



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 (2020-2023) 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*

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59<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Monday, 30<sup>TH</sup> January, 2023

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**PARLIAMENT OFFICE  
HANSARD DIVISION**

*The Assembly convened at 11.44 a.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)**

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\*Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.,  
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Prime Minister's Office,  
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Office of the President,  
New Garden Street,  
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*[Absent – on leave]*

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+ Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, M.P.,  
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Carmichael Street,  
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\* **Non-Elected Speaker**

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Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance.  
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*Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance  
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*Minister of Public Works,  
Ministry of Public Works,  
Wight's Lane,  
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+ Hon. Dr. Frank C. S. Anthony, M.P.,  
*Minister of Health,  
Ministry of Health,  
Brickdam,  
Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara),  
Minister of Education,  
Ministry of Education,  
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*[Virtual Participation]*

+ \*Hon. Brindley H.R. Benn, M.P.,  
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Ministry of Home Affairs,  
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+ **Cabinet Member**

\* **Non-Elected Minister**

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*Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),*  
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*Ministry of Agriculture,*  
*Regent and Vlissengen Road,*  
*Bourda, Georgetown.*

*[Virtual Participation]*

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*Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,*  
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*Ministry of Labour,*  
*Brickdam,*  
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*Minister of Natural Resources,*  
*Ministry of Natural Resources,*  
*Lot 96 Duke Street,*  
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*[Virtual Participation]*

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*Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce,*  
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+ **Cabinet Member**

\* **Non-Elected Minister**

[Virtual Participation]

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Minister of Human Services and Social Security,  
Ministry of Human Services and Social Security,  
Lot 357 East and Lamaha Streets  
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+ Hon. Charles S. Ramson, M.P.,  
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports,  
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,  
Main Street,  
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Sonia Savitri Parag, M.P.,  
Minister of the Public Service,  
Ministry of the Public Service,  
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Hon. Deodat Indar, M.P.,  
Minister within the Ministry of Public Works,  
Ministry of Public Works,  
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Hon. Anand Persaud, M.P.,  
Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,  
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,  
Fort Street,  
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Georgetown.

Hon. Warren Kwame E. McCoy, M.P.,  
Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister,  
Office of the Prime Minister,  
c/o Colgrain House,  
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+ **Cabinet Member**

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Hon. Mr. Alister S. Charlie, M.P.,  
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148 Lethem,  
Central Rupununi,  
c/o Freedom House,  
41 Robb Street,  
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Hon. Dr. Vishwa D.B. Mahadeo, M.P.,  
*Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),  
Lot 4 Public Road,  
No. 66 Village,  
Corentyne,  
Berbice.*

*[Virtual Participation]*

Hon. Mr. Sanjeev J. Datadin, M.P.,  
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East Bank Demerara.*

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Mainstay Lake, Essequibo Coast,  
c/o Freedom House,  
41 Robb Street,  
Georgetown.*

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South Cummingsburg,  
c/o Freedom House,  
41 Robb Street,  
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\* Hon. Ms. Sarah Browne, M.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,  
Lot 251-252 Thomas & Quamina Streets,  
South Cummingsburg,  
Georgetown.

[Absent – on leave]

\* Hon. Mr. Vikash Ramkissoon, M.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Regent and Vlissengen Road,  
Bourda, Georgetown.

[Absent – on leave]

Hon. Ms. Bhagmattie Veerasammy, M.P.,  
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Industry,  
East Coast Demerara.

## **MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION (32)**

### **(i) A Partnership For National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) (31)**

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Leader of the Opposition

[Virtual Participation]

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\* Non-Elected Minister

Hon. Ms. Catherine A. Hughes, M.P.,  
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*Lot 590 Good Hope,  
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*Lot 7 Freeman Street,  
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Hon. Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams, M.P.,  
*Lot 933 Block 1,  
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*[Virtual Participation]*



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Hon. Ms. Annette N. Ferguson, M.P.,  
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[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Ms. Juretha V. Fernandes, M.P.,  
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Lamaha Gardens,  
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[Virtual Participation]

Hon. Mr. Ronald Cox, M.P.,  
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Mabaruma Compound.

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(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),  
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Wismar, Linden.

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*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),*  
*Lot 17 Block 1, Section F,*  
*Plantation Belfield,*  
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Hon. Ms. Beverley Alert, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)*  
*Lot 169-170 Stanleytown,*  
*West Bank Demerara.*  
*c/o Lot 13 A, New Providence,*  
*East Bank Demerara.*

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*(Region No. 8 –Potaro/Siparuni)*  
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*(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),*  
*Lot 90, Section C,*  
*Wismar, Linden.*

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

Hon. Mr. Lenox R. O’Dell Shuman, M.P.,  
*Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly,*  
*St. Cuthbert’s Mission,*  
*Soesdyke Linden Highway.*

## **Officers (2)**

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, A.A.,  
*Clerk of the National Assembly,*  
*Parliament Office,*  
*Public Buildings,*  
*Brickdam,*  
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Ms. Hermina Gilgeours,  
*Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly,*  
*Parliament Office,*  
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Monday, 30<sup>TH</sup> January, 2023

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

### Visit by renowned Guyanese and International Actress, Letitia Wright

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, this morning we are honoured to have with us a young lady who has made waves throughout the world, a Guyanese, Ms. Letitia Wade. We thank her for the visit to the National Assembly. I have asked Ms. Wade to join us in the Assembly and with your indulgence, I am asking her to say a few words at this moment to the National Assembly. Ms. Wade.

### Address by Ms. Wright to the National Assembly

**Actress [Ms. Letitia Wright]:** Hello, good morning. It was not expected of me to speak today. I just wanted to visit the different sectors to know the ways in which I could use my platform for good and as an encouragement, especially for the young people of Guyana. I am the daughter of the soil of Guyana and so my return means a lot to me. I have not been home for about 20 years now. I left the country when I was just 8 years old, and I was fortunate to have the opportunity, in the United Kingdom (UK), to expand on the talent of acting that God gave to me and to travel the world. So, it means a lot to come back home.

I would just like to thank everyone who has invited me to return home. I just want to encourage you all as...I do not know the ins and outs of politics. I care more about children and the betterment of young people. That is kind of where my ministry is. As you all come together to make decisions for the country, I encourage you from both sides and both parties...I encourage peace, I encourage love. I am of peace, I am of love, and I am just proud of you and everybody who is working together for the betterment and the empowerment of our country. God bless you all as you go forth and make our country a better place from both sides. I honour you all. Thank you so much. *[Applause]*

### Welcoming remarks

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Ms. Wade. Hon. Prime Minister, I see you would like to say a few words, for the record, to the honourable young lady, our honoured visitor.

**Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of all the Members of Parliament (MPs) and the staff of the House of Assembly, we welcome you with open arms to Guyana and to this House of Assembly. We feel honoured that you were able to not only spend time with us but to address us this morning, and we look forward to you enjoying the remainder of your stay in

Guyana. Be assured that we will continue to follow you in your endeavours in the future. Thank you for spending time with us.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Member, Ms. Catherine Hughes.

**Ms. Hughes:** Welcome and it is wonderful to have you here. I am sure you know that throughout the world, and especially in Guyana, the impact of your movies really brought a lot of self-esteem and worth to many young people who very rarely saw dark skinned supermodels. I say to you, the genius of the movies and the encouragement that you have given to all young people, we thank you for that. We are so proud that you come from us, and we are always here to support you. Thank you for coming and meeting with them. I know you are going to be meeting with some young persons and so you are going to be able to impact them directly and show them all that they can achieve because they come from this beautiful country. Thank you very much. God bless you always.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member, Ms. Hughes. Hon. Member, Deputy Speaker.

**Deputy Speaker [Mr. Shuman]:** I just want to extend, formally and for the record, a very heartfelt appreciation for you coming to Guyana and being just a fantastic role model for so many, not only Guyana but across the world. I think what you represent to many young people, who have come from similar circumstances, is hope. I trust that you will enjoy your stay here and we look forward to seeing you continue your good work. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. On behalf of the Clerk and the staff of the National Assembly, we also extend our warm welcome to you. Hon. Members, I just had one observation for Ms. Wright. I said to her that how she handled the science in that movie was remarkable. Forty-odd years ago, two voyager aircraft went off from Jupiter in opposite directions. They are currently thirteen and a half billion miles away from us and every 38 minutes they communicate with Earth after all this time. We are finding out so many things. A lot of the science she spoke about, it was not mumbo jumbo. It was the stuff that Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking and Neil DeGrasse Tyson spoke about as the things that control our universe right now. I was really impressed when I saw the movie and I am so pleased that you are with us and proud that you are from us. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, we will take a short suspension. We will be back shortly.

*Sitting suspended at 11.53 a.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 12.23 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, please be seated. Hon. Members, we are still at Announcements by the Speaker, and I have a few announcements still.

### **Apology for incorrect name**

First, my apologies to the young lady for getting the 'Wright' name wrong.

### **Comments made about Minister Manickchand during Budget Debate**

There were two comments made during the debate with respect to the Hon. Priya Manickchand. The Hon. Member, Ms. Juretha Fernandes, had promised to produce a tape to the House and I think she had given last Friday as the (*inaudible*), a tape. Also, the Hon. Member, Ms. Hughes, had made a statement that Minister Manickchand had hired her relation at the Guyana Learning Channel. I have asked the Hon. Member, Ms. Hughes, to produce the evidence of that. I am waiting on that. If the evidence cannot be produced, then we need to apologise to Ms. Manickchand. Ms. Hughes?

**Ms. Hughes:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am just kind of picking up the gist of the conversation. I was not here for the start of it. Certainly, I did want to respond to your request. If the information is inaccurate, I absolutely apologise. I would like to note that, in my presentation, I never gave a name. I have been told that there are posts online where a person has been identified. I definitely did not give a name.

*12.25 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** You did not, and I asked you to provide...

**Ms. Hughes:** Therefore, as I said, if it is inaccurate, I absolutely apologise.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Hughes:** I do want to say, though, that similarly, there are comments...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, we are at Announcements by the Speaker, and I asked...

**Ms. Hughes:** I am not finished with the apology, Sir. I just want to say that there have been statements made about me...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, we are finished with the apology. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Hughes:** ...and the request for information has not been asked.

*[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member...

**Ms. Hughes:** So, I want that to be noted.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, please.

**Ms. Hughes:** Thank you.

### **Virtual participation by Members of Parliament**

**Mr. Speaker:** Finally, a number of our Members are not well. I do not want to attribute it to something here. The Minister of Health could inform us of what has been happening, generally, with the same kind of symptoms. These Members are online. I know there is going to be the consideration of the estimates and a lot of voting. I will crave your indulgence so that we could ensure, if there is the need for persons to register their vote formally, you are patient with those online.

### **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

The following Report was laid:

- (1) Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments which addresses matters relating to the nomination and appointment of Members to the Ethnic Relations Commission.

*[Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance]*

### **ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there are three questions on today's Order Paper. These questions are for oral replies and are in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. Jermaine Figueira. Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, please ask your first question.

#### **1. Pending Applications for Death, Marriage, and Birth Certificates**

**Mr. Figueira:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me extend our thanks to you and Minister Walrond for allowing our Guyanese superstar to grace us with her presence. My question is for the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs.

Could the Minister inform this House of the number of pending applications at the General Register Office (GRO) for death certificates for the years 2018, 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup>

October, 2022, as well as for marriage certificates and birth certificates for the said years? Thank you.

**Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Benn]:** I wish to thank the honourable gentleman for his question. The answer is that as at 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2022, there were no pending applications for which registrations have been received by the GRO for 2018, 2021 or for 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2022.

**Mr. Figueira:** A follow-up. Did your response cater for all three of the certificates that I enquired about – death certificates, marriage certificates and birth certificates – and is it for those years that I posed?

**Mr. Benn:** The answer is yes.

**Mr. Figueira:** Thank you.

## 2. Waiting Time for Death, Marriage, and Birth Certificates

**Mr. Figueira:** Minister, could you inform this House what was the waiting time, after an application was received by the Guyana Registrar Office, for death certificates, marriage certificates and birth certificates for the very said years?

**Mr. Benn:** The GRO is tasked with the responsibility of collecting and storing birth, death and marriage registrations for Guyanese, and the production and distribution of certificates as requested currently. It uses different methods to facilitate the request for certificates. The wait time for the applicant to receive these certificates will depend on the method used to deal with these documents.

Firstly, persons applying for these documents through the post office can expect the return of these documents within six to eight weeks. Persons applying by visiting the office can have the certificate within 24 hours to seven working days, based on the information provided and that which is available. If there is a variance between the information supplied and that which is in the records, an amendment is needed.

Thirdly, persons applying online may receive their certificates between 48 hours and 14 days, based on their location in Guyana, and if they request the certificates to be posted or if they desire a walk-in/pick up for the certificates.

## 3. Passport Applications

**Mr. Figueira:** Could the Minister inform this House of the number of pending passport applications for the years 2020, 2021 and as at October, 2022 for each of the ten regions in Guyana?

**Mr. Benn:** The answer, in a fairly general way, is for the year 2020, there were eight pending applications. For 2021, there were 16. For 2022, there were 44.

**Mr. Figueira:** Could the Minister inform this House if all of those pending applications were satisfied? Did those applicants receive those requests?

**Mr. Benn:** Mr. Chairman, I am not sure I understand the question. Those are pending applications. Pending applications could mean that the persons have not uplifted the passports, or they are deceased or whatever.

**Mr. Figueira:** Could the Minister inform this House what was the waiting time to receive a passport, after an application was received from the central intelligence office of Guyana, for the years 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022?

**Mr. Benn:** There is no central intelligence office that I am aware of.

**Mr. Figueira:** It is immigration, sorry.

**Mr. Benn:** Generally, the waiting period for a passport application in Georgetown, Region 4, from 2018 to 2022 was five working days. The waiting time from May, 2022 to October, 2022, was 40 working days. That is simply because of the transition to a new method of producing the passport and the large number of requests we have had recently had in relation to obtaining passports because many of the banks and other institutions require a second method of identification. If you have an identification card (ID), you should have a passport or a driver's licence.

**Mr. Figueira:** Could the Minister further inform this House what is presently the waiting time to receive a passport after application is received from the suboffices in Guyana?

**Mr. Benn:** The waiting time for the year 2018 to date to receive a passport, after an application is made at the suboffices providing these services, is seven days.

## PUBLIC BUSINESS

### GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

#### MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly and that, when

the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly, an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2023 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on January 16, 2023, as summarised in the attached Schedule 1;

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

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

AND WHEREAS the Minister with Responsibility for Finance recommends lump sum subventions for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2023 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 2023, of a total sum of seven hundred and twenty-one billion, five hundred and twenty-nine million, and seven hundred and thirty-four thousand dollars (\$721,529,734,000), excluding sixty billion, three hundred and fifty-one

million, two hundred and twenty-nine thousand dollars (\$60,351,229,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in Schedule 1, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and make further provision in respect of finance:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly approves the recommended lumpsum subvention for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2023 as stated in Schedule 2, amounting to a total sum of thirteen billion, eight hundred and six million, five hundred and seventy-seven thousand dollars (\$13,806,577,000) 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 2023.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the sum of \$208,944,156,942, equivalent to US\$1,002,130,249, to be withdrawn from the Natural Resource Fund for the financial year 2023 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 now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the estimates of expenditure for the financial year 2023. We are just about an hour and fifteen minutes behind the time we started last year.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we can turn to pages 90 and 91, current expenditure, and I will allow the staff of the Parliament Office to join the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance.

**Agency: 07 Parliament Office**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,935,488,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I see approximately a \$40 million increase for this year. Under Other Recurrent Charges – which is at Appendix T on page 667 that shows the expenditures and where they are going – there is a \$35 million increase. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether this increase of \$35 million is to get the various other commissions like the



Economic Service Commission and the Oversight and Public Security Commission to operationalise? Is that what this \$35 million is going towards?

**Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]:** Could the Hon. Member say which head he is on?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of zeros all around the place in relation to that, but what we do have, as you would appreciate, is page 667. The line item there is Recurrent Expenditure and Other Recurrent Charges, if you notice it, Cde. Teixeira.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just for information of those Members, there are a lot of zeros because the Parliament Office gets a lump sum, and you are absolutely correct. What is an indicative allocation is listed in that appendix.

12.40 p.m.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That is right. That is why we refer to that page, to find out whether that extra sum is going towards... It is Appendix T, page 667 of Volume 1.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Hon. Member is correct. The Appendix the Hon. Member is citing is accurate.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is because the line items that I am talking about here, at pages 90 and 91, are at zero. What you do is that you go back... Please, this has to be explained.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Other Recurrent Charges on Appendix T refers to all the other charges, which includes a number of the activities of the Parliament, such as the rental of this building, such as meals, plus allowances, *et cetera*, plus the Youth Parliament. There are a number of things that would be under this total. The more than \$30 million that you are quoting would come from, in some cases, increases in prices and/or increases in activities by the Parliament. If you are more specific, I could help in answering that.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I would like to know then, where is the expenditure coming from to get these other commissions and committees operationalised after two and a half years?

**Ms. Teixeira:** The reason for the committees not functioning has nothing to do with finances. It has to do with the chairmen of the committees, some of whom are on your side, calling the meetings. There is no financial impediment, as far as I know, to the functioning of the committees.

In addition to that, if we look at the areas that the Hon. Member is referring to, the largest area is Rental and Maintenance of Buildings, where a large increase goes, from

\$82.9 million to \$130 million. This is the big area of increase as well as Maintenance of Infrastructure. These are the two big heads for which there have been increases. If you look at Appendix T, Rental and Maintenance... Transport, actually, has dropped; Utility Charges has gone up slightly; Other Charges has gone down. The main area for increases on the other recurrent charges has to do with the rental of buildings, which goes up by almost \$40 million. Under that line item with Rental and Maintenance of Buildings, there is Maintenance of Buildings. Let me just deal with that one first.

Under Rental and Maintenance of Building, there is: repairing of the outer walls of the Public Buildings, repairs and repainting of the western stairway, tiling, and repainting of the police barrack room and the outpost, installation of lighting system on the Public Buildings, repairing of the Chief Administrative Officer's (CAO's) office and the passageway, repainting the Members of Parliament lounge, removing carpets—this is maintenance, not capital. They are not doing new infrastructure, as far as I understand—cleaning and polishing tiles. It goes on to a number of issues, all to do with the Parliament Building, *et cetera*. That is for Maintenance of Buildings.

Under line item 6241, which is Rental of Buildings, there is: the rental of official residences for five ministers, the rental of the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC), on average, 53 sittings per annum at \$26 million. I think those two heads alone account for what you are seeing as a \$34 million increase.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** [*Inaudible*] Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I do not know. Are you asking that? You have to ask me that.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am saying that under rental, or whatever else is the grounds... Because for these, you started indicating what it is the rentals are for. I want to know if there has indeed been any increase for the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, I am appalled by the Hon. Member, who has been a Member of this House for so long, being uncertain as to where to ask these questions when the Member should know where the Leader of the Opposition's money is. But I will answer it, and I hope I can help the Hon. Member, because I know he needs help. The Hon. Member needs a lot of help.

Let us go to line item 6284; look at the parliament documents as well as Appendix T. When you look at page

90 to 91 for the Parliament Office, as the budget document tells you, and page 493 for capital, that then is summarised in Appendix T, page 667. But the breakdown of the sub-heads and heads can be found on pages 90 to 91 of Volume 1. I will direct the Hon. Member to look at line item 6284, which has Other. Under line item 6284, Other...

Please remember, Mr. Ramjattan, that the constitutional bodies receive a lumpsum and then they allocate it based on the heads and sub-heads that are required by budgeting. The Leader of the Opposition is... Sorry. Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, which I think you will see on page 667, Subsidies and Contributions to Local and International Organisation comes up to \$42,411,000. That includes two line items: 6321, which is the local organisations, and 6322 to international organisations. This will be the Leader of the Opposition at \$28,211,000, and international organisations, \$14,200,000. All right, \$28,211,000. That is current and not capital. When we come to capital, you will see that there is an allocation there for the Leader of the Opposition as well.

*Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,935,488,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

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

**Ms. Lawrence:** Could the Hon. Minister give us the breakdown in terms of the allocation on this project code, which is project code 400100? In the legend, it states that it is for “upgrading of facilities” and “purchase of furniture and equipment.” Could you give us the cost for each of the projects?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, Ms. Lawrence. The total is \$50 million for capital, and it is broken down in the following ways: procurement of four electrical gates and walkthrough metal detectors – \$11 million, procurement of security cameras – \$11 million, construction of two guard huts – \$7 million, procurement of seats for the public gallery of the Parliament Chamber – \$3 million, procurement of one 16-seater bus – \$9,357,000, procurement of furniture and equipment – \$3,643,000, and the office of the Leader of the Opposition – \$5 million.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** [*Inaudible*] Minister is for the Stabroek office, not this building.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, the Parliament Office; the Public Buildings.

**Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]:** Just for clarity, has the Hon. Minister indicated \$7 million for two guard huts?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** But we have to be careful, they are just guard huts. There are security officers who will have electricals, operate the gates and so forth.

*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 National Assembly. I now invite the Auditor General and his staff to join the Hon. Minister to take us through the Audit Office of Guyana.

### Agency: 08 Audit Office of Guyana

#### Current Expenditure

#### Programme: 081 – Audit Office – \$1,117,892,000

**Ms. Lawrence:** Minister, I turn to Appendix T on page 668. I am looking at Employment Cost. I know the revised figure for 2022 is some \$819,562,000, as opposed to the 2023 amount budgeted of \$ 901,117,000. I am asking what the additional categories of employees would be, I assume, that would be added to the Audit Office of Guyana. And could we know whether there is a special department that is looking at oil and gas, and what are the different portfolios therein? Thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you, Ms. Lawrence. There are two reasons for the increase. You will see in the wage items that are listed... One is the 8% increase across the board. At the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), we approved the appointment of a number of persons to be Audit Managers. Their salary increases are now catered for in the budget.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Minister, could you kindly indicate whether the Audit Office of Guyana has, within its domain, a department that deals specifically with oil and gas? If it does, what are the designations of the top five persons?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Sorry. Could you repeat? I was trying to get an answer for you for the other question. Could you repeat, please?

*12.55 p.m.*

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mdm. Minister, I am asking whether the Audit department has an oil and gas section? If it does, what are the designations of the top five persons?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, there is a section that is part of the Performance Audit section. It is new and it has eight persons working in it. I will ask the Auditor General to provide me with the top five positions, if he has them. Sorry, according to the Auditor General, it is now being set up. It has not been set up as yet, but they made provisions for it.

*Programme: 081 – Audit Office of Guyana – \$1,117,892,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Capital Expenditure**

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

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I must ask for your excuse to sit on the rail of this seat, to allow me to get up quickly. My question to the Hon. Minister is, what does the \$25 million entail? Is it for the Head Office or is it for the offices in the regions? We are talking about furniture and equipment.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The \$25 million focuses a lot on furniture, equipment, software, *et cetera*. It is all focused on the Head Office of the Auditor General and not at the outlying offices.

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

#### **Agency: 09 Public and Police Service Commissions**

##### **Current Expenditure**

##### **Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions - \$172,387,000**

*Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions – \$172,387,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

##### **Capital Expenditure**

##### **Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions - \$2,500,000**

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

#### **Agency: 10 Teaching Service Commission**

##### **Current Expenditure**

##### **Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$140,649,000**

*Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$140,649,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

##### **Capital Expenditure**

##### **Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$7,000,000**

*Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$7,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Agency: 11 Guyana Elections Commission**

##### **Current Expenditure**

##### **Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$5,067,237,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** I note that there is a huge increase in terms of the allocation of more than \$5 billion for 2023, as opposed to \$2.9 billion in 2022. I note also in Volume II it states, in terms of indicator, that is, the Guyana Elections Commission, that they are targeting one Local Government Elections in 2023. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what has caused this substantial increase. We know that they were planning for elections last year but they only had \$2.9 billion. Having the same elections in 2023, why are we now up at \$5 billion?

**Ms. Teixeira:** The allocation of an additional \$1 billion is to facilitate the Local Government Elections. In fact, in the budget for the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), if you go through the lines, the heads have \$1,328,372 put aside, specially, in anticipation of the Local Government Elections. Last year they had \$4 billion. However, I think money was returned because there was no Local Government Elections. It was that they had the money available, but there were a number of things that did not go forward and, therefore, led to money being returned. It is expected that the \$5 billion this time will be able to cover and to allow for the Local Government Elections to go forward. All the number of heads and sub-heads are planned in that way with the increases.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Just to ask the question on Other Operating Expenses; I think there is an \$800 million increase. Could we be a little more specific in the other expenses there?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. This would be Other Operating Expenses, line item 6294, where the increase is to do with the conduct of the claims and objections exercises on the Local Government Elections. These costs include cost

associated with the hiring of 14,500 temporary staff to facilitate the Local Government Elections. Because they are not permanent staff, they are temporary, on limited contract, they would be under line item 6294 – Other, Other Operating Expenses.

**Ms. Lawrence:** To the Minister, I note that the budgeted amount for 2023 for Rental and Maintenance of Buildings is \$155 million plus. Could you disaggregate that for us, so we will know what would be the cost for the rental of buildings, *et cetera*, for the holding of the Local Government Elections, apart from the normal rental that is being done by GECOM in their day-to-day activities?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am advised that GECOM has buildings that it owns but these are buildings in addition to, according to what Ms. Lawrence asked. There are 12 buildings that they are renting. They are rented by the Guyana Elections Commission as per normal. These are: Moruca; Culture, Youth and Sport Centre, Santa Rosa; Dane Peters, Port Kaituma... Do you want the rental amount too? No. Munir Khan, Lot 38 Section F, La Grange; Soesdyke, Te Huis Te Coverden, Block ‘M’, Soesdyke; Anand Sanasie, 31 Fourth and Barrack Streets; Anand Sanasie, Lot 9, Fourth Street, Kingston; J. Jaikarran and Sons, Lot 8 Church Street and Sendall Place; Krishnalall Persaud, Area ‘M’, Diamond; Nandani Narine Sankar, Better Hope; Keith and Janice Griffith, Sheriff Street and William Street; Roopnarine Persaud, Croal Street; and Church of the Transfiguration, Mandela Avenue. The total of the rental for these buildings on an annual basis is \$44,370,000. They also, as you know Madam, have to identify the polling stations for the Local Government Elections. The GECOM has not identified those locations as yet. They have put in money for rental, but they have not gotten specific sites and specific rentals for that.

1.10 p.m.

I am advised that this would normally take about upwards of \$40 million. That heading has about \$93 million for rental of buildings by the GECOM. As I said, the GECOM also has buildings that it owns in different parts of the country, which it is doing repairs on as well.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Through the Chairman to the Hon. Minister, under the head Education Subventions and Training, I note that there is a hefty decrease in 2023. The revised figure for 2022 was more than \$131 million. In 2023, when the Elections Commission is targeting two rounds of claims and objections according to Volume 2, and one local government elections, I note that the allocation is only \$71 million. This

is an area, especially the education of electors, that the Commission is always lacking in.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you, Mdm. Lawrence. As you have correctly noticed, the decline has to do with the fact that the GECOM completed almost all the training for the temporary staff of elections for local government. They do not have to go into the same quantum or volume of training as they did last year. What they plan for this year is to have a mop up training and to complete a small area that is not completed as yet. They are saying they would not need the same quantity of money as they did last year. It is a mop up of those already trained and a few areas where they still need to complete.

**Ms. Fernandes:** A follow-up on the Rental and Maintenance of Buildings. I did note the amount and I did note the response that says that the GECOM has not yet identified the buildings that they intend to rent for the Local Government Elections. My question is, compared to previous local government elections, what is the difference in the amount of private buildings that will be rented for the Local Government Elections?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am advised that based on the change in the constituency boundaries, this may have an impact on the number of stations that will be required. Remember this is local government, and therefore, it is not the entire country. There may be some shifting in the numbers they need and therefore the budgetary requirements. I know that from the GECOM there has been a desire, an objective, to try to rent as much as possible or to use public buildings and avoid, unless absolutely necessary, private buildings or private residences.

*Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$5,067,237,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part*

*of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$150,000,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, concerning the allocation of \$150 million, the Legend states it is for “buildings, furniture and equipment.” Could I have an aggregation of that \$150 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** An aggregation or disaggregation?

**Ms. Lawrence:** A disaggregation. My apologies.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sorry, Minister.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Other than the very detailed breakdown, I will just do them as you said. For buildings, it is \$75 million, which includes a number of properties that the GECOM has outside of Georgetown such as Timehri, Port Kaituma, Corriverton, *et cetera*. Then there is the boat house and fence which is at Timehri. Then there are vehicles, boats and engines. My apologies. The boat house and fence is \$5 million; vehicles, boats and engines is \$55.6 million; equipment, \$13.1 million; and furniture \$1.2 million. The heavy emphasis is on vehicles, boats and engines and bringing the buildings into some repair.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I have a follow-up for the Minister on equipment. The Minister stated it would be \$13.5 million. Is the Minister indicating to the House that we will not be having biometrics at poll, so they are not purchasing biometric machines?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I think Ms. Lawrence knows the answer before she asked it. That is a Commission decision. If the Commission makes that decision then a supplementary will have to be prepared to give the GECOM, through this House, to be able to do that. At this point, as I understand and I am advised, that the Commission has not made a decision on this yet. The *jury is out*, as far as I understand.

*Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$150,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Minister and staff of the Elections Commission. Hon. Members, we now turn to pages 290 and 291.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, is there any way we can get a little cool air in here? It is really hot for us sitting at the bottom here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. We can, shortly.

#### **Agency: 55 Supreme Court**

#### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$2,584,263,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Chairman, I see employment costs going up by more than \$100 million. Is this for the new set of judges that we understand are an increase in the recruitment of judges both for the Court of Appeal and the High Court this year? It is under employment costs.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The increase in the amounts reflect the 8% increase that has been given to all the members of the Supreme Court. If there are any additions of judges, *et*

*cetera*, that will be through a supplementary coming back to the House.

*Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$2,584,263,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$1,500,000,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I notice under project code 4000600 – Constitutional Agencies: There is \$1.5 billion. Could that be disaggregated in simplistic terms for me?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am not sure I can, but I will try. The \$1.5 billion capital for the Supreme Court includes a significant number of rollover projects. Some are interim payments, some are now starting to pay, some have retention payments. A large part of the budget of the Supreme Court are really things that started last year and are almost finished this year; some are in the retention period and others are new. About \$1.3 billion, if I have it right, is on rollovers, payments, retention, *et cetera*, for all the new places that I believe my colleague, Minister Nandlall, referred to in his speech about the support to the Supreme Court.

Then there are a number of new areas, such as elevators being put in for the Court of Appeal, scanners, generators, a number of issues to do with digital recording, biometric time machines, air conditioners. In other words, these are things being done at a number of the courts around the country. This is disaggregated so that in some areas, the different magisterial courts and the courts are receiving equipment and other items to make their functioning and their conditions better.

There is a long list here, including trying to improve the condition in the living quarters for the persons who are in the regions who are carrying out the new courts. As we decentralise more, it is important for us to have better living conditions for the judges, the magistrates and the clerks as they move around the country. This is a very significant capital investment for the court system of Guyana.

**Mr. Holder:** Could the Minister give the specific amount for the building being constructed in Suddie?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Sorry?

**Mr. Holder:** The building in Suddie, could you give the amount...?

**Mr. Chairman:** The building in Suddie and specific amount for that building.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The building at where? Suddie? [Mr. Nandlall: Anna Regina] Is it Suddie or Anna Regina? Are you speaking about the construction or the rewiring of the Supreme Court Registry at Suddie? The one you are asking about, Mr. Holder, is to do with the Supreme Court Registry that is being rewired at \$2.2 million. The question you are asking about – I think is what you mean – is the Deeds Registry. That is not under the Supreme Court, that is under the Attorney General’s ministry. Therefore, you will be able to ask him that question when he reports today.

*Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$1,500,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

1.25 p.m.

#### **Agency: 56 Public Prosecutions**

##### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$292,188,000**

*Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$292,188,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

##### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 561– Public Prosecutions – \$63,560,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Could there be a disaggregation of that almost \$64 million?

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Hon. Member would remember that there was a fire that consumed a lot of equipment and areas that belong to the Office of the Department of Public Prosecution (DPP). What it has done for last year and trying to do this year is to recoup. Therefore, a lot of its capital is invested in equipment; webcams for computers; iPads; software; routers; a number of things that have been damaged or destroyed during the fire; as well as, normal sort of things that exist such as paper shredders; business chairs; refrigerators; vacuum cleaners; and installation of grills; fire alarms; and smoke detectors. Those are listed on the list. There is a construction of a perimeter fence for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, construction of a concrete drain and main bridge and the construction of a modern security hut.

Approximately, Mr. Ramjattan, in terms of physical works, it looks as if there is approximately \$40 million in physical works, that is, the grills, perimeter fence, the concrete drain

and the security hut with washroom. Those are \$24 million, \$9 million and \$9 million. The rest is all equipment, furniture, filing cabinets, chairs, things to be replaced and to accommodate staff who the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has at this point.

*Programme: 561– Public Prosecutions – \$63,560,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Agency: 57 Office of the Ombudsman**

##### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 571 – Ombudsman – \$61,893,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Could the Hon. Minister kindly inform the Committee whether there is an Ombudsman and if so, who is that person? If we do not have one at this time, what is being done to have someone fill that vacancy?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, I am a bit flabbergasted. The honourable Ombudsman, Justice Winston Patterson was appointed in 2015 and reappointed in 2018. He is still in the position now as the Ombudsman for Guyana and, as far as I know, he works hard and does well. He is still the Ombudsman. He has been appointed repeatedly. [An Hon. Member: Wrong Patterson.]

**Ms. Teixeira:** I do not know if the Minister got the wrong Patterson, but this is the Patterson who has been the Ombudsman since 2015.

*Programme: 571 – Office of the Ombudsman – \$61,893,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, just a note to those online, you could use your ‘raise hand’ signal. We will monitor that but you could also raise your voice if you need to speak. We have the audio for the online people running all the time too, so if I do not recognise someone’s ‘raise hand’ signal, at least if you indicate by a voice, I could also recognise you.

##### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme 571 – Office of the Ombudsman – \$1,000,000**

*Programme 571 – Office of the Ombudsman – \$1,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Agency: 58 Public Service Appellate Tribunal**

##### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$69,809,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is a little difficult for me to actually point out the line item, but in relation to the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, it has the same amount this year. Could we get, from the Hon. Minister, how many cases in 2022 did the Public Service Appellate Tribunal determine?

**Ms. Teixeira:** As the Hon. Member would know, this would not be reflected in the Budget but, in the Public Service Appellate Tribunal annual report, it should be presented. However, I am advised that there were no cases in 2022 because there has been no Public Service Commission (PSC). The generational cases to PSAT are based on decisions taken by the Public Service Commission. Therefore, for 2022, there were no cases heard at the PSAT.

*Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$69,809,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Agency: 59 Ethnic Relations Commission**

##### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 591 – Ethnic Relations Commission – \$136,389,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** To the Hon. Minister, I noted that the indicators for this Commission show that it will be doing a lot of work this year, 2023. If we look at the targets, it is seeking to have approximately 104 statutory meetings, I think and going around the country, *et cetera*. I also noted that, at this second indicator, it will be filling some 26 vacancies. Yet, when I look at the employment cost, I only see what was revised as per last year; \$75,591,000 and the same amount is being allocated this year. Where are we budgeting for this additional 25 staff?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I think the whole House knows that we put on notice the conclusion of the ERC process of nominations and hope that this House, on the last day of the Budget, when we come to an end, could pass a motion to allow the ERC members who had gone through a long consultation process to be approved by this House, so that we could send to the President for their appointments.

In regard to the persons who have been on contract, we have not been able to renew them because there is no commission so, as their contracts ended, they left. Therefore, we have anticipated that the new commission will, hopefully, be in place early this year and the commission will then decide on its hiring practices, *et cetera*. We have made provision for the similar staffing, as of 2022, plus it includes the eight per cent as well. The new commission will have that right. As

you know, the moneys in the commissions are lumpsums. They could make decisions to move the moneys around, to pay for more staff or other things but, if required, they can apply for a supplementary.

*Programme: 591 – Ethnic Relations Commission – \$136,389,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

##### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 591 – Ethnic Relations Commission – \$1,500,000**

*Programme: 591 – Ethnic Relations Commission – \$1,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

1.40 p.m.

#### **Agency: 60 Judicial Service Commission**

##### **Current Expenditure**

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

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Could I ask the Minister when actually are we going to get the Judicial Service Commission working for 2023?

**Ms. Teixeira:** There is provision made for the new Judicial Service Commission, as far as I know. Part of the members have been receiving stipends who are post holders, as if there was a Commission, because that has been the practice. To say this, in April, 2022, the Leader of the Opposition was written to suggest the name of the President's appointee and seeking his support. The National Assembly had decided on who its nominee was and unanimously agreed to. Regrettably, the response to that by correspondence has not been to address the issue of the President's nominee. The President is looking for support from the Leader of the Opposition for his nominee as required by the Constitution, but instead has focused on the appointment of the Chancellor and the Chief Justice. There are letters there hanging in the air. Regrettably, we have not been able to move on this but, I believe, that we shall see movement on this issue in the near future. Both gentlemen who have been appointed, one by National Assembly and one who has been around for a long time in the judicial system are worthy of our support in the Judicial Service Commission.

As you know too, the chairman at the Public Service Commission, we are waiting on that issue to complete at the Committee of Appointment and then for the President's

nominees to be sent to the Leader of the Opposition. Hopefully he would be supportive of those names or have other names who are worthy of consideration so that we could move forward with the Public Service Commission as well. As you know, the chairman of that sits on the Judicial Service Commission.

*Programme: 60 – Judicial Service Commission – \$10,020,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister and staff of the Judicial Service Commission. Hon. Members, let us invite the members of the rights commission to join the Hon. Minister.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, you may wish to advise the Hon. Members that this includes the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, the Indigenous People's Commission (IPC) as well as the Human Rights Commission. This covers those bodies. One may want to look at that. These are different pages in Appendix T. Forgive me for not standing, but I need to catch myself. The Rights Commission should normally, I think, be disaggregated but, in this case, it is put together. There are different pages in the Appendix T. I do not know if it is an omission or we made a mistake, which we probably all did or that it is pages 710, 711, 709 and 712. Those are the different commissions. I just wanted to get guidance on how we will deal with that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, as the Minister said, it has been aggregated in this heading, this programme under one but it covers the Rights Commission of Guyana that we have in existence now. I think they share a common secretariat if I am not mistaken.

### **Agency: 61 Rights Commissions of Guyana**

#### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$152,456,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** I am looking at Appendix T, page 711 – Women and Gender Equality Commission. I am looking at the employment cost and I would like to ask the Minister two questions so that she does not have to get up all the time. One, is this increase for \$11.348 million caters for the eight per cent increase? Two, Does that amount also caters for the increase, which was given in 2021 that the Commissioners did not receive?

