



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 (2020-2024) 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

89TH Sitting

Wednesday, 27TH November, 2024

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

The Assembly convened at 2.24 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

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

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (38)

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

Prime Minister (1)

+ Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Anthony Phillips, M.S.S., M.P.,
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Vice-President (1)

+ Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P.,
*Vice-President,
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Georgetown.*

[Absent – on leave]

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (1)

+ Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, M.P.,
*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs,
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+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Speaker**

Senior Ministers (16)

+ Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.,
(Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni),
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance,
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance.
Government Chief Whip,
Office of the Presidency,
New Garden Street,
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+ Hon. Hugh H. Todd, M.P.,
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation,
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+*Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.,
Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance
and the Public Service,
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+ Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.S., J.P., M.P.,
Minister of Public Works,
Ministry of Public Works,
Wight's Lane,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

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

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

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

* **Non-Elected Minister**

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Ministry of Agriculture,
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Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,
Lot 251-252 Thomas & Quamina Streets,
South Cummingsburg,
Georgetown.

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

+ Hon. Vickram Outar Bharrat, M.P.,
Minister of Natural Resources,
Ministry of Natural Resources,
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+*Hon. Oneidge Walrond, M.P.,
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+ Hon. Collin D. Croal, M.P.,
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Ministry of Housing and Water,
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+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Charles S. Ramson, M.P.,
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Ministry of Public Works,
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Georgetown.

Hon. Anand Persaud, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,
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+ **Cabinet Member**

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* Hon. Mr. Vikash Ramkissoon, M.P.,
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[Virtual Participation]

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South Central,
Rupununi.
(Culvert City Lethem)

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Hon. Ms. Juretha V. Fernandes, M.P.,
Lot 1282 Block EE,
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[Virtual Participation]

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Hon. Mr. Haimraj B. Rajkumar, M.P.,
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(Region # 2 Essequibo Coast).*

Hon. Ms. Nima N. Flue-Bess, M.P.,
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*Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
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Port Mourant, Corentyne Berbice.*

Hon. Ms. Maureen A. Philadelphia, M.P.,
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Hon. Ms. Beverley Alert, M.P.,
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Lot 4 Public Road,
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West Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Devin L. Sears, M.P.,
*(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),
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(ii) A New and United Guyana, Liberty and Justice Party and The New Movement (ANUG, LJP & TNM) (1)

Hon. Dr. Asha Kisooson, M.P.,
*Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly,
Lot 855, 3rd Field,
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Greater Georgetown.*

[Virtual Participation]

Officers (2)

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Clerk of the National Assembly,
Parliament Office,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

Ms. Hermina Gilgeours,
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly,
Parliament Office,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

Hansard Division Officers (16)

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Chief Editor

Ms. Marlyn Jeffers-Morrison,
Senior Editor

Ms. Shawnel Cudjoe,
Senior Editor

Ms. Shevona Telford,
Senior Editor

Ms. Carol Bess,
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Ms. Indranie Persaud,
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Ms. Lushonn Bess,
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Ms. Roseina Singh,
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Ms. Eyoka Gibson,
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Mr. Daniel Allen,
Reporter

Ms. Rajkumarie Ramdeen,
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Reporter

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Mr. Saeed Umrao,
Audio Technician

Mr. Daison Horsham,
Audio Technician

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ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Token to symbolise the visit by His Excellency, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, you all have envelopes in front of you. On behalf of the Clerk, our staff and on my own behalf, it is another little memento from the visit of His Excellency, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) Audited Financial Statements of the Public Procurement Commission for the years ending 31st December, 2022 and 2023.

[Speaker of the National Assembly]

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[For Written Replies]

Hon. Members, there is one question only for written replies on today's Order Paper. The question is in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. Sinclair and it is for the Hon. Minister of Education. The answer to this question has been received and has, therefore, in accordance with our Standing Orders, been circulated.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Sinclair:

- (a) Can the Minister inform the National Assembly how many teachers in Regions (1-10), Net salary per month is less than One Hundred and Fifty Thousand (\$150,000) for Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools?
- (b) Can the Minister also inform the National Assembly how many teachers in Regions (1-10), Net salary per month is more than One Hundred and Fifty Thousand (\$150,000) but less than Two Hundred Thousand (\$200,000) for Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools?
- (c) Can the Minister further inform the National Assembly how many teachers in Regions (1-10), Net salary per month is more than Two Hundred Thousand (\$200,000) but less than Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand (\$250,000) for Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools?

The answers were not circulated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read for the first time:

Apostille Bill 2024 – Bill No.19/2024

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to implement the Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents done at the Hague on the 5th day of October 1961 and for connected matters.”

[Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation]

Security Interest In Movable Property Bill 2024 – Bill No.20/2024

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the creation and registration of security interests in movable property and for related matters.”

[Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will resolve itself into the Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No.3/2024. I think we all would need a few moments to get on the same page.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Motion

Consideration of Financial Paper No. 3/2024 – Current Estimate

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No.3 of 2024 – Supplementary Estimate (Current) totalling four hundred and fifty-six million, eight hundred and fifty-one thousand, eight hundred and forty-five dollars (\$456,851,845) – Advances made from the Contingency Fund for the period 2024-11-07 to 2024-11-22.”

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

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service [Dr. Singh]: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In accordance with article 171(2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly, the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No.3/2024 – Supplementary Estimate (Current) advances made from the Contingency Fund totalling \$456,851,845 for the period 7th to 22nd November, 2024. I now move the motion.

Motion proposed.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Let us have a few moments so that we can have in place the staff who are defending with their Minister. We will go through as usual, line by line. Mr. Mahipaul has just brought to my attention that he has not seen the answer to the question that I said was circulated. We will rectify that during the course of our examination of the Financial Papers before us. We are now at Financial Paper No. 3. I may need a hard copy; mine came out garbled. Minister Teixeira, if you are answering, you need to go into the well.

Current Expenditure

Item 1: 01-014 Office of the President – Public Policy and Planning – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$26,449,631

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Lawrence, you have the floor.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, I note there was an increase of some \$67 million from 2023 to 2024 in the voted provision for the budget. You have come here now to ask for \$26 million, having indicated that it is for the provision of additional resources for the operations of the Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest). Could the Minister kindly tell the Committee what is urgent about this expenditure and, also, what aspect of operation expenditures we are talking about?

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I see that you are wearing some very fancy clothes these days. I have to ask where your wardrobe is coming from. With regard to the question with GO-Invest, first of all, you are right; there was a budgetary allocation increase over 2023. With regard to the \$26 million and the breakdown of it, I would like to provide that information.

The Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo was budgeted for, but there were additional costs involved. That is approximately \$4,800,882. For the Agro Fest, money was budgeted for it, but there were additional costs involved. The \$4,646,749 is to cover the additional cost for the Agro Fest. There were some contributions from some organisations of \$1.8 million, but it still left a deficit of \$4.6 million. At the time of putting in the budget for 2024, GO-Invest had wanted to cover the cost of audits that were outstanding. However, it was able to get a cost only after the budget was passed. So, it has put in \$5 million to cover its audits for 2019 and 2020. The Caribbean Investment Forum was not budgeted for. Therefore, it was an important, new intervention by GO-Invest to attract more investment to Guyana. They used \$12 million for the Caribbean Investment Forum, which was not budgeted for in the 2024 Budget. The total should come up to \$26,449,631.

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Minister, you indicated there were two programmes – the Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo and the Agro Fest – which were under-budgeted. Could you kindly tell the Committee what expenses were under budgeted or not budgeted for those two activities?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mdm. Lawrence. The additional money requested for the Agro Fest relates to coordinating the exhibition space regarding the number of booths which were increased. For the agro-tourism connect meetings, there were transportation issues as well as logistics.

2.39 p.m.

Due to certain increases, they did spend more than what was allocated. Please also remember the Agro Fest that we are talking about is the one that was held in Barbados. That was for the transportation for the delegation of the various people involved. Also, I am advised that this included freight forwarding on logistics of the exhibition items. They had to pay for freight forwarding for the items that were sent from Guyana for the exhibition.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member on that very line item, I heard you state that the Agro Fest was held out of country, but there was the Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo that was held inland. As far as I am aware, at that Conference, businesses rented booths and had their different products on show. Could you say to the honourable Committee, firstly, how many booths there were and, secondly, what was the cost for each booth? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: I think we are getting some things mixed up. With regard to the Agro Fest, one was in Barbados, and one was here. The Guyana Energy Conference was held here. We were not the coordinating body for the Guyana Energy Conference, but GO-Invest was identified as the lead Government agency for this in terms of coordinating the Government to involve and [*inaudible*].

These costs that have been placed here include, for example, the extension of the services of GO-Invest to assist with the agriculture village that was located in the parking lot of the Guyana Marriott Hotel during the event, which was beyond what was originally planned for. In addition to that, the agency was asked to stay on for two subsequent events – the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government Meeting and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) meetings which were held in February as well. These were additional requests and tasks that were given that were beyond what was planned for in *Budget 2024*, in terms of GO-Invest's participation or involvement in the Guyana Energy Conference.

Item 1: 01-014 Office of the President – Public Policy and Planning – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$26,449,631 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 1: 01-015 Office of the President – Environmental Management and Compliance – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$58,000,000.

Ms. Lawrence: With regard to this \$58 million that she is seeking for the Protected Areas Commission (PAC), could the Hon. Minister tell the Committee what aspects of operations she talking about? Is it that we underestimated for the programmes set out for the year, or are these new programmes that came on stream during the year?

Ms. Teixeira: These are not new aspects but are a continuation and implementation of the expansion of the programmes for the Protected Areas Commission, based on their new management plans that they have developed for Shell Beach and the protected area in the Kanuku Mountains. They are also in the process of doing it for the Kaieteur National Park and Kanashen. This has led to new forestations, for example, that were established. They had to look at deploying new monitoring groups in relation to the giant river otter and the river turtle in the Rupununi. They have hired more rangers for this year.

They have also five fully furnished research and monitoring stations, three outposts and a site level office funded through

the German Development Bank. These must all be effectively occupied and operational. To maintain a complement of rangers at each site, they had to hire more people this year in order to make sure the areas were properly covered. This is part of the expansion of the National Protected Area System (NPAS). They will double the protected areas by the end of this year to 17.4%. Just to give you an idea of the number, they have increased the number of rangers. This year, they have hired an additional 12 to be able to cover the new sites that have been completed to do their monitoring and data collection, *et cetera*.

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Minister, with regards to protecting our animals – those that you mentioned – they have been on the endangered list for some time. It could not have happened a couple of months ago. It was before the 2024 Budget. Building these three new stations would have been in the 2024 Budget. So, once you knew that the completion date was going to be in 2024, one would have expected that when you budgeted, you would have budgeted also to fill the vacancies for those persons who would need to manage those stations. Why is it coming here now and coming out of the Contingency Fund in a supplemental and was not catered for in the 2024 Budget?

Ms. Teixeira: I think the Hon. Members may be familiar with there being a number of local and international partners and stakeholders involved with the Protected Areas Commission. Guyana's role, in particular, has to do with monitoring activities, environmental pressures and threats. Whilst it may be that they did not calculate that they needed 12 more rangers, as the work progressed, they did not want to hold it up because they did not budget for it. It is not impossible to request a supplementary to allow them to do what is required under the Protected Areas Commission Act.

The technical teams are from the Protected Areas Commission and the rangers have been involved in activities such as camera trapping, fish surveys, water sampling, patrols and bird surveys. These are all parts of the monitoring of the Protected Areas Commission. I think sometimes when we think of protected areas, we think of areas that we just lock off and say that nothing goes on there and that is what is declared. A very important component of the Protected Areas Commission is monitoring by going in and making sure that there is no illegal activity since there are people who will try to do that from time to time. They also monitor the actual wildlife there to see that it is not under threat, *et cetera*, and also create a database so we would know exactly what we have in the protected areas.

The furnished research and monitoring stations I referred to and the three outposts and site level office are all finished. Therefore, it was important not only to have the offices occupied, which I referred to, but to have the rangers going in more often. For example, at the Kaieteur National Park, it used to be 18 weeks in and two weeks out. Now, it is six weeks in and two weeks out. So, they are going in more frequently into the Kaieteur National Park so the costs are higher. It is not just about the rangers but also the cost of transportation, logistics and so on. For Shell Beach, it was 24 weeks in and eight weeks out, particularly focused on the period when the turtles were nesting on the beach. Now, it is three weeks in and one week out at the research and monitoring stations.

I think this shows a much more proactive Protected Areas Commission. Therefore, it is not something that we should not support. It is very important in terms of reporting to be able to say what is going on in the protected areas so that we are able to ensure that the wildlife there, like the flora and fauna, are all in a healthy state. For example, the Kanuku Mountains, it is three weeks in and one week out. More frequent visits and more frequent monitoring are very important. That contributed to the cost going up as well, not only with the number of rangers but also the number of visits, monitoring, data collection, and the rangers that have been hired in 2024, *et cetera*. Of course, in 2025, they are intending to hire more.

Ms. Lawrence: Hon. Minister, could you kindly tell us how much of the \$58 million will go towards these 12 rangers and what period is it for?

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry. I did not hear the last part.

Ms. Lawrence: With regard to the period of payment, would it be from September to December, October to December or from 1st to 31st December?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much. I am taking advice from the experts of the PAC, Mr. Duncan. Mr. Duncan, please take it easy. It is too early in the day to get revved up. I do not want your pressure to go up, sir. I am being advised by the experts. I know nothing about some of these things. I confess. So, in response to Ms. Lawrence, the period that you are asking about is from September to December and the percentage with regard to the costs of the rangers, *et cetera* is 75% out of the \$58 million.

Item 1: 01-015 Office of the President – Environmental Management and Compliance – Subsidies and Contributions

to Local Organisations – \$58,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister and staff.

Item 2: 40-404 Ministry of Education – Primary Education – Security Services – \$31,888,080

Ms. Lawrence: Could the Minister state what is the increase? Sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Let us give the Hon. Minister and her staff... I think we have to go through primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, are you saying that you are going to put all three? That would be very good.

Mr. Chairman: No. We are taking the first one, but I am just trying to get all the staff together.

Ms. Lawrence: You could have put all three.

Mr. Chairman: We can put all three.

Ms. Lawrence: Yes, please.

Item 2: 40-404 Ministry of Education – Primary Education – Security Services – \$31,888,080

Item 2: 40-405 Ministry of Education – Secondary Education – Security Services – \$67,086,181

Item 2: 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – Security Services – \$20,309,261

Mr. Chairman: We are taking three items. Go ahead, Hon. Member, Ms. Lawrence.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister kindly indicate what period this increase is for and what is the percentage of increase? Is it an increase on the hourly rate? Is it an increase in the number of security guards at these institutions and would this provide 24 hours service to the schools?

2.54 p.m.

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: Thank you, very much, for the questions. At some institutions, there is an increase in the number of guards at the schools. It does cater for 24-hour security. It also caters for the increase in rates. The fourth question, I think, you had was what period. It was for the period 2024.

Ms. Lawrence: Minister, are you indicating that this increase is for the entire year of 2024?

Ms. Manickchand: It is for a projection of what will be owed for the rest of the year.

Ms. Lawrence: It is coming from the Contingency Fund, Minister. They have to properly advise you.

Ms. Manickchand: It has not been spent as yet.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I am asking whether the Minister could lay over the answer to my questions. The question is, do these provisions provide for increase in the number of security guards and if so, how many? Could the Minister state whether these security guards are there for a 24-hour period or a 12-hour period? Could the Minister also indicate what period these moneys in a total of \$119.283 million will be spent for?

Ms. Manickchand: The questions have been asked and answered but I would be happy to answer again. This caters for more security guards. It caters for an increase in rates. For the 'how many', we are dealing with three programmes here. There are about 33 primary schools, 33 secondary schools and another set of post-secondary schools. If you want us to go through programme by programme...

Mr. Chairman: I would, because the Hon. Member has asked that you lay over them. We are here. Let us get the totals for each.

Ms. Manickchand: I am advised that to be able to get the number of the increase of guards, they would have to calculate that, so we would be happy to lay it over.

Ms. Lawrence: Could we have the answers to the other parts of the question laid over too because that will go in terms of the number of guards?

Ms. Manickchand: Sure.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I have one other question to the Minister. These increases in the numbers of guards, is it with a new guard service? Are there new contracts? Are there continuation of the same contracts and we are having addendum?

Ms. Manickchand: When we prepared the budget at the Ministry – I say the word 'we' loosely because the technicians do that – and submitted it, in January, we signed contracts. The rates in January were different from the rates offered when we went to the budget. All of the security contracts, say one, which is for the exams division, have been publicly tendered and publicly awarded through the

National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) in accordance with the Procurement Act. We did not have contracts prior to that. There was no renewal of a contract. It is based on the contract signed in January for the same schools with new rates. That is the issue.

Mr. Mahipaul: For the Ministry of Education, the sum for security services under all of the programmes accumulated to \$1,142,290,000 in the 2024 Budget. On the website of NPTAB, there were contracts awarded. The sum of those contracts awarded is \$946,893,485. Sir, the amount that was budgeted in 2024 versus the amount that was towards the contracts awarded to Atlas Security Service Incorporated, Homesafe Security, Hoosein's Security Service Incorporated, RK's Guyana Security Services and Queensway Security Service Incorporated, there is a positive difference of \$195,396,515. May I ask the Minister, given that the sum is spread across the programmes, why is there a need for an additional \$119 million, given that you have that excess when you could have facilitated virements to meet the cost?

Ms. Manickchand: It is a good question. I am being advised that the answer remains that the increase in rates and the increase in the number of guards would cater or account for the increase that is needed. That is assuming two things: one, you have correctly interpreted what is on that website and you have counted all; and two, the website actually has all the accurate information. I cannot speak to that, but the Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibilities for Finance and the Public Service would have to speak to that.

Mr. Mahipaul: Contracts were signed between the Ministry of Education and Atlas Security Service Incorporated for \$275 million; Homesafe Security for \$250 million; Hossain's Security Service Incorporated for \$223 million; RK Guyana Security Services for \$69 million; Queensway Security Service Incorporated for \$131 million for the period. For that entire period, the contract sum was \$946.893 million. May I ask the Hon. Minister, what is the reason, for you to request \$119.283 million, when in your budget there is an aggregated total of \$1.142 billion? Sir, may I further ask the Minister, if she is going to request this sum of money? In fact, the Minister has already requested it and spent it, because the Paper that is guiding us says that this covers the period from 7th November, 2024, to 22nd November, 2024, and we are on 27th November, so this money is already spent. The Minister has spent it out but, based on the figures we have here, you will be returning money to the Consolidated Fund under the security charges.

Why did you not facilitate the virement of money from one programme to the next within your Ministry, which is permitted by the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA)?

Ms. Manickchand: The increase in rates is not reflected in the sum signed. You said, ‘it is already spent’; I would say, ‘committed’, because we have guards at schools from 7th November to now. When the security companies requested payment, they added, as far as I am told, charges for value-added tax (VAT) that were not catered for in their contracts. There is essentially an increase in the amount that has to be paid by the Ministry to the security company to be remitted to the Government. Perhaps, that is something we have to look at. Do we want government agencies to be paying VAT? As it stands now, that is what it is, as far as my advice goes.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, based on the answers provided by the Hon. Minister, clearly the contracts that are reflected on NPTAB’s website with that figure are not accurate, because the Minister indicated that there are some changes that have caused the Ministry to now request approximately \$119 million. May I ask the Hon. Minister, what are the accurate sums associated with each company who the Government is in contract with? There is a company who is in the public’s space, Centaur Investments Incorporated, where the allegation is that the Minister has some ties to the company. May I ask the Hon. Minister, if indeed this company is in receipt of a contract from her Ministry and, if so, what is the sum? For the respective companies who have contracts with the Ministry, could the Minister say what are the sums and the names of the companies? Do not lie.

Ms. Manickchand: I have a rule, that one deals with the message and not the messenger. I am sorely tempted here to break my own rule but I would not.

Mr. Chairman: Do not do that.

Ms. Manickchand: The Hon. Member stood in this House and said he read from a website that he is relying on the various names of contracted security companies from the Ministry of Education and the Hon. Member asked us to treat that as truth. The Hon. Member did not call Centaur Investments Incorporated. He did not call that name; yet the Hon. Member stands here to ask me something he already knows. Thus, I will answer you. I think it is important for us to examine this properly. Bringing into this House the *koka-top gyaff* that is now allowed on social media – because of

freedoms – might be something we want to guard against, but I will answer very clearly.

After I saw that myself, I inquired as to the ownership of Centaur Investments Incorporated, or contour, and it is owned by a young Guyanese of African descent named Mr. Quacy Munroe. We are very happy in the People’s Progressive Party/Civic Government to offer opportunities for growth and thriving to young Guyanese of all ethnicities and, particularly, of African descent.

3.09 p.m.

I have no ties to any security company anywhere in this country – none. Neither me, my husband, my brother, my sister nor my parents who are dead – none; absolutely none. The other question that you asked is whether or not the Ministry of Education has awarded any contracts through, of course, the NPTAB to that company. I am happy to tell you that although I would have no problems awarding any contract to anybody who has bid and won the bid, this company has never been given any contract from the Ministry of Education while I was the Minister of Education. Do you have any other questions?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, do you have any other questions?

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the fundamental question was not answered which is, there are clearly changes to the figures that are on NPTAB’s website that you indicated now cater for VAT and the likes. The figures that are on NPTAB’s website which accumulates to more than \$900 million has changed and now \$1.142 billion is no longer sufficient, which is why you need an addition of more than \$119 million. I am asking you to provide this House with the figures that have changed. No longer is ATLAS Security \$275 million as is reflected on the NPTAB’s website. It is a new number. What is that number? No longer is Home Safe Security \$250 million. It is a new figure. What is the new figure? Hoosein’s Security Service Incorporated is no longer \$223 million. What is the new figure? RK Guyana Security Services is no longer \$69 million. What is the new figure? Queensway Security Service Incorporated is no longer \$131 million. What is the new figure? I just wanted to know if you had any ties because that information is in the public’s space.

Ms. Manickchand: Now that you know I do not, do you have anything to say, being an Hon. Member and all?

Mr. Mahipaul: I was merely asking, Mr. Chairman. I saw something in the public space. I was attracted to public ...

Ms. Manickchand: I see a lot of things in the public's space. This is an honourable House, young Mr. Mahipaul, Hon. Member. You do not bring the street corner *gyaff* in here.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please. You can take that line of answering outside of the House. Right now, ...

[Noisy interruption]

[Mr. Chairman stood.]

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I am on my feet.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member should retract his earlier statement before we go forward.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister Ms. Teixeira, I am on my feet.

Ms. Teixeira: He should retract it, Sir, before he is allowed to ask any other question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister Ms. Teixeira, I am on my feet. Hon. Members, I am not going to tolerate any breakdown in this aspect of our session this afternoon. We have seen absolute disregard by two Hon. Members in this House. When a Speaker is on his feet, everyone sits and shut up. I think I have the privilege and luxury of using that word.

[Mr. Chairman resumed his Chair.]

Hon. Members, I now put the question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, there is a question...

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

Mr. Mahipaul: There is a question on the floor, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: ...the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul is clearly on a different path than what we are here for.

Item 2: 40-404 Ministry of Education – Primary Education – Security Services – \$31,888,080 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2: 40-405 Ministry of Education – Secondary Education – Security Services – \$67,086,181 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2: 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – Security Services – \$20,309,261 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much, Hon. Minister and your staff, for taking us through this item. Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, the next items are for Regions 1 and 6.

Item 3: 71-713 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$103,133,744

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. Could the Hon. Minister provide additional information with respect to the number of schools in Region 1 and other educational buildings that will benefit from this increased sum? Could the Hon. Minister also give a breakdown with respect to those buildings in the Moruca and Matarkai sub-regions?

The third question is, could the Hon. Minister also provide information with respect to the names of these companies and whether these buildings will benefit from 24-hour security? Are there increased security at the schools especially because I do know that some schools have just one security, even though they are very large buildings and several buildings in one compound? Thank you.

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Ms. Parag]: Thank you very much, Hon. Member, for the questions. There has been an increase and we have the breakdown. There are the Learning Resource Centre at Mabaruma, North West Secondary dormitory; Port Kaituma Teachers' Quarters; Port Kaituma Secondary School; Santa Rosa Secondary School; Bunbury Nursery School; Hosororo Nursery School; Mabaruma Nursery School; Sheba Nursery School; Whitewater Nursery School; Kwebanna Nursery School; Santa Rosa Nursery School; Haimacabra Nursery School; Port Kaituma Nursery School; Pakera Nursery School; Canal Bank Nursery School; Four Miles Nursery School; Mabaruma Primary School; Hosororo Primary School; Wauna Primary School; Tobago Primary School; White Water Primary School; Peter and Paul Primary School; Hobodia Primary School; Unity Square Primary School; St. Cyprian's Primary School; Koberimo Primary School; St. John's Primary School; Hotoquai Primary School; Kamo Primary School; St. Dominic's Primary School; Powaikuru Primary School; St. Anslem's Primary School; St. Anthony's Primary School; St. Margaret's Primary School; St. Ninian's Primary School; Sacred Heart Primary School; Black Water Savannah Primary School; Black Water Barima Primary School; Barasina Primary School; St. Mary's Primary School; Barabina Primary School; Port Kaituma Primary School; Matthew's Ridge Primary School; Baramita Primary School;

Canal Bank Primary School; Falls Top Primary School; Lower Kaituma Primary School; Santa Rosa Primary School; Waramuri Primary School; St. Nicholas Primary School; Kwebanna Primary School; North West Secondary School; Port Kaituma Secondary School; Baramita Secondary Department and Santa Rosa Secondary School.

I do not think in the history of Guyana that we have heard of so many schools. We have not heard of so many schools in the history of this country. We have Strategic Action Security Services as the company who has the security service for these schools. This Government have done quite well in terms of providing primary education, secondary education, nursery education and the infrastructure to go with that.

