



**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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60<sup>th</sup> Sitting

Tuesday, 31<sup>ST</sup> January, 2023

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**PARLIAMENT OFFICE  
HANSARD DIVISION**

*Assembly convened at 10.11 a.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]*

## **ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there is only one question on today's Order Paper. This question is for Oral Reply and is in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. Jermaine Figueira. The question is for the Hon. Minister of Health. Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, you may proceed.

### **New Headquarters of the Ministry of Health**

**Mr. Figueira:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is primarily related to the new Headquarters of the Ministry of Health. My question is: What date was the termination of the contract for the new Headquarters building in 2020?

**Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]:** I want to thank the Hon. Member for the question. The date for the termination of the contract was on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2020.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Minister. Would you like a follow-up, Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira?

**Mr. Figueira:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister also provide us with the cost of the original contract?

**Dr. Anthony:** The cost of the original contract was \$365 million.

**Mr. Figueira:** Additionally, could the Hon. Minister provide us with the reasons this contract was terminated?

**Dr. Anthony:** For us to understand why the contract was terminated, we probably need to go back into the background of this contract. In 2017, the Ministry's Head Office was designed by an in-house team. They did the drawings and they estimated it would cost about \$546 million. That was the engineer's estimate. A contract was signed with Chung's Global Enterprise on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2017, for \$365 million and they were given 12 months in which to complete this contract. The

contract started 14 days after the signing. On 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017, the contractor received an advance payment of \$71.2 million and that was 20% of the contract sum.

In 2018, from the Auditor General's Report, on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2018...First of all, on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2018, that was when the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Public Health, as it was known at the time, decided to contract a supervisory firm to look over the construction of the Ministry's Head Office. That firm was VIKAB (Guyana) Limited. In 2018, two additional payments were made to Chung's Global Enterprise. The first one for \$34.5 million and the second one was for \$48.8 million. From the Auditor General's Report, the Auditor General stated that little or no work was done by the end of December, 2018.

In 2019, again from the Auditor General's Report, it stated that by 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2019, 21 months after the signing of the contract, only the foundation work was completed and some works were started on the erection of a steel frame. When they visited the site, there were three workers at the site. There were three workers who were working. The VIKAB (Guyana) Limited that was contracted to supervise this work said that there were numerous instances of substandard work, and they had many examples of substandard work. For example, on 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2019, ground beams were found to be substandard, and those defects were pointed out. There were cubes that were collected and when they were tested, they all failed. The testing of these cubes was done at the University of Guyana (UG) and at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure at the time. All of them failed. They had to break out the works that were done there and do back a whole set of works which added to the cost.

In 2020, on 8<sup>th</sup> September, works remained incomplete and, again, as per the Auditor General's Report, when they visited at the time, there were four people who were working at the site. So, they improved by one. This was nine months after the project was scheduled to be completed. As such, the Auditor General recommended that liquidated damages should have been instituted, but there was no evidence that the Ministry implemented any liquidated damages.

At the end of 2019, the contractor received \$304.5 million or about 85% of the contract sum. The payments were made without valuation of six payment certificates which totalled about \$233.1 million. There was no valuation certificate and works remained incomplete. The incomplete works included the rendering of the hollow block concrete (HCB) walls, ceiling works, painting of the

internal and external walls, electrical and air condition (AC) units' installation, installation of the lifts, tiling works, plumbing works and additional furnishing. A lot of things were not done. [Mr. Ramson: Let us ask what was done. The list might be shorter.] I think so, yes. The Auditor General then recommended, in 2019, that the Head of the Budget Agency take immediate actions to activate the applicable stipulations of the contract, including the termination of the contract and recovery of the sums paid.

*10.22 a.m.*

At that point, for the works that had to be completed, an estimate was done. A bill of quantities was done for the remaining works, and it turned out that, for the building to be completed, the contract had to be increased to about \$870 million. From the sum that was given of \$304 million, the contractor wanted \$513.3 million more to complete the works. In addition to all of this, when we checked the performance bond, this had expired one year prior. Therefore, levying against the contractor proved very difficult. Based on this history and all that I have just said, this contract was terminated on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2020, and we then put in motion the legal proceedings against the contractor and decided to go out to get a new contractor to finish the building.

**Mr. Figueira:** Thank you very much for your very lengthy explanation. With all of the observations identified in your explanation, could you inform us what the new modifications to the new contract are and how much the actual cost is?

**Dr. Anthony:** Based on the list of defects that was there – I just mentioned some of them: the ceiling, the windows, the lifts, the plumbing to be done, the external wall, internal wall – all of these works had to be done. We awarded a new contract, and that contract cost \$436 million to complete the work. One of the things that we are discovering, as work is continuing on the building, is that the external wall of this facility is porous. In the last rains there were, the building was leaking. Water was coming through the supposedly concrete walls. Not only was water coming through, but mould is also now on the walls, so we now have to go and clean the mould on the wall. Moreso, regarding the area that was set aside for the lifts, when they did the structural analysis on that area, it cannot accommodate a lift. Because of the engineering that was done, if you install a lift there, it is going to collapse. Therefore, we now have to come up with a different engineering

solution to go and fix the lift. There are numerous other defects that we had to correct and modify, and that is why we now have to spend close to \$436 million to fix the defects that we found.

**Mr. Figueira:** With regard to the new contract, Hon. Minister, could you say what the percentage of works completed as of 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2022?

**Dr. Anthony:** With the new contract, at 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2022, 91% of the works were completed. The project is going to come to an end, hopefully by the end of February, so that the staff of the Ministry can move into that building, after all that lengthy correction that we have to do.

**Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister [Mr. McCoy]:** Minister Dr. Frank Anthony, Hon. Member, could you say whether any steps have been taken to institute legal proceedings against those who are culpable for this tragedy that we have at the Ministry of Health?

**Dr. Anthony:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. The Attorney General has taken the necessary steps to take legal action against the contractor. Those steps are in progress.

**Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Mr. Ramson]:** There is just one issue I am confused about in relation to the supervising firm. In relation to project management and government works, contractors are paid subsequent to the works being completed, with the exception of a mobilisation advance. The work is evaluated and then a certificate is issued by the responsible department. What I am trying to clarify, because you said that additional payments were made, identified by the Auditor General as works that had not been completed within the 12-month contracted period. Additional payments were made. On what basis were additional payments made for work not completed? Was it the supervising firm that signed off on the work, even though it identified some of the problems, or was it from the Engineering Department, the Technical Services Department?

**Dr. Anthony:** From the Auditor General's report, the valuation of six of those payments were not done. The contractor, apparently, was just paid and was paid different sums of money that amounted to \$220 something million. This payment was made without any proper valuation. As far as I can tell, the supervisory firm did not sign off on those payments, yet the payments were made. In addition to that, the \$71 million that was advanced, \$26 million of the \$71 million was used to do works that were not in the contract. These works included building a bridge, a concrete bridge, that supposedly cost \$7.9 million. It was also to build some hut for drivers and some other

miscellaneous type of work, which resulted in using \$26 million that was not authorised. All of this is in the Auditor General's report, and it keeps recurring.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **MOTION**

#### **BUDGET SPEECH 2023 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 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 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 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 of Finance]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the estimates of expenditure for financial year 2023.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** I invite the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and his staff to join us so we could commence consideration of this agency.

**Agency: 21 Ministry of Agriculture**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$989,312,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. I recognise that, at line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is a significant decrease from the year 2022 to 2023 of almost 40 employees. Could the Hon. Minister state what caused this decrease?

**Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Mustapha]:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These were Government of Guyana scholars, and they were attached to the Ministry's main programme. Now, their contracts have ended, and they are being placed in various agencies. We have already started the process. Their employment will be reflected in those agencies.

**Mr. Jordan:** Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister give a list of those buildings that are to be maintained and state what the nature of the maintenance is?

**Mr. Mustapha:** There are a number of buildings. I can lay over the information. These works include plumbing, painting, replacement of lights and other things, and repairs to be done on other infrastructure. I have the disaggregation here, which I can lay over to the Hon. Member.

**Mr. Jordan:** Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister state the purpose of these subsidies?

**Mr. Mustapha:** These are our contributions to the international organisations: the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Coconut Community. We are a very, very important member of these organisations, and I look forward to our contribution.



*Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$989,312,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$1,007,500,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** For the Flood Risk Management Project, the capital profile states that there is procurement of earth-moving equipment. Could the Hon. Minister state what that equipment is and where it would be assigned?

*10.37 a.m.*

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, I could give the Hon. Member the entire block of \$1 billion that is allocated for the Flood Risk Management Project. There are a number of areas. For example, 400,000 residents will be benefitting from this project on the East Coast.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, I asked about earth moving equipment.

**Mr. Mustapha:** I will give him that too, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Jordan:** You could stand on a point of order.

**Mr. Mustapha:** I am saying that the earth moving equipment are excavators, amphibious excavators, that we have purchased to ensure that we continue maintenance of the East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC). In the same vein, we will be expending \$1 billion in the Flood Risk Management Project to do works from Ogle to Liliendaal to ensure that we take care of the 400,000 residents who will benefit. A number of other works will be done there.

*Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$1,007,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$16,056,852,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Line item 6321 – Subsidy and Contributions to Local Organisations: I recognise here that the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) would be receiving some \$2 billion out of this \$16 billion. Could the Hon. Minister state what directly GuySuCo would be using this \$2 billion to do?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, just give the GuySuCo team time to get in place so they may properly ...

**Mr. Mustapha:** The \$2 billion is disaggregated as follows: Albion \$1 billion, Blairmont \$600,000, Uitvlugt \$400,000, which gives you \$2 billion. It is for wages and salaries, fuel lubricants and other essential materials and supplies and lorry contractors.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I notice that under the same line item, the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) will be given some \$10 billion. It is the same line item but under Local Organisations, it is reflected more at page 471, where there is a \$10 billion. Could we have, more or less, in general term, the disaggregation of how that \$10 billion will be spent?

**Mr. Mustapha:** I can go through the list of items. For example, we have fuel and lubricants, maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) projects across the country. You know for a fact that we have purchased a number of pumps and we are now building a number of sluices to complement those pumps. We are also trying to get the replacement of those 12 pumps that were purchased by the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government. Those pumps are inoperable as we are speaking. All of those issues we are trying to deal with. The \$10 billion has been disaggregated to go into works to ensure that we have proper D&I system in the country.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, did you have a follow-up? No?

*Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$16,056,852,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$14,036,180,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Again, we see that National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) will be getting \$6 billion. Could you disaggregate? Because you told us that the \$10 billion went to pumps, and this and that. We see pumps, and this and that again here.

**Mr. Mustapha:** In my budget presentation, I mentioned that last year, we started the construction of 12 pumps. Some \$4.3 billion is allocated to these projects because these projects are roll-over projects – 18-month projects. We have \$4.3 billion allocated for the roll-over sum of this project. There are additional projects, and a number of projects will continue this year. For example, this year, we will build another eight additional pumps. For the first time in the history of this, we will build pump stations on the East Bank of Demerara. We never had pump stations there before. We had thousands of acres of land. In the Pomeroun, we will be impoldering so that we can resolve the issue of flooding there.

We will do farm-to-market roads in a number of areas with places like Victoria, Buxton, Letter Kenney, Onderneeming, to name a few areas. As a matter of fact, the Montrose Pump Station, that was there for ages, we will be putting in new engine there and that will take care of a lot of drainage facilities there. I can go on and list all the other projects to ensure that we have the \$10 billion that the Hon. Member spoke about.

**Mr. Jordan:** Under Mangrove Management, I notice, according to the project profile, construction of sea-defence structures along Dantzig/Fairfield foreshore. I want to ask the Hon. Minister what type of sea defence structure will be constructed and what is the cost.

**Mr. Mustapha:** We can remember what happened at Dantzig. Thousands of acres of land were lost because of the sea water encroachment there and the breakage of the sea defence. When we were in Opposition, we went there to try to see how we could help the farmers. The Government at that time was non-responsive. Today, we have looked at the situation and we have been working very assiduously. My colleague, Bishop Edghill and his colleague, Mr. Indar, have been there on a regular basis. We in the NDIA have been working very closely with them to build a dam there. We have worked with farmers to build a dam to prevent the sea water. What we are looking to build back is natural vegetation. That is why the mangrove section of the Ministry of Agriculture will facilitate a construction of a project to do the break water system there so that we can stop the

encroachment of sea water from coming into the arable land. We will bring back those lands under cultivation.

**Mr. Jordan:** I also asked for the cost. A follow-up to that, what is the estimated project completion time?

**Mr. Mustapha:** The cost is \$104 million, and the expected completion time is approximately 12 months.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I notice that there is going to be \$500 million, and this includes an abattoir. I do not know how much will be spent on the abattoir. Are we going to get the abattoir this year?

**Mr. Mustapha:** This was the abattoir which the Hon. Member came and misled this House about by saying they started it in 2020. The contract for this abattoir was signed by the Permanent Secretary (PS) in November, 2022. This is the contribution from the Government of Guyana because you would remember that this is an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project. We are hoping that by the end of this year, this abattoir can be completed. It is not \$500 million for the abattoir only. There are a number of other projects that are listed to be done under this programme.

**Mr. Jordan:** Could the Hon. Minister state what is the current stage of the abattoir, with regard to construction?

**Mr. Mustapha:** The contract for the construction of the abattoir was signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, as I rightly said. The contractor has been mobilised and he has started some work there. It is being supervised by the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA). We will be doing strict monitoring. We know for a fact our country is now poised to ensure that we become a player in the beef and cattle industry. That is why we need this abattoir. We are looking for this to be completed very shortly, before the year is out, so that we can have a modern, state-of-the-art abattoir, so that we can start the export of beef to the Caribbean.

**Mr. Jordan:** The Hon. Minister just stated that the abattoir is important and urgently needed. The Hon. Minister also said that he is paying keen attention to the project. At what stage is the abattoir as we speak? Is it foundation? Is the roof on? Is it at 50%, 20% or 30%?

**Mr. Mustapha:** I just said that the contract was signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2022. The contractor is at the mobilisation stage and works will start shortly to move apace. I am hoping, as I said, within 12 months the works could be completed. As I said, we are very interested in having this facility completed as early as possible. Hopefully, within 12 months, this project could be completed.

**Mr. Jordan:** Respected. Could the Hon. Minister then state to us, what happened to the fundings that were within the budgets for 2021, 2022 and 2020?

**Mr. Mustapha:** That was for preliminary work – periphery works to the site – like the drains, the bridges and things like that. It had nothing to do with the abattoir.

**Mr. Jordan:** I would like to also ask the Hon. Minister, what was the total cost for the periphery works completed?

**Mr. Mustapha:** The total cost was approximately \$89 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for answering, although it is not directly on the line item.

**Mr. Holder:** Project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA): There is \$6 billion there. You can see from Volume 3 that \$10 billion was spent before 2023. Could the Minister say if any of that amount, from this \$10 billion, was spent on the Lima sluice? What was the scope of work completed?

*10.52 a.m.*

**Mr. Mustapha:** We expended some on the Lima sluice. We repaired the base, and it cost approximately \$80 million.

**Mr. Holder:** Cde. Chairman, I am aware of the works that were done at Lima.

**Mr. Ramson:** Then why did you ask?

**Mr. Holder:** I have to ask. I do not know the amount. What I will say to the Minister is the sluice was painted, you had some works done and some rocks placed at the base of the sluice where the water is being pumped out. Currently, if you visit there, those rocks are shifting into the channel of the sluice. That is a problem. Additionally, concerning the revetment works, the groyne area is cracked, and it is going into the channel also. My question is, is there any provision now to deal

with that work? Are there any remedial works to correct that situation? It poses a serious risk to flooding and it also hampers the fisherfolk that have to come through the channel and put their boats through that sluice to get to the fishery area.

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, I am surprised at the Hon. Member. He came to this National Assembly and waited until time for questioning to bring an issue as important as that to this National Assembly. That shows the type of way they represent the people. I just said that we did work to the base, and we did work to the wall. Again, this year, we will continue to do work there to ensure that we have a proper system in place. When one knows that these things are important, do not wait until it is time for questioning to score political marks. Come and raise the issue. I know about it, and we will do work this year. That is the way they do things.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Holder, works will be done, including in these estimates.

**Mr. Holder:** I am happy. The people of Region 2 are happy. We are excited about it. What I want to ask the Minister is if any action... I just spoke about the rocks – 100, by the Minister's own admission – approximately \$80 million spent. All I saw was rocks put down, the structure half painted, and revetment works unfinished. That is what I saw when I visited that site. There are obviously defects. In my opinion, the work is defective. I want to know, since the Minister is aware of it and has been aware of it for a very long time, by his own admission, what action or actions has he taken against the contractor?

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the Member cannot comprehend well. I just said we did two works. We did the base, and we did the wall. We did no painting to the structure. The sluice is operable. The pump is operable. As I said, this year, we will continue to do work on the sluice. As I said, we have not executed any painting work. Let the Member go find out who did the painting to the sluice. We did two works. The two works were the base of the sluice and the wall of the sluice. After we had completed those, the sluice is in good, operable condition. The pumps are operable there. I do not know who did the painting work that the Member is referring to.

**Mr. Holder:** The Minister seems fixated on painting. Let me be very specific.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, he is not. He is just fixated on what it contained in the estimates. Two works; the rocks and the retainer wall.

**Mr. Holder:** Let us fixate on the rocks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Holder:** I have just said to this Committee that the rocks are moving. They are moving away. The pump is pumping them. I suspect that they did that – whatever they did there – to prevent erosion. The rocks are moving away into the channel. It suggests that there is some level of substandard work there. I am asking the Minister if any action was taken against the contractor or if he intends to take any action?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you are an engineer. I only have one year of university level civil engineering. Only one. It is hard to impute substandard work. You and I know how matter moves, whether solid or semi-solid. At this time, I think it is going to be difficult to impute. I will ask the Minister to repeat his answer that he gave earlier.

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, as I said, the Member was asking what type of work we did and I said two types of work, namely, the wall and the base. If I understand, from my layman's view, the rock is placed there as a skirt protection. It is flexible. If he is a proper engineer, he will know that. The rock is placed there as a skirt protection, and it is flexible. If the rock moves, it can go back into place, but it will be there all the time to protect the area. If the Hon. Member is an engineer, he will know that.

**Mr. Holder:** I do not think the Minister understands the situation. He needs to visit urgently. It is my view that the rocks are not of the right specification. They are too light. This occurred just after the project was completed. I visited there. It suggests to me... I am offering a suggestion here to the Minister, that he visits and looks at it seriously.

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, as I said, the rocks were of the specification that was demanded there and those were the rocks that were available – Guyana's rocks – and we put it there.

**Mr. Chairman:** I now put the question...

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Just a minute.

**Mr. Chairman:** My apologies. Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, you have the floor.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Concerning the \$4,200,000,000 under project code 4503400 – Integrated Agriculture Development Programme, I notice on the profile page we have experimental brackish water prawn production and marine cage fishing as part of this \$4.2 billion. Who will be getting these brackish water prawn farms or cage fishing farms? Would it be Government controlled or is it going to be given to farmers?

**Mr. Chairman:** Before I ask the Hon. Minister to answer, let me assure the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, I shall neither rush nor rock the estimates. You may proceed, Hon. Minister.

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, any fish farmer or any brackish water farmer who needs help will be getting help under this programme. As a matter of fact, let me tell you. Last year, when this entire programme was conceptualised, we looked at the subsistence farming that these farmers normally do in the areas that they were doing these activities. There were about 120 farmers who produced roughly about 10,000 kilogrammes of shrimp monthly. We went and spoke with them, we discussed, and we said that we will help them to enhance their ponds. We did infrastructural work, and we were able to move brackish water shrimp production... Although we did not complete the entire project, we are about 80% completed. We were able to move brackish water shrimp from 10,000 kilogrammes monthly – and they were doing it on a subsistence basis – to 83,000 kilogrammes by the end of December.

We are hoping that upon the completion of this project, we will increase that to 120,000 kilogrammes monthly. We are having the diaspora...and the Hon. Member will know who are using these shrimps. The point is that we will increase and expand the brackish water shrimp too as this activity is concentrated mostly on the Corentyne Coast. We want to bring it on the East Coast, we want to bring it on the West Coast and the entire Guyana so that we can become a big producer of these pieces of shrimp which is very lucrative. For example, Ecuador exports prawns, and rakes in almost US\$7 billion annually. We are hoping that this will become a major industry for us in Guyana.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Now that certain farmers in need will be getting these, what is the amount out of the \$4.2 billion that will be put into this project so that it will then be distributed to farmers?



**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, \$445.2 million will go into this project.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That is a huge amount. Is the criterion then just at the discretion of the Minister or people who come and ask for help?

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, as I said, anyone could be helped under this programme. As a Government, we know, and the Fisheries Department knows that a number of these persons have a register. If the Hon. Member has persons, he could bring it to my attention, and we will help those persons. No problem. This Government helps every person in this country.

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Chairman, project code 2802900 – Sustainable Agriculture Development Project: I see some \$500 million provided there. Could the Hon. Minister state, out of that \$500 million, how much will go to the support for farmers in Regions 4, 5, 6 and 10, and what is the support that will be provided? Why is it that we are only providing support for Region 4, 5, 6 and 10, when agriculture should be a national issue at the moment in all 10 administrative regions?

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, this is a programme for the coastal areas of our country. That is why those regions are listed. There is another programme that takes care of the hinterland community which is the Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agricultural Development Project (HESADP). For this programme, \$100 million has been allocated to support farmers in these coastal regions.

**Mr. Jordan:** Could the Hon. Minister go far enough to specify what the programme is? I now understand it is coastal. What is the support that will be given?

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, this entails a lot of work in terms of training with farmers, giving them support such as helping them enhance their livestock section, giving them gardening tools, giving them agricultural input, *et cetera*.

**Mr. Holder:** Project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority: Cde. Chairman, about a year ago the Administration proffered that dredging of the Pomeroon River would largely...

**Mr. McCoy:** What is the line item?

**Mr. Holder:** I said it. They proffered that dredging of the Pomeroon River will largely solve the problem of flooding within that area. My question to the Minister is, has the dredging been

completed? At what cost or what percentage? The follow-up question: What percentage of reduction in flooding has been projected at this stage?

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, yes. There was a contract awarded for \$500 million. It is ongoing. The contract is to do the dredging of the Pomeroon River. Whilst that is ongoing, we are still enhancing the areas in the Pomeroon to stop flooding. Flooding has eased tremendously in the Pomeroon since we started those block drainages and elevation of the beds – the farmers’ gardening beds. This will continue. I do not know if the Hon. Member is insinuating that by doing the dredging of the Pomeroon River, we should not do any other things for the farmers since that will ease the flooding. With climate change taking place, there is rain almost every day. We have to prepare for it.

*11.07 a.m.*

The Pomeroon is an area that needs special attention. We will continue to do all of the works that are necessary so that Pomeroon could ensure that it becomes one of the most productive areas once again. Very shortly, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) will partner with us to start coffee cultivation once again in the Pomeroon, so it could produce coffee for us in Guyana.

**Mr. Holder:** The Hon. Minister failed to answer what percentage of the works has been completed. I heard \$500 million as the total but he failed to establish how much is completed thus far and, at least, a projection of the reduction, but I will move on. He went on to talk about the beds. I cannot remember the description that he gave but I understand the scope of work that he talked about. On that very project that he just mentioned, I am aware that farmers had asked for the refurbishment of an excavator. I am also aware that the Neighbourhood Democratic Council’s (NDC’s) Chair, in that specific area in the Pomeroon, had requested the repairs at a cost of about \$3.5 million. I have learnt, subsequently, that the Government intends to spend \$12 million on the excavator. I am little unclear if it has increased the scope of works on the excavator; mind you, the people are requesting \$3.5 million to repair the excavators. So, I am trying to get some clarity as to why the cost has increased and if it is actually moving ahead with that project.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I think you want to conclude by asking the Hon. Minister if all of these expenses will be accommodated under this line item.

**Mr. Holder:** Of course, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, as the Hon. Member knows, repairs will be catered for under the current budget and not the capital budget; that is one. Secondly, roughly about 70% of the first phase of the work that he asked about earlier has been completed. The two farmers group that we met with that have the two excavators, the excavators are now at the supplier. It will cost almost \$13.5 million to bring it back to operable standing so that farmers could have those excavators.

**Mr. Jordan:** Again, under project code 2802900, Sustainable Agriculture Development Project, there is a broad heading here, “institutional strengthening”. Could the Hon. Minister state, out of the \$500 million, how much will go to institutional strengthening, what are the specifics of the institutional strengthening and in what regions will it take place?

**Mr. Mustapha:** A sum of \$100 million will go towards training for the staff of the National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA). As you know, for a fact, we have to keep our extension officers in line with what is taking place, so that they could give better advice and guidance to the farmers around the country. Then, there are other moneys allocated. For example, there is \$191 million that is allocated. I mentioned the money we have to contribute to the abattoir. I said that \$100 million will go towards the programmes for farmers in the regions that the Hon. Member mentioned – Regions 4 to 10, the coastal regions. There is also a consultation to be done and the payment for a laboratory office building. Those are the disaggregations – I could lay it over to the Hon. Member – to make up the \$500 million that is in this programme.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I notice another \$100 million for equipment under project code 3402700, Food Safety Authority. The description of the project is rather skimpy, “provision for equipment”. What is the equipment you are talking about here of \$100 million worth?

**Mr. Mustapha:** This year we will start the construction of the Food Safety Authority building. At the time when the Attorney General (AG) spoke during the budget debate, he said that the Government will be bringing a number of legislations to Parliament. One of the legislations the APNU/AFC passed was the Food Safety Act which we have to bring back here for an amendment because it has many punitive clauses. For the Food Safety Authority, I am hoping that it could come into being later this year at the completion of that building. This money is allocated for the

laboratory because, remember, all the activities that fall under the Food and Drugs Department will now come under the Food Safety Authority. For the sum of \$100 million, I have the disaggregation here with the type of equipment to be purchased for this laboratory and so on.

**Mr. Holder:** Project code 4503400 – Integrated Agriculture Development Programme: I notice there are drying floors under this item, and in the budget speech Region 2 was mentioned, but I do not see Region 2 listed there. I would like to know if there are any drying floors being constructed in Region 2 this year and, if so, where.

**Mr. Mustapha:** This is listed here for two drying floors that will come out of the Integrated Agriculture Development Programme’s budget. The other drying floor will be funded by the revenue coming out from the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) for the Region 2 area that the Hon. Member asked about.

**Mr. Holder:** Could the Hon. Minister say in which communities the drying floors will be constructed?

**Mr. Chairman:** It is not under this head but, since it was raised, I will allow it.

**Mr. Mustapha:** I was just advised by the General Manager (GM) of GRDB that one will be built by the revenue from the GRDB at Somerset and Berks.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is a good area.

**Mr. Holder:** It is one area, but I heard two in the budget speech.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we have to listen. The Hon. Minister said two...

**Mr. Mustapha:** Probably, just a clarification...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, please, just a moment. The Hon. Minister said two under this particular head we are talking about and the one for Region 2 is by GRDB.

**Mr. Mustapha:** That is right. It is Windsor Forest and Cotton Tree.

**Mr. Holder:** Project code 2802900 – Sustainable Agriculture Development Project: Under the description it states “support to farmers”, but I only see Regions 4, 5 and 6. I am wondering if in

this sum there is anything catering for farm to market roads. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House how many of the previously rehabilitated farm to market roads are in good condition at this current time?

**Mr. Mustapha:** This programme, as I mentioned, caters for support to farmers in what I said – farming equipment, tools and input for agriculture. For the farm to market roads this year, I mentioned in my budget speech that we will continue the second phase of the Onderneeming road this year. In the other areas, what we have been doing during the rice crop is rehabilitating these areas so that farmers could have easy access to and from their farms.

**Mr. Holder:** Project code 1701500 – Guyana Livestock Development Authority: “breeding facility” is listed under the description. I am wondering if there is anything in the Budget here for Region 2 in terms of breeding facilities, maybe black belly sheep.

**Mr. Mustapha:** By now it is public knowledge that the President launched this project in Region 5. He said that the project will start in Region 5. I mentioned that we already received 438 black belly sheep from Barbados. We are hoping, before the first quarter of this year, that we will receive the remaining to make it 1,000. This project, as it was launched in Region 5, will start in Region 5, and then we go to different parts of the country. Probably, Region 2 will come into being later on.

**Mr. Jordan:** Project code 4503200 – Contribution to Local Corporation – GUYSUCO: There is \$2 billion there for Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo). Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this sum, in the sense to help us to understand what will the \$2 billion do now for GuySuCo?

**Mr. Mustapha:** It is public knowledge that, probably, the Hon. Members over there did not understand sugar and that is why they closed the sugar industry. I will give them some knowledge as to what we will be doing with this \$2 billion. The sum of \$1.195 million is allocated to the Rose Hall Estate. As I mentioned, we will reopen the Rose Hall Estate later this year. For its second crop of this year we will see smoke coming out of the chimney at Rose Hall. I have here the disaggregation: one semi-mechanical planting trailer, four fixed-frame tractors, fertilizer applicators, broom sprayers, 200 drainage tubes, and 260 cane punts. We could have saved these moneys. When the APNU/AFC closed the estate the punts were left to rot, now we have to build

back those 260 cane punts. The disaggregation also includes 400 sling chains and five bell loaders. These are things for the Rose Hall Estate.

Then we are talking about \$549 million for the Rose Hall factory to complete the works in the factory: the rehabilitation of the main crane gantry component, crane carrier, boiler component, bagasse carrier, centrifugal baskets and crystallisers; rehabilitation of scales, vacuum pans, wharf and general factory equipment. It has the disaggregation. We will then spend another \$50 million on buildings and roads around the area, so that takes us to \$1.195 million that is allocated, out of the \$2 billion, to the Rose Hall Estate.

Another \$452 million is allocated to the Albion Sugar Estate. We will purchase tractors, fertiliser applicators and broom sprayers. The sum of \$300 million is allocated to the start the construction of the first phase of the packaging plant at the Albion Sugar Estate.

The sum of \$287 million is allocated to the Blairmont Sugar Estate. There are a number of projects for this estate: mechanical planting trailers, fixed-frame tractors and fuel applicators. The sum of \$200 million will be allocated to the packaging plant to expand the lines at the Blairmont Sugar Estate. The sum of \$56 million is allocated to the Uitvlugt Sugar Estate to do work to enhance that estate. When you add these up it will give \$2 billion.

**Mr. Jordan:** I am happy for that explanation from the Hon. Minister, but could he go a little further to say to us what is completed percentage of works at the Rose Hall Estate? The Hon. Minister also stated that Rose Hall Estate will begin to function sometime within this year. Could the Hon. Minister state when will the first crop of canes be planted so as to prepare for the reopening?

**Mr. Mustapha:** It is public knowledge. In the *Stabroek Newspaper* last Sunday there was a big article that 75% of the work at the Rose Hall factory has been completed. There are almost 3,000 hectares of cane that is ready for the second crop of 2022. So that will be harvested and will give us approximately eight to 10 weeks of grinding in the second crop of 2022.

**Mr. Jordan:** The sum of \$452 million is for the Albion Sugar Estate and another \$300 million for the packaging plant. Could the Hon. Minister state if any and what type of study was done for the

construction of this packaging plant at the Albion Sugar Estate and if it is absolutely necessary for the packaging plant?

**Mr. Mustapha:** It is public knowledge by now, because the study shows that packaged sugar is more lucrative than the bulk sugar. I mentioned that this year we will increase package and bag sugar more than the bulk sugar so that we could have more money, more revenue generating from GuySuCo.