**Ms. Teixeira:** As far as I know, the Commissioners do not receive salary increases because they are not employed; they are appointed. The staff of the commissions receive the salary increases, but not the Commissioners. Commissioners receive their stipends; they are not employed; they are appointed and they receive their stipends, but they do not receive the same increase as everyone else does. In this case, the Women and Gender Equality Commission, as far as I understand, it caters for the eight per cent that were given to staff. I have not heard that there is any problem, where they were not given the seven per cent in the whole between 2021 and 2022.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Hon. Minister, could you kindly state the complement of staff which the Women and Gender Equality Commission has to assist it with its work? I am looking at its targets for 2023 and, in some cases, it has gone up by over 100% with some of the things that it is planning to do. I would like to know what is the complement of staff it has to assist it to achieve these targets.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am advised that it has a Chief Executive Officer and an Administrative Assistant. It is planning to hire two additional staff – Driver and Research Planning Officer. Therefore, I believe it has catered for that as well as the normal gratuity and other direct labour cost.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** I am looking at page 712 – Indigenous Peoples Commission. My question would be similar. What is the complement of the staff who we have at that Commission? If the Hon. Minister could give us that.

**Ms. Teixeira:** In addition to the Commissioners, it has two full-time staff – a Chief Executive Officer and an Administrative Assistant. Just to remind Members of Parliament, the Human Rights Commission which is the Secretariat, provides the accounting and other core areas that are needed by the Women and Gender Equality Commission, Rights of the Child Commission, and the Indigenous Peoples' Commission, in terms of administrative core services so that each commission does not have to have that right now.

*Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$152,456,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$3,485,000**



*Programme: 611 – Rights Commissions of Guyana – \$3,485,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Agency: 62 – Public Procurement Commission**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 621 – Public Procurement Commission – \$256,360,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Could there be an explanation, because statutory wages and salaries has been increased by approximately \$28 million, from 35 to 61 what may have the reason for that increase?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ramjattan, you do recall that the Public Procurement Commission was appointed around July, 2023. Therefore, it was only paid half-year or a little less than half-year. This is now the projection of the entire year to cover its stipends and its statutory requirements according to the law.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Thank you.

*Programme: 621 – Public Procurement Commission – \$256,360,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 621 – Public Procurement Commission – \$5,500,000**

*Programme: 621 – Public Procurement Commission – \$5,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us really thank the Hon. Minister, the staff of the Public Procurement Commission, along with the staff of her own Ministry who have been shepherding and marshalling the accounts of all the agencies under her head. Thank you very much, staff.

*1.55 p.m.*

Hon. Members, that concludes sections for the agencies under the Hon. Minister. I know we have had a long session and at 1.55 p.m. I will ask that the Assembly resume so we can suspend to have our lunch intermission.

*Assembly resumed.*

*Sitting suspended at 1.56 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 3.06 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. Members, please be seated. We will resolve ourselves into Committee of Supply and continue with the examination of the Estimates in Committee.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we can turn to pages 36 and 37, Office of the President and I trust that the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance has had an opportunity to recoup and recharge, being joined by the staff of the Office of the President...

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, identify your name because I am not too familiar with the voices.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I am Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you may have the floor.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. I am just confirming that you are hearing me.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are all hearing you.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you.

**Agency: 01 Office of the President**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 011 – Administration – \$1,297,112,000**

**Mr. Speaker:** I think the person who had his/her alarm on for 1.55 p.m., it is now just after 3.08 p.m. The Hon. Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley, you may have the floor.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: It was budgeted and utilised in \$50,000,000. Now there is a significant increase of \$249,000,000. Could the Minister state why this enormous increase?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Line item 6272, regrettably, there were arrears in the Guyana Power and light Incorporated (GPL Inc.) for 2022 and, therefore, it includes the \$199,000,000 being budgeted to deal with the arrears from 2022 for GPL Inc.

*Programme: 011 – Administration – \$1,297,112,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 011 – Administration – \$ 1,039,490,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Project code 2405200 – Land Transport: It states here that a total of \$100,000,000 has been budgeted for the “purchase of vehicles”. Could the Minister state how many vehicles are expected to be bought with this sum and for who?

**Ms. Teixeira:** There are 11 vehicles on the list, including two sport utility vehicles (SUV) – Presidential Guard, one sedan, two buses – 15 seaters – two pick-ups – Presidential Guard – and four vehicles for the Office of the President which is trying to update some old vehicles that it has.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Hon. Minister, just confirm, are all of the vehicles that are going to be bought for the Office of the President’s fleet?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes; they are.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Project code 1702300 – Men on Mission Programme: a sum of \$500,000,000 is budgeted for this project code. Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee, what are the enhanced human and social development that this sum will facilitate?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you, Hon. Member Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul. The \$500,000,000 here is to deal with the number of initiatives under the Men on Mission Programme, particularly, community works as you have seen; the building of homes for very, very indigent persons; as well as, working on community projects such as, sports fields and so on or sporting activities; on vocational training, social counselling, *et cetera* that would help people; particularly, focusing on issues affecting men as you know; life expectancy; mental health; and education as well as addressing domestic violence.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, may I have the floor?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Hon. Member, go ahead.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. Mr. Chairman, with reference to the building of homes, community works, enhancement of sports facilities and so on, could the Hon. Minister specify what criteria will be used to access so as to ascertain the urgency of need in terms of... Especially the constructions of homes and so on, is there a format where people can apply for assistance where the Men on Mission Programme will do an assessment? Is there that sort of arrangement?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Mahipaul, I think that you may have seen the conditions under which a number of the very elderly lived in horrible, horrible conditions and that those persons were addressing people who are living in very bad

conditions and through the quarter to be able to help themselves. There are no criteria, as you asked, in relation to, in relation to sporting facilities, *et cetera* but if one goes into a community and there are a number of social problems where interventions could help to address these concerns, the Men on Mission Programme would do that. Also, the Men on Mission Programme have its own body that makes decisions for it as well.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I understand what the Hon. Minister is saying but in an instance like this, I will like to believe that for prudent financial management and proper spending of taxpayers’ money and in this sense \$500,000,000; I am of the opinion that there should be an assessment team to ascertain on a needs basis the assistance for our residents and citizens.

Mr. Chairman, I do not disagree that there are elderly people who need assistance but, similarly, there should be some assessment, prudent financial management and proper spending of the taxpayers money to assist the people who are in need. Could the Hon. Minister say if they are going to establish a secretariat or some management committee to do that level of assessment, so that the money is spent not on selective purpose but rather on a needs basis?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, there is a body that is managing the Men on Mission Programme. The body is made up with very high and reputable leaders of our country. The head of the army; the head of the police; a number of pastors, I believe, and a number of civil society representatives. These are the persons who will make decisions on the usage of the money. If I know the Peace and Stabilisation Operations Programme (PSOP) and the Office of the President well enough, they will make sure that financial proprietary is managed.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Could the Hon. Minister say what is the structure in place for this Men on Mission Programme? I heard her saying that there are a number of reputable persons managing this Programme. May I ask who is the head of the programme? Who is the deputy head? Who is the secretary? Who is the treasurer? What is the hierarchal structure of this newly established programme where we are asking taxpayers to fund with \$500,000,000?

**Ms. Teixeira:** This is a new initiative and as I said it is led by... [An Hon. Member: Airy-fairy.] It is not airy-fairy, Sir. This is a Men on Mission Programme. Maybe, you are too young but there have been many attempts over the years to get men involved in advocacy on domestic violence and sexual violence, which my Colleague on the other side Ms.

Lawrence would be familiar with for example. Many of these have been fleeting and have not held their ground for long. This is the first time we have a very powerful organisation – not to use as a formal organisation – of over a thousand men coming together in our country, in each region involved in responsible parenthood, responsible lifestyles being opposed to domestic violence and sexual violence, and recognising their roles in the community to play a more active role in terms of caring and reaching out to people who are less fortunate.

It is a new initiative. It is led, right now, as I said, by the head of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), the head of the Guyana Police Force (GPF), a number of religious leaders of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and a number of other leaders. This is led by a very broad-based body of people who are involved with it. As it goes on, it will take on greater structures and frameworks and so on. However, at this point, it is doing important work in raising the images of our men – which I am sure you would agree with Mr. Duncan – in terms of men playing a more important role in building society. Any of us, as women, who have meetings in the communities, the majority of people who turn out are women.

3.20 p.m.

Women are engaged; women want to come out and find out what is going on. Our men have been somehow lagging. This brings men, 1000 for every region, onboard to make a powerful movement of men deciding and playing a greater role in the issues that confront them as men, as well as the society. The money is to deal with some of these issues.

As for the criteria for the elderly and the indigent, I do not know what criteria you want. Is it that someone has a latrine, so they are available, or someone living under a tarpaulin, so they are available? Come off it. These are very, very poor people who are living under terrible conditions. We must have a humanitarian view instead of trying to clock everything by criteria. If you find a woman living in terrible conditions, abandoned, do you not want to lift her? Do we not want to lift an old man, or are we losing our humanity? I believe that the Men on Mission (MoM), with \$500 million, can bring in a number of programmes that can make people's lives better, including their own. We want our men to be able to deal with their health issues. We want our men to be able to deal with improving their education. We want our men to not pommel and beat women, as we have in our society. This is part of the objective of the Men on Mission. I understand where Mr. Mahipaul is coming from but let us

give this movement – it is not old; it has recently started – its chance to take a form and organisation. What will happen automatically with the half billion dollars is – the fiduciary oversight will be done and it will be scrutinised by the Audit Office of Guyana as per norm.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I must say that the whole lecture on good practise, humanitarian and so on is good. I support humanitarian practises also and the fact that those who need help ought to be helped. My concern is that we are asking the people of Guyana to put into a programme \$500 million, and there seems to be no financial management in keeping with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act for this money. I ask the Hon. Minister again – who sits on the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) with me and spends time to scrutinise the expenditure of the Government in keeping with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA), the Procurement Act, the Stores Regulations and all the other laws that govern the finances of this country – what is the established structure that is in place for the disbursement of this fund and what is being used to assess who will get the help? Is it just that these reputable men in the name of the Guyana Defence Force's (GDF) head, the Guyana Police Force (GPF) head, the spiritual leaders, and so on just choose a community to go into, see somebody who is vulnerable, make an assessment and decide to build? Or is it that they are going to give the opportunity of doing a proper assessment of areas in different regions?

Another question to follow up on that: For this \$500 million, is there a cap where it will say there is \$100 million for Region 1, \$100 million for Region 2, or is it just isolated to one region? All those are concerns because, across this country, there are poor people who need assistance. What system do we have to cater for the poor and vulnerable as opposed to this ad hoc manner?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Would you mind if I sit more?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, just before you answer – yes, you can sit and answer the question – we have had a good speech there by the Hon. Member to ask two questions. I would ask the persons asking questions to be very succinct with their questions, rather than making speeches. In fact, Mr. Mahipaul went into some speculation too. Hon. Minister, you may sit and attempt to answer the two questions which were asked.

**Ms. Teixeira:** This is capital. We are looking at the capital allocation in the budget under the Office of the President for Programme 011. Therefore, this is a capital issue. A number of these issues relate to policy. I would, therefore, suggest to

the Hon. Members that policy questions can probably go as questions to the Ministers so that we are able to respond in more detail to these issues.

In terms of the fiduciary oversight, which was asked for by Mr. Mahipaul, any use of the capital money by the Office of the President must go through the normal processes which are covered by the Procurement Act, the financial laws, and the FMAA. So, some of the concerns Mr. Mahipaul has, I think, will be addressed by that. I wish to remind Mr. Mahipaul that we looked at the audit performance records for the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vouchers which were supposed to give 11,000 people vouchers during COVID-19 in 2020, 9000 people never received any and there is no documentation to show that. I do understand where Mr. Mahipaul is coming from. Having come from that past, I understand why he is very suspicious of an allocation like this. I wish to assure Mr. Mahipaul that we are the same as you are. I do not mean you personally, Mr. Mahipaul. You know exactly what I am talking about.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you. Just to remind the Hon. Minister, I am Hon. Mahipaul.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you asking a question or are you reminding her about something?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Well, I did not hear her say, Hon. Mr. Mahipaul.

**Mr. Chairman:** Ask a question, please. We are not going to encourage an exchange of policy statements here. One can ask a policy question with respect to the money, but to remind, is another issue. Do you have another question?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. I was just saying to her that I am Hon. Mr. Mahipaul. I did not hear her say, Hon. Mr. Mahipaul.

**Ms. Teixeira:** My deepest apologies, Mr. Mahipaul. You have my deepest apologies; you are most honourable.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** May I ask the Minister what caused her, her Ministry or her Government to come to this cap of \$500 million? What caused that? What factor was used or what...? Could she pull down the microphone, please, Sir? I was not hearing her clearly just now.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am sorry. I understand that the figure came up after the members discovered for several regions of Guyana that this was a projection of the kind of work that could be done in the year 2023. These are projections and obviously, if the money is not used, it will be returned to the

Consolidated Fund. If the money is used, we can then assess how well it has been used for the benefit of our people.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** This is my final question, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister say how much of the sum will be allocated to regions 4, 7 and 10, respectively?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Most Hon. Member, I am afraid that I have no such information to share with you.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, a follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say whether money from this \$500 million will be spent in regions 4, 7 and 10?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I assume that the male Members of this Committee who are from regions 4, 7 and 10 are also involved with Men on Mission. Therefore, they can have a great influence on what happens in Regions 4, 7 and 10. I would sincerely hope that the Hon. Men of this Committee, particularly on the other side, see it as their duty and responsibility as male leaders of our country to join Men on Mission so that we can have the male leaders be very active and have a say in how some of this money is being used in their respective communities.

**Ms. Fernandes:** I am following up on Men on a Mission. Given that Men on Mission is not a constitutional agency and this allocation is not given under Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, is the Hon. Minister saying when it did capital budgeting for Men on Mission it used a different system as against – these are the things we want to do in 2023; we are just going to put this money here and whatever comes up, that is how we are going to spend it? It is a capital expenditure and as such, every detail should have been accounted for to arrive at \$500 million.

**Ms. Teixeira:** This is a programme which has a work programme that was developed by the leaders of it, who came up with an estimate and a projection for half a billion dollars. Most of this is capital works. In terms of the areas – as I said, housing for the indigent programmes, *et cetera* – this is allowing the body to have access to funds and obviously, it will be accounted for. There is a work programme that looks at the region by region and the interventions that are needed. Some may be soft, and I cannot answer if there was a choice of putting half a billion dollars under Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations because it is not. It is not an organisation such as the civil society bodies or other state bodies. This is a programme that has been started as an initiative. So, it does not fulfil the same criteria for giving subventions to organisations. Therefore, the only place to put it was under

capital. Therefore, there is a work programme that looks at it, and the money will be accessed in keeping with our country's financial laws and regulations. If there are other questions that you have on policy, you are welcome to put questions to the Minister after the budget.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Men on Mission: I noted the Minister's response to say why it is not listed under Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, and so forth. My question is – is this registered? Is this a registered body? If so, where is it registered and under what programme?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I think I made it very clear that this is a programme and not an organisation. It is an initiative. It is a programme to try, in the first instance, to bring people together, particularly men, and get them to play more meaningful and leadership roles in our society, especially at community levels. So, Hon. Member Ms. Fernandes, it may turn into an organisation, but at this point, it is a programme with a particular objective, which is emerging as it develops. The main thing was to get 1000 men involved in every region across the political divide, hopefully, across the religious divide, across the gender divide, and across the ethnic divide. That it has succeeded in bringing to the fore. I am sure there are other steps and stages that would take place, but this is where we are now. It is not an organisation. It is not a registered organisation; it is a programme.

**Ms. Fernandes:** I just have one follow-up. In her response prior, the Hon. Minister said that the majority of this money is for capital expenditure. What portion of this is for capital expenditure, and what portion is not?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am advised that all is for capital.

*Programme: 011 – Administration – \$1,039,490,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

3.35 p.m.

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 012 – National Policy Development & Presidential Advisory Services – \$1,797,734,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation, I would like for some clarification from the Minister. Could you whether the institute that is spoken of on page 16 of Volume 2 under indicators, is the Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (IAST)? It just states institute, I just want to clarify.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, it is.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Volume 1 on page 470, shows that the Institute of Applied Science and Technology received \$255 million in the year of 2022 and it is budgeted to receive \$270 million this year. After looking at the IAST website and news agencies there is nothing that shows what they were doing over the last three years almost. Could the Minister whether IAST has started any new project or intends to start any new project that would require it to be awarded even an increase in this subvention this year?

**Ms. Teixeira:** The increase in the ISAT is mainly budget is mainly due to the increase in the capital budget and the largest cost in that figure for budget in the capital of \$47.9 million is \$34.365 million for an Analytical Lab System at the University of Guyana (UG) Campus in Turkeyen. This will allow for more diversified tests so that the samples in mining, agriculture and oil and gas from crimes do have to be sent overseas and at least three persons are already trained to use the equipment. These are not the same test being done by other agencies, these are different and this will allow for income revenue generation by the ISAT. Out of the \$47.9 million, \$34.3 million is basically the Analytical Lab System. I do not know if that helps.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I would like the Minister to look at project code 3301100, this is a provision to Lands and Survey, and we are told that it will be opening new lands for agriculture, industrial, housing and other developmental proposes. Could the Minister indicate which regions are we going to see these new lands opening for these purposes?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that the lands being addressed here have to do with the registration of lands that have been waiting for quite a while. These are in Region 1, Region 7, Black Bush, and so on. It is a very specific area working with the land court to be able to rectify and regularise these lands. As far as I am told, these are not lands dealing with housing or anything like that. These are people who have private lands and have been occupying it for a long time and have been waiting between the land court and the Lands and Surveys to regularise and complete the process. This has nothing to do with housing or anything like that. These are all private lands.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, if I may. Just to guide the Minister to the legend, there are two things that it is going to do: one is the land regularisation which you just spoke of and the first one states, opening of new land for agriculture, industrial, housing and other developmental purposes. Am I to believe that is incorrect?

**Ms. Teixeira:** No, Mdm. I believe that both from the budget that they put forward these relate to also new opening of lands that might be used for agriculture *et cetera*. As far as I am aware, there are two aspects of the Lands and Surveys. This does not include Amerindian land titling, which is dealt with differently. It does not deal with state land, for example, Mon Choisi and Willemstad are lands that have been identified for this process in this period.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I turn the Minister's attention to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I see there is an increase in there of about \$38 million plus. Would the Hon. Minister, please be kind to share with this House the top three designations for contracted employees and their total remuneration package?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Hon. Member, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there was 95 last year and 95 2023. Therefore there has not been an increase in the number of staff under the line item 6116. So, there has been not increase but there has been increase with the 8%. The top three would be the Director of the Guyana Technical Training College (GTTC), the Commissioner Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission and the National Security Advisor and the Deputy Commissioner Deputy CAO of Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Could we have the total remuneration package?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Do you mean what they receive every month or are you talking about annual?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes, every month.

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Director of GTTC Inc. \$1,360,800, Commissioner CAO of Lands and Surveys \$1,155,600, National Security Advisor \$808,920 and the Deputy Commissioner Deputy CAO of Lands and Surveys \$808,920.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

*Programme: 012 – National Policy Development and Presidential Advisory Services – \$1,797,734,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 012 – National Policy Development and Presidential Advisory Services - \$164,900,000**

*Programme: 012 – National Policy Development & Presidential Advisory Services - \$164,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$523,187,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Could the Minister indicate which new sites they will be putting this security at? I am talking about line item 6281, Security Services, on page 41. I notice it has moved from \$7.9 million to \$21 plus million.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Madam Lawrence, this figure at line item 6281 deals with security for the National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA) building itself, with having proper armed security there.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I see there is an increase of 13 from four. Would the Hon. Minister please provide the designation of the top three contracted employees under this line item and their monthly remuneration package?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. This has to do with the hiring of a number of analysts for the NISA, so that one has a Defence Board Officer, then Defence Board Officer 2 and seven analysts all paid \$152,420 per month.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Line item 6294, Other, there is a heavy increase there of over \$100 million and more. Could the Hon. Minister...