Mr. Cox: I did not get to hear the answer to the last question. Could the Hon. Minister repeat the name of the security company and state whether it is the same company who is managing or providing services to the other programmes or all four programmes in the region? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: I understand my Friend's inability to listen to which security company after hearing all of those schools being called out. It is Strategic Action Security Services and it is for all the programmes.

Mr. Cox: I did ask earlier whether the schools will be benefitting from increased security personnel and whether it is now 24-hour security services at all the schools.

Ms. Parag: Yes, Hon. Member. They have increased their personnel as well as 24-hour security services. I would like to add because they like to ask questions, so that the public can hear, from 22 facilities to 57 facilities, personnel was added and 24-hour service.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, you are well aware, I am sure, that 24-hour security service started in 2017. May I ask what is the total in terms of the contractual agreement for this year between the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development – Barima/Waini Region and the company – Strategic Action Security Services?

Ms. Parag: It is \$546 million. Each facility has a different rate as well as weekdays and holidays.

Mr. Mahipaul: Five hundred and forty-six million dollars, the one security company is managing the entire region in terms of four programmes as identified by the Hon. Minister. The total of security services charges for all four programmes is \$377,988,000 from *Budget 2024*. The

requested sum that the Ministry is seeking here under Barima/Waini is \$111,333,744, which gives you a total of \$489,321,744. How does the Minister intend to facilitate the shortfall, given that the total security service charge now, once this is passed, becomes \$489 million, when the contract that was signed is for \$546 million?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there a discrepancy in how you are managing the *[inaudible]*?

Ms. Parag: We also have a supplementary for health, Sir. You will get that under that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much.

Item 3: 71-713 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$103,133,744 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

3.24 p.m.

Item 3: 71-714 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Health Services – Security Services – \$8,200,000

Dr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item, as you rightly said, 71-714 Region 1: Barima/Waini - Health Services, Chart of Account 6281, under the remarks column states:

“Provision of additional resources to cater for increased security charges.”

Now, the budgeted voted provision was \$42 million. The Minister is coming now to ask for an additional \$8.2 million. Was it an oversight and not catered for that you have to dip into the Contingency Fund for this \$8.2 million? We are looking at extra additional charges as what? Is it increase rates or increase in the number of security personnel? Where will these personnel be located? Could you start off with that? I have additional questions.

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Hon. Member. We have three new additional sites, so the personnel has increased for those sites.

Dr. Cummings: Are we talking about 12-hour or 24-hour services?

Ms. Parag: It is 24 hours.

Dr. Cummings: Okay. Could you name the security firm, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Parag: The name is Strategic Action Security. I said that they are for all programmes.

Dr. Cummings: Is it for all programmes in Region 1?

Ms. Parag: Yes, for this region.

Dr. Cummings: Was it publicly tendered? Is it a new contract? What?

Ms. Parag: Yes. It was an open tender/public tender through the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board.

Dr. Cummings: What is the rate for these security personnel? What is the new rate? You said it is an increase in number and not in rate.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Dr. Cummings, if we are going to sit and crosstalk, then we will break down again.

Dr. Cummings: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Give respect to the Chairman, stand, ask your question to me and I will put it to her.

Dr. Cummings: Yes, through the Chairman, just to repeat, I am asking if there is an increase in the number or increase in the rates. If there is an increase in the rates, I just want to know what it increased from to.

Ms. Parag: It was \$275 before and it has been increased to \$480. That is Mondays to Fridays. There are different rates for Saturdays, a different rate for Sundays and holidays.

Dr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: In the question before with the programme that you put and now you are putting this one, the Minister indicated that there is a supplemental that is coming for health under supplementary. Sir, under supplementary, that health caters for an additional \$1 million for other transport, travel and postage. We are talking here about security services, Sir, and the difference in terms of the aggregate total and what was the contractual sum is \$57 million. How does the Minister intend to capture that gap of \$57 million, Sir? It definitely cannot be from this \$1 million.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if there is a gap but, Minister, you may attempt to answer this new line of questioning that is summing up across different lines.

Ms. Parag: It is a new line of question but it is also a very convoluted question. Hear what, the question that you are asking is not \$1 million. We have \$8.2 million here. I think your figure is wrong.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Cox, be careful of convolution.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one other final question. The Hon. Minister did mention there are three additional institutions within the region under this. Does this cater for the health centres across the riverine communities, security for them as well? Earlier you mentioned under schools, those included all in the riverine communities so we have health centres across riverine communities as well that may require security services too. Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Thank you, very much. I am very proud to say that we have built three new facilities to which we can add these security personnel too because not only are people getting healthcare now in different areas, but they are also providing employment for the security and persons around the community. To direct my answer now to the question, no; not in all the riverine areas but in some of them. We do utilise the Community Service Officers (CSOs) and the part-time.

Ms. Ferguson: Just a follow-up to my Colleague's question to the Hon. Member with regard to the security services. The Hon. Member mentioned, Sir, that the contract went out for public tender, open tender. Could you say to the National Assembly which security firm provided services before the tender went out?

Ms. Parag: It was the same security firm. Mr. Chairman, right now, we are dealing here with this particular security firm and through an open public tender process.

Ms. Ferguson: No, Mr. Chairman. The question is not about whether it is a public tender because this is moneys that you took out from the Contingency Fund. I am asking the Hon. Member which security service provided security services to the various buildings between January and October, 2024.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister did answer. She is answering for this item here now. Minister, if you want to take another...

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I answered this question already and I said that it is relevant to...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Item 3: 71-714 Region 1: Barima/Waini – Health Services – Security Services – \$8,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4: 76-761 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Regional Administration and Finance – Security Services – \$2,343,175

Mr. Ramjattan: I would like to deal with both of them. Could I ask the question, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramjattan: This is \$141 million almost that was taken out of the treasury and paid to somebody for increased security services. Could we ask the question, to whom the \$104.1 million was paid?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, we are dealing with not the total, we are dealing with a particular line item which on my paper covers approximately \$2 million.

Mr. Ramjattan: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Ramjattan: [*Inaudible*]

Ms. Parag: The security guards were increased by three and also it is Queensway Security Service Incorporated.

Item 4: 76-761 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Regional Administration and Finance – Security Services – \$2,343,175 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4: 76-764 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$139,441,773

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the identical question be posed in relation to this sum also, the name of the company?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, there are 79 personnel added to 17 schools in Region 6 and it is also Queensway Security Service Incorporated.

Mr. Ramjattan: What is the name of the company?

Ms. Parag: The name is Queensway Security Service Incorporated .

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan?

Mr. Ramjattan: That is alright.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask what is the contract sum with Queensway Security Service Incorporated for Region 6 that requires this additional sum of \$139.441 million?

Ms. Parag: The contract sum is \$1.757 billion.

Item 4: 76-764 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$139,441,773 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this completes our consideration of all the items.

Question

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set in Financial Paper No. 3 of 2024 – Advances made from the Contingency Fund totalling \$456,851,845, for the period 2024-11-07 to 2024-11-22.”

put and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, very much, Hon. Minister and your staff. Hon. Senior Minister within the Office of the President with Responsibilities for Finance and the Public Service.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3 of 2024. I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution. Thank you very much.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: This completes our consideration of Financial Paper No. 3 of 2024.

Consideration of Financial Paper No. 4/2024 – Current and Capital Estimates

Hon. Members, the Assembly will resolve itself into the Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No.4/2024.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 4 of 2024 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$84,074,229,401 for the period ended 31st December, 2024.”

[*Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Senior Minister within the Office of the President with Responsibilities for Finance and the Public Service, proceed.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In accordance with article 171(2) of the Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the

Assembly the motion for the approval of the proposals set out.

Motion proposed.

3.39 p.m.

Current Estimates

Item 1: 02–022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$9,277,100

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us now invite the Prime Minister (PM) and his staff to join us as we consider the items under this agency code. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated for Chart of Account 6234 under this Agency Code, Current Expenditure, stands part of the Estimates. Those in favour say, aye. Sorry, Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence. You wanted to raise something about cleaning.

Ms. Lawrence: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Lawrence: I note here that the Prime Minister is asking us to provide him with 48% plus increase in the amount voted for the budget. This is Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies, so I would like to know whether the Prime Minister has extended his office. Is he having another building? What is happening? We have not had a lot of rain, and being a housewife these days, I do not know how much more cleaning supplies he is using if he is still contained in the same space. That would be my first question.

Mr. Chairman: The first question, Hon. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister [Brigadier Ret'd Phillips]: Mr. Chairman, this has nothing to do with the Office of the Prime Minister, where he operates from. This has to do with the packaging of hygiene hampers, to give out to people who are affected by disasters throughout the country. **[An Hon. Member (Opposition): (Inaudible)]** But, of course. It covers... **[An Hon. Member (Opposition): (Inaudible)]** Please, please let me educate you, Ma'am. Mr. Chairman, let me educate the Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: We are asking for the money under Programme 022, Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management. Throughout the country people are affected by flooding and other forms of disaster. They are given food

hampers, and they are given hygiene hampers because they have to clean up the place. All we are asking for is the additional money to cover the cleaning agents, that are supplied to the people who are affected.

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

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: We have here Abary.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you. Mr. Prime Minister, could you kindly tell me how many packages you are catering for here, and why was it not foreseen? **[Mr. Indar:** Do you foresee disasters?] Listen to me. No, you do not foresee disaster. Why was it not foreseen? This is not the first time you are coming back here asking for moneys for these things. Or could you say whether you are asking for this money as a result of the increase in prices of commodities that the Guyanese people are facing, unlike the Government side; they do not face increase in prices.

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Yes, I agree with the Hon. Member. **[Hon. Members (Opposition): (Inaudible)]** Mr. Chairman, may I.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, go ahead.

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Yes, I agree with the Hon. Member. We did, based on a projection, ask for a sum of money. However, in the year 2024 we had more interventions than in the previous years, and the interventions demanded that we utilise what was asked for. All we are doing now – this is the month of November, and you know the rainy season is November into January, February – we are just asking for this additional amount of money to replenish and prepare to continue helping people who are likely to be affected.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman to the Prime Minister, I am glad we are hearing that there is an office that is preparing, budgeting, and does not spend the money and come here and ask us to pass it. We thank you for respecting this House. Mr. Prime Minister, could you kindly tell me, out of this \$9,000,000 how many packages you are going to get, and what would be the cost of one package.

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Sorry about that Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. We just have to get the figures right. We are preparing a 170 hygiene packages for the hinterland, and

600 to deal with interventions along the coastland. I am advised that each package will cost some \$10,000.

Ms. Lawrence: I am happy to hear about hygiene packages. Could the Prime Minister, however, indicate to us, of the \$21 million that you spent... [Mr. McCoy: *(Inaudible)*] Could you disaggregate it? I *ghun* get some *fu* *yuh* mouth. I will get some for your mouth, Hon. McCoy. I will get some hygiene for your mouth.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence, please.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I am very respectful to you and this House. But Mr. McCoy is allowed to abuse women in this Parliament and nothing is said to him and I will not allow him to do that to me. I will not allow that to happen to me, Mr. Chairman. So, please give me cover.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have a question for the Prime Minister, if not I will put, I will put...

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [Mr. McCoy: *(Inaudible)*] Answer the questions. You are not a Minister, relax yourself. You *ent gat* no [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, the question lost me. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated...

Ms. Lawrence: The Prime Minister is answering.

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Mr. Chairman, if I am to understand, the Hon. Member is asking for a disaggregation of the \$21 million: \$2,886,000, procurement of cleaning items for office and facilities used to ensure a clean and tidy working environment; \$18,450,000, procurement of 2,000 relief cleaning hampers for countrywide distribution – 500 for Region 4; 600 for Region 5; 200 for Region 6; 300 for Region 10 and 400 for Region 9. I did answer before. I gave you some figures in terms of what we are putting together, based on what we are asking for today.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, just to conclude.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please, especially Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence and many of us who have been here a little while. You are asking the Prime Minister to deal with an item we considered during the budget estimates. We are now dealing with the supplementary, which is \$9 million. That is why I totally ignored what you said. I was more concentrated on the aside you had, with respect to washing someone's mouth. The Prime Minister, if I were sitting

where you are, I would have said, during the budget debate this is what you said, and this is a departure for this additional. I am not going to tolerate items that we had considered and voted on during the estimates for this *Budget 2024*. You will agree with me that that question...

Ms. Lawrence: No, I will not.

Mr. Chairman: You would not?

Ms. Lawrence: No, Mr. Chairman, because the budget is an estimate and that is a lumpsum money. You heard the Prime Minister in his response to me say he used some for office cleaning and some for packaging.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, my ruling is, I am not going to consider such items on the *Budget 2024* which were considered and passed here. If you frame it in a way that deals with the contingencies before us, then.

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of clarity and moving forward, I would like to volunteer a clearer answer for the Hon. Member. We are asking for \$9,277,100 as a supplementary. The breakdown of \$638,460 to cover expenditure for the Abary flood in November, 2024; \$1,700,000 for the procurement of janitorial hampers for the secondary rainy season December, January for the hinterland, Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9; and \$6,938,640 for the procurement of janitorial hampers for the secondary rainy season, again, December, January, 2024 for the coastal Regions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 which is not entirely coastal but [*inaudible*].

Item 1: 02–022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies – \$9,277,100 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the schedule.

Item 1: 02–022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$2,600,000

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, the voted provision... There was no voted provision, but I want to ask the Minister – during the debate I had asked about the regional plan as well as the national plans – this \$2,600,000, is it to cater for the local travel around the regions or is it from the national level going into the regions? [*Inaudible*]

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: To answer the Hon. Member, \$2,600,000 is asked for quarterly earthquake monitoring in

Region 9. In December, \$600,000 is part of our early warning system monitoring, water sanitation, and hygiene. Programme in Region 1, \$400,000; Region 7 \$500,000; Region 8, \$500,000 and \$600,000 for routine operations in November and December.

3.54 p.m.

Dr. Cummings: I have a follow-up question. So, the capacity is not being built in the region as such. This is coming from the meteorological department. I just want to know because we want to build. It should be 10 democratic regions, 10 developmental regions. We want to improve, to narrow the gaps between the coast and the hinterland. So, how are you going forward?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, again, thanks to the Hon. Member. From what has started, the end result will be capacity not only being built at the central level but at the regional level. As we monitor, we also have people on the ground who receive training to submit reports to the central location. So yes, to answer your question, the expertise may lie now at the central level, but the capacity is being built at the regional level as we continue this process.

Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$2,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$8,840,000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Prime Minister, I note that you are asking for a 50% plus increase on your budgeted allocation. Could you kindly say if this is due to the increase in costs or is this due to the expanded programmes that you are doing?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, again, I thank the Hon. Member for the question. It is due to both an increase in costs and the expansion that you outlined in your question. Perhaps, if you want me to, I can disaggregate how we are going to spend the money, if that would be helpful.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chair, may I respond?

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

Ms. Lawrence: You can do it in response to the programmes that you said you were going to do. You highlighted seven or eight programmes just now. Do you have it coordinated like that?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Do you mean in relation to this?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Yes. We do.

Ms. Lawrence: All right, thanks.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: For transporting hampers to Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9 – \$5 million; aircraft charter to Mabaruma to monitor the migrant population – \$800,000; aircraft charter to Mahdia to monitor United States of America (USA) Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) project – \$940,000; aircraft charter to Lethem to monitor floods – \$1.2 million; and hire pickups for earthquake monitoring in December – \$900,000.

Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$8,840,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Dietary – \$79,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Prime Minister, I note in the Remarks has here:

“Provision of additional resources to facilitate an expanded work program.”

So, could the Hon. Prime Minister explain to the House what caused the increase and who the beneficiaries are of this dietary amount of the some \$79 million which he intends to spend by 31st December, 2024?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the Hon. Member's question, I think the important word is, intend. This is a projection. We come to the Committee asking for supplementary provisions. So, with regard to the \$79 million, we are asking for it to purchase 3,950 food hampers for the rainy season. We are likely to give out hampers during the rainy season – December to January. Three thousand are reserved for the coastal areas and 950 are reserved for the hinterland, mainly Region 9.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman to the Hon. Prime Minister, regarding the coastal areas, could you disaggregate for us which communities along there will benefit from these hampers to be distributed?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, this is a projection. The rainy season is coming upon us. What we are doing is procuring and storing. So, whenever communities are affected – whenever any community or every community is affected in Guyana – they will have our intervention and will receive hampers. That has been the history of the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) since I assumed responsibility. There is no discrimination. The hampers are there readied; whenever a community needs them, it will get them. I can assure you of that.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Prime Minister for his response. I just want to say to the Hon. Prime Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Do not say, ask him a question.

Ms. Ferguson: I want to ask the Hon. Prime Minister, once there is a situation in South Georgetown, I trust that I will be able to reach out to his office so that my constituents will be able to benefit from the distribution of these hampers.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, I think you have been given an open book now to talk about your policy for the whole country.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I think the Hon. Member should first be educated as to how the Civil Defence Commission operates. In times of disaster, once we have a report that a community is affected and in need, we have a team dispatched to do a damage and needs assessment. That will be the information utilised to guide further interventions as it pertains to whether they need food hampers, whether they need cleaning hampers, whether they need zinc sheets for re-roofing, whether they need shelters to be set up, or whatever. So, it is a body of knowledge; it is more a professional area and we do not discriminate.

Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Dietary – \$79,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Other – \$30,504,508,720

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, the Remarks column for this \$30.5 billion states:

“Provision of additional resources for the cash grant distribution to every citizen above 18 years of age...”

...above 18 years of age. Mr. Chairman, what I heard from the President and the Vice-President is, this cash grant is for those 18 years and above. So, we need to make an amendment to this remark here since this will form part of our records. To the Hon. Prime Minister, could he state whether any amount out of this \$30 billion will be going to administrative costs or if this is just for the grant and he will be picking up the administrative costs from another line item?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the disbursement of this money is administered by a ministry. That ministry works with other ministries throughout the country. They already have their operational budget, so this figure covers the payment going to the persons 18 years and above – you are right. If I am 18 years today, on the 1st January 2025, I qualify for the money. This money is going to the people.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated for Chart of Account 6294...

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Holder, you have the floor.

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the initial announcement, we heard a total of \$60 billion is to be disbursed. We have since seen some changes. Now, we see the amount coming to the National Assembly as \$30.5 billion, which works out to about 305,000 persons 18 years and above. My question, is the Government saying that, in its estimation, there are 305,000 persons 18 years and above, or will we see another Financial Paper coming to the National Assembly for another \$30 billion before the end of the year?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am smiling because I never expected such a question from a fellow Member of the House. Today is the 27th November. The financial year finishes on 31st December. It is just about a month. We are asking for that money and we are going to pay out that money as fast as possible. Come 1st January, we

will go into another budget cycle, and the remainder of money that is needed will be apportioned and allocated from that budget cycle. That is the easy answer. Everyone will get the money. This is financial management at the highest level.

Mr. Holder: So, is the Prime Minister saying that not all Guyanese will be getting it in this period? Would you confirm the number of persons that you are catering for, in your own estimate?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, just to allay any fears from the Hon. Member, if we finish this \$30 billion and we have to come back on the 30th December for more money, we will come back to this Committee. The task is to pay the money to every Guyanese.

4.09 p.m.

Mr. Holder: Cde Chairman, Could the Prime Minister say which areas outside of the public servants...*[Interruption]* Could the Prime Minister state who the persons are or what categories are you catering for under this first stretch, like which regions, which areas and which communities if you can get into that?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, as I speak, we have officials deployed throughout the country conducting the registration exercise. Now, if you are given a problem, the first thing you do is analyse how to solve the problem, and the low hanging fruits, or the things that you could reach easily, you would dispose of that quickly and then you would deal with the big ones. Is that not so? So, obviously, registering and paying the public servants who are already a captive population, that will be first and then we would move on. So, everyone will be paid. Everyone will be paid but we will do it in a structured way. So, in the shortest possible time, we will pay everybody. You do not have to get up. To answer you, yes, the public servants are getting paid, but for everyone in every region, we will reach everybody and pay them, even in the most difficult region. **[Hon. Members (Opposition): When?]** In the shortest possible time. That is the answer. This was ventilated. **[Hon. Members (Opposition): (Inaudible)]**

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Prime Minister.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, this issue is being dealt with – in all fairness to the Ministry of Finance – every day on social media and every day in the newspapers. Every day.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister. Let me just get the order that I have. We will have the Hon. Member, Mr. Holder conclude, then the Hon. Members, Ms. Ferguson and Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Holder: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. What I was trying to get from the Prime Minister is if there is a structure in terms of the distribution. I am trying to get him to tell us or tell this House what this structure is. He said everyone, but outside of the public servants... We understand that we are targeting all Guyanese over 18 years and above, but I am trying to understand the structure in terms of the distribution. He said, as well, that there are persons/teams doing registration across the ten administrative regions, but I am not aware, for example, in Region 2, that a registration process has commenced outside of the public servants. So, there needs to be clarity there. Also, Cde. Chairman, there needs to be clarity. **[Hon. Members: (Inaudible)]** Sir, if you can protect me, I am trying to ask some questions here for the benefit of the House and for the benefit of the Guyanese people.

Mr. Chairman: I will protect you.

Mr. Holder: Please and thank you.

Mr. Chairman: *[Mr. Chairman hits the gavel as he speaks.]* Please allow the Hon. Member to ask his questions.

Mr. Holder: Now, there needs to be clarity as well in terms of the registration process. Would it be continuous registration or just for a specific period and then you would come back for another period? The reason why I am asking this is because persons have been reaching out to me, especially those who are working in the interior and outside of their region. They want to know – because they will not be coming home for any registration process, let us say, in the next week or two – when they come, if they can register and uplift their moneys. That is what I am trying to get from the Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Pertinent. Hon. Prime Minister, you have the floor.

An Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Jordan: PM would not know that. *[Inaudible]*

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: You do not even know about agriculture. Mr. Chairman, registration is taking place, will take place and will continue to take place throughout the

length and breadth of Guyana. Just allow us to do our work. Everyone will get their money in the shortest possible time. It is obvious that we are dealing with the public servants because we know where they are located; it is easier to register them. When we move from there, we will go street by street, centre by centre and register everyone. Listen for the notice.

Mr. Holder: I have one final question. This is specific to Region 2 and maybe other regions as well. Have you authorised any such teams to move around, specifically in Region 2, to do registration? I have had numerous complaints or numerous reports of teams going around and actually saying to persons that if they did not register under that process, or at that time of them visiting their home, then they would not get the money. So, I had cause to advise residents of the region, as far as my information goes, that is not so. [**Hon. Members:** (*Inaudible*)]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

The region said that there is no process as yet, so that is where they are at. So, I need some clarity from the Hon. Minister on this matter.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the registration has started. It is ongoing. However, in the interest of the Hon. Member, we will, in all the newspapers, have the necessary communication.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson. We have a lot of questions – Ms. Ferguson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Mahipaul and Ms. Walton-Desir.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for acknowledging me. I have about two or three questions for the Hon. Prime Minister. My first observation has to do with the explanation given in the legend, where it is stated:

“Provision of additional resources...”

The question I would like to ask the Hon. Prime Minister, when reference is made to additional resources, am I to understand that the Government has started to pay out some moneys and now it is coming for \$30.5 billion?

Mr. Chairman, you would recall in the Budget Speech, under “Measures”, the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance mentioned that there was \$7 billion set aside for cost-of-living measures.

Could the Hon. Prime Minister explain to the National Assembly whether they have started to pay moneys from the \$7 billion and they are now coming to the House seeking a \$30.5 billion for this \$100,000?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am surprised. I am surprised. This is a budget; you have a voted provision. If you want a dollar more, it has to be additional provision. If you want \$30 more, it is the same thing, additional provision; if you want \$130 more, it is the same thing, additional provision; and if you want \$30 billion more, it is the same thing, additional provision; because you started with a voted provision, anything above that is additional provision. This is another teaching moment.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much to the Hon. Member, but I can read, interpret and understand. Early this year we approved \$7 billion and change, and the explanation given by the Hon. Prime Minister is that it was for hampers to assist migrants across Regions 1, 2 and 3. I am trying to remember if it was for Region 4. It is in the *Hansard*. There was no mention of a cash grant when we approved the initial \$7 billion. So, what are you telling me Prime Minister?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, those are more statements. Hon. Prime Minister, the person can read, listen and comprehend. You may want to expand and interpret.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am not surprised. I am not surprised. What I am doing here is trying to bring some clarity to the Hon. Member who is confused by numbers. She is mixing up line item 6292 with line item 6294. Line item 6292 is Dietary while line item 6294 is Other.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, if you have to make another statement, I will interrupt you and cut you off. If you have a question, let us hear the question up front.

Ms. Ferguson: Yes. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. We are discussing line item 6294, Other. When we go to the *Hansard* it will show exactly what was stated by the Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let me just interrupt you here. The Prime Minister gave a perfectly understandable answer with respect to what is additional, with respect to the financial provisions here. So, if you do not have another question, I will move on to the Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan.

Ms. Ferguson: No, Mr. Chairman. I do have another question, until I locate the part in the *Hansard* here.

Mr. Chairman: All right. You try and locate that. Let us get the question from Mr. Duncan.

Ms. Ferguson: All right.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Duncan, please...

Ms. Ferguson: I am getting to my question.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Duncan: Ms. Ferguson, I do not want to interrupt you.

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Ms. Ferguson: All right.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Duncan, you have the floor.

Mr. Duncan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Parliamentary Opposition are seeking clarity not in a vacuum. It was this honourable Government that came to this House on 10th October and told us that we were going to get 200,000 per household instantaneously and we went on that. Then they came back and said it is in about five months. Then they said it was going to be through an application (app) we would have to register. Now, we have to register in person. Then we heard the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance say, overnight, that if you do not take your photograph, you cannot get the money. Then we heard the Attorney General speak of biometrics; then the Vice-President said that he does not speak for the Government. So, we are seeking clarity in the House. **[Hon. Members: (Inaudible)]**

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman, you would recognise that this issue of the cash grant has been an enigma wrapped in a mystery. That is why we are seeking the clarifications here this afternoon because one person said something else. The President says instantaneously, the Vice-President says no, no, in five months. In this very House the President said instantaneously.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Hon. Member...

