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THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Saturday 17th October, 2015

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Saturday, October 17, 2015***APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2016) BILL, 2015**

[Sixth Day]

The Standing Finance Committee (Fourth Day) of the whole House resumed its deliberations on the Bill and Estimates.

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

10.15 a.m.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Financing Committee is resumed. We begin with Head 06, Service Commissions, \$94,013,000.

Head 06.

I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement. I am sorry. I will now invite the Minister of Public Administration to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. R. Mitchell: Madam Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee to answer any questions on Recurrent Expenditure and on the Development Programme as it pertains to the budgetary allocations for the Service Commissions.

The Service Commissions are constitutional bodies established under the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution and provide the following functions: appointment to the services under their jurisdiction and to ensure that the persons being appointed satisfy the prerequisites of integrity, skill, ability, training and experience; promotion based on training, experience, merit and ability and relative seniority along with relevant promotion examinations; transfers within their services; disciplinary control over officers in the services.

There are four Service Commissions that have full executive power to exercise these functions and they are: Public Service Commission, which has jurisdiction over civil, fire and prison services; the Police Service Commission, with powers to appoint, to act, promote, confirm persons to the positions of Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police; to monitor the

efficiency and effectiveness of the discharge of the functions of the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police; prepare annual performance reports; hear and determine appeals from decisions of the Commissioner of Police as a result of disciplinary hearings; the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, which has jurisdiction over persons holding posts in the public service requiring the possession of legal qualifications, and the Teaching Service Commission which deals with the appointment, promotion, transfer and discipline of members of the teaching service.

I thank you, Madam Chair, for allowing me these few remarks.

Question proposed: That Head 06 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$94,013,000 for Head 06: Service Commissions is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are now at page 29. Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure; Item 001 General Administration. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I would just like to go to the question of Vacant Posts in the Service Commissions—and no allocation to it. In my experience as Education Minister in the past, and related to the Teaching Service Commission, there are thousands of vacancies to be filled by the Teaching Service Commission. That is just one. And the general statement is made that there is a deficiency—inadequacy of staff to deal with the question of 16,000 teachers. Would the hon. Minister be able to say whether any steps are being made to fill positions that might be vacant? Or how many positions deal with the Service Commissions, and are there vacant positions that need to be filled to bring about greater efficiency by these Service Commissions?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, before the Minister of Public Administration gives further details, I wish to point out to the Member that your statement is incorrect. There is, in fact, an allocation for Vacant Posts in 2016.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, this line here—

Mr. Imbert: You are probably looking at the wrong line.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I am looking, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Vacant Posts - Salaries, COLA - Direct Charges.

Mr. Imbert: Are you not seeing Vacant Posts, \$800,000?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Vacant Posts, \$200—

Mr. Imbert: You are not seeing lower down, Vacant Posts, \$800,000?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on page 29, you know, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: So am I. After Government Contribution—

Dr. Gopeesingh: But there is a “Vacant Posts - Salaries and COLA - Direct Charges” where there is no line item—shows no fees here.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. Go down.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you look at number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5—

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, and if you go down to—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I see the one down. So what is the difference between that “Vacant Posts - Salaries and COLA - Direct Charges” and the Vacant Posts you are referring to? What is the difference between those two? That is always confusing for us.

Mr. Imbert: All right. I think that could be easily elucidated in writing or if the Minister is capable of—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Tell us, “nuh”. The Minister of Public Administration may know, or his colleagues.

Hon. Mitchell: The Vacant Posts - Direct Charges, those pertain to the members of the Commission in the Service Commissions Department.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Well, it still goes back to my question. Is it possible, hon. Minister, to give us an idea of the amount of positions that are filled and those that are vacant in terms of bringing about greater efficiency in the management of these Service Commissions? You will experience the same difficulty, as a Government, so I am just trying to make it easier for all of us, to understand where we are and whether there is need to fill more positions to make these Commissions more efficient and effective.

Hon. Mitchell: Madam Chair, we will put that in writing and forward it to the hon. Member of Parliament for Caroni East.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may ask, just to bring to the attention of the Minister, the decrease of \$9.5 million in the allocation for Salaries and Cost of Living, that is 01 on page 30. Just under the “ditto” rule, if we can have an explanation, please, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: The “ditto” rule will apply.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: There is an undertaking by the hon. Minister of Finance to provide in writing, the details. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: It was the same question I wanted to ask, but I am asking in the light of the number of people who complain about the length of time it is taking to get matters of discipline dealt with by the Service Commissions, as well as appointments, and whether this \$9.5 million decrease is not going to further exacerbate the situation.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have been at pains to point out that some categories of staff within the Government system were paid arrears in 2015 and others were not. So that when you see a decrease, in all probability it is because there was payment of arrears to particular categories of staff in 2015 which is not required in 2016, and this is why I have given the commitment that I will explain each variation, whether it is upward or downward, so you could see whether it is arrears or whatever it is. Okay?

Dr. Rambachan: Well, just a follow-up question. Is it the intention of the Minister then, to do a review of the Service Commissions in light of what has to be described as an inefficient operation in which disciplinary matters take so very long, and appointments are taking so very long, so that in a lot of schools people are remaining without teachers and what have you and so on? Is there any plan by the Government to review this in the shortest possible time and probably add staff so that the Service Commissions can become more efficient in what they are doing?

Hon. Mitchell: That matter is under consideration.

Dr. Rambachan: Is there a time frame for it?

Hon. Mitchell: Not at this time.

Madam Chairman: Might we move on to Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services; Item 001 General Administration? Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just refer to line Item 16 Contract Employment? Is it possible to get an explanation for that increase as opposed to simply saying it is increased? And at the same time while you are there—[*Crosstalk*] Item 17, the decrease of \$200,000 for training, what would have been the cause of this?

Hon. Mitchell: I will put that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I am referring to line Item 21 under Goods and Services: Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. In my appreciation while serving as the Minister is that a number of these Commissions have complained and we have tried in our way as a government to assist them with their accommodation, and we tried to move them into different places and so on—still remains cramped. I visited the building where the Public Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission are held, and in the previous page there is a line Item for rent/lease and so on. That might be covering that. But it seems as though a number of other departments within these Service Commissions lack the space and office accommodation.

I see a very small amount being given to the Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. Would you want to give any comment on that, whether you are comfortable with the accommodation of these four Service Commissions: Teaching Service, Public Service, Police Service and Judicial and Legal Service; and also Statutory Authorities Service Commission? Are you comfortable—well, I know you are a new Minister and perhaps it would be opportune for you to have an appreciation of the premises and the buildings and then you and your hon. Minister of Finance could determine where you go in terms of—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, might I ask if the question is: is the Minister satisfied there is sufficient money to maintain the buildings?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you aware of what the buildings are, and are you satisfied with the accommodation of your Commissions so far?

Hon. Mitchell: I have not yet had an appreciation of the accommodation.

Mr. Imbert: But there is a point that needs to be made. It is interesting that the Member for Caroni East would say that the allocation is small—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I said on the previous page there is one for rent and lease of \$10 million.

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about this line item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, good.

Mr. Imbert: It is interesting that the Member for Caroni East would say that the allocation in this line item, “Repairs and Maintenance” is small.

Dr. Gopeesingh: \$400,000.

Mr. Imbert: It is 50 per cent more than you gave in 2014. But I would give an assurance that if the Service Commissions require a supplementary allocation it will be given to them in the context of the national budget.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam. Under Goods and Services: Electricity, we notice that electricity has been increased by about 33 per cent in 2016 over 2015. Does this reflect a possible rise in electricity rates in the country as a whole? Or is this for some specific—or new buildings or what have you? What does this really reflect?

Hon. Mitchell: New building.

Dr. Rambachan: Where is this new building, may I ask?

Hon. Mitchell: On Cipriani Boulevard, DFL building.

Dr. Rambachan: That is a new building you are going to occupy?

Mr. Imbert: Well, the building is not new. If you know the Development Finance building, it is not new—the corner of Tranquillity Street and Cipriani Boulevard—but it is new for the Service Commission and as a result of their increased accommodation requirements they will obviously have to pay increased utilities. So that is what that is all about.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Under Goods and Services, Madam Chair, under 23, I am seeing Fees. I need to know, perhaps, would the hon. Minister, if he can account for what that is expected to be provided for, fees of \$200,000?

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Imbert: You know, it is quite a long list. So I think this will be given to you in writing, but I simply want to make the point that this Department has responsibility for software that is used within the Public Service, and there will be

annual licensing fees associated with the use of software which are quite substantial. But the Minister does have a complete list which he can give you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I believe we are on page 32, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: Page 32, we have not reached there as yet. That is another item. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, under Goods and Services again, I was completing my point on electricity. Given what appears to be a high cost item as the whole, which is energy in terms of electricity, and given what you see from time to time of buildings in the night with all these lights and nobody in the buildings, does the Government and the Minister have any plan that can effect energy savings in the use of public buildings?