*11.22 a.m.*

**Mr. Jordan:** With \$2 billion being provided for GuySuCo, it is public knowledge also that GuySuCo has not made a single crops' target in the last year. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House what percentage GuySuCo fell short by, by estates that is, for the final crop of last year?

**Mr. Chairman:** Ask more for a question to the Minister directly. You are now asking for an update across all the estates, and we are dealing with a specific line item here.

**Mr. Holder:** It is for GuySuCo, Mr. Chairman. Let me complete. What amount of profit did GuySuCo make during the last crop?

**Mr. Mustapha:** Mr. Chairman, I mentioned it. The Minister of Finance said it in his budget speech. GuySuCo – I do not have it here for individual estates – fell short by 18%. The point is that the Hon. Members keep harping on GuySuCo. I was looking when I spoke during the budget debate, when Mr. Ramjattan said in the National Assembly that we want them to pump more money in GuySuCo. That is why they are over there. GuySuCo satisfies a number of issues in our country. The social issues... Look at how many employment opportunities GuySuCo is providing; look at the village economy; look at the health facility; look at the social facilities. All those contributions GuySuCo is making to the development of our country.

The Hon. Member is talking about profit. GuySuCo will become profitable again. We have to work. They ran down GuySuCo. I mentioned that when we came out of Government, in 2015, GuySuCo was producing 231,000 metric tons of sugar. In 2019, GuySuCo went down to 91,000 metric tons. That is the point. They took GuySuCo. They wanted to close GuySuCo because they felt GuySuCo supporters were working there; they will punish the People's Progressive

Party/Civic (PPP/C) supporters if they close GuySuCo. That is the vindictiveness of the Opposition. They will not have a chance again in this country.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, let us try to refrain from the general debate. We are asking very specific questions with respect to the allocations.

**Mr. Jordan:** I just want to clarify, to get the understanding. I listened to the Minister ranting just now. I want to understand, is it that the Minister is saying that GuySuCo is failing? I want it to be clear. [Mr. McCoy: What is the line item?] It is the same line item. Rather, is he saying that GuySuCo has failed?

**Mr. Chairman:** You will now have to start framing your question with respect to the allocation. In light of these allocations, *blah, blah*. Now that you have given way so that the Hon. Minister could answer a policy issue, go ahead Hon. Minister. Is GuySuCo failing?

**Mr. Mustapha:** As I said earlier, and the Member is referring to me ranting... I am saying the facts: GuySuCo has never failed, and it will never fail, because GuySuCo is supporting almost half of the population in certain areas. We will continue to support GuySuCo because it is making a big difference in this country. Let me tell you, Mr. Chairman, GuySuCo is responsible for all or most of the wealth that we own in today's Guyana. GuySuCo has made a lot of contributions. Even for the National Cultural Centre, we had money come out of GuySuCo to build that cultural centre. GuySuCo is making a valuable contribution to our country's economy. As I said, when we came out of Government in 2015, GuySuCo was on the path of turning around. They killed GuySuCo; they starved GuySuCo for funds. They just spent about \$76 million only on GuySuCo. They wanted, as I said, to punish the PPP/C supporters. They thought that if they closed GuySuCo, they would punish the PPP/C supporters. But we will continue to support any corporation that employs a large number of persons and give livelihood to that section of the population.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, we do have an hour allocated for this particular agency. We are now at 11.27 a.m. having started at 10.32 a.m.

**Mr. Jordan:** The very same line item, \$300 million for the packaging plant and \$452 for Albion. With all this investment into GuySuCo and production still falls short every crop. Is there any plan



by the Hon. Minister to change the management of GuySuCo so that we could see profitability and increased production?

**Mr. Mustapha:** This is one of the plans as I said. When one has plans, one has to continue to update plans. One of the plans is ensure that we have the packet sugar, lucrative sugar. The management of GuySuCo, yes, we have made changes recently and we will continue. We have moved managers, we have replaced managers, and we will continue to do that. That is a work in progress, and we will continue to bring new managers into the system with new ideas.

**Mr. Jordan:** Project code 4503400 – Integrated Agriculture Development Programme. Could the Hon. Minister state who are the young people that will benefit from the Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurship Programme and in which region or regions this programme will be had?

**Mr. Mustapha:** This programme, I mentioned it. Last year we started out this programme; the President launched this programme. There are 100 graduates from the University of Guyana and the Guyana School of Agriculture in this programme presently. This year we will expand it to all the regions in our country. We will have more young graduates and more young people coming to this programme. This programme will be going across our country.

*Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$14,036,180,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$408,886,000**

*Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$408,886,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$35,000,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** For this capital works, I noticed there is a payment of retention here. **[Mr. McCoy:** What is the line item?] It is the same line item. It is one line item for this Fisheries, \$35 million. I noticed “enhanced production” as the benefits of the programme. What is going to be enhanced here? Is it the actual production? Let me just get an answer to that.

**Mr. Mustapha:** This is retention from a roll over project of \$3 million. The construction, through the drainage structure that was done, would be utilized to remove excess waters from the ponds at the Satyadeow Sawh Aquaculture Station at Mon Repos. The pond, when raw water falls it has excessive water which could overflow and the fish could... you understand. There is water being removed.

*Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$35,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$686,978,000**

*Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$686,978,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$63,000,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I see it is for equipment. Is this going to be the scientific equipment that is going to help out with our better forecast of the weather?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, is there a better doppler?

**Mr. Mustapha:** No, Mr. Chairman. That which the Hon. Member is referring to is listed in integrated, that particular equipment. This here is for more meteorological, ocean... the buoys at the Demerara River, aluminium boat and engine to do work in the various hinterland communities and so.

*Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$63,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, let us thank the Hon. Minister and his staff from the various agencies and programmes for taking us through these Estimates. Let us invite the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and her staff to join us as her agency comes up for consideration. As the Minister and staff get into place. Let us turn to pages 150 and 151.

**Agency: 23 – Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 231 – Policy Development and Administration – \$397,983,000**

*11.37 p.m.*

**Ms. Hughes:** At line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings – we see a large increase. Could you give us a breakdown of what that is and where that building is?

**Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce [Ms. Walrond]:** The increase caters for the maintenance of building works undertaken at the head office and the National Exhibition Centre. The maintenance works: repairs and recapping... extensive works as we prepare for the re-hosting of the GuyExpo that we did not have for the past two years because of the pandemic. The National Exhibition Centre is doing some extensive maintenance works.

**Ms. Hughes:** Could we disaggregate that, just break it down to the two? What is for the Exhibition Centre and what is for the main office at the Ministry?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, the head office, a sum of \$1.2 million caters for the maintenance works on the changing of locks, replacements of bulbs and fittings and minor plumbing works. At the National Exhibition Centre, a sum of \$14.5 million: repairs and recapping of staff quarters at \$1.4 million; repairs to the fuel bond and installation of storage shelves at \$1.5 million; repairs and recapping to the foreman's store at \$1.2 million; refurbishing of the GuyExpo Secretariat and kitchen area at \$3.4 million; repairs to the roof, shed and main stage area at the main auditorium at \$2.9 million; repairs and repainting of the floors, walls and stage of the main auditorium at \$2.8 million; replacing defective outlets and lighting fixtures in the office building at \$200,000; replacing all damaged PVC fittings at \$50,000; repairs to fibreglass gutters at \$1 million.

**Ms. Hughes:** Thank you. Line item 6284: Could you explain Other?

**Ms. Walrond:** Other, this is the marketing, communication and production activities. Due to increased collaboration with the private sector, this number has significantly decreased.

**Mr. Sears:** Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister, with regards to line item 6291, National and Other Events, state to this honourable House how much is allocated to Mashramani and Emancipation, and if any allocation is being made to cater for CPL Cricket Carnival?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, there are several national events catered for. I believe that the Hon. Member has asked for Mashramani and Cricket Carnival specifically. Cricket Carnival, a sum of \$5 million; GuyExpo, a sum of \$5 million; Christmas Village...; Emancipation, a sum of \$250,000; Diwali, a sum of \$300,000; and Mashramani is \$800,000.

**Mr. Sears:** With regard to line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), the question that I am posing to the Minister is, could the Minister state the areas of studies that will be catered for?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, the areas that we are going to be training for are in a strategic direction, which is 200 businesses to be trained in the Digital in Motion initiative and 50 businesses to be trained in export readiness.

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Chairman, a follow-up on the very/same line item. Minister, you have indicated that this is a training for over 200 businesses. Have those businesses been identified and is it a reflection of all 10 Administrative Regions?

**Ms. Walrond:** This is a project in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Mr. Chairman, and the businesses identified are in Regions 3, 4 and 5.

**Mr. Figueira:** Could you indicate what were the criteria for these 200 businesses? This is in the event other persons may want to be considered, they can satisfy the criteria in the future.

**Ms. Walrond:** This project is being conducted in consultation with the UNDP and we can make the criteria available or the process which the UNDP has engaged to choose. I believe the regions were chosen and the UNDP has identified the businesses in consultation with the Ministry. We can make the entire project document available to the Hon. Member.

**Mr. Holder:** Cde. Chairman, line item 6291. Could the Minister explain or justify the sums or the disparity between the sums for Mashramani and Cricket Carnival, with \$800,000 for mash and \$5 million for Cricket Carnival? Mashramani has been a tradition for Guyanese... [An Hon Member: *(Inaudible)*] ...yes, it is Guyanese, something that we all embrace. It brings out our

different cultures; it represents Guyana holistically and so I am a bit puzzled. I would like the Minister to really explain or justify the difference between those provisions, the \$800,000 to \$5 million for this new initiative, Cricket Carnival.

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, it appears that there is a discrepancy, there is a wide gap, but there is not one really. This \$800,000 that is reflective in this Programme 1, is \$800,000 that is only from the Ministry's Programme 1. All of the other subvention agencies that are under the Ministries also have an item that caters for Mashramani so, cumulatively, it adds up to more than the Cricket Carnival allocations. Also, Mashramani is the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport's event that is catered for, budget wise, in that Ministry.

*Programme: 231 – Policy Development and Administration – \$397,983,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 231 – Policy Development and Administration – \$29,500,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Project code 1214700: Could you say where this fence is?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, this fence is located at the National Exhibition Centre.

**Mr. Sears:** Just a quick follow-up on that particular line item, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister share the value of the fence?

**Ms. Walrond:** Construction of the fence is budgeted at \$13.847 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated for Programme 231...

**Mr. Sears:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Sears.

**Mr. Sears:** The line item which reflects "furniture and equipment": the question to the Hon. Minister is, could the Hon. Minister share or layover to this honourable House the offices that will be the beneficiaries of this allocation?

**Ms. Walrond:** The offices will be the National Exhibition Centre and the head office.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members online, please mute the microphone and if you need to interject then you can unmute.

*Programme 231 – Policy Development and Administration – \$29,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Estimates**

#### **Programme: 232 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$1,065,969,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6281 – Security Services. Could you explain the increase giving the name of the security company and the locations at which these services are being provided?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, this increase caters for the provision of security services at six new locations because of the call centres that the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce has started. The additional call centres are at No. 78 Village, Berbice; Onderneeming; Anna Regina; the Industrial Estate at Region 10, Amalia’s Ward; and in Region 2. Those are the new locations Mr. Chairman, and so the increase in security services at these locations.

*11.52 a.m.*

**Ms. Hughes:** I do not think I heard the name of the security company.

**Ms. Walrond:** The names cannot be provided because, unlike our Friends, we do not hand pick or sole source. These names are going to go to open tender and the lowest bidder will be contracted.

**Ms. Hughes:** I think that we are all aware of the security company. Anyways, can you disaggregate line item 6284 which also has a massive increase?

**Ms. Walrond:** This increase caters for industrial development manuals for the industrial estates and the increased quality of the publication of tender due to the additional major capital projects that would be executed by the Industrial Development Division. It also caters for computer networking facilities and closed-circuit television (CCTV) system at the new scrap metal office.

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could you say if the training is local or international?

**Ms. Walrond:** The training (including scholarships) will all be conducted right here in Guyana. There will be no international scholarships under this line item.

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: We see an increase in local travel and subsistence, could you give us an idea of the areas that are associated with that?

**Ms. Walrond:** The local travel is due to increased site visits. As you know, we have added six new industrial estates and call centres. So, there are twice-a-month visits to Eccles; Coldingen; the two call centres at Berbice, Enmore; Tuschen; the new industrial estates in Essequibo, Wakenaam and Amelia's Ward as well as Belvidere. The increase is due to the fact that we actually have more industrial activities.

**Mr. Sears:** Mr. Chairman, just a quick follow-up on that line item. I noticed that there was no mention of the Midas Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Incorporated call centre located at Linden/Kara Kara. Could the Hon. Minister state if this call centre still falls under her purview?

**Ms. Walrond:** That specific call centre does not fall under our purview. We do have one call centre, but it is at Amelia's Ward and not at Kara Kara.

**Mr. Sears:** Maybe, I have missed something. Is the Hon. Minister stating that there is a call centre or industrial site in Amelia's Ward?

**Ms. Walrond:** It is an industrial estate.

**Mr. Sears:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: The question to the Hon. Minister is – could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the allocation for the local organisations subsidies and contributions? Where are these contributions being made to?

**Mr. Chairman:** Before you answer, Hon. Minister, there is a schedule at the back of the Estimates. So, I think this is the fourth budget that we are dealing with here now. Hon. Minister, go ahead.

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, would the Hon. Member like the contributions to be disaggregated?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Sears:** Yes.

**Ms. Walrond:** We have annual contributions to the Small Business Bureau and the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS). That is it, the Small Business Bureau and the National Bureau of Standards.

*Programme: 232 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$1,065,969,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 232 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$4,072,500,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Project code 4404200 – Small Business Development Fund: Could you explain the thinking behind the fact that there has been no increase in funds for the provisions of the Small Business Development Fund?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, the targets are 1,000 grants for the year 2023. This way surpasses the target of 560 grants in five years under the previous Administration. So, I do believe that 1,000 grants for one year are not insignificant.

**Mr. Sears:** Mr. Chairman, I am just going back a bit to project code 1214700, Buildings. Could the Hon. Minister share where this parking lot is located?

**Ms. Walrond:** Could the Hon. Member repeat the project code?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, please, repeat the project code.

**Mr. Sears:** It is project code 1214700, Buildings.

**Ms. Walrond:** The parking area with the shed is to be located at the new scrap metal unit that is being constructed.

**Mr. Sears:** Project code 4403100 – National Quality Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister give a quick brief overview with regard to this project? I think this is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).



**Ms. Walrond:** This project, the National Quality Infrastructure, deals with enhancing the quality of the business environment and our exports. This includes enhancing the Guyana National Bureau of Standards so that it is able to prepare our products and to make sure that there are export ready at international standards. To that extent, we had to build laboratory facilities and do other kinds of capital work to build out the capacity for the National Bureau of Standards.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Project code 4404200 – Small Business Development Fund: I just was to back on this \$300 million. I heard the Hon Minister said that they are catering for 1,000 grants. Am I to interpret that as 300 persons or organisations will benefit from this sum?

**Ms. Walrond:** The 1,000 grants mean 1,000 recipients. I am not sure what...

**Mr. Mahipaul:** So, could the Hon. Minister say what is the value that will go? Is there a cap that will go to every recipient?

**Ms. Walrond:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, according to our grant regulation, the ceiling is \$500,000 and the minimum is \$150,000. So, it can be anywhere in between.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say how can a member or an organisation in the public domain apply for this grant? What is the system that is in place that can facilitate the application?

**Ms. Walrond:** The application process can be done online at the website of the Small Business Bureau. The business must be registered with the Small Business Bureau and satisfy the criteria for being a small business according to the Small Business (Amendment) Act. The business also must be in compliance – registered with the Commercial Registry – with the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and the National Insurance Scheme (NIS). They will then submit a business plan and based on the completed plan, a determination will be made as to whether the applicant can get the grant.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Chair, with your permission, could I ask the Hon. Minister how many grants were distributed last year with this same allocated sum? Is it the same 1,000 that they are looking at?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chair, I would indulge the Hon. Member for last year even though we are dealing with projections for this year 2023. In the last year, 1,439 grants were distributed.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Last year, they distributed 1,439 grants and this year they are looking at 1,000. Is there a reason for the reduction in terms of the spread?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to correct that. For the record, it was 1,429 and not 1,439; I did make an error. The 1,429 grants far surpassed our projections of 1,200 for last year as well. This year, we have decided to do more monitoring of the businesses. So, we have decided to make 1,000 businesses, but it will not necessarily be limited to that; that is our target. Every year, we have been exceeding our targets and we probably might this year, but 1,000 is the number of businesses that we feel that we could effectively monitor. It is a target that we find that we could work with. It is sustainable, in terms of us not just handing them the grants but following up with training and more inspections so that the businesses can grow. That figure, we consider will be a manageable one for us to handle. Mr. Chairman, it does not mean that we are confining ourselves to 1,000 because we have found that we have continued to exceed our targets as we set them.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** May I ask the Hon. Minister what is the monitoring structure that is in place for these 1,429 grants and how does the hon. Member envisages enhancing it to cater for the additional 1,000 grants that are expected this year, in view of some of the businesses who received funding from this grant in Region 3 are no longer functioning?

*12.07 p.m.*

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, there is a robust monitoring structure already in place. It is because of the widespread, which is the fact that it is not just confined to one region, we are in every single region of the country. It has taken more resources and time to go to these different regions. We have decided to spread it out – unlike what has happened previously – to the far-flung regions. The monitoring structure will be enhanced only because we have to do more travelling to do the monitoring. I am not quite sure if I answered that question from the Hon. Member.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** From the 1,429 grants who benefited last year, should they be interested in continuing to expand their business, can they be entitled to another grant from this Bureau? Are these 1,000 grants that they are looking at strictly for new business enterprise?

**Ms. Walrond:** The policy is when a business has received a grant it cannot receive another grant but there is a Credit Guarantee Programme where it can get access to or help to get credit from a private bank and that is facilitated as Guarantee Programme through the Small Business Bureau.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** My last question on this project code. Is there a target for every region that the Ministry is looking with reference to those 1,000 grants that is expected in 2023? Is there a target for each region? If so, would the Minister be kind enough to say how many businesses are targeted for each region?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, it will be based on demand. It is a *first come, first serve*. It is based on who is asking and also we will be looking in terms of region at the past distribution. Every region has its unique nuances in terms of population, so a densely populated region will obviously have more request than a region that is sparsely populated. There is no specific target per region. It is based on demand.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, forgive me I did say it is my last question, but I want to follow-up based on the answer the Minister reference there. In the far-flung regions of our country accessibility to information poses a problem and many of them may not have access to information technology and so on. Does the Ministry have any mechanism in place to edify the citizens of the various far-flung regions and allow them the opportunity to access this fund and assist them in term of satisfying the criteria so that our friends and our loved Guyanese in Regions 7, 8, 9 and 10 could also have access to this fund, and at least develop themselves through this Small Business Development Fund allocation?

**Ms. Walrond:** The Small Business Bureau and the Ministry have done several outreaches to all of the regions, and it has been widely known. We continue to do these outreaches, where we bring all of the compliant agencies as well as the application process, sensitisation and information sessions have been held in every single region and we continue to do that. This is the entire Small Business Bureau (SBB) staff have gone to every region to spread information about the grant process. We, in every region, have a Small Business Bureau help desk situated where people can interface and if there are any questions from the different regions as well.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** The Hon. Minister indicated to this honourable Committee just now that there is 1,429 recipients of small business grants from last year. I am looking at Volume 2 on page 124, and it states:

“Number of small businesses that received loans and grants from the Small Business Bureau 722.”

I would like the Hon. Minister to clarify how is it that in the Volume 2 it states 722 received loans and grants but under this Small Business Bureau allocation here we are seeing 1,429? I would like to have that clarification.

**Ms. Walrond:** At the time of printing, it was that figure 722. We have since distributed to the tune as of 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2022, the balance of the 1,429.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, am I to interpret that at the time of printing its target was 1,100 and now the Hon. Member is saying to this Committee that the Ministry has reduced that target to 1,000 for 2023?

**Ms. Walrond:** We have distributed 1,229 grants to small and microenterprises many of whom are women, many of whom are single parents, many businesses that have suffered during the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I do not know if this is the time to quibble over two or more targets. We have done and surpassed far beyond what the previous Administration have done, in terms of helping microenterprises and people in vulnerable areas including Region 10.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I thank the Minister for doing what she has to do; that is what the Hon. Member is there for. Congratulations on doing all of this but our job requires Hon. Member to clarify these numbers that are mixed up here. Just now, the Hon. Minister said that they did 1,229 grants and before that we heard 1,429 grants, so we need that clarification, that is one.

Two, at the time of printing this Budget which was the day before we received the Budget Speech, her target was set here as 1,100 grants and the Minister is saying to us now that her target is 1,000 grants. So, I am asking the \$300 million is fixed and they had set that target as 1,100 grants which is an additional 100 people benefiting, excellent. Now, the Minister is saying that the 1,000 grants. All I am asking the Hon. Minister is to clarify these numbers.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, there seems to be some confusion in the Hon. Member's mind so please, clarify.

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, the current target is 1,000 grants for 2023.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, 1,000 grants for 2023.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, all I will say and rest this case is that they should reflect the true – what she has been insisting – value or the true numbers in these books because the books have different numbers.

**Mr. Sears:** Project code 4503300 – Industrial Development: Could the Hon. Minister share the specific locations of these Industrial sites? We are fully aware of Enmore, Lethem and in Linden. What are the constituencies in which these industrial estates will be constructed? I have two follow-up questions.

**Ms. Walrond:** For the industrial estates one will be located at Amelia's Ward which started construction and the other at Onderneeming in Essequibo.

**Mr. Sears:** Could the Hon. Minister share the current status update of the industrial estate at Amelias Ward in Linden?

**Ms. Walrond:** The Amelias Ward industrial estate, the land has already been cleared and we currently working on the roads and drains.

**Mr. Sears:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. The final follow-up question for the Hon. Minister would be, could the allocations for the two estates be disaggregated?

**Ms. Walrond:** The Amelias Ward is \$279, 763 million and the engineer's estimate for Essequibo is \$293,238 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. Before I take the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, I noticed that Mr. Holder wanted to say something. Are you no longer interested?

**Mr. Holder:** No, Sir.

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

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes, Sir. I am going back to project code 4404200, Small Business Development Fund. This sum is for loans and grants. Could the Minister say how many persons from this 1,000 is expected to receive loans and how many are expected to receive grants? From this 1,429 that was there before, how many received loans and how many received grants? The third question to the Hon. Minister is, how many have repaid their loans or if they are still in the process of repaying?

**Ms. Walrond:** This number reflects grants; they are all grants not loans.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, you see it comes back to the books. The book is saying number of small businesses that received loans and grants. We are depending on these texts to guide us. If they are all grants, then the Ministry ought to have said that it is the number of businesses that received grants.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, sometimes the heading is Loans and Grants but, so far, it is all grants. I think the Minister did say that loans are facilitated guarantee and are taken from private institutions. There are no loans included, just all grants. Minister, if I am not clear you can restate.

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, you are absolutely correct. There are no loans at all reflected in this. All are grants – 1,429 grants.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Just for clarity, does this Small Business Bureau cater for loans?

**Ms. Walrond:** Mr. Chairman, it is a loan guarantee programme; it is not actual loans.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I gave you a chance earlier, but you were more taken up with what was before you. Please, go ahead.

*12.22 p.m.*

**Mr. Holder:** Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Project code 4404200 – Small Business Development Fund: Would the Minister be kind enough to layover to the Committee the 1,429 recipients of the small business grants with specific details, such as names; addresses; and also, if there is a report or an assessment evaluating the performance of these businesses because I assume that you are

getting these grants for the development of some kind of business? If there is a report of some kind of assessment, would she be kind enough to lay it over to the Committee?

**Ms. Walrond:** With respect to the laying over names of recipients, the Small Business Bureau at the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce has a strict policy of confidentiality of client information. Therefore, identifying the names would not be provided. This is essential to protect our clients from political attacks, marketing scams, fraud and other intrusion. Also, the ethical storage of personal information and details, we cannot and will not disclose. This is essential for maintaining the trust of our clients.

**Mr. Holder:** Cde. Chairman, how is it then we in this Committee could verify or confirm that these grants were actually disbursed to those 1,429 recipients? Are there any other means of this Committee verifying the disbursement? Could the Minister layover such a document?

**Ms. Walrond:** The Small Business Bureau continues to be audited continually by the Auditor General. The Report of the Auditor General will reflect if there are any discrepancies and we are sure that there would not be any.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I do not have a question for the Hon. Minister, but I am actually standing as a representative in this Committee. I mean Members could heckle but as we are considering...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, if you do not have a question, I cannot allow you at this time. There are many opportunities for the representatives of the people in this Committee to represent their constituents. At this time, we are dealing with a specific question under this particular programme.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I do not have a question for the Hon. Minister, as I said. I know that we are in the Committee of Supply. Could you advise me when I could address you, as the Speaker, to highlight some major, major concerns I have as an elected Member sitting in this National Assembly?

**Mr. Chairman:** I will.

*Programme: 232 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$4,072,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Current Expenditure**

### **Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$146,943,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Could we get an idea of the regions and areas of focus that could explain the travel in this area?

**Ms. Walrond:** This caters for 28 planned data collection trips to five municipal markets in Regions 3 and 4, that is, Mahaica, Stabroek, Bourda and Parika Markets, as well as Mon Repos Market. There would be six trips, one to Regions 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Also, there are regional outreaches that caters for eight regional outreach programmes.

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could we get an idea of the current events planned under that line item?

**Ms. Walrond:** The events planned are the commemoration of the World Consumer Rights Day, a fitness walk, participating in GuyExpo, the Essequibo Agri and Trade Expo, the Berbice Expo and Trade Fair and the Rupununi Trade Expo.

*Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$146,943,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Mahipaul:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** The word ‘no’ was loud from one person.

## **Capital Expenditure**

### **Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$750,000**

*Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$750,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Current Expenditure**

### **Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$781,336,000**



**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: Could we get an idea of exactly what those are and what would account for the increase?

**Ms. Walrond:** The Department of Tourism will be doing more outreaches and this increase caters for the purchase of field materials and supplies for the Department to conduct its field work in the various regions.

**Ms. Hughes:** I think we know it is field supplies. What are some of those supplies?

**Ms. Walrond:** The field supplies are life jackets, safety boots, hats, umbrellas, water bottles – five each, raincoats and safety helmets. For the staff at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC) there are safety helmets, safety jackets, boots and umbrellas to the tune of \$450,000.

**Ms. Hughes:** Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could you say which buildings are covered under this line item?

**Ms. Walrond:** It will be the Arthur Chung Conference Centre.

**Mr. Sears:** I would like to turn our attention just a little back to line item 6116, Contracted Employees. I observe that there is a reduction of three contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister share what posts have been relieved?

**Ms. Walrond:** Three staff have resigned and those are a Driver, a Cleaner and one Machine Operator.

**Mr. Sears:** Could the Hon. Minister confirm if there are any addition to the Regional Tourism Development Officers?

**Ms. Walrond:** What line item is it?

**Mr. Sears:** Just for confirmation, again, with regard to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I am just trying to confirm, how many Regional Tourism Development Officers fall under this line item?

**Ms. Walrond:** Under this line item, none.

**Mr. Sears:** With regard to line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: We notice that there is an increase by one. Could the Hon. Minister share the position or role that temporary employee would fill?

**Ms. Walrond:** This caters for one Gardener.

**Mr. Sears:** A follow-up: Where will this gardener serve or function from?

**Ms. Walrond:** The gardener will be serving the Arthur Chung Conference Centre.

*Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$781,336,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$33,905,000**

**Ms. Hughes:** Project code 1208300 – Arthur Chung Conference Centre: What are the upgrades that are proposed for the Arthur Chung Conference Centre and do they include an audio system?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, you have the floor. I thought you were going to ask ‘AC’?

**Ms. Walrond:** In the context of the recent assault on the Arthur Chung Conference Centre, certainly video camera footage, more video cameras, security cameras to be installed, flag poles, more computers, Karaoke Television (KTV) receivers, refrigerator, leaf blower, a transmitter, tracking cameras, dining tables and a vacuum pump.

*Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$33,905,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*12.37 p.m.*

*Assembly suspended at 12.38 p.m.*

*Assembly resumed at 1.49 p.m.*

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Speaker, if I may?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before we head into Committee of Supply, I just want to make a brief statement.

**Mr. Speakers:** Hon. Members, I do not think we are at that stage on the Order Paper for a brief statement. Unfortunately, I will not be able to allow you to. We are at Government's Business.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Alright, Mr. Speaker. I will defer to tomorrow morning, God spare life.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we will resume the Committee of Supply.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I would like to call the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources and staff to be in place.

**Agency: 26 Ministry of Natural Resources**

**Current Estimates**

**Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$404,447,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** Minister, welcome to you and your staff, the staff particularly. In relation to the oil and gas sector for natural resources, unfortunately, the Ministry is quite bare. However, my first question is under line item 6241, Rental of Buildings. [Mr. Seeraj: The Sussex Street Bond?] Maybe. Could the Hon. Minister provide some details?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, could you provide some details of this rental?

**Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Bharrat]:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank the Hon. Member for the question as well. This building has been rented by the Ministry of Natural Resources since 2019. It is the building on Main Street that houses the Compliance Department of the Ministry as well as the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Secretariat.

**Mr. Patterson:** A follow-up: there is a new Guyana Oil and Power Incorporated. Does this new agency fall under the Ministry of Natural Resources? If not, could the Minister inform where it is? I am still at the same line item– rental of buildings.

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, the direct answer is no. As I mentioned, the building will house the compliance department as well as the EITI Secretariat.

**Mr. Patterson:** It might be a good time to put on back the air conditioning (AC) unit now. Line item 6322, Subsidies and Contribution to International Organisations. There is a sum of \$2.1 million, which I assume is our annual contribution. That is the EITI. Could the Minister inform the House as to where the actual budget for the EITI is or under?

**Mr. Bharrat:** The Member is right. This is the annual subscription for the EITI. The allocation for EITI is in this programme as well, I am advised.

**Mr. Patterson:** A follow-up question: what is the allocation for the EITI for 2023, Hon. Minister?

**Mr. Bharrat:** I am advised that the field activities are covered under the same programme, programme 261, while some of the other activities are supported by the World Bank project.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, did the Hon. Minister say 261, which is Local Travel and Subsistence?

**Mr. Bharrat:** No, programme 261. It is the programme.

**Mr. Patterson:** Programme 261. This is the Minister's budget. I asked, specifically, what is the allocation for the EITI for 2023? I am asking the Hon. Minister to disaggregate the amounts committed to the EITI.

**Mr. Chairman:** Under which line item?

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister said...

**Mr. Chairman:** Under which line item, first. Let us come back to a line item.

**Mr. Patterson:** I started off at line item 6322, and the Hon. Minister said that this was the international fees for the EITI. I then subsequently asked a follow up question: what is the EITI allocation under this? The Minister responded that it is under this programme.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister was talking about other programmes, if I heard him correctly. Did I hear other programme?

**Mr. Patterson:** The Minister said 261, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, under Subsidies to International Organisations, there is a table at the back. I am educating the Members. Under the line item, if we check and a particular agency is not there, we have to look for the line item where it is to ask the question. But to come and ask a general policy, where is this, where is that... The document that we have before us has a lot of information. The question really is, I believe, the EITI catered for under this? Hon. Minister, I am just trying to bring some clarity so that the questions can be very focused on the line item.