Mr. Duncan: Sir, we are not asking these questions in a vacuum.

Mr. Chairman: ...for clarity, what do we want to ask the Hon. Prime Minister?

Mr. Duncan: My first question is, what percentage of the population is represented in this requested \$30 billion allocation?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, we already said \$60 billion will be required and we are asking for \$30 billion. We are asking for \$30 billion. That is 50% of the people who are eligible. Fifty percent of the people who are eligible will be covered by the \$30 billion. All that we are saying, today is the 27th November, and by our work programme we are going to push hard to pay everybody in the shortest possible time. By 31st December, it is envisioned that we will expend, if not all, most of this money and in the next financial year, we will ask for the next set of money.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Prime Minister was kind enough to say \$60 billion is required and this requested sum here of \$30.5 billion represents 50%. My question to the Hon. Prime Minister, is there an administrative cost that is associated with this...?

Mr. Chairman: He answered that already. Hon. Member Ms. Amanza Walton-Desir.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I go to another question?

4.24 p.m.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for the Prime Minister (PM) as it relates to the registration process. We are aware that the Ministries and even the Members of Parliament have been asked to register. I am curious as to the rationale for this registration because, for example, if I am working in the Ministry of Public Works... *[interruption]* Mr. Chairman, may I be allowed to ask my question?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman, I am curious and the reason I am asking is because one would assume that if I am employed in the Ministry of Public Works, the human resource (HR) department would have my records and a record of all the employees of the organisation. I think it is safe for me to assume that they would have that record. I am trying to understand the need for you to go from ministry to ministry,

to have public servants, whose names are already on a payroll, and whose coordinates, including their identification cards, passports, *et cetera*, are already on file to re-register, PM. What is the rationale for that?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, again... [interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please, let us give the Hon. Prime Minister the respect.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: This information is public information. On 27th November, 2024, *Guyana Chronicle* stated:

“100k cash grant distribution to be a two-step process”

None other than the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibilities for Finance and the Public Service who, at length, explained this whole thing. There is no need for such a question. We are focused on accountability. We are focused on ensuring every Guyanese get that money, including you. Whatever system we put in place to ensure that happens, you must respect that system.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Mr. Chairman, I have to observe that the question has not been answered. If I am to follow up with what the Hon. PM is saying, he is saying that he wants to make sure that everybody gets, as should happen. Why can we not rely on the records that are already in the ministries? This is what I am trying to say because if the Hon. PM is coming to tell me that their employment records have to be verified... This is what we are trying to understand. It is not intended to be a trap. Mr. Chairman, maybe we could get an answer from the person under whom it should come in the first place.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. I have the Hon. Prime Minister and the Hon. Minister of Finance.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I will defer to the Hon. Minister. In the interest of the understanding of the people of Guyana, I will defer to the Hon. Senior Minister and ask him to take the floor now and further explain once and for all.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, if I might...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: We all want to hear about the process/processes and the different tranches.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, if I might add some further clarity to the abundant clarity that has already been shed on this matter by the distinguished Prime Minister. I am not speaking specifically to the question asked by the Hon. Member, Ms. Amanza Walton-Desir, as to why a registration stage is required for public servants when we already have them on the payroll. Indeed, we do already have them on the payroll. The reason registration is required for everybody is because, in addition to processing public servants' payments simply by virtue of the fact that they are in public employment, we are also registering in the communities. The people who work in public offices, also live in these communities, so to ensure that we minimise, avoid and eliminate, as far as we possibly could, duplications, it is imperative that everybody be registered.

Ms. Walton-Desir: That makes no sense.

Dr. Singh: I understand why the Hon. Members on that side of the House will have difficulty understanding. I will repeat, Sir. In order to ensure that we avoid duplication because we are also registering in the very communities in which these people live. Apart from doing a registration at my place of work, you are also registering in my community where I live ... The same applies to everybody. In order to avoid duplication, everybody has to be registered. Now, I can understand why Hon. Members on that side of the House are having difficulty comprehending this because they are not known for having implemented anything at all during their five years in office. Therefore, a simple task such as this is bound to elude their limited powers of comprehension. This is an extremely simple matter. It is a very simple and basic registration process.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Vincero Jordan, you have the floor.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened to the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibilities for Finance and the Public Service and he spoke about the reason for taking a photograph. I also understand and know for a fact that our Guyanese identification card carries a photograph. I am asking now, why is it necessary if we already have a photograph on our identification card, that we need to take another photograph when we are being registered?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: We have the Hon. Prime Minister to answer the question.

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Mr. Chairman, we already answered the question. Our primary focus is accountability. If we put that measure in place to satisfy accountability, so be it. It is a measure to satisfy accountability.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister is saying that it is a measure of accountability. However, is he also saying that our national identification card does not look like us? It is the same photograph. What is it with our identification card that the same photograph cannot work for the verification and the identification to fulfil his accountability needs?

Mr. Chairman: We are now repeating ourselves and I will give the Hon. Prime Minister another chance to repeat his answer. If he does not, I will put the question.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Other – \$30,504,508,720 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$51,129,585

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for recognising me, Mr. Chairman. To start off nicely, could the Prime Minister disaggregate the sum being sought – the \$51 million for the Mahdia Power and Light Company?

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Regarding the disaggregation of the \$51,129,585, we have a shortfall of \$22,862,487 and outstanding liabilities of \$28,267,098. That will give you the sum of \$51,129,585. In regard to the outstanding liability, the Guyana Oil Company Limited (GUYOIL) fuel – \$8 million; transportation of fuel – \$500,000; supply of filters for generators – \$319,998; maintenance work for generators – \$1,900,000; additional reimbursement for fuel expenses – \$12 million; fence repairs – \$4,152,100; and upgrade of billing system – \$1,395,000. That is the disaggregation.

Mr. Patterson: Prime Minister, you did not disaggregate shortfalls. Before you do that, there is \$12 million for additional expenses in fuel, in addition to the \$8 million for GUYOIL as part of your outstanding liabilities. Could I ask who this \$12 million is payable to, Sir?

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: The \$12 million is related to the reimbursement for fuel expenses with GUYOIL for September, 2024.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, for the \$8 million you are paying, you said they are all liabilities, which means they have all been expended. There is a \$12 million reimbursement, and then a \$8 million fuel expense. Could you clarify that?

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the \$12 million is the advancement of payment for fuel to GUYOIL for September, 2024 and the \$8 million has covered the fuel for August, 2024.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Prime Minister confirm whether the shortfall of \$8 million is for fuel for the balance of the year?

Brigadier Ret'd Phillips: The \$22.8 million, which is a shortfall and what we are requesting now will cover all our expenses, including fuel for the rest of the year.

4.39 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister. After expending this amount of money, could the Prime Minister explain to this House why is there still power outages in Mahdia?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: We had several reasons for power outages in Mahdia. There was even one time where we had to intervene and purchase a brand-new generator because the generator started to malfunction. It has been there for a long time. What we are doing now is repairing and maintaining those generators. For example, if a generator is undergoing maintenance, there will be some reduction in the power available to the community. As it is right now, the generators are working.

Mr. Patterson: I am aware that there is a solar farm in Mahdia. Could the Hon. Prime Minister say what amount of power that is contributing? Is it working completely?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: We have a .65-megawatt capacity that is installed, in terms of the solar farm. It is working. We have already worked through all the problems of integration. That obviously will be commissioned in a week's time. The community is receiving fuel from it. Sorry, the community is receiving energy from it.

Mr. Patterson: Every day the Ministry of Finance and everyone in the Government always wax lyrically about the subsidies, zero taxes on fuel, and things like that. Could the Hon. Prime Minister say why? The Chairman does not allow

you to go back but for this particular question, when you pass the budget, why are we spending \$2248 million out of this for fuel, since there are no taxes being subsidised by your Government?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The simple answer is, there is an increase in demand. We have connected more homes. For fuel price, the answer is yes. Everyone is aware that fuel prices went up. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that the Government would have removed the taxation on imported fuel, the real price that we are paying for fuel has increased.

Mr. Patterson: I know we are coming on to that. I know that when the much talked about gas-to-shore project that we will come to shortly is completed, the Government has said that the consumers in the Demerara/Berbice Interconnectivity System can expect their fuel prices, their electricity costs to be halved. Could I ask the Hon. Prime Minister what the residents of Mahdia could expect and when can they expect the prices that they pay for electricity to be halved, like what you are bringing to Georgetown and the rest of the Demerara/Berbice Grid?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Certainly, and the Hon. Member is right. It was a promise made to the people of Guyana. We have a history of delivering on our promises. For every utility in the hinterland, the plan is to have a renewable energy source to complement that utility. As we complete that project, in this case Mahdia, we will go through an evaluation process and the necessary reduction in costs will be determined and made available to the people of that community.

Mr. Patterson: The Prime Minister is saying that they will be powered by renewable so that when the solar farm is commissioned next week because that is the only renewable there is in Mahdia, a process will commence to provide the people of Mahdia with half-price like the rest on the DBSD. That is what you just said.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman. I said a re-evaluation. It is obvious that the price will go down, but I never said 50%. Let us take one step at a time. Let us commission the new energy source. This means integrating with what is existing there. Do the re-evaluation in terms of cost, for example, how much we are saving and whatever the savings will be to the benefit of the people.

Mr. Patterson: My final question on this. Could the PM say, since he is commissioning next week, whether the re-evaluation period will be completed in time for Christmas so that the people in Mahdia could have a brighter Christmas?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The people in Mahdia, since 2nd August, 2020, have started enjoying brighter Christmases. Years 2021, 2022 2023, 2024 – four brighter Christmases for the people in Mahdia. It will keep getting brighter and brighter. This will not only be in Mahdia but throughout Guyana.

Mr. Patterson: I do thank the PM for his answer. Could the PM confirm if the people of Mahdia are getting 24-hour electricity – a service provided by the previous Administration? In 2015, they were only getting eight hours. Could you confirm that you have continued what we have implemented? Thank you.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: They are getting 24-hour electricity, and it is getting better. They will continue to get 24-hour electricity. At the end of the re-evaluation, they will pay less for the 24-hour service.

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister - Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - \$51,129,585 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

Capital Expenditure

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Small Hydro Projects – \$422,887,330

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, it seems as though one has to be *jack in the box* to get your attention.

Mr. Chairman: Not at all. If you are ready to ask a question, be ready. I respond to the lights I see and the people rising. The Standing Orders say who first catches the eye. You are slow. I understand age is catching up with us.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir. I would not comment on that at all. Small Hydro Projects – the *Legend* under this line item has four components. Could the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate to where this \$422,887,330 will be paid out?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, Capital specific...

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The \$422,887,330 has been asked for to deal with the engineering, procurement and construction of Kumu Hydropower Plant and the rehabilitation of the Moco-Moco Hydropower Plant.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I know that from the *Legend*, as you are well aware, Sir. Does the Prime Minister want me to read the *Legend*? I am asking him to disaggregate the sum and not the project. The *Legend* says 'Construction of hydro project facilities at Moco-Moco and Kumu'.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry if I did not answer the Hon. Member's question clearly. It is all for the payments of the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC). It is for the earlier completion of the hydro so what we are doing is paying for it – the engineering, procurement and construction – solely for that.

Mr. Patterson: The Prime Minister acknowledged that he needed time to answer the question.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: I will offer the Hon. Member the breakdown as to how much went to Moco Moco and how much went to Kumu. Most of the money went to Moco-Moco because it was completed earlier than expected so we decided to pay off ...

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. We are going on to the next item and you have accepted that you will lay it over. Could I ask you for the time period for that – the information that you are laying over?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Close of business, tomorrow, 27th November, the Hon. Member will have his information.

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

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Small Hydro Projects -\$422,887,330 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, just to remind that those who did not get registered for this \$100,000 – the MPs and the staff, the Ministry of Finance staff is here waiting.

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Gas to Power Project -\$25,301,500,162

Mr. Patterson: I will start off with the \$25.3 billion being sought. I know it is to facilitate payments and accelerate implementation. Could the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate this amount, please?

4.54 p.m.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: To answer the Hon. Member, the disaggregation is as follows: natural gas, power plant and natural gas liquid plant - \$23,806,18,000,413; project management consultancy \$149,422,822; transformers \$26,767,430; transmission lines and substations \$889,978,538; supervision of the transformers transmission lines and substations control centres \$103,155,203; supply, installation, integration and commissioning of a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), Generation Management System (GMS), Energy Management System

(EMS), Outage Management System (OTS) and Remote Terminal Units \$156,000,001; SCADA, Power Management Control (PMC), Overall Equipment Efficiency (OEE), deBarr... There is no sum there. Sorry. Consultancy services... Just skip that one. Consultancy Services for the construction of a building for the Guyana National Control Centre (GNCC), \$4,144,347; SCADA training \$18,397,527; land acquisition \$4,000,000; construction – access road \$26,439,695; upgrade of access road \$44,776,187; repairs to access road \$47,400,000; and moving of pipelines \$15,000,000. That gives us a total of \$25,301,500,162.37.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister. Mr. Chairman, the first one, the engineering, procurement and construction contractor, Sir, for \$23.86 billion, could you give us the name of that contractor?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, the name of the contractor is Lindsayca CH4. Lindsayca, spelt L-I-N-D-S-A-Y-C-A, Lindsayca, capital C, capital H4, Lindsayca CH4.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the reason I asked the question is, in January, 2024, the Hon. Prime Minister came for \$55.4 billion for this contractor, this particular contractor, which at the time had represented 35% of its contract sum. Could the Hon. Prime Minister confirm that the contractor has completed 35% of his work and this additional 23 will carry us to almost 50% of the moneys owed to the contractor? We are concerned that the project Lindsayca is 50% completed.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: The natural gas power plant and natural gas liquid plant commencement, the contract, December, 2022. Conclusion... Now you have the contractor Lindsayca CH4, the contract sum of \$159.9 billion and expenditure prior to 2024, \$55.7 billion. Right, you said that. Expenditure as of today's date, \$44,678,828,886.37. The balance on the contract to date is \$59,514,413,036.48. You have the projected expenditure and the shortfall, which is \$23,816,018,413.

Mr. Patterson: Sir...

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Fifty-eight per cent of the work has been completed.

Mr. Patterson: Eighty-eight per cent of the...

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Fifty-eight. Five eight.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask the Prime Minister if any of this money to that company is for payment of arbitration? That is why I asked for the name,

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, this money does not include the sum for the dispute arbitration. The Dispute of Avoidance and Adjudication Board, that sum is, to date, \$13.6 million.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, could the Hon. Prime Minister say what the \$13.6 million is for or was paid for?

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: To date, the sum of \$13.6 million has been paid for the consultants and lawyers in regard to this activity.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, with your leave, in January, 2024, the Hon. Prime Minister made a commitment to this House to lay over all the documents. If I could with your leave just read, the Clerk of the National Assembly, on 2nd April, 2024, wrote the Hon. Brigadier Retired Mark Phillips, M.P.,

“...to remind you that during the consideration of the 2024 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, at the 77th Sitting of the National Assembly on 30th January, 2024, you promised, as requested by Mr. David Patterson, M.P., to provide information with respect to the following:...

...breakdown of \$73B expended in 2023.”

If you can remember, there is a shortfall of \$5.49 billion in the numbers he gave.

“Copies of the agreements signed with Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Limited (EEPGL).

A copy of the Insurance Policy for each of the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) contracts.”

Sir, that was 2nd April... Could the Hon. Prime Minister say, not to me but to the country, why he has not kept his promise?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister...

Mr. Patterson: Do you want me to read the letter? It was signed by the Clerk of the National Assembly, Hon. Sherlock E. Isaacs, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Prime Minister, I will allow you to respond.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Chairman, if I had failed in offering my response as requested by the Hon. Member, let me apologise to this honourable House and I will seek to, in the shortest possible time, honour that request...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister. This might be a good note to put the question, Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Well, I would just like to remind you Sir and this is...

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Ask a question, do not remind me.

Mr. Patterson: No. Sir, this is the third time he has made this offer. Sir [*inaudible*]...

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Please, if there is a question... The Hon. Prime Minister was most gracious to acknowledge his slippages.

Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Gas to Power Project – \$25,301,500,162 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I remind those who need to register and have their pictures taken that we still have the Ministry of Finance... Hon. Minister of Finance, would you like to say something?

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for that timely reminder.

Mr. Chairman: Let me thank you and your staff for being so patient with us because they have been here since around 12.30 p.m. Thank you. The chauffeurs of the Ministers and everybody who is associated can register. Thank you. Let us take a suspension for one hour. We return at 6.10 p.m. Thank you very much, Prime Minister and staff.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 5.08 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.24 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated. Thank you very much. We do have a quorum because we have some Members online.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: For those who have not yet been registered for this \$100,000 initial payment, we cannot keep the Ministry of Finance staff all night, we will give you an additional 40 minutes. Those who have not been registered, including the staff and the drivers, please, you have until 7.05 p.m. to register.

6.25 p.m.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, may I please?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Dr. Singh: It is only to clarify – since I do not know if it was said very clearly – that the staff are in the last room on the corridor as you go towards the media room on the wing that is usually used by the Government. There is an office there, the end office, which is where the enumeration staff are. I did speak with one or two Members of Parliament (MPs), at the break, who were unsure where to go and where the staff were located. Those who have not yet registered, if they go along the eastern corridor towards where the media room is, the last room on their left is where there is a small team of people still waiting to register you. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. There is just a slight change. Initially, we had the staff in front, but that is where we have a coffee station. We had to move them down to the eastern side of the building. Please reach out to your drivers. Mr. Issacs will remind the staff so that we can complete the registration.

Current Expenditure

Item 2: 12-121 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – Development of Foreign Policy – Other – \$123,486,000

Item 2: 12-121 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – Development of Foreign Policy – Other – \$123,486,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

An Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, unfortunately, we have passed that. Let us go to the next one.

An Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, with respect to the Hon. Member's comments, let us restart.

Item 2: 12-121 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – Development of Foreign Policy – Other – \$123,486,000

Mr. Chairman: Do you have to get your staff, Hon. Minister? The Hon. Member, Ms. Amanza Walton-Desir, you have the floor.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I note that the remarks' column states:

“Provision of additional resources for regional humanitarian support.”

Could the Hon. Minister advise the Committee as to who exactly this humanitarian support is for?

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation [Mr. Todd]: Thank you very much for the question, Hon. Member. As you may recall, Mr. Speaker, we had several crises in the region – one being the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. Given the fact that they have had political troubles which we have been, as CARICOM, spearheading in collaboration with our partners and friends...President Ali, who is also CARICOM's lead on humanitarian efforts...We have undertaken, as a Government and people, to make a donation in kind to the Haitian people.

Secondly, you would recall, Mr. Speaker, that in June/July, we had a category four hurricane, Beryl, which had a devastating effect on the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) countries and some of the More Developed Countries (MDCs). Guyana stepped up as usual. Apart from sending support in terms of rebuilding efforts, we also made contributions in kind to the OECS countries. That accounts for the sums you are seeing there. Given the fact that we have the comparative advantage in the production of rice, we have made that available to the countries.

Ms. Walton-Desir: In light of the Minister's response, could the Hon. Minister indicate whether he is able to disaggregate these sums? What exactly was sent to Haiti? What exactly was Hurricane Beryl's relief? You mentioned rice. Would that be in kind contributions? Could you clarify that for me, please?

Mr. Todd: I mentioned that we have a comparative advantage. As an economic term, you might not be aware of it. We did supply rice. For OECS countries, \$470,300 and for Haiti, \$91,000. This is in United States (US) dollars. When you convert it, you get to \$124,000, I believe; it is \$123,486.

Item 2: 12-121 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – Development of Foreign Policy – Other – \$123,486,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$2,528,090,157

Mr. Jordan: According to the remarks for this line item, it states:

“Provision of additional resources for the operations of the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority.”

Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate this \$2.5 billion, please?

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Mustapha]: The disaggregation is as follows: \$85 million for provision of fuel for the operation of National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) pumps; repair to NDIA quarters at Tarlogie and installation of shed at Land of Canaan for \$2.8 million; repairs to access road at Ithaca sluice and revetment at Blairmont, West Bank Berbice for \$25 million; mechanical excavation, manual clearing, desilting of drainage and irrigation canal installation of High-density polyethylene (HDPE) tubes, repairs to sluice doors and revetments, and repair to access dams, combined with clearing of culverts and drainage structure in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 – \$1,561,852,210; repair to NDIA vehicles from Regions 1 to 10 – \$17,008,000; payment for the relocation, fabrication, installation and maintenance of NDIA’s pump, machinery and equipment in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 – \$597,478,247; payment for transportation of NDIA machinery and equipment, fuel, timber mats, tractor pumping of water and carting away of spoils and debris – \$183,329,000; operation of NDIA machinery and equipment in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 – \$55,622,000. This gives a total of \$2,528,090,157.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles were repaired at the cost of \$17,000,000 and what were the major damage to these vehicles?

Mr. Mustapha: The NDIA has a number of vehicles in various regions. There were 25 vehicles repaired, and I can go through the types of repairs that were done. Repairs to undercarriage of NDIA vehicle PTT 5413, \$302,000; general servicing and diagnosis of NDIA bus PYY 5426, \$230,000; repair to engine and cooling system of NDIA vehicle PXX 4990, \$1,320,000; repair for the suspension of NDIA vehicle PYY 1382, \$411,000; diagnostic and repair to engine of NDIA vehicle and other spares – \$1.5 million; diagnostic and repair to engine and fuel system of NDIA vehicle PXX 3242 and 9448, \$1.4 million; installation of turbo engine on NDIA bus PYY 4424, \$1.4 million; overhauling of engine for NDIA vehicle PRR 9448, \$1.4 million; gauge and alignment of PRR 9329, \$130,000; PAC 6052, servicing, \$116,000; battery for 3454, \$43,000; PAE 2566, purchase of windscreen, \$399,000; PAE 2566, servicing and tires for that vehicle, \$750,000; PXX 5470, servicing, \$300,000; repair to

PWW 6593, \$800,000; PAC computer system and bumper, \$484,000; and servicing of NDIA vehicle PWW 6593, \$101,000.

Mr. Jordan: I am just seeking clarity. The number went a bit fast. PAE something, something, something, \$395,000 for a windshield. What type of vehicle is that?

Mr. Mustapha: That is a double cab Vigo pick-up.

Mr. Jordan: Is it the Nissan Navara?

Mr. Mustapha: It is a Vigo, Toyota Vigo.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon Minister also say *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Jordan: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Mustapha: There are a number of mechanics who service NDIA based on the price range and because of the different types of work that has to be done.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Just let the technician check the microphones in the row with the Hon. Members, Ms. Walton-Desir and Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us a list of those mechanics by repairs or be kind enough to lay it over?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you lay it over?

Mr. Mustapha: Sure, Mr. Chairman.

Item 3: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$2,528,090,157 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Expenditure

Item 3: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority – \$2,971,767,888

Mr. Jordan: I see \$2.9 billion. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate this sum?

6.40 p.m.

Mr. Mustapha: This disaggregation is as follows: Procurement of mini and amphibious excavators for NDIA – five minis, Lot 1, \$45 million; procurement of mini and amphibious excavator for NDIA – two amphibious, Lot 2, \$150 million; supply and delivery of two long boom excavator for NDIA, \$74.5 million; construction of access

road at Canal No.2 Polder conservancy dam, West Bank Demerara/Region 3, \$80 million; rehabilitation of farm-to-market road at Maria's Lodge/West Bank Demerara, Region 3, \$74.7 million; fabrication and installation of eastern and western stainless steel single doors at Cottage/Region 5, \$53 million; fabrication and installation of stainless steel door at Westbury/Region 2, \$13.9 million; fabrication and installation of stainless steel door at Onderneeming sluice, Region 2, \$13.9 million; fabrication and installation of stainless steel door at Golden Fleece's south sluice, Region 2, \$13.8 million; rehabilitation of stainless steel door at La Union/Essequibo Coast/Region 2, \$13.9 million; construction of stainless steel doors, middle and southern Canal No. 1 Polder sluice, West Bank, Demerara, \$47.3 million; supply, fabrication and installation of stainless steel door, which was already ordered, at Abary/Region 5 that failed the other day, \$26.3 million; dredging and excavation of outfall along Corentyne/Region 6, \$206,300,000; rehabilitation of 87 drainage and irrigation (D&I) channels within the Essequibo Coast/Region 2, \$139,042,000; rehabilitation of farm-to-market access road at Sparta/Essequibo, \$14.6 million; construction of D&I channels at Sand Hills, Low Wood, Susannah's Rust and Dora, West Bank Demerara/Region 3, \$109,840,000; construction of D&I channels at Sand Hills, Low Wood, Susannah's Rust, and Dora, East Bank Demerara/Region 4; \$116,104,000; mechanical excavation of Kamuni Creek/Region 3 – Lots 1 and 2, \$20 million; construction of crown dam and main access dam from Plegt Anker to Germania/Region 6, \$186,900,000; rehabilitation of drainage channel, middle area Corentyne/Region 6 – Lots 1 to 10, \$71.9 million; rehabilitation of drainage channels within Liverpool, Whim, Letter Kenny, Bengal, Yakusari and Manchester/Region 6, \$134 million; rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation channels in Hogg Island and Bonasika/Region 3, \$344,733,000; rehabilitation of internal drains located in Number 51 Village/Good Hope Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) district, Corentyne/Region 6, \$70.8 million; rehabilitation of drainage channels from upper East Bank Berbice to Fyrish/East Bank Corentyne/Berbice/Region 6, \$120 million; rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation channels, West Canje/Region 6, \$68.1 million; rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation channels, East Canje/Region 6, \$75.6 million; rehabilitation of channels and D&I structures at Upper Pomeroon/Region 2, \$185 million; rehabilitation of D&I structure and desilting of drain in Lower Pomeroon, \$95 million; construction of drainage structure, 100 acre land clearing and 180 feet (ft) revetment, Barakara/Region 6, \$90 million; rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation channels in

New Amsterdam and Moleson Creek/Region 6, \$95 million; rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation channels in Belladrum/El Dorado area, Region 5, \$40 million; rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation channels in Mocha-Arcadia/East Bank Demerara, Betervwagting (BV), Victoria and Buxton/East Coast Demerara, \$90.4 million; rehabilitation of Weloelegen sideline and cross channel, East Bank Berbice/ Region 6, \$12.5 million; mechanical excavation of eastern drainage channels at Adventure, East Coast Berbice, \$13.3 million; emergency works and construction of timber revetment on the northern side of Mahaica Market sluice, East Coast Demerara, \$13.2 million; mechanical clearing of agricultural land for the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) Shade House Project, Bonasika/Essequibo River/Region 3, \$6.3 million; rehabilitation of sluice door and provision for installation of new lifting mechanism at First Avenue and Sixth Street/Bartica/Region 7, \$4.9 million; construction of drainage and irrigation channels, Sand Hills farming area, West Bank Demerara, \$13.4 million; construction of drainage and irrigation channels at Munesh to Jasodra-Arjune area, Kabakawaru Island, Essequibo/Region 2, \$13.9 million; and the construction of drainage and irrigation channels at Kampta Persaud to Phillip area at Karabo Island/Essequibo, \$13.8 million. This gives you a total of \$2,971,767,888.