Mr. Imbert: Minister, sorry, former Minister, as you can note from the budget statement, we set a target that 10 per cent of energy should come from renewable energy sources from the year 2021. It is part of an overall drive on the part of this Government to conserve energy, to move towards green buildings, to move towards the use of solar energy and wind power where feasible and where possible, and certainly I am concerned about the electricity bills. And you are right, you drive through Port of Spain and you would see—

Dr. Rambachan: Even this building.

Mr. Imbert: Well, I would not want to cast any aspersions—lights on all the time, and we really need to move to the use of building management systems. It is a common methodology where you have an electronic computerized system that would determine what time of day it is—

Dr. Rambachan: Smart buildings.

Mr. Imbert:—will determine the energy needs and will turn off and turn on lights. We really need to move to that to conserve energy, and it is a policy, a manifesto commitment of this Government.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just a short thing. Would it be possible for the hon. Minister to give us an idea of line Item 28 which speaks about Contracted Services? Of course, it carries the same amount from last year. If you can give us some ideas.

Mr. Imbert: I think essentially it is fees for recruitment, advertisement, selection of interview panels, boards for assessing promotions and that sort of thing. But if you want a detailed list—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no. I just wanted an idea.

Madam Chairman: So Sub-Head 002, Goods and Services. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Both the Public Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission on that page, Other Contracted Services, 28, on both Items. Because of what is happening in terms of the amount of vacant positions across the board, I understand that there are about 11,000 positions that are vacant in the Public Service and I can tell you when we demitted office, in the Teaching Service Commission for personnel there is approximately 1500 positions that had not been filled. Can you increase that Contracted Services to bring about the necessary and the required amount of personnel to help to deal with filling the vacant positions, Minister? If this is contracted services—you can do a lot within contracted services.

Hon. Mitchell: Mediators in EDR.

Mr. Imbert: This is not contract employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no. Just a while ago you explained what Contracted Services is.

Mr. Imbert: So what line Item are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 28. Both Public Service Commission and Teaching Service Commission on page 32.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, that is the same thing, Contracted Services. That is not contract employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, I know. But is there anything within that Contracted Services—

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. That is not for hiring people. It is not for hiring people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. It is not for hiring people, but can you get a firm or an establishment to help you, like pay to the Government's human resource information team. Pay a contracted service to them to help you get the positions filled.

Mr. Imbert: You see, the thing is, these are independent Commissions. So really they are the ones that will have to make that request to engage a firm and to use another method in an effort to expedite the recruitment of people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that is why I was asking you if there is any thought on probably increasing the appropriation in those areas to facilitate that.

Mr. Imbert: As I indicated, that if it is necessary to supplement this allocation to the Service Commissions, that will be done within the context of the budget. This is always a very important area, but the request will have to come from the Commission itself.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister of Finance, I appreciate you making a commitment to your colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Administration, that you will give him the support to do what is required to bring these Commissions to the efficiency.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Public Service Commission; Item 004; Teaching Service Commission; Item 005, Judicial and Legal Service Commission; Item 006, Police Service Commission. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Tobago Services. Hon. Member for Caroni East, we are on Item 002, Tobago Services.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is all right.

Madam Chairman: Now we move on to the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09. It is Head 06 and it should be on page 11 of the *Development Programme, Draft Estimates*. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 06 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives from the Service Commissions and the hon. Minister of Public Administration for assisting the Committee. You all are relieved.

We now go on to Head 40, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, before we start that, yesterday there was a query from the hon. Member for Oropouche East with respect to the Agricultural Development Bank. I am now able to clarify that matter. With your permission can we do so?

Madam Chairman: I think it should be held first while the other Ministry sets up.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much. Madam Chairman, I had been told by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance that the \$75 million allocated and transferred to the Agricultural Development Bank for un-lending to farmers in 2015 had not been utilized up to the end of the fiscal year. The hon. Member for Oropouche East did his own checks and told this House, that as far as he had been advised that what I had said was incorrect and that some \$35 million had been un-lent to farmers by the ADB in fiscal 2015 out of that \$75 million, leaving a balance of \$40 million. So, of course, this caused me some concern and I have checked, and I have in my possession a statement by the Chief Executive Officer of the Agricultural Development Bank, Mr. Sheivan Ramnath, and this is his response.

As per your request, please note that the sum of \$75 million received on 28th of August has not been utilized—has not been utilized—and therefore, the amounts available will be utilized in 2016 to satisfy the objects in the ADB Act.

So the fact of the matter is that the entire \$75 million was not un-lent and was not spent, and therefore, the information given to this House by the Member for Oropouche East was incorrect. Not one cent. Exactly what I said.

Dr. Rambachan: But they got it in August?

Mr. Imbert: August 28. So how could they spend \$35 million?

Dr. Rambachan: They did not lend from the last—

Mr. Imbert: They had not received an allocation since 2013. You starved them of funds, and then when they got the money they were unable to give farmers one cent in 2015.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, I think the letter is clear. The letter said the date on which the \$75 million had been—

Dr. Rambachan: I do not doubt it.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Are we ready to move on? Thank you, hon. Minister of Finance for clearing up the record.

Head 40.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$1,850,658,854. I will now invite the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Olivierre: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Finance Committee as we examine the Estimates for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

The areas of responsibility under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries include the oil and gas sector, power generation and the minerals industry. The energy sector is the main driver of the Trinidad and Tobago economy, contributing historically on average approximately 40 per cent of GDP. In 2014, the sector contribution dropped to a low of 37.2 per cent of GDP.

Over the past five years, the Government has been unable to arrest the decline in oil production, which has fallen some 17 per cent from 98,100 barrel per day in 2010, to 81,000 barrels per day in 2014. Similarly, we have seen a persistent decline in our proven gas reserves from 17.0 tcf at the start-up of Train 4 in 2006 to a low of 11.5 tcf in 2014. I acknowledge that I have assumed responsibility for this Ministry at a very challenging time, but I view this as a tremendous opportunity. In times of high prices, operational inefficiencies can be masked by windfall profits. However, times of low prices and falling production do indeed test our ability to effectively and efficiently manage the sector.

Accordingly, in an effort to stimulate growth in the sector, this Government is committed to creating an environment in which producer companies, both existing and new, become aggressive about seeking new discoveries in oil and gas. During this term, we also intend to place greater attention to the regulation and management of the quarrying industry. There is an allocation of \$3 million for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. These funds are earmarked for training as we build capacity in the mineral sector to enable the companies to comply with the reporting requirements for the 2014 and 2015 EITI reports.

In addition, the Permanent Local Content Committee will be reconvened and given the mandate to transition from our current Local Content Policy into legislation to ensure that as a nation we receive maximum benefits from our energy sector. Several other committees which have gone dormant under the past administration will also be reconvened. These include the Standing Committee on Energy, the Retail Marketing Advisory Committee and the future power generation committee.

Correspondingly, there has been an increase in the allocation for remuneration to Members of Cabinet-appointed committees to cater for the increased activity under this Item. Overall, we anticipate that once we cut out the waste, mismanagement and corruption, we expect to realise increased revenues from our energy resources.

Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 40 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,850,658,854 for Head 40, Energy and Energy Industries, is comprised of moneys proposed for Expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

10.45 a.m.

We are at page 289. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 14, Remunerations to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Through you, whether Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. Imbert: I am sure I can answer your question.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yeah, my husband said to me last night, you looked very tired. He was watching the proceedings. So I was saying, you know, that you kept going and would not stop. He said, “No, man, the man looking tired”. He said, “Give him ah chance, give him ah chance”.

Mr. Imbert: I am so happy he is looking out for me. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So happy to see you this morning. Good morning to you, Minister. Line Item 14, Cabinet-appointed committees, would the Minister be so kind just to tell us which are these committees, one; two, the members of each of the committees and the qualifications of these members?

Mr. Imbert: If it was just the names of the committees, that would be easy, but since you want the names of the members and their qualifications, we will have to put that in writing to you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, can we go on to—[*Interruption*] Sorry.

Dr. Tewarie: I have a question. Under 01, Personnel Expenditure and 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies—this is on page 288—we can see an overall decrease, specifically at 3.08 reduction in Current Transfers and Subsidies. Is that explainable simply by the reduction in the price of oil and the subsequent savings from subsidies and transfers?