**Ms. Teixeira:** Sir, I cannot hear you well Hon. Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line item 6294.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** ...please give us at least an understanding of this significant increase of over \$100 million?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Hon. Member, you know what NISA is and you know what NISA terms of reference are and so it is a National Intelligence Security Agency and the reason for the variance and the request for increase is the increase in operational funding to conduct more operations along our borders within our maritime zone and across the spectrum of crime intelligence. As you are aware the border issues, border security and maritime security has further heightened particularly now that we have oil and gas rigs out in our waters *et cetera*. These are to address the number of heighten security concerns by NISA in terms of intelligence gathering and operations.

*Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$523,187,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$175,000,000**

3.50 p.m.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Hon. Minister, I am looking at project code 2507900 and I note a substantial increase from \$25 million to \$120 million provided for furniture and equipment. Could you layover a breakdown of the furniture and the equipment in the National Assembly?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, it is a laying over request.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I could easily read them out. They are not that long. A number of the equipment have to do with analysing based on their responsibilities as the intelligence agency, but the majority of issues are basic office equipment, cubicles, air conditioner, cameras, file cabinets, fire extinguishers *et cetera*. There are some pieces of equipment that I believe would not be in the best interest to...

**Ms. Lawrence:** It is understood, Minister.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I do not mind sharing it with Ms. Lawrence, but I would prefer that not be circulated which is a problem because every Member of Parliament (MP) has a right to see when there is a request. I need your guidance on that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Ms. Lawrence, there is some sensitive pieces of equipment which you will have...

**Ms. Lawrence:** Yes, I do understand, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, very much.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I will withdraw from the laying over but I want to ask specifically whether any of this equipment is going to help us with our cybercrimes?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I believe we are trying to improve our capability. We have some capability but we need to strengthen our capability in this area. Some of this may help as well.

*Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security – \$175,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$416,600,000**

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, this programme, Public Policy and Planning has no staffing details. All are zero, but I see that there are sums of moneys allocated for different

line items speaking to line items 6221 to 6224. I also see a sum for Local Travel and Subsistence, line item 6261 and some other line items there. May I ask the Hon. Minister who will be utilising these sums of moneys if there is no staffing details or no present staff for this programme? I do take into account Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, that this is the programme where \$318 million will be going to Guyana Office for Investment (Go-Invest) also, but they are separate. That is a contribution to Local Organisations. Who are the other moneys that are budgeted here going to be spent on?

**Ms. Teixeira:** My understanding is that there are staff at the Office of the President who would be involved in this programme of Public Policy and Planning, in terms of execution of programmes, including outreaches, stakeholder forums *et cetera*, as well as where we will be required, for example hiring of consultants on public policy strategies and development of strategic plans. There has been an increase in the budget, for example under line item 6284, Other, to allow for this and including research and monitoring. This includes staff that are already in the Office of the President who will now be working on these issues.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I just want to draw to your attention given the answer by the Hon. Minister that the indicators under Programme 014, Public Policy and Planning, is not applicable for monitoring of national development planning *et cetera*. There is nothing there. I just want to bring that to her attention with her answer.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Do you mean in the description?

**Ms. Lawrence:** In the targets.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I would like to turn my attention to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. All of this money is going to Go-Invest and there is just one target, number 4 which reads:

“4. Number of new national projects developed.”

It states one. We have an increase. I do not know whether in the budget presented, what Go-Invest would say to the Hon. Minister when it would be given this money. What is it we are going to see? What could we see jumping out at us in 2023 from Go-Invest? If it is not here, the Minister could layover something for us.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Just give me a minute. Thank you for waiting, Hon. Member. I am advised that it is based on several delegations that came to visit Guyana that were interested in

investment last year, for example Jamaica, Saudi Arabia, and Dubai. This year there would be a follow-up in terms of bringing these expressions of interest into greater organisational form with Go-Invest. The follow-up would be for example with offers and interest particularly in the oil and gas sector. Those three countries in particular we will be focused on based on last year's discussions and the delegations that came down.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum...

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. I indicated...

**Mr. Chairman:** Sorry about that. Go ahead, Hon. Ms. Sarabo-Halley.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** I am looking at the same indicators that were just spoken about, number 4 which states:

“4. Number of new national projects developed.”

The target for 2023 is one. For 2022, it is zero:

“...new national projects developed.”

I took the opportunity to look for 2021 and 2020 and all said at zero:

“...new national projects developed.”

I was just trying to get some clarity from the Minister whether this is the indicator which shows that there have been no new national projects developed from 2020 to now because it states zero from 2020 to 2022 and 2023? There is a hope that one new national project would be developed.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am advised that there are two projects that are being worked on between 2022 and now and those are the call centres for Tuschen and Enmore.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Just to confirm that those projects happened already, is it a case that the indicators are wrong that there have not been no new national projects on board or completed or implemented since 2020?

**Ms. Teixeira:** They have been initiated but not completed.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** All right. Just for clarity also, these national projects being developed, are they just for the Office of the President or is it nationwide?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. It is Go Invest.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Go-Invest is responsible for the whole country in terms of opportunities for investment and development.

*Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$416,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$11,500,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** I am at project code 2507900: Purchase of Furniture and Equipment. As was stated by the Hon. Minister and from the earlier part of volume one, there are no staff here. I am just querying which office is the purchase of furniture and equipment for?

**Ms. Teixeira:** This is the OP staff who are functioning under this programme of Public Policy and Planning. This is for four computers and four laptops. That is what the \$2.5 million comes up to. This is the same amount that was budgeted in 2022 for furniture and equipment, that is.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Just for clarification, the Hon. Minister stated earlier that the staff is already in offices under other programmes and would just be assisting in these particular policies, so they should have furniture and desk in that particular programme, and if there is any need, they would be able to get it under that programme. I am trying to understand why it is that they now need more computers under this programme, if they are just assisting in the analysis and whatever it is they may need to do under policies.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I did say at some point and maybe I was not clear enough, that they are also looking to hire persons and consultancies. If one looks at line item 6284, there is an increase in the budget from \$26 million to \$30 million. I did say this would be involved with the hiring of consultants to inform on public policy strategies and the development of strategic plans. This would also involve things like advertisements, broadcast *et cetera*. There is provision for the additional persons to work in the field as researchers or as consultants. If one looks at line item 6294, there is an increase which again deals with research and payment for research studies on socioeconomic development or development baseline, as well as this would be supporting research and monitoring of the evaluation unit. This has more to do with policies and developmental policies or research to be able to guide the Government in making decisions.



4.05 p.m.

*Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning – \$11,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Current Estimates

#### **Programme: 015 - Environmental Management and Compliance – \$1,621,508,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Under the International Subsidies to Local Organisations at page 470, I see the identical sums last year for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), \$668 million and \$676 million. In view of the need for strengthening at that institution, in view of all the oil and gas and so on, was there no need of some extra moneys for people here and their expertise to come to the EPA?

**Ms. Teixeira:** For a number of the issues raised by the Hon. Member, according to the EPA, we do not have to pay for certain services, such as training, as there are existing mechanisms. The regional and international relationship are paying for a lot of the training for the staff from the EPA. In addition to that, the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are paid for by the developers and not by the EPA. There are two cost centres that do not need to be catered for in the budget by the EPA. The figures that they had last year has decreased, but part of this was because there were a number of issues related to flaring taxes, as you know. The revenue that came in, as you will see... Under revenues, \$1.8 billion came as revenue last year. This was the money the EPA got from the flaring tax that was introduced. The EPA did not cater for revenue because it is hard to project, but it has not increased because they did not expect to continue with flaring, as they did before.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Chairman, in addition to this \$676 million that the EPA will have as a budgetary allocation from us in this National Assembly, would its expenditures for the year include that additional \$1.8 billion? Is it \$1.8 plus \$676 million?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, Sir. The moneys that the Hon. Member referred to, the \$1.8 billion, will be accessible through the trust fund. They have also projected fines and fees that they would be able to access. My understanding is that this money will be available to the EPA.

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** Under Contracted Employees, I see that there are six contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister say what these contracted employees are for – the specifics?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Are you talking about line item 6116? Yes. Just give me a second. These are Renewable Energy Liaison Officer – \$353, 899; Climate Change Officer – \$259,659; Driver – \$120,831; Project Manager PMO – \$599,541; Science and Technology Officer – \$440,345; Project Manager – \$433,350 totalling \$2.2 million for the year, including gratuity allowances and the National Insurance Scheme (NIS). This would come to \$36,316,285.

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** Thank you, Hon. Minister. I see in Appendix T, that is page 655, there is \$14,592,000 for training. I know that there was a proposal for training of 36 Members to be on the rig, like on site. I want to know if this money is sufficient or if it is part for those persons to do that training.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Under what heading was that again? Do you mind reminding me?

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** Appendix T.

**Ms. Teixeira:** As I said earlier, whatever, they have international relations and regional relations with different institutes dealing with oil and gas, like in California, and a number of others who are providing training for staff in oil and gas. Where this money may not be sufficient, then they would use this money. But they also have money from the trust fund, *et cetera*. This is thought to be adequate for the needs at this point, in case of any other kind of training. I assume things such as the office staff need for training, non-oil and gas things, for example, for which they would need to upgrade staff just in terms of the normal day to day training of staff.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Just quickly, at line item 6116, same Contracted Employees, could the Minister state whether any of these employees are in charge of completing the integrated data management system at the EPA?

**Ms. Teixeira:** No. I am advised not.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** According to volume 2 of the budget, it states that the percentage completion of that system is at 20%. It has been there for a number of years. I am just wondering whether any money was budgeted so that could be completed. This is because it has a target of 100% again for this year.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am advised that the National Data Management Authority (NDMA)... All the data management issues are dealt with EPA and the NDMA. There was a previous contract and a review of the terms of reference, *et cetera*. This contract has now been

revised/rewritten with a new contract with the NDMA in order to digitalise all the records.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Final question, Mr. Chairman. Is there a date or a deadline as to when this is going to be completed? Do you expect this to be done by the end of this year?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am advised that it should be finished by the third quarter of 2023.

*Programme: 015 - Environmental Management and Compliance – \$ 1,621,508,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Estimates

**Programme: 015 - Environmental Management and Compliance – \$415,830,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Mr. Chairman, I am at project code 4403600, the Guyana Protected Area Systems, where \$350 million is budgeted. It states here in the Legend:

“Provision for management of selected protected areas...”

Have those areas been selected as yet, and could you state where those areas are?

**Ms. Teixeira:** This is a German-funded programme. The three geographic locations are wetlands, conservancies, and the Rupununi for this project. In terms of the German funding, that has been identified. These are new projects, I understand.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Right, I understand. Has there been a concept document that we at the National Assembly could be assisted with, as to what it is that this \$350 million is going towards? Or an executive summary?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Those can be laid over, if you wish. Is it the concept document for the German-funded project, yes?

*Programme: 015 Environmental Management and Compliance – \$415,830,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Current Estimates

**Programme: 016 – Police Complaints Authority – \$70,600,000**

*Programme: 016 – Police Complaints Authority – \$70,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

4.20 p.m.

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 016 – Police Complaints Authority - \$1,215,000**

*Programme: 016 – Police Complaints Authority - \$1,215,000 agreed to and stand part of the Estimates*

**Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force**

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support - \$17,106,394,000**

*Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support - \$17,106,394,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support - \$3,121,867,000**

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Project code 2404600 - Air, Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the final payment for the offshore patrol vessel and aircraft? Could the Hon. Minister give some details pertaining to the other vehicles that are listed under this project code?

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Metal Shark Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) is multi-year. The total cost is \$2.4 billion and this has been paid. The balance for this year is \$242,023,000. For the Bell 412 Environmental Port Index (EPI) is also multi-year. The total cost is \$1.9 billion. Do you want me to give all the full figures? One billion, six hundred million is to be paid this year. Is that clear?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes. There are some other ...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, ...

**Ms. Teixeira:** What is the third one?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you very much, Sir. I get that is the final payment for the two vehicles. That is for the offshore patrol vessel and the aircraft. Listed is the sum of \$2,010,522,000, also caters for vehicles, boats and out-board engines. Could we have some specifics there? If it can be laid over, that would be okay.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Are you asking for the balance on the \$2 billion or are you asking for the specifics on the vehicles that have been acquired? I am not clear.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** No, Cde. Chairman. I am saying that from this \$2,010,522,000, there is an amount of \$1.2 billion that is

for final payment. There is also an amount of \$242 million for final payment for the aircraft and for the offshore patrol vessel. When you minus the two, the remainder that caters for vehicles, boats and out-board engines is separate from the final payment of those two equipment. I am asking for some specifics on the other equipment that falls under the project code.

**Ms. Teixeira:** That is what I thought you were asking. One Landcruiser – \$30 million; one Double-Cab Pickup Landcruiser – \$34 million; one Single-Cab Landcruiser – \$45 million; troops carrying trucks (four tons) – \$30 million; two outboard engines for border areas, 300 horsepower (hp) - \$18.5 million; and a wooden boat – \$1,021,000. That is the balance of the \$2 billion, after you extract the \$242 million for the OPV and \$1.6 billion for the Bell 412.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I notice in project code 2800200, there has been a drastic reduction in the provision for agricultural developmental initiatives by some \$50 million. It was \$80 million and \$80 million and now it is \$29 million. Is there any reason for that? We like our Army to be self-sufficient in these items.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Remember, the last two years we were developing the processing plant which would have caused an increase, as you would have seen in 2021 and 2022. The plant is now finished and ready to operate. Therefore, we do not have to now address the issue of developing the agro-processing plant. What we have right now in the budget is the construction of housing for small ruminants, pasture development for sheep and goats, development of 40 x 40 poultry pens, shade houses and farm projects, coming up to the \$29,500,000. There is no diminishing of the focus on agriculture. Now, they are at a stage where they can actually do agro-processing which they could not have done before. One of the shade houses, by the way, the Member might be interested, is at PK Secondary School – the dormitory school.

*Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support - \$3,121,867,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

**Agency: 06 Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance**

#### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration - \$168,897,000**

**Mr. Jones:** Line item 6284 – Other: There is an increase from \$91 million to \$99 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what has occasioned this increase?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Are we talking about Programme 1?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Ms. Teixeira:** This is the same amount basically as 2022. This is a similar amount but slightly less by half a million dollars. It is relating to consultancies and international visitors. We are hosting a conference – maintenance for website. You may have visited our Human Rights Exposition which we had on 10<sup>th</sup> December. We intend to make that an annual feature. The money that is catered for will be adequate for us to deal with these activities – I said in consultancies as well. It will help in a number of the treaties reporting that we have to do on anti-corruption and human right, from time to time.

*Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration - \$168,897,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration - \$6,545,000**

**Mr. Jones:** Project code 1220000 – Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister provide the information in terms of the payment of retention?

**Ms. Teixeira:** We have \$45,000 left, a retention on replacement of a number of the windows in the Ministry's building in New Garden Street. That is the only roll-over that we have.

*Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration - \$6,545,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

4.35 p.m.

#### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$13,358,000**

**Mr. Jones:** Mr. Chairman, line item 6284 – Other: I notice here that a sum of \$1.5 million was allocated. In the revised sum, it indicates that only \$48,000 was utilised. We now see a request again for \$1.5 million. Could the Minister explain?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, it is correct. We were not able to spend the money. One reason was that we are working towards preparing a manual on parliamentary procedures to

guide elected officials from Local Government, Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and the general public so that they are more familiar with the way in which the Parliament works, how they can access Parliament and in what way. It is more a manual to help persons particularly at the Local Government level to become more familiar with the procedures and the way in which there is a connection between Parliament and what they do. In addition to that, to have annual workshops and training programmes for members of staff, as well as for Parliamentarians.

**Mr. Jones:** Cde. Chairman, under Other Operating Expenses, I note that indicator number two shows a decrease in the number of Bills that were passed and adopted by the House. It decreased from 34 to 30. I do recall that the Hon. Minister and Attorney General had indicated to this House that, in 2023, he would be bringing between 15 to 20 Bills, excluding the other ministries. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House the reason for the decrease in this year's Bills that will be coming to the House?

**Ms. Teixeira:** As far as I know, these were targets. The targets actually were surpassed. We have put targets for 2023 so that when one refers to that, page 56, we have put in the number of Bills passed and the committees' recommendations. We have put in the number of Bills presented and the number of Reports. They did not have in here, distinctly, which Bills were enacted. There are a number of Bills in committee right now that have to be concluded. The fact that we made 72% of our own projections in terms of the matters before the House, these projections in 2023 are not very different. The one area that is different is the number of Reports submitted in the National Assembly by statutory bodies. We have worked quite hard to improve the submissions and we hope that in the first half of the year a lot of Reports that have been outstanding will be brought to the House by the statutory bodies.

As one may know, all the Bills have to go through the Attorney General's Office. It does not matter which agency – all Bills. While the Attorney General may quote the Bills, they are not all his, in that sense. They all go through him because they must go through him as Attorney General, and of course, they go through Cabinet. There are a number of Bills that I think he called out when he was speaking that referred to other sectors and there are others that still have to come in. We will project that there are probably about another 20 Bills to come in this year and maybe more, depending on what Bills we have to amend. There are a number of Bills that have to be amended as well, which are

not new Bills like a number of those we had last year. There are a number of areas we have found that there are amendments to be made. For example, to mention one, the Allied Health Professionals Act 2010, which is under review. There are new Bills and there are also ones that need amending. I would just add that a number of these Bills must go before different consultations with civil societies or what one calls a special interest. If they are private sector more than trade union or *vice versa*, as well as areas of civil society.

*Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$13,358,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 063 – Governance – \$132,959,000**

**Mr. Jones:** Cde. Chairman, line item 6291 – National and Other Events: There was no allocation last year and we see an increase of \$5 million. I can double them.

Line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals: Has a figure here of \$3 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the events are that the Ministry will be engaged in?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member Mr. Jones. Concerning line item 6291, you are correct. There was nothing in 2022. What we have included, the \$5 million for this year, is for the hosting of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Caribbean Association of Integrity Commissions and Anti-Corruption Bodies (CCAICACB). That will be held in April of this year. We are the host country for the Commonwealth Caribbean (CARICOM). As I said, that will be held in April. That is the \$5 million we had to put in under 'Other' to cater for hosting that conference.

We have increased the refreshment and meals because, as a result of the Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), feeling that there could be some flexing of the COVID-19 arrangements, we are back meeting in situ at the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow up (NMRF) of Human Rights, the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) on Anti-Corruption Framework and Conventions and the National Stakeholder Forum. The fact that the virtual platform allows us to save quite a bit of money, when there are in situ meetings, we may have to rent places for the meetings, and we have to cater for snacks, *et cetera*. That is why that money went up. Including that, for the conference we are hosting with the Commonwealth, we hope to have a nice reception or something for them. That is why the budget went up under line item 6293.

*Programme: 063 – Governance – \$132,959,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

#### Programme: 063 – Governance – \$3,000,000

*Programme: 063 – Governance – \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister and staff. The Permanent Secretary (PS) and the staff of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. Thank you very much for taking us through your agency. We want to thank the Hon. Minister, despite the fact she was one of the victims of what happened over the weekend, she was able to make it and take us through all the agencies in such an expeditious and efficient manner. Thank you.

I now invite the Hon. Prime Minister and his team to join us as we go through the agencies and programmes under the Office of the Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister and his team get into position, let us turn to pages 52 and 53.

### Agency 02: Office of the Prime Minister

#### Current Expenditure

#### Programme: 021 – Prime Minister's Secretariat – \$467,100,000

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Line item 6284 – Other: I notice it went from \$99 million to \$200 million. This is for goods and services to be purchased. What caters for that high increase?

**Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]:** Concerning the figure mentioned, the increase is related to consultancies related to the gas to shore project that has spiked that sub-head. The allocation caters for the hiring of a consultant for our Hon. Prime Minister, annual subscriptions, human resource management software (HRMS) for the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), payment for advisor/consultant to the Office of the Prime Minister, purchase of items, the provision of support, again the consultant as mentioned earlier to the gas to power plant and other facilities.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Could there be a disaggregation of that? Especially the consultancy for the gas to shore this year. What will that be costing us?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** By our projection, it is likely to cost us \$83 million for the year 2023.

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6262 – Overseas Conferences and Official Visits: Hon. Prime Minister, I see zeros. I would

have thought there is a certain amount of travel that is part of your responsibilities. Could you explain that?

4.50 p.m.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** All overseas travels related to the Office of the Prime Minister is paid for by the Ministry of Finance and that is why you see zeros there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, Hon. Members, if there is a zero, you cannot ask a question because you have to ask... Apparently, we have about 15 Speakers in the House. I would defer to anyone who would want to answer. If there is no money allocated, there is no question; anything by zero is zero.

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): I see a fairly large increase. Could you explain what areas of training you refer to here and who are the recipients?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Bear in mind, we had \$240,000 last year. This year, we are only asking for \$600,000. That is not a major increase.

**Ms. Hughes:** I do not think the question was answered. I was asking for content – the areas for training and to whom.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Professional staff development, effective communication and office ethics are the areas for training. The Office of the Prime Minister has \$200,000 allocated for each area.

**Ms. Hughes:** Is that internal staff?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** It is internal staff because what we are looking at the Prime Minister's Secretariat, basically.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate to the Committee what are the positions for which the six staff are not available under the 2023 staffing details? What positions did they hold?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I am just trying to sort out... Did the staffing details decrease by six?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you want to know what was eliminated?

**Ms. Lawrence:** No. I want to know what are the positions that were held.

**Mr. Chairman:** But again...

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, it relates to line 6111, Administrative right through to line item 6117, Temporary Employees. It is how I asked the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister, there are six members less on your staff and the Committee is asking if you could state the positions that those were.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, shall I bring the Committee's attention... These are deficiencies in staff that you are questioning. It is not an increase in staff.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I am asking for the positions.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** First, we have the household workers. These are just ancillary staff, as far as I am concerned.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Do not go into details. I just want to know the positions.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The positions are household workers.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Are all of them household workers, even the one listed under line item 6113?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** There is one household worker, one data entry clerk, two secretaries and one office assistant.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister. It seems as though you have gotten more efficient.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate whether the Office of the Prime Minister will be filling these vacancies because I do not see a decrease in the total wages and salaries? The amount here, I know, takes into account the 8%, but it still does not reflect a decrease for those six persons.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** It is the intention to fill the vacancies with the appropriate staff. Basically, we are searching for the staff now.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Hon. Prime Minister, a lot of people send us applications believing that because we are in Parliament we could help. Should I forward them to your Office, Sir?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** No harm meant, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Member could forward all the applications and, of course, we will go through the process.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister.

*Programme: 021 – Prime Minister's Secretariat – \$467,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 021 – Prime Minister's Secretariat – \$94,825,000**

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Project code 1701000 – Minor Works: I see that it specifies:

“Provision for developmental, humanitarian and other activities”.

In the legend, it states, “enhance human and social development” and it goes on to state “developmental, humanitarian and other activities”. Could the Hon. Prime Minister specify what are the developmental, humanitarian and other activities that this project code speaks to?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** To answer the question, the \$10 million is controlled solely by the Prime Minister. It is utilised based on the Prime Minister's prerogative. It is used to help many at the grassroots levels. Appeals are made, whether in writing, to the Prime Minister or on behalf of people who may want some assistance in setting up a small business or so and the Prime Minister will provide the money. For example, there was a mudslide in Linden where three families were affected. They are in the process of rebuilding their homes. The Prime Minister graciously donated \$3.5 million to that worthy cost. Basically, this is what is done with the money. It is something historical and it has existed and been utilised by many Prime Ministers before me.

*Programme: 021 – Prime Minister's Secretariat – \$94,825,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$5,797,052,000**

**Dr. Cummings:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to ask two policy questions, as I lead this agency. I am looking at the performance indicators, as seen in Volume 2, page 29. There is an increase in the level of response required and needed at the regional level when compared to the national response, so much so that the preparedness plans are implemented in the region nine times more than the implementation at the national level. Could the Hon. Prime Minister state if there are any major challenges as it relates

to the channels of communication, monitoring and with alarm systems, especially in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** If I am to understand the Hon. Member, are you asking if there are any communication challenges between the headquarters of the Civil Defence Commissions (CDC) and their Regional Democratic Councils (RDC)?

**Dr. Cummings:** Yes. How do you monitor the warning systems when you have these challenges?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I could tell you offhand that wherever there is established communications, there is not an issue in terms of monitoring and communicating with those regions, perhaps, Region 8...

**Dr. Cummings:** Do they have internet and so on?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Yes. Perhaps, I could state that, from experience, Region 8, from time to time, would be more problematic than many other regions for obvious reasons.

**Dr. Cummings:** Could you tell this august Assembly how much money was spent in the last year for the management of disasters...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Dr. Cummings, zero in on a line item...

**Dr. Cummings:** I am coming to that, Sir. This is my last question on the policy. Could you tell us how much was spent...

**Mr. Chairman:** The general debate, which we completed last week, was intended for us to explore, literally, extensively and intensively our probing but this week is a bit more specific.

**Dr. Cummings:** Thank you for the reminder, Sir. Could you tell us how much was spent per region under disaster preparedness? Do you have that figure of how much was spent in Regions 7, 8, 9 and so on? In Region 10, there was Kwakwani and the floods. Do you have it per region? How much money was expended per region?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Unfortunately, I do not have the disaggregated sum by region. I could always lay it over.

**Dr. Cummings:** I would be happy for the regional plan as well. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I have noticed that the staff members are all contracted employees moving from 25 to 34 to the tune of \$69,077,000 to \$94,071,000, an increase of approximately, I think, \$25

million. Would you not want to build a cadre of members in the long-term to place on a fixed establishment, rather than having these contract workers? Why contract persons rather than have them on the fixed establishment?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** It is because of the nature of the work that they do. Historically, these are members who were paid by the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) and we have brought them over to our payroll now.

**Dr. Cummings:** Are they seconded?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I will not say that they are seconded. We have taken them over and we continue to have them as contracted workers.

**Dr. Cummings:** Now, looking at the target indicators, there are 34 contracted employees, could you state if that number is adequate for the disaster response in a timely manner which is within 72 hours? Do you have adequate number of employees?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister, there is a question on line item 6116; Contracted Employees.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The critical area is the 24 hours monitoring and these staff does that. In addition to their work, we have volunteers and other agencies, like the Guyana Defence Force and the Guyana Police Force (GPF), so that we could pull personnel on to deal with a specific disaster. So, I would say, yes, for now, this could work.

5.05 p.m.

**Dr. Cummings:** Could the Prime Minister state the top five employees with the corresponding monthly remuneration package for each?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The top five employees are: Internal Auditor – monthly salary \$255,190. Let me give you all the allowances: Duty allowance, \$20,000; travel, telephone allowance, \$10,000; vacation allowance, \$255,190; and yearly gratuity amount to \$689,013. The next one is the Warehouse Supervisor with a monthly salary of \$296,298; vacation allowance, \$296,298; yearly gratuity - \$800,005; travelling allowance, \$13,000; and uniform allowance but there is no total. Information Technology Officer's monthly salary - \$274,350; yearly gratuity, \$638,785; and vacation allowance, \$274,350. Project Manager's monthly salary - \$227,174; yearly gratuity, \$613,370; and vacation allowance, \$227,174. Administrative Officer's monthly salary - \$222,284; uniform allowance, \$7,280; gratuity, \$600,165; and vacation allowance, \$222,284. Those are the five that are listed here. My

understanding is that both the Director General and the Deputy Director General are seconded from the Guyana Defence Force. That is why I did not mention their salaries.

**Dr. Cummings:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): I noticed there is an increase of \$4 million moving from \$3 million. That was the revised for 2022. Now, \$4 million has been added to that, making the budget allocation of \$7 million for 2023. For the trainings, do you have tentative dates and where the training will take place? Is there a training manual? Who are the recipients of such training? Will this training be in a classroom setting or individual mentor-directed setting so to speak?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The training will focus, this year, on community-based disaster risk management training in Regions 1, 2, and 9. This is also the year when Guyana will be hosting, again, Exercise Tradewinds, an exercise where many countries from the Caribbean, even as far as Europe, will come to Guyana for their annual exercise. The CDC is responsible for the humanitarian assistance, disaster response aspect of that exercise. They will be also conducting training with the other participating agencies – the Guyana Defence Force, and some other agencies in Guyana that will be part of that exercise. Of course, they would have to continue to build on human capacity by continuous training of their members of the CDC. These trainings are done locally for the staff, and overseas training.

In addition to that, there are two other areas that are important in terms of the training – warehouse facility management training and shelter management training. There goes the money. The intention is to establish a regional warehouse in Mahdia, Region 8, and we have to train locals at Mahdia to man that warehouse. All in all, the effort is to enhance humanitarian relief efforts by decentralising the necessary skills needed to man warehouses, man shelter, and to actually supervise and conduct operations during times of disaster wherever it may occur in Guyana.

**Dr. Cummings:** I have understood you very much that it is more or less international because you have persons coming from the region and, maybe, Europe as you said. Looking inwards, such an important and topical issue, was a survey done to assess the knowledge, attitude, and training of health professionals towards disaster management? As you know, there is a paucity of formal training in medical schools. Do you plan to maybe team up with the health science department, faculty of the university to do short-term courses to address this important issue? It is not only the statutory

thing of coming every year, Exercise Tradewinds, but in-house, do you want to develop our capacity here at an early age?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I could assure you that the Ministry of Health already has its well-established training programmes. At the end of the day, what is important is that the CDC is a lead agency during disaster. They are responsible for coordinating the participation of other agencies during time of disaster. The training at CDC is specific to the coordination and the operational level training, not necessarily for the specialised training that is offered, for example, like the Ministry of Health. It is more about manning the operation so that we could bring relief to those affected in the affected areas; logistics management, shelter management, *et cetera*.

**Dr. Cummings:** Line item 6292 – Dietary: As you man the operations, does this cater for bulk purchase of non-perishable items to be stockpiled and in case of disaster as you tag off a set of bags to share? Is it for training or is it to buy stocks of non-perishable goods?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The sum at line item 6292, \$204,855,840, is specifically related to the hampers that are normally issued, during times of disasters, to those that are affected. It is food hampers and sanitation hampers. This specifically is about the food hampers. The projection is that we would utilise this money based on our experiences over the last couple of years. This is a good amount to start with to provide for the entire year. This is a year when we expect the *El Nino* phenomenon over an extended period, and it is likely we will have an extended period of disaster-related interventions.

**Dr. Cummings:** Last question. Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could you give us the name of the security service? Apart from the CDC office in Thomas Lands, are there other locations that we have security services?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Sorry. I did not get the question.

**Dr. Cummings:** Security services.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** In terms of facilities.

**Dr. Cummings:** In terms of facilities, yes.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** We have a facility at Region 9 that requires the security service. We have to contract some agency to provide security in Region 9. We have Georgetown where we have to pay for security, another contractor, and Timehri too.



**Dr. Cummings:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Fernandes:** I have two questions actually. Firstly, could the Prime Minister just clarify the figure he give to line item 6292 – Dietary? We have a different figure in the book. Also, line item 6294, could you disaggregate that figure please?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The figure in the book is \$205 million. I think I said \$204,885,840, which is just like about \$15,000 short. My apologies.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Sorry. I want you to disaggregate the \$5.3 billion under line item 6294 – Other. If you could just not give specifics right through, but just give us an idea of what it is. If it is too lengthy, kindly lay it over.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Is the question related to the \$5 billion that we have this year or the money that we had last year?

**Ms. Fernandes:** I am only asking for this year.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** That is a lumpsum of money that is placed there to deal with disasters not in terms of relief, but related to...For example, last year, we had the farmers who were affected. Therefore, we had to give flood relief. That money is there too. It is placed there and if there is a disaster for which we have to give, like the flood relief, that is where we would get the money from. The one before was related strictly to dietary, but this is related to flood relief.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. I think you said earlier that, based on your experience, this is an adequate amount.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, this is an adequate amount. The reality is that we have to prepare. We have to plan and prepare. Every year, we are affected by floods. As I mentioned before, there is a projection for the *El Nino* Phenomenon to affect Guyana this year. We have to be prepared or else we will fail.

*Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$5,797,052,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$125,000,000**

**Dr. Cummings:** Project code 2606400 – Civil Defence Commission: Could you tell us about the suggested date of

completion for the multipurpose building and the bond on Thomas Lands? Secondly, is this a new building or is it being retrofitted?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** What is the first question in relation to?

**Dr. Cummings:** The completion date. Do you have a projected date for the completion of the building and the bond at Thomas lands that is being built?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** It is December, 2023.

**Dr. Cummings:** Is it a new building or is it being retrofitted?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** It is a new warehouse, being built from the bottom up.

**Dr. Cummings:** Thank you.

*Programme: 022 – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – \$125,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

5.20 p.m.

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 023 – Power Generation – \$4,931,731,000**

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us give the staff an opportunity to get in place so that the Prime Minister will have his team ready to answer your questions. Thank you very much. The Hon. Prime Minister and his team are in place.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. I did not hear you propose the question, and I heard you put the question so my apologies.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I proposed the question, and we had a prolonged pause so that the team could get in place.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** My apology. I did not hear that, Cde. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, Hon. Member.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you. I see that, overall, there is a decrease in this programme which speaks to primarily line item 6321, and it really speaks to the various power generation companies across the country. I see that there is a reduction at Lethem Power Company from \$237,680,000 to

\$126,973,000. I also see a decrease at LINMINE (Community Power) from \$4,948,527,000 to \$3,402,000,000. There is some additional decreases. I am seeing one here from Mabaruma Power Company from \$136,259,000 to \$49,901,000. I am seeing Mahdia Power and Light Company Incorporated being reduced from \$100,236,000 to \$84,507,000. I am seeing, Sir, Matthew's Ridge Power and Light Company Incorporated reduced from \$35,126,000 to \$24,958,000 and Port Kaituma Power and Light Company Incorporated reduced from \$128,001,000 to \$84,467,000. May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister if he can provide some guidance as to why these reductions, given that the consumption or the utilisation of last year's moneys was extremely high compared to what is catered for now?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** To answer the question posed by the Hon. Member, if we look, we would have seen the original budget for 2022 for all the areas that he mentioned, had a certain sum and then we had to go for a supplementary provision that led us to the revised budget. There is a projection that the steep rise in fuel cost that led to that increase is likely to be a slight decrease in the cost of fuel. Therefore, the sums projected for 2023 is based on the indication that the price of fuel is likely to drop during this year. The increase was related solely to fuel and the fact that fuel price is going to go down...and that is the prediction, that fuel prices are going to go down in 2023. Therefore, we less amount of money. It is the basically the average between the low point and the high point that we ended the year in.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much Hon. Prime Minister. A very rational position to take.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister what was the cost for the fuel in terms of this projection that they have now projected this decrease? At what cost did they associate perhaps a barrel a fuel to, to get these projected amounts given that....

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I think you have asked the question and Prime Minister is just waiting for me to invite him to put the question to him.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Okay, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister, what is the cost of fuel you used in these projections?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, to answer the Hon. Member, we had reached a peak of some \$210 per litre and the projection is that it is going to drop to \$193 per litre and perhaps even lower than that during 2023.

*Programme: 023 Power Generation - \$4,931,731,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

#### Programme: 023 - Power Generation - \$48,767,420,000

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. I am noticing that under this power generation here that speaks to all the agencies there, speaks to basically increased or improved electricity distribution. Could I ask the Hon. Prime Minister what is the installed capacity at the moment at the Lethem Power Company, the hinterland electrification and the others? Given that we are speaking about improving the electricity distribution, what are they catered for in terms of the demand? If he can tell me first what is the current installed capacity.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** To answer the Hon. Member, at Lethem, we have several generators with different ratings. First, we have a Doosan no.10 with 550 kilo-volt-amperes KVA, a Doosan no.11 with 650 KVA, a Doosan no.12 with 650 KVA, a Doosan no.13 750 KVA, a Cummings generator with 900 KVA and we have a 1-megawatt solar farm. The upgrade mentioned is really to improve the network of that facility and, generally, it will obtain for all the other locations too, improvement of the network. We are satisfied that we had adequate generation capacity at present. The issue is that, as we go on, we will be converting from non-renewable to renewable. That is why we have the programme with the solar farm which, perhaps, will come up afterwards.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Are these generators the property of the State or are they being rented?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** All the generators are the property of the State, and they were acquired over a period of time. Each generator will have a lifespan and for the planning purpose of efficiency, we try to acquire new generators before the end of the life of any particular generator. During the year 2022, we acquired several generators for the different locations, including Lethem. We acquired two generators for Lethem. As you could recall, the solar farm at Lethem came into operation in 2022. We have a similar solar farm that will come into operation in Bartica this year. We have one under construction at Mahdia. I hope that answers the question of the Hon. Member, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** What fuel are these generators using? Are they using heavy fuel oil or low fuel oil?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** All our generators are using standard diesel fuel Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** May I turn the attention to the Gas to Power Project? I see that is project code 2610600.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, Hon. Member.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. A sum of \$43,300,000,000 is provision for power plant and associated facilities – United States of America (USA). In the legend, it tells me that this is to improve generation of electricity, caters for the construction of natural gas, fired powered plant and natural gas liquids plant at Wales, upgrading of transmission network, project management, consultancy and supervision. Would the Hon. Prime Minister be kind enough to disaggregate that sum?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The Hon. Member asked for a disaggregation of the sum. This year, we have a total of \$43.3 billion and the disaggregation is as follows: a sum of \$33,672,000,000 will go for the engineering, procurement and construction related to the natural gas liquids plant and the power plant to generate the electricity. For the project management consultancy, a sum of \$968,092,000, and for the transmission lines, we have a sum of \$8,659,159,000 and that gives us a total of \$43.3 billion.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, may I have the floor?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you may have the floor.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you, Sir. Unfortunately, I do not have the raise hand feature. Sorry for butting in. That same project code - Gas to Shore Project. The expansion network, who will be executing this project? I see everything is financed this year. Who will be executing the transmission upgrade?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** To answer the Hon. Member, we have that on tender and the bids are expected to close at the end of February.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sorry, Mr. Chairman, but I was trying to ask which agency would be undertaking this.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think it is self-evident. This is executed under the Office of the Prime Minister, right?

**Mr. Patterson:** [*Inaudible*] Gas to Shore Project could be doing transmission. It could be a third agency.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just help us a bit. We are asking for this money under Agency 02, which is Office of the Prime Minister. With respect to the execution of this by a firm, that

is out to tender. I am trying to figure now, what is the question being asked.

