hon. Member back to line item 6224. I heard you. You said that books will be procured for the staff to use at the Attorney General's Chambers. My question to the Hon. Member is: would any law books be purchased personally for the Attorney General from this particular line item?

Mr. Nandlall: I take my time and I put my words together very carefully. I have answered that question comprehensively.

Mr. Ramjattan: Line item 6284 – Other: I noticed that the revised amount and the actual for 2020 is about \$100 million, but there is \$122,000,000 now. Could the Hon. Attorney General state what might have been the cause for that increase under Other?

Mr. Nandlall: Under that line item, the following activities are budgeted to be funded: electoral and constitutional reforms; public outreach and sensitisation programmes; legal fees; we subscribe to an online library; advertisements; costs that are normally awarded in the courts against the Attorney General, whenever we lose, which is a rarity; and consultation on the new arbitration bill. I have spoken a lot about the new arbitration bill. We are going to engage a consultant of pre-eminence from the Caribbean to guide us on this process. It is a new bill, a model bill, produced by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). It carries with it the establishment of certain infrastructural structures, because it deals with arbitration, both intra the judicial process as well as extra the judicial process. So, a litigant, under the new system, if he does not want to go to the courts, can go to arbitration without litigation. That is the kind of model we are pursuing. Then, there is, within the Ministry, the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Unit. That Unit advises us and works with us in relation to our obligation under this regime. The funding, Mr. Ramjattan, are for those activities.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Forde, did you want to ask something just now? Thank you.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$460,307,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$9,500,000

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$9,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$32,303,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6111 – Administrative: I see a sum of \$15,397,000; I see a sum of \$9,452,000 being spent, but in the Legend, in 2021, zero is reflected there. I want to know if that is a typographical error, first of all, because if money was spent for salaries there, then, of course, it had to reflect who was being paid. The year 2021 is not reflecting anybody; that is one. Two, what is the designation of the person being paid under Administrative for 2022 and the entire remuneration package per month of that individual?

Mr. Nandlall: This officer was once on contract and requested that she be transferred to the permanent establishment and so there was a vacation of office. Historically, there were three offices, the State Solicitor, the Public Trustee, and the Official Receiver. Some years ago, we merged the three functional responsibilities into one, and one person is performing those three functional responsibilities. That person is paid this salary.

Mr. Mahipaul: I still need some clarity, because under Contracted Employees, line item 6116, there is a sum that was spent in 2021 – \$7,307,000. In the Legend for staffing details, one is seeing that one being reflected there and so that accounts for that \$7,307,000. I am seeing \$9,452,000 under Administrative at line item 6111, but zero is reflected under Administrative in 2021. I want to know where this money, this \$9 million and something, went if there was zero staff there for the year.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, it is the same explanation. The person transitioned about June, mid-year of 2021. This was a person who had litigation against the former Attorney General for unlawful and wrongful dismissal, and when she *re-transitioned* here, she requested to be moved to the permanent establishment. So, there is a hybrid here – half-year contracted and half-year under the permanent establishment.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$32,303,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$2,800,000

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$2,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs and staff, thank you very much for taking us through your agency.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you very much, Sir.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this is a good time to take a suspension for half of an hour.

Sitting suspended at 6.45 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.31 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The House will resolve itself into Committee.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I call now on the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and his staff.

Agency: 12 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Current Expenditure

Programme: 121 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$2,372,399,000

Ms. Walton-Desir: Mr. Chairman, I just have a few questions for the Hon. Minister. I want to draw his attention to line item 6284, Other. I noticed that there is almost a doubling of the allocation. It has increased by some \$403 million or thereabout. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the activities to be undertaken are that would occasion this doubling, and could he indicate the cost of each activity?

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation [Mr. Todd]: The increase caters for payment of legal fees, consultancy services on border issues, public relations activities, diaspora outreaches and engagements, digitalisation of the Ministry's records and the preservation

and easy retrieval of documents, payments for bank charges, remittances for programme 2, translation services, software applications, advertisements, antivirus firewall, Adobe and client access licences.

7.35 p.m.

There will also be an upgrade of the information technology system within the Ministry. The breakdown is as follows: legal fees – \$660 million, public relations activities – \$25 million, diaspora – \$50 million, digitalisation of the Ministry’s records – \$10 million, remittances and bank charges – \$40 million, software applications – \$24 million, translation and interpretation services – \$900,000, and advertisements – \$100,000. This takes it to a total of \$810 million.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Ms. Desir-Walton, you have the floor.

Ms. Walton-Desir: It is Ms. Walton-Desir, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Walton-Desir.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Through you, Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister, I note that there is an increase in staff, contracted employees, from 30 to 34. I would be grateful if you could advise as to the designations of the persons contracted and their emoluments.

Mr. Todd: We have an Agent, a Foreign Secretary, a Permanent Secretary, an Advisor to the Minister, the Head of the Expenditure Planning and Management Unit (EPMU) along with a Principal Foreign Service Officer and a Legal Officer.

Ms. Walton-Desir: I want to draw our attention to line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations. I am particularly interested in the line item that relates to the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC). I noted that in 2021, we budgeted approximately \$4 million. However, that was not paid because there is a zero value there, and I notice that we, again, budgeted approximately \$4,500,000. I am curious as to why we did not make that payment that we budgeted to the Commission.

Mr. Todd: Could you just give me a second, Mr. Chairman? We do not have any outstanding payment. We usually wait on the Commission to tell us what the budget is, and then we will make payments, but we budgeted for it this year.

Ms. Walton-Desir: I am not satisfied with the answer provided. Is it that they did not request payment for 2021? I am unclear. What assurances do we have that this would not happen again where we will not pay? There seems to be a little bit of an ad-hoc arrangement. Could you clarify that?

Mr. Todd: There was no request and we do not have any control over the Reparation Commission. We have to be guided by them and we are not in arrears.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Thank you, Hon. Minister, for that. The other issue that I wanted to touch on was the issue of training. I note that for line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), there is a \$3 million allocation there. Could you disaggregate that sum for me? Thank you.

Mr. Todd: I can disaggregate it according to the programmes we have identified. There is training in principle of non-intervention in the 21st century and diplomatic training – four modules. This is at the DiploFoundation in Malta. There is a diploma in administrative principles and practices. This is at the Guyana Technical Institute (GTI). There is an advance certificate in procurement – this is at the Nations University; translator/interpreter – this is online; the University of Columbia; French at Alliance Francaise of Guyana; Spanish – this is the Governments of Columbia and Chile, and Portuguese – this is through Brazil, the cultural institute. We have six lectures which will be in-house; we have discussion, information and briefing sessions which will be in-house as well; we have speech briefs and writing skills and note taking which will be done in-house as well, and then we also have public speaking which will be done by the Georgetown Toastmasters Club.

Ms. Walton-Desir: On the same line item in relation to training, the Hon. Minister indicated a number of institutions that would be offering different training courses. I am particularly curious as to which courses, if any, are going to be offered by the Foreign Service Institute.

Mr. Todd: It is those I mentioned that are inhouse.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Could you enumerate?

Mr. Todd: I gave a description earlier.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Hon. Minister, I am asking you to repeat. Thank you.

Mr. Todd: We have discussion, information and briefing sessions, speech briefs, writing skills, note taking, and we also have lectures in diplomacy.

Ms. Walton-Desir: My final question on that, and I would be grateful if the Hon. Minister could layover this response...I am interested in seeing the content of these courses and I am interested in who will be delivering these courses. So, could that information be laid over? Thank you.