Mr. Imbert: Let me handle that. In the first instance, that is on the summary page. We will get to it in due course. It is a couple of pages along. You will see, when we get there, there is a specific reference to the subsidy on petroleum products, so we can deal with that when we get to that.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I also then flag that I would appreciate an explanation of the reduction also for Goods and Services?

Madam Chairman: Are we at 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, hon. Member for Caroni Central? Are we there?

Dr. Tewarie: I was looking at this summary page.

Madam Chairman: Well, we started at page 289, so to avoid us having to defer your question too long, might I ask that we take it in the correct turn?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, that is fine. It is just a simple explanation.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, I think you will get a fuller answer then. Yes, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under Personnel Expenditure, just to remind us, I see the increase of \$1.6 and the ditto question we have been asking on personnel expenditure, like—

Madam Chairman: Okay, so the undertaking given by the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]*—ditto.*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure, thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: I just think “ditto” might not look too well in the record.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, we have been using it for days.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I did not come up with that term “ditto”, you know.

Madam Chairman: No, we understand it but that is why I am taking the pains to still make the statement.

Mr. Imbert: But it was not mine.

Madam Chairman: Let us get along, please. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, I want to look at 08, Rent/Lease, there is a substantial increase in rental of properties. What accounts for that? I have also a question—when that is answered—in three other areas.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. Imbert: What was the first question?

Madam Chairman: We are on page 290, line Item 08.

Mr. Singh: Yeah, 08, Rent/Lease, Accommodation and Storage, substantial increase.

Hon. Olivierre: Yes, we have an increase there because we have an extension to our office in San Fernando. We are acquiring additional space, plus we also plan to have a mineral's office which would be in the facility of Sangre Grande.

Mr. Singh: Item 17, Training. I noticed that there is a significant decrease in Training. What accounts for that?

Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. This reduction was made by the Ministry of Finance. We have asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to review their training needs and we will supplement this allocation if it is required.

Mr. Singh: Well, I do want a plug for the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: It is part of the budgeting exercise. You have to balance—

Mr. Singh: You have specialized skills set required in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and therefore—

Mr. Imbert: Yes, but you can vire funds. So we have asked the Minister to review and we will supplement and approve virements as and when required.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West, I believe you said you had one more question.

Mr. Singh: Two more, yeah. I noticed that while there is a decrease in Training, there is an increase in overseas travel. What is responsible for that projection? Is this a reversal of policy that has enunciated cutting down overseas travel?

Hon. Olivierre: We do have several international obligations as a result of many of the organizations that we belong to, like OLADE and the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, the World Petroleum Council. So based on these international obligations, we do have to maintain those amounts.

Madam Chairman: And you said you have one more question?

Mr. Singh: Yes, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. I know that this is used for employment and that there is a decrease of some \$10.6 million. So what—

Mr. Imbert: It is not employment; that is services.

Mr. Singh: What is this for, then?

Hon. Olivierre: Yes, well, I can give you an indication of some of the main services that would be covered under this. We do recognize that there is an allocation which is significantly less than we would have requested, but some of the main areas would be development work on the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, the Bilateral Oil Spill Contingency Plan which is an initiative that we have with Venezuela and we also have one with Grenada.

There is a contract with the IMA for fingerprinting of oil. This would be important in the events of oil spills, we can identify exactly where the source of it is. There is a gas reserves audit, the Ryder Scott audit; there is an allocation for that. We also intend to do an oil reserves audit. There are some geological surveys and several other contracting services that we have on-stream.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister, we see on line Item 16, an increase of Contract Employment by \$1 million for the Graduate Training Programme and it is a series of questions I have here with respect to contract employment in some of the other agencies that fall under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

First, could the hon. Minister indicate whether the current Graduate Training Programme in Petrotrin will continue in its existing form, one? How many persons have been sent home since completing the programme over the last two months? Whether the programme will be expanded due to the Government's interest in employment? Which areas will be addressed? How many positions? A description of the programme and positions. And also, if the hon. Minister would be kind enough to give us a list of persons who have been retained since completing the Graduate Training Programme in Petrotrin over the last two months? And also, if we can get a list of all existing Graduate Training Programmes from all agencies under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries?

Mr. Imbert: Let me deal with that, Madam Chairman, I realize the Member is new. This has nothing to do with Petrotrin. This is the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. Petrotrin would have its own programme. There is not a single Item here that would have any relationship to any graduate training in Petrotrin.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, through you, again, I understand that, hon. Minister, I am asking in relation to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. Imbert: You asked for the line Item.

Mr. Padarath: If the hon. Minister would be kind enough, as a line Minister with responsibility for these agencies, whether or not she can provide us with that

information?

Mr. Imbert: But we are not on that line Item.

Madam Chairman: I was just about to indicate that—

Mr. Padarath: But we are on the line Item, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but we are dealing with the Ministry—

Mr. Imbert: Your question is irrelevant.

Mr. Padarath: You are irrelevant.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please. We are dealing with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the line Item refers to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Interruption*] Could we please start off the day with a little measure of tolerance? So that you may be able to get the information you wish using another mechanism that is available to you under the Standing Orders, but not under this particular Item. Okay?

Mr. Padarath: I understand that, Madam Chairman, but it is in relation to line Item 16, if the hon. Minister can indicate—

Mr. Imbert: It is not.

Mr. Padarath:—to us.

Mr. Imbert: It is not.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, please, I have determined that I cannot allow that question under this line Item.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. Well, we go back to line Item 16 with its specific reference to Contract Employment with respect to that Graduate Training Programme in the Ministry, whether or not the hon. Minister can give us a clear indication of what positions will be created within the Ministry? Which areas? What sort of criteria will be used to select these persons? And then when we reach to that other area, I would like to raise the issue of the other agencies that fall under the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: All right. So right now, we are just dealing with your first part of your question. Yes?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have said now four times—this is now the fifth time, and I know that the hon. Member was present for at least three of those four times—that the Minister of Finance is the one who initiated this programme and allocated \$55 million to Ministries and the Tobago House of Assembly, and

that I will, in due course—and I was very clear about this—formulate guidelines and advise the Ministries on the mechanisms, the terms and conditions and the modus operandi of the graduate programme. Since I have not done that yet, it is unfair to ask a line Minister how it will operate and I have said that now five times.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, is it then that the Minister is admitting that there is no plan with respect to this programme?

Mr. Imbert: No, I am admitting nothing. I spoke about it in the budget statement just a few days ago and it is something that will be put in place within the next few weeks.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: No, he asked the question.

Madam Chairman: Much obliged. So that can we move on now and we go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies.

Dr. Tewarie: I just want the decrease of \$3 billion to be explained. That is all. Under Regional Bodies, 001.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 291.

Hon. Olivierre: Yes, that decrease is as a result of significant arrears which were due last year which have been paid, so there is no need to allocate that additional sum.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister gave an explanation under 007, Household, 01 and I wanted, if I may, to follow up on the response.

Madam Chairman: That is what I am asking. If we are in 001, Regional Bodies.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 007, 01.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, Madam Chairman, not Regional Bodies, shortfall in subsidy.

Madam Chairman: We are at 00—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, I apologize. I went ahead.

Madam Chairman: That is all right. Item 004, International Bodies; Item 007, Households. Hon. Member for Siparia, was there a question not under Households?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma'am, thank you. 01, Shortfall in subsidy re sale of Petroleum Products. So I just want to be sure this \$3 billion is that we do not have to pay the fuel subsidy to the tune of \$3 billion. Is this what this is for?

Mr. Imbert: Well, the Minister has a detailed explanation. I will just give you a little preliminary information, and then I will hand it over to our very competent Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to give you some details.

When we all began the fiscal year in 2015, oil was predicated on a price of \$80, so the fuel subsidy, at that time, would have been calculated based on \$80, which would have been the \$4.8 billion. But during the year, the oil price dropped and therefore—because there was substantial amount of arrears in the 2015 estimates by the way. The \$6 billion includes the substantial arrears from the previous year; \$3 billion in arrears, I am told. So most of the arrears have been cleared off. And we now come to 2016 where, very fortunately, there is a significant reduction in the fuel subsidy because of the reduction in oil price. So I will hand you over to our very competent Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

11.00 a.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sir but this may go up and down, depending on the price.

Mr. Imbert: It can go up and down, of course, up and down. Yes, yes, of course. As oil price goes up you have to pay more subsidy but you get more revenue and usually you get more revenue than you have to pay in subsidy.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you, Sir. I think that is sufficient to answer.

Mr. Imbert: So you do not want to hear from our very competent Minister of Energy?