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned, the expenses or the allocation for EITI is catered for in programme 261. I could just give an example, for clarity, to the Hon. Member. For example, line item 6284, Other, there is an allocation of \$56,280,000. Part of that allocation caters for the systematic disclosure for the EITI. The beneficial ownership register is catered for under line item 6284, while administrative expenses are catered for under the other heads. A few other expenses will fall under the World Bank project, as has always been the common practice since the EITI has been established in Guyana.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Hon. Minister Patterson. Sorry, Hon. Member Mr. Patterson.

**Mr. Patterson:** That is okay, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Once you were a Minister, for me, you are always a Minister.

**Mr. Patterson:** Forward thinking; things to come. I thank the Hon. Minister. I was going on to line item 6284, but I wanted to ensure. Sir, I am very well acquainted with Appendix T and the other appendices where the organisations are, but thanks for the reminder. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this \$56.280 million allocated for under line item 6284, Other?

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, systematic disclosure, as I mentioned – \$7 million, advertisements – \$10 million, design and printing – \$4 million, the Youth in Natural Resources Apprenticeship Programme – \$8 million, legal opinion and consultancies – \$25 million for the year 2023. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** I do not want to berate this point anymore. The Hon. Minister indicated that the EITI is disbursed under this. The disaggregation the Minister mentioned has no mention of the EITI. That is just a point, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, before you speak, you can sit, if you so desire, and pull the microphone down so that we could hear better.

**Mr. Patterson:** Is that available to everyone?

**Mr. Chairman:** Just the person in the realm.

**Mr. Patterson:** I am suffering the same.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will allow you to.

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, I did mention the \$7 million allocation for the systematic disclosure. That is in regard to the EITI.

**Mr. Patterson:** Could I ask the Hon. Minister to further disaggregate the \$7 million, including the employment cost for systematic disclosure for the EITI? Could the Minister confirm if the Chairman or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the EITI is being paid under this \$7 million?

**Mr. Bharrat:** This \$7 million is to cater for consultancy. The staffing is catered for under a different line item and is not catered for in this \$7 million.

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say specifically where this training will be or as to what will be conducted?

**Mr. Bharrat:** The following trainings will cater for; water quality monitoring, global positioning system (GPS) mapping and reading, strategic planning, natural resource policy leadership programme, first aid training.

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** I asked the question because I wanted to know if there was any training to be done, or I do not know if the Ministry of Natural Resources has a task force to assist in the monitoring of the oil and gas sector. That is why I was specifically asking where the training will be done.

**Mr. Bharrat:** Not under this programme, Mr. Chairman.

*Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$404,447,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

2.03 p.m.

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,000,000**

*Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$668,729,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** Line item 6284 – Other: Once again, could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the \$405 million?

**Mr. Bharrat:** Definitely. RIZA Forestation Programme – \$300 million, the final phase of the Forest Inventory Programme – \$95 million, advertisement and other services to support these – \$10 million.

*Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$668,729,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$8,500,000**

*Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$8,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$580,391,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** In order to save time, I will ask the question with brevity. Line items 6284 and 6294, both are Other. Could that be disaggregated?

**Mr. Bharrat:** For line item 6284, if I may deal with that first, a total of \$204 million, \$6.3 million goes towards the third-party inspection cost, a cost which is attached to the off-loading of crude whenever a lift is being done. This has always been a standing agreement between us and the operator. We pay 50% and they pay 50%. This represents 50% of having a person physically on the Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO). This also takes into consideration that the third Floating Production Storage and Offloading will become a part of our fleet in 2023.

Fifty million is being allocated to the newly formed Local Content secretariat. As you are aware, the Secretariat was established in 2022, mainly supported by the Ministry's 261 Programme. However, now we would like to formally have an allocation assigned to the Local Content Secretariat so that much more could be done especially with our promise to review the Act in 2023, by way of holding consultations. In the Act itself, it states that the Local Content Secretariat is responsible for conducting sensitisation, capacity development programmes across the country. We would like to start that in 2023.

Forty-two million represents subscription, especially going towards S & P Global Flats and a number of other organisations, for example the International Energy Agency and the Oracle Crystal Ball Bloomberg Subscription. These are necessary because it helps our technical team at the Ministry to manage the sector in a more prudent manner. As a result of some of these subscriptions and the knowledge gained from them, we have been able to save significantly on demurrage costs which has been cut significantly. One will see in the allocation in this Budget for example, we have only asked for—I will give you the figures as we go to the other one—ninety-five million demurrage cost. At one time demurrage cost was almost \$500 million. The subscription has helped our technical team a lot working with those organisations to cut our demurrage cost by tracking pricing and tracking vessels as it moves.

The other cost of \$5 million will go towards advertisements and brochure and petroleum activities, for the public and staff and \$1.7 million is allocated for the review of the Whiptail Field Development Plan (FDP) which is our sixth development. There is an indication that that FDP will



be submitted to us sometime late 2023. We are making provisions to start the review process of the sixth development. This is line item 6284.

I think the Hon. Member also asked about 6294, being a total of \$156.5 million. Fifty million is going towards the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS). The GNBS is now the agency that has a physical presence on both FPSOs presently, looking into the measurement calibration and also monitoring the daily production and the off-loading. The sum of \$98.5 million is budgeted for demurrage expenses and as I mentioned, this has been significantly reduced due to the efficient management of the sector.

In the past, if I may give you an example in 2020, we had a total of 19 lifts and the demurrage cost was \$2.8 million. In 2022, we had 32 lifts, with a demurrage cost of \$2.8 million. It almost doubles the amount of lifts for the same demurrage cost. As you are aware, Mr. Chairman demurrage cost is not something that can be avoided, it is almost unavoidable but at the same time, one can determine a fixed cost to every lift, depending on the downtime or the time a vessel takes to load at the FPSO. This \$98.5 million is also factoring the third FPSO coming on board in 2023, as well. Finally, \$8 million will go towards the Local Content secretariat and the Petroleum Unit in general, participating in international forum and expositions, like our International Energy Expo coming up on Valentine's Day and of course, the number of international expos that we are all usually invited to, Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) and a few others. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you, very much, for the explanation of line items 6284 and 6294. Could I ask the Minister, with your leave Sir, the audits which were awarded, under which line head were they conducted during the last two and a half years?

**Mr. Bharrat:** I know it is not linked to any line item but in the interest and in the spirit of transparency and accountability because there is nothing to hide with regards to the management of the oil and gas sector and there is nothing sinister or hidden in the Budget with regards to management of the oil and gas sector and I will volunteer to give the information regardless. I think the Hon. Member is fully aware that there is a petroleum account at the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) of which licence fees and other dues are paid into. For example, in the new production licences that we are issuing now, we have actually included an auditing fee so

that the operator pays an auditing fee to Guyana. That money is being paid into the Petroleum account at the GGMC.

For example, the audit that is being done right now, that is the one involving the local consortium, the three local accounting companies participating and partnering with the international company are being paid through that mechanism. I would like to say that an initial report was submitted by the consortium and we are awaiting the second report which should be submitted in another two months from today.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you very much, for the Minister's frank answer and his commitment. Everything is transparent. What about the position of the first audit which was completed by the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) in November, 2020, some 2 ½ years ago? Could the Hon. Minister be so equally forthright with that?

**Mr. Bharrat:** I think what the Hon. Member is, the review was done by the GRA in 2020 indeed. It found that there was need to go back and do some further work with the operator. This was done and a final report has now been submitted and is being reviewed by all the relevant agencies, stakeholders, including the Petroleum Unit at the GRA. Once that is over, we will conclude the first audit, hopefully very soon.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, a follow-up. Thank you once again for your frankness, Minister. Mr. Minister, in November, 2022, I am not allowed to call his name, reported that the second audit would have been completed by the end of last year.

*2.18 p.m.*

You have now said that the second report will be done in two months. Could you inform this nation when you expect the final report to be ready and available and laid in the National Assembly?

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, the final report is due in March of 2023. I think from the inception when the contract was signed, there was a bit of a misunderstanding. In the contract it states 120 working days and I think there were a lot of misconceptions – not necessarily by the Opposition, but I think the media as well – that it will be 120 running days or calendar days. It is 120 working days. What has happened since then is that the consortium sent a number of its accountants/auditors

to Oklahoma. I know it went to Oklahoma, for sure, to do some training programmes. It went to Houston as well.

The whole idea of having a local consortium participating in this audit is to build capacity. Yes, there has been a slight delay, but it is at the expense of building capacity locally so that we can have this very local consortium and even add more local companies to them. The door is not shut to that. They can do the future audits and we can reach a stage where we will not be auditing 2018 and 2019, but we can audit 2021 and 2022, or even half yearly audits, once we have that capacity. We do have good auditors and accountants in Guyana but can they audit oil and gas expenses? The answer to that is no. They need to familiarise themselves with the expenses associated with the oil and gas sector. If we are going to talk about a Christmas tree or RIZA or drilling fluid then they are not quite familiar with that. It is more of a learning process to and building capacity. Yes, there has been a slight delay but the last report is due in March of 2023. Thank you.

*Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$580,391,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

### **Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$511,000,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** I am speaking on project code 4404600 – Oil and Gas Sector Development Programme: I do not have programme one here so one could help me with the project code, Sir. For the Minister, from Volume III, the capital profile, number 3, Creation of oil and gas data management system. That is one of the targets to be delivered. Could the Hon. Minister update us on that? I have follow-up questions.

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, indeed, part of the allocation is to ensure that we start the process of having our very own data repository right here in Guyana. The disadvantage that we face right now is that our oil and gas data is not stored in Guyana. The issue with that is that we can make a lot of revenue by having that data in the country and us being the sole agent responsible for it. Presently, it is being hosted by one or two different companies in Houston that has the type of capacity to hold our data. These are not new arrangements. This is an arrangement that has been in place since the previous Administration has been in Government. We have maintained the same

arrangement. We have not changed anything. If I can give an example right now, we have this bid round. Our bid rounds that are now public. Fourteen blocks are up for auction. If any company, for example, ExxonMobil, needs additional data on Guyana – seismic data or any other data – then it has to go to this third party in Houston to pay for that data. Of course, 50% will come to us. It is because we do not have our own data repository in Guyana that we have to take 50% and not 100%.

We are aiming to change that so we can have our own data – Guyana data – stored in Guyana and we can manage it and make the revenue for ourselves right here in Guyana too. As we continue to develop the oil and gas sector, there will be much more data. Not only from the Stabroek Block but all other blocks outside with Stabroek as well as nearshore and onshore blocks. There is an allocation here to start that process to get a consultant to look at our needs as a country because we will have to determine first, what data we need to store, the size of the data, what software would be needed, what hardware would be needed, the specifications and requirements. These are all information that we need upfront. There is an allocation here to hire a consultant to start the initial work so that we are advised properly before we rush into setting up this data repository in Guyana. It is not as simple as it sounds, it is highly technical. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** Under this programme and in light of the gas to shore, does this programme cater for a gas leak management plan? It has been properly committed to be available since last year. Could I ask the Minister where that is funded and what is the status of that?

**Mr. Bharrat:** I thank the Hon. Member for the question. Mr. Chairman, these studies are ongoing. The operator has been assisting with all the studies along with our technical team. One would not see an allocation assigned to it but it is being done between us and the operator. They are paying for it, in other words.

Additionally, through His Excellency, President Ali, and the recent visit by the Minister of State for Energy Affairs of the State of Qatar to Guyana, on building our relationship, we have managed to secure two experts that will be in the country next week. That is, Qatar is sending two experts to Guyana to assist us with this very plan that the Hon. Member spoke of. The gas leak and gas utilisation monetisation plan. If I may add, at no cost to us. This is Qatar's way of showing their appreciation to Guyana. It will be paying for that.

**Mr. Patterson:** Does the Minister think that it is prudent for a country that is in its Natural Resource Fund (NRF) at over \$1 billion for 2022 only, that the operator, ExxonMobil, should be conducting our gas leak management plan, as opposed to us procuring these services independently and separately? Is that the most prudent way the Ministry is going within the industry? That the operator is doing its own gas leak management plan?

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, based on the new production licence that we would have signed for Payara and Yellowtail, we have built into the production licence that it becomes a requirement from the operator but it must be reviewed by the Ministry of Natural Resources' technical team. It is not us accepting what the operator gives to us, it is us reviewing and making our input. It is built into the licence so it is part of its responsibility. It takes the expense away from us but we still have a major say in reviewing and putting our inputs into any plan.

**Mr. Patterson:** I see the Minister is suffering a bit so I will speed up. There is a gas dispersion plan which was promised. There is a wastewater management plan which was promised. There is a fishing stock depletion plan. All of these were promised for 2022. Also, a natural gas management plan. All were promised to be available by the end of 2022. Could the Minister update this Assembly on that or is that being done by the operator as well?

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Chairman, let me correct the Hon. Member. I cannot recall and I do not think that it is accurate that I said all these studies would have been completed by the end of 2022. However, I have a list here of all the studies that are ongoing. I could probably go through a few. For example, conducting the produced water study, conducting the Block Seismic Activity Study, conducting the effective drilling, production activity and marine environment study. There are a number of studies being done by independent consultants. The Ministry is reviewing all these studies and making our input. I cannot recall making the promise that it would be concluded by the end of 2022. What I can say presently, is that all these studies are currently ongoing and we have an active say.

I do not want it to look in anyway as if the operator is doing the studies for the Government. I want to share the same point as the Hon. Member mentioned. As a country, and as the Ministry responsible for the sector, we cannot have an operator doing the studies and preparing the report, and we are accepting it as it is. I want to assure the Hon. Member and everybody that the study is

being done but the Ministry is reviewing. That is why we have – I think I went through it – \$25 million for consultancies. What we are also doing is employing or contracting independent consultants so that they can assist us with reviewing some of these reports. Some of these reports, as the Hon. Member would agree, are very technical reports so we need experts in those fields. That is why there is an allocation of \$25 million for consultancies. That is being done and it is not that the report or the study from the operator is being accepted by Government. I just wanted to make that point. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, my final question for the Minister so we can get on with the business. The natural resources stock, particularly the fishing stock. That is the report to give us a baseline study of what our fishing *et cetera* are at present. Therefore, should there be any peril, God forbid, we can say this is the damage and this is the long term damage and things like that. I know that the Minister has said that it is the operator and the Ministry checking but I would like to ask the Minister if he does not take it as viable at this stage – as it is not only for ExxonMobil, but for countries worldwide, it is not only for offshore but onshore, and all the villages and communities on the coastline – that this is done independently of the operator.

2.33 p.m.

They are only concerned about where their operations are. It should be a countrywide independent fishing stock baseline study and not limited to where the operator, which is ExxonMobil, is operating.

**Mr. Bharrat:** I am advised that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently conducting a study of that nature. It is countrywide and under the EPA permit before we could actually issue a production licence.

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** Cde. Chairman, I just have a follow-up question from Mr. Patterson's question. I know there was an Allison Redford Report. Could the Hon. Member say if he has the report and whether we could have a copy of that?

**Mr. Bharrat:** Even though it is not part of the budget, I am willing to give an answer. As I mentioned, we have nothing to hide in the oil and gas sector. When we took Government in August of 2020, the Payara licence was almost completed by the then Administration. However, it was the

People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Administration that was going to sign that production licence. So, His Excellency decided that if we were going to sign a production licence, then we should have a review done to ensure that we are satisfied. If not, the President would have been asking me to sign a document that I had no knowledge of. He also said that we should look at the conditions and see how we could improve on them too. What we did, instead of going ahead and signing the Payara licence as it was in August, 2020, we delayed it by a month, in order to have a second review of the work done by Bayphase Limited. This was because Bayphase Limited was the consultant contracted by the previous Administration. Bayphase Limited is still contracted by us even now to review the Field Development Plan (FDP) for Payara and to also negotiate the terms.

What we did was to contract somebody quickly because of the essence of time. The Payara licence was actually supposed to be signed before August, 2020, so that the operator could have made a final investment decision. We were definitely behind time, so we reached out to a reputable consultant from Canada. The contact was made, of course, through the Canadian High Commission in Guyana. We did not just pick somebody out of the thin air and that is the very person the Hon. Member is speaking of. We contracted that person to do a quick review of the work that Bayphase Limited did on the Payara licence. To ask for a report from that person is asking for the licence. The recommendations, if any, the addition or the changes made are contained in the Payara licence. I would say to the Hon. Member that the Payara licence is the report. If you want a report from the consultant, then there is the Bayphase Limited report. This is because Bayphase Limited was the original consultant for the Payara licence. The recommendation made by the third-party consultant is contained in the licence. The Payara licence, which is public, is on the Ministry's website. I could point the Hon. Member to that licence. The Information is contained there.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I have a follow-up: I am having some trouble understanding. Is there or is there not a report? I understand how these things work. I am sure that somewhere there is, whether it be in a form of a memorandum or correspondence where this individual said, these are my recommendations. She had to have a deliverable to be paid against. My question to the Hon. Minister is, where is that memorandum, document or whatever it is in which she had indicated that 'these are my recommendations'? I do not believe that you could be saying to this honourable

House that she, more or less, prepared that licence. I am very sure that there is that document somewhere. What we want to know is where it is and if this House could be given a copy of that document.

**Mr. Bharrat:** The position remains the same. The licence is the report. The licence was signed between the Government of Guyana and Esso Exploration & Production Guyana Limited (EPGL) and it is public.

**Ms. Walton-Desir:** I have a follow-up: if I as a Member of the National Assembly were to say that Ms. Redford had prepared that licence, would I be factually correct in saying that?

**Mr. Bharrat:** As I mentioned, the Field Development Plan was reviewed by Bayphase Limited and a licence was prepared. The consultant in question was asked to review the licence and make recommendations of which it is contained in the licence. Thank you.

*Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$511,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us thank the Hon. Minister and the staff for taking us through that agency. Thank you, very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, let us now invite the Hon. Minister of Public Works, the Hon. Bishop Juan Edghill, and his team to join us and take us through his agency, Agency 31. Hon. Members, can we turn to pages 172 and 173.

### **Agency: 31 Ministry of Public Works**

#### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 311 – Policy Development and Administration – \$ 1,842,671,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** May I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6272, Electricity Charges. I recognised that there was a revised amount of \$32 million in 2022 and an increase by some \$23 million and change. Could the Hon. Member explain to the people of Guyana and to the National Assembly what caused this increase. This is because we heard yesterday from the Hon. Prime Minister that fuel will not increase, therefore, we ought not to see an increase in electricity charges? Could the Hon. Member explain to the House the reason for the more than \$23 million increase?



**Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]:** Thank you to the Hon. Member for the question. Just to indicate that this amount will be required because the Ministry of Public Works has rehabilitated and made habitable and usable 10 additional buildings that were not previously in use. Thank you, Sir.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much to the Hon. Member. I would like to turn our attention to line item 6281, Security Services. I recognised that there is a vast increase from \$187,657,000 to \$225,669,000. Could the Hon. Member explain to the National Assembly, one, who is provided security services, which locations are benefiting from such services and why the increase? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** We are considering *Budget 2023* and we are asking that moneys be appropriate for security. It simply means that we intend to go out to the procurement process to be able to have in place a security firm to execute this contract. So, I cannot name the firm that will be utilising this money. If the Hon. Member would like to know which the firm was there in 2022, is a different matter.

Secondly, Sir, you would recall that we came to this House for a supplementary provision because of the increase in rates, one, being that the Government did increase the minimum rates and that was a supplementary that was passed across the board for all sectors as it relates to security. So, this number takes into account the new minimum wage and an extrapolation of the figures as going out for tender.

**Ms. Ferguson:** A follow-up to the very line item. Could the Hon. Member explain to us here whether... I understand that you will be tendering and whatnot for these services, but could the House be advised whether the services of security are done annually or biannually?

**Bishop Edghill:** We come to this House for appropriation on a yearly basis. I am aware that it is known knowledge that Government do not go into credit. We ask for money for an annual contract.

*2.48 p.m.*

**Mr. Patterson:** I am going to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. [An Hon. Member: *Ow Patto.*] *We aint deh suh you know. We aint deh suh atal.* Line item

6321 – Subsidies. I start off with the Berbice Bridge Company. The \$166 million previously represented 10% of the cost. Could the Minister confirm that this is still the case?

**Bishop Edghill:** The subsidy for tolls at the Berbice Bridge Company remains the same.

**Mr. Patterson:** It remains the same. Is the Ministry contemplating asking on behalf of the people of Berbice, 5 and 6, for an increase subsidy to this toll?

**Bishop Edghill:** The Ministry of Public Works has requested a subsidy that has been appropriated here. We are asking the House to approve this subsidy. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** Obviously nothing for the Berbicans on the bridge toll. Could I ask the Hon. Member the status of the negotiation and discussions they are having on the Berbice Bridge Company? Could I remind him, if you permit me, to quote from the Hansard last year, line item 6231, Sir. This is the Hon. Minister Bishop Edghill:

“As a responsible Government, I just said that we are engaging the Berbice Company. Cabinet is discussing the matter. Based upon the discussions that we are having with the Berbice Bridge Company – the Hon. Attorney General is involved in the matter...

I would have to say at the appropriate time – since last year. Come to the National Assembly and told the people of Guyana what the future is. Could I ask the Hon. Member, what is the future for the Berbice Bridge Company in the Government?

**Bishop Edghill:** To answer the Hon. Member, we must remind ourselves that it was the Hon. Member, while he was the Minister of Public Infrastructure, who compulsorily acquired the Berbice Bridge Company, bringing a private sector investment under the control of the State.

When we came to Government, because we are a Government that understands that the private sector is the engine of growth, it must not be strangled, their investment must not be placed in jeopardy, and we must send the right signals to all private investors coming to Guyana where private-public partnerships are concerned. We indicated by way of instructions to the Attorney General that we wish to discontinue those proceedings where the Berbice Bridge Company will be an asset of the State and that it should go back to its private-public partnership agreement. Those actions have engaged the offices of the Attorney General of this country and the Berbice Bridge

Company. There were matters in the High Court that were filed, matters for discontinuance and the rest of it had to be indicated and signed. That is a matter I believe that, if it comes in the form of a proper question on the Order Paper, we could provide all the details to the Hon. Member to bring this House up to date in this particular matter. The clear policy direction of the Government is that the Berbice Bridge Company should remain a private company and we will want to ensure that it stays like that. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** I really do not know what the Hon. Minister is speaking about. This matter went to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), the Apex and the final court. They ruled – I was a main party, they ruled in my favour. If I could be so [*inaudible*]. I thank the Minister for enlightening the people in Berbice that they, very shortly, will be discontinuing the order which caps the toll for the Berbice Bridge Company. I am sure they are eagerly...

On the same line item – Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD). There is \$563.964 million allocated. That was the exact amount that was budgeted for in 2022. There was a revised thing in 2022. The Hon. Minister wax lyrically that they were bringing in a new boat for the Northwest, they are buying tugs. Could I ask the Hon. Minister how come these vessels were not available in 2022? Where has he budgeted for these vessels to come or, does he not anticipate for them to be here in 2023?

**Bishop Edghill:** I thank the Hon. Member for the question. The Transport and Harbours Department provides a service to the people of this country and has always done so. The moneys that have been appropriated year after year, which the Hon. Member is fully aware, have always been a subsidy for the cost of fuel. The Hon. Member made mention that I waxed lyrically, which means he admires my speaking ability. In explaining to this House that because the Transport and Harbours Department receives a substantial subsidy from the State for fuel, myself and my Colleague who serves with me in the Ministry, Minister Indar, have paid specific attention to the utilisation and management of fuel for our vessels. Even though our boats have made more trips in 2022, we have burnt less fuel. A magic that we are still trying to ascertain. All that we are asking here, Sir, is to continue the fuel subsidy and I could give you the assurance, with policy direction from myself and my Colleague, the Board of the Transport and Harbours Department and the Management, we intend to ensure that whatever subsidy we receive from the State is properly

utilised and we tighten up on the management and controls that exist at that department. Thank you very much, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** Just a follow up. Is the Hon. Minister confirming that the new vessels he waxed lyrically about, the fuel for them, which will come on [*inaudible*] has been included in this allocation for any new vessels coming on stream?

**Bishop Edghill:** The new vessel that is expected to come on stream would be the MV MA Lisha, which is en route to Guyana. It has left Port Calcutta and it is coming to Guyana. That boat will service the Georgetown/Region 1 route, making stops at Mabaruma, Morawhanna, Port Kaituma. That will replace the MV Barima and the MV Kimbia that presently traverse those routes. This boat is supposed to provide some amount of fuel efficiency. We will have to look because both the MV Barima and the MV Kimbia have been recently dry dock and refurbished. Perhaps, we will look at introducing other routes or replacing some of the routes that used to be in place before. With the development that is taking place in agriculture, down the Berbice River, it has been a long call for people of the Berbice River to have a vessel go down. The Minister is building a wharf and a stelling down that river. As it is right now, what we are asking for is what we envisaged would be utilised. This is because this is not paying for all the fuel that the boats use. This is just a subsidy. If there is need, we will come back candidly to the House to say with additional routes and what is happening, what will be required. Thank you.

**Ms. Ferguson:** May I turn our attention to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarship). Hon. Member, I noticed we have a reduction for 2023. Could you advise the reason for the reduction? That is one. What the training entails? Who are the likely beneficiaries for the training and the areas for the training? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** I thank the Hon. Member for the question. This is basically for staff development training and what we envisage it would be undertaken there, business and marketing management, business management and foundation in accountancy. What we are asking for is what we envisaged it will cost. There is a difference of \$200,000.

*Programme: 311 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,842,671,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## Capital Expenditure

### Programme: 311 – Policy Development and Administration – \$4,209,000,000

**Mr. Patterson:** Project code 214800 – Government Buildings. Once again, my apologies for the... Could the Hon. Minister inform the House one, the location of these offices, the value of the contracts awarded, the name of the contractor and amounts paid?

**Bishop Edghill:** We are talking here about the 2023 budgetary allocations. I do not know how I could name a contractor for a project that is going out to procurement. As it relates to the new office complex, which I spoke about in my budget speech, this project was advertised publicly starting on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2022. The deadline for submissions was 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2022. This contract was awarded 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2022. There were four companies that submitted bids. There were three companies that passed the technical qualifications. This contract was awarded to Caribbean Green Building Incorporated and the contract sum is \$15,874,143,300.

3.03 p.m.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, just clarify something for me, Sir. These are ongoing/rollover projects which means that even though they were awarded in 2022, there are moneys allocated in 2023 that are there for their payments. So, there is nothing wrong or inappropriate for me to ask who are the contractors that will be paid in 2023 and the amounts allocated for them, Sir. Could I repeat my question to the Minister, the values of the contracts, the contractors because they will be paid out of this disbursement and the amounts paid and, Sir, I ask the locations of these office complexes?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, there are going to be two buildings along with the office complex that I just spoke about, giving every minute detail to the Hon. Member and this House. The other two buildings will be one at Coldingen and one at Wakenaam. The contracts have not been awarded. We are seeking the money in the 2023 Budget, just like we are asking for the moneys to continue what was started in the 2022 Budget [*inaudible*]. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman I am seeking your assistance; you are a longstanding Member here. Sir, Government buildings under Policy Development and Administration, a sum expended in 2022 is \$2.654 billion. In 2023, we are budgeting \$4.045 billion. When the Hon. Minister spoke

during his budget speech we could recall, he did say that they awarded contracts for these office complexes. You can recall that. I am simply asking what is the location? At least let us start there. What is the location of the new office complex?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, a fair question.

**Bishop Edghill:** Thank you, Sir. For the avoidance of doubt Sir, the sums quoted by the Hon. Member, the sum in excess of \$2.5 billion was paid to the contractor Caribbean Green Building Inc. as the mobilisation advance for the office towers. The location of this office complex is, if he travelled the Mandela/Eccles interlinked road which is the gazetted name of the road, on the left-hand side in the Houston plot. That is where these buildings will be.

**Mr. Patterson:** A follow up Sir, if you permit me. Sir, this exact question was asked last year, and I hope I could stimulate your memory. Last year and I quote from page 67 of the Hansard.

“We are improving that facility to be used and we have budgeted \$30 million for that. Construction for a fence, guard hut and the living quarters at Coldingen – \$15 million; and construction of office complexes \$2.6 billion.”

The intent... and this is where you can recall.

“...we are talking with the architects and the design people is that we will utilise plots of lands within the vicinity of where the offices are now held but rather than spreading out, we will go up and free up space for other activities that will take place in that area. It will be within the vicinity of the present officers.”

Sir and you had a follow up question on the parking and those things like that. Last year, the Hon. Member came for \$2.6 billion under this head. He said the designs and those things are finished, this year we are now going to Eccles. The question is, and I have follow up questions, what and when necessitated because this was in February of 2022. He went out to tender... What date was it? July, which was three months after in 2022. How and when necessitated this change for the Government building based on his response to this Parliament last year?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I must admit that I have some confusion trying to understand what the gentleman is requiring, so if you could guide me. But, for a full disclosure to this House, the

Government of Guyana went out for a design build office complex. If the Hon. Member is the shadow of this sector, at minimum, he should be following the advertisements and the rest of it that is taking place – at minimum. The intent of us with these office complexes is a consolidating of Government facilities into one location for greater efficiency and to be able to improve on the delivery of service. Our Ministry and its agencies are scattered into several buildings in different locations. The intent, based upon what we are looking at, is that these office complexes should be able to accommodate about 6000 persons. As it relates to Coldingen, where the Hon. Member is inquiring about, I think every Guyanese who traverse the Lamaha Embankment will see the transformation that is taking place there. We are moving that corridor from a graveyard of old excavators, junk, old trucks and the rest of it and we are bringing it as part of the beautification of our urban rehabilitation and the renewal programme.

The Special Projects Unit, which I heard the Hon. Member said he started, I guess Minister Benn and others who were there before would indicate to him that, if you do an affidavit and change the name of force account to special projects, it is the same child we are talking about. The Force Account Unit was always there. What we would have done is that we have moved the Force Account operation to Coldingen and we are completing that by ensuring that it is adequately housed, our machines, trucks and so on that we are purchasing and equipment for the maintenance and servicing. I do not think any Guyanese would want to know that you are using prime Government land for mechanical work and the rest of it.

We have land at Coldingen, we are doing the repairs and maintenance there and we are rehabilitating that whole corridor. I would like to remind the Hon. Member, with Guyana going towards being a tourist destination, part of the vision of Lamaha Street, where the old train station was located and my Colleague, Minister Indar, has been taking the lead in carrying out the execution of that project. Apart from being a safe space for children and family, we intend to put in place an art gallery. We intend to be able to allow and facilitate local foods so that the people from the prime hotels could come down there and have breakfast in the morning, the people from the Ministries nearby could go and get a good Guyanese lunch. We are rehabilitating and putting that at a prime tourist spot. The intent is that the old train and engine that are there are going to be rehabilitated so that people would be able to go and see what the train used to look like. We are not changing the outlook nor the structures. We are keeping it in its old form, but we are renewing

it, rehabilitating it and putting it into use so that Guyana can benefit and we could have a better-looking environment in that area so that will help the Hon. Member and all Members of this House. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Excellent. Thank you very much Hon. Minister.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, did I hear you say ‘excellent’? This is because he never answered the question, but Sir...*[interruption]* Mr. Chairman, can I once again quote? Obviously, when you come to this House, and we cannot use the word ‘mislead’ right, we would hope that the answers we get can guide the country and the nation going forward. Could I have the opportunity, once again, because he waxed lyrically about the boats, trains and those things like that? Let me quote the Hon. Minister in February of 2022. We are doing geotechnical studies; this was when we asked this same question.

“...we have to do the designs, we have to get the supervisory services and ultimately, the advance payment for civil works.”