Mr. Todd: Certainly, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 121 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$2,372,399,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 121 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$161,700,000

Programme: 121 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$161,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 122 –Foreign Policy Promotion – \$3,517,269,000

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member, Ms. Amanza Desir-Walton, you have the floor.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Mr. Chairman, I find that you keep allocating me surnames in the wrong order. Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: I note that there is an approximate \$288 million increase over the last budgeted sum. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what is responsible for this increase?

Mr. Todd: The increase basically caters for the new mission in Doha, Qatar. The Ministry also has budgeted for the establishment of the diplomatic mission in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Abu Dhabi. Also, the representation in Nairobi, Kenya is part of the CARICOM diplomatic mission. Also, in addition to this, there is the rental of residences for the replacement of ambassadors and staff posted to the missions which would cater for the sum stated in this year's budget.

Ms. Walton-Desir: I want to turn your attention to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships). I note there is \$2.6 million allocated. I am particularly concerned, Hon. Minister, at these very, I would consider, paltry sums, given that, in your budget speech, you indicated that there will be heavy emphasis on training. Could you indicate what that \$2.3 million will accomplish, in terms of training of foreign service personnel or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation's staff?

Mr. Todd: This sum allocated would take care of training of our staff at the overseas missions. Could you repeat the question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please repeat.

Mr. Todd: Did you want a breakdown?

Ms. Walton-Desir: I said that I wanted to understand what type of training the \$2 million would accomplish for the staff.

Mr. Todd: All right. For example, in Beijing, Mandarin would be one of the trainings undertaken and also finance and international relations. This is also part and parcel of building of capacity within the missions. For example, in Boa Vista, Portuguese, to improve our efficiency; in Paramaribo – Dutch, communication skills; in New York, the consulate – training in customer service and also diaspora issues; India – a lot of public speaking, negotiation skills, presentation skills and computer training as well; and in Switzerland, we want to be able to do training in people and culture, and this is at the certificate level. Thank you.

Ms. Walton-Desir: I will just ask for the similar courtesy that I asked earlier. Would the Minister be kind enough to layover the curricula so that we can have a better idea as to the courses and who will be delivering the courses, *et cetera*?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you layover the curricula of the courses?

Mr. Todd: Certainly, Mr. Chairman.

7.50 p.m.

Ms. Walton-Desir: I would like to turn our attention to line item 6111, particularly to the administrative staffing. I note that the staff there has been reduced by eight. I am curious as to the positions that were terminated.

Mr. Todd: This would be for the hosting of our staff from one programme to another. That is why it seems as if there is a reduction.

Ms. Walton-Desir: I have a follow-up on the same line item. This represents a rearranging of staff if I am understanding you correctly.

Mr. Todd: Rearranging...? When we are posting from programme one to programme two, they are moved, so this is just part of the administrative function that we have to perform. Then those who are returning to the headquarters would be coming back from programme two to programme one.

Ms. Walton-Desir: My final question under this head is under line item 6116, Contracted Employees. I notice that there is a decrease in the number of contracted employees from 14 to nine. Could the Hon. Minister indicate those positions that were terminated?

Mr. Todd: There was a resignation of the Registry Supervisor and two Confidential Secretaries in diplomat mission in New York. We also had a non-renewal of contract for one Foreign Service Officer.

In London, the Principal Foreign Service Officer was transferred to programme one, which is the returning to the headquarters. In London, one Legal Officer was returned to headquarters. In Havana, the Director of Trade, Investment and Agriculture and the [inaudible] Consular... We also have Heads of Missions who were appointed to Brasilia, Caracas, Ottawa, Brussels, Geneva, London, Kuwait, Nickerie, Bridgetown, Port of Spain and New York.

Programme: 122 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$3,517,269,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 122 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$60,340,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 1201400 – Buildings: I notice the provision of \$24,340,000 for building and gate. Of course, the capital project profile speaks to:

“1. Completion of building in the Guyana – Guyana Embassy – Brazil.”

And also:

“2. Provision for gate...”

I think it is for the building in Havana. I think the works for the Guyana Embassy is a rollover programme from about two years ago. What percentage has been completed? We notice that the entire project is \$957,231,000. Up to last year, \$407,316,000 was spent. I would like to know what percentage of the Brazilian Embassy has been completed and when is the due date for completion and also for the gate in Havana, Cuba.

Mr. Todd: About 53% of the building has been completed, and we should...

Dr. Cummings: Please speak louder.

Mr. Todd: Fifty-three per cent of the building has been completed, and we estimate 100% before the first half of this year.

Programme: 122 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$60,340,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$52,248,000

Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$52,248,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$500,000

Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, on your behalf, I thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Ministry for taking us through their agency. As the Hon. Minister and his staff departs, let us bring the Hon. Minister of the Public Service to the microphone.

Agency: 14 Ministry of Public Service

Current Expenditure

Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$177,430,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6111 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister state how many of the public service designations are held by contracted employees?

Minister of Public Service [Ms. Parag]: Two of those persons are contracted employees; the others are pensionable.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister please state the designations of those two persons?

Ms. Parag: The designations are the Accountant and the Expenditure Planning and Management Analysis (EPMA).

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister please layover the designations and emoluments of the public service positions that are currently being held by those contracted employees?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I will not layover, but I could state it right here and now. Permanent Secretary (PS) – \$551,423 by 12 months; the Accountant – \$121,564; and the EPMA – \$141,804.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister please layover the terms of the contract for security services that necessitated an over \$4 million in increase for security?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I am not going to layover the contract. The contract has been given for payment for security services for three locations: the Ministry of Public the Service, Head Office, Waterloo Street; the Permanent Secretary's residence; and the Ministerial Advisor to the Minister's residence.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister please state why there is a \$4 million increase in the security service?

Ms. Parag: In 2021, it was just a nine-month contract; it is now a full year contract.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state which service is providing security services for these different locations?

Ms. Parag: We are currently being secured by Elite Protection Services.

Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$177,430,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,500,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate what this \$3.5 million is going to be spent on and where?

Ms. Parag: Could I ask the Hon. Member to just repeat the question for me, please?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please repeat.

8.05 p.m.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state or disaggregate the \$3.5 million that would be utilised under this particular line item?

Ms. Parag: We would be buying two desk computers, one laptop computer, one monitor unit camera, one executive chair, two bath sanitising stations, two webcams, one monitor – 27 inches, one desktop printer, one shredder, one headset, two water dispensers, one heavy-duty stapler and one station intercom phone.

Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – \$2,958,121,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6284 – Other: Budgeted for 2021 was \$0, for 2020 it was \$0, the Revised Budget for 2021 was \$27 million and the budget for 2022 is \$260,000. Could the Hon. Minister state why there is this significant increase? How is it there an increase in a revised budget when no supplemental came to the House for this particular provision and nothing was budgeted for in 2021 before we get to the \$260,000.

Ms. Parag: I will be happy to answer the question. Line item 6284 was not opened in 2021, so there was a virement from line item 6201 which is Training. The \$27 million was specifically for the launching of Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) and commencement programmes like the Centre for Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT), *et cetera*. That is why there is a reduction in this.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Thank you very much for that response. We go on to line item 6302: Training. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this sum, how much will be going to the GOAL and how much will be going to pay for students who are already enrolled and are overseas?

Ms. Parag: Provision of training programme and scholarships sponsored by the Government of Guyana: the Centre of Excellence for Information Technology training programmes in the sum of \$15 million; local training in the sum of \$20 million, which includes central training at \$11 million, virtual training at \$2,192,000, in-house training at \$6,037,000 and procurement of training software at \$770,000; Government of Guyana scholarships in the sum of \$1.5 billion, which includes local continuing scholarships at \$298,348,806, local new scholarships at \$175,799,000, continuing international scholarships at \$407,843,000, new international scholarships at \$567,547,000; other costs, such as advertisements, care packages for students, stipend and meals for interview panels in the sum of \$50,462,000; and the GOAL initiative is in the sum of \$1.3 billion.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether the sum of the GOAL initiative includes moneys for the administrative cost of running the programme?