Hon. N. Olivierre: If I can just add to that. The amount to \$1.71 billion, this is comprised of an estimated \$1.52 billion, which is estimated as Government liability for subsidy in 2016. But, in addition to that, we have a \$600 million arrears from the 2015 payment, plus we have a \$120 million, which would be increased cost due to the filling and handling charges when we opened the Caroni Gantry facility.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am dealing with transfers to state enterprises.

Madam Chairman: All right, we have not reached there as yet. We are moving on from Item 007, Households. We are now at item 009.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask one question under 007, Households?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: I thought, I may be wrong, this is addressed, through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister of Finance. But I thought in the explanation to the Leader of the Opposition, he indicated that with the rise in the oil price the subsidies may then continue to accrue.

Mr. Imbert: Not may, it will. It will go up. As oil prices goes up and the price of fuel goes up, the subsidy goes up.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Therefore, my follow-up question is this: the Government policy, as articulated by you in the budget, is a 15 per cent tax, basically, on whatever price. Does the Government have any intention of holding the subsidies at the \$45 price that you have now pegged the budget at?

Mr. Imbert: I appreciate that question and I gather from the Member's demeanour that it is a very sincere question and I thank you for that. I said in the budget statement that we are going to initiate a national dialogue because, as you will see, the subsidy for this year \$1.7 billion. In the past, it has been \$4 billion and we need to start talking as a country about this money. Is this the best way to spend \$1.7 billion or \$2 billion or \$3 billion, as the case may be, because it will vary according to the price of fuel?

I started the discussion with the increase of 15 per cent. Arising from the dialogue, we will see whether there should be further adjustments or not but we have to try to reach consensus as a country. Because you could take a \$1 billion of this money and use it to help the poor, for example. So we need to talk about these things. So, the 15 per cent was just to get the ball rolling, get people talking about it and then we would have a national dialogue to see where we go from here.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Item 009; Other Transfers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to clarify whether the subsidies have any—
[*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, are we on 009?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. I was just talking about the Households 007, just for a brief moment, following what the Member for Caroni Central was asking, just a short additional question on that, since the Minister of Finance cleared up very clearly.

Mr. Imbert: I also think it is a very important topic, so I would have no objection if it pleases you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: I am so happy, hon. Minister of Finance, so that we could get on with the business of the people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I crave your indulgence, hon. Minister, to determine whether the subsidies have any tangential relationship with gas prices?

Mr. Imbert: Natural gas?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The gas, yes.

Mr. Imbert: When you say gas, you mean natural gas?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Which we pegged at \$2.75.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. This is petroleum products which would be diesel, premium gasoline, super gasoline; petroleum products.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. I appreciate your answer.

Mr. Imbert: It is not natural gas.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So we move on to Item 009: Other Transfers? Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, the establishment of the Quarries Authority, could you give us a sense of the status of that, where it is at, if it is—in writing, perhaps?

Hon. Olivierre: I would be happy to tell you. We have not yet determined that we will establish a quarries authority. Currently we have a choice between maintaining the Minerals Division within the Ministry or should we move to an authority, which would have greater autonomy and greater regulatory powers. So that is still under discussion. But we do have an allocation in there, in case we decide that we will move in that direction.

Mr. Singh: Yes, because there is need for significant regulation of quarries. I do not know whether the authority is the right mechanism, but certainly there is need for a greater regulatory intervention on the part of the Ministry.

Hon. Olivierre: And if you would note from my opening remarks, I did say that we do intend to place greater emphasis on the quarries industry because there has been a lot of activity of illegal quarrying and currently it is a little to manage to bring them in line. So we are still determining whether the authority would be the best mechanism or if we can beef-up the legislation within the Minerals Division of the Ministry. So that is something that is foremost in our attention. It is something that I personally intend to champion.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 09: Development Programme; Consolidated Fund, Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under 003, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiatives, I note for 2016, an allocation of \$6 million. If the Minister would be so kind as to identify the specific initiatives that would be included under this item of expenditure? I note that in 2015, still on the same Item, an allocation was made, estimated at \$16 million. The revised remains at \$16 million and now we are down to an allocation of \$6 million. I guess this is just an estimate in 2015, and we do not know how much was actually expended. So, can you tell us, if any at all was expended in 2015 and then for 2016, what specific initiatives are being included for this item of expenditure of \$6 million for renewable energy?

Hon. Olivierre: A more up-to-date revised estimate for 2015, actually, it is going more like \$12.2 million. A large percentage of that was on a public awareness campaign. So we feel that the public—as well as some of that work is completed and a lot of the public is aware. So we have a reduced allocation. But the areas under which we intend to expend the \$6 million in 2016, we would be continuing with the light bulb exchange programme, the school public awareness, that would be continued and also the installation of solar equipment.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I am listening to what the Minister has indicated, but in the budget speech, the hon. Minister of Finance indicated a 10 per cent renewable energy input into the grid by 2021 and I do not see the linkage between the projects and the current issue.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. I would explain. The 27 European Union countries, for example, have agreed and put into their national legislation that they would achieve a 20 per cent from renewable energy sources by the year 2020. Now, I thought that 20 per cent was unachievable and I also thought that trying to do it in a five-year period was also unachievable because you have to do a lot of planning. So we will be planning how we would have this major thrust to encourage people

to use solar energy and wind energy. I think it is a national discussion. Because at this point in time, these forms of renewable energy are quite expensive. They are coming down. The cost of wind energy is coming down; solar energy is still quite expensive, but we do need to discuss this.

There is a view that we should not be talking about our carbon footprint because even though we are the second largest country per capita, in terms of carbon emissions, when you look on the map you would see a little dot, in terms of quantum. But I think it was time that we as a country get serious, so I put the target of 10 per cent and we will use the mechanisms that have been used successfully in countries like Norway and the Scandinavian countries that are now up to 50 per cent of energy from renewable sources and learn from their experiences and apply best practice.

In 2016, we will be putting the framework in place to start to encourage the country to start moving towards renewable energy. So you are not going to see it in this allocation at this time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, Item 005, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. I saw a decrease of about \$1.1 million. But bearing in mind that it took so long, even starting with their administration and our administration, we had the first set of publications for transparency with EITI in 2013/2014. Hon. Minister, perhaps, can I ask you whether you think it is appropriate to cut their budget or you should give them more encouragement to facilitate greater transparency and accountability in the energy sector, which they have been lauded for internationally and globally, Trinidad and Tobago being one of the few countries now that has gone on to the transparency with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative? Do you think it is worth reconsideration and to give them the full complement so that they can do their work and carry Trinidad and Tobago forward on the map?

Hon. Olivierre: Well, it is not that we have cut their budget. We have given them exactly what they have requested and this is the amount that they have requested for 2016. But I did mention in my opening statement that some of these funds would be expended in capacity building, particularly in the mineral sector. Because in the previous reports, the minerals sector were not included. And we intend to have them included in subsequent reports. So a lot of the funds is going to place some focus on the minerals/mining industry.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just want to make one little point on what the Minister of Finance said. I crave you indulgence, Madam Chair. We have 20 schools now that have solar energy so, therefore it is a way to look at 134 secondary schools with

solar energy. So, while you may want to talk, we have already gone forward with implementation.

Mr. Imbert: We will do this together.

Hon. Olivierre: If I can just mention we also plan to install some photovoltaic exterior lighting at 15 community centres and solar-powered water distillation units and photovoltaic exterior lighting technology at 15 secondary schools. So we are pressing ahead with this initiative.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Minister of Education will be happy.

Dr. Tewarie: When we look at both the expenditure allocation and the development allocation, the Minister of Finance, in this budget presentation talked about the challenge of production and he did mention, for instance, lease operatorships to small players in the gas industry. I do not see anything that would identify in the budgetary allocation, anything related to the production side. I wonder if either the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries would care to address the issue of how we manage or how we focus on the production side.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I will answer that. We have already had meetings. Now, a lot of this has to do with fiscal incentives. It is not really investing money. It is really waiving taxes and giving tax holidays and giving particular fiscal regimes that would encourage people to invest in particular areas in the energy sector. And if you look at what we said in the budget statement and also otherwise, we are going to have an open forum with the upstream/mid-stream/downstream service companies. From the perspective of the Ministry of Finance, we will be calling for submissions from all the players in the energy sector, in terms of their views on the fiscal regime. I already met with the energy chamber, very briefly, before the budget and they have asked for us to look at the level of supplementary petroleum tax.

11.15 a.m.

They have made the point, for example, that when the SPT was set at \$50, oil was about \$25, and then you would have some conflict in the Middle East or something like that, where it suddenly escalates the price up to \$50. So with no additional investment on the part of the energy companies, they would make windfall profits. So it was a windfall tax; it is used all around the world. Supplementary petroleum tax is not unique to Trinidad. It is designed to allow

Governments to get some of the windfall profits that oil companies make when there is a sudden escalation in price. It has nothing to do with them. They have invested in plant and equipment.