Could I ask the Hon. Member if he could provide us with the details of the geotechnical study and those things like that? He was designing, Sir, as you remember and recall correctly, he was going up. He wanted to get closer to the Lord, so he was going up.

**Mr. Chairman:** Before I invite the Hon. Minister to respond, I said ‘excellent’ because I think Guyana had the first railway in South America ever built, starting with that location. The history behind the terminal itself is amazing. Hon. Minister, you may have the floor.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member would like to get information on the geotechnical studies that were done for these 12 storey towers that will be built because they are 12 storeys high and the geotechnical studies were done. There is another way in which we could get it than coming at the Committee of Supply to ask this. Just to let him know, in that very same facility, to put everybody at ease, there will be a hospital, there will be a hotel and there are other developments that are taking place in that very same area and the geotechnical studies were all done. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** Moving on Sir because obviously I am being timed. We do have extra time with this Ministry, we did a lot of time saving, I ensured my Colleagues did that, at least an hour and a



half extra. The lands, Eccles if he goes along there, how have the lands been acquired by the Ministry of Public Works? From whom and how much? What legal instruments are there in place for the land which the Ministry of Public Works is now occupying?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, unlike what my Colleague would have experienced when he was part of a Cabinet where lands were given to individuals and then flipped to others for development purposes...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, the word you just used is a bleep.

**Bishop Edghill:** I withdraw the word 'flipped' Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** This is a Government project. This is for the development of the state of Guyana. The acquisitions of the land will be through the competent authority under whose portfolio those lands fall. The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing and Water and His Excellency the President have always been in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana the sole person who can give Government lands. This is Government land for Government building. This is not private land we are buying from anybody. This land was not passed on to any private individual that the Government is buying it back. This is a straight Government transaction. Thank you very much, Sir.

*3.18 p.m.*

**Mr. Patterson:** So, the Hon. Minister is confirming that there is no transaction in place. Thank you very much for that confirmation. In 2022, this was an ongoing project. It was well thought out, of course, and the Hon. Minister took his time to say that it is an ongoing project. In 2022, we budgeted \$10.254 billion of which, last year, we expended \$2.6 billion. If you look at the Capital Project Profile, once again, for this same thing, it has now risen to \$15.5 billion. This is another \$5.5 billion for this Government building. It is the same description as last year. Could the Hon. Minister explain? I know he cannot, but could he give us an explanation? From July, 2022 to January, 2023, there was a \$5.5 billion increase in the total overall project cost. What occurred for this increase?

**Bishop Edghill:** I was really trying to check to see exactly what the Member is enquiring about because he did not even quote a project code. I believe it is the same project code 1214800, Government Buildings, that we are under. So, I am answering as it relates to that. The Hon. Member, a former Minister of Government, knows fully that one could have a project proposed cost, go out to public bid, evaluate the bids, and have the final cost may differ from the original projected cost. So, I really do not understand what we are getting at. What I can tell you is that I have been advised, based upon all that we would have seen in terms of the project that we have signed on to, that what we are getting a superior product. I just told this Committee of Supply that this facility would be able to house about 6000 staff; it would have parking for close to 1000 vehicles; it would have a conference centre that could accommodate 1500 persons; it would have backup facilities with power for up to seven days; and many other facilities that go along with this. So, I do not know what the Hon. Member is talking about, Sir. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chair, I would not even indulge the Minister. I would like to say to this Committee that when you put up a project proposal to the Ministry of Finance, you have a full project development document which highlights what is your proposed project. That was done in 2022. In 2022, the Minister looked within his crystal ball, and it was \$10.524 billion for an ongoing project. The planned duration was from January, 2022 to December, 2024. A year after – and that is the question I am asking the Minister – that same project that he designed and conceptualised in 2022, has now risen, overall, to \$15.5 billion. He is now saying that it is because of the tenders that he received. I am asking the Hon. Minister, if he actually did some work in 2022, what has occasioned the rise in \$5.5 billion, US\$25 million? Is he saying that he was so wrong and so far off – by US\$25 million in 2022?

**Bishop Edghill:** I often wonder why every time something major is about to happen, we have to see a *jumbie* behind every bush. It is a recurring decimal in this Parliament. Every time something good is about to happen, we have a *jumbie* behind the bush. Mr. Chairman, I will take the time to give you the scope of this project and put it on the record of the National Assembly. We had an idea for an office complex that we were looking at and we made certain projections. We went out for a design/build project. In that design/build project the various bidders were allowed to submit a design and price it. This product that we have signed on to was considered by the evaluators to be the superior of the bids that came in. What we are getting here is far beyond what the Ministry

had envisaged. There is an expanded scope, and we are getting more. This is something about which the people of Guyana should be very proud.

**Mr. Patterson:** The Minister said that there is one contract with the Caribbean Green Company Incorporated for fifteen point something billion dollars, that is \$4 billion. This is \$15 billion. He is now coming and telling the Committee that, based on the design... [**Mr. McCoy:** (*inaudible*)]. I am seeking clarification for the people of the country. I am asking the Minister... He just said that based on a submission he got, they increased their budget by \$5.5 billion. Did I not hear that correctly? He only announced one contract for \$15 billion and that is why I was asking. Could the Minister be very specific?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I would take this as the final question.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chair, I did indicate that we went out for a design/build facility. We received three submissions. I would like to tell the Committee that this contract that we have entered into went to the lowest responsive bidder; the others had higher prices. I am saying, even though it is over the \$10 billion that we anticipated, we are getting a superior product; we are getting more. The design entitled us to have more. Thank you, Sir.

**Ms. Ferguson:** On the same project code, Government Buildings, last year, we had a budgeted amount of \$2.6 billion. When the Hon. Member was asked to provide a disaggregation of the Government buildings, the information in the *Hansard* on page 65 is very clear. In the final response, he stated there would be the construction of office complexes with \$2.6 billion. Prior to that, he gave a disaggregated sum for the kitchen, the building at Coldigen and all manner of things. Earlier, in response to a question asked by my colleague, Mr. Patterson, about the cost of the project, the Hon. Minister responded – if my memory serves me accurately – that the cost of \$2.5 billion was paid. If you are to add the \$2.5 billion to \$15 million and \$30 million, you will go way above the \$2.6 billion that was actually approved by the National Assembly last year.

The question I need to ask the Hon. Minister is – how much money was paid to the Caribbean Green Company Incorporated that was awarded the contract last year? Could he provide the amount paid to the company last year? Thank you. Before I yield to my seat, Cde. Chair, the Hon. Member mentioned that the building will be constructed along the Eccles carriageway but when you pass there, you are not seeing a depiction of what the complex would look like or anything.

What you are seeing is a depiction of what the hospital would look like and what the hotel would look like. So, I would love to see a depiction of what this complex would look like. Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I came to the National Assembly last year and asked that the Hon. Members of this Committee appropriate \$2,654,000,000 for Government buildings. As of 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 2022, \$2.6 billion was paid as the mobilisation advance for the building of the office complex that the Hon. Member Patterson was asking questions about. The \$54 million that remained was spent on works that were done at Coldigen, New Market Street, Echillibar Villas and West Demerara, where we had other smaller projects to do work on Government buildings. This was for \$54 million for that and \$2.6 billion went as the mobilisation advance. I think this is enough to put this matter to rest. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I did take the request of the Hon. Member about the billboard depicting the building and I will have a discussion with my project engineers and the contractor so that we could get that up as soon as possible. Apart from the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, others may want to see what is being put up. It is a fair request.

*Programme 311: Policy Development and Administration – \$4,209,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply had looked at the allocation of time. We had said that if there are time savings from one head, we will carry them over to the next, which is a system that has happened for a long time. I just want to bring our attention to the timekeeping. All the heads yesterday totalled 740 minutes. Yesterday, we actually spent...As some people say, this very biased Speaker spent 798 minutes. We allowed 58 minutes more for yesterday.

*3.33 p.m.*

Today, we started well. We only went 3 minutes over the time allocated with prior lunch period. Yours truly will be invoking the time limit set by the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply and which all of us agreed to in the Assembly. We now continue.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, could I just bring to your attention, I thought that Business Sub-Committee said that if we exceed our time on any particular agency we will lose it, because we are taking the time *en bloc*.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we had *en bloc* for....

**Mr. Patterson:** For the day.

**Mr. Chairman:** One second, Hon. Member. We had *en bloc* for the constitutional agencies.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, just for clarification. It was my impression that if we are allocated 740 minutes for day 2, we have that. If we exceed it on one agency, at 742 minutes, at the end of the day, we will put what is outstanding immediately. That was the understanding of the Opposition.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I do not know about the understanding of one person or a group of persons, but I know what the principle is. If there is savings on a head, that is carried over to the next head. In order for us to deal with the constitutional agencies and to accommodate, we had a special dispensation for that bloc. After, it will revert. If there is savings, then the saving in time goes to a next...because it is unfair for us to usurp the time allocated for a particular agency by over examining or, as one speaker had said one time, badgering questions. I will stick to the principle that I know, which has always been in the books. And the Clerk is here. If there is savings, we can allocate it to the next head and so forth. It is not that we can go over our time and deduct from the next head. Let us continue. Noting that, we will try to pull ourselves back on track. I will allow the complete examination of the Ministry of Public Works and then we will proceed as I understand it.

## **Current Expenditure**

### **Programme: 312– Public Works - \$6,618,818,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** Line items 6112, Senior Technical and 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled: We see a reduction (*inaudible*) to always. I will ask the Hon. Minister to give us the designation of the Technical and the staff that has departed from the Ministry in the year of 2023.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, did I hear 612 and 613? [**An. Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] I was just checking to see if it was the line items.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, to save time, the Contracted Employees had similar reduction. I would ask him to lay that over so we can speed up but just the oral response for line items 6112 and 6113.

**Bishop Edghill:** Line time 6112 speaks to Senior Technical and 6113 deals with Other Technical and Craft Skilled. He wants to know who departed. At 6112, we had four persons and at 6113, we had three persons. These were Electrical Technicians and other staff. This also had a situation that.... You would recall that the 2018 policy was that everybody be placed on the establishment. A number of people watched their colleagues, as contracted employees, getting gratuity every six months and they were not. So, a number of these persons actually resigned their positions to benefit from contracted positions because the policy of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Administration is that employees can be both on the establishment and/or be contracted workers.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you, Sir. If you are saying that one would have seen a similar increase in contracted employees. Some 43 persons left the Ministry in the year of 2023. But I have asked if he is willing to lay over the positions of the persons who have departed as opposed to those who have been retained.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member. Are you prepared, Hon. Minister, to lay over?

**Bishop Edghill:** Yes, that is not a difficulty. I will ensure my Permanent Secretary (PS) has the necessary documents. Just to let you know that people, when they are looking after their financial welfare, time when would resign. These people resigned at the end of December so that they could have their full year and then they intend to transition to the new contractual arrangement. But we can lay that over.

*Programme: 312 – Public Works – \$6,618,818,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 312– Public Works - \$140,248,570,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I will go straight to the Demerara River Crossing. Looking at the project profile, could the Hon. Minister state the percentage of work completed, if any? We paid \$22

billion last year. Does this sum budgeted for 2023 include anything for land acquisition cost? Could the Hon. Minister say whether the contractor submitted any geotechnical or any design reports? If so, has these been approved? Has the commencement order for the project been issued? If so, on what date? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I did not hear a project code, but I suppose he is referring to project code 1101200, New Demerara River Crossing. I thank the Hon. Member for the question. Sir, you would recall that this contract for this bridge was signed on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2022. I would also like to indicate that we have just recently received in country the supervisory firm that will be supervising this design/build project. That supervisory firm took effect, I think, from 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2023. They are in the mobilisation stage. I met them last Friday for the first time. The contractor is required to submit all of the things that Mr. Patterson, the Hon. Member, was asking about to the supervisory firm so that they can review them and approve them so that we can actually have approvals for the construction. The Minister would not approve designs, geotechnical and other technical things. We have asked that a supervisory firm, which we went out publicly and advertised for the supervision of this project...Politécnico out of Italy won this bid and they are now the supervisory firm in place.

Just last Friday an engagement was held with the contractor and the supervisory firm, and my project team and we will be able to keep the nation updated, in another couple of weeks, on various stages of where the bridge will be. As it relates to land acquisition, the Ministry of Housing has successfully, and I would like to say successfully, negotiated and handled all of the properties that are in the path of the bridge, and we had no resistance from anyone not wanting to move. I would like to report that to the House.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I asked if the commencement order for the project has been issued and what date.

**Bishop Edghill:** Sir, I am advised that the actual commencement order, which is a letter officially to begin, has not been issued because they are tidying up arrangements between the supervisory firm and the contractor.

**Mr. Patterson:** Could the Minister confirm to the nation that without the commencement order being issued the project would not officially start? So, the timeframe that the Government has given to the people of the country has not started as yet.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, and all other Members of this House who traverse that corridor would see that the civil works contractor has been mobilised and the site office has already been established. It has been in the media – the site clearing that has been done and the preliminary works. But when we are talking about the civil works construction, which deals with the technical details, we had to get in place the supervisory firm to sign off on those things before we could issue the commencement order. But the mobilisation of staff, the last word I had, there are an excess of 35 technical staff from the contractor from China who are already in the country. They are a number of Guyanese who have already been hired. The issues of the alignment and where the bridge is going have already been clarified. The surveys, levels and everything that needed to be done that would have necessitated the Ministry of Housing engaging people for relocation, all of that has been done. Now that we have in place the competent, properly put in place supervisory firm, Politécnico, those other issues of actual construction...

*3.48 p.m.*

I would like to assure the Committee the clear instructions that I have and the clear instructions that I have given to the contractor and to the supervisory firm is that the contract states 24 months from the time of commencement of this contract. We are holding the contractor and the consultant to those timelines.

**Mr. Patterson:** I will go straight to the East Bank - East Coast Demerara Road. Project code 1403800 – East Bank - East Coast Demerara Road Linkage: The project has now risen to \$22.783 billion. The Government of Guyana has now put in \$12 billion. The loan from the Indian Bank remains at \$10.4 billion. Previously, the Government of Guyana was only required to pay \$365 million. We are funding 55% of this project.

Since 55% is the larger amount at \$12 billion, could I ask the Hon. Minister why the project was not disaggregated and local contractors allowed to bid for the \$12 billion which is being funded by the Government of Guyana, as opposed to allowing companies from India, which is only funding \$45 billion, to do the entire project?



**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I must admit to you that I am extremely baffled by this question coming from the Hon. Member. For the simple reason that this was a project that was in the pipeline as of May, 2015 when the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) took office and did nothing for five years. We came back into Government in August, 2020, and one of the first projects that was resuscitated, because of its importance, was this East Bank - East Coast Road Linkage.

The sum of \$50 million was available for the Government of Guyana based upon a line of credit that was negotiated since 2014. It is in that same line of credit that \$18 million was also available for the ferry for the northwest district in which nothing was done as well. This National Assembly would be pleased to know that, because of the interventions that were made, we have the ferry that is coming in at less than the \$18 million.

This road that we are now undertaking went out to public bidding. It is being financed by the Exim Bank of India and the lowest responsive bid came in at \$106,383,954.92¢ which was above the money that was available for the line of credit. That is not a surprise because if you have a line of credit with figures in 2014, and you are issuing a contract in 2020, the cost of materials and the cost of labour...With all that would have happened in the world, prices have changed. The Government of Guyana is funding 54.4% of the contract and India, through the Exim Bank of India, is funding 5.76% of the contract.

The question that the Hon. Member is asking is not if the Indian Government will give subcontractors from Guyana work. He is asking why Guyana does not give India 45.76% of the work while 54.24% must go the Guyanese contractors. It is the same road, the same culvert, the same bridges, and everything else. I do not know what we are asking for. Somebody has to be responsible for the executing of the contract, and in the executing of this contract, it is a bilateral arrangement, through the line of credit, with the Government of India. We have an Indian contractor who has been properly mobilised. The contract was signed since 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2022. The actual commencement date of work was 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2022. The contract period is for 24 months, and we would be building a number of culverts and structures to facilitate this road. The Indian contractor, and we have said to them, they could and should engage Guyanese subcontractors. But of course, in the engagement of those subcontractors, it is the contractor who would be held

accountable for the delivery of this road at a particular price and in a particular timeframe. Thank you very much, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** He waxed lyrically but never explained it, but time is going. Miscellaneous Roads...

**Mr. Chairman:** You have quite a bit of time. The savings on the previous head was 40 minutes.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you very much, Sir. I could slow down. I want to go back because I skipped Infrastructural Development. First and foremost, could the Hon. Member disaggregate the budgeted sum of \$3.65 billion for 2023? Sir, just confirm for me before I go on, do we have an hour and a half plus 40 minutes? I seem to be getting things mixed up. Is that correct?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, if you will permit me, my able and efficient technical staff reminded me that I omitted to tell the Committee that, regarding the project the honourable gentleman enquired about, which is the Ogle/Eccles, East Coast/East Bank linkage, the contract caters for 40% local content. So, the 40% local content is enshrined in the contract. As it relates to the breakdown of the expenditure, there are three areas that payments would be made, and these are all in United States (US) dollars.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, I have moved on from that. Are you going back?

**Bishop Edghill:** Could I finish my answer?

**Mr. Patterson:** All right.

**Bishop Edghill:** The payments would be to Ashoka Buildcon Limited, the civil works contractor, from the foreign funded at \$4.6 billion. From the local money, it would be \$5.4 billion, which would give us just over \$10 billion. I am trying to go to the nearest number. For the supervisory consultancy, this would be going the Rail India Technical and Economic Service Limited (RITES) and it would be for \$224 million. That would be paid from local moneys. Project management is \$15 million. It is a total of \$10,290,000,000. That is the breakdown.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, as you said that I had time, I moved on to Infrastructural Development, but he has answered a previous question. The disaggregation for the Infrastructural Development is still outstanding. Thank you. **[Bishop Edghill: (Inaudible)].**

**Mr. Chairman:** The disaggregation of that particular line.

**Mr. Patterson:** Project code 1214900 – Infrastructural Development.

**Bishop Edghill:** Just one moment, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Sir. For Infrastructural Development, we have a total of \$3,655,000,000. The sum of \$1,138,724,000 would be used to pay projects that have been rolled over.

As it relates to the new programmes, these include: installation of highway lights at the University of Guyana (UG) access road, \$13.5 billion; construction of access road into the Diamond Housing Scheme, \$80 million; construction of pedestrian sidewalk at West Bank Demerara, which is at La Grange, \$104 million; construction of pedestrian sidewalk along the Mon Repos access road, \$33 million; construction of pedestrian sidewalk along La Bonne Intention (LBI) access road, \$33 million; construction of pedestrian sidewalk at Tuschen access road, West Coast Demerara (WCD), \$88 million; construction of pedestrian walkway along Mahaicony Branch Road, \$22 million; geometric upgrading and enhancement of a section of the Diamond access road, \$400 million; geometrical improvements to Providence Main Access Road, \$400 million; and the construction of pedestrian sidewalk at Suddie, \$44 million.

As it relates to the urban enhancement, these include: construction of pedestrian sidewalks along Main Street, that is New Amsterdam; geometric improvement to Vlissengen and Regent Street, construction of pedestrian sidewalk along Brickdam phase one; geometric upgrade of Aubrey Barker road phase one; enhancement of avenues in Georgetown- Carmichael Street, Middle Street to Church Street; enhancement of avenues- East Street and Middle Street to Church Street; geometric upgrading and enhancement of Camp Street, Lamaha to Church Street; geometric upgrade, and enhancement of Vlissengen Road and Irving Street, Lamaha to Homestretch Avenue. Those are some of the items we have listed here and that will come up to \$2.516 billion with the rollover of \$1.138 billion.

**Mr. Patterson:** I would be grateful if the Hon. Minister could layover that document upon completion.

**Bishop Edghill:** It is in the *Hansard*.

**Mr. Patterson:** Project code 1404100 – Miscellaneous Roads/Drainage: Could I ask the Minister specifically what is the rollover amount included in this and the retention amount? That is a very specific question.

*4.03 p.m.*

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, you would be reminded that we came to this House for a supplementary. I told the House that, through the Ministry of Public Works, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Water and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, we will be undertaking a number of projects across the country. I am happy to report to you that in excess of 700 contracts were signed, which will see the rehabilitation of close to 1,085 roads. The rollover amount to continue those works is \$14,785,000. We have an additional \$2.7 billion, which would cater for retention and other amounts on ongoing projects. For new works for 2023, we have an allocated sum of \$14.463 billion in this year's budget. Thank you very much, Sir.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, through you, I am on the very line item. The Hon. Member provided the disaggregation of the \$31.9 billion and said that the remaining \$14.5 billion will go towards new works. Could the Hon. Member share with this National Assembly, or lay over to the National Assembly, the works which will complement the \$14.5 billion?

**Bishop Edghill:** We have \$14.463 billion for new works in 2023. At this current stage, as I stand here for Budget 2023, there is an exercise that is continuing/ongoing. It is not just merely mapping on paper, but it is also physical verification. You would recall, Sir, that we had roads that were done by regions, roads that were done through the Ministry of Agriculture, farm to market access roads, and there were roads that were also done through the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Local Government. What we are doing is continuing that grand scheme of physical verification. We do not want to be advertising for a road that is in a programme but it is already done. It is not just matching information from various entities but it is physical verification. As soon as that is

completed, the Hon. Member, who I am sure is an avid reader, will see all of the lots and roads that are to be fixed advertised publicly for contractors to bid. That will continue to be a public process.

**Mr. Patterson:** The Minister confirmed that over half of the works are from last year. Never mind. I will ask the exact/same question for the next one, Urban Roads. I will only ask for the rollover and the retention amount on the urban roads.

**Bishop Edghill:** I would like to correct the Hon. Member on what he just said. A rollover is not as a result of failure to implement; a rollover is as a result of works having to be continued from one year into the next year. That is why it is a rollover. One could only rollover projects with the permission of the Ministry of Finance. We came to this House in November and said that we would like to have additional moneys, because there was fiscal space for more moneys to be made available for us to continue to bring roads to the people. We are up in our game. Rather than waiting for March, 2023, to start advertising and implementing projects, we did that since last year. That is why, in the collaborative effort of the Ministry of Housing and Water, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, I just said to this House, we signed more than 700 contracts which will see 1,085 roads awarded and currently being implemented as a result of 2022 allocations. Final payments and the rest of it are to be paid in a rollover manner from the 2023 allocations. As it relates to urban roads, the total rollover from 2022 is \$104,131,000. As it relates to new projects for urban roads, it is \$1,395,869,000. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** Highway improvement. In the project profile, it states “feasibility studies and designs”. Where and how much? We are talking highway improvement. Where are the feasibility studies, designs, and how much? For the other projects listed under the project profile, were feasibility studies and designs done to them? If so, would the Hon. Member be willing to lay it over.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, are you willing to lay over?

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I asked for one. There is listed there, feasibility studies and designs. And for the remainder, would the Hon. Member lay those over?

**Mr. Chairman:** Feasibility study and design.

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

And then would you be willing to lay over the rest?

**Bishop Edghill:** This project went out by way of public advertising for a design-build project. It was a design-build project. We are currently at the concluding stage of the procurement of the supervisory firm which will be supervising this project. At the procurement of the civil works, all of the companies provided their designs and their studies, methodologies and the rest of it to be evaluated. The Ministry did not engage to design and do studies, it was the contractors who did. The supervisory firm is now going to ensure quality control and implementation when it is put in place.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, could I get a confirmation from the Minister that the four-lane road...? There are four projects listed there: the Railway Embankment to Orange Nassau, Belfield to Orange Nassau, Orange Nassau to Mahaica, and a bridge, once more, over the Hope Canal. Is the Minister saying to this House that all of these have gone out to tender, or will go out, in the designed and supervised manner?

**Bishop Edghill:** It was one package that entails all the structures, from Sheriff Street to Orange Nassau, on the Railway Embankment, including the bridge over the Hope Canal, as well as the upgrade of the road from Belfield, on the front, to Orange Nassau. It is one contract that has gone up for a design and build. I need to also inform the House that, as it relates to the upgrade of the road from Mahaica to Rosignol, \$200 million has been allocated in this year's budget for studies to facilitate the upgrade of the road from Mahaica to Rosignol. But the contract for Sheriff Street to Orange Nassau, with all of the structures and the bridge across the Hope Canal and the upgrade from Belfield to Orange Nassau, is what is involved in this design-build contract that we awarded.

**Mr. Patterson:** We are talking about rehabilitation of public and main access roads. This is funded locally, for the total project cost of \$105.4 billion, of which \$33.8 billion is going to be expended. Could I ask the Hon. Member, was a feasibility study done for this? [**Mr. McCoy:** (*Inaudible*)] I want these on the records. We are looking for value for money. Was a feasibility study done for this amount? If yes, is the Minister willing to lay over a copy? Could the Minister disaggregate the \$33.85 billion as appropriated in 2023?

**Bishop Edghill:** Out of this sum of \$33,850,000, \$10,185,216,000 is for rollover projects. Let me tell the House what the rollover projects are: The continuation of the work at Lima Sands in Region 2; Canal No. 1; Canal No. 2; De Hoop access road; Burma Road, Mahaicony; Mahaicony Branch Road; Lesbeholden and Mibicuri roads, Black Bush Polder; Johanna, Black Bush Polder; structures in New Amsterdam to Brighton, Region 6; and structures from Brighton to Moleson Creek. Let me explain these structures.

*4.18 p.m.*

We are expanding the road from Palmyra all the way to Moleson Creek. There are 99 structures along that road, and contracts have already been awarded and work has begun for the expansion of all 99 structures. That was done on the 2022 Budget and we have roll-over sums to continue that work. We also have to remove the utilities. If we are going to talk about the development that will take place at Palmyra, where we had gone out for public interest on an oil refinery, building of a new stadium, putting in a municipal airport, hotel development, housing development, a bridge across the Corentyne River, the current East Berbice main road has become inadequate. It is now being converted into a four-lane road. We have to move the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) mains, the electricity and telephone mains, to facilitate the construction of this road. Those are what we went out for and what is being engaged.

In terms of the new works for this year, we have \$23,664,000,000 and we will be spending a substantial sum to continue the work on that four-lane Palmyra to Moleson Creek road. I am sure all of us are pleased that we have been rehabilitating that section of Lamaha Street, from Vlissengen Road to Sheriff Street, which was practically shifted into the canal. Aubrey Barker Street or Aubrey Barker Road is being moved into a four-lane road to facilitate the kind of housing development and to provide a link of how one can get straight from South Ruimveldt into Cummings Lodge, all the way through to Ogle. So, Aubrey Barker Road is being improved. The Conversation Tree road is being upgraded to a four-lane road. There will be the rehabilitation of High Street, Main Street and Avenue of the Republic corridor. Burma Road, Mahaicony is catered for, sections of DeHoop Road at Mahaica, the continuation works at sections of Canal No. 1, and the upgrade of Homestretch Avenue, which we are all aware, needs some serious attention. When one comes out from the Eccles/Mandela interlink which is the concrete road, Cane View Avenue, which used to be a back road, is now becoming a main access road as a turn off, to get access into

the city. We are paying attention to the Cane View access road and, of course, we want to do some further upgrade to Carifesta Avenue as well – a total of \$23,664,784,000.

**Ms. Ferguson:** To the Hon. Member, if I am to turn our attention to project code 1601000, Stellings, I note in the profile document here, the sum of \$240 million is to be expended on Parika, Rosignol and New Amsterdam stellings. Could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregation of the \$240 million? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** The intent is that we have budgeted to about \$80 million of work at Parika, \$80 million at New Amsterdam and \$80 million at Rosignol.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sorry, Sir. Someone else indicated that they want to speak so I was giving them the opportunity to have... We are looking at farm access roads, which is from Parika to Makouria. Obviously, I know this well, it was a brainchild of the APNU/AFC. I spoke about it extensively in my budget presentation and I questioned the Minister if he had any similar document to what we have. Of course, we know not. Sir, could the Minister disaggregate... [**Mr. Hamilton:** Did you build the road?] No, we did not build it. We talked about it. As I said then, there is an organism called parasites that suck from the host. Could the Minister disaggregate the three different projects, included in *Budget 2023*?

**Bishop Edghill:** We have four projects that will be addressed under this allocation. The Parika to Goshen/Makouria link, we are spending about \$274 million; Timehri to Sand Hills to Makouria, Bartica, \$250 million; IR 3 to Abary, \$150 million; and Moleson Creek to El Dorado, \$200 million.

What we are doing currently with the Parika/Goshen/Makouria link and the Timehri/Sand Hills/Makouria link is, with the allocation that is being made here, which would be just over \$500 million on these two, we want to be able to see vehicles being able to get through. Last year, we ensured that the entire alignment was cleared. If you are a tough jungle or interior driver, you could get there right now because the entire alignment was clear. What we are going to do this year, while we wait to bring it up to its optimum level, is to do additional works so that trucks and other heavy-duty carrying vehicles could start moving through to get produce and get expansion in that area. We will be spending some money in that region to make these carriageways or these thoroughfares usable. That is what we are seeking here, along with what would be done at Moleson Creek to El Dorado, as well as IR 3, Abary. Thank you, Sir.



**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I am doing a time check before I run through my other notes.

**Mr. Chairman:** If we add on the savings from the previous head, we can go until 4.50 p.m. according to my clock.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you, Sir. I move on to Sea and River Defence Works. I am particularly interested in the roll-over amount included in this sum and the retention amounts included in this sum and not the new work. I will come to that if there is need to.

**Bishop Edghill:** The roll-over amount, and these are the results of works ongoing, \$688,578,000. In terms of new works projected for this year under this programme – you will see there is sea and river defence maintenance, which is different to the capital works – \$2,811,422,000.

*Programme: 312 – Public Works – \$140,248,570,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 313 – Transport - \$215,031,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** If I can turn our attention to line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage, I note a revised sum of \$9.867 million for 2022. We are now seeking \$10 million for 2023. Could the Hon. Member explain the purpose or reason for the increase? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** It is from this line item that the officers of the Ministry receive funding to travel, to do monitoring and inspections across the country. This merely caters for increased activity, knowing that we will have more capital works and improved monitoring. Thank you.

**Mr. Patterson:** The one employee at line item 6116, is no longer there. There are actually no employees under this Programme. Could the Minister say to the National Assembly, having lost almost 50 employees under the Public Works and other programmes, and he already admitted that he is short staffed, how will this particular Programme be administered?

**Bishop Edghill:** The distinguished and knowledgeable gentleman, who worked and was paid under this line item, has reached the age of retirement. He has been re-engaged on a month-to-month basis and he is being paid under a different heading.