Ms. Parag: The Guyana Online Academy of Learning is a unit or department within the Ministry of Education and therefore administrative costs are catered for under the Ministry of Education.

With respect to the granting or awarding of scholarships and the moneys to be spent on scholarships, *et cetera*, that is from the Ministry of the Public Service.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister indicate, under the GOAL scholarship, whether there is any cost attached to partnering with the overseas institutions and what is the total cost?

Ms. Parag: For all collaborations with any institution outside of Guyana, the budgeted sum of \$1.3 billion will cover that.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state whether there is a reoccurring cost in terms of administrative costs to those institutions that we have to pay annually, which is outside of the scholarships that we are getting for the students?

Ms. Parag: We just pay the tuition; that is it.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state whether any efforts were made to first determine the level of accreditation of the universities that are being used for the GOAL scholarships?

Ms. Parag: The GOAL is an entire department which is dedicated to looking at accreditation. It assesses what are the needs of nation and the ranks of the universities, internationally. That is GOAL's job and task. That is being done and that was done in 2020.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I heard the Minister state that the GOAL programme is at the Ministry of Education and that her Ministry just deals with training. Is that accurate?

Ms. Parag: For the Hon. Member's comprehension, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Public Service have collaborated. The unit comes, administratively, under the Ministry of Education. Just like the University of Guyana, which deals with its own administration in terms of admission of a student into an institution, that is what GOAL does through the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of the Public Service determines who is selected for the scholarship.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Minister please inform the House about the process persons go through to be chosen for the GOAL scholarships?

Ms. Parag: The process starts with the Ministry of Education where there is an admission into the institution once the applicants are eligible for the programmes. They are then placed on a list and the Ministry of the Public Service, in collaboration with the Director of GOAL, will do a selection process based on several criteria, three of which are one's income and one's geographical location, and one's grade point average (GPA).

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just for clarification, is the Hon. Minister saying that the Director of GOAL is the one who determines who gets the GOAL scholarships?

Ms. Parag: It is not only the Director of GOAL; it is also a panel of four persons. For clarification, there was a question that was asked by Order Paper by the Hon. Member in 2021. That question was also answered publicly.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister please inform the House whether any monitoring and evaluation mechanism has been put in place to show whether the upscaling, which is taking place through GOAL, is positively impacting the employment numbers and standard of living of the recipients?

Ms. Parag: The programme started in 2021, only. We only had certain programmes with certificates. The other courses are on-going. I would say that it is a bit early but, if the Hon. Member asks again next year, she will probably have a different answer.

Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – \$2,958,121,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – 112,800,000

Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – 112,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management – \$57,561,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6111 – Administrative: There is an increase in administrative staff by three. Could the Hon. Minister state whether any of the new staff will be working with the Public Service Commission (PSC) to reduce the six-month wait for salary that currently exists?

Ms. Parag: May I ask that the Hon. Member repeat her question, Mr. Chairman?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: There is an increase in administrative staff by three. Could the Hon. Minister state whether any of the new staff will be working with the Public Service Commission to reduce the six-month wait for salaries that currently exists?

Ms. Parag: There is not a six-month wait for salaries to be paid. I cannot have somebody work for something that does not exist.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I am just wondering what I will tell the public servants who are waiting for their salaries for the last six months. **[Mr. Indar: *[Inaudible]*]** Thank you. I do not have to tell them anything. They just have to keep waiting. Thank you, Minister Indar. Could the Hon. Minister inform the House whether moneys have been budgeted to do any job evaluation across agencies? **[An Hon. Member (Government):** What is the line item?] It is the same line item 6111.

Ms. Parag: First of all, I am the Minister of the Public Service so I should be saying if there is an issue with salaries. My Ministry is working assiduously to cure any delays or any glitches in the system. That aside, I will ask the Hon. Member to repeat the other part of the question.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Of the three staff that you just hired, I am just wondering whether anyone of them would be dealing with job evaluations to determine whether jobs are equivalent across agencies.

Ms. Parag: Since 2021, we have had a team from the Personnel Department in the Ministry of the Public Service working along with Ministries. We have already been working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour. We are moving on to other Ministries this year to be able to continue the job evaluation or the job descriptions (JD) evaluation.

8.20 p.m.

There is no line item that was specifically stated by the Hon. Member, but I believe that it is not a money or a financial tax.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister stated in her budget speech, under the same line item 6111 – Administrative, that a Centre for Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) started in 2021. However, I would like to state that the Centre for Excellence in Information Technology started in June of 2019. Could the Hon. Minister state when the human resources (HR) needs assessment will commence and whether terms of reference (ToRs) have been completed for it?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, those were three questions in one. In terms of the CEIT, there was a collaboration in 2019, but if I may inform the Hon. Member...

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Yes, you may.

Ms. Parag: I can reliably inform the Hon. Member since I am now sitting in her seat...

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Yes.

Ms. Parag: ...what used to be her seat, that the CEIT only trained master trainers who went to Republic of India. It has not done any particular training for the public service or elsewhere. That was taken off in 2021. It was under the Ministry of the Public Service and under my mandate that this CEIT took off.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Hon. Chairman, she did not answer the other two questions. Could the Hon. Minister state whether the HR needs assessment – thank you that you are actually starting it – will commence and whether ToRs have been completed for that?

Ms. Parag: The needs assessment is slated to start shortly after the Budget has been completed. The ToRs have been prepared and sent for review.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister kindly share with us the ToRs for the needs assessment? Is that something that you would be willing to do?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of the Public Service has nothing to hide. As soon as the evaluation is finished, I will be happy to share with the Hon. Member. It may not be tomorrow, it may not be next week, but I will be happy to share it.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state whether the Ministry of the Public Service will await the results of the needs assessment before it starts courses for the private sector? That is something else that you mentioned in your budget speech.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I would kindly like to ask the Hon. Member to indicate the line item to which she is referring?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6111 – Administrative: It is Human Resource Management, so we are dealing with human resource management issues.

Ms. Parag: That line item comes with the employment of administrative under Human Resource Management. However, I am also happy to answer the Hon. Member to say that we have always been looking at the priority and relevant needs of the public service. Therefore, training that has commenced under my purview in the Ministry of the Public Service, since 2020, has been in keeping with the relevant needs of the public sector. We are going beyond in terms of training within the training division as well as scholarships to be extended to the private sector. It is still a bit too early because we are still in talks with the private sector, but I am also happy to give... At next year's estimates, I can have that information.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state how different the training for the private sector would be from what pertains through the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) Scholarship Programme, as GOAL does not benefit the public service?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I would kindly like to ask the Hon. Member again to indicate the line item to which she is referring?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, we are dealing with line item 6111 – Administrative. We are looking at Human Resource Management and these are human resource issues. It is under... [**Hon. Members:** *Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: You may proceed, Hon. Member.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Yes, Sir. I am of the view that I can ask questions that relate to human resource management of the public service under this head. If that is not the case, then I am so guided. It states Human Resource Management. It states Administrative. These persons who are

in this section will be dealing with the management of the human resources in the public service and so they will have to deal with these particular questions that I am asking. I am kindly asking the Minister to state how different the training of the private sector would be from what currently pertains to GOAL, as GOAL does not currently benefit the public service.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you are asking these questions under 6111 – Administrative. Am I wrong?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Am I wrong?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Chairman: So, I am correct.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I said yes, Sir. I said line item 6111.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. What you are asking pertains to training policies for the GOAL, if I understand it. Under this line item, it is to ask questions with respect to the salaries, the working conditions, the staffing details, the duties of the officers...