Mr. Jordan: I just have two follow-ups. I heard the Minister mention five mini excavators, two long booms and another one which I missed because it was going fast. Could you say whether these excavators are for the regions – as you did in the past when you gave them to different Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) to manage – or are they solely for the NDIA?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, the NDIA is still managing these machines, but we are working in close collaboration with the RDCs and the NDCs. Most of the time, for example, we are giving the NDC these to manage also, but sometimes we do the operation and maintenance costs at the NDIA level.

Mr. Jordan: Minister, you mentioned that there is \$53 million to be spent on a steel sluice door at Cottage. I just want to confirm if this is Cottage/West Coast Berbice/Region 5 or Cottage/Mahaicony.

Mr. Mustapha: This is Cottage in Mahaicony. Remember, we had a failure where the pump is now being built. We had a failure at the pump station in Cottage. So, we put in a stoplog and now we are building a steel structure there.

Mr. Jordan: I just wanted to confirm that. At Cottage where the works are being conducted, what percentage of works have been completed thus far?

Mr. Mustapha: The entire pump structure has been constructed in terms of it being fabricated already. Only the basin in front remains and the pump which is to be installed. I will say close to 70% of the work have been completed already.

Mr. Jordan: Hon. Minister, is this the same pump station that you said – during the consideration in February – was 80% completed with a completion deadline of March of this year, or is this another pump station?

Mr. Mustapha: That is exactly it, Mr. Chairman. The process is in liquidated damages now. We are charging the contractor for liquidated damages. This is not only for that project alone. For a number of projects, we have been charging liquidated damages. We thought that he would have completed it very shortly, but he is still paying liquidated damages for these.

Mr. Jordan: Could the Hon. Minister now say to us what were some of the issues that caused the delay? We are seeing that it was from 30th March, and we are in November – almost completing the year 2024. In a span of over of 11 months, this contractor could not have completed 20% of the work. Now, you say it is at 70%. What were those major setbacks?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, the contractor and also our Engineer reported that the contractor suffered major failure in terms of the entire cofferdam field. He had to put a whole set of mechanisms in place. It would have taken a lot of time to rebuild the entire system, and that is why he went over the period. Recently, he had another failure, and he had to put a stop on the work for a period of time because of the failure of the sluice door. We installed a stoplog. Due to that, he had to wait before we could have put proper systems in place to finish. When that sluice collapsed, the entire system, the entire cofferdam, collapsed, and the whole system was in a disarray. He had to put it back in place. Also, the Engineer and the consultant told us that he had to correct a number of works on the steel structure because of the saltwater encroaching on the steel. So, he had to do those corrective works. That is the reason he had extended the time on the project.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I do hear the Minister with regards to the breaches and the works being set back, but in totality, Minister, can we conclude that this partially has to

do with the incompetence of the contractor or it is totally to be blamed on God's creation or God's work?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I cannot say it is the incompetence of the contractor. As I said, he suffered failure, but we are working with the rules. When this period of liquidated damages is concluded, I will ensure that we write to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) to terminate the contract if the contractor cannot complete the contract during that period.

Mr. Jordan: Will we continue to give him contracts or will we blacklist him? Will we continue to give him contracts? As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, is it okay for the Hon. Minister to say to us who that contractor is? I believe it was about \$900 million that was awarded with that contract on 1st December, 2021. He then had a completion date of September, 2023, which then moved to March, 2024. Who is the contractor?

Mr. Mustapha: The contractor is VALS Construction. For the Hon. Member's information, Mr. Chairman, we informed the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board about the performance of the contractor. If we terminate the contract, we will inform the board, and they have the duty to give him contracts or blacklist him.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think this might be my last question on this area. I just want to confirm from the *Hansard*...in February, the Minister said to us that the pump station was 80% completed. Could we conclude now that the pump station was not 80% complete?

Mr. Mustapha: It was, but as I said, the contractor and the contract suffered a lot of damage with the encroachment of the tide and failures. Then we had a regression of the work that was done; some of the steel had to be changed because saltwater invaded that area. So, what the Hon. Member said is true. It was at that point in time, but then we had a regression due to the failures.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to be back and forth, respectfully, but just before the Hon. Minister mentioned of all the defects and difficulties, he mentioned that it was 75% completed to date. In February, the Minister said it was 80% completed. That is why I drew the conclusion that the 80% in February was not accurate compared to what the Minister said just a few minutes ago about it being 75% completed. When did the regression happen, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, there are two items. There is the basin – if the Hon. Member knows what I am talking

about – from which you discharge the water and the discharge box. Those two items remain to be completed and the pump house. Now, the NDIA is procuring the pumps. We are procuring the pumps from the manufacturers. [An Hon. Member: Is it the Morrison pump?] It would not be a Morrison pump; it would be from any reputable manufacturer. What the Hon. Member said is true. At that point in time, we had that percentage of work completed but we had the failures. Two major issues remain to be completed – the basin and the discharge box.

Mr. Jordan: I am finished with that, Sir. For Abary, you said \$26.3 million is for the installation of a steel door. That was the sluice which gave away the other day and caused hundreds of residents to be flooded in Calcutta, Catherine, Novar and other villages. When is this expected to be completed, please?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, the fabrication has already started. I think that will be finished and installed within three weeks' time.

Item 3: 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture Development and Support Services – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority – \$2,971,767,888 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

6.55 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister and staff, for taking us through your line item. We are at Agency Code 26-264. Hon. Minister Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, this is for the Ministry of Natural Resources – Petroleum Management.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, you had conveyed condolences, on behalf of the House, to the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Vickram Bharrat. He is, of course...

Mr. Chairman: Would you be answering?

Dr. Singh: I would be happy to take any questions on his behalf, if there are any.

Mr. Chairman: The Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service has been asked to take this item.

Item 4: 26-264 Ministry of Natural Resources – Petroleum Management – Oil and Gas Sector Development Programme – \$125,235,496

Mr. Patterson: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate the payments of \$125.23 million, Sir?

Dr. Singh: Certainly, Mr. Chairman. Let me thank the Hon. Member for the question that he has posed. He will, of course, note that we are speaking here about specific resources which are typically donor or development partner financed resources. In this instance, the Hon. Member would, of course, be aware that Guyana is the beneficiary of a Guyana Petroleum Resources Governance Management Project, which indeed, I believe, was approved prior to our assumption of office and while the Hon. Member was himself a Member of the then Government.

That project is a World Bank project. It was approved in 2019, and it is currently in execution. The total value of the project is US\$20 million. Like I said, it is in execution. It addresses various institutional aspects of the petroleum/oil and gas sector such as strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks and strengthening, in particular, the capacity of key institutions to manage the sector. There are a number of agencies that are beneficiaries of these resources, including, of course, the Ministry of Natural Resources and other entities that have various mandates within the sector. The additional inflows are required because the pace of implementation of the project has picked up during the current year, and we anticipate that we will be disbursing more than we had originally anticipated at the time of the budget. So, we expect now to disburse an additional \$125 million – the amount indicated there.

In response to the question that the Hon. Member asked – and I suspect he probably has some familiarity with the various components of this project – the sum of \$125,235,496 can be disaggregated across the following three components of the project: firstly, the enhancement of legal frameworks, which is Component A, as it is described in the project document. It is enhancement of legal frameworks and stakeholder engagement. That component accounts for the bulk of the resources being sought. It amounts to \$102,786,718. There is Component B – capacity building of key institutions. That Component accounts for \$1,751,400. There is Component D – project management – and that component accounts for \$20,697,378. Within those respective components, there are a number of activities being supported and in relation to each, of course, in turn, a number of service providers who would all have been contracted within the World Bank procedures and all of whom would, in due course, be paid out of these additional World Bank resources for which we are seeking approval. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Patterson: I do not know if the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance

and the Public Service would be able to help us, but I will *give it a stab*. With regard to the same line item in the Budget Estimates of 2024 and under this same legal institution, there was \$25 million at the time, which is what the Minister provided, and it is actually for five studies. There is a study to produce water, which he said will be completed very shortly; block seismic activity, effective drilling, production and maritime and the marine environmental study as well as the data repository update. He did not call that, so I would not go there. Could the Hon. Minister say what is the position of those studies?

Dr. Singh: I believe the Hon. Member pre-empted my likely response in his own prefatory remarks as he was posing the question. I am not in possession of that information, but I am sure that were he to table a question through the appropriate channel, the responsible Minister would be more than happy to respond. Thank you very much.

Mr. Patterson: Okay. So, I take it that you would not, on behalf of the Minister, lay over the answers. Sir, we have two experts. They came free of cost, apparently from Kuwait. Their services were, according to the Minister, of course, free of cost but the other administrative costs were catered for under this item. They were producing a gas leak master plan. Could the Hon. Minister give this Committee an update on that? One, did the two experts from Kuwait arrive and two, what is the status of this gas leak master plan?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure that this is the occasion for random excursions into the sector. In relation to the resources that are being sought, I have already outlined the respective components for which we are seeking this financing.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, Sir, I am reading from the *Hansard* the responses given to me by the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources. If the Minister does not know, he can say so, but he cannot say that this is an excursion. Could I repeat my question, Sir, or do you want me to quote, for the enlightenment of the Minister, the response given by the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources in the Budget Estimate? It is not an excursion. These are the responses he gave, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister has answered. I will ask him if he wants to proffer another answer.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member is welcomed to repeat his question. I am indisposed to repeat my answer.

Mr. Patterson: This is nice transparency here. With regard to the enhancement of the legal framework for the sum of

\$102 million, could the Minister provide us the deliverables that would be derived from component one?

Dr. Singh: It would be recalled, Mr. Chairman, that when we assumed office in 2020, the oil and gas sector was completely devoid of a sound, legal and regulatory framework. We inherited, for example, a Natural Resource Fund Act that was rife with egregious deficiencies and shortcomings which we subsequently, in December, 2021, came to this House to amend and succeeded only in doing so in the face...*[Interruption]* In fact, I should clarify, Sir, that the first Natural Resource Fund Act was brought to this House after the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) had lost a no confidence motion, in the absence of any consultation with the then Opposition and now Government, and in the absence of the participation of any Member of the Opposition benches. It was a deliberately obtuse and deficient piece of legislation. We identified, at that time, under the leadership of the then Opposition Leader now Vice President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, several of those deficiencies. We indicated that, upon our assumption of office, we would repair those deficiencies. We did so, it would be recalled, by bringing a new Natural Resource Fund Bill which was considered in December, 2021.

That new Natural Resource Fund Act considerably strengthened the governance arrangements, including the transparency arrangements that would now require the publication of all receipts into the sector in the *Official Gazette*; that would ensure that all receipts are notified to this National Assembly; that would remove and eliminate the excessive ministerial and overreaching ministerial powers of that highly offensive piece of legislation that they rammed down the throats of the Guyanese people; that would ensure a simple and transparent formula for transferring resources from the Fund to the Consolidated Fund; and that would introduce a Board of Directors for the very first time and transfer to that Board of Directors the powers that were previously and entirely concentrated in the hands of their Minister of Finance, who at the time, incidentally, denied knowledge of a signing bonus which was received and secreted in a bank account whose existence he denied more than one year after the bank account was established.

Mr. Chairman, in addition, there was no local content framework, much less a local content act. We prepared a local content framework; we consulted with the oil and gas industry; we consulted with the non-oil private sector to

identify sectors that could potentially benefit from participation in the oil and gas activities.

7.10 p.m.

We consulted extensively. We brought that Local Content Bill to the National Assembly which, incidentally, the APNU/AFC objected to and voted against. Thereby, they undermined the interests of the Guyanese private sector and the Guyanese society at large from benefiting from the oil and gas sector. Nevertheless, the will of the majority of the people of Guyana prevailed. The Local Content Bill was enacted and it is now in law, as a result of which hundreds of millions of United States America (USA) dollars' worth of business have been generated to the benefit of the Guyanese private sector and to the benefit of the Guyanese people. We prepared a new Petroleum Activities Bill and brought it to this National Assembly. It would be recalled that the APNU/AFC were administering the sector under an ancient 1986 piece of legislation that predated the discovery of oil in this country. We prepared a modern Petroleum Activities law, brought it to this National Assembly and enacted it. Now, we have a modern legislation. We prepared a new modelled Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) and consulted on it. That modelled PSA formed the basis of the new blocks that we put out for a public international auction that saw the participation of major international companies from around the world.

All of those, Mr. Chairman, just to give you some examples, are evidence of the soundness with which the sector is being managed under this People's Progressive Party/Civic Government; a soundness that was completely missing under the APNU/AFC's Government. We continued to further strengthen the sector. Some of the activities that we are currently working on include strengthening the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) virements in particular, the HSE regulations, and strengthening the templates and the framework for... It would be recalled that when we came into Government, Guyana had been suspended from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) process. We had to restore Guyana to credibility under the EITI arrangement. We are now in good standing with the EITI. Small wonder that Guyana was suspended from the EITI because the signing bonus, as I said earlier, was mysteriously parked in a secret bank account. Small wonder that the EITI Secretariat suspended it from the EITI process. We are strengthening the EITI's validation templates. We are continuing to do work on making sure that we improve the timeliness of our annual EITI reports. As I said earlier, we

have introduced a Natural Resource Fund board. That board now produces numerous reports and we are supporting that process. This is just to name a few deliverables, some of which have been supported under this project. Those are just a few examples to elaborate and elucidate. Those are just a few examples of some of the initiatives that we are implementing under this project. Thank you, very much.

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Minister, on behalf of the Minister of National Resources, is saying that the majority of \$102 million is going to strengthen EITI, which I think Guyana was suspended because of a non-submission of a report under the PPP/C's Government. We were suspended. The Hon. Member is saying that out of this money here – \$125 million – being [*inaudible*] is to ensure that their incompetence does not cause us to be suspended once again. Is that what the Hon. Minister is saying? If my memory serves me correctly, Guyana was suspended in 2023 and not 2020. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that this money is to undo the flaws that the PPP/C created?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I heard the Hon. Member speak about us completing some report that he claimed started under his Administration. This is not a new tune. We have been regaled over the last four years of ideas that the APNU/AFC claim to have had, none of which they were able to deliver. They thought of a bridge but could not build it. They thought of a road but could not build it. They studied some plants but could not deliver them. They were studying what we would do in the gas sector but could not deliver a power plant or a pipeline. They were studying everything and thinking about everything but could not deliver them. We will deliver. They spent their entire five years in Government thinking, generating ideas, studying and producing reports. This People's Progressive Party/Civic Government have been delivering and will deliver actual outputs that benefit the people of Guyana.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, very much, for all the lovely comments that you made about the studies. We do acknowledge that we did a lot of studies. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that this allocation of \$125 million is going towards the strengthening of EITI and its templates, so that the repeat of what happened on 30th June, 2023, by the Board of EITI – suspending Guyana – will not reoccur? I do not think any of my other Colleagues or I were in Government at that moment.

Dr. Singh: It is a matter of public record that the EITI Secretariat restored Guyana to good standing under this

People's Progressive Party/Civic Government. It is also a matter of public record that the first piece of oil revenue received, which was a signing bonus, was hidden in a secret bank account under the APNU/AFC. Those are matters of public record. The first dollar of oil revenue received by this country was the US\$18 million signing bonus and it was hidden in a secret bank account by the APNU/AFC. One could only shudder to believe if they hid the first US\$18 million, what they would have done and what they were planning to do with the rest when it would, subsequently, have been received. Those are matters of public record. I believe I was clear. I listed a number of activities. I spoke about legal and regulatory frameworks. I spoke about support for key institutions. I spoke about project management. I spoke about the EITI's templates and strengthening them. I was very clear about a number of activities, including the regulations that we are developing in the health and safety area. I listed a number of activities. We have long established that the APNU/AFC have very limited facility when it comes to numbers. It would appear, too, that they have similarly limited facilities when it comes to language and comprehension. Thank you, very much.

Mr. Patterson: On behalf of the country, we are glad that the PPP/C is now taking the EITI's submission seriously. Could I ask him to say to the National Assembly exactly how much of this \$125 million has been apportioned to ensure that Guyana is not further suspended once again, because of the failure of the PPP/C Government?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, every ounce of this People's Progressive Party/Civic Government's energy will be devoted to ensure that Guyana is never brought into the international discredit that it was brought into under the APNU/AFC Government. It is not only when it comes to EITI, but in making us almost a pariah state as they did in 2020. We will ensure that never happens to Guyana again – never again. Thank you, very much, Sir.

Item 4: 26-264 Ministry of Natural Resources – Petroleum Management – Oil and Gas Sector Development Programme – \$125,235,496 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Demerara Harbour Bridge –\$138,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, through you, could the Hon. Minister disaggregate what the sum of

\$138 million is for and the method of procurement that is going to use to spend it?

Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman and I thank the Hon. Member for the question. This money will be used to pay for the repairs of the pontoon at Kwakwani. I thank the Hon. Member for asking the question because I will have an opportunity now to tell him how we got involved. The pontoon service at Kwakwani under the PPP/C was organised and engaged with a service provider who provided a service and allowed the Government and emergency vehicles to cross free. That service provider was responsible for the repairs and maintenance of that pontoon. When we left Office in 2015, the Hon. Member asking the question along with his other Colleagues in the Cabinet, who did not understand how business runs, took the pontoon service from the provider and put it to the Kwakwani Neighbourhood Development Council (KNDC) to operate it. Basically, the pontoon continued to run. There were no repairs. There was no maintenance. The moneys that were derived was used up by the KNDC and the pontoon deteriorated. The pontoon began to sink.

7.25 p.m.

In order for the economic activity in that community to continue, which is primarily forestry, as we always do, the Government of Guyana made an intervention. In that intervention, we took the pontoon out of service and with the support of the Demerara Harbour Bridge (DHB) and its sub-contractors, restored that pontoon to the satisfaction of all the residents in Kwakwani and the users. This money represents answering a problem that was created by the then Government who did not understand what will happen when they did what they did – having a pontoon operating without a mechanism to service and repairs. This money would be used to repair that pontoon, put it back into service, ensure that Kwakwani and the people in the forestry sector continue to enjoy the service, and that their economic activities and livelihoods would not be affected. The method of procurement is sole sourced to the Demerara Harbour Bridge. Thank you.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Patterson: Sir, in 2015, this pontoon was in the hands of National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) who gave it in the hands of a People's Progressive Party/Civic operative. The Government changed and for \$1.00 the elected Neighbourhood Democratic Council

(NDC) of Kwakwani was given control of the pontoon. The funds went to develop Kwakwani. Of course, we know how Kwakwani votes. In addition, the Maritime Department of Guyana (MARAD) and the Demerara Harbour Bridge maintained that pontoon for four years. The PPP/C took over and did absolutely nothing for four years. The four years were 2020, to 2024. They waited until the pontoon deteriorated and used that as an excuse to take it away from the good citizens of Kwakwani and deprive them of income. They now come to say that we do not understand. For eight years, from 2016 to 2024, it was operational and the people were able to give...

[Bishop Edghill: Everything was *(inaudible)* Yes, of course, Sir. Could I ask the Hon. Minister why it took him four years to even make any intervention for the people of Kwakwani?

Bishop Edghill: This is a public forum – Parliament. The people of Kwakwani are listening to this gentleman. The pontoon at Kwakwani remains with the Kwakwani Neighbourhood Democratic Council. It was not taken away from the people of the KNDC. The Hon. Member just said that. To stand in this House and tell the people the PPP/C used the deteriorated state of the pontoon to take it back and to give to a PPP/C supporter are misleading the House and is misinformation being tended.

Mr. Chairman: Do not impute that the Hon. Member is misleading the House. We could use other words.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am calling on him to withdraw that because the Hon. Member is ascribing motive that he cannot substantiate. I am calling on him to withdraw it.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, the Hon. Minister is saying that his Government did not take away that pontoon and give it to anybody else. What you stated may not be totally accurate.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Minister say what revenue now, ...

Mr. Chairman: We are dealing with the accuracy of the statement you made which has a lot of imputations with respect to the ...

Mr. Patterson: I am pleased to hear that the pontoon remains with the Kwakwani NDC. However, I am asking, what is the revenue sharing that the community of Kwakwani...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Sir, as long as you can hear me, I am okay.... are now enjoying the pontoon?

Mr. Chairman: No. The point we are at was the inaccuracy of your statement, which we are asking you to withdraw. Sir, prior to 2016, it was in the hands of a PPP/C operative.

Bishop Edghill: You just said we used it as a *(inaudible)* and then take it back.

Mr. Patterson: We wrote NICIL and it said that it had a special arrangement. Prior to 2016, all the money used to go...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if I am listening correctly, you are speaking of the period post-2020, when the Hon. Minister and this Government...

Mr. Patterson: It is prior to 2016. Sir, may I be pellucid? It was in the hands of a PPP/C operative. It was taken from NICIL; handed over by Cabinet to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, who rented it; who sold it to the people in Kwakwani for \$1.00. We maintained, operated and did all the maintenance for four years.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, clearly what I heard is what the Minister heard. You said the current Government took it. We will ask the Clerk to go back... I would hate to know I have to strike it out and that people would be honourable enough, just as the Prime Minister said, "I did not intend to say so, so I withdraw".

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports [Mr. Ramson]: You are asking that man to be honourable.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, thank you very much for the intervention. Hon. Member, you may now ask your question.

Mr. Patterson: If the House got the impression that I misspoke, I will withdraw it.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: What revenues are being paid over to the Kwakwani NDC for the usage of the barge?

Bishop Edghill: If a Member of this Assembly claims to represent people and, more particularly...

Mr. Chairman: Come on, Minister, we... Whomever...

Bishop Edghill: ...people of this country and represent people in Region 10, the KNDC is supported by a majority who went to the APNU and do not know that the pontoon is being operated by the KNDC; I have a difficulty with that.

Secondly, for him to ask me, what revenues are paid over to the owner of the barge is like asking someone who is not responsible for something, to explain to the whole world why it is being done. The Government is not responsible for the pontoon, neither the barge. My understanding when we went to repair this barge because it was sinking, I said, look, this is what the Government will do: we will bring in the people; we will fix the barge. May I take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to publicly at a national level, thank the more than 35 men who travelled to Kwakwani, spent several days working day and night, even during the rain to get this project completed. We were told that the KNDC did not even have the funds to buy fuel for the generators that the men needed to use to work at nights. If you understand business and you want to represent an issue, when the man you referred to as a 'PPP/C supporter' had the pontoon, the MARAD, the Demerara Harbour Bridge and Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) spent no money to repair it. The gentleman, from the revenues that he garnered, maintained and repaired the pontoon.

You took it from that gentleman and you gave it to the KNDC. By your own admission, you said the MARAD and the T&HD for four years, you used Government's money to repair the pontoon. The KNDC collected all the revenue. Now, it is a good time to have it audited for us to be able to say where the moneys went. If you pay \$22,000, Mr. Chairman, to cross a truck and at least five trucks cross a day, then we are supposed to have some moneys somewhere. If the Hon. Member, while he was the Minister used MARAD resources and the T&HD resources to maintain a pontoon in the Kwakwani area, where the PPP/C supporter who he referred to used to be able to generate the money, repair and maintain the pontoon, then you are seeing a difference in management style. You are seeing the difference in management style and that is no wonder Guyana went the way it went in the period of 2015 to 2020 when they were in Office.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, may I complete my answer. I am not finished.

Mr. Chairman: I think you are finished. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, proceed.

Mr. Patterson: I thank the Hon. Minister for his answer and I do appreciate that. We are going live. I am sure the people of Kwakwani will love to hear the Hon. Minister say to them that they squandered all the moneys and the next time he visits, they will welcome him with open...

Mr. Chairman: What is the question?

Mr. Patterson: The word is not 'squander', Sir. I withdraw that word.

Mr. Chairman: What is the question? I may have to start asking people to state the question first and then the ramble after.

Mr. Patterson: Fifty/Fifty/fifty, Sir. The question is... the people of Kwakwani would love to know what the Minister thinks of them and the KNDC. I am going to communicate that to them and play this clip for them.

Mr. Chairman: Is that the right Minister?

Mr. Patterson: No. The question is, prior to this intervention, which everyone is happy for, when did the Ministry of Public Works did any maintenance or provide any support for the barge at Kwakwani?

Bishop Edghill: The pontoon is a commercial operation. There is an operator who collects fees and provides a service. There is no need for the Ministry of Public Works to expend money to maintain the pontoon because the Operator collects fees. He has to service the pontoon and the barge, to keep the commercial operation going. When we went in, it was because there was no money. The Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and all the Councillors met me in my office about several other matters. I would not allow somebody to send a message that is inaccurate. They were appealing for help for many things. All the roads that we did in Kwakwani was in consultation with them. Everything we did was in consultation with them. We did not see the People's National Congress (PNC), the PPP/C and so on. We went to a neighbourhood democratic community, – a local authority – we consulted and engaged them.