*Programme: 313 – Transport – \$215,031,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

### **Programme: 313 – Transport – \$5,069,162,000**

*4.33 p.m.*

**Mr. Patterson:** Following up from my last question, is the Hon. Member saying that one retiree will be responsible for \$1.4 billion of hinterland airstrips in 2023? Is that what he is saying to the country? We are speaking about hinterland and coastal airways. There is \$1.4 billion there. You said the honourable gentleman, who is a retiree, paid elsewhere. That is the question. Is the one retiree looking at \$1.4 billion of airstrip and coastal works?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I recall reading somewhere that assumption is the lowest form of wisdom. No, Sir. They are engineers from the Works Services Group (WSG) that are also engaged in these projects that these capital sums are going to be involved in. I must also indicate to this House, because sometimes the people of Guyana are not fully apprised, that the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) 4 Engineers' Battalion is also engaged with the Ministry of Public Works in helping with some of the construction for hinterland airstrips. They are currently doing the extension to Kaieteur and they are also engaged in civil works at Eteringbang. There are other personnel from the Works Services Group, as well as engineers from the Guyana Defence Force that are also engaged in these projects. Thank you, Sir.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, if I am to turn our attention to project code 1601400, Central Transport Planning: I note a provision of \$100 million here and the explanation given is for the provision of consultancy services. When I go to the project file, it is very vague. Could the Hon. Member state what consultancy services this provision will cater for? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, the consultancy services that are at the procurement stage at this time would allow us to have in place a supervisory firm to oversee the construction of the Kingston Goods Wharf, which is being rehabilitated and reset to facilitate the MV MA Lisha that is on her way, as well as the new stelling to be built at Port Kaituma; and there will be continued engagement for the stelling at Mabaruma, as well as Morawhanna. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, with the question of hinterland and coastal airstrips, in the 2020 and 2021 budgets there were provisions for the upgrade of the Lethem Airport into international/regional airport. Could I ask the Hon. Minister if that project is catered for under this project code? If not, has the Government abandoned it or is it catered for elsewhere?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, the Lethem aerodrome continues to be a priority for the Government of Guyana, especially with us believing that we will ultimately become that link, that air link and hub between South America and the Caribbean, with us attracting the long hauls. The work to be done at Lethem is the terminal building, with facilities for check-in, immigration and the rest of it. It is not in these sums that have been appropriated. These are directly for airstrips, but we are in engagements with bilateral partners addressing the terminal building and other issues for Lethem.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, project code 1602000, Civil Aviation Authority: I note here, they are seeking a sum of \$385 million. When I look at the project file, the profile explanation is to procure “software and equipment”. Could the Hon. Member give a brief explanation of what the software and equipment entail and, also, provide us with a disaggregation for the software and equipment to be procured? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for her question. Traditionally, when we talk about our operations in terms of aviation, we address either flights into the interior or international flights to other destinations. In Guyana, we have a new reality. We have the steel city that is more than 270 kilometres in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) where we have floating production storage and offloading vessels (FPSOs) operating, and our air navigational services must be able to track what is happening out there. We must see the helicopters when they are landing, enhancing safety and search and rescue. The allocations that are there, just the two items, are for Communications, Navigation and Surveillance Systems for Air Traffic Management (CNS/ATM) equipment replacement. That is, to replace what is at Timehri for a higher category at \$260 million. It is for search and rescue software and hardware. The hardware is SARMaster 600, at \$125 million. A total of \$385 million. This is all to enhance the efficiency, capability and capacity for the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) and the air navigational services. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Patterson:** I have a follow-up on the same project code, Sir. Eugene F. Correia International Airport, Ogle: The security systems are not working, the baggage handling systems are not working. None of the systems that one would expect at an international airport are functioning, thus jeopardising the entire ratings of Guyana – our category ratings. We are judged not only by the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. Could the Hon. Minister inform us if under this provision, on the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority, any provision is included for upgrade and maintenance, *in light of* those services – baggage handling, *et cetera* – for the Eugene F. Correia International Airport? If not, could the Minister direct us to where these important facilities can be found?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for the question. The Hon. Member asking the question was the gazetted officer, from 2015 to 2020, that was responsible for this sector. He ought to be fully aware that the Eugene F. Correia International Airport, which was renamed under his tenure, is an airport that is in a private/public partnership where private investors run that airport. The Guyana Civil Aviation Authority is the regulator to ensure that standards are met.

For the benefit of the distinguished gentleman asking the question, as it relates to the scanner that is inoperable, we are not *sitting on our hands*, there is correspondence from the Eugene F. Correia International Airport to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, which this Minister has seen, requesting assistance that available assets that are at Timehri be loaned to them to ensure that our national security and our architecture is adequately maintained. Those discussions for that facilitation are going to be completed shortly. Thank you, Sir.

*Programme: 313 – Transport – \$5,069,162,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Let me thank the Hon. Minister.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, if you would permit me, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Permanent Secretary (PS) and my colleague Minister, Minister Indar, and the heads of the various agencies and departments of the Ministry, for the fine work they have been doing in managing and keeping us up to date so that we can provide adequate answers to the National Assembly on such matters. I would like to say thank you very much, to them, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. On behalf of all the Members of the Assembly and on my own behalf, thank you and your staff for taking us through your agency during the past two hours and two minutes. Let us now invite the Hon. Minister of Labour, the Hon. Joseph Hamilton, and his team from the Ministry of Labour to join us for his agency. His agency has half an hour, and we have five minutes from the previous two heads.

**Agency: 38 Ministry of Labour**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$710,309,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Mr. Chairman, I start off with line item 6116, Contracted Employees: The contracted workers have reduced by about 11. I am not seeing that reduction in the numbers. Could the Minister kindly state the designation of those persons that, I am guessing, are no longer with the Ministry, and if he intends to find new persons for those particular designations this year?

**Minister of Labour [Mr. Hamilton]:** Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member, just to say that these positions are in the administration. Most of the people here, if not all, have resigned over the period.

*4.48 p.m.*

I know that the Personnel Department has interviewed persons. We, the Ministry of Labour, have made recommendations to the Ministry of the Public Service for employment to fill the vacancies that we have.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** I requested the designations of those persons.

**Mr. Hamilton:** The designations are one Office Assistant, one Public Relations Officer (PRO), one Confidential Secretary and a Legal Officer. In the case of the vacancy for the Legal Officer, that vacancy has just been fill by the PSM. There is also one Typist Clerk, one Receptionist, two Drivers and a Stores Clerk.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Could the Hon. Minister, please disaggregate line item 6284, Other? There is almost 500% increase in the amount allotted between 2022 and 2023.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Hon. Member, the breakdown of these activities are advertisements; servicing of our biometric system; the fire alarms, the Closed-circuit Television (CCTV); sanitary service; media coverage for the Minister *Zoom* account; and there is Dr. Yadav, a Consultant, who will be with the Ministry for the next three years to help us put in place a strategy for the Ministry of Labour and to deal with all of the issues, with regard to the labour force survey and all the statistics that surround that matter; and the creation of the Ministry of Labour's website, basically, upgrading that facility.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Would the Hon. Minister be willing to lay over, if it is possible, the terms of reference for that particular Consultant?

**Mr. Hamilton:** One, I would say that I have no difficulty laying over that but, first, I will have to consult on that matter.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Between line items 6111, Administrative and 6117, Temporary Employees, in terms of the staff for this particular Programme, when one looks at *Volume II*, it shows that none of the targets for 2022 were met. The Ministry had a target of \$441 million and the document shows that they are zeros which suggested that none of the targets were met in 2022. I am just wondering if the Hon. Minister would be able to state, why is it the labour market information bulletin, the social services bulletin, *et cetera* were not done in 2022 as was expected.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Hon. Member, just to report, because of the deficiencies in the Statistical Department is the reason the Consultant is helping us to develop the type of facility/department that we would want to have. Just for reference, when I got to the Ministry, that department was just staffed with either two or three persons, so I met it deficient. We are trying to ensure that it is developed and that is the reason we have hired a Consultant to help us to do that.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There are two phases there – the industrial training and the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) Commission. Could the Hon. Minister state what exactly the Labour Market Information System Commission is supposed to be doing that is different from what the Consultant will be doing?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I am advised that Dr. Yadav is also working to help with the LMIS.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Hon. Minister, is it that the Commission is not functioning now just for clarity and the Consultant is helping to resuscitate that?

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

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** One final question: I am not sure if I am on the right programme but during the Budget Speech, the Hon. Minister stated that ActionCOACH assisted in some labour services this year. You said that the consultancy was done under line item 6284, Other. I am just wondering if ActionCOACH was done under that, if it is continuing and if the information from that could be made available as well.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Just to be clear, Hon. Member, ActionCOACH did a survey on behalf of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) which we collaborated and cooperated with. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) also did a study that has to do with the oil and gas.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Hon. Minister, could you then indicate if the information received by ActionCOACH and IOM has been used to determine what programme is for this year in terms of training under line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships)?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Yes. All the reports and studies that were done over the period of 2022, we will be reviewing and they will be utilised to help us going forward.

**Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]:** A follow-up: on line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Cde. Minister, you said that the Labour Market Information System Commission is not functioning. Is that correct?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Yes.

**Mr. Jones:** I see a voted provision here for 2022 of \$1.5 million and the revised has zero but, then in 2023, there is another request for \$1.5 million. If it not functioning why is the request being made?

**Mr. Hamilton:** As indicated and if you followed since last year's Budget Speech, Dr. Yadav is here with us for several months now. He came since 2022, so the work and the funds that were made available and requested were utilised during 2022. Now, we are asking for more funds in 2023 to continue.

**Mr. Jones:** A follow-up: Cde. Minister, you said that the funds were utilised but in the revised Budget 2022 it has zero which is an indication that no money was used.

**Mr. Hamilton:** I was advised and stand corrected by the Permanent Secretary that the funds were not utilised in 2022.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Line item 6281 – Security Services: There is a significant increase in that line item. Could the Hon. Minister state whether another security firm has been hired and who is that security firm?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Just to say the increase has to do with the fact that in 2022 the minimum wage was increased and, therefore, that is a reflection regarding security providers. From tomorrow a security provider will start as the security provider for the Ministry. What I know is that a couple of weeks ago, there was an open tender and a security provider won that bid and so there is this new contract with this provision.

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Would the Hon. Minister be able to state the name of that security provider?

**Mr. Hamilton:** The name is Strategic Action Security.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister state under the Board of Industrial Training, what are the expected expansions for the programme, in terms of meeting all across Guyana, in communities that the Ministry may not have touched as yet?

**Mr. Hamilton:** The Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, caused me to chuckle. Just for reference, I am taking up from where he left off. When we got into Government, the Board of Industrial Training was primarily a coastal operation. We have taken it in two and a half years into every region and subregion of this country; every hinterland region, every river, every creek and every mountain top. The expansion you talked about has already happened. In every region, we have, either a technical officer or two. In the case of the Region 9, there are three technical officers of the Board of Industrial Training. The expansion you sought my good friend, in 2023, started since August, 2020.



**Mr. Mahipaul:** I know that the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) began to expand it. I am happy that the Hon. Minister expanded it further so that is very good. I mean, the Board of Industrial Training was there long before 2020.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, ask a question because I may know differently.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** As a former Minister...

**Mr. Chairman:** No. I actually served under a particular board during your period.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. I know that the Board of Industrial Training is doing a lot of work to bring our young people especially... I am asking if there are plans to go into other communities that we, the Opposition, did not go into to further enhance young people especially and if there are, could the Hon. Minister, please, indicate?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, just to state, we have gone beyond what you are thinking about. Let me put it into context here – the Board of Industrial Training in 2022, never before, has trained nearly 50% of some total as females. In what a person would call ‘hard skills’ if you follow. As I speak to you, there are 40 persons being trained in Region 10; heavy-duty equipment operators and 50% of those are females.

To answer your question about whether we will go into other areas, yes, we are collaborating with several organisations if you follow. We have signed several memorandum of agreements with several agencies and organisations whether it is the private sector or the public sector and that work will continue. The expansion will continue. The other important task that we have taken on and started in 2021 is paying some attention to retirees. We have done some successful training programmes to reskill retirees to go back out into the world of work. Yes, we will continue to expand and yes, we will continue to collaborate with *all and sundry* to effect the programmes.

5.03 p.m.

**Mr. Holder:** Under the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, could the Minister say how many persons completed training under the Board of Industrial Training (BIT) programmes last year? How many are currently successfully engaged in

employment? Is there a system to monitor and to check the effectiveness of the BIT programme? I heard a little of it in the Budget Speech but, it is not clear, so I am asking the Minister to expand.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Could you repeat? I am hardly hearing what you are saying.

**Mr. Holder:** The Minister probably needs an hearing aid.

**Mr. Hamilton:** I am hardly hearing you.

**Mr. Holder:** I am asking the Minister, how many persons were trained under the BIT programme for last year?

**Mr. Hamilton:** That is your first question.

**Mr. Holder:** How many of them are employed from those who were trained of course? Is there a system to monitor, track and evaluate the effectiveness of the BIT programme?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. First question, so far, for 2022, 4,017 persons graduated – 2,746 females and 1,271 males. As I speak to you, we are preparing for graduations in several regions for persons whose programme rolled over to 2023. I am told that from the Chief Education Office (CEO) acting (ag), it is about 1,200 persons to be gradated. If you are to add that to the 4.017, we are talking about 5,600 persons we have trained in 2022.

The other question about monitoring and evaluation, yes. We now have a Monitoring and Evaluation Department that does what you are seeking to get answers too.

Regarding 2022, you would appreciate that these persons were just gradated and, therefore, what we have, and I indicated during the Budget presentation is the statistics from the 2021 trainings that indicated about 70% of the persons are employed. I think some 15% are still being trained in other areas or are going to school. The trace of study will continue and will happen for 2022.

*Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$710,309,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$180,000,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Project code 1220100 – Buildings: There is a significant increase in the amount being requested. It states: “Provisions for buildings and payments...” Could the Hon. Minister say what this increase entails?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Retention for building of fence that started last year; retention for building for the main building at Hadfield Street; retention for the joining of the two buildings, and that project is ongoing. Now, I am going to new projects here. We are constructing an office and a training centre at New Amsterdam. We were gifted a plot of land by the New Amsterdam Town Council. We are planning to construct a training centre to the tune of about some \$30.9 million estimated. The Town Council also in Corriverton has gifted us a plot of land and we plan to execute a project there to build an office and training centre to service the Upper/Corentyne.

Region 9, we have started to use a building that was built and left useless. We are now doing training programmes there. We plan to inject some funds into that building for development and training for Nort Rupununi, some \$20 million. Rehabilitation of the Learning and Resource Centre at Unity. Again, that was a building that was left, so we plan to utilise \$25 million to rehabilitate that building. The intention and idea for the Unity building is to utilise it as a training centre to certify and accredit persons who already have a skill. We have several people who are carpenters, plumbers, masons and electricians, but they do not have no requisite certification and qualification. The intention of the Unity building is to ensure that we take matured persons who are already participating in work in the technical area and have them retrained to be certified there.

We have Bartica. There is the rehabilitation of the Learning and Resource Centre at the top of Mongrippa Hill. That is a building that was not as useful as it should have been over the years. We are now in possession of that building. It is being utilised as the Ministry of Labour office. Also, we do train there for the Board of Industrial Training. We plan to utilise about \$10 million to bring that building up-to-speed, with air conditioned (AC) unit and all the necessary things. The total to be expended on capital here is \$138,500,000. [**Hon. Members:** *(Inaudible)*].

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I am hearing some unparliamentary words.

*Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$180,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Current Expenditure**

### **Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$319,020,000**

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is a list there at page 472. I have recognised a number of unions did not receive any of their subsidies last year and they are budgeted for, again, this year; such as the Guyana Trade Unions Congress (GTUC). Then, support to other trade unions budgeted \$8,000 in 2022, but only \$1,297,000 was received by unions and then it is budgeted again for 2023. Could the Hon. Minister state why this difference for Guyana Trade Unions Congress and the other trade unions that they intend to give but they were not able to in 2022 that they will support now in 2023?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Just to say that the one Union that you noted received its subvention is the only Union that complied to give us a report as to what it used the money for or what it will use the money for. All the other unions were written to several times. It was a simple request, which is to give us a financial statement of how it expended the money. They have refused to and, therefore, I am duty bound that until and unless they did like Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU) did, the moneys will not be released to the union. We want to do it tomorrow.

*Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$319,020,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

### **Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$25,260,000**

*Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$25,260,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Let me thank, on your behalf and my own, the Hon. Minister and his staff of the Ministry of Labour for taking us through his agency.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we now invite the Hon. Minister of Human Services and Social Security and her staff to join us.

**Agency: 39 – Ministry of Human Services and Social Security**

**Current expenditure**

**Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$391,146,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Line item 6111 – Administrative: The number of employees have declined from 10 in 2022 to seven in 2023, yet the budget for 2023 has increased by \$38 million over the Revised 2022. I know that the eight per cent is there, but could you kindly explain this discrepancy?

**Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Dr. Persaud]:** In fact, there has been a decrease. The increase within that overall decrease caters for the eight per cent salary and we have had a resignation there as well. The numbers are \$17,561,000 for 2022 and Budget 2023 is \$14,359,000.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Is that the overall figure?

**Dr. Persaud:** Yes. That is the overall figure. Line item 6111, Administrative, that is what you are asking.

*5.18 p.m.*

**Ms. Lawrence:** Sorry, Mdm. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, I used line item 6111 to show that there was a decrease in employees but when I speak of the salaries, I am speaking about the overall figure. It moved from \$181,922,000 to \$219,913,000.

**Dr. Persaud:** It goes back to my original explanation, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman through you, there were increases on everything which includes the eight per cent increase.

**Ms. Lawrence:** A follow-up: What are the designations of the three persons who are no longer being catered for? Have they resigned? Could you kindly say whether the positions have been deleted from the inventory or whether you intend to fill these vacancies?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. The decrease is due to the resignation of the Assistant General and the Principal Assistant General. We have not deleted those positions and there is a reclassification of a Technical Officer.

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the number of employees who have been reduced from four in 2022 to three? We see here the budgetary amount in 2023 has been reduced from \$7,479,000 in 2022 to \$7,202,000 in 2023. In looking at this, we would like to know, what are the designations of the persons who are no longer in that category?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. If someone is no longer there that figure will reduce but it also includes the eight per cent salary increase and that is due to the resignation of one Procurement Officer. We still have within that category, an Engineer, one Expenditure Management and Procurement Analyst (EMPA) and one Superintendent of Works.

*[Mr. Chairman left the Chair.]*

*[Deputy Speaker assumed the Chair.]*

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** A follow up: The difference amounts to \$277,000 divided by 12 gives a total of \$22,083 per month. It is not meshing up in terms of the payment.

**Dr. Persaud:** Yes, the person did not resigned for the entire year. The person resigned in August and had a basic salary of \$120,221, which is why you would see that addition.

**Ms. Lawrence:** May I follow-up, Mr. Chairman?

**Deputy Speaker [Mr. Shuman]:** Go ahead, Hon. Member.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mdm. Minister, you said the Procurement Officer resigned in August, are you not catering for another Procurement Officer because that is a very important position?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member and as a Minister who was here, I am sure you know that we do not cater for that in the Budget, in terms of budgetary allocations but the post remains there and will be filled.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, I will move on. Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There is no change in the staffing number of two, however, the salary budgeted in 2023 has risen to \$2,825,000 from the revised \$2,291,000, it has gone down. Could the Minister kindly explain to us, why we see this difference in terms of the figures?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. There has actually been an increase and it is from \$2.2 million to \$2.8 million of the variance of \$533,375, and that caters for an eight per cent salary increase.

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

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

**Mr. Jaiprakash:** Could the Hon. Minister explain line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support? There is a sharp decline in the numbers of category from 43 to 34 in terms of the Clerical and Office Support staff. Although the nine persons are no longer on the payroll, the budget for this line item has only declined to \$2.3 million?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, for that question. We had a re-designation and we also had resignation. You will see the figure also catering in spite of that for the eight per cent increase.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: This has risen significantly, Mdm. Minister, from 32 to 51 which is an increase of 19 persons. What are the designations and emoluments of the 19 persons?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, for the question. They include a Technical Officer with a salary of \$319,645, gratuity of \$863,042; Civil Engineer with a salary of \$276,536; EPMA II – \$219,878; one Project Officer – \$205,200; one Project Officer – \$177,797; one Project Officer – \$177,797; one Transport Officer – \$90,630; one Clerk II General – \$87,960; one Clerk II General – \$84,821; three Data Entry Clerks who each receive \$84,662; one Driver – \$80,892; one Cleaner – \$80,892; one Office Assistant – \$80,892; one Driver – \$80,892 – one Typist Clerk – \$80,892; one Driver – \$80,892; and one more Driver at \$80,892. Those are all the new recruits.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mdm. Minister. Mr. Chairman, could the Minister indicate whether there is a policy for contracted employees replacing the Public Service Commission (PSC) appointed public servants?

**Dr. Persaud:** I am sure the Ministry of the Public Service gave you that policy direction as it comes from the Ministry of the Public Service. As you know, this Government, we have both the fixed establishment and the contractual workers.

**Ms. Flue-Bess:** Could the Hon. Minister under the line item 6281, Security Services, give reasons for the sharp increase in security services?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, for the question, Hon. Member. Provision is made for security at the main office and the permanent secretary's residence but, inadvertently, the rental of \$4.5 million was placed here mistakenly so I am glad that you asked so that I could provide clarity to you on that.

**Ms. Flue-Bess:** Just for clarity, are you saying for the four rental of buildings, the cost was added under this line item?

**Dr. Persaud:** Line item 6241, Rental of Buildings, has zero so it was inadvertently placed under line item 6281, Security Services.

**Ms. Flue-Bess:** Okay. Noted.

**Dr. Persaud:** Do you get it? It is line item 6241, Rental of Buildings.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Line item 6284– Other: There is an increase of \$9 million. Could you kindly provide to this Committee a breakdown of the category for the items catered for? Thank you.

**Dr. Persaud:** Line item 6284 – Other: It moved from \$8.5 million to \$8.6 million so I am not sure if you are telling me the right line item Hon. Member.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Sorry. It is line item 6291 – National and Other Events .

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, for the question. We do have a number of activities and events that the Ministry host, usually Easter; Phagwah; Emancipation; Mashramani; Deepavali; Eid al-Adha; Christmas; and Heritage month for the Ministry, but this year we will be hosting a conference to



share on some of the more outstanding programmes of the Ministry where we will be sharing nationally and regionally, the work we have done on gender-based violence. We are the country with one of the most exemplary records under spotlight and it is the spotlight teams expectations that Guyana leads this discussion because we have a comprehensive programme that focusses on strategies to tackle gender-based violence, as different from every other country in the region which includes Latin America and the Caribbean.

We will also be speaking on a number of innovations and initiatives that have been achieved by Guyana including the 914 which is a 24-hour hotline. We also managed to have a Survivor Advocates Programme which is new to the Region. We also have the *iMatter* application (App) which has a series of resources that people can access using information technology (IT). The App also has a 914 panic button and the App is expected to expand, so those are the sorts of sharing we will do. We have also developed a referral pathway that links all of our regions through the police, healthcare, and the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security's Programme. We have trained 1,400 policemen through the COPSQUAD 2000 Initiative. We also offered to persons who are in need safe voucher and we are also able to provide shelters through our Shelter Expansion Programme.

In addition to that initiative, we will also be speaking to some of our other noteworthy initiatives like the Women's Investment and Innovation Network (WIIN) programme which is one of the most impressive programmes of the Ministry and it has seen thousands of people trained across the country. It is a programme that my Caribbean counterparts, such as those in Latin America and those beyond the shores of Guyana, all the way in the United Kingdom (UK) would like to have access to. It gives us an opportunity to share the work that Guyana is doing to present the Guyana model for these things. We will be engaging so many people to share the level of work that we are doing in the Ministry, this way.

**Ms. Flue-Bess:** I have a question. I do not know how I am going to fit it in. The Minister gave a good overview of what is intended but when I look at this legend in Volume 2, Under Social Services, I noticed that there are a number of programmes and campaigns, so I do not know...

5.33 p.m.

**Dr. Persaud:** If I can interrupt, Hon. Member, we are on Programme 391.

**Ms. Flue-Bess:** Okay.

*Programme 391: Policy Development and Administration – \$391,146,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme 391: Policy Development and Administration – \$369,746,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam. Minister, project code 1220200, Buildings: could you kindly state for us what is the status of the building on High Street and when would the Ministry be utilising that building?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. We are not utilising that building.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Could the Minister say where she will be putting these fire escapes?

**Dr. Persaud:** Yes, Hon. Member. I think if you tried to open the door of your office at one time and stepped out there you would have fallen, so it is in a bad state. The fire escape at the Lamaha Street building is in terrible condition. It is very unsafe.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Project Code 1220200: could the Minister indicate where on Brickdam this juvenile centre will be and give us a description of the project profile?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. I would be happy to do so when we get to Programme 392.

**Ms. Lawrence:** So, that is it.

*Programme 391: Policy Development and Administration – \$369,746,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme 392: Social Services – \$38,269,315,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister some questions for clarification on her Programme Performance Statements in Volume 2, page 161. Minister, through the Chair, your indicator at number three states that you have a:

“...Number of elderly residential facilities meeting minimum operating standards”

Is the Minister is saying in 2022 there were zero or no survey done? Then, you are only targeting one for 2023.

**Dr. Persaud:** Yes. Thank you very much, Hon. Member. It is exactly that and we had help from the Ministry of Labour. It has given us a very comprehensive report toward the end of 2022, moving more into 2023. So, we are focusing on that specifically— the Palms Geriatric Home.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mdm. Minister number four states:

“Number of youths in conflict with the law accessing rehabilitation programmes.”

I noted that you have 12 and 25, kindly give us an explanation as to what you are referring to? Are these reports or is this a figure from a survey that was done? What does it represent?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. This is something that is of a troubling nature in the sense that we had the Juvenile Justice Act passed and amended. What we have been finding is that the juveniles are not going to court because there seems to be some misunderstanding of the legislation and what it entails. The question that you asked me earlier which I said I will explain, will attempt to deal with some of that. This is what we were able to do and what we are hoping to have done in 2023. We will probably exceed that target. We are being very conservative with the number.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, for indicator number five, I note the number in terms of the women who are benefitting from empowerment programmes. The Ministry have put it from 4000 to 6000 and I applaud you for that. I would like you to know – this is just a statement – that there are many women who are saying that they are not being allowed to access it. When they go to the office, they are asked so many questions and are told to come back today, tomorrow and so on. I just want to bring that to your attention.

My question really is on number eight. I am worried about number eight, Mdm. Minister, through the Chair. It refers to the number of persons accessing our shelters. I am wondering whether, in all

the programmes that you outlined earlier, is there anything to work with homes and families, especially for family members who are either on some drugs, who are suffering from Dementia or something like that? We have a lot of problems with that. People do not really understand and there are elderly persons on the streets. So, I wonder if you have a programme presently or if you are going to put one in place for 2023, so that we can keep our people in their homes and not have them in shelters.

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member both for your comment and question. With regard to the comment, we had a deluge of applications last year; it was out of the park – if I say it that way – from the 2140 persons that we trained in 2021 to the 10,000 applicants in 2022. We were able to train this much and so we are increasing. For example, in the first week of Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) programme's registration being open, we got 7000 applicants. So, the enormity of that tells you how tough it is to process everyone at the same time. We are trying as much as possible to make sure that everyone or as many of the people who applied – giving preference to those who never did any programmes with us, the first opportunity – get through to the WIIN programme.

To your question on number eight, there are several programmes. We have established the Community Advocates' Network last year and this is a grassroots network where we are doing training in communities on all types of violence – from elder abuse to domestic violence. In our Every Child Safe programme for children as well, we deal with child abuse. We are doing a whole gamut of things to educate and inform communities and ask those persons to volunteer with us. When we opened that register for the network, we got over 1000 volunteers who gave several commitments: one, for everybody to be trained so that they can do peer education; two, some offered their homes as sanctuaries; three, some actually wanted to learn more about what they can do in their own situations.

Lastly, we had a collaboration with the Mental Health Unit of the Ministry of Health. We are working with it to first target the persons in our homes and shelters. We had an assessment by the unit of all those persons who are in our homes so that we can filter them for organic mental health illnesses – those who have mental health illnesses as a result of substance abuse; those who are recovering addicts; those who have other complaints; and those who are just homeless. We are looking at the various levels of persons in care. Then, from there, we will begin to assess how we

can reintegrate some; how we can shift some around so they have the best possible treatment in line with what their conditions are; and how we can work with the wider community to encourage people. I feel just like you. This is how we can work with the wider community so that we can educate people on how to care for persons who have special needs because that is an important thing. For caregivers to care, they must understand the nature of what they are caring for. Sometimes, if they get burnt out or if they get frustrated, it could easily transcend into abuse. In short, the answer is yes but it will take, as you will appreciate, some time to achieve the results we all want.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mdm. Minister.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** In line with Cde. Ms. Lawrence's question and in keeping with Volume 2, it was brought to our attention some time back and it concerns an elderly home in De Willem/Meten-Meer-Zorg area, which is in a very deplorable state. The Minister, I know, visited the area. Subsequent to that, the location was moved from the back street, and it is now at the front street. It is still in a deplorable state and residents are still complaining about its status and how these senior citizens are being treated. I know it was also brought to the Minister's attention a second time, but the home is still functioning there in a deplorable state and the senior citizens are in a really terrible state being cared for. What does the Minister plan to do to address this situation and can the Minister say if she has a monitoring unit that is attending to these kinds of situations?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. Through the Chairman, I am just kindly asking for the programme head or subhead under which this falls and I will be very happy to answer.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I am asking it under line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations where I see a series of...

**Dr. Persaud:** This home is not one.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I will happily accept an answer because this is a situation that is hampering the senior citizens.

**Dr. Persaud:** Mr. Chairman, I will do so answer. Due to it being of concern, we have made several interventions. In fact, the Ministry has established an Elderly Home Visiting Committee. This Committee visits all homes, all year round and we have reports with recommendations generated.

The homes have to confirm with the recommendations and at least let us know what they have done to change the circumstances and situations, barring which, if the Ministry in the terms of Programme 392 – the department that deals with it – feel that the homes do not satisfy our minimum or basic standards then it would have to take decisive actions. I also want to say, in that particular instance, I am being told an organisation might take charge of that situation. We are monitoring it closely and like you, I am very concerned for the senior citizens as well.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** This is just to follow up. This is my final question on this. Could the Minister say when it is that it intends to look into this matter closely because it is really affecting a number of senior citizens that are there currently?

*5.48 p.m.*

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. We have looked at it closely. In fact, we have started by removing persons from the home. We have already removed two and that is a plan that would perhaps continue. We remove two persons already and we will perhaps continue to do that until there is no one there if the situation persists.

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** Could the Hon. Minister explain the line item 6111, Administrative? We have a decline of employees from 8 persons to 6 persons, what are the designation for these individuals that are no longer cater for? Are they reassigned or?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member. The line caters for an 8% increase and a resignation of one Director and a Manager of Sexual Offense and Domestic Violence and yes, there are plans to have those positions addressed.

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** The line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, the reduction of staffing by two individuals. What are the designations of these individuals? Are they retiring or resigning?

**Dr. Persaud:** There is one resignation of Probation and Social Services Officer and a Staff Nurse, so accounts for your variants.

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** The line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled. The category has declined from 156 persons in the year of 2022 to 148 persons in the year of 2023. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the designation of these eight individuals who are no longer on the payroll?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you. There are five Patient Care Assistants, two Ward Maids and one Porter. One Ward Maid was transfer to Programme 1.

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** Follow-up Hon. Minister, in spite of a decline in numbers there is a rise in the payroll of these categories, \$8.6 million, could the Hon. Minister please explain?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you. It is the 8% increase in salary.

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** In the year of 2021, the actual cost was \$146 million, in the year of 2022 it was \$151 million, but only \$144 million was spent. Yet another \$152 million is being budgeted for in the year of 2023 in spite of fewer employees.

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you Hon. Member, we are on the *2023 Budget* and as I mentioned it includes the 8% salary increase. In the year of 2021 there was another increase.

**Mr. Jaiprashad:** The line item 6116, Contracted Employees, has risen significantly from 122 persons in 2022 to 149 persons in 2023. An increase of 27 persons. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House the designations and emoluments for these 27 new employees?