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, I understand what you are saying but the staff under this head will be dealing with the human resource... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, kindly give the Hon. Member an opportunity to be heard.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: As far as I understand it – I may be wrong – the staff under this head will be dealing with human resource management issues. It was under that head that I am now asking human resource management questions.

Mr. Chairman: No. I would not do that.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: So, that is not how it works.

Mr. Chairman: No. Under the training subventions that appear, you can ask this. Under staffing, you can ask the personnel issues for the staff members.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I am not asking a question. I am just seeking clarification.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right. You may proceed. If I could...

Mr. Patterson: Are you saying that under this head one cannot ask the actual duties...

Mr. Chairman: I am saying...

Mr. Patterson: Kindly allow me, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right.

Mr. Patterson: Under line items 6111 to 6116, one cannot ask the actual duties and administrative...

Mr. Chairman: I never said that. You heard me wrongly. I was advising the Hon. Member with respect to the line of questioning which was deviating from that which pertains to staffing details. Hon. Member Ms. Sarabo-Halley, do you have a follow-up?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I have one question. You will guide me on whether I can go ahead with it. I will ask it and you will tell me whether...

Mr. Chairman: Could you identify the line item for me?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: It is the same line item.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line items 6111 to 6117: Could the Hon. Minister state what is the scope of the needs assessment that the senior technical officer will be doing? I would like to know what the scope is for that particular assessment.

Mr. Chairman: The scope of the assessment...

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: The needs assessment that the Minister said that they will be starting soon.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if this needs assessment is pertaining to this staff or something else. I will give the Minister an opportunity to answer that question.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, line items 6111 to 6116 deal with the specific types of employment, the wages and salaries attached to those employments and the designation attached those types of employment. It does not extend to a needs assessment and how one is doing a needs assessment. This specific line item in question... Under this specific line item, there is no response for that other than it deals with wages and salaries, it deals with a certain type of employment, and it deals with the designations.

Mr. Chairman: It deals with the human resource management of the Ministry.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you have a – I do not want to use the adjective – habit of standing and speaking without being recognised. The convention is the person that first *catches the eye* of the Speaker outside of if we have a speakers' list... The person that *caught my eye* was Ms. Sarabo-Halley. Before I could open my mouth to acknowledge you and tell you that I have a previous speaker in my sight, you started to talk. Please, I am asking that you allow the Chairman to recognise you to ask a question. Hon. Member Ms. Sarabo-Halley, are you finished?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you may proceed.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You are most welcome, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: I am accustomed to you not recognising me. Hence, the reason I jump and intervene as often as possible. Somehow or the other, here seems to be...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you continue to insinuate. There is not a time today that I have not recognised you when you asked for recognition. You are not in my blindsight, you are not.

Mr. Patterson: I am glad to know that...

Mr. Chairman: I have a good view of the conference centre.

Mr. Patterson: Most gracious...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member...

[Mr. Chairman stood.]

Mr. Chairman: You have to take your seat when the Chairman is standing.

[Mr. Chairman took his seat.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have been going well. The kind of exchange that I just had I will not tolerate again. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you can ask your question.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much again, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You are welcome again, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: There you go. Glad to be recognised. Sir, could I ask the Hon. Minister...

Mr. Chairman: That is why you have the floor.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much. That is very enlightening, Sir. Line items 6111 to 6117: Are any of these employees tasked with completing a needs assessment?

Ms. Parag: Again, Mr. Chairman, those line items deal with types of employment such as temporary, such as contracted...

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Really?

Ms. Parag: Yes. It also deals with the designations. Hon. Member, if they come under human resource management, they are part of personnel. Therefore, yes, they can deal with assessments.

Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management – \$57,561,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management – \$3,000,000

Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management – \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

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

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, could we turn to pages 176 and 177. The agency is the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Let us give the Hon. Minister and her staff an opportunity to get in place.

8.35 p.m.

Agency: 16 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$711,588,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Under line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), to the tune of \$40.8 million, could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us the details of this expenditure? Thank you.

Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Ms. Campbell-Sukhai]: Thank you for the question, Hon. Member. Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), caters for training for Community Development Officers (CDOs).

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you may have to go closer to the microphone, please.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The allocation caters for the training of Community Development Officers and village councils, in terms of training in governance and recordkeeping.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I have a follow-up question.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: The follow-up question is, how many CDOs and how many village councils does the Hon. Member intended to train under this line item?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Twenty-four CDOs across the hinterland regions will be afforded training, And, of course, we have just completed, close to a couple of months now, the elections

for village councils, so we have quite a number of new Toshaos, and councillors. We are targeting to train 220 such leaders.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6284 – Other, and line item 6294 – Other: \$17.6 million and \$15 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what those two line items entail?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6284 – Other: There is an increase also that caters for the public tendering of projects. It also caters for repairs to office furniture; photocopying; binding of documents; advertising of bids, vacancies; purchasing of fuel drum hose, drum and vehicle logos; payments for services; and driver/porters fees for transportation of tractors and labour for transport and capital purchases.

Our Ministry is procuring capital items for hinterland regions, so this allocation covers the delivery. For example, we will be acquiring 71 additional tractors and we will need operators and fuel to take them to the villages. All those expenditures will be catered for under this line item. What was the other line item you asked after line item 6284, Other?

Mr. Chairman: It was line item 6294, Other.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6294 – Other: This estimate caters for the purchase of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) supplies for Amerindian communities such as masks, sanitisers, anti-bacterial soaps, disinfectant sprays, thermometers for villages, the Ministry staff and ministerial board members. The annual cost is \$504,000. The estimate also caters for financial assistance to villages; schools asking for support for sports events; purchase of bunting, flags for national events; purchase of kitchen utensils for the Ministry's staff room; and the purchase of door and bathroom mats to replace old and deteriorating ones. It will also cater for the annual cloud storage licence, Microsoft suite's annual subscription licence, anti-virus, and upgrade of the Ministry's website. Basically, what we are saying here is that, for our electronic-governance (e-governance), we need to upgrade some of those applications, *et cetera*, and it will cover those things.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, just hold a minute. I have the Hon. Member, Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul, online.

Mr. Mahipaul (Virtual): Thank you Cde. Chairman. Thank you for recognising me. I am joining you virtually. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see that there is an increase from \$60.6 million to \$128.5 million and an increase in the staff complement to 27 for this line item. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to layover the designations for the additional 27 staff, their job description and emolument package, please?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I have the information and I am willing to provide it verbally. The additional 27 staff is...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member is asking that you lay it over.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I will lay it over, but I would also like for the House to hear it because I have it in front of me. I am accustomed to ensuring that our information is disseminated to the House. The additional 27 staff are: Programme Coordinator; Regional Coordinator; Principal Assistant Secretary (Finance); Ministerial Liaison to the National Tshaos Council (NTC); the Regional Coordinator of Community Development; Management Development Officer – two of those; System Administrator; Senior Regional Development Officer and 16 CDOs. There is a Confidential Secretary and one Cleaner. That adds up to the 27 staff.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Cox.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman...

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

Mr. Mahipaul: I trust that when the Hon. Minister lays the document over it would also provide us with the remuneration package for these staff and their job description as requested in the question.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I can provide that immediately. The Programme Coordinator's salary is \$411,914; Regional Coordinator – \$321,000; Principal Assistant Secretary (Finance) – \$267,500; Ministerial Liaison to the NTC – \$267,500; Regional Coordinator of Community Development – \$457,498; Management Development Officer – \$187,642, that is for the two officers that we have there; System Administrator – \$187,642; and for the CDOs, they all

came on at the rate of \$109,202. There is a Senior Regional Development Officer with a salary of \$160,500. The Confidential Secretary comes on at \$85,587 and the Cleaner at \$74,900.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Let us give the Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul... Is that okay with you, Hon. Member?