7.40 p.m.

In this particular matter, it was not about if it was PNC or PPP/C. It was about the lives, the livelihoods of the people of Kwakwani and their economic future. The Government went in with an intervention and restored that. We handed them back a pontoon that says you have seven to 10 years based upon the work that was done in an open forum. Everybody was able to see what the bottom looked like, what the top looked like and the work that had to be done. They were there cooking and carrying food for the people to make sure the work was going because all the trucks were parked. There was nothing moving. I would not be admonished by someone who is ill-informed. I will say this, Mr. Chairman, to come to this House and to play politics about this pontoon is messing with the lives of the people of Kwakwani when the Hon. Member knows full well that the KNDC, while it received the revenue, did not... Either it did not have the capacity...

Mr. Chairman: That is the third time I have heard that. It is a repetition.

Bishop Edghill: Good, Sir.

Item 5: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Demerara Harbour Bridge – \$138,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Road Network and Expansion Project – \$51,811,073

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Sir. This is a simple question. It is non-contentious. This here is to facilitate the project closeout. Could I simply ask the Minister which project or projects are closing out with this sum?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, there again I thank the Hon. Member for the question and the opportunity to answer it. We are discussing the Sheriff-Mandela project, which was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Mr. Chairman, in 2020, when we took Office, this project was at a standstill. The IDB refused to disburse any funds to this project because of the way it was managed. Mr. Chairman, everything that could have gone wrong went wrong. The fact that most Members of this House, staff and all the people of Guyana, traverse Sheriff-Mandela tell you about the ability of the PPP/C to take dying things and resurrect them and restore them. This was one of those projects. Now that we were able to get it done, we had savings. I repeat the word, Sir, 'savings'. The project was completed and we had savings. We agreed with the IDB on some of the things that we will do with the savings. Even after the project was completed, substantial completion was achieved. We went

out to acquire some equipment and other things that will help the Ministry in the execution of its work. This is an inflow to allow for the closure of this project at this particular time. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, it was a simple question. However, is this the same Sheriff-Mandela project that was flagged twice under the PPP/C for corruption where contractors are banned up to today? Sir, is this the same Sheriff... [Ms.

Ferguson: Blacklisted.] ...and blacklisted. Mr. Chairman, you can go on the website. This loan was signed in 2012/2011, twice they went out. Mr. Chairman, if you go on the Public Procurement Commission's website right now, they are two contractors who have been blacklisted. Is this the same Sheriff-Mandela project in which the IDB Office of Institutional Integrity threatened to blacklist all IDB projects because of corruption in 2014? That was in 2014, before we even got here. Is this the same project that the Minister spoke of? Both times, the IDB cancelled it. The only project I know of, Sir, under our Administration, that the IDB committee of professional integrity wrote, not to me, to the President directly to say that how if you do not... Sir, I do not want to call the individual's name. Mr. Chairman, if you do not know, they would pull all their portfolios for something done under the PPP/C. Could I ask the Hon. Minister if this is the same project he spoke of?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am very amused. [Mr. Mahipaul: Amused?]

Yes. I am. The Sheriff-Mandela project that I spoke of is a project where a contractor by the name of Sinohydro Corporation Limited entered into a contract under APNU/AFC. That is the Sheriff-Mandela project that I am talking about. I am not talking about a 2014 project. I am talking about a contract that was awarded to a company Sinohydro Corporation Limited under the APNU/AFC. I am talking about a Sheriff-Mandela that the same IDB that the gentleman referred to refused to disburse any further funds under the APNU/AFC with the contractor on site. That is the Sheriff-Mandela project that I am talking about, so do not let us obfuscate the issue here tonight. The project that I am talking about is one where there was zero observance of occupational health and safety. The project that I am talking about is that even when the supervisory missions from the IDB came here, what they found under the management of the Hon. Member who is asking the question was so much lacking that they refused to continue to put development funds in a project that they were worried about.

In November, 2020, when we came to Office, the same Sheriff-Mandela road that used to be described as the abortion road – some people forget that – the same Sheriff-

Mandela road that was the concern of many people because of all the redesigns of where they wanted to expand to four lanes because of who was living where and who was there, it was that same project that was not properly handled that we took over, sat with the contractor and the consultants, and got this project delivered to the people of Guyana. They are all enjoying it now. That is the project I am talking about.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Sir. I acknowledge, Sir, this is the IDB's project. I acknowledge that we had a free, fair and transparent procurement, which was won by Sinohydro Corporation Limited under the IDB rules. I am trying to ask the Minister to clarify, prior to the award of the contract under the IDB and our National Procurement Tender Administration Board, Sinohydro Corporation Limited, is this not the same project where... [An Hon. Member:

(Inaudible)] It is on the Public Procurement Commission, Sir, so I can say... Invepar Construtora Ltda-me, out of Brazil; Mr. Vevakanand Dalip Enterprise and Ms. Sabrina Mary Williams have been debarred because of this by the IDB, so egregious was their crime, until the year 12th December, 2030? Is this not the same project, Sir, that the IDB wrote to the Government of Guyana and asked us to remove three Engineers from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure because of all their malpractice?

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I heard what the Hon. Minister said and I am hearing what you are asking...

Mr. Patterson: You could conclude that it is the project.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, it is a simple question. Is it not the same project?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We heard and I think the Minister heard. I am sure you heard what the Minister said too. Minister, one more time.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the moneys that are being sought as inflows to close out this project is an IDB-funded road project where the contractor was Sinohydro Corporation Limited awarded under the tenure of the APNU/AFC and the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, was the Minister of Public Infrastructure. It is the same project that the IDB refused to disburse any moneys because of what was taking place on it, so we are not talking about a contract with Dalip or anybody out of Brazil. We are talking about a contract that was entered into under the watch of the Hon. Member who asked the question. We had savings and this is what we did with the moneys in agreement with the IDB. They did not only disburse for us to finish the road, even

when we had savings they were so satisfied that they worked with us to find adequate ways of utilising all the remaining funds and that is what we are asking for here.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I thank the Minister for his clarification and his acknowledgement that of course, it is the same project that was...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please, the Minister was very specific with respect to what this allocation is for and in particular the companies and the extra work done because of the savings, and that is current.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I am acknowledging it is the same loan portfolio from the IDB.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know which same loan we are talking about.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the loan...

Mr. Chairman: Which part of that same loan? Please.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, this project was tendered twice under the PPP/C...

Mr. Chairman: I have heard enough on this and I think the House heard enough on it. Let us move on.

Mr. Patterson: No, thank you, Sir. The people of Guyana can *google* what is there of course. They know. Twice, debarred.

Item 5: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Road Network and Expansion Project – \$51,811,073 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5: 31-313 Ministry of Public Works – Transport – Ferry Vessel and Stellings – \$33,992,000

Ms. Ferguson: I recognise that this sum is actually a loan given by the IDB to facilitate project closeout. I would like to ask the Hon. Member... I note here you have ferry vessel and stellings so, could you disaggregate the moneys that will go towards the ferry stelling and also the ferry? Which ferry and stellings are you talking about? Thank you.

7.55 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I thank the Hon. Member for the question. The ferry that we are talking about, the ferry that should have been built that was not built, it is the ferry where there was a line of credit to build the Ogle to Eccles road that is now being built, and the ferry that goes to Region 1 which came as a line of credit when President Donald Ramotar visited India and it was

established. That was before 2015. We returned to Office in 2020. There was no road and there was no ferry, and the money was still there. The Member asking the question was the Minister within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure who had responsibilities for this. There was no road and there was no ferry. What we did, we were able in the shortest possible time to deliver to the people of Guyana the ferry, the Merchant Vessel (MV) Ma Lisha – that services the Region 1 area, that is air conditioned, carries 276 passengers, has wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) on board, cabins, and facilities that the people are now enjoying. It is the same ferry. It does not have anything to do with stellings, but the subhead in terms of our location for budgetary expenditure... The Hon. Member was a Minister and would know that the subhead is Ferry and Stellings. This is the retention money to close out the programme. That is all this is for.

Item 5: 31-313 Ministry of Public Works – Transport – Ferry Vessel and Stellings – \$33,992,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have 21 items on this Paper and we are at item five. So, clearly, we will go long beyond the time stipulated. Could I ask the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to move the motion that we go until we complete the business of the day?

Assembly resumed.

Suspension of Standing Order No. 10

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Order No. 10 be suspended to enable this sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 10.00 p.m.”

[Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip]

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir. We would like to move, under Standing Order No.10, that we proceed to conclude the sitting today with the passage of the Supplementary Financial Paper, that we be allowed to continue past the normal hour.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Order Suspended.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Let us now invite the Hon. Minister of Education and her team to take us through the next item.

Current Estimates

Item 6: 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post Secondary/Tertiary Education – Education Subventions and Grants - \$1,161,911,292

Mr. Chairman: We welcome, the Vice-Chancellor (VC) of the University of Guyana (UG), Professor Paloma Mohammed Martin.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, the sum that is requested here is \$1,161,911,292. May I ask the Hon. Minister if this is the sum that will fill the gap with reference to when the announcement was made for free tertiary education to December, if this is the amount for all the students at the University of Guyana.

Ms. Manickchand: This is the amount that will meet the costs of the University from now to the end of December.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, one follow-up question and I would appreciate it if the Minister could lay the answer over. Would the Minister be kind enough to provide this House with a breakdown of the tuition cost for each faculty programme that was in existence before the announcement for free tuition cost? Secondly, the free education, does it also cater for the miscellaneous fees like the lab fees, sport fees, student fees and so on? Tuition costs and miscellaneous, does it encompass everything?

Ms. Manickchand: The PPP/C, when it went to the electorate, before it created its manifesto about what it would do when it came into office, sought the views of the electorate as far as their needs went. Meeting after meeting, bottom house after bottom house, consultation after consultation, we met with Guyanese, particularly young people who said that what would be of great assistance to them would be if they could access tertiary university, tertiary education, post-secondary education that was free. As a result of that, a programme was crafted on the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) where collaborations with foreign universities are had. We are working currently with 20 foreign universities to provide certificates, degrees, Doctors of Philosophy (PhDs), masters, at no cost to the student. The Government picks up that cost. Happily, I report that we have more than 30,000 Guyanese people benefiting from that programme, the first of its kind in the country.

The second promise was that we would look at the University of Guyana in two tracks. One, to provide free university education and, two, to provide a pathway for the relief of those who had debts at the University. Happily,

President Ali has announced, in this House, that beginning January 2025 university education in Guyana, at the University of Guyana, will be free. That includes the tuition as well as fees – miscellaneous and otherwise – that students had to pay. That is a stark difference from what happened under the APNU/AFC when fees at the University were raised by more than 40%, when the University was met with rising costs. Instead of the Government innovating around that and funding it, they passed that cost on to the young people of this country. That is not what this PPP/C Government is doing. We are very happy to say to you that this free university education relates to both tuition as well as miscellaneous costs that ordinarily would have been passed on to the student learner at the University.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, it is good to hear that university education will once again be free. May I ask the Hon. Minister, from this sum requested, \$1.162 billion, what is the increase that is catered for here in terms of the percentage for the lecturers and other staff members at the University of Guyana?

Ms. Manickchand: This sum caters for all the University's costs between now and 31st December, including employment costs.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could we have the percentage of increase that will be given to the lecturers and other staff members at the University of Guyana?

Ms. Manickchand: I am not sure what you are prefacing your question on. I said this will meet all the employment costs and other costs of the University of Guyana, in accordance with what the institution has asked for, from now to 31st December, including salaries that have to be paid to lecturers and other ancillary staff.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, finally, will there be an increase in salary for staff members at the University of Guyana, lecturers and other staff? Will there be? Yes, or no?

Ms. Manickchand: As I said, we are dealing with a particular line item here that addresses \$1.161 billion. This \$1.161 billion, plus, will address all employment costs between now and 31st December at the University of Guyana.

Item 6: 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post Secondary/Tertiary Education – Education Subventions and Grants – \$1,161,911,292 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister; thank you, VC and staff of the University of Guyana. We now invite the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports and his team to take us through the next line item.

Capital Estimates

Item 7: 44-444 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports – Sports – Grounds Enhancement Programme – \$400,000,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Cde. Chairman, based on what I have seen written here in the Remarks column, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, what does the current work programme entail?

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports [Mr. Ramson]: Cde. Chairman, the Ground Enhancement Programme is where the Ministry invests in community grounds all across the country. The country has a deficit in investment and requires a lot more investment. Traditionally, prior to 2015, we were investing about \$300 million in community grounds every year.

8.10 p.m.

When the previous Administration came into Government, it had cut that funding by about 60%. Community grounds are very peculiar in this particular nature, which is that they require continuous investment.

The Ministry received \$1 billion for community grounds at the last budget reading. I want to share with the honourable Committee some of the locations that we have already used that expenditure for: Waramuri, Haimakabra, Liberty, Anna Regina, Vergenoegen, De Kinderen, Zeeburg, Meten-Meer-Zorg, Hague, Seaview, Meten-Meer-Zorg, Kastev, Parika/Salem, Stewartville Pasture, Leonora Primary School, Kawall School, Schoonord, Two Brothers School ground, Goed Fortuin Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) ground, Westminster multi-purpose ground, Zeelugt old scheme ground, Westminster ground, Hague back dam, Parika back, Cornelia Ida (CI), Stewartville Secondary School, Uitvlugt, Boundary, Farm, Den Amstel, Green Park, Groenveldt, Belle Vue, Wakenaam, Patentia, the Hugh Anderson Sports Complex ground in Goed Fortuin, Sans Souci, Tuschen, Arthurville, St. Lawrence, Windsor Forest, Ruby Back dam, CI, Farnum, St. Stephen's, farmers ground in Sophia, Turkeyen, Sunflower, Lamaha Springs, Prashad Nagar, Kanuku Street, Blygezight, St. Pius, Lodge, Lamaha Park, Cadet Lane, Liliendaal, Tucville, C Field, Alma Avenue, South Ruimveldt Gardens, E.R. Burrowes/Festival City, Eping Avenue, Tukeit Drive, Campton's Ground, High

Palm Street, Agricola, Houston, East Ruimveldt, Victoria, Two Friends/Dochfour, Good Hope, Helena, Belle West, Jonestown, Belfield, Section B/Non Pareil, Plaisance, Lancaster, Success, Hopetown, and Kamarang. In addition to that, working with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs during the National Tshaos Council's Conference, we also gave every Tshaos' council \$1 million each. So, in total, we gave the councils \$246 million for those communities. Cde. Chairman, that exhausted the sum.

For our work programme that we are looking to do for this \$400 million, this is a non-exhaustive list: Beterverwagting (BV), the polders, Whim, Cotton Tree, Number 5 Village, Bath, Plaisance, Sparendam, Blairmont, Pigeon Island; Section D/Non Pareil; two grounds in Cane Grove, Vryheid's Lust south, Mon Repos, Jai Hind, De Hoop, Victoria, Better Hope, Ann's Grove, Tuschen, Leonora, Christianburg, and Hope Estate. This is a non-exhaustive list. This is a list that I also drew with my Cabinet colleagues. They also have some special requests for some locations, along with His Excellency, to capture some of the areas that have not been covered. This programme has been one of the most important programmes from the Ministry. We have done a lot of grounds. In fact, we have invested in over 400 community grounds since coming into Government. The transformation has been fantastic; it has been remarkable. Just to be clear, Mr. Chairman, this programme will need continuous investment over the years in order to get all of the community grounds in this country up to a certain standard, and that is our intention. As you can see, from the sheer number which we have done, we are looking to invest in every single community ground and community space so that we can have good public spaces for all our citizens to access. Thank you very much.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Cde. Chairman, I did not receive the answer that I asked for. My question was very direct – what does the current work programme entail? What the Minister did was give me a list of about 93 grounds. I do not know what was done on the grounds. I wanted to get an idea of what exactly they are doing on these grounds. Since the Minister took the time to call the names of these grounds, then I would like to know what work was actually done on at least five of the grounds, so that I can get an idea.

Mr. Ramson: At least five of the grounds...

Ms. Flue-Bess: I am not finished.

Mr. Ramson: Sure. I am happy...

Ms. Flue-Bess: The Minister is asking for some additional moneys. The Remarks states that it is for an “expanded work programme”. So, I need to get an idea of what is the current work programme and what aspect of the work programme does he intend to expand.

Mr. Chairman: Just be careful, because you just opened the door for him to repeat all he just said. You said the current and he mentioned all. He did mention all the grounds which he will cover with this new allocation. Minister, that is what I heard.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Mr. Chairman, excuse me.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I will be direct again. I asked, what does the current work programme entail? The Minister listed a set of grounds, but he did not say what was done. I am asking for him to say what was done on the first five grounds on his list. Thank you.

Mr. Ramson: Generally, our focus is on getting the grounds usable. It depends on the circumstances of the grounds. Let us use Liberty, for example. We had to do the impoldering. This is Region 2 in the Pomeroon. This is just an example of what we had to do – impoldering, installing high-density polyethylene (HDPE) tubes; constructing a fence; constructing a timber bridge and completing a pavilion. That is one location. So, those are several projects that we would do at one location. Every ground has its unique situation – some might need fences; some might need bridge access; some might need pavilions; and some might need lights. Let us use another location, Vergenoegen. We did the construction of a fence, and we did some landfilling. At De Kinderen, we did repairs to a fence. In Zeeburg, we did repairs to a fence and landfilling. In Meten-Meer-Zorg, we did landfilling. In Hague/Seaview we did landfilling and constructed a fence. Those are the five.

We are focused specifically on getting the grounds usable – access, which is if they need a bridge access; culverts with concrete bridges, making sure that they are high enough so that they do not flood; and then protecting them from animals, particularly cows and horses. Once you do work to the ground, you do not want the animals to come in and destroy the ground and the work already done. Some grounds are already beyond that space, in terms of just having that because we have done the investment already. Let us say, they ask for a washroom, a pavilion or lights... For example, just this weekend, we were at the Charlestown, Farnum Ground and we put in the lights in the location, and

we are going to continue to do that. The point that I am making is, that is not the question asked but we are happy to discuss all the projects. Every single ground has more than one project. Almost every single ground will have more than one project. When you go back to the location again, they will have something else that they want. As I said, every single facility has a deficit in what is needed and what they want, and what they want to use it for. Those are some of the projects that we completed.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. I note that during our budget presentation and questioning there were 251 grounds listed in the legend where you explained the target for 2024. We asked for a list of those grounds to be laid over to the House, and we never got a copy of it. That was supposed to be covered by this \$1 billion. When I looked at 251 grounds, which was your target, and divided that, I note that there was over \$3 million expected to be spent on each of the grounds. The list of grounds that was given, which is just about 93, and the explanation that you have given for that is, the \$1 billion has been expended completely. So, I have a follow-up question. I know that you were in Bel Air, I think, where you did a ground and a bridge. There is no fencing there, and I noticed that there are horses grazing on that ground. From this \$400 million that you are asking the Assembly for, will any money be spent on that facility?

Mr. Ramson: I think that I have answered that question already.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Ramson: I have answered the question already.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Nima Flue Bess...? Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On the very project code, the Hon. Member listed in excess of 93 grounds, or approximately 93 grounds that they did for 2024. Could he say to the Committee whether those works were tendered and what...?

Mr. Ramson: Yes. They were all tendered. We followed public procurement.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, let her complete, please.

Ms. Ferguson: You are too quick. Mr. Chairman, thank you for protecting me. Could the Hon. Minister inform the Committee what method of procurement was used to effect the works? With this expanded programme, could he state

whether there will be public tendering and what method he intends to use? Thank you very much.

Mr. Ramson: The Hon. Member will never need protection from me – just to be clear about that. Yes. We follow all the laws of Guyana, which includes the public procurement process. As you read through our audit in the Report of the Auditor General, you will see that there are no breaches there when it comes to our community Grounds Enhancement project. That is one. Two, when it comes to the work that has to be executed now, there is not going to be any change to how we do it. We are going to execute it in accordance with the laws of Guyana.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Cde. Chairman, I would like to know what is the total cost spent on the ground at Region 2? You said it was Liberty.

Ms. Ramson: Yes. It is \$12.3 million.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated... Hon. Member Mr. Jones.

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: Thank you very much, Cde. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Committee whether the Tucville Community Centre...?

Mr. Ramson: That was already answered, Hon. Member.

Mr. Jones: Was this specifically about the Tucville ground?

Mr. Ramson: Yes, we spoke about it.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead with your question, Sir.

Mr. Jones: All right. How much money was allocated to this ground? What is the percentage of completion in terms of works done?

8.25 p.m.

Mr. Ramson: We had it on the list that we called out, but I can tell you how much money was spent on the ground. Let me just find it here. It was \$6.8 million.

Mr. Jones: Thank you. Was this \$6.8 million allocated or spent?

Mr. Ramson: This was spent.

Mr. Jones: Could you say the completion of works done?

Mr. Ramson: As I said, we do our work based on projects. We would identify the projects that are required, we prioritise them, which are the ones that we have to do first.

In terms of the projects, those are completed but there is more work to be done on the ground.

Mr. Jones: Cde. Chairman, I will beg the Minister for the specificity, in terms of the amount of work done on the ground. Could the Minister indicate what are the works that have been completed, what are the works still outstanding to be done, and what percentage is remaining to be done?

Mr. Ramson: I answered that already. For the projects, I can name the project that was completed this year out of the 2024 Budget, which was that fence, the fence that came around on the eastern side. No, actually, it is both sides. The sum of \$6.8 million was for the fence. That project is complete. There is still more work to be done on the ground. In fact, the folks from Tucville came to see me about two weeks ago. They have asked for the lights to be installed. That is a project to be done. We are going to continue to do work in every single community ground. We do not have a large allocation to get all of the work done in one go. In any event, it is far better to do it this way, where the community consultation happens. They make the request for their projects that is based on the priorities and, then, we would do one, two, or three projects at the same time, depending on what the various costs and estimate are; and then we would go back and do it again for the next year. So, we will continue to make the investment in Tucville. Actually, all of the grounds in Georgetown are being invested in right now.

Mr. Jones: Cde. Chairman, noting that the Minister indicated that we cannot do all of the work at one time, could the Hon. Minister indicate if Tucville ground was one of those grounds for the Grounds Enhancement Programme in 2023 or 2024? If, yes, what was the allocation for 2023 and the allocation for 2024?

Mr. Ramson: I do not have that information in front of me. This is only dealing with 2024.

Mr. Chairman: I was about to mention that we are dealing with the allocation here. It would be unfair to go back again because the information would not be at one's fingertips.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, I heard when you gave the listing Sunflower Circle, could you say whether it is Sunflower Circle, East Ruimveldt or Sunflower Circle, South Ruimveldt?

Mr. Ramson: It is at South Ruimveldt.

Ms. Ferguson: All right; good. You further stated that works were done on the Lamaha Park ground. Am I correct?

Mr. Ramson: Yes.

Ms. Ferguson: Good. Could you say what works were done and the cost?

Mr. Ramson: Lamaha Park was a massive, massive forest. We spent \$9.9... I do not want to mislead you. We spent \$9.946 million to clear and fill the ground.

Ms. Ferguson: Clear and fill the ground. A follow-up, Mr. Chairman. Could you provide us the disaggregation, the cost you spent to clear and the cost you spent to fill the ground? By the way, could I ask a further question or perhaps I might be suggesting a response.

Mr. Chairman: I think you have to ask my permission to ask a question, not his.

Ms. Ferguson: Sorry, Sir.

Mr. Ramson: I do not have it as disaggregated. It is a total.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are asking about the allocation here. I do not have a problem with allowing some flexibility for an update on the amount spent so far, but please, it would be unfair for the Minister who is coming here to defend this allocation to walk with all of the comprehensive information that could be requested. The Minister does not have that at his fingertips.

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

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Ferguson: Since the Hon. Minister does not have the information and he is not prepared to provide responses, could he then lay over...

Mr. Chairman: Who said that he is not prepared to?

Mr. Ramson: I am not prepared... I am providing responses.

Mr. Chairman: No one ever said so. Come on. We are going good, and you are just beginning to spoil it.

Mr. Ramson: You are getting like Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul.

Ms. Ferguson: Is he prepared to lay over?

Mr. Ramson: Yes. I am prepared to lay over.

Mr. Chairman: He is prepared to. Hon. Member Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones: Thank you. Could the Hon. Minister indicate how much moneys were allocated to Belladrum, Calcutta and Rosignol grounds in the 2024 Budget allocation?

Mr. Ramson: None.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated...

Mr. Jones: Sorry, Cde. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: He answered.

Mr. Ramson: None.

Mr. Jones: None. All right. I have a further question.

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

Mr. Jones: With regard to St. Stephen's ground, could the Minister indicate how much money is allocated to that ground, as well as the Bartica Community Centre ground?

Mr. Chairman: I think St. Stephen's ground is well used today. Is that right, Minister?

Mr. Ramson: St. Stephen's ground, \$8.6 million. [An Hon. Member: *(Inaudible)*] So far, nothing, but it is most likely to be on the programme.

Mr. Jones: Forgive me again, Cde. Chairman, because I know we are pressed for time. The challenge I am having is, the Hon. Minister indicated in 2023 that he would layover the community grounds that were targeted last year. Similarly, in 2024, he committed to lay over the grounds that were targeted for 2024 but we have not received them.

Mr. Chairman: I think we had that line of questions similarly from the Hon. Member Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Jones: Was it on the grounds?

Mr. Chairman: No.

Mr. Jones: Oh!

Mr. Chairman: On the trajectory.

Mr. Jones: So, that is the challenge.

Mr. Chairman: I disallowed it.

Mr. Jones: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: So, let us confine ourselves to the expanded programme for the resources being asked now. Thank you.

Mr. Ramson: Thank you very much.

Item 7: 44-444 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports – Sports – Grounds Enhancement Programme – \$400,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister and your team. We now invite the Hon. Collin Croal, the Minister of Housing and Water and his team to defend item eight.