**Dr. Persaud:** A receptionist receiving \$74,900, Two Probation and Social Services Officers receiving \$110,733 each, four typist clerks receiving \$70,000 each, two Probation and Social Services Officers receiving \$110,733, one cook receiving \$70,000, one Clerk II General receiving \$78,538, one labourer at \$70,000, one Administrative Assistant receiving \$96,597, one Senior Investigation and Liaison Officer receiving \$153,815, one Probation and Social Services Officer receiving \$110,733, two Probation and Social Services Officer each receiving \$110,733, one Probation and Social Services Officer at \$110,733, one First Responder Social Services 1 receiving \$96,597, one Probation and Social Services Officer receiving \$110,733, one Probation Officer receiving \$110,733, one Stores Clerk at \$74,900, three data entry clerks each receiving \$84,622, two porters each receiving \$80,892, one Laundress receiving \$80,892, one Coordinator receiving \$344,097, one First Responder Social Services 1 receiving \$111,628, one driver receiving \$80,892, one Stores Clerk receiving \$80,892 and one Probation and Social Services Officer receiving \$110,733.

**Ms. Lawrence:** The line item 6272, Electricity Charges. On at least two occasions Mdm. Minister, the Minister of Finance came to this House for moneys to cover debts owed by the Government

and other agencies, while there is no expected increase in electricity charges in the year of 2023. Could the Minister state why is the budget in 2023, slated to increase by \$13.35 million? Does the Ministry have arrears for Guyana Power and Light (GPL) and if so, how much?

**Dr. Persaud:** I am happy to say we have no arrears for GPL but this increase is as a result of several good things. We have a new Culinary and Training Facility and this will come on board this year, with it comes equipment and the cost of operationalisation and those things require electricity, and it is expected that this Culinary Centre will cater for the training of hundreds, if not thousands of women, across the length and breadth of Guyana. It focuses on us using locally produce food to create value added products. Training for women in catering and so much more within that centre. We are also looking at the operationalisation of the region, I would not say, some domestic violence (DV) shelters and you understand why I will not go further.

We are also adding to this line-up a very good thing, something called a Learning Lab. This is an institution that caters to the training, empowerment and entrepreneurship activity of persons with disabilities. It is envisage that this will become the hub of all persons across Guyana. We are catering for persons of all levels of disabilities giving them an opportunity to have free training and putting them in the stead where they can be financially independent, where they can have the opportunity for self-empowerment and they can have the opportunity in cases of mobility issues, to learn how to use the support aids that we will be providing for them at no cost, so that they can have an improved quality of life and you will appreciate, Hon. Member, that all of these new locations and new facilities will have equipment cost attach to them. Hence the answer for your electricity cost.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you Mdm. Minister. I want to ask you when all these training is finished do you give these women upon graduating a kit, like if they learnt to icing cake, do you give them a kit and a startup money to go out there and apply their trade and getting into business? Do you do the same for the men who I know also participate in some of these programmes not many but we have a few brave ones who come forward? Do you do that?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you Hon. Member. I am not sure of the line item but I am happy to answer because this is a programme I am very proud of. In fact, I will tell you more than 3,000 women trained, a sample taken, 48% of them are employed, 25% of them have their own business and I



am happy to say the Ministry goes further than a kit. We provide seed funding, business stimulus funding to them and these women are able to start their business with that. We are able to also provide things like appliances, several women will receive sewing machines, some will receive freezers, so we are going way beyond the kit and it is directly related to the kind of training that we are doing and I am happy to say that there is a percentage of persons who would have been men, in all of the programmes in all of the regions because the Women's Investment and Innovation Network programme has been offered in every region across the length and breadth of Guyana and the number of beneficiaries for the Empowerment Grant is a grand total of 4,939. I hope you are happy to hear that and this is an institute that was never functional. I would love for the Member to come and visit to see what is happening there.

*[Mr. Chairman assumed the Chair.]*

**Ms. Lawrence:** I might very well take you up on that Mdm. Minister. Mdm. Minister, could you turn to line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings. If we go back from the year 2021, it is noted that we spent some \$140 million on the maintenance of building under this programme. In the year of 2023 we are estimated to spend some \$75 million. Could you kindly lay over those buildings and the amount of money we will be spending for maintenance on each of them?

**Dr. Persaud:** Hon. Member, I think you would want to look back at the line item because there is really no difference in that line item. I can read the numbers if you wish. It is 75, 74....

**Ms. Lawrence:** No. I did not say it was an increase. I am looking at over the period how much money we have been spending on maintenance of these buildings. If we look at what we had budgeted from 2021 to 2022, then now we are adding another \$75 million in maintenance.

**Dr. Persaud:** It is the same almost. Yes, the maintenance....

**Ms. Lawrence:** No. I am not talking about the allocations. I am just thinking terms of whether we should continue to do all these maintenance in terms of value for money or whether we need some new buildings. That is what I am looking at.

**Dr. Persaud:** Hon. Member, if you are giving us new buildings, I will willingly accept but not at high rental costs but we are continuing to maintain what we have to keep them in good order, so

that they are productive and whatever we use them for produces the quality of service that we want them to deliver to the people of Guyana.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I take it that the Minister will lay over that for me and as she spoke of rental cost, if we go to line item 6241, Rental of Buildings, there is an increase there from \$6.6 million to \$10.3 million. Are we renting additional buildings or we having new contracts done at different rates?

**Dr. Persaud:** We are having additional buildings for Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and you know I cannot divulge much more than that. I will say to you the buildings of which I speak of are mostly sensitive ones.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Minister. Hon. Member have you exhausted your questions for this head?

**Ms. Lawrence:** I will put the others to the Minister in the House.

*Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$38,269,315,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

*6.03 p.m.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$251,000,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Project code 1220200 – Buildings: Mdm. Minister, you said when we came to this area that you would explain the juvenile centre at Brickdam.

**Dr. Persaud:** Are you now on capital expenditure?

**Ms. Lawrence:** Yes.

**Dr. Persaud:** As I mentioned, the Juvenile Justice Act was passed and amended. One of the requirements would have been a Juvenile Processing Centre and another one would have been a Juvenile Holding Centre. This is to ensure that when young people come into conflict with the law, especially within the age of the Juvenile Justice Act, 15, while they are not immune from being

charged, they are treated in a certain way where all of their rights are preserved. This is the facility that will be a buffer for those young people. We will also work in tandem with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Cops and Faith Community Network and our Ministry's services to provide that sort of environment for those young people, before they get further into this system, so we will be able to look at what kind of intervention. We do not want repeat offenders. We want to make sure that if the law is satisfied in its requirement and it is not a case where it is a serious offense, then at least there is someone who could oversee and monitor that person, and they could look at rehabilitation and that sort of thing. That is the initial interface this Juvenile Processing Centre would cater for.

**Ms. Lawrence:** A follow-up on the same line item. In the Legend you speak of:

“Provision for care centre for the elderly.”

I heard in your budget presentation you spoke of the care centres for evenings for our elderly people. I would like to know whether a survey was done because you know how old people... They would want to sleep in their own bed, in their own house and with their own family. I want to know whether that survey was done or whether this is a community project? Would it be done in the community where they are familiar with persons or would you actually be building a centre where we are going to take these people in the night?

**Dr. Persaud:** I think with the cacophony of noise there was on the day I was presenting; I believe people got a little mixed up between the children and the adult. The day and night care early childhood centres are for children, which I will explain when we get to that programme if you are interested. For this, we are looking at the Palms Geriatric Home in particular. It was built in 1874 by Mr. Castellani and it has survived up to now. I am sure every Guyanese are *au fait* with the age of the Palms Geriatric Home, but we are also looking at a more modern structure with an increased capacity with the intention overtime of moving people to a modern structure. This \$100 million would be for the design and would be a lot of things towards starting the construction. You would appreciate too that that building has several stories so it is very difficult, especially when people are bed ridden, to move them up and down. We have run out of space. The capacity is 240 at the Palms. We currently have to date 146 persons.

We kept the numbers tight because of the Coronavirus disease (COVID- 19) and we are even limited because of the ground floor space. We have been expending. It is back to your original question on the maintenance cost. This is a case like that where we have been expending huge sums to refurbish and rehabilitate the Palms Geriatric Home. I think Guyana deserves a state-of-the-art new care facility for the elderly. That is to answer your question.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I want to congratulate the Minister on moving that forward, that is, our geriatric home and making it modern *et cetera* for our senior citizens. I think she needs an applaud for that. Thank you. I want to come back to the night facility for the children as you spoke of when we get there.

*Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$251,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$968,032,000**

*Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$968,032,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$163,000,000**

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mdm. Minister again, I am at project code 1220200, and my question goes back to the day and night care centres. I want to know why the Government is taking on this responsibility of the day and night care with all of the regulations that you must meet *et cetera*?

When we started a very long time ago, many years ago, we encouraged persons to get into the business of day care facilities for children. As you know, the Ministry trained a lot of people and also it licenced them to open these facilities. Why do we not try to use the persons in the communities who have gotten into these businesses and so on, and provide this upgraded care? I know the night care for children started with the day care centre in North Ruimveldt and that particular proprietress offered night care. She was the first person who did it in the city of

Georgetown. I am wondering since we have all of these people with all of these facilities, why not let us do something to encourage them to move up?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. It is interesting that you asked that because it is an integrated system. It is a day and night care facility, well more than one. It also blends with it, early childhood development. The intention is to meld the structure with the skillsets that we are producing through the Women Innovation and Investment Network Programme. We have trained thousands of women across the regions in childcare. We are encouraging them to form consortiums and do exactly what you said, where they would start their own day and night care, and early childhood facilities, but we have to produce models that they could follow. These would be the models and they would also provide wheel service. It would be training/care facilities and this would be a very novel thing. I believe it would be the first in the region with the combination of early childhood development and care facilities. This is one of the Guyana's models as well. This would also work later on in the public private partnerships. It would also be the grounding for people who would like to start their own, because as you know, WINN's intention is to create a number of entrepreneurs, whether individually or whether through consortiums.

We have trained so many people in childcare. The level one and level two childcare and level three and four would give them special needs education, as well as early childhood development. When they start their own facility or if they choose to work with us for a little bit, get some experience and go off to start their own, they would be doing so with very firm footing, and they could provide the sort of care that people would want. With regard to the night care component, I think a lot of women have jobs that take them into the late evenings. Some women work on shifts and we are very conscious of that as a Government. In fact, this initiative was one that was so lauded by women and men across the country, because a lot of them too are single parents and they want to have this option. I think it is one that you would see perhaps expand. It is one that you would see people perhaps clamour for more of, but I think it is one that has very good prospects going forward, Hon. Member.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I would just like the Minister to know that my questions on the current aspect of childcare, I will send through you, Mr. Chairman.

*Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$163,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** This brings us to the end of the agency. We thank the Hon. Minister and her staff for taking us through the agency. I will now invite the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water, the Hon. Colin Croal and his staff to join us for his agency.

**Agency: 45 Ministry of Housing and Water**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$213,482,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. If I am to turn our attention to line item 6254, Vehicle Spares and Services: Could the Hon. Member state the number of vehicle fleets in the authority?

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]:** Mr. Chairman, the line item that was mentioned was 62...

**Ms. Ferguson:** Sorry. It is line item 6264.

**Mr. Croal:** Thank you. There are 10 vehicles assigned to this programme.

*6.18 p.m.*

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I turn our attention to line item 6272, Electricity Charges. I note, for 2022, we had a budgeted amount of more than \$55 million and there was a revised amount of more than \$36 million. I note, for 2023, the Ministry is now requesting \$20,160,000. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the decrease in the electricity charges and whether this amount is actually adequate, taking into account what was actually catered for last year and what was revised last year, too?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, if you choose, you could pull the microphone down and sit, and we will get a better feed.

**Mr. Croal:** I will talk longer, though, if I sit. Mr. Chairman, regarding the expense here, I believe it is adequate. The reason there was an increase is because there was a faulty meter on the building, for which the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL Inc.) corrected. Subsequently, the Ministry of Finance provided the additional resources for us to be up to date with the payment of our metering bills.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I turn our attention to line item 6281, Security Services. I note there was a budgeted amount of \$21 million in 2022 with a revise of \$18.5 million. For 2023, the Ministry is requesting more than \$28 million. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the decrease last year; two, the locations where these services will be provided; and, thirdly, whether the authority will be outsourcing, and whether the procurement process has commenced?

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, this is a new tender that was awarded. The sum represented there represents the current contract of January to December, 2023. The two locations are the Ministry's main building and the Permanent Secretary's residence.

**Ms. Ferguson:** A follow-up: I heard the Hon. Member say that the services have already been awarded. Am I to understand that the security service to which the award was made is Sheriff Security Services? You can provide us that information.

**Mr. Croal:** The answer to that is no.

**Ms. Ferguson:** A follow-up...

**Mr. Croal:** You asked if it was Sheriff Security Services, so I said no.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Since the answer is no, perhaps, you could provide to the House the name of the security firm.

**Mr. Croal:** The security company is...

**Ms. Ferguson:** ... Thank you.

**Mr. Croal:** I answer according to what you...

**Ms. Ferguson:** I have not heard you. You cannot cross talk while I am still asking a question.

**Mr. Croal:** I choose when to answer.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, please speak to the Chair.

**Mr. Croal:** This is not your court today. The security company is Atlas Security Service Incorporated.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I turn our attention to line item 6284, Other. I have noticed a small increase for 2023, as against 2022. Could the Hon. Member explain what constitutes “Other” where this line item is concerned? And the Member could provide, perhaps, a disaggregation of the amount.

**Mr. Croal:** Procurement notices; advertisement; the need for identification (ID) cards for the staff; signs and stamps that one would normally have to use for stationery purposes; marking of these vehicles and assets; notices; our domain renewal – that is for our internet service; a provision for our homepage; radio and television programme airing; and billboards.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, this will be my final question on this particular programme. I turn our attention to line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships). I note, for last year, you had a budgeted sum of \$800,000 and a revised figure of \$799,000. I note that, for 2023, you are seeking \$850,000. Could you explain the beneficiaries? Secondly, what exactly will be the training?

**Mr. Croal:** The categories of training will be for Leadership Development Programme, Human Resource Management, Secretarial Studies, Advance Certificate in Procurement and Supply. The persons who will be trained are staff of the Ministry. You asked who, so I am telling you that it is the staff of the Ministry.

**Ms. Ferguson:** A follow-up: How many persons are expected to benefit from this training?

**Mr. Croal:** The various persons for the respective training programmes that I just identified. For example, Secretarial studies will be for secretarial staff of the Minister’s Office and the Permanent Secretary’s Office... Three, Human Resource Management will be another. Four, the Leadership Development Programme – these are for the top managers at management level, roughly about four. And then there is Procurement and Supply, two.



*Programme: 451 - Policy Development and Administration – \$213,482,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Estimates**

#### **Programme: 451 - Policy Development and Administration – \$ 3,600,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** I turn our attention to project code 2507000, Furniture and Equipment. I note that for 2023, the Ministry is requesting \$3.5 to procure furniture and equipment. Perhaps the Hon. Member could assist us in disaggregating the sums, what equipment and furniture are to be procured, and where these items will be assigned or deployed.

**Mr. Croal:** Executive chairs, printers, document binder, filing cabinets. Executive chairs – \$300,000; all-purpose printer – \$260,000; document binder – \$300,000; guillotine – \$30,000; filing cabinets – \$140,000; complete sofa set – \$400,000 – I plan to change your green chair, finally; desktop computer – \$400,000; laptops – \$360,000; coffee maker – \$45,000; folding table – \$45,000; typist chair – \$140,000; desk – \$160,000; LaserJet printer – \$160,000; backup batteries – \$160,000; cubicles – \$200,000; drone – \$300,000; and pocket camera – \$200,000.

*Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Estimates**

#### **Programme: 452 – Housing Development – \$1,425,846,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** May I turn our attention to line item 6112, Senior Technical. Could the Hon. Member be gracious to provide us with the positions and the emoluments that go with this particular line item?

**Mr. Croal:** Two Architects – \$261,210 each; and one Senior Engineer – \$340,422.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I would like to turn our attention to line item 6294, Other. I note, for 2022, we had \$27 million, and for 2023, we are seeking... Sorry, line item 6284. We are seeking \$30 million for 2023. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the increase and also provide to the House what constitutes other where this particular line item is concerned?

**Mr. Croal:** Line item 6284, Other: Two activities are catered for under this line item, and those are the proprietary for the hosting of Building Expo activities. The second one would be in terms of our other Dream Realised activities.

**Ms. Ferguson:** May I turn our attention to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. I note that this particular sum is going towards the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA). If we turn our attention to Appendix T on page 699 under Central Housing and Planning Authority, we would have seen that the authority made a handsome sum through the sale of assets, *et cetera*. Could the Hon. Member explain what this sum will be utilised for that will be used as subsidy by the Central Housing and Planning Authority?

**Mr. Croal:** There are two categories: the employment cost for 376 employees and other charges.

*6.33 p.m.*

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I do not know whether the Hon. Member has the information at his disposal, but I guess his technical staff can be of assistance to him. If we turn to page 699, perhaps, sale of assets, I note that for last year 2022, some \$10 billion was actually catered for. There is a revised sum of \$25.9 billion. Perhaps, the Minister can provide to this Assembly what are the assets that would constitute this particular figure of \$25.9 billion.

**Mr. Croal:** The Minister is unaware of what line item that falls under. The Minister can answer you at 6321 – what the subsidies to local organisations are, which is to the CH&PA. I can give you a further breakdown from the information I provided just now. If you want, I can go further.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I did not get the Hon. Member clearly. He muzzled a bit. Perhaps he can draw his mouth closer to his desk.

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, let us go. Let me go. The Subsidies to Local Organisations of \$1.3 billion, first of all, employment cost for 376 employees is to the tune of \$952 million. The other charges are \$411,295,000. The other charges constitute total material equipment and supplies – \$12.9 million; rental and maintenance of buildings - \$75 million; fuel and lubricants - \$41.6 million; total transport, travel and postage – \$92.8 million; utility charges – \$27.8 million; other goods and services, including security - \$119 million; other operating expenses – \$38.9 million; education, subventions and training – \$2.9 million. That will give you a total of \$1,364,000,000.

**Ms. Ferguson:** A follow-up: I heard the Hon. Member state rental of buildings. Is it building or buildings and where is the building or buildings located?

**Mr. Croal:** Rental of buildings – two and the location is ... I have every available information you need. Just calm down. Sublot ‘Y’ of Lot 42, Stabroek and Lot 46, Brickdam and Austin Place.

*Programme: 452 – Housing Development - \$1,425,846,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 452 – Housing Development - \$53,100,000,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** If I am to turn our attention to project code 1903100, Infrastructural Development and Buildings. I note that the Ministry is seeking a provision of \$50 billion. Based on the explanation in the Legend, “Provision for access road, building and infrastructure works in new and existing areas”. When I turn my attention to the Project Profile here, I note that there are several activities listed – provision of building, construction of highway, that is, from Eccles to Diamond. Then we have Meer Zorgen to Schoonord and Schoonord to Crane. We also have provision for infrastructural works, including construction of roads, bridges, water distribution and electrical network and land preparation in new and existing housing schemes. My first question is: could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregated sum for the varying activities listed therein that represents this \$50 billion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, you can answer the first question.

**Mr. Croal:** Allow me to go lengthy, Mr. Chairman. Let us go. The activities for the \$50 billion roll-over – take notes – the continuation of four-lane highway for Eccles to Diamond, this sum represented of \$7.3 billion is to complete the four-lane.

Activity 2 – the construction of roads, drainage, structures for new areas. Some of these new areas include Metem-Meer-Zorg, Stewartville, Leonora, De Endragt, Hope, Success, Enterprise, Plantation Non Pariel, Great Diamond – Blocks 3, 7, 11 and 13, Silica City, Burma, Balthyock, Shieldstown, Prospect and Palmyra, Mabaruma, Wales, Lusignan, Good Hope, Amelia’s Ward and Conception, Region 10.

Activity 3 – construction of four-lane highway from Schoonord to Crane, eight lots. The total contract sum is \$12 billion. We have expended \$2.7 billion to date. We are budgeting another \$5.5 billion this year. This project will be completed next year.

Activity 4 – there is a construction of our new office building. Phase 1, budgeted this year is \$467,500,000.

Activity 5 – infrastructure works for continuation of regularisation of some areas. These include Charity, where we are catering to regularise 228 lots; Patentia – 53; Stewartville/Uitvlugt – 82; Tuschen School Site – 28; Chateau Margot – 44; Sophia – 120; Cummings Lodge Track A – 42; Experiment – 50; Plantation Belvedere – 35; Hampshire – 47; Amelia’s Ward – we are going to regularise a certain portion of Amelia’s Ward – 489. This year, the areas that I just called, approximately 1,218 lots for which we are regularising for persons who we have deemed as our next priority list.

Activity 6 – acquisition of lands. You will know this is an on-going activity.

Activity 7 – the utilities that you just highlighted, that is, in terms of water and electricity expansion. Bring your follow-ups now.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Before I continue, I think during my questions put to the Minister, I request of him to provide a disaggregated sum for all the activities. I heard about Silica City.

**Mr. Croal:** Have a seat, let me go.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I do not know how much Silica City cost. Please, I need that information.

**Mr. Croal:** I will give you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I think you missed some of the Heads in terms of the amount.

**Mr. Patterson:** He did not miss the Heads, he missed ...

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

**Mr. Croal:** I provided the information on the four-lane, I provided on the ... Did I miss the four-lane? Let me repeat then - \$7.3 billion for Eccles to Diamond and that is to be completed this year.

Schoonord, which I just mentioned to you, is \$5.4 billion for continuation of this year. I just gave you the main office, which is \$467.5 million and that is Phase 1.

For the new projects and this is the one you did not get, for example, Mabaruma - \$5 million; Metem-Meer-Zorg, Phase 3 – \$1.5 billion; Stewartville West – \$1.5 billion; Stewartville East – \$5 million; Leonora Phase II - \$1 billion; De Endragt – \$1 billion; Block 6 Hope – \$528 million; Blocks ‘C’ and ‘D’ Hope – \$300.15 million; Blocks ‘A’ and ‘B’ Hope – \$164.2 million; Success – \$1.3 billion; Enterprise – \$5 million; Plantation Non-Pariel – \$5 billion; Great Diamond Block 3 – \$1 billion; Block 7 – \$1 billion; Block 11 – \$1 billion; Block 13 – \$1.3 billion; Good Hope Phase 4 – \$635 million; Silica City – \$1 billion; Burma Phase 2 – \$830.2 million; Shieldstown – \$1 billion; Balthyock – \$442 million; Prospect/Palmyra – \$5 million; No. 75 Block ‘B’ Village – \$918.7 million; No. 76 Village – \$918.7 million; Block ‘C’ Bartica – \$614.4 million, where we will be building houses; Amelia’s Ward, Phase 4B – \$10 million; and Conception – \$5 million.

On regularisation for infrastructure works – \$10 million each on the areas that I call – Charity, Patentia, Stewartville, Tuschen, Chateau Margot, Block ‘SS’ Sophia, Cummings Lodge, Track ‘A’ Experiment, Plantation Belvedere, Hampshire, Topo and Amelia’s Ward. For the utilities - \$10 million.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I would request of the Hon. Member to lay over the information that he just shared, with us in the National Assembly. I have Constituents and I have to inform them about what is happening in the housing sector. The list that the Hon. Member shared not so long with us, I have not heard him mention the dumpsite road. I know that we have works currently on-going on the dumpsite road where there are several contractors. Perhaps, the Hon. Member can inform the House where in *Budget 2023* has provision for the dumpsite road. He can also provide to the National Assembly the list of contractors and the associated sums awarded to all of them doing works along that stretch. Thank you very much.

*6.48 p.m.*

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, I came prepared to answer questions. I am not laying over any information. Secondly, in terms of the...

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead Minister, you may proceed.

**Mr. Croal:** It is alright, I like the exchange. In terms of the landfill, it is the Haags Bosch Landfill Road, not a dumpsite. On this, we are here prepared to answer in terms of the budgetary allocation for the \$50 billion. There are works ongoing. The Hon. Member is correct. There are three portions. One, that is catered for from the Windsor Estate that will go to the public road. Another is catered from Windsor between the four-lane to Windsor. Then there is another portion which is beyond, entering in the vicinity of where the landfill is. That portion is not being done under the Central Housing & Planning Authority. In fact, that is going to be catered for through public works. That is part of the construction that will be done or the road alignment that will be done from the Ogle to Eccles first phase. Then that landfill road will be one of the main access roads for that East Coast four-lane road. In terms of the work that is ongoing there that you see now, the remaining funds for that is being done through the housing funds not from this year's budget.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, through you, could the Hon. Member share with the House the entire project cost for the landfill road? Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you have to ask a question for the Minister responsible, – I think the Minister said – public works. Was that...

**Mr. Croal:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Chairman:** He is doing from Windsor Estate to the public road.

**Mr. Croal:** The Ministry of Housing and Water, through the Central Housing & Planning Authority, is doing between the four-lane to Windsor Estate.

**Mr. Chairman:** And the cost.

**Mr. Croal:** That cost is not here in this budget. You may ask a follow-up question on another day.

**Mr. Chairman:** Another head.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member informed the National Assembly that the works currently ongoing on that stretch is being done by the Central Housing & Planning Authority utilising the housing funds. By right, he should provide the National Assembly with the project cost for that project. Thank you.

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, I like to listen to this Hon. Member who makes it sound like we do not provide information. I said the completion of that project is being done through the housing funds. I am here to defend the \$50 billion on this line item that you are asking. You can ask that follow-up question through parliamentary process, all the time.

**Ms. Ferguson:** You do not determine that for me. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Continuing, in the list, the Hon. Member stated that \$1 billion is going towards Silica City. The questions I wish to put to the Hon. Member are one, whether lots have been allocated, and secondly, whether low-income earners will be benefitting from those allocations out in Silica City and the total number of lots in Silica City? Thank you.

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, this amount is going towards further land preparation for the construction of houses for which I had alluded have already started. In terms of the number of houses, we are starting with the first 100 houses immediately. That will be starting by next month.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member state from the 75,509 pending applications on file whether low-income earners will be benefitting from an allocation there in Silica City?

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, not only Silica City, the entire Soesdyke Highway is being addressed and that will be made available for all categories of applicants. In fact, if you recall, during His Excellency's outreach two weeks ago to the Soesdyke Highway, we indicated that as part of the entire activities for Soesdyke, three areas will be identified to zone for us to regularise a number of those persons who are along the highway. In fact, where Silica City is falling, there are persons who are occupying there illegally. We are addressing them.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Since the Hon. Member refused to answer my question directly on whether low-income earners from the 75,509 pending applications will be benefitting from a house lot, I can only conclude that Silica City is a third Pradoville.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, kindly do not assume. Minister, would you like to repeat? I think I heard quite clearly.

**Mr. Croal:** I want to repeat the lesson of the Hon. Member Edghill who said, assumption is what? Mr. Chairman, I said the persons who will be benefitting from Silica City are persons from our pending applications.

**Mr. Jordan:** The Hon. Minister mentioned that some \$830 million is allocated for Burma, \$1 billion for Shieldstown and \$442 million for Balthyock. According to the project profile, it states that infrastructural works including construction of roads, bridges, water distribution and electrical works, and land preparations are expected to be done in these schemes. Could the Hon. Minister say whether all these works will be done in Burma, Shieldstown and Balthyock, and when these works are expected to begin?

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, the cost identified there is for basic infrastructure. That is, for the roads and drainage access. In fact, we have already tendered. In another two weeks, maximum, one will hear announcements of the awarding of a number of contracts for many of these areas, for the development of new areas for persons to be able to, for the first time, own their own lot or own home.

**Mr. Jordan:** Thank you, Hon. Minister. Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister further state how many lots will be provided by these three schemes and how soon the applicants can access these lots?

**Mr. Croal:** Just for clarification, when you say lots, do you mean how we are tendering lots, or do you mean the allocation of lots?

**Mr. Jordan:** House lots.

**Mr. Croal:** *Oh.* I can quickly get that. The second part of your question on when persons will be able to access – all these areas that we called or that I listed, all persons are expected to access by the end of this year. I can easily provide you with the allocations as well.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman...

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, a follow-up for the three... Just a moment, Hon. Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, you may proceed.

**Mr. Croal:** A follow-up for the three areas you asked about. It is catering for about 1,500 lots.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I recall during the budget debate both Members alluded to the fact that they have created 53 new housing schemes. My question to the Hon. Member, under this same



line item, could he provide to this National Assembly, from the 53 or 1, could he perhaps lay over the list detailing the 53 new housing schemes recently developed? Secondly, could he inform the National Assembly whether in the 53, there are housing schemes that were developed under the Coalition Government?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, you...

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, allow me to make this point. All the areas that the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government made allocations for, the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government has provided the infrastructural work for all those persons to access it. Now that we have established that, let me list some of these areas. Lust En Rust, Cornelia Ida (CI), Edinburgh, Leonora, Stewartville, Met en Meerzorg, Little Diamond, Great Diamond, Prospect, Providence... If I am going to fast, tell me. Annandale, Vigilance, Bladen Hall, Strathspey, Cummings Lodge, La Bonne Intention (LBI), Mon Repos, Hope, Experiment, Number 79, Number 75, Hampshire, Williamsburg, Ordnance Fort Lands. Then there is Onderneeming, Saint Joseph, Charity, Buxton, Ruimveldt, Met en Meerzorg, Edinburgh, De Kinderen, Golden Grove, Block 18 – that is by Kaneville. Little Diamond, Great Diamond, Blocks 1 and 9, commercial hub, Great Diamond, Block 5, Peters Hall, commercial, Golden Grove, Blocks 15 and 17, La Reconnaissance – these are under construction. Vigilance is complete. Vigilance, Bladen Hall, Strathspey, LBI phase 4, Cummings Lodge because there are two phases, LBI phase 2, Lethem 'Poke Bridge' as it is commonly called, Amelia's Ward, Foulis/Enmore, commercial, Enterprise, Nonpareil, Golden Grove, Block 9. The first set is 26 and the second set is 28. That will give you 53.

*Programme: 452 – Housing Development – \$53,100,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$1,417,095,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, may I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6255 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: I notice we have a \$150,000 increase as against 2022. Could the Hon. Member state the reason for the increase?

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, line item 6255, is that what you are asking? I am just verifying because...

**Mr. Chairman:** Kindly repeat, Hon. Member Ferguson. The Minister is asking which line item.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Line item 6265.

*7.03 p.m.*

**Mr. Croal:** Okay, thank you. It is Other Transport, Travel and Postage. The allocation for this is provision, whether by bus, boat or air, for the categories of staff stated there.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Through you, Mr. Chairman, may I turn our attention to line item 6284 – Other? I note there is an increase for 2023 as against 2022. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the increase, and could he assist in providing the disaggregation of this amount and what constitutes ‘Other’?

**Mr. Croal:** For line item 6284, Other, there is a variation of an increase of \$478,000. The categories are for procurement notices, advertisements, radio and television advertisements, and if any billboard is required.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Through you, Mr. Chairman, could I like to draw the Hon. Member’s attention to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations? There seems to be a smaller figure for 2023 as against what was actually budgeted and revised for 2022. Could the Hon. Member explain what caused the decrease for 2023 and what this sum will be utilised for? Thank you. I know that it is going to the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI).

**Mr. Croal:** Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There are two categories for this expense. One is \$500 million which is for the hinterland operations to support its day-to-day activities and \$900 million for electricity charges incurred by GWI. The Hon. Member’s question was basically why it reduced. The Hon. Member is accustomed to seeing things increase.

**Mr. Jordan:** Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister state what is the current bill that GWI has for the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) and if it has outstanding payments for the year 2022?