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cox: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank you Hon. Minister. Those details represent a vast expansion of the Ministry, so we look forward to more effective work projects in the Ministry. With the increase of the 27 contracted employees, in which specific regions would these CDOs be employed? For the majority of the contracted employees, are they at the central Ministry or are they sent to regions?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I would want to respond to the comment first and that is, yes. Since the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government came into Office on the 2nd August, 2020, there has been a vast improvement in the service that the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has been delivering to villages, communities, and settlements.

On the dispersion of the CDOs, I can give you the 24 CDOs that we have across the region. In Region 1, we have five CDOs; Regions 3 and 4, we have one CDO; Regions 5 and 6, we have one; Region 7, we have seven; Region 8, we have four; Region 9, we have five; and Region 10, we have one.

Mr. Cox: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Line item 6222, Field Materials and Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister detail what field materials and supplies will be utilised and under what activities?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: The estimate caters for the purchase of umbrellas, mosquito repellents, rain coats, flashlights, long boots, snake bite kits, tarpaulins, and life jackets. It also caters for safety gears for five handymen and six drivers. It is all in keeping with occupational health and safety for the Ministry. Thank you.

Mr. Cox: I am happy that occupational health and safety is a priority at the Ministry. Let us move on to line item 9281, Security Services. What security services are hired and where are these

services really occupied? Is it only at the central Ministry or are they at other buildings across the country like Amerindian hostels and so on?

8.50 p.m.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The security service that is contracted is the Modern Security Services and they are located at the head office, the Amerindian residence, the dormitories – we have the tertiary, and we have the scholarship dormitories – and also the Amerindian village in the Sophia exhibition site.

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships). Could the Hon. Minister provide some details on what scholarship would be offered here, how many and the beneficiaries likely to engage in this scholarship?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I have responded to that question under training. It is scholarship and training. We said we are going to train 24 or 25 CDOs and 220 leaders.

Mr. Cox: Let us get it clear. These persons will be trained. Let me rephrase the question. What is the training? What scholarship? I want to know the institution, the duration of the programme. Is it an academic scholarship or is it just staff development?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: With respect to the training of the CDO it is staff development.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6111 – Administrative: This is the first question and I have a follow-up. Is this the line item that covers the stipends for Toshaos?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: No. It does not cater for that.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, you notice maintenance of building. Is this a building that could be maintained and house officers of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs? The reason I ask is because I notice that many of them are not at a desk at any time but are roaming Lethem.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, line item 6242, Maintenance of Building, he did not call the line item, but he did say something about maintenance. It caters for the maintenance work at the Ministry and it is routine work – replacement of damaged floor boards; to repair dining hall floor; the grilling of the eastern side of the dining hall at the Welfare Department; repair of kitchen

counter top and cupboard, and to paint the administrative quarter; general repairs and servicing of gutters on the building; general repairs to female dormitories and washroom; electrical and plumbing maintenance at the Amerindian residence; at the head office we will be repairing the exterior of the building; refurbishing of office, electrical and plumbing; maintenance at Sophia, the Amerindian Village, we will be dealing with electrical and plumbing; maintenance at the tertiary dormitory, we will be dealing with electrical and plumbing; maintenance at the scholarship student dormitory, we will be repainting the male and the female rooms, painting the library, the dining hall, the kitchen, the housekeeper's quarter; we will repaint the laundry room and washroom; electrical and plumbing maintenance will also be done at that institution. We want to ensure that our facilities are taken care of and they need these minor routine repairs.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Is this heading catering for a National Toshias Council's conference by any chance?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: This line item caters for the hosting of leaders' meetings within Regions 1-10, support for hosting of various expos and, of course, support to district sporting events. For example, we have been customarily supporting the Upper Mazaruni District Council's sports.

Mr. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I asked a specific question, if this amount would cater for a National Toshias Council conference this year. Is the answer yes, or no?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I have answered it. Some people refer to leaders as leaders and some refer to Toshao which mean leader.

Mr. Henry: Therefore, there will be no National Toshias Council conference. I will answer myself.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Our Government introduced in the legislation the National Toshias Council, which is a very important body that represents and embodies all the elected leaders. We have done that. We have customarily held it every year – annually. We were unable to hold it during the COVID-19 period. We have catered, if the leaders become much more responsible and support the Government's COVID-19 effort, we may get back to some form of normalcy and we will be happy to hold the NTC conference.

Mr. Henry: Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: the amount there is \$5.332 million. I also heard that there are a number of CDOs right across the country and many of them have all-terrain vehicles (ATVs); some of them have their marine vehicles – boats and things like that. An ATV is a very expensive equipment to maintain. The question is, why so small amount if you want to have a very good output by the CDOs and other workers?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: it caters for the maintenance of equipment such as air-conditioning units; desk top computers and laptops; radio sets; gas stoves, which are at the dormitory; photocopier; scanner; fax machine; refrigerators and freezers for storing food items for our scholarship students.

Ms. Ferguson: Could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage? I notice in 2021 you had a budgeted sum of \$105 million, then there was a revised sum to more than \$135 million. Could the Hon. Member state the reason for the increase from \$135 million revised, for 2021, now to more than \$136 million in 2022? [**An Hon. Member:** *Inaudible*] Never mind; for every cent the taxpayers have to know what is happening.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: it caters for enhanced visits to 220 Amerindian villages and satellites. Our Government came in the latter part of 2022. We had to be up to speed and ready to provide the level of engagement, delivery of service, *et cetera*. To do that, our staff from various departments are expected to do outreaches, including the Minister. This line item caters for the Project Department and Management Development Officers to do monitoring and implementation of projects. The governance department, we have had many issues as it relates to governance, and the officers have to go out into the fields to deal with the issues as they occur. Field audits, we have continued to do field audit as the legislation requires and ministerial outreaches. Of course, this year, on the call for an examination or a review of the legislation, we will be establishing a committee that will start the work on that matter and, of course, we have other travelling officers like Field Auditor, Engineer, *et cetera*, and this heading will be used for them to do their work. Of course, postage of capital items, again, under this line item we have moneys allocated for the delivery of 71 tractors.

Just to add, not only tractors but there are accompanying trailers and implements which is a very important and significant project that our Government is pursuing with leaders and the village councils and the villagers to enhance their life.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, I heard the Hon. Minister, whilst answering line item 6281, Security Services, spoke in past tense indicating that the service is already being provided and where the service is being provided. Am I to interpret that a contract was already awarded to the tune of this sum? May I ask what procurement measure or procurement practice was used for the awarding of this \$49,008,000?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The question posed was what the security service was, and I provided the name of the security service. I was asked, where is the security being provided? Of course, it is the areas and locations that I have repeated here in the House when I was answering the question earlier. To answer the second part of the question, the contract was awarded in May of last year and it is a roll over for one year.

Mr. Mahipaul: If it is rolled over to May of this year, or if it is a one year, it would be the month before May, which would be April. Questioning the allocation for *Budget 2022* to the tune of \$49,008,000, this contract has not been awarded. That service is not the service that will be utilising this amount. Am I correct to say that?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: With some level of definitiveness, the contract will be readvertised mid-year, this year.

9.05 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: So, the current service that is being utilised is not the service that this \$49 million is budgeted for. This will be after the tendering process and the award. Whichever company is awarded the contract, that company will be facilitated with this budgeted sum based on what it bid for. Am I correct?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is he correct?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I have been advised that this total is part for this year and the new contract – whichever service may be successful after the tendering process or whoever will be awarded.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Cde. Chair.

Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$711,588,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$37,325,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister please disaggregate the sum of \$17,825,000 under project code 1214500, Buildings, and say how much money is for the payment of retention? How much is for the completion of the sanitary facility and where is the sanitary facility located? How much is for the upgrade of facilities at the head office and dormitories? Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say how many dormitories are there, where they are located and what is the amount for each? Thank you, Sir.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, the retention for the construction of the sanitary facility is \$2,272,776. The retention for the rewiring work at the Amerindian residence is \$711,458. With respect to the locations for the construction of the dormitories, they are both at the Amerindian residence, not the dormitories.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I just have a clarification – I was looking at Policy Development and Administration on page 636, with the Details of Capital Expenditure, and there is no allocation under that. Have you gone over now to Community Development and Empowerment? I am sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Could we take Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson as you sort yourself out?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Yes.

Ms. Ferguson: It is the very observation that my Colleague made, Mr. Chairman. We have concluded the Current Expenditure for the Policy Development and Administration, so if we are to go to the Capital Expenditure, there is no sum there – zero.

Mr. Chairman: Is there no sum? I did not check.

Ms. Ferguson: Exactly, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman...?

Mr. Chairman: Just one moment, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: Are we not dealing with Programme 161, Policy Development and Administration?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, what I proposed was Programme 161, Policy Development and Administration. That has, I think, \$1,917,325,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: No, Sir; it is \$37,325,000.

Mr. Chairman: I am sorry. It is \$37 million. There are allocations there. Yes, for Programme 161, Policy development and Administration, Capital Expenditure, there are allocations there.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I proceed?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you may proceed?

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 2406700 – Land and Water Transport: A total of \$9,500,000 is there for the provision of vehicles. May I ask how many vehicles and ATVs are likely to be purchased with this budgeted sum? Where will they be placed for operation and utilised by whom?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, we will be purchasing five ATVs. These will be allocated in this manner: Region 1, two ATVs – one for the CDOs in the Moruca sub-region and one in the Matarkai sub-region. The third one will be allocated to Region 8 in the North Pakaraima. The other two ATVs will be assigned to Region 9 in South Central Rupununi.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chair, through you, on the very project code 2406700, Land and Water Transport, could the Hon. Member state, for this Committee and the people who are listening, what procurement method will be used to purchase these five ATVs?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, we will be doing open tendering which is customary for the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Hastings-Williams, are you okay now?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: [*Inaudible*]

Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$37,325,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$529,547,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, just give me one second because I think the internet went down and the feed went down also. I cannot see if Members online are raising their hands.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I am hearing you loud and clear.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Hastings Williams.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): It would do well if our young Amerindian Toshaos are granted scholarships under this line item. Maybe the Minister could take that recommendation. It was mentioned that 805 students stand to benefit from this line item. My question is, could the Hon. Minister tell the Committee or give us a breakdown of the number of students per region, and the learning institutions they are expected to attend? She can lay it over.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, just to bring some clarity to this line item, it caters for allowances, fees and supplies for hinterland scholarships students. It caters for pocket allowances, uniform allowances, guardian allowances, monthly dormitory allowances, quarterly examination fees, purchase of any textbooks which may not come from the public system, and assistance for School Based Assessments (SBAs) projects at President's College. It caters for support to projects for students going to the Government Technical Institute (GTI), the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), the Carnegie School of Home Economics and, of course, the return transportation for students to their respective villages when they need to go home at the end of the academic year.

With respect to the number by regions: Region 1 – 57; Region 2 – 73; Region 3 – 8; Region 4 – 212; Region 6 – 19; Region 7 – 53; Region 8 – 9; Region 9 – 193; and Region 10 – 43. There might be some shortfalls but in the month of September there is always an increase, so we cater for that too. This is the increase in terms of the student population.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Minister for that answer. Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is an increase from \$10.2 million to \$23.2 million. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say what is responsible for the increase and give us the top five of the contracted employees and their emoluments?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, the increase caters for a number of things. It caters for the staffing detail which we moved from 7 to 15 staff. It also caters for the 7% salary increase. The top five will be: a Senior Social Worker with a salary of \$153,857; a Social Worker at \$125,275; a Welfare Officer at the salary of \$95,702; another Welfare Officer at the same monthly salary; and a Welfare Officer at the salary of \$94,824. That takes care of the top five.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, on the very line item 6116, Contracted Employees, to the Hon. Member, you have just shared with us the top five and their emoluments. Could you say to us whether these positions were advertised? If yes, when was this? When did staff actually commence their employment respectively? Thank you.

9.20 p.m.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am informed that applications and files were used by the personnel department and the applicants were invited for interviews.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Just to add...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you can add when you are going to answer the next question.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow up to the question and the answer given: Could the Hon. Minister state whether that was the appropriate method to use. Why is it that an open advertisement was not made so that at least persons externally could have been given the opportunity to file an application rather than having it done closed doors?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you could add an answer.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am told that all were not new. There were some transfers and movement within the structure. Temporary employees were moved to full contract.

Mr. Chairman: After Ms. Ferguson, I have the Hon. Member, Mr. Cox, and Mr. Mahipaul still has his hand up.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow up: based on the explanation just given by the Hon. Member, she said that persons were moved from one category to another category and reference was made to that of temporary employees. If one looks at the staffing details for last year, it had three persons. There is a reduction of two employees which is now one employee and when one looks at the contracted employees, it had seven. If one is to add the two employees to the seven employees that it had, one cannot get 15 employees. Perhaps, one needs to explain more, Hon. Member. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you give a further explanation with respect to the movement within the staffing establishment?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The prior year had seven employees and it was moved to 15 employees. The total movement there is eight employees. There is eight employees plus the seven employees which is equal to 15 employees. I am told that in looking at the sheet, one senior Social Worker was new and seven employees have moved from temporary into full contract.

Mr. Cox: Line item 6112, Senior Technical: I know previously the Hon. Minister, mentioned that she is engaging in the vast expansion of her Ministry which is commendable. Could the Hon. Minister provide details with the portfolio with emoluments of the one newly added senior technical staff? Could the Hon. Member also state what procedure was used for the hiring of this technical staff? Thank you.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: This line item caters for two staff; a Senior Social Worker – a Welfare and a Student Affairs Officer. Their emoluments, respectively, are \$156,788 and \$94,824. The addition which is one employee is a promotion.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6321, I noticed that there is an allocation of \$20 million for the National Toshaos Council Secretariat. May I ask the Hon. Minister if this sum will also see a National Toshaos Council Conference being held? Additionally, there is an allocated amount of \$4,502,000 for the Kanuku Mountains Regional Group. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to elaborate on the work of this group?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, before you answer, I want to draw Member's attention to reputation and in this case continuous reputation. This issue of annual Toshaos Conference was well answered by the Hon. Minister. Hon. Minister if you want you can repeat but you do not have to.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Chairman, I may have missed that, my apologies.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under this line item 6321, the allocation of \$20 million goes for the administrative expenditure of the National Toshaos Secretariat. The question with respect to this...

Mr. Chairman: Sir, put down the microphone.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The allocation for The Kanuku Mountain Community Representative Group (KMCRG), administratively that group supports the Kanuku Mountain Community Representative Group. We have inherited this allocation from the previous Government and we are seeing that we have approved for it to move on.

Mr. Chairman: [*Inaudible*]

Ms. Ferguson: Through you, Mr. Chairman, perhaps the Hon. Member could help me to locate what I am looking for. The whole issue with the Community Support Officers (CSOs) and how they were reemployed and all manner of things. Could the Hon. Member [*inaudible*] under which line item would we be able to find the more than 2,000 CSOs who have been reemployed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have to find the line item and ask the question within the line item. Hon. Mr. Cox, do you need an extra 30 seconds to find the line item?

Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$529,547,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$1,880,000,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Project Code 1400100 – Amerindian Development Fund to the tune of \$1.8 billion. I observed that the project profile has listed four programmes namely Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme (YEAP), presidential grants, completion of

National Toshaos Council (NTC) Headquarters and Amerindian development projects. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House how much each of these four projects will cost? After, I will ask a follow up question. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: With respect to the roll over projects which includes the construction of the NTC Secretariat, the construction of the designs and consultancy, and the procurement of 71 tractors. The roll over sum for those three projects will cost \$335,771. With respect to the YEAP project that will be \$1,110,000,000. With respect to the Amerindian Development Projects, that will be \$680 million and the \$45 million will go towards land and water transportation which will take you to the sum of \$1,835,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Hastings-Williams, you may have the floor.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I will yield, Cde. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I may not come back to you if you yield.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Under the same project code, Hon. Minister, how much do you plan to spend on presidential grant?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The presidential grant will fall within the Amerindian Development Fund and it will be \$300 million. To remind the Hon. Member, in 2020, we had increased the presidential grant. We increased it in 2021 and approximately \$300 million forms part of that increase.

Mr. Cox: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member say which institution would be responsible for training of these additional CSOs?

Mr. Chairman: Which project code?

Hon. Members: What is the project code?

Mr. Chairman: I have a very loud echo.

Mr. Cox: It is Amerindian Development Fund, project code 1400100.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Cox: I am asking in relation to the training of the CSOs. Which institution would be responsible for their training and, at the end of training, would these persons be receiving a recognised certificate of competence from the institution?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Since we took over the leadership of this country, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs was re-established, to date, we have trained a number of CSOs and they have been awarded with certificates of competency in the field of...

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you may have to talk directly into the microphone, many persons cannot hear you because of the noise.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to training in tourism and hospitality our Ministry would be collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. With respect to the business plan, development, good manufacturing practices and quality management, the training in all-terrain vehicles (ATV), and small engine repairs, we will tender out for those.

9.35 p.m.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Same project code, 1400100. I am looking at the budget and, at a glance, it states that there is \$60 million to train 650 CSOs to serve in 220 communities. I heard the Minister say that she is going to collaborate with other ministries to do the training for the CSOs. Could the Minister lay over to this House, exactly what area of training will be for the CSOs? I know that the Minister has also committed to add 500 CSOs. Could you be kind enough, Minister, to lay over to this House, how many of the 2,500 CSOs will be trained during this year and in what area of training? You did mention like small engine repairs. Could you please lay that over to the House? Thank you.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I will lay it over, but I have it before me. In training in tourism, 31 villages; for business plan development, including good manufacturing practices and other quality management principles, we will be training from 100 villages; for the training in ATVs and small engine repairs, we will be training from 75 villages; training in garment construction, from 65 villages. In total, we will be training 650 CSOs.

Ms. Ferguson: Through the Chair, under the same project code, 1400100, Amerindian Development Fund, the Hon. Member listed how many CSOs are expected to be trained across the regions. Could the Hon. Member state whether the list before her has the various villages from which the beneficiaries are expected to come from? Could you also provide that kind of information to us, because we have to go into the villages and let the people know that so much will be trained from the particular area? Thank you very much.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: For training in tourism and hospitality, 100 CSOs; for Region 1, we will train four from Waramuri Mission, four from Warapoka, three from Kumaka, Santa Rosa islands, three from Red Hill, Region 1, three from...

Ms. Ferguson: Lay it over, Hon. Member. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I prefer that we share this information with the House for the benefit of all the Members.

In Mashabo, Region 2, three; Mainstay, Region 2, three; Capoey, three; Santa Mission, three; St. Cuthbert's Mission, three; Moraikobai, four; Orealla, three; Paruima, three; Phillipai, three; Karrau, three; Monkey Mountain, four; Kopinang, four; Chenapou, four; Fair View, four; Konashen, three; Rewa, three; Surama, three; Aishalton, three; Shulinab, three; Nappi, three; Moco Moco, three; Kumu Village, three; Karasabai, three; St. Ignatius, three; Great Falls, three; River's View in Region 10, three; and Rockstone, three.

Mr. Chairman, I am reading it out because I want to explain that there is a fair spread across the communities and villages that are engaged in tourism at the moment. That goes for all the other areas with respect to training in business planning, good manufacturing practices and quality management principles.

For Region 1: Four Miles, two; Arukamai, two; Assakata, two; Arakaka, two; Barabina Hill, two; Baramita, two; Barima/Koriabo, two; Bumbury Hill, two; Canal Bank, two; Eclipse Falls, two; Kamwatta, two; Karaburi, two; Kariako, two; Kobarimo Creek, two; Kokerite, two; Kwebanna, two; Manawarin, two; Red Hill, two; Santa Cruz, two; Sebai, two; Waikrebi, two; Waramuri, two; Warapoka, two; White Water, two; and Yarakita, two. For Region 2: Akawini, two; Bethany, two; Kabakaburi, two; St. Monica Karawab, two; Mashabo; two, Saint Denny's Mission/Tapakuma,

two; Saint Monica Mission, two; and Warapoka, two. For Region 3: Santa Mission, two; Saxakalli, two; and Aratak River, two. For Region 4: St. Cuthbert's Mission, two; and Laluni River, two. For Region 5: there is Moraikobai, two. There is Orealla in Region 6: two; Siparuta Creek, two. Region 7: Agatash, two; Arau, two; Batavia, two; Chinoweng, two; Isseneru, two; Jawalla, two; Kaburi, 72 Miles, two; Karauia Creek, two; Phillipai, two; Kwebanna, two; Tasserene, two; Kangaruma, two; Waramadong, two; Whitewater, two; and Kartabu, two. For Region 8: Campbelltown, two; Chenapou, two; Cheong Mouth, two; Fair View, two; Itabac, two; Kaibarupai, two; Kamana, two; Kanapang, two; Kato, two; Kopinang, two; Kurukabaru, two; Micobie, two; Monkey Mountain, two; Princeville, two; Taruka, two; Tusseneng, two; and Waipa, two. For Region 9: Achiwuib, two; Apoteri, two; Awaruwaunau, two; Crash Water, two; Karaudanawa, two; Katoka, two; Katoonarib, two; Kwatamang, two; Maruranau, two; Massara, two; Meriwau, two; Nappi, two; Pai Pang, two; Parikwaranau, two; Rukumuta, two; Rupertee, two; Sawariwau, two; Shea, two; Toka, two; Yakarinta, two, and Yupukari, two. Region 10: Great Falls, two; Kuru Kururu, two; Kimbia River, two; River's View, two; Rockstone, two; and Wiruni, two.

For training in ATV outboard small engine repairs, for Region 1: Hobodia, two; Hotoquai, two; Imbotero River, two; Kamwatta, two; Karaburi, two; Kariako, two; Kobarimo, two; Kokerite, two; Kwebanna, two; Manawarin, Pakera, two; Red Hill, two; Santa Cruz, two; Sebai, two; Three Brothers, two; Tobago and Wauna Hill Amer Village, two; Waikrebi, two; Warapoka, two; and Lower Kaituma, two. For Region 2: Kabakaburi, two; St. Monica Karawab, two; St. Monica Mission, two; Mashabo, two. For Region 3: Karia Karia, two. Moraikobai in Region 5, two. Siparuta Creek in Region 6, two; Cashew Island in Region 6, two. For Region 7 there are Isseneru, two; Jawalla, two; Kako, two; Kurutuku, two; Phillipai, two; Kwebanna, two; Tasserene, two; and Kangaruma, two. Region 8, Cheong Mouth, two; Fair View, two; Itabac, two; Kaibarupai, two; Kamana, two; Kanapang, two; Karisparu, two; Kato, two; Kopinang, two; Kurukabaru, two; Micobie, two; Monkey Mountain, two; Paramakatoi, two; Bamboo Creek, two; Mountain Foot, two; Princeville, two; Taruka, two; Tusseneng, two; Waipa, two; Maikwak, two; Sand Hills, Two; Red Creek, two; Penack, two; Moruwa, two; Kakshibai, two; Taushida, two; Tiger Pond, two; Tipuru, two; Pipand, two; and Yurong Pero, two. For Region 10, Kuru Kururu, two; Kimbia, two; Malali, two; Muritaro, two; Rivers View, two; Rockstone, two; Sand Hills, two; Wikki/Kalkuni, two; and Wiruni, two.