So they asked us to review the SPT. It is very complex. We are looking at it because if you do raise the SPT threshold, then of course that results in a loss of revenue to the Government. But the point they made is that if we do not consider it, then they may not be able to invest in further production. Then you have the problems with small fields that do not have the capital necessary to invest, and they would need assistance in terms of fiscal incentives; then you have stranded gas, then you have problems with secondary recovery and so on.

We have all of these issues, because we are a mature oil province. We are not a new oil province. You know, our reserves are declining. Our fields are old. We are now going into the deep water. So that I have decided the best thing to do and, of course, the Ministry of Energy will be doing its own initiatives and approaches with respect to this matter, but after this debate is over, there will be a formal call for submissions from the industry, as to what we as a Government can do to incentivize them to get involved in production. That is similar to what was done in the United Kingdom in 2014. They faced the same problem that there was declining production, oil companies pulling out, so they had a call for evidence and it resulted in a lot of changes. Now they are getting increased investments. So that is the approach we are going to use.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Madam Chair, through you. The hon. Minister of Finance had indicated that they will be converting to renewable energy, the grounds. You have identified 15 recreation grounds, and then you all will look at schools and community centres. Would you please kindly put in writing the—*[Interruption]* she said that in her statement, Minister of Finance. I am just asking—in writing if you can identify what the grounds are and the schools and community centres you are starting with, please? Thank you.

Madam Chairman: The Renewable Energy Projects?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: You want to know where they are?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. Thank you very much. So that would be given in writing. Can we move on then to the Infrastructure Development Fund; that is at page 311? Item 003 Economic Infrastructure.

Appropriation Bill, 2015

Saturday, October 17, 2015

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, line Item 001, Development of Industrial Sites, an allocation of \$40 million. Would the Minister be so kind as to provide a list of the sites to be developed in 2016?

Madam Chairman: So you will take that in writing? Hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, is the list available?

Hon. Olivierre: I will provide it in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you Ma'am, and 005, Development of New Port Facilities, a \$40 million allocation. What projects will this fund?— which projects, again, a list of the project; new ports development.

Hon. Olivierre: Yes. So these new port facilities are the Brighton Port in La Brea and the Galeota Port, Port 1A, 1B and Port No. 2 in Galeota. So it is Brighton and Galeota, those are the ongoing projects.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Those are ongoing from 2015?

Hon. Olivierre: Those are the ongoing projects. Yes, they are.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, she answered the question, so thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 40 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I will like to thank the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the representatives of that Ministry for coming and assisting the Committee. You all are relieved.

Head 42.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. We are at page 293 of the *Draft Estimates for Recurrent Expenditure*. Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, \$2,244,933.455. I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Khan: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I will start by saying it is certainly a personal pleasure and privilege for me to sit in this

honourable House once again after a hiatus of eight years. Let me start first of all as Leader of Government Business in the other place, to formally congratulate you, Madam Chairman, for your election as Speaker of this honourable House, and I am sure you will do, as you have been doing, an excellent job.

Madam Chairman, for those of you who were listening carefully to the PNM's election campaign, our political leader, now Prime Minister, spoke extensively on two transformational areas, aimed at radically changing the governance structure and the service delivery model in Trinidad and Tobago. These two policy areas were as follows: one, local government reform, by and large using the THA model. It involves, as I like to say, the retiring of the Ministry of Local Government, what I call the Gorbachev agenda. And secondly, the creation the Ministry of Rural Development—*[Interruption]* yeah, the Gorbachev agenda is the disbanding of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and to let the Republics be autonomous—*[Interruption]* the creation of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. I was handed this transformational exercise and I want to thank this hon. Prime Minister for placing this confidence in me. I want to give him the assurance that I will deliver.

With regard to local government reform, Madam Chairman, we propose the devolution of power and authority with the creation of executive councils, similar to that of the THA, and to the many other changes as articulated in our manifesto. As we speak, Cabinet has already set up two committees. One, a ministerial committee with oversight responsibility, and a technical committee to start the consultation as we embark on this exercise.

From the Budget Statement, Members would realize that the estimates are still cast in the old mould. You will also realize that under this mould, we will all admit that local government is very much under resourced. I want to give this House the assurance that this is the last year for that.

With regard to rural development, Madam Chairman, I would like to make two points. One, firstly, this is the first policy articulated by the current Prime Minister. As a matter of fact, he made the statement on the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government way back in January 2012 at a meeting in Basse Terre, Moruga.

So much effort is assigned to this Ministry, Madam Chairman, I want to draw your attention to the fact that the Cabinet has been reduced from 33 to 23 and the Prime Minister still saw it fit to have an entire Ministry dedicated to rural development, showing the emphasis that this administration now placed on this matter, with what I call a rural deficit in all areas.

However, when we took office a lot of the draft estimates were already prepared, so that the estimates do not truly reflect our focus on rural development. In the mid-year review, Madam Chairman, you will see a lot more changes as we bring this Ministry into prominence with oversight responsibility for all rural development plans.

To hear more of our plans for local government reform and rural development, I invite Members to tune in on Tuesday at the Senate debate, where we will be articulating our position in some great detail, especially my contribution. So once again, Madam Chairman, I thank you very much for this opportunity to make these introductory remarks, and I am now willing to entertain questions.

Question proposed: That Head 42 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,244,933,455 for Head 42: the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. We are at page 294.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, and may I crave your indulgence to welcome the Member back into the Parliament. I listened to him speak of making sure that rural development and local government is not under resourced and, therefore, if we are looking at Personnel Expenditure—in fact, the summary of recurrent expenditure, I note there has been a decrease of \$92.3 million in recurrent expenditure. How does this fit in with the Minister's words of more resourcing? Is there another source of funding for local government, given the \$92.3 million decrease in recurrent expenditure?

Hon. Khan: You realize that in the recurrent expenditure, the revised estimates for 2015 was extremely high. That was largely due to the salary increases that were awarded to the PSA. If you look at our estimates for 2016, it is slightly higher than the original estimates for 2015 and the estimates for 2014, and that reflects the actual salary increases of 10 per cent or 12 per cent as it were. So it is consistent. The expenditure has not grown, it is just the salary has increased by 10 per cent to 12 per cent. As we say, this year is transformational year, and we will be seeing a lot of new things coming out next year, but really with an empowered regional corporation and municipalities.

Madam Chairman: Page 294, Item 001 General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minister, under 01—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just add some clarity if—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Are we going back?

Mr. Imbert: Just to give us a better—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Just to understand, are we going back?

Madam Chairman: We are, and we are at—

Mr. Imbert: On the question that the Leader of the Opposition raised. You had raised the question about the \$92 million.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Are we going back to—

Mr. Imbert: If you do not mind. I think it is necessary—

Madam Chairman: Is this the overall—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The speaker does not really—

Madam Chairman:—that was asked by—

Mr. Imbert: The overall question, because remember it is the Ministry of Finance that makes the appropriation.

11.30 a.m.

If you go along in the document, you would see that some of the responsibilities of this Ministry have been transferred to other Ministries. So, for example, the Solid Waste Management Company has been transferred to the Ministry of Public Utilities and that alone is \$75 million, and then the National Commission for Self-Help has been transferred to the Ministry of Community Development.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Where is the line item for that?

Mr. Imbert: Look on 297.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Let us get to 296.

Mr. Imbert: When we get to this page, I would deal with that.

Madam Chairman: And, therefore, Members, if we would avoid the summary sheet, because some of the answers will be carrying us forward, and that is why I tried to direct us to the individual Heads.

So, we are again at 001, General Administration, and I would take it that any question concerning an increase or decrease in salaries, the hon. Minister of Finance is bound by that covering undertaking. Anything else in 001, General Administration? Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services: Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to ask: what accounts for the \$5.2 million decrease in Travelling and Subsistence? What accounts for that big decrease? Is it related to the wage increase the year before, the back pay?

Hon. Khan: It comes back in line with arrears with a slight increase over 2014.

Miss Ramdial: That is okay. The question was asked.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

Dr. Rambachan: Page 295, Contract Employment.

Madam Chairman: Line Item? Could you give us the line Item, please?

Dr. Rambachan: Sure, 16.

Madam Chairman: That is 16. Contract Employment is \$25.7 million. Can the Minister give us an understanding of what is the nature of this Contract Employment, apart from the Graduate Employment of about \$2 million? What is the nature of this Contract Employment?