**Mr. Croal:** Thanks to prudent management of the economy and the injection of additional resources to the Ministry and GWI, it has zero arrears for electricity.

*Programme: 453 – Water Services Expansion and Management – \$1,417,095,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

### **Programme: 453 – Water Services Expansion and Management – \$ 16,045,000,000**

**Mr. Jordan:** Under project code 1601800, Water Supply Improvement Project, could the Hon. Minister state what are the provisions for improving water services or water supply in the areas listed according to the project profile and if it is for first time customers or the expansion of distribution networks?

**Mr. Croal:** Let me start. Project code 1601800, Water Supply Improvement Project, is for enhancement projects. Repeatedly, in a lot of the presentations that were made by the Opposition, they complained, and their concern was with respect to the quality of water being delivered to households. As a result of an assessment that was done...For example, the quality of water is because of the amount of untreated water that is being delivered to customers. On the coastland, there is about 52% of treated water when one thinks about Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 and Bartica central for Region 7. As a result of that assessment, this PPP/C Government has decided to invest to ensure that, by 2025, we will be able to deliver a minimum of 90% treated water across the coastland.

For the \$1 billion here, last year, we signed contracts for seven new treatment plants, which we will talk about under the coastal water programme. For the Water Sector Enhancement Project, in order to fast track for the citizens of Guyana to get a better quality of life, through a Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) loan, which is in the initial phase for US\$26.3 million, we have catered for six new water treatment plants in the following areas: for Walton Hall to Charity, there will be a new water treatment plant. All of these areas and treatment plants I am alluding to, before the end of February, we will be going out for tenders for them. I want to also make this point. Through the strengthening of the human capital in GWI, we have been able to save the taxpayers millions of dollars because the designs for all of these are being done through the staff at GWI. The

treatment plants catered for here are, as I said, Walton Hall to Charity, that is one. For Wakenaam in Region 3, we are constructing a water treatment plant there, and another in Leguan. So, those are two water treatment plants for Region 3 under this programme. [An. Hon. Member: (Inaudible)] It is for the entire Wakenaam. For Region 5, from Number 7 Village to Kingsley, there will be a water treatment plant. There will also be another water treatment plant at Bath Village and in Region 6 at Adventure. This is what the initial \$1 billion caters for. If the Hon. Member would like, I could go into all of the areas with those catchments if he wants to know the number of beneficiaries.

**Mr. Jordan:** The Hon. Minister could lay over the breakdown in terms of the number of customers that are to benefit. I just want to clarify, Hon. Minister, whether any expansion of networks will be conducted, or first-time customers will be receiving...

**Mr. Croal:** Could I ask you if you could save that for when we go to the coastal water programme and we will get to talk more about that?

**Jordan:** All right. Let us go back to the [inaudible]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, did you say coastal water?

**Mr. Croal:** For the questions the Hon. Member is asking, there is information on it, but it is under another programme, unless he wants to go into it now.

**Mr. Chairman:** According to my ...

**Mr. Jordan:** It could be answered under Programme 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is correct.

**Mr. Croal:** Under project code 2802200 – Coastal Water Supply – there are a number of activities catered for here. First of all, there is \$126 million that has been rolled over. These are from first-time access for installation and upgrade networks, including Parika Backdam, as well as the extension works that were done at Kuru Kururu, Moblissa, Kairuni, Long Creek and Swan. These are all rollovers that I am detailing. There is an extension of the Friendship and Sophia water treatment plants – this will be an extension, Hon. Jordan; installation of transmission mains from

Vergenoegen to Zeelugt – the retention is catered for here; extension of the distribution mains for unserved areas – the rollover is catered for here; and the procurement of an inline filter for Sparendaaam Well Station – this is a pilot. This is what the rollover caters for.

Let us go to the other activities. Under this programme, we are catering for... I alluded that we had signed a contract last year for new treatment plants. The CDB programme I just mentioned to you is coming on stream this year. Those are the six. There are also seven water treatment plants. If I may give some information here, there are water treatment plants for Onderneeming and Parika. This is multiyear project. This programme is expected to be completed sometime by mid next year. As part of treatment plants, Wales and La Parfaite Harmonie as well as Caledonia, Cummings Lodge and Bachelor's Adventure will have treatment plants. These are all multiyear projects. For Onderneeming and Parika, there are two water treatment plants and Wales and La Parfaite Harmonie, there are two more, a total of four, and for Caledonia, Cummings Lodge and Bachelor's Adventure, a total of three, so that will give us a total of seven. Those are seven new treatment plants.

Then, we come to the upgrading of existing treatment plants. Catered for are The Vergenoegen Fellowship and Pouderoyen, Eccles, Covent Garden and Grove. I am giving you in clusters. On the East Coast Demerara, there are Better Hope, Mon Repos and Friendship. Then, there are Cotton Tree, New Amsterdam and Port Mourant in Region 6. I have given the breakdown for the \$12 billion. In addition to that, there are small treatment plants. We expect to construct a number of small treatment plants too. These include in areas such as Sparendaaam, Annandale, La Bonne Intention (LBI), Helena Well, Weldaad, Farm, Johanna, Yakusari, Lesbeholden, Mibikuri, Crabwood Creek and Edinburgh. What are also catered for in this \$12 billion are transmission mains and non-revenue water. As part of those transmissions, there are Pouderoyen, Vergenoegen, La Parfaite Harmonie, Caledonia and Cummings Lodge. There would be drilling of new wells at Onderneeming, Cummings Lodge and Caledonia.

Also included in this activity is procurement of water metres. We intend to procure 35,000 water metres this year – 30,000 under the coastal programme and another 5,000 under the urban sewage and water programme, which is the next programme. Included in this cost is the installation of a minimum of 25,000 or 30,000 water metres with their boxes because we are buying them. In this metering programme, by the end of this year, Georgetown will be at least 95%. For those areas

that we are putting in the treatment plants, it means the level of service has improved. So, we are also targeting them, following that, with the metering programme. Part of the \$12 billion also includes the purchase of electro-mechanical equipment, extension of transmission and distribution in a number of unserved areas, provision of a new water source for a new supply at 4 and 5 Miles new housing development at Bartica.

*7.18 p.m.*

Bartica, at 5 Miles, there is as challenge in terms of the level of the service that is received by the households. We have found a new source. I just alluded to us constructing houses in Bartica. All of this area will be catered for under this programme. We intend also to drill a new well at Lima in Region 2, new wells at Bamia, Circuitville and Rockstone, a new well at Yarrowkabra, and increase our storage facility at Kairuni, Moblissa and Long Creek. We did some work, but now we are dealing with storage. We are going to be procuring a heavy-duty equipment and excavator and Hiab and purchasing a portable 300 KV8 standby generator. The purpose for this is that for areas that we may have prolonged blackout, we can move on the coast land. We could quickly move that generator to power the plant when there is challenge in the area from a long-term perspective. That is a breakdown of what the \$12 billion is expected to be expended on.

**Mr. Jordan:** Permit me to ask the Hon. Minister in three parts...

**Mr. Chairman:** You might have to restrict that to one part, because I have two minutes remaining, including the six minutes saved from all the previous heads.

**Mr. Jordan:** Oh, my.

**Mr. Chairman:** Oh, Yes.

**Mr. Jordan:** Could I have confirmation from the Hon. Minister whether extension of water distribution network would be done at Ithaca on the West Bank of Berbice?

**Mr. Croal:** I am advised that, yes, that will be catered for under the Cotton Tree expansion.

**Mr. Jordan:** Good. Could the Hon. Minister state what would be the composition of these small water treatment plants? To be specific, will there be filtration, irrigation and the various chemical treatments at these water treatment plants?

**Mr. Croal:** We are using the technology of in-line filters.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much. Hon. Members, we have exhausted the time, including the savings from the previous heads. I am now required to put the question.

*Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$16,045,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister and you staff for taking us through your agency. Hon. Members, let us invite the Hon. Minister of Education and her staff to join us as we turn to pages 198 and 199.

**Agency: 40 – Ministry of Education**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,952,611,000**

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Line item 6301 – Education Subvention and Grants: could the Hon. Minister disaggregate for us the education subventions?

**Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:** Fees payable to the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) the body that manages our secondary exit, primary exit, and A level exit examination.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Line item 6301 – Education Subvention and Grants...

**Ms. Manickchand:** It is to CXC, to the National Accreditation Council (NAC) and to pay National Insurance Scheme (NIS), gratuity and leave passage of persons who were on petty contracts.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Could you say if Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) falls under this subvention too?

**Ms. Manickchand:** No, it does not.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Could the Hon. Minister tell us the sum allocated for the National Accreditation Council?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Is it the sum under this line item? It is not one sum.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** It is a subvention. Is it not?

**Ms. Manickchand:** It is \$50.7 million. Staff is different though.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Pardon?

**Ms. Manickchand:** It is \$50.76 million. The Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU) also receives a subvention under this line.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Under this same line item 6301, in relation to the subvention for the NAC, today, we learnt that a provider of education from whom the medical council has disassociated itself, the former Minister of Health, Dr. Ramsammy, would have caused that proprietor to be locked up for false...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, a couple of infractions here. I do not think the honourable doctor is here to represent himself. That is one. Secondly, we have to ask a question pertaining to the service which the allocation is seeking.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under line item 6301 – Education Subvention and Grants, the subvention for the National Accreditation Council, a questionable character was granted three years permission to run a medical programme. Could the Minister say if there would be training for the external evaluators in higher education?

**Ms. Manickchand:** The National Accreditation Council is managed and operated in accordance with legislation. That council is run actually by a council of persons appointed in accordance with that law. We at the Ministry of Education (MOE) do not get involved in the everyday activities and we are certainly not qualified or do not have the jurisdiction to accredit or discredit anyone. I would expect, and I am aware that the NAC, since you were there, would hire persons who are skilled in different fields to accredit different persons. I do not think anyone in the country should treat accreditation as definitive. There are always subject to conditions. I do not know what you speak of so clearly my day was a little bit busier than yours, or I was not in touch with the news. I think we could feel safe that the National Accreditation Council is operating according to law, and that they have very reputable persons on the council who will take any complaint seriously.



**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Follow-up on that same line item. Could we ask, since the National Accreditation Council reports to the Minister of Education, that the particular report be laid over to us?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Which report?

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** The registration of North Shore Medical Institute.

**Ms. Philadelphia:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6281 – Security Services: In 2022, we had a total sum of \$90,893. In 2023, it is \$100066. Could the Hon. Minister be kind to explain to us as to what may have been responsible for this increase?

**Ms. Manickchand:** The increase is reflective of the increase in the established minimum wage paid directly to security providers as per contract effective from 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2022.

*Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,952,611,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,688,000,000**

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** There is a sum of \$78 million for... the project description says provision for upgrading of electrical systems. Could the Minister give us a breakdown of this project, particularly which building and where? It is project code 1215000 – Administrative Buildings.

**Ms. Manickchand:** This is to look at the electrical infrastructure rehabilitation at the MOE's annex at Smythe Street, the offices at 21 Brickdam, the Examinations Division and 68 Brickdam.

*Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,688,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 402 – Training and Development – \$2,294,525,000**

*Programme: 402 – Training and Development – \$2,294,525,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

7.33 p.m.

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 402 - Training and Development - \$218,800,000**

*Programme: 402 - Training and Development - \$218,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 403 - Nursery Education - \$3,577,912,000**

**Ms. Philadelphia:** Line item 6116: In 2022, there were zero contracted employees and in 2023 we now have 90. Could the Hon. Minister be kind to explain to us what has been responsible for this?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Yes. Hitherto, we had cleaners on a temporary establishment, so they were not given benefits like leave and gratuity and did not have other security of tenure that is usually provided for by contract. We have placed more than 90 cleaners on contract. These are persons who are mostly women and so I am sure this is something you would be able to get behind and support.

**Mr. Cox:** Let me congratulate the Hon. Minister, first of all, for placing these cleaners on the establishment. My question to the Hon. Minister is, could you state how many of these cleaners that were placed are in the Barima-Waini region?

**Ms. Manickchand:** The way the budget is crafted, this addresses Georgetown. Barima-Waini would come under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development under the Education Delivery Programme there.

*Programme: 403 - Nursery Education - \$3,577,912,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 403 - Nursery Education - \$75,500,000**

**Ms. Philadelphia:** Mr. Chairman, I hope I am at the right place, project code 2607100. When I look at Volume 3, it speaks to the completion of buildings, St. Gabriel's Nursery School, the extension of building and the construction of bridge and fence at Alexander Village Nursery School. I recognised, from visits to the Alexander Village Nursery School, that the fence is relatively good. What I also recognised, Mdm. Minister, is that the sanitary facility is inadequate to take care of the enrolment of that institution. My question to you is: was any consideration given towards having the sanitary block of that institution looked at? It speaks to benab at Sophia and Ascension Nursery School. From attending headteachers' meeting, I recognised my colleague from Stella Maris Nursery School would be complaining ever so often. Pillars are up over four years for a benab, but to date, they have not been able to. So, again, I ask if there is any consideration being given towards helping this institution to have the benab completed which will take learning beyond the walls of the classroom. Thank you.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I will have a look at it, but I could tell you, that is the condition I met – lots of beginning projects and lots of projects that were intended. St. Roses High School was flat on the ground. Good Hope Secondary School was started and not finished. Yarrowkabra School was started and not finished. Prospect School was never started. That is the condition I met. The dilapidated nature of how civil works was attended to by the previous administration. If there is a benab that has gone up or half gone up and has not been completed, we can have a look at it to see in the terms of priority where that is.

I can tell you that, currently, from last year's budget, there is an extension happening at Stella Maris Primary School, which the nursery feeds into. These projects are usually... the fence at Alexander Village Nursery School or the bridge are usually projects that are asked for by the parent-teacher association (PTA), the stakeholders of the school, and then assessed by the Ministry's civil works department. That is how we would usually get to it. I can also say this: if in the course of the year, there is a bigger need for something than what was initially planned for, there can be a change of programme to accommodate that, but I do caution that what you see as a visitor may not be what the PTA body thinks is necessary at their school. We would have to hear from them. We are big on consultation with and amongst the people we serve.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Line item 2607100. Could the Hon. Minister list the type of furniture and equipment to be purchased and state where these will be placed?

**Ms. Manickchand:** These are all for nursery schools or the nursery department. There are two executive chairs for two officers, two executive chairs for two accountants, one printer for an administrator, two air conditioning units, one shredder, one photocopy machine, 20 filing cabinets with four drawers, 20 filing cabinets with two drawers, 29 fire extinguishers, 58 tablets, 15 desktop computers, 10 aquariums for schools, 10 executive chairs, 40 teacher chairs with metal legs, 15 teacher tables, 12 single bed with mattresses, and 27 television sets with digital versatile disc (DVD) players. That should be it.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Cde. Chairman, a follow-up? Based on the response from the Hon. Minister, I suspect these things are not for the department but for the nursery schools...

**Ms. Manickchand:** They are for nursery schools. The mattresses, beds and so on are where the kids nap.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, could you allow her to complete the question?

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Could the Hon. Minister lay over a list of the nursery schools that will benefit from these furniture and equipment?

**Ms. Manickchand:** I could tell you now: Precious Jewels Nursery School, Gacestock Nursery School, Starters Nursery School, Head Start Nursery School, Happy Hearts Nursery School, Polly's Nursery School, East Street Nursery School, St. Gabriel's Nursery School, Smythe Street Nursery School, Selman Fraser Nursery School, Liana Nursery School, Alexander Village Nursery School, Enterprise Nursery School, Lodge Nursery School, Roxanne Burnham Nursery School, Stella Maris Nursery School, St. Christopher Nursery School, Sophia Nursery School, Ascension Nursery School, Houston Nursery School, Albouystown Nursery School, South Ruimveldt Nursery School, Bel Air Nursery School, Carmelita Nursery School, Turkeyen Nursery School, 'C' Field Nursery School, Cummings Park Nursery School, St. Peters Nursery School, Agricola Nursery School, totalling 29 schools, which really gives each school something that they asked for.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Line item 1215300: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the current percentage of completion of St. Gabriel's Nursery School? The planned duration states 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2022 to

31<sup>st</sup> December, 2023. The other two projects listed, are they included as projects that started or these are two new projects to start this year?

**Ms. Manickchand:** St. Gabriel's Nursery School is an eight-month project and it is three quarters or 75% finished, if I am to use the payments made so far because payments are usually made according to measured works. While I do not have a percentage of completion here, we have paid, so far, \$45 million out of \$60 million. So, I would say it is about 75% complete.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** There was a second part on whether the extension of building and construction of bridge and fence at Alexander Village Nursery School and construction of benab at Sophia and bridge at Ascension Nursery School are two new projects for 2023 or they began in 2022.

**Ms. Manickchand:** It is a new project; it is not on the rollover. St. Gabriel's Nursery School is on the rollover, but these are new projects.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I just want to say to the Hon. Minister that in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) we have found that not at all times moneys are paid for measured works. So, perhaps, her team should visit to verify that indeed 75% of this school, St. Gabriel's Nursery School, is completed and we are paying for measured works.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I will note that the current years before you on the PAC do not apply to this current administration.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Line item 2607400, Furniture and Equipment: Could the Minister tell us about the equipment and furniture that will be going to Region 1 since this is a national project, Regions 1 to 10?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Education is decentralised. The Ministry of Education here would not be answering for Region 1. The Region 1 allocations for education delivery and any service in education would be found under the Education Programme under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, which is Mr. Dharamlall's Ministry.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I need your guidance here because when I look at Volume 3 on page 182, it says Region 1 to 10 and it also says national and this particular sum and

purchase is not under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. It says the executing agency is the Ministry of Education.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, but I also know, having sat on all sides of the House, that Georgetown is treated very specially, and it comes specifically as Ministry of Education. I think it is even listed as District 11 or something like that. So, appropriately, when we come to the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in the morning, we can see what is available.

*7.48 p.m.*

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Sir, guide me as to why the legend states that the executing agency is the Ministry of Education...

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** ... and it is for Regions 1 to 10, and it is a national project.

**Mr. Chairman:** We will find out from the budget Director because as far as I know, it has always been District 11, Georgetown, Ministry of Education, head office. Hon. Minister, do you want to answer that – why is it listed as Regions 1 to 10, plus national?

**Ms. Manickchand:** This is because it augments other regions. I am just giving an answer as I am receiving it. This provision is for the Georgetown Nursery Education Delivery Programme.

*Programme: 403 – Nursery Education – \$75,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$9,118,812,000**

*Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$9,118,812,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$657,485,000**

**Ms. Philadelphia:** Mr. Chairman, at project code 1215400, Primary Schools, it states:

“Provision for schools and educational facilities.”

Could the Hon. Minister explain the facilities that would be awarded to schools and which are the schools that would benefit from this project code?

**Ms. Manickchand:** The extension of Stella Maris Primary School is going to be completed. We had promised the parents and children of Arthurville in Wakenaam that we would rebuild the school entirely. That began, and it is going to be completed this year. Additionally, this year, as was said by the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance as well as me, for the first time we have embarked on a mapping across the education sector. We are going to determine, very shortly, exactly which schools need to be repaired, which ones need to be extended, and which ones need to be built from scratch – where we have a need. It is under this profile that those works will be completed. We will be happy to share that with you once that mapping is completed.

*Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$657,485,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$8,255,574,000**

*Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$8,255,574,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$9,492,000,000**

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Project code 1215500, Secondary Schools: I see a sum of \$5.5 billion. I want to ask specifically from the Capital Project Profile at number two under the Description of Project which states:

“Provision for St. Rose’s and Bishops’ High Schools and Yarrowkabra, North West and East and North Ruimveldt Secondary Schools.”

I see the planned duration is from 2019 to 2025. Are these going to be new schools to start in 2023?

**Ms. Manickchand:** No. If you would recall, St. Rose's High School was demolished sometime around 2017/2018 and was never rebuilt. We began to rebuild that, and it is going to be completed in June of this year. The North Ruimveldt Multilateral Secondary School was destroyed by fire in 2021 and we began to rebuild that last year. It is going to be completed this year by September. The North West Secondary School was destroyed by arson in 2021. We began to rebuild that, and it is going to be completed in 12 months hence, which would be sometime at the end of this year. For St. Winefride's Secondary School, there is an extension so that we could actually seat more children comfortably. The East Ruimveldt Secondary School is an extension so that we could seat more children comfortably. Both of them should be finished by June of this year.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you. Is the full sum for this North West Secondary School in this budgeted sum of \$5.5 billion to start this year?

**Ms. Manickchand:** No, it is a rollover. We advanced for mobilisation last year because we signed a contract last year with the contractor.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** This is a follow-up question. I noticed here for St. Rose's and Bishops' High Schools, North West Secondary School and so on, that the common feature is fire. Last week, the Minister said that the Government promised to rebuild all those schools. Could the Minister tell us what the intention for St. George's High School is?

**Ms. Manickchand:** St. George's High School, before it got destroyed, was on land owned by the church, as was the Christ Church Secondary School. This really ought to be registered again in the Committee because we have said that publicly everywhere, and yet, I see very strange suggestions being made that the schools were destroyed so that somebody could use the land. The land is owned by the church – two different churches. There is every intention of rebuilding St. George's High School and St. Mary's Secondary School. Whether we rebuild at the same location is still something that we are looking at. The location might not be ideal and conducive for the kind of education we want to deliver. If we do not have other space, given that we must have schools that are close to children's homes, then we will rebuild on that location.



**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Project code 2607400, School Furniture and Equipment: Could the Minister lay over a list of schools that will benefit? I notice this is a Region 4 project.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Did you say project code 2607400? So, I can give you that now. They are all secondary schools in Georgetown, but I can list them for you now. These are: Ascencion Secondary School, Brickdam Secondary School, Carmel Secondary School, Charlestown Secondary School, Christ Church Secondary School, Cummings Lodge Secondary School, Dolphin Secondary School, East Ruimveldt Secondary School, Freeburg Secondary School, Huston Secondary School, Kingston Secondary School, Lodge Secondary School, New Campbellville Secondary School, North Georgetown Secondary School, North Ruimveldt Secondary School, Queens College, Queenstown Secondary School, Richard Ishmael Secondary School, Sophia Special School, South Ruimveldt Secondary School, St. Barnabas Special School, St. John College, St. Joseph's High School, St. Rose's High School, St. Stanislaus College, St. Winefride's Secondary School, Bishops' High School, New Central High School, Tucville Secondary, Tutorial High School, West Ruimveldt Secondary School, Agricola Practical Instruction Centre (PIC) (Home Economics), Agricola (PIC) (Industrial Arts), Durban Backlands PIC, Kingston PIC, Sophia PIC, Harold B. Davis Special School and the Ministry of Education's Unit for the Blind and Visually Impaired. There is the Good Hope Secondary School which is going to be completed by June and the Yarrowkabra Secondary School which is going to be completed by May. Both of them are in Region 4 and will also benefit from provisions under this programme.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Project code 2607500, Secondary Education Improvement Project: Minister, at this point in time, I am glad you told us that the Good Hope Secondary School will be completed by June of this year. Could you tell us what cost will take us to the end of this project?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Let us retrace the history of Good Hope Secondary School. In or around 2014, we secured funding from the World Bank for the building of six secondary schools to bring us closer to universal secondary education. Everything was done; the groundwork was laid, and funding was secured. That school began after the contract was awarded sometime in 2017 or 2018 under the APNU/AFC, and it was never completed. It is a World Bank project. That means the funding is being provided by a loan from the World Bank and it has certain requirements for when something such as this happens – when a party fails to deliver projects on time – to the detriment

of children, I might add. One of the conditions is that public procurement is done for the entire world for someone or anyone who wishes to bid to complete the project. The lowest responsive bid we got to complete the incomplete project, which was a badly managed secondary school civil work by the APNU/AFC, was US\$1.45 million. That is what bad management and poor governance cost this country and its children. The people who did that should hang their heads in shame...

**Mr. Chairman:** Beep, beep.

**Ms. Manickchand:** ...because children are now crowded in auditoriums.

**Mr. Chairman:** Beep, beep. Hon. Minister...Hon. Minister, you do not want me to stand.

**Ms. Manickchand:** They cannot attend school because it is not finished. Yes, Sir. They should hang their heads...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I gave you a beep. Do you want to withdraw the word that is unparliamentary?

**Ms. Manickchand:** I will withdraw the word that is unparliamentary and say that people who managed this project and failed to bring it in, should hang their heads and wring their hands because they failed the children of the East Coast Demerara.

*8.03 p.m.*

The Children of the East Coast Demerara are still attending primary tops. This school is going to allow us to close all the secondary departments of primary schools on the East Coast Demerara. These are some of the consequences of bad management in Government and poor governance.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Thank you, Sir. Apparently, the Minister of Education forgot that last week was the budget speeches, she is still in her speech mode. But let me proceed. On the same line item, could the Minister say to us the cost of the design for the Prospect Secondary School?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I want to remind you that you speak to the Chair.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I am advised, Mr. Chairman, that the cost of the design for the Prospect Secondary School is \$15 million. This is also a school that should have been finished under the

last Administration; ineptness has really cost the children of this country. We have children sitting in auditoriums and under stairways because these schools were not finished. That is how we have harmed them.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Education stood in this National Assembly and told us that all the children of our schools have textbooks. Could the Minister tell us, from this same line item, how much would the textbooks that would be purchased under this project code cost out of the total sum?

**Ms. Manickchand:** The Minister of Education did not say all of the children have textbooks. I think what she said is that all the children will get textbooks. What she said is all the children of Grade 6 for the first time in the history of the country received all the textbooks they needed and all the children of primary schools from Grades 1 to 5 received already, save for the English text, all the textbooks they needed. She said this year's budget is going to allow us to provide for the children of secondary schools all the textbooks they need, except for the enrichment programs. I think that is what she said.

**Mr. Chairman:** The question was the cost, Hon. Minister.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Cde. Chairman, under the same project code, there is "procurement for equipment for smart classrooms". Could the Minister tell us which schools will be benefiting from these smart classrooms?

**Ms. Manickchand:** The secondary schools that will benefit from the classrooms are as follows: there will be 25 secondary schools benefitting from some aspect of smart classrooms. You would recall, also, that the previous Minister of Communications had said that she had installed smart classrooms across the country and the parents, teachers and children of those...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I cannot recall. I was not here.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Mr. Chairman, in the 2020 Budget as well as in the public, the former Hon. Minister of trade and then communication had indicated, incorrectly, that there were smart classrooms installed at Charity Secondary School, 8<sup>th</sup> of May Secondary School, in Linden and in Berbice and none of that was true. The only smart classroom that was established in this country was at the North Ruimveldt Secondary School in 2015; none else had been established or installed in

the five years that the Minister was speaking of. This year 22 to 25 smart classrooms will be enhanced or established in secondary schools across Guyana.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Cde. Chairman, project code 2610500, Human Capital Strengthening Project. I find that under the strengthening of human capital we are constructing and rehabilitating schools. Could the Minister tell us the schools that will be constructed as against the ones that will be rehabilitated?

**Ms. Manickchand:** This is to address and engage with seven schools in all: to construct three schools and rehabilitate four schools so that the human beings who are going into those schools could leave with the capital of added education. They could have the added value of quality education in those facilities.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Following up on the same line item, I did ask for the names of the schools for construction and rehabilitation.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The Minister of Finance said in his budget speech, and I referred to it just now, that we are in the process of doing a mapping; it is almost finished. Once that is done, we are going to be able to decide and determine exactly where the priority is. Now, a large part of this is going to go towards rehabilitating and repairing the multilateral schools in the country, beginning with Christiansburg that is in a really bad state, which, unfortunately, got to that state because of poor attention and repair for a prolong period of time under your Government. Then for secondary schools, for sure the Prospect Secondary School, and then in other locations that the school mapping determines it is needed.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Just a final question on this one. I want to leave here clear. This is \$2 billion and a part of that \$2 billion is the “construction and rehabilitation of schools”. The Minister sits in this House and cannot tell us the seven schools that will be constructed and rehabilitated. Is that clear?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I do not know; you are now asking the Chairman a question. This is a process for you to ask the Minister. I listened to the Minister and I was quite clear with respect to the answer – mapping and then determining priority. Hon. Minister, could you enlighten us?

**Ms. Manickchand:** I can say with sureness, if the Hon. Member does not find it clear enough, I would be happy to say it again. Prospect Secondary School, which should have been built under the 2014 project, never got off the ground; that will be built this year. Turkeyen Secondary School, which is a brand-new school that will house children from Sophia and the eastern Georgetown area, is going to be built here.

Secondly, we are in the process of a school mapping exercise; it is the first time it has been done in the country. What that means is that we find out from communities, people that we are all serving – parents, teachers and children – where are schools needed? Where do we need to repair? Where do we need to extend? Where do we need to construct a new school? Once that is finished, I would be happy to tell you which schools are being constructed, which schools have been identified as a priority to be extended or repaired. Additionally, the multilateral schools in this country, which suffered severe disrepair and did not get attention for a prolong period of time – five years to be exact – will receive money under this programme to have them repaired.

*Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$9,492,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Current Expenditure**

### **Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$5,612,715,000**

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, line item 6301, Education Subventions and Grants. Cde. Chairman, your guidance please. Are we at Programme 406, Current Expenditure, Education Subvention and Grants, line item 6301? I see that there is a sum here of \$3,043,440,000 for the University of Guyana, Turkeyen Campus. May I ask the Hon. Minister, what will this sum go for towards the University of Guyana (UG)? Is it a lump sum that was requested? And is it the sum that was requested from the University of Guyana?

**Ms. Manickchand:** This provision caters for employment cost at \$2.715 billion as well as operational expenses at \$327.7 million.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, please forgive me, but with the heckling I did not hear the figure that the Minister called. Could she please repeat it?

**Ms. Manickchand:** The sum of \$2.715 billion for employment cost and \$327.7 million for operational expenses.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, I know that the University of Guyana, having served there with distinction, much to the annoyance of my friends on the other side... May I ask if the University of Guyana in its submission to the Ministry requested this amount? Since my years there it has been requesting this amount and, I know, with the increase in recurrent expenditure and maintenance of buildings and so on... Is the amount that was requested? I know that this Government has education at heart, so I am asking if that is the amount the University requested?

**Ms. Manickchand:** There has been an increase to the budget for the University of Guyana from 2022 to now. I can tell you, Mr. Mahipaul, just like in your home, there are dreams and wishes for the best and then we have to live within reality. I do not know at this stage exactly what the University requested but I can almost assuredly tell you this, that is being given, is a significant increase, more than \$1 billion from the 2019 Budget.

*8.18 p.m.*

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, as a former University of Guyana Student Society (UGSS) President, I do have my friends from the student body who sit there still. I am guided by my student council representatives there that the University of Guyana requested a sum of \$9 billion. I see that the allocation here is \$3 billion thereabout, which is about one third of the request. Could the Hon. Minister say what other measures they foresee to assist the University of Guyana...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, firstly we are dealing with some facts here. I do not know about your friends and the source of their information. Hon. Minister please.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, you cut me off without my completing, so I thought you were interjecting. May I justify that I am willing to layover what was provided to me as the submission by my friends at the University, as to what they requested, which is \$9 billion? That is to justify that they did ask for \$9 billion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, you can layover it. Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

**Ms. Manickchand:** A budget for the nation is not very different from a budget for your house. The same way Mr. Mahipaul's... [Mr. Mahipaul: Hon. Member.] ...or the Hon. Member's wife may dream of a beautiful four post bed... [Mr. Mahipaul: She has that.] ...with newly painted walls and a brand-new partner to go in it, she may only end up with one thing, one improvement. It probably would not be the partner. In the same way, when we are budgeting for the nation, everyone will not get exactly what they want. What we do know is that the budget advances a programme that was already voiced even before we got into Office. We said very clearly that the students at the University of Guyana who have already incurred debt will be given a pathway to clear that. We said very clearly that we will not be charging UG fees for the children of the University at Guyana. I am very happy to say that this Budget will take us one step closer to getting there.