5.35 p.m.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, I am trying to ascertain if the Guyana Power and Light (GPL)...Who will be the primary distributors [*inaudible*]?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister, is there any other information on the execution partners, agencies or departments?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for this whole process. A few moments ago, I did mention that the tender is out, and will close at the end of February. As far as I am concerned, that is an adequate answer at this point in time. I wish to assure the Hon. Member that we are committed to transparency. As information becomes available, we will communicate to the general Guyanese public and, certainly, to the Members on the opposite side of the Committee. This is a project for all of us. All of us will benefit from this project. What is important for us is not just completing the project in its allotted time and having it ready by December, 2024, but ensuring that step-by-step transparency is maintained, and everyone knows about this project. That is my commitment to the Hon. Member.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Project code [*inaudible*]. How many households did you provide for to the tune of \$171 million in 2022 and how many do you plan to provide with solar panels in 2023 to the tune of \$1.755 million?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** To the Hon. Member, 30,000 households will be provided with solar panel systems. We will start receiving solar panels this year. During the second quarter of this year, we are expecting to receive 10,000 and we will distribute that. For the rest of the year, we will receive another 10,000 – hopefully by the third quarter. In the final quarter, there will be the final 10,000. So, it is our expectation that, by the end of this year, all 30,000 solar panel systems will be in the country and will be distributed in 200 hinterland communities. The whole aim is to bridge the energy divide. My Ministry is responsible for bridging the information and communications technology (ICT) divide and the energy divide. I wish to assure the Hon. Member that I will work overtime to ensure that both divides are bridged through the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Minister, my other question to you is, could you kindly tell this House what are the sizes of the

solar systems that you intend to place in these households? And probably you can give us the wattages.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** These will have 150 kilowatts (kW). I wish to assure you that this means that they are more powerful than the ones that the last People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government had distributed to the same communities throughout Guyana. [An Hon. Member (*Inaudible*)] I know everything; I was in the Guyana Defence Force (GDF).

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, could I go to Small Hydro Projects? I am not sure if it was answered. It is under the Capital Project Profile. It states at number 4:

“Provision for consultancy services, administration and land acquisition.”

Could the Hon. Minister say which land is being acquired?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I am asking if the Hon. Member can repeat the question because I am trying to...

**Mr. Chairman:** It is in the legend too. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson could you just...?

**Mr. Patterson:** This is Power Generation, Programme 023, Volume 3, page 31, Small Hydro Projects. Under Description of Project, the fourth item listed states:

“Provision for consultancy services...”

**Mr. Chairman:** It is the last item. Just one second, Hon. Member, I am guiding the Prime Minister. It is the last item at project code 2610100, Small Hydro Projects. Go ahead, Hon. Member Mr. Patterson.

**Mr. Patterson:** In the legend, under the Description of Project in the Capital Project Profile, it states:

“Provision for consultancy services, administration and land acquisition.”

I was asking the Prime Minister if he could say which land they are planning to acquire under this programme.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I rather suspect that the Hon. Member is talking about the Kumu and the Moco Moco small hydropower projects. There is no need for land acquisition with those two projects. What there was a need for was community engagement and we have done that as part of the project. The communities welcomed these two projects. In fact, you can recall that we already had a functional hydropower at Moco Moco. Unfortunately, that

one was damaged, so it is being repaired. The one at Kumu is new. We had several outreaches which included me. I visited several communities last year and had consultations with the residents there. I can assure you that these two projects are most welcomed by the residents of both communities. They will not offer only electricity to them but, during the construction phase, there will be some amount of employment available for the locals – the people who are living there. Again, this is one of the other people-centred projects that we are funding this year.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: I just wanted to remind the Prime Minister that the communities of Kumu and Moco Moco signed off on those projects in writing since 2018. You may not have been aware of that. However, is he saying that the legend is incorrect? It states, “consultancy services”. Could he break it down? Could he disaggregate what number four of the project entails for the Committee? It states:

“...consultancy services, administration and land acquisition.”

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I have the breakdown here, but I wish to remind the Hon. Member that both projects were conceptualised by a previous PPP/C Government. So, while they may have signed off on the project, fortunately, again, for the people of Guyana, we have to implement it. We will do that; we are implementers, Mr. Chairman.

With regard to the second part, there is the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) contract for the rehabilitation and upgrade of the Moco Moco, 0.7 megawatts, Hydropower Plant and the construction of the Kumu, 1.5 megawatts, Hydropower Plant – \$1.392 billion. There are consultancy services for the design, review, construction, and supervision of the Kumu and Moco Moco Hydropower Plants – \$89 million. There is the Project Management Unit (PMU) support staff – \$8 million; and PMU support staff – \$5 million. These are the staff emoluments for Clerk of Works, Technicians, *et cetera*, and the one before which was staff emoluments for Procurement Specialist; and PMU support (Logistics) – \$7 million. The cost for the maintenance of two vehicles is included there. That gives us a grand total of \$1.5 billion.

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

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Henry is on the floor.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I am sorry.

[*Mr. Chairman left the Chair.*]

[*Mr. Seeraj assumed the Chair.*]

**Mr. Henry:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project code 2606600, Lethem Power Company: I listened to the Prime Minister, and he mentioned that a one-megawatt solar farm is included in the package. My question, is it working to its full capacity? If not, when will remedial work be done on it? If it is working to its full capacity, when will the consumers in Lethem get a reduced cost for their household electricity? Thank you.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** This is a complementary system in the sense that it works in conjunction with the diesel generators that I mentioned earlier. Therefore, at no time will it work to its full capacity. It will lead to a reduction in the cost of fuel associated with generating electricity. What I can tell the Hon. Member is not to expect a reduction in what you are paying for electricity. Perhaps, what will happen is that we may not necessarily have to increase what you are paying now unless there is a case like what happened in 2022 – there was a huge increase in the cost of fuel. So, it will work in your favour.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, I want to go back to Description of Project in the legend, that speaks to the Small Hydro Projects. This legend is guiding us that for the Moco Moco and Kumu projects there will be land acquisition. That is what this document that was presented to us is stating. The Prime Minister is now saying that there will be no land acquisition. So, for clarity, is the document that we have before us misleading; will there be land acquisition; and where is this land located?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Let me assure the Hon. Member that I have visited this project and there is no need for land acquisition.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Comrade.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** While it may have been written there, the updated position, as of today, is that there is no need for land acquisition. If there is any sum associated with land acquisition, it means that it will now become savings for the project.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you for confirming.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Members, I should remind you that we have one hour allocated for the Office of the Prime Minister. We

are exhausting that time; we have eight minutes remaining and we have two more programmes to cover.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, do we not have any savings in time from the previous agencies?

**Mr. Seeraj:** We are way behind schedule.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, I have two other questions, please. Thank you. In terms of this project code 2610000, these solar panels for the 30,000 households, I heard the Hon. Prime Minister say that it is for 30,000 households and it is 150 kilowatts or something to that nature, and they are better than the ones that were given to the previous communities. Are these 30,000 solar panels that we are now catering for going back to the same communities or are there additional communities? How many additional communities are there and where are they located? This is not in terms of the villages but in terms of the areas. Are these the same areas that they serviced before and are servicing again or new areas with the areas that were already serviced?

5.50 p.m.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, if I am to understand the Hon. Member, there are two questions he is asking. The first one is relating to the wattage. The previous solar system was 65 watts, this one is 150 watts, more than double the previous one. In relation to the distribution, 30,000 was distributed and I can assure you that the Office of the Prime Minister will be working with other Ministries, especially the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, to distribute the 30,000 systems, based on a need basis, in over 200 communities.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you very much Cde. Prime Minister. My final question, with reference to project code 3402400, Guyana Energy Agency, could the Hon. Prime Minister say, under the completion of these solar mini-grids, the location of these mini-grids please?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** (*Inaudible*)

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Project code 3402400. Mr. Chair, I hope we will be getting back our time.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the locations of the 19 solar powered mini-grids are: Sebai, Karaburi, Baramita, Kwebanna, Canal Bank, and Haimakabra in Region 1; Tapakuma, Saint Monica, Mission Capoey, and Wakapau in Region 2; Jawalla, Waramadong, Paruima in Region 7; Kurukabaru, in Region 8; Annai, Karasabai, Karaudarnau, and Aishalton in Region 9; and River's View in Region 10.

*Programme: 023 – Power Generation - \$48,767,420,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation - \$2,577,630**

**Ms. Hughes:** Hon. Prime Minister, in the line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence, we see there is a very large increase. Could you explain if this includes travel across the region? Where? Maybe you can give up a little update on.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, to answer the Hon. Member the sums listed there are related to, yes, travel and subsistence for the Industry and Innovation department. As you know, starting in 2022, there were several outreaches, job fairs and training programmes throughout Guyana. It is our intention this year to ramp up the number of locations that we would be visiting and conducting similar activities because, if Guyana is to really move forward, we need to have our people at the grass root level knowledgeable about ICT. We know that there are similar training activities by the Ministry of Education and other institutions, but this unit will be traversing the length and breadth of Guyana again, spending a lot of time not only on the coastland but going into the hinterland to conduct similar training, and that is the sole reason for the increase.

**Ms. Hughes:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Line item 6291, National and Other events. Could you give us an idea of those events? Are they events that are involving members of the private sector, young people, hackathons?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, certainly. I must complement the Hon. Member for being *right on the ball* in terms of the questions, and I am quite certain she is aware of the answer. However, Innovation Challenge 2023, is an event aimed at creating innovative solutions to issues affecting Guyanese and to foster the development of innovative products and our services. It will take the form of a hackathon, where the country's best programmers will be working to develop world class ICT applications that can be used to change the digital landscape in Guyana. The unit will be doing two such categories: one, Expert – this will involve senior coders, programmers who are already establish in the field; and two, Novice – this will involve junior programmers and will allow them to showcase their innovative ideas. We have a budgeted sum of \$2 million and, of course, as mentioned before, the amount provided in 2022 was inadequate and as such a sponsor had to be solicited. In 2023, there is no guarantee the unit will be able to acquire a

sponsor. Also, the unit is looking to attract more teams and more highly qualified programmers and, as such, there has to be an increase in prize money.

Secondly, the ICT Exhibition and Investment Forum: this activity will give corporate Guyana an opportunity to highlight the ICT products and plans for Guyana. This will be a collaborative effort with the private sector and other governmental organisations in Guyana. It is expected that this event will highlight the importance and heighten interest in ICT and will showcase Guyana as the possible ICT business destination. Apart from the exhibition, there will be an investment forum to attract more investors in the ICT sector, and we have \$1 million that is programmed. We have the ICT Road Show and an ICT Job Fair. Again, two other activities that are very familiar to the Hon. Member. We have \$500,000 for each area, giving us a grand total of \$4 million.

**Ms. Hughes:** Wonderful, Prime Minister. Line Item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), again we have a large increase. Could you say what type of training and whom?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Advance screening workshops in Animation, Artificial Intelligence, Graphics, and Cybersecurity. One advance training workshop will be held in Georgetown for persons throughout Guyana. The content to be covered includes: Animation, Artificial Intelligence, Graphics, and Cybersecurity. That will last for two weeks, and we hope to have 60 persons attending that training. The total estimated cost is \$4 million.

For basic community level ICT training, introductory level training that will target all selective regions, the topics include Introduction to Computer, Introduction to the Internet and Web, and Microsoft Office Suite. We intend to train 1,000 persons in that area in the year 2023 to the cost of some \$8 million.

The ICT innovation camps are specialised 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 Math (STEM), among other things, will be done. These ICT innovation camps will be held in Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara during the period of July to August, the eight weeks when our children are normally at home from school, and we intend to attract from 200 schoolboys and girls at the estimated cost of \$2.5 million.

Then we have the girls in ICT. This is in collaboration with the University of Guyana and will take the form of a girls'

code camp, where girls will be trained in Programming and Coding. Again, we hope to attract 200 girls to this training, and it will cost a some \$2 million.

Trainer of Trainers, remote and riverine communities: there will be three Trainer of Trainers workshops for remote locations in Guyana. These trainings will look to train persons to become ICT trainers within their communities. We hope to attract 105 persons to this training and the intention is to spend \$7 million.

Then we have the special training which will be held with persons who are blind, using the Job Access With Speech (JAWS) software. We hope to attract 35 persons to that training and to spend \$1.5 million. That will bring us to a grand total of \$25 million for the training.

**Ms. Hughes:** Thank you very much. Line item 6322, Subsidies and Contribution to International Organisations. Hon. Prime Minister, are there any regional or international organisations that your Ministry, your Office or any of the project areas, make regular contributions to?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, while we have zeros there, we have contributions that we will make to agencies such as the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU). Those contributions are ongoing. We are still members. We have issues in the sense that prior to taking Office, for extended periods, in some cases three years or five years, no contributions were made, so we are a bit *behind the curve*. But all those contributions are handled through the Ministry of Finance. International Telecommunication Union (ITU), CTU, *etcetera*.

**Ms. Hughes:** Thank you. Are you a member of those agencies still?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** We are members but, in some cases, we are behind in terms of our contributions....

**Ms. Hughes:** I got that.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** ....and, therefore, that will affect how we participate in those organisations.

6.05 p.m.

**Ms. Hughes:** Thank you. Related to your general programme performance statements, I noticed that quite a few of your important indicators have “not applicable”.

“2 Internet penetration in the Hinterland

3 Fixed Broadband...

4 Mobile-Cellular...”

I am just wondering, how it is that you measure the impact of what the Ministry is doing without those indicators printed here and generally being known?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am advised that those are based on information published through the Bureau of Statistics.

**Ms. Hughes:** But surely, for us to understand better and to be able to monitor your impact going forward, I want to make the recommendation that that information should be in here.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I wish to submit that that is a very good point raised by the Hon. Member and, going forward, we will ensure we put systems in place to accurately monitor.

*Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation – \$2,577,630,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation – \$6,615,590,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Hon. Prime Minister, project code 1219100 – National Data Management Authority: I am wondering if you could disaggregate that sum. We know that it should be for safe city, internet infrastructure and national identification enrolment, but could you just give us a breakdown?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The disaggregation reads as follows: provision for the expansion of what was known as safe city is now being expanded. It will now become safe country. We are moving from the city to other regions starting with Regions 3 and 6, and the sum there is \$2 billion. The next one is the Electronic Identification System (eID) in the sum of \$2,205,000,000. The third one is the provision of the electronic immigration gate (e-Gate) and border control systems at our ports of entry. This will be modernising the entry and exit at our ports of entry in the sum of \$2,085,000,000. The upgrading of the internet infrastructure is in the sum of \$321,590,000. That will give us a grand total of \$6,611,590,000.

**Ms. Hughes:** With regard to the same project code, could you give us an idea of the software equipment?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** May I ask software equipment for which one, Hon. Member? Obviously, there are software for three areas.

**Ms. Hughes:** It is for the same project code 1219100.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Let me explain. Under project code 1219100, listed as a project, there are three sub projects that requires software. I am requesting if you could point me to which one you are talking about.

**Ms. Hughes:** I kind of wanted an idea of what type of software you were ordering. If you want to give me the list after, it is just for a sense of what kind of software you would be ordering for the four different areas we are looking at.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** There are a number of software that would be utilised. For these three sub projects there is the eID Processing System software, the Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS) Biometric Engine software, the Source Code software, the Immigration Police software, the Immigration Police Physical Infrastructure software and the OnSite software integration.

**Ms. Hughes:** Project code 4502900 – National Communication Network: Could you tell us a bit of where exactly is the network expanding to in terms of the locations?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am advised that we are examining Telecommunications and Innovation. We have not reached to that as yet.

**Mr. Seeraj:** That is correct. We are at Programme 024, Telecommunications and Innovation.

**Ms. Hughes:** Sorry about that. I jumped the gun. That is all from me. Thank you.

*Programme: 024 – Telecommunications and Innovation – \$6,615,590,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$939,304,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6284 – Other: Could you disaggregate that for us?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The disaggregation as requested by the Hon. Member is as follows: the training of a consultant for 100-strong communication recruitment

programme for the state media supporting media entities, \$5 million; procurement of consultancy services for the design and setting up of a national digital infrastructure for the Government's public information sector, \$10 million; continued rollout and operationalisation of the National Broadcasting Academy, \$20 million; procurement of investment opportunities and international advertising, \$15 million; external media exchange and resource sharing, \$15 million; subscription to digital communications network, \$2 million; subscription to publications – and that is for international publications – \$2 million; subscription to community-based groups for Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10, \$5 million.

**Ms. Hughes:** Hon. Prime Minister, I do not mean to interrupt but, in the interest of time, I am just wondering if you would be all right laying that over?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I already read it out so...

**Mr. Seeraj:** Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister.

**Ms. Hughes:** If you have read all, that is all right.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Should I continue? The procurement of consultancy services for the development of standardised employment policies across the state media, \$10 million; procurement of consultancy and advisory services for the Department of Public Affairs, \$40 million; procurement of consultancy services for the development of audio visual and developmental programmes, \$12 million; procurement of consultancy services for the design and rollout of a national mobile information campaign, \$15 million; procurement for research and development consultancy services, \$5 million; procurement of consultancy services for the regional broadcasters summit 2023, \$5 million; and the procurement of consultancy services for the planning and execution of the 2023 World Press Freedom Day, National Conference and Symposium, \$9 million. That gives us a total cost of \$170 million.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, if I may?

**Mr. Seeraj:** Go ahead Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is a sum allocated there of \$266 million for the National Communications Network (NCN) and for the Department of Public Information (DPI) a sum of \$331,540,000, all belonging to the taxpayers of Guyana, including taxpayers who support the Parliamentary Opposition. May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister if there will be space allocated to the



Parliamentary Opposition to broadcast their information via NCN and the Department of Public Information and if the Prime Minister would be kind enough to say when those airtimes would be available.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Everything is available to everyone in Guyana to be utilised.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Currently, as I said before, these are moneys belonging to all taxpayers, including supporters of the Opposition Party, and all taxpayers contribute towards the financing and functioning of NCN and DPI. Right now, the Opposition does not have airtime on NCN and DPI. I am asking the Hon. Prime Minister what are the durations that are currently available for the Parliamentary Opposition to air their business on NCN and DPI considering that these programmes or these entities are financed by all taxpayers, including the Opposition taxpayers.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** We have a policy where it is available to all the people of Guyana. I do not think at this forum we should go down into the weeds – and forgive me for using that term – to try to disaggregate as to who should get what in terms of hours or minutes or so on. The policy remains: it is available to all.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you very much, Cde. Chairman. Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what has occasioned this sharp increase?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I think attention is of the essence here. I have just laboriously read out, based on the request by the Hon. Member, Ms. Catherine Hughes,...

**Mr. Seeraj:** That is correct, Hon. Prime Minister.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** ...what has been asked by the Hon. Member, Mr. Christopher Jones.

**Mr. Jones:** My apologies, PM.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, I have one other question on a separate line item please.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Hon. Members, I will now put the question that the sum stated...

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, I have one other question on a separate line item.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Hon. Mahipaul, we are running out of time. We still have to go to the Capital Expenditure. Go ahead, please. I will allow one more question.

6.20 p.m.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. I was turning to line item 6116, Contracted Employees. Would the Hon. Prime Minister please tell this Committee the top five contracted employees, their designations and total remuneration packages?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The top five employees – number 1: Director of Digital Communications, with a salary of \$410,014 and a duty allowance of \$40,000, travelling allowance – \$25,000, telephone allowance – \$10,000, entertainment allowance – \$15,000, yearly gratuity of \$1,107,038 and vacation allowance – \$410,014.

Number 2: Director of Public Affairs, with a salary of \$410,014; duty allowance – \$40,000; travelling allowance – \$25,000; telephone allowance – \$10,000; entertainment allowance – \$15,000; yearly gratuity – \$1,107,038; and vacation allowance – \$410,014.

Number 3: Digital Communication Officer's salary is \$219,564; duty allowance – \$10,000; travelling allowance – \$15,000; telephone allowance – \$10,000; gratuity – \$592,823; and vacation allowance – \$219,564.

Number 4: Public Relations Officer's salary is \$183,600; duty allowance – \$35,000; other allowances – \$15,000; yearly gratuity – \$495,720; and vacation allowance – \$183,600.

Technical Officer salary is \$325,309; duty allowance – \$30,000; travelling allowance – \$20,000; other allowance – \$10,000; gratuity – \$878,334; and vacation allowance – \$325,309. That is number five.

*Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$939,304,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Estimates

**Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$150,000,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Project code 4502900 – National Communication Network:

“Provision for upgrading and expansion of network.”

Could you tell us a bit about that expansion and exactly what areas you are going into?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The disaggregation of the \$125 million, is that the question, Hon. Member?