Item 8: 45-452 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing Development – Infrastructural Development and Buildings – \$6,525,482,932

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Member, could he inform the National Assembly what percentage of the initial voted sum has been spent as of today?

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]: It is 95%.: There is an allotment report you can check.

Ms. Ferguson: It is 95%. Could the Hon. Member say whether the 5% remaining will be going to retention fees? What would the 5% take care of?

Mr. Croal: No. It would not be rolled over. It will all be maximised in this year's budget. You will appreciate that I am here to answer on the supplementary that... *(inaudible)*.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Collin Croal, do not determine for me what I should ask and what I should not ask. Anyway...

Mr. Chairman: Are you speaking to me, Hon. Member?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I now turn our attention to the sums now being sought, which is some \$6.5 billion. In the Remarks column, you spoke about the expansion of the work programme. Could you explain to the Committee what work programme or what this \$6.5 billion will take care of and, if you can, provide us with a disaggregation?

Mr. Croal: Sure, Mr. Chairman. There are five activities. One has to do with the widening of the expanded road work in the vicinity of the Stadium and the Heroes Highway. I am referring to the Massy Road, the Stadium Road, the road that connects both the Stadium Road and the Massy Road but in front of Windsor Estate. That is one activity. It was not here in this year's budget. The second activity has to do with the access road that will lead to the Heroes Highway when the Demerara Harbour Bridge is completed, which is landing in the vicinity of Nandy Park. So, that is the second activity. The other activity has to do with the infrastructure work at Wales. It is a new housing development. The other activity has to do with the electrical installation infrastructure works to expand our electricity network in the new housing areas. The last activity has to do with the four-lane road being constructed at Liliendaal. So, it is five activities.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, it seems as though the Hon. Member did not hear the second part of my question. Since

he has provided five activities that this expanded programme will take care of, could he provide the Committee with a disaggregation of each activity that will bring us to \$6.5 billion?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, sure. The sum of \$1.5 billion would be for the road widening. That is the Massy, Windsor Estate and Greenfield Roads. The sum of \$1.6 billion would be for the Access Road that would connect the Demerara Harbour Bridge to the Heroes Highway. The sum of \$2.4 billion would be for the Wales development infrastructure work. Another \$653 million would be for the electrical installation infrastructure development works and the four-lane at Liliendaal, \$359 million. That would take us to \$6.5 billion.

8.40 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member inform the National Assembly whether tendering will be done for the extra work and what procurement method the Ministry intends to utilise?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the tendering activity was completed.

Ms. Ferguson: Since the Hon. Member has informed us that the tendering activity has been completed, could he say what method was used, and which companies were awarded the contracts? Thank you.

Mr. Croal: For the electrical installation, *et cetera*, – public tender; the Wales development – public tender; the access road from the Demerara Harbour Bridge to Heroes Highway – public tender; the road widening in the vicinity of Massay Road, Windsor Estate/Greenfield Road – selective tender; and the four-lane here in Liliendaal – selective tender.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, again, the Hon. Member missed the second part of my question. For each activity, you have listed the type of procurement method used. Could you now provide to the National Assembly the names of the contractors or the companies that have been awarded the contracts? Thank you very much.

Mr. Croal: Sorry, I did not realise you wanted that detail. Let us go. The road widening was divided into seven lots. The contract sum was done individually. For the supplementary request... Which one do you want? Do you want the contract sum or the supplementary request? Obviously, you would not ask for all. **[Ms. Ferguson: (Inaudible)]** Sure. That is all right. The enhancement

work around the stadium, *et cetera*, under Aronco Services Incorporated, \$240 million. Am I allowed to say names?

Mr. Chairman: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Croal: S. Jagmohan Construction and General Supplies Incorporated, \$210 million; AJM Enterprise, \$180 million; Japarts Construction Incorporated, \$195 million; Vals Construction, \$165 million; GuyAmerica Construction Incorporated, \$285 million and Gaico Construction, \$225 million. These are all in the millions. That gives a total of \$1.5 billion.

The Liliendaal Project, \$358 million – KP Thomas and Sons; the four-lane from the Demerara Harbour Bridge to the Heroes Highway is four lots, \$326 million. Let me paraphrase, for lot 1 it is \$195 million – BK International Incorporated; lot 3, \$897 million – Ashoka Buildcon Limited; another lot at \$326 million going to L'Heureuse Construction and Services Incorporated; another one \$212 million to – China Railway First Group Company Limited. That gives a total of \$1.6 billion.

For the other projects at Wales there are 14 lots. I will call them in order, \$238 million – Guy-Canada Infrastructure; \$190 million – Veira 66 Logistics; \$238 million – Puran Brothers Disposal Incorporated; \$333 million – Khans Enterprise; \$262 million – Build Smart Construction and Supplies Incorporated; \$167 million – Eagle Transport and General Construction Incorporated; \$238 million – S&D Construction; \$191 million – Romcol Construction Engineering and Maintenance Services; \$309 million – Builders Hardware General Supplies and Construction; \$333 million – Expert General Contracting Service; \$214 million – Puran Brothers Disposal Incorporated; \$357 million – Brandon Construction Services; \$309 million – Extreme Construction Incorporated; and \$262 million – L'Heureuse Construction and Services.

The last set of projects now is for the electrical installations. Four lots to SPR Enterprises – \$28 million, \$32 million, \$33 million and \$32 million; four lots to N. Balgobin and Sons Contracting Services and Electrical Supplies – \$52 million, \$46 million, \$36 million, and \$33 million; four lots to Twins Enterprises – \$16 million, \$18 million, and \$6.5 million; N. Balgobin and Sons Contracting Services and Electrical Supplies, another four lots – \$18 million, \$19 million, \$15 million, and \$19 million; Cummings Electrical Company Limited, four lots – \$26 million, \$29 million, \$29 million, and \$28 million; and four lots to Twins Enterprises – \$31 million, \$30 million, \$29 million, and \$29 million. That gives a rounded \$653 million.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to the electrical infrastructure works to be done? You said the Ministry will be spending \$653 million. Could you say which housing areas are likely to benefit from this \$653 million?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, if I may guide you on how the procurement for electrical works. We buy in bulk, and that bulk goes towards prioritising as the housing schemes are completed. This is not going to any one area. This is going for us to bring all the 2023 housing schemes up to date, and then, of course, push forward to have this year's new housing areas covered for electricity.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I know for a fact that there has been a number of allocations and people are still waiting for the electrical installation and, also, the various infrastructure works to be done so that they can access their lands. Even though you are buying in bulk, it would be good for you to say now to the people of Guyana, well, Perseverance expects electrical installation by XYZ, could you provide a time frame for when these areas will be able to access electricity services?

Mr. Croal: What I could recommend, Mr. Chairman... The Hon. Member could ask that and I could give a detail... I do not have all the areas here with me, but I can provide...

Ms. Ferguson: You could lay it over.

Mr. Croal: Not layover. I do not deal with layovers. Ask me the question and I will answer. I can provide all those answers – our electricity plan for the new areas.

Ms. Ferguson: I am happy to hear the suggestion from the Hon. Minister. I hope that when the questions are put, the Minister will provide the necessary information as he has committed to. That being said, Mr. Chairman, I think I have exhausted my questions for this particular line item. Thank you very much.

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Minister, you have four lots here for the new bridge to the Heroes Highway. Could I ask what is the contract period on each of these lots?

Mr. Croal: The expected completion would be mid-June, 2025.

Mr. Patterson: Just for clarity, for all four lots, could you... I do not know if you can, but I will ask. The new Demerara Harbour Bridge is 70% completed and is supposed to be handed over on 31st March, 2025, some three months before the roads will be completed, I do not know if it is your

Ministry, but could you tell me how persons will be able to access this road?

Mr. Croal: There will be many access points. This is just one. There are many branches off from the bridge. This is just one.

Mr. Patterson: Is this just one?

Mr. Croal: Yes. This is connecting straight to the Heroes Highway.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, could you enlighten the country of the other access points to the bridge?

Mr. Croal: I will just speak to this. The Minister of Public Works could speak on the bridge.

Mr. Patterson: Okay, Sir. That is very good, I think. Your contracts are finishing in June. The bridge is finishing, according to the Minister of Public Works...

Mr. Croal: You asked for the contract time period.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, gentlemen, please. We are speaking to the House, not to each other.

Mr. Patterson: My apologies for the informality.

Mr. Chairman: He was quite clear. He is concerned about one and the Ministry of Public Works. You are about to venture into something that you need to ask Minister Edghill, but that is not contained here.

Mr. Patterson: He said there are many access points, and I was just moving on.

Mr. Croal: They are exit points.

Mr. Patterson: Pardon me?

Mr. Chairman: There are many exit points.

Mr. Chairman: Gentlemen, please. Hon. Member, if you do not have another question, I will put...

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I was going to ask... but the Minister wanted to continue. [**Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)]

Mr. Chairman: No. I have a long time here and you too. Go ahead.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, could I ask the Minister if there is an appointed supervisory consultant on the contracts for the bridge, and who it is since he came with no supplementary for them?

Mr. Croal: It is the Project Department of the Central Housing and Planning Authority.

Item 8: 45-452 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing Development – Infrastructural Development and Buildings – \$6,525,482,932, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the schedule.

Item 8: 45-453 Ministry of Housing and Water – Water Service Expansion and Management – Coastal Water Supply – \$1,901,831,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, the Legend is suggesting to us that the moneys being requested here, \$1.9 billion, is to take care of expanded work programmes on the coastland. Could the Hon. Member provide to us a disaggregation of this money, and what are his new expanded programmes that this money will take care of?

8.55 p.m.

Mr. Croal: This is tied in mainly to our national programme of bringing or fulfilling our commitment to treated water across the coastland by the end of 2025, to have a minimum of 90% coverage of treated water to households. Three years ago, we were somewhere around 52%. We started this year at 57%. As I speak, in terms of coverage, we are somewhere around getting close to 70% to 75%. In order to do this, a number of activities were required. It entailed seven new large treatment plants, 15 small plants and the upgrading of 12 existing plants. To complement these, there will be the drilling of a number of wells that will supply these plants, as well as cater for the increased output that is expected and, similarly, the changing over of transmission lines to accommodate the increased service as a result of the pressure you will have from that output. That means for Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 where we are at home.

What we came here for are for the following activities: One, we are asking for \$248 million. This is for 14 small treatment plants in the following areas: Region 4 – Agricola, La Bonne Intention (LBI), Lusignan; Region 5 – Perseverance, Calcutta, Straths Campbelle, Weldaad and Farm; Region 6 – Crabwood Creek, No. 69 Village, Edinburgh, Johanna, Mibicuri and Chesney. That is one activity. Another activity is for the drilling of a potable well in Mon Repos. That is for \$160 million. Another activity is the drilling of a fourth well at Parika and Onderneeming. These are to go directly to the treatment plants that are being constructed there for Parika and Caledonia. Within two weeks all persons on that system will be getting treated water. The fourth activity is for design, supply and

installation of water treatment plant at Five Miles Bartica. There is a system in Central Bartica, but it cannot cover the expanded areas that we have. For example, we have new housing development that will eventually reach to Seven Miles, *et cetera*. That is for \$458 million. Drilling of a potable well at Mara. This is the only activity I am listing that is not related to the treatment plant. This is because of a Presidential commitment and a necessity.

Similarly, the \$300 million for three in-line filters for Ithaca, DeHoop and Lima Sans... In addition to what I have just identified in terms of small treatment plants, we also have a number small in-line filters that are being put into small plants. These three areas are not catered for. I can go through where the others are if you would like.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Croal: I just said Lima Sans is one we have added. The other areas are Agricola, within La Bonne Intention (LBI), Sparendaa, Lusignan, Weldaad, Farm, Calcutta, Strath Campbelle, Perseverance, Johanna, Mibicuri, Crabwood Creek, No. 62, No. 74, Chesney and Edinburgh. The seventh activity is for transmission mains along Caledonia, which is on the East Bank Demerara and that is about \$216 million. Supply and installation of transmission systems from Farm, Westminster Pump Station Lust En Rust Water Treatment Plant – that is about \$145 million and along the Timehri Phase II – \$149 million. That takes you to \$1.9 billion.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, I am happy to know that the Government is trying its best to bring treated water to our people by virtually drilling and building these treatment plants. What I want to ask the Hon. Minister is, with all this money being spent to construct new treatment plants, drilling and so forth, I know for a fact that in Central Georgetown we are having some major issues with the colour of the water coming through the taps, and, I guess many other areas are experiencing those kinds of challenges, could the Hon. Minister inform the National Assembly what the Ministry is doing, even if it is a temporary solution, to solve this high iron content that people are getting through their taps?

Mr. Croal: In the meanwhile, what they normally do is frequent flushing. Depending on different areas, I will respond to the two areas you used as examples. The Shelter Belt, that is not present but maybe two months ago, you had water of a different colour. That had to do with the Conservancy and the building up of silt. We have put additional mechanisms to prevent a re-occurrence. That has been addressed. If you looked over the last week, you would

have seen complaints coming from areas like Parika, Greenwich Park, *et cetera*. That is because they are testing the Parika new treatment plant. As a result, they are flushing out the iron. In maybe a week or two, that will be very clear. It depends on where I could answer but the general answer is, in the meanwhile all of this is happening, and believe me, we would like for all of this to happen as quickly as possible, the resources by the Government are committed to ensuring that as quickly as possible, we can do this. We can only flush out frequently as we get the complaints.

Ms. Ferguson: I am happy to hear what the Minister said in terms of how the Ministry is addressing these issues. It is not only in the areas that I have highlighted – Farm, Tucville and South Georgetown. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Minister, you would agree with me that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) inherited a well-functioning Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) sector. Water used to be running 24 hours... [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)] Or 24/7. Now, it seems as though the People's Progressive Party/Civic has returned to their old way of rationing water. Could the Hon. Member say to the National Assembly why he is rationing the water and why is it that citizens are not benefitting from 24/7 water supply in their homes? Thank you very much. This is the entire Guyana.

Mr. Croal: The questions were going good until now. The question was asked if the PPP/C inherited a better functioning GWI. What did we inherit? [Mr. Jones: If you agree...] No. I do not. We inherited ... [Ms. Ferguson: Move on.] I cannot move on because you opened the batting. We inherited an indebted GWI. We inherited a GWI that was not fixing leaks. For example, we have a number of new areas that are coming on stream so obviously the supply stream has increased. We inherited a GWI that had a double complement of staff... [interruption]

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mahipaul, I want to hear...

Mr. Croal: ...and the efficiency was not there. I can go on and on. In terms of the system now, from time to time, there are wells that will draw away and that is a natural way. As I speak, we have a well that is being drilled right in the Shelter Belt. There is one in Shelter Belt and there is one not too far from here at Turkeyen. We just completed one at Cummings Lodge. [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)] I am giving you Georgetown. We have the one on the Back Road that is being advertised right now. I can go on and on. That we will see when we finish those changing out of the transmission lines... For example, all those disruptions you

see on Main Street, High Street, *et cetera*, are to remove all those aged pipes to allow us to be able to increase the pressure. If we are to increase the pressure, you will see the re-occurrence of leakages, as in the Bank of Guyana, Umana Yana, and by the Parliament, in fact, *et cetera*. We have a programme that we are implementing now. Yes, you will see more disruptions of the roads, but it is for the long-term good.

Ms. Ferguson: I am taken by surprise. Why would the Hon. Minister inform this National Assembly that his Government inherited a bankrupt and inefficient sector when the very gentleman who was manning the sector is now good for you to be Guyana's Ambassador to Venezuela? I know he is performing at high standards because I know the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman: The gentleman has reached his calling.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, my final question to the Hon. Minister is, could he say when customers or Guyanese should expect full water supply? There must be a period that he is working with. Could he share that information?

Mr. Croal: Different areas have different time periods. Could you give me some specifics?

Ms. Ferguson: Consumers in general.

Mr. Croal: For the East Bank of Demerara, we have completed the Eccles transformation. Eventually, Eccles, Caldonia, Covent Garden and Grove will all be interlinked. For the East Bank of Demerara, all things being equal, that should be within a month the most. For Georgetown itself, we still have the drilling ongoing at Shelter Belt and some others as I have highlighted. That will be part of the programme sometime in the new year to be able to have that full service. I could go on and on. If you ask me the specifics, I could. The Treatment Plant programme – while we speak about treated water as part of that programme, this ensures the drilling of new wells. Throughout the process, you have, wherever required, new wells that are being drilled to ensure that those new wells supply that source. I will give you an example. For Vergenoegen, we drilled a new well because we upgraded the Treatment plant there. As early as one week from now, they will start benefitting from that service. Minister Indar will be able to shower better. Across the board, this Government is committing that with the current customer base that we have. In 2025, there will be 90% full coverage and treated water.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I have no further questions for the Hon. Minister.

Item 8: 45-453 – Ministry of Housing and Water – Water Services Expansion and Management – Coastal Water Supply - \$1,901,831,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

9.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister and your staff, for taking us through this item. Hon. Members, let us take a 20-minute break and we will come back at 9:30 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 9.10 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 10.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated. We shall resume in Committee of Supply to continue consideration of Financial Paper No. 4.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: I invite the Hon. Minister of Health and his team to take us through the Ministry of Health.

Current Expenditure

Item 9: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$600,000,000

Dr. Cummings: In this Chart of Account 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, there was a voted provision earlier this year for \$4.5 billion towards this line item. Further, provision was previously sought for another sum of \$19,962,330. At this point in time, the agency is asking for \$600 million. Mr. Chairman, we are in the last week of November and have just about six weeks left in the year. I am wondering if this sum, which is intended for additional resources to facilitate an expanded work programme, is taking into account the time. Will the drugs be delivered in a timely manner? Also, bearing in mind that the Auditor General, I think under section 4(12), had recommended that these agencies ensure that the suppliers of drug and medical supplies honour their contractual agreement and obligation. I am wondering if this amount would be utilised within the time frame. The second question is, who are the suppliers?

Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]: The \$600 million that is being sought, we would be able to utilise it in the time that is prescribed. With the \$600 million, what we are doing here is buying medicines for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) patients. We are also buying medicines for tuberculosis (TB) patients. We are using some of the money to buy supplies for

the National Public Health Reference Lab and also for patients with malaria. The suppliers – we have gone to tender. We had a public tender and the company that won the tender for pharmaceuticals is the New GPC Incorporated. In terms of the medical supplies, the laboratory supplies, the tender was sole-sourced, and it went to Western Scientific Company Limited. The reason we had to sole source from Western Scientific Company Limited is because a lot of the equipment that we have in the Ministry are Minrays and some other brands that are exclusive to Western Scientific Company Limited. Thus, for the reagents, we had to go directly to them to get the reagents.

Dr. Cummings: Through the Chairman, I am assuming that we will have adequate viral load kits, testing and so forth because there was a shortage. I am a little worried because, according to the Auditor General's Report, under Section 4(12), the two companies mentioned, Western Scientific Company Limited and New GPC Incorporated, both have outstanding deliveries to the tune of \$84 million – New GPC Incorporated \$513 million and Western Scientific Company Limited \$14,000,323. This was in August, 2024, by now, have they delivered those drugs?

Dr. Anthony: I do not think we are discussing the Auditor General's report here but just for your comfort, I will let you know that the supplies that were mentioned in the Auditor General's Report have been delivered.

Item 9: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$600,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Dietary – \$35,215,250

Dr. Cummings: Of course, it is well documented, the relationship or the link between nutrition and diet, well nutrition and disease as we want to reduce the prevalence and incidents of disease, and, of course, morbidity and mortality. A voted provision of \$33,501,000 was made earlier this year. Now, we are asking for an added sum of \$35,215,250. Could we have a disaggregation of this sum? What is it for?

Dr. Anthony: The additional sums are to provide for the dietary requirements of patients at the Infectious Disease Hospital. While our patient load for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) have been reduced, we have been using the facility for other infectious diseases such as TB and other

diseases. This is to provide the dietary requirements for those patients.

Dr. Cummings: Do we have a Dietician (*inaudible*).

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, we do have a dietitian on staff at the Georgetown Public Hospital, who advises on the dietary requirements of the patients.

Mr. Holder: Cde. Chairman, if I may. Line item 6292, Dietary, the same line item. You have a voted provision of \$33.5 million that was given at the budget stage and now you are asking for \$35 million. Could the Minister say how much of that voted provision has been expended at what point in the year? I am bringing this line of question because we only have one month and a few days remaining, and you are coming for 100% or more than 100% of what was budgeted. I would like the Minister to explain that. How is it that you are coming at this point to spend \$35 million and the whole year you had \$33 million?

Dr. Anthony: Again, this sum, the \$33,500,000, we have already expended this sum because of the patient load that we had at the Infectious Disease Hospital. The \$35 million that we are asking for now is to cover the arrears plus to cover December so that we can ensure that patients who are coming to us would get adequate dietary, whatever their dietary requirements are at the hospital. Does that answer your question?

Item 9: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – Dietary – \$35,215,250 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Expenditure

Item 9: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – HIV/TB/Malaria Programmes – \$100,090,232

Dr. Cummings: This line item is more or less like a capital, it is specific, not current but it is specific. This is a Global Fund's human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), tuberculosis (TB) and Malaria programme. According to the ledger here, it is accelerated implementation. What percentage of this sum, \$200 million, the voted provision for this year, has been spent? Why are asking now for almost half of that, \$100,090,232? What needs more to be implemented?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much for the question. This is money that we are getting from the Global Fund through the HIV grant that we are getting from that we have from the Global Fund so it is inflows coming in. We had projected that we will be spending \$200 million under the Global Fund

for this year. We have exceeded that and so we are able now to implement additional activities. That is why we are asking for the \$100 million. Some of the things that we are implementing here would include where you asked for the viral load for HIV patients, so we are acquiring more viral load reagents so that we can provide those tests for our HIV patients. As you would recall up to about a year and a half ago, we were not able to provide viral load in the public sector and, therefore, when we were treating our patients, we had no clue whether or not they were virally suppressed. We have invested US\$500,000 in procuring that piece of equipment and we now have to get the reagents to make sure that we can provide the tests. For every one of our patients that we have on treatment, we will do viral load at least twice or sometimes more if it is necessary for those patients. Part of the sums that we are asking for here is to cover the reagents for our viral load kits.

Item 9: 47-472 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Communicable Diseases – HIV/TB/Malaria Programmes – \$100,090,232 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Expenditure

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$1,938,586,148

10.30 p.m.

Dr. Cummings: A voted provision of \$1,480,000,000 was given to this agency in the last budget period. I am wondering... This... More than what was voted for at that time and as I said before, we have just about six weeks remaining in the year, and \$1,938,586,148 billion is being asked for under current. Is this amount moneys from the regions that you hope to recoup which is being warranted to your department or is the agency trying to procure drugs and medical supplies? Could you say what are some of the disaggregates?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The sum that we are asking for is \$1.9 billion. Again, these are contracts that we have existing. We have already expended, in some cases, the moneys, and we have the supplies that are coming in. We have to pay off those arrears. Getting the money spent by the end of the year is not a problem because we have these existing contracts on which we have to pay arrears.

What are some of the things that we are doing? We have spent \$1.3 billion on a number of additional medications that

we need for specialised services that we are offering. This is going out to the various regions. In addition to that, for example, last year we did 3,195 cataracts. This year, already by September, we have completed 4,860 cataracts. These are some of the supplies that we need because we had not catered to do so many cataracts. We needed additional supplies. In addition to that, we have seen, this year, close to 18,992 patients that require various types of eye medications. We have a list of these medications that we are providing.

We have budgeted \$242 million for additional surgeries that we have been able to do because we now have theatres that are open in various regions, and we have been sending in teams of doctors to do elective surgeries at these sites. By doing that, we have been able to reduce the number of people coming out to Georgetown. We have spent \$232 million to provide pharmaceuticals for the 11 municipal health centres. These are health centres in Georgetown, which, technically, should have been under the Mayor and City Council. The Ministry is now running these centres and providing medicines for the patients who come here. We have another \$69 million that we have budgeted for the National Ophthalmology Hospital. Again, these are some surgeries that were done, and we intend, by the end of the year, to use up this sum of money.

Mr. Holder: If I may, Cde. Chairman. The Minister mentioned contractors. Could he name the contractors, and could he also state how much of this sum, if any, covers replenishing of drugs which would have expired within the various regions?

Dr. Anthony: I am not sure to what contractor the Hon. Member is referring.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$1,938,586,148 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$18,540,561

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, for this 6265 Chart of Account, during the course of this year, \$256,018,000 was the voted provision. A supplementary was asked for later of \$22,128,341. At this point in time, six weeks to the end of the year, the Minister has come to ask for a further \$18,540,561. The Hon. Minister just alluded to the point that in the regions we are doing more surgeries and so forth. I am wondering who travels. We are trying to narrow the gap, in

terms of healthcare, between the coastal and the hinterland. I am wondering why you need this extra sum. If you envisage medivac or...what is the reason for this? Could you state what the reason for this is if you have adequate surgeons and so in the regions?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The \$18 million that is being sought is for medevac or projected expenditure on medevac for the month of December. You would also know that the Ministry has implemented telemedicine. We are now at 53 sites. In those 53 sites, things that probably would have gone unnoticed or people might have died because they did not have access to care, now people can easily get access to care and someone from Georgetown can assist in making the diagnosis. When someone is very critical and that diagnosis is made, we have been sending in medevac to pick those persons up. Nevertheless, the total sums that we would be spending is far less than what we spent in 2023. Therefore, this \$18 million is what we are projecting for the month of December.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$18,540,561 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Security Services – \$32,218,116

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister tell us if there is a new security service with new personnel, more personnel and new rates, the name of the security service that we are talking about and whether it is 24/7 security we are talking about?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is the same security service, as far as I am aware. It is Home Safe Security. However, they have a new contract with rates that are changed. They now have a new contract, and the rates are different from their old contract that they had before. This is for Linden Hospital.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Security Services – \$32,218,116 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Dietary – \$27,003,000.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Dietary – \$27,003,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$1,500,000,000

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, under subsidies and contributions to local organisations, of course, money is being allocated to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). The voted sum for this year was \$16,233,836,000. Currently, you are asking for \$1.5 billion. Could you say what this provision is for, and could you disaggregate how this money is going to be spent?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We are asking for an additional \$1.5 billion for the Georgetown Hospital because last year we saw approximately 238,635 patients at the hospital. This year we are projecting to see, by the end of this year, 370,524 patients. That is the projection. There is an increase of 131,889. We need to give these patients medication and different supplies and tests that we are running, and that is what \$1.5 billion is accounting for.