Hon. Khan: As you are aware, over the last several years, the public service has been leaning towards contract employment, so there are a lot of positions that are in the establishment, so to speak, that are contract employees. As a matter of fact, the contract establishment in the Ministry of Local Government is 338, and the established public service position is now getting smaller and smaller as a percentage of the public service, and it is something that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise and the Prime Minister has indicated that they want to bring some sanity into. So we are just part of all the other Ministries that—I do not want to use the word “suffer”—are part of this whole process.

Dr. Rambachan: Can the Minister provide us with the names of persons and the positions of people who are in these contract positions now and when would these contract positions come to an end?

Hon. Khan: We will provide that in writing, but most of these contracts, my understanding are three-year contracts and they expire at various points in time.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. On the item of Short-Term Employment, I noticed a decrease of \$3 million. There have been some concerns at local government bodies of persons being sent home. I know at the Siparia Regional Corporation, I think at Mayaro. Was it at Mayaro as well? I do not know if this is involved here or this is only at the Ministry level, but if you would kindly explain the reason for the decrease in Short-Term Employment, please.

Mr. Imbert: Let me come in there. As I indicated, Short-Term Employment is not attached to any position, and it is for employment periods of six months or less. There were a number of short-term contracts, not just in this Ministry, but all over the service which had an expiry date of September 30, 2015. People were hired just for three months, four months and so on. So there is no question of anybody being sent home. The short-term contracts came to an end.

All Ministers have been asked to review the short-term contracts that people were just hired in June or July or something like that. The Ministers have been asked to review the short-term contracts to determine what was their purpose, whether they achieved the intended objectives and whether the short-term contract should be revived in 2016, and that exercise is still incomplete.

I had discussions with a particular Minister and he is still in the process of reviewing all these three-month contracts that were scheduled to expire on September 30 and did. So, it is not a question of anybody being sent home. The contracts had an expiry date and they expired.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases: Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I do not know if we have gone off page 295? Have we?

Madam Chairman: We are at Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. That begins at page 296.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, I would crave your indulgence to ask the question on page 295 on promotions, line Item, 62.

Madam Chairman: I would allow it on this occasion, but I would really like all Members—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I would try my best, Madam Chairman, okay.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sometimes, you know, the pages move faster than we can keep up with them. Page 295—and I thank you for allowing the question—line Item 62, Promotions/Publicity and Printing. I noticed an increase in the allocation. I make this comment because I have noticed this is one of the few Ministries where you actually have an increase in promotions and so on. Would the Minister kindly indicate how he intends to expend this money? If there is any specific reason why it has increased?

Hon. Khan: The answer I would proffer here is that over the coming months there would be a minimum of 15 consultations that we will be hosting: 14 in the

regional corporations and one with the Tobago House of Assembly to gain some institutional knowledge from them as to how they have rolled out their plans. So a lot of this expenditure there could be regarded—as a matter of fact, that is insufficient, so we may have to come back for a vote in the mid-year review or vire some money because the consultation process will be elaborate.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Minister. So, Item 66 now which deals with the hosting of conferences, seminars and functions.

Hon. Khan: Well, all of that is part of the same whole.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So the promotions and the hosting—

Hon. Khan: Well, yeah, there is a big Venn diagram effect there, and a lot of overlapping.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But you have two separate items.

Hon. Khan: But operationally there is this A\cap B sort of thing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So you would use the money for consultation.

Madam Chairman: So, we are moving on. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. At 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, I see a significant drop from the revised estimates of \$100 million in 2015 to \$43 million. Who are these bodies to which the moneys were provided? It is a significant sum, \$56 million. Could you provide some explanation as to the reason for the reduction? Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this is the point I was making. If you look on the next page, you will see that Solid Waste Management has been transferred to Public Utilities, \$75 million; National Commission for Self-Help transferred to the Ministry of Community Development and so on. So that there have been additions and subtractions, but the net effect is the reduction as a result of these significant elements like Solid Waste Management and National Commission for Self-Help going to other Ministries.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. That may hold for as we go on to page 297 and so on, but we are dealing here with the Item, Regional Bodies, so that has nothing to do with Solid Waste.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. Hon. Member of Siparia, the question was not asked with respect to regional bodies. There was a general question asked by

the hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Imbert: The same question you had asked.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, well may I ask it then? So I hear you.

Madam Chairman: So, we are now at Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under 009, 03, ttconnect Service Centres, we are seeing in the 2016 estimates at \$16 million. Can the Minister be so kind as to provide some information on these connect service centres?

Hon. Khan: This year, for the first time, the ttconnect portfolio has been handed to the Ministry of Local Government and, again, with keeping to provide connectivity to rural areas, I mean that is where it is best needed. So this \$16 million is allocated, but we have a staff of 37 and an operating expense and we plan to roll out that infrastructure big time, so to speak, in the rural areas because rural areas need connectivity, both physical connectivity and virtual connectivity.

Mr. Karim: That is the question I was going to ask.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we go on to Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman, line Items 05 and 06. I note that we are transferring to RDC moneys for the construction of the Princes Town Regional Corporation building. I welcome that because I know we had pushed really hard to have the designs and so on done. Can I ask if there is any similar provision for the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation Building?

Hon. Khan: We will provide that in writing because I am not totally seized of that matter.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Through you, Madam Chair. I asked because I know that was also one where the designs had been completed and, indeed, a contract was awarded. So, I would like to know the status, please. Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in similar vein, with respect to RDC, I know that the RDC had an allocation of, I think \$20 million to deal with the Chaguanas Market. I would like to get a status report on the refurbishment of the Chaguanas Market?

Hon. Khan: That comes under the DP.

Mr. Singh: It is only \$5 million there.

Hon. Khan: You will see it under DP when we get to that.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 005, Local Government Bodies.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, I note that there has been a net reduction of \$92.3 million for transfers to these regional corporations, local government bodies, and within that I note that several areas: the Siparia Regional Corporation has been slashed by \$6.6 million; the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation has been slashed by \$5.6 million; several have been slashed. I mentioned those two because they fall within my constituency areas, and I would be very happy to get an explanation as to why such a drastic drop in funding in these areas: Siparia Regional Corporation and the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, if the Member would look at the whole list, you would see, for example.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Which is the whole list.

Mr. Imbert: The whole list, Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: There was a total reduction.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, yes, but if you look inside the various items, you will see, for example, the Chaguanas Borough Corporation has been increased from \$89 million to \$100 million and the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation has also been increased. So the Princes Town Regional Corporation has been increased.

Hon. Member: Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, a decrease.

Mr. Imbert: Sorry, it is the Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation that has been increased and the Princes Town Regional Corporation has been increased. So we have Princes Town increased, Mayaro/Rio Claro and Chaguanas and then there are other increases and decreases as the case may be. For example, the San Fernando City Corporation has a significant decrease and the Tunapuna/Piarco has a very significant decrease from \$230 million to \$208 million.

11.45 p.m.

So, in order to dispel any views that might be outside there that, you know, PNM corporations or UNC corporations are being targeted, you can see these increases and decreases have been across the board, and it is based on the requests

made by the corporations and the budgetary process. Again, in the fiscal year, once our fortunes improve and we can make reallocations, based on the needs of these corporations, we will consider requests for supplementary funding as the case may be.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, I am looking at the very same figures but it would have made a lot of sense if we could have gone through this particular section, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies, by reference to the other document, Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure for the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, in which the details of each of the corporations are given, but given your ruling yesterday I do not think we can go to this document. But in that document you will see that there have been revisions to goods and services, and in several areas necessary goods and services have been cut, and, therefore, what you are doing is you are denying—and in a large portion of it is rural communities—the kind of resources that they need. And the promise of the Minister simply to say that, as time goes on, we will see what we can do, I do not think it is comforting to the people who live in these rural communities. You take a community like Couva/Tabaquite Regional Corporation, Minister, which is one of the largest in the country, and which, you know—even if I take my constituency of Tabaquite, has 42 villages by itself, it gives you an idea of what is—your margin. When you cut a small budget, and you cut it down before, you know you are going against the grain of your policy about rural development. You have a conflict in terms of, I am interested in rural development, and so on. While you attempt the reform, which is appreciated, at the same time the grass is growing but the horse is starving and the “fellas” cannot do any work.

Madam Chairman: And the question following on that—

Dr. Rambachan: The question is, why are you allowing local government to starve even if you are going through the reform process?