**Ms. Hughes:** The areas you are expanding into.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Oh, the areas we are expanding into. The areas we are expanding into are the Port Kaituma, Kato, Kwakwani and New Amsterdam. Those are the new stations.

*Programme: 025 – Government Information and Communication Services – \$150,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Seeraj:** This brings us to the end of the Office of the Prime Minister. Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister and team. We will now move on to the Minister of Legal Affairs. We will allow the Attorney General some time for the staff to settle in. In agreement with the Members of the Opposition, through the Opposition Chief Whip, the Hon. Member, Mr. Jones, we will allocate 30 minutes to the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

#### **Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs**

##### **Current Estimates**

**Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$153,458,000**

*Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$153,458,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

##### **Capital Estimates**

**Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$454,000,000**

**Mr. Forde:** In relation to this item, project code 1201300, Buildings, there is a provision for a \$4 million guard hut. Could the Hon. Minister provide the description of this guard hut?

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:** There is a wooden guard hut at the main building. It is in a very dilapidated condition. It is a guard hut with lavatory facilities. It is made of wood and it is now going to be made of concrete.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** A follow-up: could the Hon. Attorney General give the dimension of this new guard that will cost the taxpayers over \$4 million or somewhere thereabout?

**Mr. Nandlall:** I do not have the dimensions but it is not only a guard hut; it is also a lavatory facility. I am told, it also has with it some security apparatus, scanners, *et cetera*.

*Programme: 521 – Policy Development and Administration – \$454,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

##### **Current Estimates**

**Programme: 523 – Attorney Generals Chambers – \$1,112,166,000**

**Mr. Forde:** In relation to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I observed that there is an increase in contracted employees from 13 to 29, which is an increase from \$165 million to \$267 million. Could the Minister lay over the designations and remuneration packages for these employees?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Mr. Forde is asking me to lay it over, so I will oblige, Sir.

**Mr. Forde:** In relation to line item 6284, under the designation Other, there is an increase from \$225 million to \$682 million. Could the Minister provide us with a breakdown?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Under this line item, there are several activities for this year, including constitutional reform – \$150 million, stipend for law reform commissioners – \$20,657,000, public outreach and the sensitisation – \$10 million, legal fees – \$50 million, online library – \$6 million, advertisement – \$30 million, costs to pay in court matters – \$30 million and consultation on the new Arbitration Bill, that is an ongoing process – \$6 million. This year, Guyana will undergo its mutual assessment at the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) under the Anti-Money Laundering, Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) programme \$8 million is budgeted there. Work will begin on the establishment of a regional law school; \$30 million is budgeted there. Contribution towards the complete revised laws of Guyana. This year, we are doing the revised laws of Guyana from 2012 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. We have \$220 million set aside for that. We are also doing law reports from 2007 to 2020. That is the publication of the books as well as online. From 2007 to 2020, \$95 million. The Ministry of Legal Affairs will continue to partner with agencies such as the Deeds Registry, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, and Lands and Surveys Commission to assist in land regularisation across the country. The sum of \$50 million was put aside for that. There is a \$4,000,800 that

is put aside for other miscellaneous expenses associated with these activities.

6.35 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Reference to the Constitutional Reform Commission, a sum of \$150 million is put aside for that. Could the Hon. Attorney General (AG) inform this Committee, at what stage is the operationalisation of this Commission at currently?

**Mr. Nandlall:** The Constitutional Reform Act was passed and the Hon. Member ought to know that under the Act a Commission has to be established, which will be done shortly. A building has already been secured and furnished. A secretariat has to be appointed to work along with the Commission, as I said furnishing has been acquired for that building already and the building is rented. As soon as possible, early this year, when the President appoints the commission will begin its work.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. May I ask the Hon. AG the location of the building and the cost in terms of rental?

**Mr. Nandlall:** It is the same building that is currently being used to house the Commission of Inquiry (COI) into the 2020 Elections. The building has been rented for \$750,000 and the rent will continue upon the conclusion of that Commission, and it will move straight into the Law Reform Commission.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** A follow-up: By the conclusion of the COI into the Elections, are we expected to immediately begin the Constitutional Reform Commission?

**Mr. Nandlall:** I do not have a timeframe, Sir but it will happen early. The Commission of Inquiry is supposed to conclude its Hearings very shortly. A report would have to be written but the building would not have to be used. The writing of the report ... These things are going to happen in the year 2023, as I said in my Budget presentation.

*Programme: 523 – Attorney Generals Chambers – \$1,112,166,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 523 – Attorney Generals Chambers – \$17,177,000**

*Programme: 523 – Attorney Generals Chambers – \$17,177,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$38,028,000**

*Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$38,028,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$3,500,000**

*Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Let me thank, on your behalf and my behalf, the Hon. Attorney General and his staff for taking us through that agency. Thank you, Hon. Attorney General. We can now prepare for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. We are still in Committee. We are going to just give the Hon. Minister a few more minutes to get in place. Is the staff of the Ministry here? Is the Minister coming? Yes? Is Her Excellency, Ms. Elisabeth Harper or head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation here? I do not mind suspending but the problem is getting the Members back. Let us suspend for 15 minutes.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, we can move to the next Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on one second. I am listening to the Hon. Member, Ms. Lawrence.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, I am proposing we move to the next Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** The challenge I have Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence is that if the... While it was a decent suggestion, the issue was mobilising the staff for the next Ministry, which was scheduled for 8 p.m. The staff may not have known that we are going right through. Thank you very much, Ms. Lawrence. I think in the meanwhile we can ask those Ministers and their staff who are scheduled for the rest of the evening, if they could mobilise to get them forward.

#### Agency: 12 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

#### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 121 Development of Foreign Policy – \$2,699,770,000**

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I note that there is an increase in the sum and I note as well that there is an addition of about 13 persons to the list of contracted employees. I want to ask the Hon. Minister whether he would be so kind as to indicate the designations of those additional persons, the designations of the top three persons in the category and their remuneration. I want to ask if he would be kind enough to lay that information over.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough to lay over the information?

**Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation [Mr. Todd]:** The top three would be the Advisor to the Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Permanent Secretary. The increase of 13 staff members is the employment of 15 staff. Three were transferred into the line item and one staff to Programme 2. We have had one resignation and three staff whose contract ended. That gives you 13.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** A follow-up on what the Hon. Member had proceeded with, what are the designations of the contract that ended?

**Mr. Todd:** The designations are: one Senior Foreign Service Officer, one Senior Personnel Officer and Communications Assistant.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I want to draw our attention to line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence. I am at a bit of a disadvantage because I had hoped to be able to ask questions on 6262, Overseas Conferences and Official Visits, but there are no sums allocated there. To look curious, him being the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperations, I would like the Hon. Member to inform the Committee, what comprises this local travel and subsistence? Where is he going, locally, to deal with the development of foreign policy?

**Mr. Todd:** For Local Travel and Subsistence, we have Public Relations (PR) campaigns, which is meant to sensitise the people of Guyana, especially the bordering communities. We have included that as part of our local and travel.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I want to draw our attention to line item 6284, Other. There is a sum there of \$810,000; could the Hon. Minister provide us with a disaggregation of that sum?

**Mr. Todd:** It is for payment of legal fees – \$535,300,000; public diplomacy/public relations activities – \$166,700,000; diaspora engagements and outreaches – \$50,300,000;

digitalisation of the Ministry's web boards – \$ 10 million; bank charges/remittances to overseas missions and other operational expenditure – \$37,700,000; and software applications/antivirus firewall, Adobe and client access licences – \$10 million. This gives a total of \$810 million.

*6.50 p.m.*

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I have two follow-up questions on that one. I heard the Hon. Minister refer to diaspora outreaches. I am curious as to what that entails. Does it entail you travelling? Again, I am not seeing any amounts for international travel for foreign ministers. I want to have an idea as to where your sums for your overseas trips are catered for.

**Mr. Todd:** The very said line item, Mr. Chairman.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Am I to understand that your sums for travelling are catered for under Other?

**Mr. Todd:** The diaspora of activities is catered for under this line item.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Does this include your travelling overseas?

**Mr. Todd:** It is overseas to various states and jurisdictions.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I am really having difficulty understanding why it is budgeted for under Other when there is a discreet line item dealing with the overseas travel, but I will move on. I want to draw our attention to line item 6322, Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations. There is a significant increase and I wonder whether the Hon. Minister could advise us as to what would have occasioned that increase?

**Mr. Todd:** It is due to an increase that caters to the contribution in Regional Security System (RSS) which we have signed on to which gives a total of \$156.4 million. The increase is assessed, contributions. The exchange rate and differences where credit balances were fully utilised in 2022.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I want to go back to Other. I wanted to clarify with a follow-up. Are the costs for the Attorneys who are currently representing us at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) catered for in this line item?

**Mr. Todd:** It is catered for under legal fees.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** A follow-up to my Colleague, Ms. Walton-Desir's, first question under line item 6116, Contracted Employees: I heard her asking about the remuneration packages for the top three, but I did not hear the Hon.

Minister answering it. The advisor to the Minister, the Foreign Secretary and some other person he listed. Could he be kind enough to say what is the total remuneration package for these three employees?

**Mr. Todd:** Mr. Chairman, that is another question. The Hon. Member did not ask that question. She just wanted to know the top three, but I can give it.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** To clarify, I did ask but I had asked that you lay it over.

**Mr. Todd:** Did you? Sorry; I did not hear that. For the Advisor, it is \$1,072,307; Foreign Secretary \$808,920 and Permanent Secretary (PS) – \$751,140.

*Programme: 121 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$2,699,770,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 121 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$18,900,000**

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Unfortunately, I am at a disadvantage because my book does not have that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you suffering a ‘Mahipaul moment’?

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I am having a ‘Mahipaul moment’, I am afraid.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could we get...

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, I was wondering who would have had it this time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, did you make a comment? I did not get that clearly.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes, Sir. I was saying that I was wondering who is going to have it this time because all my pages are in order.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. It moves around. It is contagious. Page 491, programme 121.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** No questions here, please.

*Programme: 121 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$18,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 122 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$3,806,530,000**

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: I notice there is a notable increase in the number of clerical and office support staff. Could the Hon. Minister give an explanation as to what occasioned this increase?

**Mr. Todd:** The increase is consistent with the growing nature of our responsibility in promoting our foreign policy agenda.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Mr. Chairman, I do not think if I press I will get any more details so I will move on. Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister provide a disaggregation of that amount?

**Mr. Todd:** Bank charges – \$45 million; public relations activities – \$9,174,000; upgrade and maintenance to website – \$19,266,000; licence fees and other miscellaneous items – \$30 million; translation services, which is pertaining to the United Nations (UN) Security Council – \$729,750; and insurance of diplomatic staff, residences and chancellery – \$14,270,250 which gives a total of \$118,400,000.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** A follow-up: I noted that the Hon. Minister mentioned translation services in respect of the UN Security Council. I am aware that we have written to be a non-permanent member of that Council. I wondered whether the Hon. Minister could advise the Committee as to whether... If he could indicate, where, if not here, or the other activities, that we expect that we will undertake in this bid. Where is that catered for and what are those other activities?

**Mr. Todd:** Do you want the total as well or just the activities?

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Both will be fine.

**Mr. Todd:** Campaign activities –\$12,510,000, this is craft items. This under programme one. There is another campaign activity listed. This is for tokens, banner, backdrop, receptions – \$5,066,550. Meetings with GRULAC (Group of Latin America and the Caribbean) ambassadors – \$6,255,000. Translation service – the same figure applies. Security council report with regard to training – \$8,340,000. Airfare for posting of temporary staff to the permanent mission in New York – \$2,439,450. The accommodation for temporary staff – \$51,457,800. Additional office space at the permanent mission in New York – \$10,842,000. Utilities for the temporary staff – \$2,168,400 which give a total of \$99,808,950.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Ms. Desir-Walton.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** It is ‘Walton-Desir’, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** My apologies, Ms. Walton-Desir.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Again, I am just curious for a disaggregation of this amount. What are the activities that we will be undertaking locally as it relates to our foreign policy promotion?

**Mr. Todd:** Council outreaches, accreditation of ambassadors, meals and accommodation, and transportation.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I want to draw our attention to line item 6111, Administrative; There is a decrease in administrative staffing complement from 14 to eight. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister could explain to us, what the cause of that decline in staffing is?

**Mr. Todd:** The increase is due to the increase of five staff who were transferred from programme one into this line item. Three staff are from Programme 3 and three staff were transferred out of this line item.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Where are they now catered for? Are they contracted employees? Where were they transferred to?

**Mr. Todd:** This is in regard to postings.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: I see under rental of buildings that the sum has increased hugely. Are we renting additional buildings and for what purpose, may I ask, in comparison to the sum that was paid last year for rental of buildings?

**Mr. Todd:** I think the Security Council bid that we are vying for is what is responsible for that increase.

7.05 p.m.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** A follow-up on that, how exactly is that responsible for the increase in buildings for rental? Is the Ministry hiring additional staff, so there is a need to house more people?

**Mr. Todd:** I think, I just explained that Mr. Chairman. It would require temporary housing for those staff who would be posted.

*Programme 122: Foreign Policy Promotion – \$3,806,530,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 122 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$573,636,000**

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I am looking at project code 1201400, Buildings, there is a \$525 million provision for buildings. I am looking at the description as well. Could the Hon. Member clarify the activities for which we are making these provisions? It is not very clear to me from the profile.

**Mr. Todd:** This is for the completion of the building.

*Programme: 122 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$573,636,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$37,158,000**

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I am confirming that we are on pages 76 and 77, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on pages 76 and 77.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I was just wondering whether the Hon. Member could indicate what accounts were declined in the staffing complement for the administrative complement at line item 6111? It moved from 14 staff to eight staff.

**Mr. Todd:** There is a decrease in staff because four staff were transferred to programme 2 and two to programme 1. The Ministry had two resignations. Two staff were transferred to programme 1 into the line item.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** A follow-up on that. Could you provide this honourable House with the designation of the positions that resigned? The Hon. Member said there were two resignations.

**Mr. Todd:** The two positions that resigned were two Foreign Service Officers. Sorry, one Foreign Service Officer III and one Foreign Service Officer II.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether these Foreign Service Officers were posted locally or whether they were posted through an overseas mission and could he also indicate to this House whether these positions have since been filled?

**Mr. Todd:** All four positions were posted.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I am at a disadvantage. I did not quite understand the Hon. Member's response.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please repeat, Hon. Minister.

**Mr. Todd:** Very well, the four staff were posted. Posting means overseas missions.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Right, so...

**Mr. Todd:** She is the shadow Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am the Speaker.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I had asked whether these positions have been filled? Are you confirming that these were overseas positions and they were filled?

**Mr. Todd:** Do you mean that when they are posted, if the positions locally here at the headquarters are being filled?

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** No, Hon. Member. I am talking about the resignation, sorry, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Todd:** There has been no recruitment to date.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Thank you. At what date did these positions become vacant? From when were their resignations effective?

**Mr. Todd:** I do not have that information at hand. Could I lay it over?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member of Parliament (MP) could the Hon. Minister lay it over?

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I have no objection to him laying it over. When he is laying over that information could he indicate how soon the Ministry intends to begin recruiting [*inaudible*].

**Mr. Todd:** We are in the process of recruiting.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, very much.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** The Hon. Member said that he is in the process, could he indicate by what means has this process been initiated? Were there internal advertisements for the vacancies or were they published in the newspapers?

**Mr. Todd:** The Ministry has received staff from the Public Service Ministry (PSM) which is the primary, I should say, recruitment over the last year or two because it is bonded scholars, so there is a need to depend on them. We have not done any advertisements to the general public.

*Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$37,158,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$550,000**

*Programme: 123 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$550,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, that concludes our consideration of the estimates for Agency 12: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Let me thank the Hon. Minister, Her Excellency Ambassador Harper and the staff for taking us through that agency. Thank you, very much. We will now proceed with the Ministry of Public Service. I will invite the Hon. Minister of the Ministry of Public Service, the Hon. Sonia Parag and her staff to join us.

### Agency: 14 Ministry of Public Service

#### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$185,563,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate whether any staff, either between line items 6111, Administrative to 6117, Temporary Employees, has been tasked or assigned with planning, designing or implementing any initiative to modernise the public sector?

**Minister of Public Service [Ms. Parag]:** Thank you, Hon. Member. All the staff of the Ministry of Public Service contributes towards the modernisation of the public service.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Could the Hon. Minister state if there is any current initiative, plan or design currently being implemented by all of the members of the public service to modernise the public sector?

**Ms. Parag:** As a matter of fact, we are looking at an e-governance structure throughout the public service but in the meanwhile the Ministry of Public Service is actually looking to have a software be installed that would be compatible with that when it comes on board.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** I have a clarification; is it that the Hon. Minister is stating that a software is going to be utilised and that software is going to be implemented and will cause the public sector to be modernised?

**Ms. Parag:** Yes. It will allow all of the agencies to be connected. For example, with the Ministry of Housing and Water... We have that tabled in the National Assembly for a single window. That is one way.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether any staff has been assigned to formulate policies to strengthen the human management of the public service?

**Ms. Parag:** We do have our Chief Personnel Officer who constantly would update herself, not only with that but would usually have her team available from the Personnel Department speak with all of the agencies and then we come together and formulate. We are looking towards speaking with all agencies.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** I have recognised that the Ministry is still using the word ‘personnel’ and I am guessing that also means that there is a Senior Personnel/Principal Personnel Officer. In the move from personnel to human resources management, I am wondering whether any policies are going to be implemented to move the structure from a personnel management to a human resource management in the public service not just in the Ministry of Public Service but throughout the public service.

**Ms. Parag:** May I ask the Hon. Member, what line item is she referring to?

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** I asked the Hon. Minister initially if there are any staff under line items from 6111, Administrative to 6117, Temporary Employees that would be dealing with this particular item, so we are dealing with policy development and so that is where we are.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are under staffing. She did mention the number of headings we have from line times from 6111, Administrative to 6117, Temporary Employees.

7.20 p.m.

**Ms. Parag:** As a matter of fact, what we did at the end of 2021, we conducted a training with Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), in collaboration of CARICAD and the United Nations (UN). I think the first step that we wanted to take was a change in mindset, because one cannot physically change it without having the mindset being changed. We have actually activated that already.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Could the Minister indicate whether any staff under the same line item has been assigned to oversee the administrative reforms across the public service?

**Ms. Parag:** Yes. A team inclusive of the Chief Personnel Officer and other personnel officers have been working with teams in the different ministries and their personnels to overlook initiatives such as reviewing the job descriptions and so.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** I am going to line item 6284 – Other. There is almost a double increase from \$3 million to \$6

million. Could the Hon. Minister state what caused this increase?

**Ms. Parag:** The Ministry has included additional items in its 2023 Budget for payment of advertisement, open tender for maintenance, capital purchasing of sanitary cups, floral arrangement, increasing cost for curtains and other items.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Mr. Chairman, it is almost double what it was last year and I am not seeing any rental of buildings or so for this one particular Ministry and I am trying to understand if there is no significant increase of staff that would require this double amount that we are seeing here from \$3 million to \$6 million. Is there something specific that is happening that was not happening before under this line item?

**Ms. Parag:** The open tender was not taken from this line item last year, but it is put under this line item now. That is one.

Two, we have oversight now of the Centre for Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) staff as well.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** This would be the final question on this line item. Could the Hon. Minister state if there are any particular policies that they plan to develop or update in 2023? I am seeing in the indicator that there are plans for five. Have the Ministry decided on what are those policies that it would like to either implement or initiate this year?