Dr. Cummings: Through the Chairman, I do not think it is really a good projection because if we are talking about universal healthcare, if we are talking about primary healthcare, we should be... the regions, you know...we should... The Georgetown Hospital is a referral hospital. You should not be glad that you are having more persons coming there. They should be going to the community health centres for primary care. You want to prevent the diseases from going to the tertiary level. We have to really change our thinking of how the Georgetown Hospital is supposed to function.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am happy that the Hon. Member is talking about primary healthcare. We are providing better primary healthcare. In fact, we provide approximately 117 different interventions at the primary healthcare level at most of our health centres.

In every region, we have added new health centres; we have given access to primary health care; and the system is actually seeing more people at primary healthcare. One of the things that you should note with the Georgetown Hospital is the type of specialised services that we are offering. We are seeing that a lot of patients who would have chosen otherwise to be in the private sector are now utilising the services of the Georgetown Hospital. For example, over the last weekend, we had 51 patients for whom we did implants for both knees and hips. For this year, by the end of the year I think we would complete close to 300 implants. In terms of stents, last year, we saw close to 800 persons at the Georgetown Hospital that came in with Myocardial

Infraction (MI). We were able to do angiograms for them. Having done the angiograms and having seen where the problems were located, we were able to give them stents, and they were able to leave that hospital within a 48-hour period. These are services that were never provided before and are now being provided. I think a lot of people who would have otherwise gone to the private sector are now utilising the services of the Georgetown Hospital. Indeed, it is functioning like a referral hospital, as a referral hospital should, by taking on these complicated cases.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$1,500,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

10.45 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Health Sector Improvement Programme – \$4,474,652,577

Dr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr Chairman. During the budget period earlier this year, there was a voted provision in a sum of \$33.5 billion. I have noticed that, specifically, \$4.155 billion is coming as a supplementary. There is a local input of \$319,209,881. The total for this project is \$4.4 billion. Is it not kind of short sighted...because this is the health improvement plan. Some of this money is coming from Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) the United Kingdom (UK), EF, Sweden and so forth. You could have projected earlier, with a good contractor, how this money could have been spent. Why it was it not taken care of earlier in the year? Could you explain what is happening here in terms of this new provision? Explain to us – the populace – how you going to spend this money within six weeks.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for that question. Indeed, yes, we had \$33.5 billion that was projected to be spent this year under this particular project code – the Health Sector Improvement Programme. It is because the Ministry has been managing effectively that we have come back to ask for this \$4.47 billion. It would be expended before the year comes to an end.

Dr. Cummings: Could you tell us what is to be done? For the health centres, are these Suddie, Bartica and West Demerara? Which regional hospitals are we talking about here? Could you give us some more information?

Dr. Anthony: Again, thank you very much for the question. In terms of the first one, we will be spending \$3.3 billion on the project that we have just signed – the construction of the new Lethem Regional Hospital. That is an IDB-funded project. We will be spending this money before the year comes to an end. This is to sign the contract and give the advance. They are starting the work already. So, this is to start that work. In addition to that, we will be spending \$2.2 billion more on the Paediatric and Maternal Hospital (PMH) at Ogle. Let me go back over that. For the projection that we had for the IDB hospitals, by the end of this year, we will be spending \$1.9 billion which includes the Lethem Regional Hospital. For the other hospitals that we are looking at, there is \$1.6 billion for Lima Sands, De Kinderen, Diamond, Enmore, Bath and Number Seventy-Five Village. We are spending \$577 million on the new New Amsterdam Hospital. All these sums of moneys would be expended before the year comes to an end.

Item 9: 47-474 Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Health Sector Improvement Programme – \$4,474,652,577 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Current Expenditure

Item 9: 47-476 Ministry of Health – Standards and Technical Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$561,413,852

Dr. Cummings: Chart of Account, 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies: the voted provision was \$1.5 billion. There was a provision previously sought of \$67,452,079. Currently, they are asking for \$561,413,852. I am asking the Hon. Minister to give some information on this additional resource. Which programme will it be used to expand? Is it the blood bank? Just tell us more how... and disaggregate the figure, please.

Dr. Anthony: For the \$561 million that we are asking for, we will be spending \$482 million on re-agents for regional laboratories, another \$42 million for viral load testing for regional laboratories, and \$37 million for consumables.

Item 9: 47-476 Ministry of Health – Standards and Technical Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$561,413,852 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9: 47-478 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Non-Communicable Diseases – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$500,000,000

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, this is a very important area – non-communicable diseases. This takes up much of our budget, I know. One would have thought that careful planning and budgeting would have taken place. Some \$565,132,000 was the Voted Provision, I guess this is from looking at the past – 2023 and so forth. Could you tell us what this \$500 million at this juncture would be spent on? I alluded earlier to our suppliers, and the recommendations from the Accountant General about paying up front, and the goods not being delivered in a timely manner.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. For the \$500 million that we are requesting, we want to spend \$134 million to improve cardiovascular health. As you know, we implemented HEARTS. HEARTS is now at a number of health centres. We projected that we have close to 30,000 persons with high blood pressure and switching them to HEARTS is very important. Last year, we were at 78 sites. This year, we have moved to 213 sites. Obviously for the medication that we are using, if we are switching over to HEARTS, it is more effective. Therefore, we have to budget accordingly. We are sourcing these medications from the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). We are getting them at affordable prices because we are buying through the Strategic Fund. The other set of money that we are spending is \$197 million, approximately. This is for our diabetic patients. Again, we have new diabetic guidelines – first line, second line and so forth. Some of the medications have changed from what we have been traditionally using.

In addition to that, we are now procuring insulin for our Type 1 Diabetics. Previously, the Guyana Diabetic Association (GDA) used to provide the insulin for those patients. Now, we have to provide it because they are not getting those donations. We have been budgeting for this and providing it for those patients. We also have another \$29 million which we have been spending on some patients with chronic respiratory diseases. We have seen, post Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), that there are people with chronic respiratory diseases who need additional support. Under this heading, we have been able to do that. In addition to that, we have a programme now to wean people off tobacco. We have been giving them Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), and we are buying from this heading.

Dr. Cummings: Is it not a little bit redundant? You are getting the drugs from PAHO under HEARTS and some of it from our system as well. Is that not so? In the chronic disease clinic, there are certain drugs that you can use and there are essential guidelines – A, B, different angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and so forth. Then you

are taking from the PAHO again. Is PAHO giving it to you for free or something? You are taking drugs from PAHO, plus you are having drugs here under chronic disease. Please explain for the benefit of the populace.

Dr. Anthony: HEARTS is a programme that the World Health Organization (WHO) and PAHO have advised us to move towards. It provides comprehensive management for our cardiovascular and hypertensive patients. HEARTS D provide for all of that, plus diabetes. There are new guidelines. We are phasing out the medication that we were previously using because those medications are not as effective for these conditions. While we are phasing those out, we have to get new medications and bring those in. We are working with the PAHO because through its Strategic Fund – it buys in a larger bulk – we are getting better prices. If we had gone out on the open market to buy these medications, we would have had to pay a lot more money than what we are paying the PAHO. That is why it is so cheap.

Item 9: 47-478 Ministry of Health – Disease Control – Non-Communicable Diseases – Drugs and Medical Supplies – \$500,000,000 agreed and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister and staff, for taking us through your Chart of Accounts. Let us invite the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs and his staff so that we can deal with Item 10. The Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs will be taking this item for the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Benn.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: With your permission, Sir, I stand in the shoes of my colleague, the Minister of Home Affairs.

11.00 p.m.

Item 10: 51-511 Ministry of Home Affairs – Policy Development and Administration – Other – \$40,000,000

Item 10: 51-511 Ministry of Home Affairs – Policy Development and Administration – Other – \$40,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 10: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force – Equipment Maintenance – \$94,773,815

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what this \$94 million is for in relation to the expanded work programme?

Mr. Nandlall: I am informed, Sir, that these are moneys that are going to be spent on the maintenance and support of our border management system and passport issuance control system for the period February to November, 2024. These are moneys that we are paying to the Canadian Bank Note company for managing the system for us. The Hon. Member, as a former Minister of Home Affairs, would be very familiar with the contract.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. Equipment maintenance under the Guyana Police Force (GPF) with a sum of \$94,773,815: I have been communicating with a lot of drivers for these police vehicles, and they have indicated to me that several of the vehicles are without licence for motor vehicles, insurance and fitness. Could the Hon. Minister say if any amount here would be used to get the vehicles that are used by the State, in particular, the Guyana Police Force, to ensure that they comply with the laws to acquire license for motor vehicle, insurance and fitness for these respective vehicles?

Mr. Nandlall: The short answer is no, Sir. This is very specific and I explained the purpose.

Item 10: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force – Equipment Maintenance – \$94,773,815 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 10: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force – Other – \$1,265,088,902

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, under this line item, Other, may I put the same question and ask if there is any intention on the part of the Ministry to ensure that all of the vehicles under the Guyana Police Force comply with the laws to acquire licence for motor vehicle, insurance and fitness for these respective vehicles?

Mr. Nandlall: No, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: I understand the Minister is saying that it would not be covered. Is there any intention by the Ministry to ensure that this happens since it is a flagrant violation of our laws in the country?

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, no doubt, the Hon. Member is asking a very important question. Unfortunately, that question should not be accommodated under this line item. It has nothing to do with vehicles. No doubt the Ministry will make provisions but not here.

Mr. Ramjattan: I noticed that the voted provision was \$450 million, and you are now trying to spend three times that in current expenditure for one month or a six-week period.

Could I get a disaggregation as to what this \$1.2 billion is going towards for the next six weeks?

Mr. Nandlall: In 2019, after the Coalition Government was defeated by a no confidence motion in the National Assembly, and though we had court rulings to the effect that they were a caretaker government and ought not to have entered into major contracts, other than engage in the routine management of the State, they proceeded to enter into a major contract with the Canadian Bank Note company for the management of our border system, for the production, manufacture and supply of passports, for the redesign of a new passport system, *et cetera*. A dispute began to arise during the period of that contract. The contract is now expired. There were several impasses and moneys were held back until differences were worked out between the Government of Guyana and the Canadian Bank Note Company. We still maintained a good relationship with them until those unresolved matters were resolved to the mutual acceptance of both sides. That, Sir, has now been accomplished and the accumulated debt over a protracted period is now being paid off, as we conclude the contract which you signed in 2019.

Item 10: 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force – Other – \$1,265,088,902 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We thank the Permanent Secretary and the staff in the Ministry of Home Affairs for accompanying the Attorney General (AG) through item 10.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: AG, I think we need you again for item 11, which is the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Policy Development Administration, Agency Code 52-521.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir. Thank you.

Capital Expenditure

Item 11: 52-5521 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Policy Development and Administration – Justice Sector Programme – \$123,688,480

Item 11: 52-5521 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Policy Development and Administration – Justice Sector Programme – \$123,688,480 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, AG, and your staff. I now invite the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional

Development and her staff to take us through quite a few items in this Financial Paper.

Current Expenditure

Item 12: 71-711 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$16,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, under line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency, could the Hon. Minister disaggregate and tell us what the \$16 million will cater for?

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Please permit me to sit and answer the questions. Thank you, Hon. Member. It is for the provision of funds to cater for the payment of stipend for Chairpersons of the eight newly- established Community Development Councils (CDCs), as well as payment for the accommodation, travel, fuel and so forth for the Regional Toshaos Conference. That was not previously budgeted for in the 2024 budget, and as we went along in the year, we realised it was something that we needed to have.

Mr. Mahipaul: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us what is the stipend per month for the CDC Officers or the elected Councillors?

Ms. Parag: It is \$30,000.

Item 12: 71-711 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$16,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12: 71-714 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Health Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$1,000,000

Item 12: 71-714 Region 1 – Barima/Waini – Health Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$1,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 13: 72-722 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Agriculture – Fuel and Lubricants – \$4,000,000

Item 13: 72-722 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Agriculture – Fuel and Lubricants – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 13: 72-724 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$2,500,000

Item 13: 72-724 Region 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 14: 73-733 Region 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara – Public Works – Security Services – \$2,500,000

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

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, forgive me. Is this Region 3 we are dealing with?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. May I ask the Hon. Minister, what is the name of the company that is providing security services for the Essequibo Islands/West Demerara region and what is the total contracted sum between the region and the company for the year 2024?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is Elite Contracting Service. The total is \$1.442 billion.

11.15 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: If I heard correctly, is the total contracted sum \$1.442 billion? I am trying to understand, why we are requesting \$2,500,000 when we have an aggregated sum for the entire region totalling \$1.46087 billion? When that is added together, the total is \$1.463 billion.

Ms. Parag: There are several programmes but this particular programme that we are dealing with is not \$1.6 billion. This particular \$2.5 million is specifically being asked for to cater for more guards at the crane stores.

Mr. Mahipaul: One contract was awarded by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board for Elite Contracting Service to provide security services to Region 3. The contract was awarded in the sum of \$1.442 billion. The way the Ministry or the region will go about getting this money to pay the \$1.442 billion, as was explained to us by the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh in *Budget 2024*, is that it would put the sums in all five programmes. When one adds those five programmes, he/she will get \$1.460 billion, which is a greater number than what the contract was awarded. The contract that was awarded is \$1.442 billion, which is a lesser number. If it is a lesser number, you have the money that is in *Budget 2024*. What are you doing here asking for more money then?

Ms. Parag: This is the explanation and listen very carefully. We have to have additional guards who were not catered for in the 2024 Budget for equipment that are at the crane stores. It goes past this \$1.442 billion and \$1.460 billion.

Mr. Mahipaul: Okay. We are getting somewhere. The contract that was awarded by NPTAB for \$1.442 billion has now changed and there is a greater sum. May I ask the Hon. Minister what is that greater sum that is now associated with this contract? Clearly, with additional security comes additional money. It is higher than the \$1.442 billion. What is the new sum agreement between the region and the security firm?

Ms. Parag: It is \$2.5 million more than what is there.

Item 14: 73-733 Region 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara – Public Works – Security Services – \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 15: 74-741 Region 4 – Demerara/Mahaica – Regional Administration and Finance – Security Services – \$4,487,975

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister for the name of the company who is providing security services for the Demerara/Mahaica Region and the contracted sum?

Ms. Parag: The name of the security service is Security in Action Guyana Incorporated.

Mr. Chairman: What is the contracted sum?

Ms. Parag: The contracted sum is \$1.595 billion.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Could I anticipate your next question and tell you the answer is there?

Item 15: 74-741 Region 4 – Demerara/Mahaica – Regional Administration and Finance – Security Services – \$4,487,975 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 15: 74-744 Region 4 – Demerara/Mahaica – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$44,652,563

Item 15: 74-744 Region 4 – Demerara/Mahaica – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$44,652,563 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 15: 74-745 Region 4 – Demerara/Mahaica – Health Services – Security Services – \$30,154,965

Item 15: 74-745 Region 4 – Demerara/Mahaica – Health Services – Security Services – \$30,154,965 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 16: 75-751 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$5,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the Hon. Minister to tell us what this \$5 million would be used for?

Ma. Parag: There was an increase in the allocation of security guards under this line item due to the opening of three new health centres at District 10, Esau and Jacob and Abary.

Mr. Mahipaul: We are dealing with line item 6211, Expenses Specific to Agency. How does security guards fall here for \$5 million?

Ms. Parag: I am sorry about that. There was an increase in its spending as a result of additional outreaches and consultations with various communities on developmental initiatives that are taking place. There was a dry season which caused numerous fires, freak storms and other natural catastrophes that resulted in the loss of properties and lives and prompted the Administration to provide assistance to the residents in Region 5.

Item 16: 75-751 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$5,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 16: 75-753 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Public Works – Other – \$3,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I noted the initial voted provision was \$1.2 million and the new request is \$3 million. Firstly, could the Hon. Member state why there is a variation between the two figures? Now that the new request is seeking an expanded work programme; could you detail or disaggregate what this \$3 million will take care of? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: I cannot see that we have had poor budget planning when, in fact, we have been expending moneys to improve infrastructure, improve health services and improve education across the country. In fact, the Coalition Government returned moneys to the Consolidated Fund because they could not carry out any of the initiatives.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I asked a simple question.

Ms. Parag: Here is the explanation, there was an increase in spending as a result of increased advertisement for projects and bid documents that had to be printed. Those were things that were unforeseen at that time when we presented *Budget 2024*. This is what we need it for.

Ms. Ferguson: I will tell you, sometimes this young lady just makes me smile. Mr. Chairman, is the Hon. Member

stating that \$3 million will be utilised for publishing and printing of bidding documents?

Ms. Parag: I know that you have been following the Government's efforts from 2020 to now, because you know you stay in this National Assembly more than anyone else who I have known on the Opposition, paying keen attention to the number of projects that we have been rolling out across the country and throughout the budgets that we have had from 2020. You know the magnitude of projects that we have been churning out would require much more bid documents and much more printing of bid documents. This is just a small amount for bid documents that needed to be printed and advertisement for these projects.

Ms. Ferguson: I am trying to understand the Hon. Member because, I know under budget lines there is an area there for print and non-print materials. I thought that printing of bid documents would fall under that line item, so I did not expect to see it under the line item, Other. Could the Hon. Member explain why it is under this particular line item?

Ms. Parag: While you are partially correct, there is a line item for print and non-print that speaks to literally— print and non-print materials. There is something that is called 'advertisement of projects' and bid documents that can also fall under line item 6284.

Item 16: 75-753 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Public Works – Other – \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: I only heard one aye.

Item 16: 75-754 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$3,000,000

Item 16: 75-754 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 16: 75-755 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Office Materials and Supplies – \$4,070,600

Item 16: 75-755 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Office Materials and Supplies – \$4,070,600 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 16: 75-755 Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$1,500,000

Ms. Lawrence: Hon. Minister, I noted that the voted provision for 2024 was \$1.9 million and now you are asking for \$1.5 million. Have you incurred costs already in terms of receiving items or is this for the period going forward to 31st December?

11.30 p.m.

Ms. Parag: There was one of the vehicles that we were using to transport drugs and medical supplies that broke down and we hired a canter to do this. We had to have some additional funds to do that.

Ms. Lawrence: To the Minister, the other part of the question is the period. How long have you been using this rented canter for?

Ms. Parag: It is approximately three months.

Item 16: 75-755 – Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services - Other Transport, Travel and Postage - \$1,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 16: 75-755 – Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Security Services - \$4,690,167

Mr. Mahipaul: May we have the name of the company who is providing the security service for Mahaica/Berbice Region and the contracted sum for that company for the year 2024, please?

Ms. Parag: It is Super Graphic Security.

Mr. Mahipaul: What is the contracted sum?

Ms. Parag: It is \$148 million and that is for health.

Mr. Mahipaul: One hundred and forty-eight million dollars, did I hear correctly, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Mahipaul: Is that under Health? The voted provision here is \$163 million. Are you asking for an additional \$4.6 million? Your voted provision is higher than the sum that you have given me. Are you saying that is the contracted sum that was awarded by the NPTAB?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Mahipaul Hon. Member, it is actually \$163 million, sorry. There was a line before that for \$148,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: If it is \$163 million, what are you doing here for \$4.6 million, because your voted provision was \$163 million?

Ms. Parag: I am happy that you asked that question. We have placed three new health centres and we need an increase in Security Guards. This Government have placed three new health centres in Region 5 to serve the people of Region 5.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, something is not right. The Hon. Minister said that the contracted sum is \$163 million.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Mahipaul: That is the voted provision that we voted for in February right here.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Mahipaul: Now, the Hon. Minister is saying that there is extra security at the health centres and what is not. I am asking, is \$163 million the sum that the NPTAB awarded for the security service of Super Graphic in Region 5? This one security firm, Sir, is managing all the entities in Region 5. Is that the sum that the NPTAB awarded?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I think I need to break it down further. This is for the health programme. Each region has four different programmes. This is for the health programme, when there was a budgeted sum and when there was a public procurement that led to this company perhaps winning that bid. At that time, three new health centres were not catered for in the Budget. As a matter of fact, I think it is excellent vision that we can go beyond a Budget to put three new facilities beyond what we had promised the people, go beyond that promise to put three new health centres. After that, we have to put guards there. Are you telling the public and Region 5 with three new health centres that you have no security for that area? Are you telling them they do not deserve that?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have been going really good.

Mr. Mahipaul: I agree, Sir. When the advertisement was placed in the newspaper for security services in Region 5, it was a sum that was catered for all four programmes. The contract was awarded by the NPTAB to Super Graphic Security.

Mr. Chairman: We are repeating now, Hon. Member, because...

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I wanted the contract...

Mr. Chairman: Just one second. The Minister was quite specific that the \$163 million was for the health sector and not for all. We are dealing here with a \$4 million specially for something – three additional health centres. I do not know how clearer that could be.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask your guidance?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Mahipaul: When the award was made by NPTAB...

Mr. Chairman: I do not know about that.

Mr. Mahipaul: It is on the public website, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Mahipaul: When it made the award, it did not specify an amount for a specific programme. It did a bulk award.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have heard today that “ferries and stellings” is the heading and this item catered for ferries...

Mr. Mahipaul: Okay, Sir, continue.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Item 16: 75-755 – Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Security Services – \$4,690,167 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 16: 75-755 – Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Other – \$4,000,000

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Minister, the budgeted sum was \$2.9 million and you are here asking for \$4,000,000 as a supplementary, one month and a couple days before the end of this financial period. I would like to know, of this 138% increase on your budgeted amount, what entails this expanded work programme under this special line item 6284?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, special line item.

Mr. Mahipaul: [Inaudible]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, are you imputing?

Mr. Mahipaul: [Inaudible]

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Parag: The Hon. Member knows not to throw stones when he does not live in a glass house. Hon. Member, this particular line item – Other – caters for the increase in spending due to advertisement of projects from the Ministry of Health and storage of human remains at private facilities.... Is this where you are speaking of a \$4,000,000?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes.

Ms. Parag: Yes. ...due to the rehabilitation of the Fort Wellington Hospital Mortuary.

Ms. Lawrence: Minister, could you disaggregate the expenditures for the two items that you just named? Could you kindly say what period we are paying for the storage of bodies at this private facility? What is the name of the facility?

Ms. Parag: Thank you, very much. It is a projected sum that we will be spending towards the end of the year for this facility and the advertisement. I cannot give you that exact breakdown at the moment but this is the estimated projected figure that we will need.

Item 16: 75-755 – Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Other – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 16: 75-755 – Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Dietary – \$3,500,000

Ms. Ferguson: Under this very line item, I note that we had an initial voted provision of \$14.8 million and the Ministry is now requesting an additional \$3.5 million. In the legend there is programme expansion. Could you say to us the programmes that are being expanded and provide us with a disaggregation of what the \$3.5 million would take care of? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Thank you, very much, Hon. Member. This increase is for the expanded programme under Health Services. There was an increase in spending under this line item due to an increase in surgery procedures which is now being offered at the Mahaicony Hospital. the reason we need it are for caesarean sections (CS) resulting in more in-

patients for the two to three days recovery period and the dengue cases in the region resulting in more in-patients. It is for the in-patients in these two particular areas.

Item 16: 75-755 – Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice – Health Services – Dietary – \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 17: 76-762 – Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture – Fuel and Lubricants – \$33,155,548

Ms. Lawrence: Could the Minister kindly indicate to us the programmes under this expanded work that being done that we are going to use all these extra fuel for?

Ms. Parag: This request is required to purchase fuel and lubricants for two additional pumps that are placed at Black Bush and Manarabisi pump stations.

Ms. Lawrence: Is this for tomorrow to the end of December or is this for a period that has passed that they have incurred costs?

Ms. Parag: This is for now until the end of December.

Item 17: 76-762 – Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture – Fuel and Lubricants – \$33,155,548 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 17: 76-762 – Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$3,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: I note the provision being requested here will take care of Other Transport, Travel and Postage. The explanation given is ‘for an expanded work programme’. Mr. Chairman, this expansion work programme has been featuring very regularly. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what the programmes are? Could the Hon. Minister provide a disaggregation of what the \$3 million will take care of and whether this amount is suffice for the end of 2024?

Ms. Parag: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. I am so happy that expanded work programme is featured very often because it signifies, tells the public and Guyanese citizenry that the Government has a developmental agenda that we are continuing with. It is that we are the fastest growing economy in this world for a reason. Supplementary request is required for transporting of the fuel and lubricants that I

spoke of in the previous line item for the irrigation pumps at Manarabisi and Black Bush Polder.

Item 17: 76-762 – Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

11.45 p.m.

Item 17: 76-765 – Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Health Services – Fuel and Lubricants – \$6,000,000

Ms. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Minister tell the House why we are... This is the second supplemental for this line item for Region 6 asking for fuel and lubricant for health services. Now, the Minister is asking for \$6 million. Could you kindly indicate what expense this relates to? Why was it not foreseen the last time when you came for a supplemental?

Ms. Parag: We do in fact have two line items with the fuel and lubricants – one is for agriculture under the agriculture programme and this one is under health services. I am going to explain why the \$6 million was unforeseen. Something such as dengue and how it was being spread could not have been able to have, at that point in time, all that we needed in terms of the chemical to spray. We were using fuel and lubricants to be able to spray throughout the Region 6 for the fogging throughout for the dengue fever.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, follow up, what period is the \$6 million for – fuel? You are using it in one of those little things that go around with a machine and spray.

Ms. Parag: This is an ongoing spraying for a few months now that will take us up until 31st December. [An Hon. Member (Opposition): (Inaudible)] I beg your pardon. I am explaining to you that this is an ongoing process. It is not something that happened and stopped. It is ongoing so we need this to be able to continue for the next six weeks.