We can make a lot of sensational noise and soundings about who asked for what, and how much they really got, then twist that on some talk show in the night to say we do not like a particular section. I would invite the persons looking at this to look at the increase in fees under the APNU/AFC and determine from that who really likes the students of the University of Guyana and who do not. When I came into office, in 2020, there were about five civil works projects that were incomplete such as the bursary and the pump house. Nothing that was started was ever completed. I think that is the legacy of the APNU/AFC as far as civil works go. To answer the Hon. Member...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, the word "completed" triggered me to watch the clock and the time has been exhausted. Hon. Members, we started this agency at 7.21 p.m. and according to my clock it is 8.21.32 p.m. I have no choice but to now put the question.

*Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$5,612,715,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$1,963,970,000**

*Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$1,963,970,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Hon. Minister and all of your support staff, Vice Chancellor and the Permanent Secretary (PS) for taking us through your agency. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, we now invite the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport to join us with his team. Hon. Members we could turn to pages 214 and 215. We are starting at 8.24 p.m.

**Agency: 44 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$389,142,000**

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Chairman, line item 6116, Contracted Employees: I see an increase of eight contracted employees. Could you provide us with the rationale for these additional contracted employees?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I know you are very challenged. If you want, you could sit and pull the microphone to you.

**Mr. Ramson:** I prefer to stand. It is to respect the House and also to respect my friends on the other side. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** We respect you too.]

**Mr. Chairman:** I agree. We respect you too.

**Mr. Ramson:** In relation to the question that was asked, there is a variance of six new appointees. These are bonded...

**Mr. Figueira:** It is eight actually.

**Mr. Ramson:** ...employees who had done their scholarship and they have returned to work with the Government of Guyana. I just want to identify them, not by name but by their designation. They are three Technical Assistants, three Engineers and two relocated, one Project Officer and one Accounts Clerk.

**Mr. Chairman:** Someone has their microphone on. I am asking those online to mute their microphones and if they have to interject, then they could put it on.

**Mr. Ramson:** That answers the question.



**Mr. Figueira:** In your response you indicated six. From what I am recognising here, there are eight contracted employees. Could you also, when you stand to respond, say what is the unique skill set these contracted employees bring to the Ministry?

*[Mr. Chairman left the Chair.]*

*[Deputy Speaker assumed the Chair.]*

**Mr. Ramson:** I did identify the eight. The six were bonded and there were two that were relocated from line items 6114 to 6116. For the Technical Assistants, they are support staff – technical drawings and civil engineering.

**Mr. Figueira:** I am trying to understand... Let us go to line item 6284, Other: The sum of \$14 million has been allocated to this line item. Could you give some clarity with regard to what this money would be utilised for?

**Mr. Shuman:** Minister, considering that you are vertically challenged, as we have seen; we have kind of developed a little issue sometimes with the microphone.

**Mr. Ramson:** I am happy to stand.

**Mr. Shuman:** You could sit if you wish.

**Mr. Ramson:** This sum caters for graphic artists, production of digital content, quantity surveyor services, bank charges, advertisement for tenders, services for the payment of information technology (IT) services and software upgrade, research for technical services, and rental of tables, chairs, tents and that sort of payment.

**Mr. Jones:** Cde. Chairman, under Contracted Employees I noted the eight new persons who will be appointed, and you spoke about their technical expertise. When you go to your performance statement, index one states:

“Number of policies developed or updated for culture, youth and/or sport.”

For 2022, there is zero, and your target for 2023 is three. Could you indicate to the House what are those three policies that you intend to update or bring to the House?

**Mr. Ramson:** There are two policies that we are going to bring to the House. One is the sports policy and the other one is the cultural policy. I think there was a mistake in relation to the printing of three.

**Mr. Jones:** I am still continuing with the indicators. At number 4:

“Legal framework updated to facilitate development of culture, youth, and sports.”

In 2022, there was none, and in 2023, there is an indication that the Ministry intends to update the legal framework. Could you give an indication of what that framework is?

**Mr. Ramson:** It is specifically for the national trust.

**Mr. Jones:** I am still continuing with the indicators. With regard to indicator number 5, you stated:

“Number of events in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector.”

In 2022, there is an indication that 20 such activities were had, and you indicated that in 2023 you are slated to host 30. Could you indicate to this House what would be the 10 new events in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector?

*[Mr. Chairman resumed the Chair.]*

8.33 p.m.

**Mr. Ramson:** There are three new areas under culture that we are putting forward starting now. One is the Guyana Prize Literary Festival. That is going to be part of a composite of activities happening around Mashramani. It is a new event for us. I will just give some explanation behind the idea to have this event, not just the basis but how the public will benefit. We had before the Guyana Prize for Literature, where taxpayers and Government were making investment in supporting literary arts. That investment resulted in the production of many books in written form, plays, but all ended up on shelves and in stacked boxes. The literary arts festival is intended to bring all of the works that are associated with the Guyana Prize for Literature to bring it alive. Just so you get an idea of what the literary arts festival looks like, it will be a weekend of three days but, on the final day, there will be a play that is based on any previous winner of the Guyana Prize for Literature. That play is being currently being hosted. They have been having their rehearsals.

Just last night, none other than Ms. Letitia Wright was able to go to the location to have a critique of the play while they were rehearsing, which is what the Ministry organised. Subsequently, we were able to have an interview with her and a question-and-answer segment. Those are the three days of events that will be added there.

You also know that we had a number of additional activities that were catered for or that we are catering for this year. Number one is the Mashramani float parade, which is going to be added this year. We did not have to cater for that last year because of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Why do you look confused? [Mr. Jones: *Inaudible*] Did we have Mashramani last year? An additional activity that we are catering for is the Mashramani float parade.

One of the other activities that we are catering for also this year is the Regatta that is going to be at the Blue Lake in Linden, which was a big success. There is also a steel pan on the beach that is going to be held which we are catering for this year. Those are the number of activities. I am also being reminded that we are putting, during the literary arts festival, the Poetry Slam, the storytelling, the symposiums, *et cetera*.

**Mr. Jones:** Cde. Chairman, for clarity because you were not here, Sir. Essentially, I was asking on indicators. The Ministry stated here that in 2022 it held 20 events and it is slated to host 30 in 2023. I am trying to get an idea of what those 10 new activities are. So far, the Hon. Minister just noted three: the Mashramani float parade, which – using his explanation, is a return because of COVID-19 – and the Regatta which is held at the Linden Blue Lake, which was held last year so it cannot be new. I cannot remember right now what the third item is. But the Hon. Minister is still to list the remaining seven.

**Mr. Ramson:** I also listed the literary festival, but the literary festival had a number of events in there. That is an example of the additional events. We are also putting in a drama component, where we are going to have three to four plays, where the Government of Guyana, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, is going to be supporting those plays. They are going to be held at three or four different times of the year. The first one is starting during the literary festival. We have already had that engagement and we are going to have the second one around Independence.

**Mr. Jones:** Sir, while I encourage the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, which is very important to all of us in Guyana, could I ask the Hon. Minister to lay over the ten new events, for clarity?

**Mr. Ramson:** What I will do, when I get the full complement, because our response is based on the programme heads, I will either advise the Committee or lay it over.

**Mr. Jones:** Cde. Chairman, that is the point. The Hon. Minister just indicated when he gets the information from the programme heads, but this was already written in the 2023 Budget. Therefore, there had to have been a programme submitted in order for this to be here. I cannot understand the Minister's explanation at all.

**Ms. Flue-Bess:** The same indicators, number three:

“3. Number of international cultural, youth and/or sporting events at which Guyana participated...”

I see it had 28 in 2022 and I am seeing 28 for 2023. Could the Hon. Minister say if these events were covered, all expenses, paid by your ministry?

**Mr. Ramson:** Most of these are catered for by the Ministry, but they are not any sort of expenses because they are usually virtual.

**Ms. Flue-Bess:** Could I ask the Hon. Minister to lay over a list of the 28 events that Guyana is expected to take part in this year? Thank you.

**Mr. Ramson:** Yes, sure.

*Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$389,142,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Estimates**

**Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$24,000,000**

**Mr. Figueira:** I do not know where in the project code this amount of money actually falls. There is a provision for \$60 million for musical instruments, furniture and equipment... [Mr.

**Hamilton:** You need to ask on a line item.] You need to be quiet. You are loquacious. My apologies. Project code 1205700 – Buildings: I recognised there is an allocation of \$20 million for extension of buildings. What level of extension will be added to this building?

**Mr. Ramson:** When you say, ‘level of extension’, do you mean if it is going to be one storey, two storey or three storey? Is that what you mean by ‘level of extension’?

**Mr. Figueira:** Is it to facilitate more staff? What is it for?

**Mr. Ramson:** You can ask that question, what is the purpose of the extension? The purpose of the extension is for accommodation as well as for storage. What has been happening at the Ministry is that we have been collecting a lot of paper for a lot of the work that we have been doing. It has been a struggle to keep, as we are required to do, the documents that form part of our records, especially when it comes to our audits and checking on items. We are essentially running out of space for storage, on one part, and then also to accommodate more persons at the compound.

*Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$24,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Estimates**

#### **Programme: 442 – Culture – \$1,222,135,000**

**Mr. Figueira:** Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: There is an allocation of \$200 million here. Could the Minister inform the Committee what the national and other events are? Could he disaggregate the five events that will garner most of the allocation?

**Mr. Ramson:** Most importantly, one of the things that we have to cater for this year is for Mashramani, and that is the float parade part of the national and other events that we take care of at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. You will see that there is an increase there, but there is also a number of other events that we do under Mashramani. Just so that I could assist the Committee, there are quite a few events that we are responsible for. One of the events is the flag raising ceremony. We also do the Calypso Junior and Senior Calypso Monarch. We also do the Junior and Senior Soca Monarch. We do the steel pan panorama. We do the Chutney Monarch. We are also having a folk Evening this year. There are a number of other events that are catered

for under this line item. We do the Guyana Talent Search. We also have religious events related to Phagwah, Arrival Day and Independence in May.

8.48 p.m.

In fact, you will remember that we held Independence last year in Region 2. It was the first time it was moved out of the Capital. This year, it will be moved out of the Capital again. It will be itinerant. It was a huge success for us to do that. We did the Enmore Martyrs. We also have a number of activities relating to Cricket Carnival, the One Guyana Festival and the Christmas Concert. [Mr. Mahipaul: Is it in Region 10 the Flag Raising will be?] Yes. [Mr. Mahipaul: I Will be coming to that one.] Those are some of the main national other events that we take care of.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Minister disaggregate this sum and tell us if the Institute of Creative Arts (ICA) is captured under this sum or where is it?

**Mr. Ramson:** The Hon. Member is correct. Just to give a fairly comprehensive answer to the question that was asked under 6284, Other, the allocation caters for the payment of technical and software services related to the Cultural and Creative Industries Registry and services related to the Accreditation. This is something that I want to stress on. The Institute of Creative Arts, which you spoke about a moment ago was created by the People's Progressive Party/Civic in 2012/2013. That was when we were in Government. During the time that the previous Administration, the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) was in Office, this Institute, after having been formed, the major issue that needed to be accomplished or the item to be accomplished objectively, was the accreditation of the Institute. During those five years, there had been no movement towards the accreditation of the Institute of Creative Arts.

This year, this line item also caters for the completion of the accreditation of the Institute of Creative Arts. [An Hon. Member: *Inaudible*] I am not finished as yet. We have already had engagement with the Ministry of Education – the department that is responsible for the accreditation. We have a timeline that leads towards the implementation. Just to complete, it also caters for the stipends that are part of the running of the Institute of Creative Arts and the engagement of the services related to that.

**Ms. Lewis-Singh:** A follow up: Clearly, the Minister has no understanding of what he is talking about. Sir, the Institute of Creative Arts, under the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government ...

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

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Yes, Sir. I am coming to the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please. If you ...

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** There is no legislation to establish the ICA.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I am still speaking.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Sorry, Sir. I did not ask my question. I am sorry. I need to ask my question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, she did not ask the question. She was ... That was the preamble.

**Mr. Ramson:** Okay, I understand.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you keep the commentary with respect to the preamble and towards the question, very succinct?

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Thank you, for your guidance, Mr. Chairman. The Institute of Creative Arts has to first be registered with the National Accreditation Council. That is the prequalification for accreditation. The National Accreditation Council does not do institutional accreditations. It does programme accreditations at this moment. The ICA could not have been registered all this time because there is no legislation in place that established the ICA. Could the Minister say to us in this Committee, when would the ICA be registered?

**Mr. Chairman:** Could it be put a different way? Does this sum cater for the consultancies to ensure it can qualify for registration?

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Sir, my question is for a specific time – when.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, but this has to be with respect to the allocation.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Yes, Sir. Thank you, for your guidance.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ramson:** I am very happy for the question. I am also happy to advise the Committee and the public because it is important that we get enough clarity from people who are not politicians but that we are getting the advice from technical people. Anyone can come and make statements about who does not know their work, and who does not have a clue about that. I can say that about you and social cohesion for a million days, every day for the rest of my life. I can come here and say that. It does not take us anywhere. However, let me advise you, since you do not know, that it is not a prerequisite for the legislation to be passed in order for it to be registered. In fact, the registration has already commenced. I have here the Director of Culture. She has just responded to know and I have had the meetings myself with her and our entire Culture Department, in relation to the accreditation. In fact, we have established a timeline and that is why I can speak with certainty. There will be the accreditation which will happen this year. The registration and accreditation will happen this year.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you very much, Cde. Chairman. I turn the Hon. Minister's attention to the Programme Performance Statement, which states at number one: "Number of cultural presentations and exhibitions held in 2022, 27 and 30 in 2023" to be exact, you are slated to host. Could you indicate to the Committee what are the three new activities that will be added?

**Mr. Ramson:** I just listed a number of events that are connected to there but I will give you a more comprehensive layout of those events – the three new ones.

**Mr. Jones:** Minister, the number of activities that you listed was under Policy Development and Administration. We are now on Culture, which is a different indicator.

**Mr. Ramson:** In 2021, you would find in our Capital Programme we did quite a bit of work to the Castellani House. What we are adding here specifically – the three new ones are the exhibitions, now that the work has been completed for Castellani House. That is the answer for the three additional events.

**Mr. Jones:** Could the Hon. Minister indicate at Number 5 where it states: "Updating the legal framework in the areas pertinent to the preservation and conservation of our heritage". In 2022,



there was none. This year you are listed to do same. What are those legal framework that you intend to update, as it relates to preservation and conservation of our heritage?

**Mr. Ramson:** That answer is the National Trust of Guyana.

**Mr. Jones:** Is that The National Trust legislation?

**Mr. Ramson:** Yes, legislation, the Act.

**Mr. Figueira:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Minister, I recognise that there is a contribution here of only \$1.5 million for the Theatre Guild of Guyana. You quoted Ms. Wright. I would like to quote what she said too. She said “You must always be a student of the craft”. My question to you is, given the fact that the Theatre Guild plays a pivotal role in the promotion and the enhancement of the cultural craft of a lot of young people in Guyana, could you explain why we have such a paltry allocation of only \$1.5 million, to the Theatre Guild?

**Mr. Ramson:** This is a subsidy that we give to the Theatre Guild. In the Institute of Creative Arts, we cater for the drama, as one of the areas as we do as part of the Institute. We actually do dance, music, drama and art. You heard of schools such as the Burrowes School of Art, the Dance school, the music school and Drama is one of the schools that we catered for. Under there, each head has a sum. I do not have the exact sum for each of the heads, but I remember it was about \$20 million we actually spent on drama for all of the teachers and the lecturers. The training is actually done at the National Cultural Centre (NCC). They have classes there.

**Mr. Figueira:** You mentioned Burrowes School of Art but I have not recognised any allocation there. Is that under the line item 6284, Other? More so, how much has been allocated to the School?

**Mr. Ramson:** I am advised that it stretched across many lines. There is payment of part-time workers and payment from field materials. There are a number of areas there. There are utilities, maintenance... There are a number of areas that we spend for the Institute on each of the schools.

**Mr. Figueira:** The United Nations (UN) has recognised slavery as the worst atrocity attributed to any human race. They have given recognition to the people of African descent. In the two years – 2021 and 2022 – each year was given \$100 million. I recognise that there is a \$0.00 allocation sum here. We are still recognising a Decade of People of African Descent. I am wondering why is it

that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport failed to give the Decade of People of African Descent an allocation?

**Mr. Ramson:** We here in the Government of Guyana share the view that the United Nations establishes. Just to be clear too, it was the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government who supported the establishment and the protocols that led to Decade of People of African Descent. To get to that point, one had to have the agreement. In any event, the money is catered for under line item 6294, Other. You heard the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance mentioned it in his Speech that it is catered for in line item 6294, Other, to support the groups that are related to the assembly of the International Decade of People of African Descent Assembly-Guyana (IDPADA-G).

9.03 p.m.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister made mention that the money is found under line item 6294 – Other. If my memory serves accurately that total figure is just over \$100 million. Could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregated sum or the amount going to IDPADA-G, or the groups who he has alluded to? Could he layover that information? Thank you.

**Mr. Ramson:** The sum that is allocated for that, Members will see that there is an increase there of \$104 million. The sum that is allocated there is \$100 million. Concerning the groups, I am not able to share that. I do not have that with me at the moment. In any event, to be clear, this will be done through wide consultation and the list will also come to the attention and approval of Cabinet.

**Mr. Figueira:** In proffering an explanation for this allocation, I heard the Minister saying that it will be going to the respective groups. Could the Minister provide us an understanding of why is it moving from this organised body who received it almost three consecutive years – \$100 million – now it is going to be disseminated to several groups? Is there a reason for that?

**Mr. Ramson:** I thank the Hon. Member for his question because it is a very important question for the country. The matter is in court so there is only so much that I can say because it is *sub judice*. I can say that from our analysis and based on the statements that were shared with us – when I say statements, I mean the financial statements that were shared with us – you have seen subsequent public statements being made that the administrative cost of that \$100 million was

approximately \$60 million, on just administrative alone. Now, we believe that the groups would be able to benefit because we want as many people as possible to benefit from this instead of just a few people.

**Mr. Figueira:** Concerning those groups who are likely to benefit, based on your explanation, one, they have not been identified. One would want to believe that the Ministry would have provided a criterion for interested groups to make an application to benefit from this allocation. Are there criteria outlined by the Ministry? **[Mr. McCoy: (Inaudible)]** Mr. Chairman, I crave your protection. This guy is very obnoxious.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, kindly allow the Member to ask his question. I cannot hear him properly.

**Mr. Figueira:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Is there criteria set out by the Ministry that interested groupings across the country can be *au fait* with what is required of them in order to benefit from this allocation?

**Mr. Ramson:** It is a good question. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. What I should advise the Hon. Member, is that the original assembly had many groups who were already established. There were many groups who formed the original assembly before the body moved into a much smaller group who was then incorporated – a private entity incorporated. Originally, there were many groups who created this body called IDPADA-G. It was an umbrella organisation that was called an assembly. Subsequently, somehow, this group created another body and it then formed a private company.

Many groups complained about their inaccessibility to the funding that the Government of Guyana made available for the purposes of what it was intended. The intention was to further cultural activities related to African-Guyanese and African cultural related activities. If that body had established itself for that purpose... We know that more than half of the allocation that was there was being spent for merely administration. We have the original list of groups who formed the Assembly. Those groups have already been in contact with us because they have registered a number of complaints. Subsequent to the passage of this Budget, we will reengage the groups and it will be done in a very open and transparent way. Based on the consultation that we would have, if it is decided that the expansion is necessary then the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, on

behalf of the Government of Guyana, will be making those criteria. If one is established based on the decision to expand, we will make it public.

**Mr. Figueira:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Minister inform the Committee, what are some of the training his Ministry will be embarking on and in which category will this training be done?

**Mr. Ramson:** This line item caters to a very important initiative for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports that has brought tremendous benefit to the cultural and creative industries especially to a lot of the young people who are connected to the cultural and creative industries. I am sure the Hon. Member have seen that, in the last two years, the Ministry put out applications for cultural and creative industries grant. We have had tremendous response to it, and we have also had a tremendous level of success, good outcomes and the preservation of culture in relation to many areas. That is one of the areas that is captured there. There is \$30 million that is set aside for just the cultural and creative industries grant. Occasionally, we have been publishing a number of success stories that are related to that on our page where many of the young persons – the awardees – had spoken, put on many of the displays and the products that came out of it. It is captured under that line item. We are also going to be having a mentorship programme for the awardees who are captured under that line item as well.

One of the new programmes that we did last year which was very well attended and hugely successful, is our Youth Culture Camp (YCC). That is something that we worked with at the National Trust. We worked with the youth department and it was, obviously, led by the culture department. It is an initiative that we put, as a new initiative, where young people coming out of school, during the break from school, they were able to be part of all the areas of culture. They were also able to have tours of our heritage sites where they can have the expedition and learn about a lot of the monuments that are important to our heritage. It was a huge success and now we are going to expand it. That is why you see an additional allocation there too.

*Programme: 442 – Culture – \$1,222,135,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, there is 11 minutes remaining on this head.

## **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 442 – Culture – \$198,455,000**

*Programme: 442 – Culture – \$198,455,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 443 – Youth – \$860,187,000**

*Programme: 443 – Youth – \$860,187,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 443 – Youth – \$100,000,000**

*Programme: 443 – Youth – \$100,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Let me formally recognise former Parliamentary Secretary (PS) and Member of the House, the honourable Mr. Steve Ninvalle.

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 444 – Sports – \$912,042,000**

**Mr. Figueira:** Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Minister provide us an explanation in regard to this allocation? What are those national and other events this allocation caters for?

*9.18 p.m.*

**Mr. Ramson:** This line item caters for any events the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport hosts at its facilities that need support to assist with the hosting of the events. Just to assist with naming a few so that you could have an idea about this, because it is not hosting a national event like Remembrance Day or Independence Day but for all of the events. For example, let us say, for the track at Leonora, many times the sports associations would come and say that they need some assistance with tents, tables, chairs, *et cetera*, for the hosting of its activities, and we will support that. Now, because we have an expanded programme for all of our facilities; tracks, the aquatic centre, the Guyana National Stadium, *et cetera*, we have been able to give them that sort of support so that it could host its activities. That is what this line item caters to. What we are also catering

for under this line item which is important and just for the sake of the Hon. Member, who I am sure would want to know as well, is for the Aliann Pompey race that is scheduled to take place around July of this year. Ms. Pompey and I have already had some discussions about preliminary dates for the event. It is a very important event. We were unable to have it last year. The track had deteriorated to a point where it could not be recognised and had deteriorated outside of the warranty period. The deterioration started during the warranty period. In fact, I saw that the previous Minister made a statement about it but did not make the claim that we could have had the track repaired during that time. Those are some of the events that cater for under this line item.

**Mr. Figueira:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: recognising the bulk of this allocation that goes to the National Sports Commission. Could the Hon. Minister give a synopsis of the role the Commission will play with regard to this significant allocation?

**Mr. Ramson:** Is the question, what role the Commission plays?

**Mr. Figueira:** What is the added role the Commission will play?

**Mr. Ramson:** I do not understand the question.

**Mr. Figueira:** The Commission has a number of responsibilities. This allocation has significantly increased. Is this increase a result of more responsibility that the Commission will be taking on this year?

**Mr. Ramson:** It is not really more responsibility but more activities. The allocation that you see there is \$450 million. The allocation that is there is under the recurrent side, that is where there is a significant increase, but the significant increase is based on the fact that in addition to some of the other expenditures that are recurrent. When we launched the National Sports Academy, we said it would have three pillars. I made the presentation publicly. I published it online and in the media. It would have three pillars. The first pillar is the nursery. For the nursery programme, we have to support the coaching for all of the 12 core sports, 10 or 11 of core sports. In addition, we have to purchase field materials connected to running the National Sports Academy.

The second pillar is the tournaments. This year it is going to be one of the prime additions to our calendar. One will see, coming out in the next few days, which was just discussed at our sports conference, published on our page and in the newspapers for the first time, a calendar of

tournaments/events for the entire year. In preparation for the second pillar of the National Sports Academy, we asked all of the 12 core sports to send in their tournaments before the year ended so that we could get this in preparation. Now, we will have that published for the first time so that anyone can go on our page, in the newspapers and media, and view it. Persons will be able to see the major sporting events happening this month and where they will be held so they can attend, and everybody could be aware that these tournaments are happening. It moves in a progressive way. It culminates each one of the 12 core sports into a national final, a national version of that. Thank you.

**Mr. Figueira:** The respective sporting organisations will be furnishing the Ministry with their calendar of activities and not necessarily tournaments but leagues and such like. That is the understanding I am trying to get from you. Additionally, regarding the National Sports Academy, I want to have a sense of how it will be facilitated. Are we going to have certified coaches for all of the respective levels, and besides the coaches, what other technical personnel will be associated with the National Sports Academy? Are we going to have physiotherapists and nutritionists because there are different techniques these foundation athletes will have to learn as they gradually go phase by phase in the development of learning each respective sport? I am trying to get a sense of what is your understanding or what is the Ministry's position with regards to this academy.

**Mr. Ramson:** We have spoken about this publicly, but I would like to furnish the Hon. Member with the information. To support our nurseries, we had to hire certified coaches. Those coaches came from the recommendation of the sports associations, and that is how we were able to find the coaches that were suitable for the nurseries. They are now hired to support the nursery. In addition, for the nursery of the National Sports Academy, we have also given it additional personnel, for example, the organisers. The organisers play a supporting role in each of the core sports.

Thirdly, just to add on the personnel side, I have had a very fruitful engagement with the army now we are expanding. It is currently putting together its list of military personnel with backgrounds in particular sports that will assist each of the core sports. This is on the coaching and the supporting staff. In relation to all of the areas that require additional support that is tangential to the development of talent, specifically outside of cricket, basketball, or football talent, we have already hired a sports Psychologist. One heard the Director of Sport who spoke publicly about this.

In addition, we also have a Physiotherapist. He raised an important point in relation to nutrition. This was one of the items discussed, specifically, at the sports conference, which was streamed so that the National Assembly and the public are advised. We streamed those panels. One of the panels covered, amongst other things, nutrition, of which we had a nutritionist on the panel. What we decided coming out of that was there would be workshops for all of the sports associations and athletes but would cater, specifically, to the sport and not just nutritionists speaking, generally. That was one of the issues identified during our discussion. It is not speaking about nutrition generally, where it states that one needs his/her macronutrients and some carbohydrate, protein, fruits, and water. It is a more general training that athletes will need as part of the workshop. It is an engagement that we are going to have with the health department. We are going to state this is what specifically we are looking for. If it is unable to do it, then we will outsource it. It is far more specific when it comes to each sport and each area a person will be pursuing for a sport. For example, the type of diet that one will have in general while he/she is training is not the same type of diet that he/she will have while performing. On the day of the performance, his/her diet is going to be a different diet from the night before when he/she goes for his/her tournament. That is the level of detail and focus on the science preparation part of sport and talent development.

**Mr. Chairman:** Before the Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira ask his next question, we are just a few minutes over. Let us see if we could quickly conclude these.

**Mr. Figueira:** Let us go to the other part.

*Programme: 444 – Sports – \$912,042,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 444 – Sports – \$ 3,400,000,000**

**Mr. Figueira:** Project code 4506400 – Grounds Enhancement Programme: With regards to this programme, Hon. Minister, could you state if this allocation will be utilised at the grounds that were already given some upgrade last year as a means to enhance the upgrading to a much higher degree or will it be new grounds identified for this upgrade and what level of upgrading will this allocation be for those identified grounds? Is it fence, *et cetera*? What is the thinking with regards to upgrading these grounds?



**Mr. Ramson:** The Grounds Enhancement Programme has been a very important programme to us. We have seen some tremendous results. Some of the grounds will need some additional support because the allocations that we have for the grounds, may still need some finishing up sort of work to complete the facility. So, the answer to the question in relation to this allocation which is a block figure is that there will be some new grounds. In fact, there will be many new grounds but there will still be some outstanding work that needs to be completed based on the work already done. Some of the facilities may need just some finishing up and touching up projects to complete and hand it back over to the community.

**Mr. Figueira:** With regards to the upgrading, would any of the grounds that need touching up and such, like, cater for all-weather grounds, and if so, would it be reflected in all 10 of the Administrative Regions? Why I state, specifically, all-weather grounds because it is of the climatic conditions which we experienced. We do not want the sport to be hampered from its continuation if these facilities are not upgraded.

**Mr. Ramson:** The answer to the question is both yes and no because there are some parts of what we are doing that will cater for an all-weather type of scenario.

*9.33 p.m.*

For example, if we do an area, let us use Mocha. We recently just completed building a new court for them using the official size. We are about to install the basketball hoops, and we are finishing up the ground as well. It is going to be extremely difficult for the ground—when I say the ground meaning the earth—to turn that into an all-weather facility. At the same time, in some areas, depending on what exists and the different types of sports being played, there will be a facility or a component of the facility that is all-weather. What is an all-weather ground in this situation, meaning earth? You currently have one, which is at the National Stadium. There is no other ground in this country where we have an all-weather ground where if it rains today, 20 minutes from now, you could go and play. The only problem is that to go and do something like that requires massive amounts of work. What the Hon. Member should know is that is what is being done at McKenzie in Linden in Region 10. That is also being done in Anna Regina in Region 2. That is also being done at Albion in Region 6. It is a cost factor in relation to this particular head, but for all of the

stadiums that we are doing, and there are many stadiums that we are doing right now that there will be the all-weather capability at those grounds.

**Mr. Figueira:** Thank you for your indulgence. Multipurpose sporting facility and you mentioned the McKenzie sports club. Could you say if there is an identified timeline for the completion of this facility? As well as, you mentioned stadium, what would be the seating capacity when the multipurpose facility has been completed?

**Mr. Ramson:** For which one are we talking about?

**Mr. Figueira:** It is for McKenzie.

**Mr. Ramson:** I said this when you had not arrived as yet. There are some details that I am unable to share at this point. We are in a very short period of time; in a matter of months, I will be able to share those details. We are advancing the work for completion. In terms of timeline as well, I will be able to share that at that time. It is just a matter of months we will be able to share that type of information with the House.

**Mr. Figueira:** With regard to the McKenzie sports club facility, which was already a multipurpose facility, given this upgrade and the fact that one cannot provide certain information now, my question is if all of the sporting discipline that the club facilitated then before this upgrade— if all of those facilities— and even more will be accommodated or will there be a diminished amount of sporting disciplines that the facility used to cater for? Would there be a reduced amount or will there be an increase with this new update? [An Hon. Member: I do not know]

**Mr. Ramson:** The Attorney General is answering for me.

**Mr. Chairman:** He has to be in the seat to answer for you.

**Mr. Ramson:** I am not quite sure that it was a legal matter, but the answer is that we are aiming to have increased number of facilities.

*Programme: 444 – Sports – \$3,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, let us thank the Hon. Minister, former Parliamentary Secretary and the staff of the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport for taking us through that agency.

*Assembly resumed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we are back in the Assembly. I will ask the Hon. Prime Minister to move the adjournment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do now adjourn to 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2022.”

*[Prime Minister]*

**Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]:** Mr. Speaker, I asked that we adjourn until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

*Motion put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, the House stands adjourned until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow.

*Adjourned accordingly at 9.40 p.m.*