With respect to garment construction, for Region 1, we will train three per village. The villages are Arukamai, three; Smith Creek, three; Kabrora, three; Hotoquai, three; Orinduik, three; Waikrebi, three; Haimakabra, three; Warapoka, three; Kamwatta, three; White Water Creek, three; and Kwebanna, three. Region 2, Wakapau, three; Akawini, three; Saxakalli in Region 3, three. Moraikobai in Region 5, three. There is Cashew Island, three, in Region 6. In Region 7, Kaikan, three; Karau, three; Batavia, three; Paruima, three; Kwebanna, three; Arrau, three; Phillipai, three; Chinoweng, three; Tasserene, three; Amichukpai, three; Kurutuku, three. With respect to Region 8, Monkey Mountain, three; Bamboo Creek, three; Kato, three; Karisparu, three; Cheong Mouth, three; Tusseneng, three; Taruka, three; Nashville Mountain Foot, three; Waipa, three; El Paso, three; Kopinang, three; Itabac, three; Kaibarupai, three; Chenapou, three; Fair View, three; Kamana, three; Kanapang, three; and Paramakatoi, three. In Region 9, Rukumuta, three; Bashaidrun, three; Parikwaranau, three; St. Ignatius, three; Konashen, three; Parabara, three; Taushida, three; Massara, three; Yurong Paru, three; Katoka, three; Rewa, three; Katoonarib, three; Wowetta, three; Karasabai, three; and Sand Creek, three. For Region 10, Malali, three; Sand Hill City, three; Wikki/Kalkuni, three; Wiruni, three; and Muritaro, three.

Mr. Chairman, those are the areas which our Government will provide access and opportunity to training for skills that are necessary for the villages. It is building the capacity of young Amerindian youths, both male and female and, of course, they will be provided with certification.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you, the Hon. Member referred to twos and threes, but perhaps the Hon. Member could assist us with the criteria or criterion that was or were used to ensure that these twos and threes were... How were they selected?

Mr. Chairman: Is it the word 'were' or 'are'?

Ms. Ferguson: How were they selected, the twos and the threes?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, how were the twos and threes selected?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The CSOs will come from the villages and they will be selected by the Village Council.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. Under the same line item, in terms of the population density of these Indigenous People's communities, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say if the

selection of two across the board for some of the communities and three across the board for some of the communities are adequate in terms of the number of persons living in these respective communities?

9.50 p.m.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The selection, of course, will be done internally. We are training the CSOs not only affording them the opportunity to be trained, but they will also have the skill that they can be trainers or they can also become small entrepreneurs in the field of training. For example, in garment construction, we will expect that the women sewing group, along with the CSOs, will be able to produce in the very small and remote communities school uniform so that they can have the \$5,000 multiplied by the number of students in that community to circulate in the community. It will not only be building capacity but providing skills that obviously can become very useful for those who want to venture out in entrepreneurship too.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, did that answer your question?

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I will try to restructure with your permission because I do not think the question was answered. When you look at the...

Mr. Chairman: Well, as you restructure, let me give the floor to the Hon. Member, Ms. Annette Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Hon. Member, project code 1400100 – Amerindian Development Fund, could the Hon. Member tell this House, where these young persons will be trained and for how long these trainings are expected to be? You called the garment factory training and ATV mechanic training amongst every other thing. For each training, could you say where these trainings will be held?

Secondly, how long each training is expected for? Thirdly, what are the age of those who are expected to be trained? Thank you very much.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: With respect to training in tourism and hospitality, they will be trained in the city because we will collaborate with our sister Ministry on this. In fact, I am told that they

have been talking about it already among the different officers They will be trained here. With respect to the business plan development, food safety prerequisite and good manufacturing practices, of course, we have the capacity to train them here too. With respect to the ATV training, it is likewise. With respect to the period of training, I am told that the training in ATVs will take six weeks, for garment construction it will be six weeks and for the others, two weeks.

Ms. Ferguson: The Hon. Member did not answer the last part of my question and that has to do with the ages of those who will be trained.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Did you say ages?

Ms. Ferguson: Would it be 18 years and over or whatever it is?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I missed that third part of the question but the CSOs are between the ages of 18 and 40.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, have you restructured?

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, Sir. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, in terms of these Indigenous communities, not all the communities have the same population. I heard the Hon. Minister having uniform numbers with two across the board for some regions, and three across the board for some regions. I am asking the Hon. Minister if she believes it is unfair to communities that are more populated than others, to only be given the same amount of persons for these training sessions or training programmes.

For example, in Region 3, I heard her speak of Santa Aratak. Santa Aratak is a fairly densely populated Amerindian community or Indigenous community as opposed to some others that have the same number. Would the Hon. Minister consider it unfair to these communities that are more densely populated than others to have the same number of persons going through the training programme?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Our numbers are in keeping with affordability and, two, the level of activity that the skill will be required for. Just like to inform you that our Ministry, if you have

been following what has taken place, we have already trained about 600 CSOs from various areas, and these will be the skills necessary to support the village development at the moment. I would want to remind the Hon. Member that the Hon. Member on your side, Ms. Dawn Hastings, in her Budget speech has congratulated us for restarting this programme and the usefulness of it.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Under the same project code 1400100, could the Hon. Minister say to this House if the demarcation and titling of the 20 communities fall under this project and if so, how much?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: No. It does not fall under this project code.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I will now move to project code 2406700 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister say to this House, how many ATVs, how many boats and how many engines does the Ministry intend to purchase? Which communities or organisations stand to benefit from this?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: We will be procuring nine ATVs. The ATVs will be assigned to: Kwebanna in Region 7, one; Arau is badly in need of one ATV; Kamana in Region 8; Sand Hills in Region 8; Taushida in Region 9; Paipang in Region 9, Bashaidrun in Region 9, Tiperu in Region 9 and one in Region 10, Great Falls.

With respect to the outboard engines, we will provide to Three Brothers in Region 1 an outboard engine; Waikrebi, one; Kangaruma in Region 7, one; Tasserine in Region 7, one; Kurutuku in Region 7; Karatabo in Region 7; Itabac in Region 8; Batavia in Region 7; Kimbia in Region 10 and Sand Hills in Region 10.

For the boats, we will provide Three Brothers, one; Hymacabra, one; Karatabo in Region 7, a boat; Kangaruma in Region 7, a boat; Tasserine in Region 7; Kurutuku in Region 7; and Wailong in Region 7. In Region 8: Itabac, one; in Region 7 Batavia, one; In Region 10 Kimbia and Sand Hills, one each.

Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$1,880,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the Hon. Minister and her staff for taking us through the Estimates for her agency. Hon. Members, this concludes our business for today. Hon. Prime Minister, proceed.

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do now adjourn to 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 8th February, 2022.”

[Prime Minister]

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of the Assembly to 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 8th February, 2022.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly now stands adjourned to 10.00 a.m., Tuesday 8th February, 2022.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.02. p.m.