Item 17: 76-765 Region 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne – Health Services – Fuel and Lubricants – \$6,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 18: 77-773 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$5,000,000

Item 18: 77-773 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$5,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 18: 77-773 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$9,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: No. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. You Members were discussing what you want to say.

Ms. Ferguson: No.

Mr. Chairman: I was very observant. I am at line item 6265. Please, Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence, proceed.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, we are asked to approve \$9 million for other transport, travel and postage with 34 more days to the end of the year. Could the Minister kindly tell the House whether this \$9 million is for these 34 days or whether moneys that are owed is also included in this amount? Thank you, Sir.

Ms. Parag: This is to cater for the transporting of furniture for the new term as well as textbooks for the new term. This is going to happen in this period and it is by aircraft because of the geography.

Ms. Ferguson: On this very line item, based on the explanation just given by the Hon. Member, it is air transport to be used. Could you say how many schools are expected to benefit from this service? Thank you.

Ms. Parag: It is about four secondary schools and one secondary to benefit from it.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up: therefore, aircraft will be used and the aircraft will land at one location. There will have ground transport to have the items transported. Could you say whether the ground transportation is captured in this request that you are seeking? If so, kindly provide a disaggregation of what the air transport will cost as against the ground transportation. Thank you.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I know you are a smart Hon. Member. The aircraft will cost more than the ground transportation. It is landing at Kamarang and then there will be distribution from there by boat.

Item 18: 77-773 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$9,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 18: 77-773 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery – Dietary – \$10,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: I note the Ministry or rather the region is requesting an additional \$10 million. The explanation given is 'for an expanded programme'. Could you say to us what this \$10 million will take care of under dietary?

Ms. Parag: There is an addition of 33 students who are now at the dormitory who we are catering for. It has gone from 575 to 608 with three dormitories being included.

Item 18: 77-773 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery – Dietary – \$10,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 18: 77-774 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Health Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$5,000,000

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Minister, this \$5 million if it is not for spraying, what is it for?

Ms. Parag: I cannot think that the Hon. Member would actually be making fun of spraying for dengue when that is something that is very helpful and health-conscious for the nation. This particular line item is actually for the referral of patients. You know, this geography is quite different from Region 6 and Region 5.

Item 18: 77-774 Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Health Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$5,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 19: 78-781 Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Regional Administration and Finance – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$4,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: I note the region is requesting an additional \$4 million to be expended by 31st December, 2024. The explanation given here is that it is 'for an expanded work programme'. Could the Hon. Member inform the National Assembly whether any money will be due for payout from this \$4 million for activities that might have been done before the Paper came to the National Assembly?

Ms. Parag: No, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: Okay. Could I ask the Hon. Member, Mr. Chairman, what this provision will take care of?

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Hon. Member. This Government want to make things easier for Guyanese and so salaries are now being paid by cash in the villages. This sum is catering for those persons who will be going into those villages to pay that cash because we want people to be able to as easily as possible, access their payment in their villages so they are

not inconvenienced. This is why this is here and this is from now to December.

Ms. Ferguson: Since the Hon. Member explained that staff from the central Ministry will be travelling to the varying locations or areas in the region to effect salary payment, could the Hon. Member say how many staff will be benefitting from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: We have four teams. This is not central Ministry; this is the regional staff who are located in various villages. All are being covered and teams have to go out. Every time they have to go out, they obviously have to expend. I am sorry to see the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, leaving the honourable House.

Mr. Chairman: Leaving the House, Hon. Minister, is not necessarily leaving the Assembly. He can sign in virtually; we have a hybrid system. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, proceed.

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Member state whether this \$4 million is sufficient to cover all costs by 31st December, 2024? This is taxpayer's money.

Ms. Parag: I believe it is adequate. Yes.

Ms. Ferguson: Okay. Thank you very much.

Item 19: 78-781 Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Regional Administration and Finance – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 19: 78-783 Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$15,000,000

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what the Ministry will be doing in the next 34 days that will take up \$15 million for fuel and lubricants?

Ms. Parag: Thank you, Hon. Member. Indeed, for five years there was nothing done so this Government is ensuring that we cater to the needs of all Guyanese. We are catering for an increase in litres for two generators at Paramakatoi. We are catering for an increase in litres per month, for 12 months generators at Kato budgeted for. We are catering for Bamboo Creek as well as Monkey Mountain for those generators that are there.

Ms. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Minister tell the House when these generator sets were installed?

Ms. Parag: I will ask the Hon. Member just to repeat. Thank you.

Ms. Lawrence: All of these generator sets that the fuel and lubricants are going towards, when were they installed?

12.00 a.m.

Ms. Parag: These generators, for example Paramakatoi, would have only been in last year; Kato would have been a few years before that. However, they have increased the hours of the generators functioning and operating.

Ms. Lawrence: I am happy to hear that. So, we have an under budgeting. How many hours in excess from last year are they using now? How many hours?

Ms. Parag: Hon. Member, we have not under budgeted in 2024. As a matter of fact, we saw on consultation, which is something the Coalition Government never did – consulting with the people and the residents... After consulting with them, we felt the need to increase the operation of the generators to cater to those needs. I do not see, and I cannot see, that in this Committee the Opposition would be questioning why people should need more hours of a generator.

Ms. Lawrence: I just want the Minister to know that we are questioning the moneys you are asking us to approve. Since you are a good planner, I am certain that the Government got a plan to tell the people why they *ent ghun* get the \$100,000 before next year.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence, I will give the Minister an opportunity to make a speech too.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would sincerely hope that the Hon. Member was one of those that, before the rest of the Guyanese people, registered today for her \$100,000. All of the Guyanese people who are 18 years and above will receive their \$100,000, because this Government does not go back on any promises. They deliver and deliver 100%. [Ms. Ferguson: (Inaudible)]

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

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Earlier, on the very line item, the Hon. Member listed a few generators that this \$15 million is expected to take care of. Could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregation of the number of generators that will be benefitting from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: Just to clarify, it is the Guyanese, it is the residents of Region 8, that will be benefiting from this and not the generators. However, Mr. Chairman, I will take the Hon. Member Ms. Volda Lawrence's compliment that we are good planners, that I am a good planner. I will tell her with the disaggregation: \$6.2 million and *change* for Paramakatoi; \$3.3 million for Kato; then \$7.6 million, Bamboo Creek; \$2.2 million and then \$1.8 million. Tally it all up.

Item 19: 78-783 – Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$15,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 19: 78-783 – Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Education Delivery – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$5,287,500

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I note the new request being sought here is \$5.287 million. Could the Hon. Member explain? I know it is for education delivery, but could the Hon. Member say one, what is the work programme? And two, how many schools are likely to benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. The purpose of this request is to enable the timely payment of the cost that is associated with the supervisory visit conducted by the Education Officers. They play a critical role, of course, in ensuring that the Ministry of Education's policies, their curriculum standards and so on, are effectively implemented. They provide support and guidance to teachers, in the very critical times of the National Grade Six Assessments (NGSA), as well as the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). Of course, you know, visits throughout is very key, and ongoing, to meet those times. We believe too that this investment is essential to uphold the educational standards and foster continuous improvement in student performance. It is for this purpose.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member state what mode of transportation, whether it is by river, by plane, or whatever? I know that...

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, all modes of transportation are used here. They are air, water transport, as well as land with the use of the all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in these particular areas.

Ms. Lawrence: Hon. Minister, you spoke about the visits being done to ensure that the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and the Grade Six Examinations were fully

covered and everything was in place. This money is to pay for expenses already incurred.

Ms. Parag: This is ongoing. This is to ensure that the Education Officers pay the visits that are necessary towards engaging the teachers and the students. It is not for the specific examination period, but it is all leading up to that. So it is ongoing. [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]

It is prepping for the new term as well; you are getting to January.

Ms. Lawrence: Just repeat what you said, Minister, through the Chairman. You said something at the end about the term, the new term. [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]

Hello. Hello. Go home.

Ms. Parag: Preparing for the new term. You have a new term that is coming up in January.

Ms. Lawrence: Okay, thank you.

Item 19: 78-783 Region 8 – Potaro/ Siparuni – Education Delivery – Local Travel and Subsistence – \$5,287,500 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 19: 78-783 Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$12,000,0000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I note the region is requesting an additional \$12 million for an expanded work programme. Could you list, for the honourable Assembly, what are the work programmes and the cost associated with each programme?

Ms. Parag: It is actually an education delivery. It is to ensure that we get the teachers and the students from home to school, and also in relation to the new term that is coming up, which you know will be prior to a budget period for 2025.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence.

Ms. Ferguson: Ms. Ferguson.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry, Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, based on the explanation just proffered by the Hon. Member, that teachers and students usually benefit from such allocation, could you say the number of teachers who are expected to benefit from this \$12 million and that of students?

Ms. Parag: All the teachers and all the students who are required to be taken from home to school, those are catered for in this particular sum.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry. I am really, really disappointed in the Minister. This is a figure the region came up with. In order for you to arrive at \$12 million you had to equate it with target numbers. If students are to benefit, could you say from this \$12 million, how many students are likely to benefit, likewise how many teachers? You cannot tell me all students and all teachers. That is not helping me.

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, if I were to say it would benefit half the students and half the teachers, it would be a problem. Benefiting all of the teachers who are there at the schools in Region 8, and all of the children who are there, from home to school, I would think that that is something quite substantial. I would think that that is something that is quite significant. Whether I say 30 or whether I say 10, and it amounts to all, we are catering to the needs of all the teachers and all the students.

Mr. Chairman: Is that all of the questions?

Ms. Ferguson: No, it is not all the questions.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: Since the Hon. Member seems to be having a difficulty with numbers.

Mr. Chairman: She is not having a difficulty. Come on, please. Hon. Members, I now put the question...

Ms. Ferguson: No, Mr. Chairman. Therefore, could the Hon. Member state, for the sub-region, how much of this money is going to Sub-Region 1 and how much is going to Sub-Region 2?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, this amount of money will be catering for all the sub-regions. The key word here is all, and it is catering for everyone who is captured in this particular delivery.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member say the number of schools in Sub-Region 1 and the number of schools in Sub-Region 2, that all the students and all the teachers will be benefiting from this \$12 million?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, what is the number of all of the schools?

Ms. Parag: Just approximately 20 schools or so, in both sub-regions.

Item 19: 78-783 Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$12,000,0000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 19: 78-784 Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Health Services – Fuel and Lubricants – \$10,000,0000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell the House what is the expanded work programme for the next 34 days for this \$10 million that they are asking for?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This increase is attributed to an increase in use of the generator at the Mahdia District Hospital and an increase in activities at all 26 health facilities such as home visits, supervisory visits and transport of emergency patients. It is also to up the amount of hours that the generator is being operated.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if there has been a change in terms of line items. Is the Minister saying that this line item that deals with fuel and lubricants, that moneys are being used to pay transportation to take persons to visit health facilities?

12.15 a.m.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if this is... It might be a comprehension problem – not might, it is and a perpetual one. I said, generator. I said also, these are for health facilities, home visits, supervisory visits and the transport of emergency patients, which means that you need to have fuel in a vehicle. You have to put fuel in a vehicle for it to move.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up on this particular line item. Could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles will be benefitting from this...[*Interruption*] You said vehicles –people have to make home visits and vehicles have to be used. I am asking how many vehicles are catered for under this particular line item.

Ms. Parag: Ambulances, all-terrain vehicles and boats – all those vehicles will be getting the fuel, but the people will be benefitting from this allocation.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up please. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Minister – you said ambulances and ATVs. Could you say how many ambulances and ATVs are expected to benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Parag: The people will be benefitting. These transportations will be getting the fuel and the people will be benefitting from this allocation. Now, if you have a patient tomorrow, are you expecting me to say that I know that there will be a patient tomorrow? We do not want to be placed in a position where we will have a patient tomorrow to transport and no money to buy the fuel to put in the vehicle. So, this is what it is for.

Ms. Ferguson: All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This is my last question for the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Is it going to be the equipment benefitting and the people enjoying the benefits?

Ms. Ferguson: No, Mr. Chairman. How many vehicles are catered for under this particular line item?

Mr. Chairman: Is this a repeat?

Ms. Parag: For the modes of transportation, the vehicles which will be catered for will be ambulances, ATVs and boats. Those are what would be catered for.

Mr. Chairman: I now put the question that the sum stated for this Chart of Account, Agency Code 78-784 – in which all the vehicles and vessels will benefit so that the people can enjoy the benefit – stands part of the Schedule.

Item 19: 78-784 Region 8 – Potaro/Siparuni – Heath Services – Fuel and Lubricants – \$10,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-791 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$3,000,000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell the Committee what the \$3 million is for with regard to the expanded work programme for the Regional Administrative Office?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Hon. Chairman as well as Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, I have to state that the PPP/C Administration has placed great emphasis on development in the hinterland regions as well as the coastal regions. We have continuously engaged our Amerindian brothers and sisters in the hinterland regions and villages. That is why we had very successful National Toshias Council's (NTC's) conferences. We have had Regional Toshias Council's conferences. Following the Regional Toshias Council's conferences, 56 of these villages have asked that we have another Indigenous conference because

they found them very fruitful. We are happy to be able to facilitate that. This line item is catering for that.

Item 20: 79-791 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Regional Administration and Finance – Expenses Specific to the Agency – \$3,000,000 agreed and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-791 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Regional Administration and Finance – Fuel and Lubricants – \$1,500,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I note that the region is requesting an additional \$1.5 million which will go towards fuel and lubricants. Could the Hon. Minister say the number of vehicles that are likely to...

Mr. Chairman: ...to enjoy.

Ms. Ferguson: ...to benefit from this allocation?

Mr. Chairman: ...to benefit.

Ms. Ferguson: ...or will be catered for in this allocation?

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for that question. I do not believe that the Opposition was aware that there were savannah wildfires – tragedies – and floods for which we actually had to ensure that we had fuel in the vehicles to continuously go and help those persons as well as get those fires under control. There were water pumps and all those things, so the fuel was used up at that time. We need this for all the vehicles that are in the administration's pool. The fuel was definitely used up to ensure that we were able to quell the fires as well as manage the floods. [An Hon. Member (Government): (Inaudible)]

Ms. Ferguson: I am tired. Yes, Mr. Chairman. I think I asked a simple question – numbers. You said the administration has a number of vehicles. Could you say how many vehicles are assigned to the administrative division of the region?

Ms. Parag: All the vehicles in the administration's pool.

Item 20: 79-791 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Regional Administration and Finance – Fuel and Lubricants – \$1,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20 79-791 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Regional Administration and Finance – Vehicle Spares and Service – \$1,500,000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, you are seeking \$1.5 million for Vehicle Spares and Service. Could you kindly say which vehicle/vehicles will be served or are under repair? Could you say whether the work was done, or will it be done once the money is passed?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much. This will be from the Regional Chairman's secretariat and the Regional Executive Officer (REO). These are four vehicles. This is particularly because of the wear and tear from the rugged terrain in Region 9. This is what will be needed for tires, *et cetera*, from now until the end of the year.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, therefore the explanation in the legend is inaccurate. This is not for... The purchasing of spares, tires and servicing is not for an expanded programme, based on the answer that you just give to my colleague, the Hon. Member Volda Lawrence.

Ms. Parag: Hon. Member, I think that you have that inaccurately. This line item is 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Parag: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: This is very accurate.

Item 20: 79-791 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Regional Administration and Finance – Vehicle Spares and Service – \$1,500,000 agreed and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-792 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Agriculture – Fuel and Lubricants – \$1,598,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chair, I note that the region is seeking \$1.598 million. I think I recognise that figure somewhere in another... It seems to be the same figure. Could the Hon. Member explain the expanded work programme under Agriculture that this provision will take care off?

Ms. Parag: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. This \$1.598 million will go towards fuel for the vehicles under the Agriculture programme so that the programme can continue to be expanded. Why it is that we need it? It is because all the vehicles under all of the programme heads were being used, at the time when there were the savannah fires as well as the floods, to bring relief to the residents.

Ms. Ferguson: I have a follow-up for the Hon. Member. Could you inform the Committee of the number of vehicles

assigned to the agriculture section of the region that this provision will take care of?

Ms. Parag: We have two vehicles under the Agriculture programme.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member say what are these two types of vehicles?

Ms. Parag: There is a truck and a 4 x 4 vehicle.

Ms. Ferguson: There is a truck and a 4 x 4 vehicle.

Ms. Parag: As you know, Region 9 is an agricultural region as well. So, these vehicles are being used far more than may... As a matter of fact, under all the programme heads we have expanded the work programmes. So, they are being used continuously, and at an increased or accelerated rate.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, since two vehicles are likely to benefit, I would like the Hon. Member to provide us with a disaggregation. How much is going to the truck and how much is going to the Hilux. The truck will utilise more fuel and lubricant because that is a heavy-duty vehicle.

Ms. Parag: Mr. Chairman, on this side of the Committee we have been waiting a while to see exactly where the winning Statements of Poll (SoPs) of the Opposition have been too. Right now, we cannot tell you if the vehicle is going to need fuel today, tomorrow, next week, or every day. What we know is that this will cover it because, from now until the end of the year, we do have a very progressive work programme.

Item 20: 79-792 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Agriculture – Fuel and Lubricants – \$1,598,000 agreed and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-793 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Public Works – Vehicle Spares and Service – \$1,000,000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, there is \$1 million for spares and servicing for a vehicle being used in Region 9. What is it you are planning to do? Is it a vehicle or vehicles? What is it for this \$1 million?

Ms. Parag: We are ensuring that the vehicles are in working order under the Public Works' work programme. We need spares and servicing to ensure... [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) tires.] We do need tires. Are you not aware Hon. Member that because of the terrain, we will need to replace those? Public Works has two vehicles under this programme head in this region. To ensure that those vehicles are able to function the way they should, to carry out the work

programme, we have to cater for that from now until the end of the year.

Item 20: 79-793 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Public Works – Vehicle Spares and Service – \$1,000,000 agreed and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

12.30 a.m.

Item 20: 79-794 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$2,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I note here the region is requesting an additional \$2 million. First of all, could the Hon. Member state whether the initial voted provision has been used up?

Ms. Parag: Cooking gas also falls under this line item of Fuel and Lubricants. That has been used up under the voted sum. So, we do need the amount.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much. For the new request, which is \$2 million for the expanded programme, could the Hon. Member say what are the expanded programmes that this sum will cater for? [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)] I leave you to Melly Mel.

Ms. Parag: I do not think I have to answer this, Mr. Chairman, because the Hon. Member is not listening.

Mr. Chairman: I am.

Ms. Parag: The sum of \$2 million is going towards cooking gas which has gone from \$6,000 per bottle to \$8,000, which is 37% up from when we had the voted sum. Then we are also looking at transportation which would be used for education delivery.

Item 20: 79-794 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Education Delivery – Fuel and Lubricants – \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-794 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$4,000,000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, \$4 million is being sought here for Other Transport, Travel and Postage. What is the additional travelling that will be incurred between now and December?

Ms. Parag: We have had the Regional and National Science Fairs, the national athletic swimming and cycling

championship, Education Month activities and the Regional Awards Ceremony.

Ms. Lawrence: So, Minister, are you indicating that all of this money has been spent already for these programmes?

Ms. Parag: No. These are ongoing programmes. For example, we have the fairs, the swimming and cycling championships and so on. When we are bringing persons, we have to bring persons out of the villages.

Item 20: 79-794 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Education Delivery – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-794 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Education Delivery – National and Other Events – \$2,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, I note your request is for an additional \$2 million, which will take care of National and Other Events. Could the Hon. Member state what are the expanded programmes under this particular line item that the \$2 million would cater for?

Ms. Parag: This would cater for more participation with persons in the sub-regions – bringing them together, ensuring that we have a ‘One Guyana’ participating, inclusive, coming together, ensuring that we honour the youths in the sub-region.

Item 20: 79-794 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Education Delivery – National and Other Events – \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-795 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Health Services – Fuel and Lubricants – \$4,239,350

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Are you proposing to incur this amount in the next 34 days or is this part of moneys that have already been used up?

Ms. Parag: This is going to be from now until the end of the year.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Lawrence: Have you given me the floor, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you, Sir. Hon. Minister, could you kindly tell us what was unforeseen that this money was not budgeted for?

Ms. Parag: Cooking gas had gone from \$6,000 to \$8,000 which was a 37% increase from the voted provision. So, this will cater for now until the end of the year for the cooking gas that is going towards the hospitals and so on.

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

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I heard the Hon. Minister state that this sum is going towards cooking gas and fuel for the hospitals – and fuel. For the cooking gas, could you say whether it is the 50-pound gas cylinder or the 100-pound gas cylinder? And what is the cost you quoted earlier?

Mr. Chairman: You have asked the question. Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

Ms. Parag: It is the 20-pound cylinder at the sum of \$8,000.

Mr. Chairman: Is it pounds or kilograms?

Item 20: 79-795 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Health Services – Fuel and Lubricants – \$4,239,350 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-795 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Health Services – Local Tarvel and Subsistence – \$4,500,000

Ms. Lawrence: Could the Minister indicate whether any part of this \$4.5 million is going towards staff who go out into the fields, and if so, how much of it?

Ms. Parag: Yes, it is. It is to cater for medical outreaches to Aishalton and Karasabai, and this is based on the request from the villages.

Item 20: 79-795 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Health Services – Local Tarvel and Subsistence – \$4,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 20: 79-795 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Health Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$10,373,257

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, with 34 days remaining until the end of the year, I note that the Ministry is requesting an additional \$10 million towards Other Transport, Travel and

Postage. I want the Hon. Member to explain to us this expanded programme that would cover the \$10 million.

Ms. Parag: The region has commenced transportation of cataract patients to Georgetown for surgeries and to cater for other surgeries and specialised treatments. So, this figure will take us from now until the end of the year.

Item 20: 79-795 Region 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo – Health Services – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – \$10,373,257 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 21: 80-803 Region 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$134,397,808

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, to Hon. Minister, could you kindly indicate whether this \$134,397,000 plus that you are asking for has to do with increase in the cost of the security services or whether it has to do with the increase in the number of security personnel? If it is a personnel increase, which sub-region are we referring to?

Ms. Parag: So, this will cater for Sub-Region 1 and it is for an increase of 43 security guards at four schools.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated for agency... Hon. Member Mr. Sears, please.

Mr. Sears: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, could you list the schools that this is going to be implemented at?

Ms. Parag: We have the Multilateral School, One Mile, Watooka Day and St. Aidan.

Mr. Sears: Thank you very much. To the Hon. Minister, were consultations held with the regional educational authorities or local stakeholders in determining these security needs?

Ms. Parag: To ensure that schools were not vandalised and because of recent experiences, these securities were placed strategically at these schools to ensure the safety of the school, as well as students.

Mr. Sears: Through the Chairman to the Hon. Minister, with regard to let us say schools that are being rehabilitated or constructed, specifically Bamia Primary School, I note that you did not mention any security being provided there. Could you confirm?

Ms. Parag: It has not been handed over by the contractors as yet. All of these other schools, as you know, are under the region. So, these are the schools that we are catering for with the 43 security guards to ensure that the school's infrastructure, as well as the students and teachers, are safe. Thank you.

12.45 a.m.

Mr. Sears: To the Hon. Minister, with regard to the contract that is being awarded to provide this service, could you name the company that is currently providing this service?

Ms. Parag: The company is Homesafe Security.

Mr. Sears: I just have a follow-up, and this is my final question, Mr. Chairman. What matrix or indicators will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the increase in the budget for security in improving educational outcomes?

Ms. Parag: We are ensuring, based on the request of the head teachers... You asked an earlier question about whether or not there was consultation. As a matter of fact, it was a request from the head teachers to ensure that the schools are not vandalised and that the safety of the infrastructure as well as the students and teachers are held intact. That is why we ensure that we place security to reinforce that.

Item 21: 80-803 Region 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice – Education Delivery – Security Services – \$134,397,808 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this completes the consideration of all the items.

Question

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set in Financial Paper, No. 4 of 2024-Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$84,074,229,401 for the period ending 31st December, 2024.”

Put and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish very briefly to thank our Colleagues on that side of the House, in particular, Hon. Members, Ms. Ferguson and Ms. Lawrence for persevering in the manner they did and affording us an opportunity to showcase, once again, the transparency for which this Government is so well known for. Also, thank you to my Colleagues on this side of the House for the

comprehensive answers provided. Against that background, I now wish to report that the Committee of Supply (COS) has approved of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 4 of 2024, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Before they leave let us all thank the Minister and the Members of the region for taking us through those items. Members the question is,

“That the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in its resolution on Financial Paper No. 4.”

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: This concludes our consideration of Financial Paper No. 4 of 2024. Hon. Members, we now have to deal with the Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

Dr. Singh: In accordance with...

Mr. Speaker: Sorry. Hon. Prime Minister, we have to seek the suspension of Standing Orders 13 (n) and 54, so that we can take the Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

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

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 of 2024) Bill 2024, Bill No. 18 of 2024 to be introduced at this stage.”

[Prime Minister]

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 2 for 2024) Bill 2024, Bill No. 18 of 2024 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2024) Bill 2024, Bill No. 18 of 2024 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly, and I move that it be read the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

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

Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 of 2024) Bill 2024 – Bill No. 18 of 2024

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2024, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibilities for Finance and the Public Service]

Question put and carried.

Bill read the first time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS**GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS****Bills – Second and Third Readings****Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 of 2024) Bill 2024 – Bill No. 18 of 2024**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2024, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibilities for Finance and the Public Service]

Dr. Singh: I now move, Sir, that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2024) Bill 2024, Bill No. 18 of 2024 be read a second time.

Question put and carried.

Bill read the second time.

Dr. Singh: I now move, Sir, that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2024) Bill 2024, Bill No. 18 of 2024 be read the third time and be passed as printed.

Bill considered and approved.

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

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be determined.”

[Prime Minister]

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of the sitting of the House of Assembly to a date and time to be decided on.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members and staff, have a safe trip home. The National Assembly stands adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Adjourned accordingly at 12.54 a.m.