Hon. Khan: The point I made earlier is that this budget estimates have been cast in the old moon, just give us six months and you will see major transformation, because rural development will now take charge of oversight responsibility for all aspects of service delivery in rural areas, and there will be major revisions of the estimates in March.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, while the Minister of Finance says he is going to cut off the waste and cut off corruption, and so on, I want to ask the Minister of Finance, what oversight mechanisms is he going to put in place that is

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going to ensure this country that what he does has value for money, accountability, transparency, and that there is equality of distribution of resources in the country?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, just to concur with my colleague, I have gone through the documents in details and I do see that there is a reduction in a number of goods and services that would really provide and so, therefore, I would like to ask, specifically for line Item 31, Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, how will the decrease in the allocation really impact upon the improvements that have been promised?—in light of the fact that even in today's papers, there is someone who is writing from Toco—I am applauding the efforts of the Government on what it is you planned to do in Toco, and yet there is a decrease. So, I myself would like to know, how will the improvements be achieved? Thank you.

Hon. Khan: When you say improvements you more than likely refer to the development budget, this is on the recurrent side. They probably were cutting any superfluous activity that was going on, but, really and truly, you see the impact of the development process from the DP, not from the recurrent side.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I will be going through the DPE with you, Sir.

Hon. Khan: Okay. Yeah, well, we will talk when we reach the DPE.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I wonder if I could ask you to permit me to ask the hon. Minister for Rural Development and Local Government some general questions based on what he articulated in his overarching contribution, but they relate directly—

Madam Chairman: Once you could identify a line item—

Dr. Tewarie: It relates to Item 005. It relates to local government. You see, I am having a little confusion right, and it is genuine, I am not trying to make any political point here. The confusion has to do with this, local government, the Ministry, Central, is being removed. Local government, the 14 regional corporations are going to be strengthened, a la, House of Assembly model. The budgetary allocations here, both here and in development, because when we get to development I can show you that no councillor in Couva/Tabaquite, for instance,

gets more than \$230,000 or \$240,000 to basically do various types of important works, but the point I am making—so rural development, the Ministry is now going to be having the overarching responsibility for local government.

Now, local government is not only rural, you have rural local government and you have the City of San Fernando, City of Port of Spain, et cetera—*[Interruption]* I am getting to the question, I mean, if you would just indulge me—and in the strengthening of local government you also have the element of parliamentary representation, which is a fact of life in our parliamentary system, and my own sense, given the allocations here, I take your point that you are going to revise this in your March revisions when you come back to the budget.

If the power and the autonomy and the money is going to be given to local government agencies under the new framework that you are establishing, what is the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government going to do? What is the relationship between rural development and local government given now the abolition of local government, the central authority?

Hon. Khan: Member for Caroni Central, I invite you to listen to my contribution on Tuesday in the Senate, it will be clarified in some great detail.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: I would also like to have the opportunity to examine the allocations as per the regional corporations, but I just wanted to draw to the Minister's attention that local health authority, allocations would come under this and I have noticed that there would have been a significant cut when you look at the line items. So, Minister, just to draw that to your attention in terms of the environmental health and the control of mosquitos, and issues like that, if you can take that into account.

Madam Chairman: So that is just a general comment on—

Dr. Bodoë: Just a comment following on the last item.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Consolidated Fund, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. We are at page 135.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, on page 135, but I note again that there is a reduction in the Development Programme again for this Ministry and I am requesting, once more, to the hon. Minister—you speak about making sure you are not under-resourced, you have added a limb to local government and yet the DP has also been slashed.

Hon. Khan: Bear in mind, hon. Member for Siparia, that there is an overall reduction in revenue and an overall reduction in expenditure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, you have a \$63 billion budget.

Hon. Khan: Yeah, but, you know, \$5 billion of that is to clear debt—whatever.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I was just saying it is not in sync with your words.

Hon. Khan: But \$12 million is a sizeable amount compared to \$15, you know, it is not a significant decrease. We have to cut our cloth to suit the circumstances now and I think this \$12 million will be well spent.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services—hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, thank you, I see that under Item 021, Local Government Reform Programme, there is no allocation, and whilst the Minister speaks of a relief form process that without an allocation it becomes an illusion.

Hon. Khan: This is really historical budgeting. This item has been occurring on the draft estimates for years. I mean, this was since in Hazel Manning—Mrs. Manning's time, and then under Dr. Rambachan and Sharma and thing, so it is just part, it is picked up with the hold system, but this is of the old template. And our new reform process will largely be—in this first six month—would be largely consultation and, again, as I said, we will put funding for it in March, as and when required.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. To the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, welcome to the House, Sir, I know you are a Mayaro man so I think our constituency will be well taken care of over the next fiscal year. I have two questions, Madam Chairman, on line Item 029 and line Item 030; with 029, can the Minister provide, for the benefit of the viewing audience, a brief description of the strategy behind the 211 implementation that I see here? And on Item 030, I had done some work with the CARILED project at the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation concerning the BIA assessment, and so on, which I thought was very good that goes towards town centre development, and so on. I was very excited about that programme, but I am just looking at the allocation being a bit on the lower end and if we are going to push rural development our town centre has to be a great focus. Could you give us a bit of idea of where you plan to head in terms of your Ministry and pushing that CARILED model forward? Thank you.

Hon. Khan: Aid out of the Canadian Government in Caribbean local reform, so that, basically, we do not budget for the aid that comes out there, so the vast majority of the funding from that programme comes from the Canadian Government. So I think this is just largely some amount of facilities that we provide for them in Trinidad. But I met with CARILED last week and that programme is going well, their flagship project has been the Mayaro project, which has worked quite well. With regards to the 211 ICT Platform, that is a programme that we are currently reviewing because it was a platform where all the complaints and concerns of the national community will come into one centre and then redistribute them in the various regional corporations. But seeing that tconnect is now under the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, I plan to merge those two facilities into one—I do not want to say mega facilities, but into one consolidated facility where we will provide that service.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line item 031, Amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act, I note an allocation of \$1 million, would you explain how amending the Act will cost you \$1 million? Is it not under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Attorney General, and so on?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, but I guess it is a generic term that covers part of the reform process. That is all I can say right, but I will check to see exactly what was meant by that and I can probably get back to you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Let us know thereafter. Item 060, please, on the same page, public buildings, Refurbishment of Administrative Building for Local Government Head Office, I note in the explanation, in the column under explanation, that you said this project has been transferred to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and, therefore, I ask the question, why is \$1 million allocated under this Head if it is now under another Head of expenditure, namely the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development? Why are we putting it here and then—

Hon. Khan: No, no, no, projects number 53 and 55, which is new City Mall and East Side Plaza, that is where the note—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. Thank you, Minister. So this \$1 million—

Hon. Khan: It is just typed in the wrong area, but if you check project numbers 53 and 55—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, 53 and 55—I am guided. So this particular project, 060, the allocation of \$1 million, what is proposed to be done with this?

Hon. Khan: Well, I think there is still some repairs to be done at Kent House, it is an old building, I mean, some funding was allocated in previous years gone by. It has improved significantly. I think the office is reasonably well done, but there are still some work to be done.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. Minister, if my memory serves me right, No. 1 Alexandra was being outfitted for the head office for your Ministry, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, you are now telling me Kent House is in need of refurbishments continue—

Hon. Khan: If you want to hear about No. 1 Alexandra tune on on Tuesday and—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, well you would give us in writing, I mean— please.

Hon. Member: Then we can stop now and just tune in.

Mr. Imbert: That is not a line item, this is the administrative office; this is Kent House, it is not No. 1 Alexandra. It has nothing to do with No. 1 Alexandra.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Refurbishment is being done to Kent House?

Mr. Imbert: Not at No. 1 Alexandra.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members, can we go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund, page 313?

Dr. Rambachan: You are moving from page 136?

Madam Chairman: We still have questions under Item 005?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: No, well, I am looking at page 137, 09.

Madam Chairman: And under 09 I had called Item 005. We had done Item 003 and then I went on to Item 005, which is the Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, but the last item we dealt with there was Refurbishment for Administrative Building for a Local Government Head Office—

Madam Chairman: So, are there any other questions or concerns to be raised on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Dr. Rambachan: All right, and that goes over to page 137, right?

Madam Chairman: I believe so, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, thank you. Well, with your permission, I would like to find out under the Local Government Services, Port of Spain City Corporation, the Item 038, there was \$1 million allocated for Latrine Eradication Programme in 2015, and I know that the former Mayor of Port of Spain, Mr. Lee Sing, was very of au courant with getting this programme on the road. But I noticed nothing has been allocated in 2016, and given that the Government has expressed its interest to develop certain areas of Port of Spain why is it that you have not allocated money there in order to continue this programme?

Hon. Khan: Nothing is allocated in the revised estimate of 2015, so—

Dr. Rambachan: So nothing has been requested by the Port of Spain City Corporation for this?

Mr. Imbert: We did not spend any money.

Hon. Khan: We did not spend anything.

Mr. Imbert: Look at the 2015 revised estimates.