**Ms. Parag:** As you know, since I have been in office from 2020 and continuous budgets, we have been looking at training not only as in scholarships, but also through the training division and robust training. We actually started for 2023, already and we have reintroduced monitoring and evaluation. As a matter of fact, it is going to be starting in a week. In relation to training, we will continue to update training as we see it relevant and priority areas become important throughout the sector as well as the developing sectors, as well as every policy that we have started before will continue.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, in the Volume 2 of the Estimates this programme: 141, the Minister is saying to us that she intends to issue eight circulars this year. May I ask the Minister what are the eight circulars about that she intends to issue for this year under this programme?

**Ms. Parag:** As it becomes relevant, salary, vacation, employment, others on a needs basis.



*Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$185,563,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$28,000,000**

*Programme: 141 – Policy Development and Administration – \$28,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – \$4,001,943,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** There is an increase in contracted employees. I would like if the Hon. Minister, I am looking at line item 6116, Contracted Employees, could indicate those employees that were hired under this line item that created that increase?

**Ms. Parag:** The reason for the variants is due to employment for two senior training officers with a salary of over \$200,000. We have one student affairs officer and one clerk II, which was necessary.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Line item 6302: Training (including Scholarships). I am guessing that both Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) and the Government of Guyana scholarships would come out from this particular line item. I am curious to note from the Minister, could the Hon. Minister state of the thousands of scholarships that would be given out or were given out through the GOAL and Government of Guyana, what percentage of these scholarships were to target the needs of the current public service and also the needs of the country?

**Ms. Parag:** With respect to the needs of the public service, it is 100% from the Public Service Ministry. As a matter of fact, we do have an assessment being conducted officially now, but with what we have determined a 100% in terms of the GOAL scholarship.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** The Hon. Minister stated 100% for the Government of Guyana and 100% for GOAL in the needs of the Public Service and of the country. Could the Hon. Minister state why be it that so many of the students that are coming off from scholarships or finishing their programmes have not been able to be employed in the public service even though they are supposedly meeting the needs of the scholarship programme?

**Ms. Parag:** Hon. Member, I really dislike having to answer this question because you were the Hon. Minister sitting there when those persons went on scholarships as well as the previous Administration. If I am to state here the relevant and priority areas were not selected, it was done very *ad hoc*. You had persons coming out one, where there were no vacancies available for their skillset, so a lot of those persons... Where you did have areas in which you train, you overtrained. The people who are coming out now are not from this particular administration.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** The Hon. Minister gave her response. I have a follow up question. I have looked at the current list of the scholarships that have been given out to Government of Guyana scholarships and the GOAL scholarships. There are not many changes in those scholarships from what was being given out before. If it is that the priorities of the Government have changed and it will now find spaces for those scholars when they come off, why is it there no significant change in the scholarships being given out?

**Ms. Parag:** I am not certain what you mean by significant change. The areas that we determined that places were not there to fill people. As a matter of fact, the Vice-President and I held a meeting with those persons and we consulted with those persons who were in agriculture and forestry who could not be placed. We did hold a consultation with them, we heard from them and we worked along with them. When you say significant change, I am not sure what you mean. There are specific areas which we found that we could not place that we took off the list.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Could the Hon. Minister state which areas have been taken off the list?

**Ms. Parag:** Agriculture, forestry and international relations. We limited some of the numbers in relation to some of the others.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Even though there is a significant push from the Minister of Agriculture that we are supposed to be food security wise and trying to increase our food security, the Government has decided that agriculture is not the best place to do scholarships.

**Ms. Parag:** That is not so. As a matter of fact, we continue to do the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA). We continue to do speciality areas such as food science and food technology in masters and things like that. We are catering for where the areas are going to advance in agriculture.

*Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – \$4,001,943,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – \$122,500,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Just one question on this project code 2506200 – Furniture and Equipment. Could the Hon. Minister state exactly which departments require the furniture and equipment?

**Ms. Parag:** Those would be the CEIT centre and the Smart Classroom.

*Programme: 142 – Human Resource Development – \$122,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

7.35 p.m.

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management & Technology – \$48,314,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Mr. Chairman there is a reduction in contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister state which designations it lost persons from in 2022?

**Ms. Parag:** One Personnel Officer II resigned and a System Development Officer resigned.

*Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management & Technology – \$48,314,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management & Technology – \$8,000,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Mr. Chairman, I just would like the Hon. Minister to state what software is being acquired under this programme?

**Ms. Parag:** The Human Resource Management and Information System (HRMIS) software.

*Programme: 143 – Human Resource Management & Technology – \$8,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister and your staff for taking us through your agency.

**Ms. Parag:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us invite the Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs, the Hon. Member Ms. Pauline Campbell-Sukhai and her team to join us as we deal with the final agency on the first day of consideration of the Estimates.

### Agency:16 – Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

#### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$732,534,000**

**Mr. Cox:** Mr. Chairman, I refer you to line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships). Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of the training under scholarship offered and I would like this in relation to the different regions and the specific institutions where these scholarships are being offered?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, one could remain seated if one wants.

**Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Ms. Campbell-Sukhai]:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman under line item 6302, this line item caters for training of staff which will include the Community Development Officers (CDO) and Toshao training. It is not scholarship. It is training. The Toshao training, is training in the Amerindian Act and CDOs training. Throughout the year, we usually provide them with training, so that they can better execute their work.

**Mr. Cox:** A follow-up question: Could the Hon. Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the amount of CDOs in the different hinterland regions, regions 1,7,8 and 9?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** We have 24 CDOs. I do not have the breakdown here with me but we can provide it to you before the session is over.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I observed that there is an increase by five. Could the Hon. Minister give us the designations of the five persons who are added?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, the five employees will be the Project Coordinator, the Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS), the Regional Coordinator for community development in Region 1 and the Ministerial Liaison Officer to the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDC).

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Line item 6284, Other, could the Hon. Minister tell us what this line item entails?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Line item 6284, caters for the repair to office furniture. Items like photocopying, for the binding of documents, advertisement of bids and vacancies, purchasing of fuel drums, payment of services for drivers and porters fee, transportation and this relates to the transportation of tractors. Over the year we have been distributing and delivering tractors, so these expenses come out of here.

**Mr. Henry:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. I heard the Minister mention that one of those contracted employees is a Regional Coordinator. Is this for Region 9? If so, where is the office? Is it in Lethem? Is he or she a part-time worker or full-time worker?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** The Regional Coordinator for community development is in Region 9 and he is stationed at the Regional Democratic Council (RDC).

**Mr. Henry:** The question was not fully answered, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please repeat that for me?

**Mr. Henry:** He is a full-time worker or a part-time worker?

**Mr. Chairman:** The employee is full-time.

**Mr. Henry:** Minister, whoever are the supervisors, let them have a good look at those workers working.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you for the caution, Hon. Member of Parliament (MP).

**Mr. Cox:** A follow-up question on line item 6284. The Hon. Minister did mention the delivery cost for tractors comes out from this line item. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the number of tractors delivered thus far and how many the Ministry is intending to provide in this year's budget?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, I did not get the second part of the question but so far, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has delivered 145 tractors to various villages across the 10 administrative regions and more particularly, into the hinterlands, 1,7,8 and 9.

**Mr. Cox:** The second half of the question was, how many tractors is the Ministry intending to purchase and delivered to these indigenous villages for 2023?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, we do not have any tractors budgeted for 2023.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Thank you, Minister. I asked the question about line item 6282 Other and you said that you

are going to use some of those moneys to repair tractors, attend to vehicles, if I heard correctly, and also to repair computers, printers *et cetera*. Would it not have been wise for you to budget it under Office Equipment, Materials and Supplies? We also have line item 6264: Vehicles, Spares and Service.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Just for clarity Mr. Chairman, the allocation under this head and I will repeat, according to my information it caters to repairs to office furniture, photocopying, binding of documents, advertisement of bids, vacancies, purchase of fuel drum and hose, this is to put in tractor fuel when they are taking it up, logos for the vehicles, payment of service for those drivers and porters that come to uplift the tractors, fees for transportation of the tractors, labour for transporting the capital purchases, you know we buy quite a lot of capital items during the year and we have to transport them out to the villages.

*Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$732,534,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*7.50 p.m.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$88,500,000**

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Project code 2406700, Land and Water Transport: There is provision for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), boats and outboard engines. Could the Hon. Minister say to us how many ATVs she intends to purchase; how many boats; how many outboard engines; and where they will be located?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, I am reliably informed that there are only nine ATVs that will be purchased under this project code 2406700, Land and Water Transport for Programme 1. We are actually justifying Programme 1 at the moment, not Programme 2.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** I did ask, also, where you are going to place these ATVs.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** The ATVs will be placed accordingly: two in Region 1; two in Region 7; four in Region 9; one in Region 8; and one in Region 10. These will be supporting the works of the Community Development Officers (CDOs).

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Project code 1214500, Buildings: I see you have allocated \$42 million for the construction of

stores and revetment. Could you give us the location where you are going to build the stores and do the revetment?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** The central store will be constructed at Liliendaal within the compound of the Students' Dormitory and the revetment is for the trench around the Amerindian residence in Princess Street so as to avoid the deterioration of the fence.

*Capital Expenditure Programme: 161 – Policy Development and Administration – \$88,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Current Expenditure

**Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$524,463,000**

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** I am looking at line item 6284, Other, which has an allocation to the tune of \$36.2 million. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us the breakdown of the \$36.2 million? Thank you.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, this has to do with welfare support to the hinterland. It caters for support to families and patients who have difficult financial circumstances and are affected by natural disasters such as fires. There is also assistance for burial, medical treatment, ultrasounds, cancer treatment, Amerindian prisoners, the processing of birth certificates, the purchasing of medication and essential items for patients and transporting deceased bodies back to the villages.

**Mr. Cox:** I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister say what is the cost regularly incurred for transporting the deceased, particularly for areas such as Region 1? Is there a percentage that is normally offered out of the total cost or is there a specific amount that is offered by your Ministry?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** The allocation is assistance. There is a collaboration with the Ministry, the family and oftentimes the region to meet the cost for transportation. Transportation varies. The COVID-19 cases are much more expensive than normal illnesses or any disease that persons die from – regular illnesses other than COVID-19.

*Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$524,463,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### Capital Expenditure

**Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$2,821,000,000**

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Project code 2406700 – Land and Water Transport: I would like to turn our attention there again. There is provision for vehicles, boats and engines to the tune of \$81 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many vehicles, boats and outboard engines are there and which communities will benefit? Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, what are the numbers of vehicles, boats and engines and the locations where they will be deployed to?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There will be 21 ATVs, 18 outboard engines and 18 boats.

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are they being deployed, which communities?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** With respect to the ATVs, they will be for Kobarimo Creek, Kabakaburi, Bethany, Amakokopai, Waramadong, Kopinang, Maikwak, Bamboo Creek, Penack, Chenapau, Kamana, Arisoa Creek, Kaibarupai, El Paso, Yupukari, Parabara, Rewa, Mariwa, Konashen, Rockstone and Rivers View Fall mouth.

With respect to the outboard engines, they will be going to Manawarin, Sebai, Warapoka, Moraikobai, Wax Creek, Arrau, Imbaimadai, Isseneru, El Passo, Konashen, Rupanau, Malali, Wikki/Kalkuni, Wairuni, Kimbia River, Rockstone and Sand Hills.

With respect to the boats, they will be similar to the outboard engines.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Thank you, Minister. Project code 1400100, the Amerindian Development Fund has a total of \$2.7 billion as a provision for the Amerindian development projects and programmes. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this sum – how much will be given to numbers one, two, three and four, as is stated in the Capital Project Profile?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, just bear with me one minute.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Minister.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** There is the consultation for the review of the Amerindian Act – \$80 million; the Community Service Officers (CSO) or the Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme – \$1.470 billion; and Presidential grants – \$361, 200,000. There are also economic projects which are done in categories. There is a subtotal for bakeries which is \$30 million. For sewing centres, we have \$96 million; for sawmilling enterprises, we have \$43

million; for woodworking, we have \$18 million; for block making, we have \$10 million; for enterprises to do with fishing, we have \$13 million; for cattle rearing and livestock, we have \$18 million; for meat centres, we have \$15 million; for guest houses related to tourism, we have \$56.5 million, inclusive of \$10 million to address the lakefront development; for solar food processing project, we have \$20 million; shade Houses which will support our agriculture drive and contribute to our country's food security and improving food security in the Indigenous community, \$114 million.

8.05 p.m.

Agro-processing – \$24 million, that will also include farine processing for \$20 million; cultivation of a fish or aquaculture sweet water fish \$5 million; infrastructure in terms of village benab – \$20 million; multipurpose building – \$10 million; villages offices – \$6 million; sanitary blocks – \$13 million; rest house and impoldering and drainage – \$22 million; communication devices or communication radio sets – \$6.5 million.

We have \$123 million allocated to the preservation of Amerindian languages; preservation of heritage sites; Archeology study; Indigenous cultural items and sound systems; chipper and plough, this is the final batch – 20. Agriculture brush cutters, chainsaw, sewing machines, black tanks, zinc, concrete walkway, Amerindian Historical Centre, uniforms for our athletes in preparation for heritage games. Pickup for Kanapang and Rupanau. That adds up to an allocation of \$123.2 million.

Kopinang, Kurukabaru and Itabac, we are investing in lorries that can traverse those terrains. Minibuses for Wauna, Kamaka, Arakaka, Moco Moco and Great Falls, those are allocated for \$21 million. That in total adds up to \$2.74 billion under the Amerindian Development Fund (ADF).

**Mr. Cox:** To the Hon. Minister, it would be very welcoming to know that Presidential grants are a continuous programme under the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. What would be more welcoming is if these Presidential grants see an increase. Does this sum, under this line item, cater for any increase in the Presidential grants? If so, what percentage is this increase?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, I am advised that it has increased by 30%. It is a manifesto commitment and from the very first year we came into Office it was increased from \$300 million to \$380 million and now it is being increased to \$361.2 million.

**Mr. Cox:** Mr. Chairman, first of all let me say congratulations to the Indigenous people for continuous representation for their rights and this is a manifestation of such representation. I did not get the Minister clearly, is this a wholesome increase or is this specific to the Community Presidential grants? I could recall that the last committee grant was \$1.5 million. Is it 30% on the \$1.5 million or is it the whole thing?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** I am advised it is overall.

**Mr. Cox:** Is it overall? Okay.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Yes, and various villages have various amounts. So, ranging from now a minimum of \$1.5 million to larger villages that goes to about \$2 million. Villages with satellites exceed \$2 million, combined or consolidated.

**Mr. Cox:** Is this a new initiative or was it done this way all the time?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** The Presidential grant is not a new initiative. However, our manifesto spoke to an increase of the grant for the villages. So, villages have received increases in the grant.

**Mr. Cox:** Thank you very Mr. Chairman and thank you very much to the Hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, on the Apprenticeship Training Programme, could you give a breakdown of the number of persons trained and how many are expected to be trained under this line item for 2023?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Our target for training is 400 CSOs in 2023. The areas we will be training in are to build skillset in tourism and hospitality, small engine repairs, garment construction, tractor repairs and maintenance. These are relevant skillsets which are required in the village currently.

**Mr. Cox:** Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and Hon. Minister. Follow-up questions: Could the Hon. Minister state whether or not there is any provision or approaches to the inclusion of training for the oil and gas sector under this line item? If not, why? And a second question: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the new initiatives or the new training programmes for this year that were not there before?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs trained for the skillset required by the village. For example, in agriculture equipment, which we are pushing for food security, we are training in the necessary skills of driving and maintaining the machineries and equipment that we invest in to support the development of the village economy. Training in oil and gas is catered for by

other sectors. The Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) scholarship offers training in those areas. The Ministry of Labour offers various other types of training. This is relevant to the CSO programme.

Just to clarify, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs offer scholarships to Grade Six successful higher achievers and not regular scholarships. If a student 16 years old and up needs to have a scholarship to continue in the Six Form, we also offer those types of scholarships. All other scholarships are usually catered for under the Public Service Ministry (PSM) scholarship programme. Sometimes, when a 16 year old would like to go to the Carnegie School of Home Economics, the Burrowes School of Art or the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), if he/she 16 years old or is a child, we support. This is because, by the end of their two years, they are then into adulthood. At our Ministry, we do not offer scholarship for above 18 years old. Just to clear the air on scholarships.

**Mr. Henry:** Mr. Chairman, in terms of the Presidential grants, we heard glowingly about the 30%. I just want to mention that a village getting \$1.5 million will be getting less than \$2 million. In terms of our economy now that is way too low. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I could ask the Hon. Minister to respond. In fairness to the statement made, I will ask her if she wants to respond to the statement.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, I would gladly respond because the Presidential grant is just one programme under the ADF. The villages benefit from investment funds throughout the year in terms of capital items support, *et cetera*. So, the Presidential grant is just one programme that we invest in.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** To the Hon. Minister, same project code 14001400, Amerindian Development Fund: Could the Hon. Minister say to this House how many village sustainable plans or programmes have she received to date? And, for those who have not submitted, is there any technical assistant to help the village councils so that they too can produce or submit their sustainable plans. Thank you.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, unlike the five years under the A Partnership for National Unity/ Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC), where they invested in excess of \$100 million to establish Village Improvement Plans (VIPs) and nothing was submitted to the Ministry, over the last two years we have been contacting the institutions who have

been paid to do that work and they have been forth coming recently. One of the institutions is still willing to continue to support our initiative now in the sustainable village plans. We have completed Region 9 under the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). We have also collaborated with the Office of the Climate Change and the officers there have been conducting and providing technical support to various regions that are embarking on their sustainable plan.

**Ms. Hastings-Williams:** Thank Cde. Chairman and Minister. Am I to understand that you only receive VIPs from Region 9?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Chairman, this work that we began, it is more or less, as I would say.... let me style it differently. There was a lot of talk about VIPs being produced in various regions, but really there was nothing. So, when we took Office, we began to work on the VIPs. In fact, there is a master plan which has been worked on at the National Toshao's Council (NTC) and for those regions that are still not up to date, we are working with them to bring them up to date.

**Mr. Cox:** Hon. Minister, for clarity, are you saying that.... under the same line item.... Are you saying that, since August, 2020, you are still working in 2023 on actually getting those villages' VIPs?

8.20 p.m.

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** If you would allow me to respond. I mentioned that there is a master plan. Our Ministry has worked on developing with the Toshaos the plans that they have submitted to us. However, we are updating those that are outstanding and are lagging. We are working with the Office of Climate Change (OCC). We conducted a few sessions recently to bring them up to scratch.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Minister. Hon. Members, I now...

**Mr. Henry:** Mr. Chairman, if I may?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Henry, you have the floor. If you make another statement, you will invite another statement in terms of comments from the Minister.

**Mr. Henry:** It is a question I am asking.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. I am just cautioning you.

**Mr. Henry:** Under the same line item, how much of this money allocated for this heading here came from the carbon credit sales and was received and closed and is part of the budget of this year?

**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member of Parliament (MP) is quite aware that the proceeds from the carbon sale is not part of our Amerindian Development Fund, unless he has not been reading the estimates or he has not listened carefully to the budget.

*Programme: 162 – Community Development and Empowerment – \$2,821,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** On your behalf and ours, let me thank the Minister and the staff of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs for taking us through their agency. Thank you very much, Minister and staff. Hon. Members, this completes our consideration of the estimates for today. Let the Assembly resume.

*Assembly resumed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, again, let me thank all of those MPs who were informed and still joined online, and who, at great sacrifice, joined us physically this first day of the consideration of the estimates, including our dear Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip, who I now invite to move the adjournment.

## ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly be adjourned to 10.00 a.m. on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2023.”

*[Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip]*

**Ms. Teixeira:** I would like to adjourn to tomorrow morning at 10.00 a.m. to continue the review of the estimates of *Budget 2023*. Thank you.

*Motion put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, the Assembly stands...Hon. Minister Bishop Edghill, did you want to say something? Hon. Members, we will adjourn until tomorrow at 10.00 a.m.

*Adjourned accordingly at 8.23 p.m.*