Dr. Rambachan: So you are not giving them any money?

Mr. Imbert: But they do not spend any money.

Dr. Rambachan: But they do not have the money, do they? The money has been returned, is that not so? Do they have this \$1 million still?

Mr. Imbert: The revised estimate indicates there was no expenditure under this line item, so when that happens the Budget Division would consult and make a determination as to whether they should allocate to the item in the next fiscal.

Dr. Rambachan: Do they have this \$1 million as unspent balances that they can now use for this programme?

Mr. Imbert: I am afraid that is something you will have to get in writing. As you know, unspent balances could only be used for certain things.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Further question, does the Port of Spain City Corporation still have a Latrine Eradication Programme?

Hon. Khan: I will have to consult with the corporation and—

Hon. Member: They did not ask for funds.

Hon. Khan: Yeah, but there is no funding here.

Dr. Rambachan: But there is no funding. We have a programme with no funding.

Hon. Khan: Let me get back to you in writing on that one.

Mr. Imbert: You will get it in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, the question was asked by the hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chairman, I just want to know, under 09, if we are continuing in the pages here, my question is on page 141.

Madam Chairman: Once we are within the Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, I will entertain it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under line item 233, if, through you, the hon. Minister can provide me with the areas where you will be having the Drainage and Irrigation Programme?

Hon. Khan: I will consult with the corporation and I will provide that to you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And, also, would you consider at all for line two—also, I need to get the information for the development of the recreational facilities, if Carmichael and Norris Rampersad is a part of that?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, I will be able to provide that at a later date in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am on page 142, under the Item 005, section U, item line 369, Establishment of Spatial Development Plan for the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation. Hon. Minister, I am aware that a spatial development plan was about a year and a half ago—I am hoping that you would have seen that plan—I noticed there is no allocation for it but there were several areas in that plan in terms of the upgrading of the Plaisance Beach area, the Ortoire River bank, certain areas of the Church Road Church, could you give us an idea in terms of, you know, whether this is something that would fall under your new Ministry and would you be adopting that spatial development plan for consideration?—just for the benefit of our viewing audience? Thank you.

Hon. Khan: That is under review, because the spatial development plans were developed by the Ministry of Local Government, and, in my opinion,

without sufficient consultation with the regional corporation. If you check the PNM manifesto we said we were going with 14 regional plans to be developed by the corporations in an autonomous fashion so that they would determine what their priorities are, obviously in consultation with some scientific knowledge in terms of spatial development plan, how do you go about the planning process, and do not ad hocly assign projects. So, this spatial development plan, while it is there, I think it was too much of an up-down situation and we will now empower the corporations to come up with their own regional plans.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Minister—just one minute, Madam Chairman. I know the plan was driven through the corporation. It was done by the corporation, I was part of that process in terms of the consulting, so I look forward to seeing—

Hon. Khan: But we are not reinventing the wheel, I mean, so a lot of it could form the basis for the new plan.

Mr. Paray: Good. I appreciate that Minister. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman, I am looking at page 138, Item 136, under the Point Fortin Borough Corporation, and I note there was an allocation for a Municipal Police Sub Station in 2015, none now in 2016, and is it that this substation is complete? And, Madam Chairman, I go further as we speak of municipal police for our local government bodies, I was of the mistaken view that the local constabularies spoken of were under National Security, I then got the impression that it was under TTPS, and then I was advised by the hon. Chair that the local constabularies would come under local government, can you tell me where in this is there any allocation for these local constabularies?

Hon. Khan: We have this in our manifesto that we plan to put 100 municipal police per corporation. We are in the process of discussion because, obviously, I have to consult closely with the Minister of National Security in that regard, because, as we speak, the municipal police report to the CEO and, probably, there is some inconsistencies in that because they should have a rank in the public service, and there is a thinking that the municipal police should report to the Commissioner of Police. So, we are still in the formative stages of that and we plan to get that programme well underway during this fiscal year with the strengthened force.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. So, municipal police and what was spoken about as local constabularies, am I to understand they are one and the same to be expanded?

Hon. Khan: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But there is no allocation in these budgetary documents for that expansion?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, but that will come in March.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, there is none at the moment. What happened to the substation, please? Item 136. There is no allocation; is it that that substation is now complete? The municipal police, under Point Fortin Borough Corporation, 136, allocation of \$1 million in 2015. There is no allocation in 2016, is it that that substation is complete?

Hon. Khan: My information here is that they did not ask for any money.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They did not ask, so is it complete? The substation?

Hon. Khan: We will have to get back to you on that one—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, in writing, please.

Hon. Khan: In writing, yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, I had asked earlier about the status of the development programme for the Chaguanas market and in Item 148 on page 139, Construction of Markets and Abattoirs, there was a \$15 million allocation, I would really like to get an update, perhaps in writing, of the status of the improvements to the Chaguanas market.

Hon. Khan: Well, that project is handled by the Rural Development Company, so I will give you a full update on that.

Mr. Singh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am looking at page 139, and this will apply to a lot of the other corporations, Item 145, Chaguanas Borough Corporation, Development of Recreational Facilities. There are 36 recreation grounds on the last count in the Borough of Chaguanas, and

there is an allocation of \$1 million to develop 36 recreation grounds, about \$30,000 per ground, and you are talking about trying to attract youth away from the crime line to a more positive lifestyle. How is the corporation expected to maintain and develop 36 recreation grounds for \$1 million?

Hon. Khan: Member for Tabaquite, you see, especially over the last five years, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago has virtually invaded the territory of the regional corporations, and without permission from the corporations and with ministerial directive they went on an escapade—nothing wrong with that, they were repairing grounds, building pavilions, doing all sorts of things. What we are planning to do now is to rationalize it and that is where the local government reform comes into play, so there will be a schedule of responsibilities that is clearly articulate, something like Schedule 5 in the THA, so that you would have an Act that assigns responsibilities to the corporation, and they will be so funded. So, for example, you see \$1 million for 36 recreational grounds but previously you would have seen \$30 million coming out of the Sport Company for recreation grounds, and the people who should be in charge of recreation grounds were not in charge.

Madam Chairman: You have a follow-up question?

Dr. Rambachan: I have two or three questions, Madam Chairman. Construction, Development of Cemeteries and Cremation Facilities, in 2015 you had \$700,000; in 2016 you have cut that by \$400,000, and you have a major cremation site in Felicity that is in dire need of development, and you also you have several cemeteries that were bought to a particular level and were looking, you know, like parks. How do you expect the corporation to continue to maintain that standard, and especially with respect for our ancestors, with \$300,000? Fair question.

Hon. Khan: Yeah, fair question, but I have no answer right now but we will look into it.

Dr. Rambachan: All right. Construction of Markets and Abattoirs, \$15 million allocated in 2015. As I understand it, the Rural Development Company had tendered the abattoir in Chaguanas, is there some update on the building of the abattoir in Chaguanas?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, I will get an update for you because I was briefed cursory with the—the tenders are almost complete on the Chaguanas abattoir. The Rural Development Company has funds for that, and it is a project that will be undertaken.

Dr. Rambachan: So they have funds for it?

Hon. Khan: Yeah.

Dr. Rambachan: Would it be a similar answer for the development of the market for Chaguanas?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, the guttering and—

Dr. Rambachan: So they have funds for that also?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, they have funds for that too.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Four questions, through you to the hon. Minister, page 141, line Item 236, hon. Minister, I would just like to make a request on behalf of my constituents; the Muslim community has requested a site for their burial, and if you would consider that in your development of cemeteries? The second thing is on line 240, if you can identify, hon. Minister, the Local Roads and Bridges Programme—what have you identified in the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla? And just a question on line 385, I know you had indicated to the Opposition Leader that the municipal police would still have to have discussions with the hon. Minister of National Security, but I noticed that you have the Municipal Police Equipment as a line item with funding under you, so I just wanted to know if there is going to be a realignment in those discussions?

Finally, on line 389, Tourism Development Programme, I just want to make a request again on behalf of my constituents. There is the Fishing Pond boardwalk that is in serious disrepair and they have asked that you consider that as a tourism product to be developed. Thank you.

12.15 p.m.

Hon. Khan: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, while as a Minister of Local Government and Rural Development I present the budget, the actual projects has its genesis from the corporation, so it is better you liaise with your various councillors in the area to get these on the radar so to speak. I cannot tell a corporation, “Go and build a cemetery in Sangre Grande”.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If I may just thank the Minister for his advice, but I am guided by my constituents; this is why I represent them inside of the Parliament, therefore, I must make my representation through here.

Hon. Khan: Will do.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to reinforce something that was already indicated to the Minister. With respect to the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, I see an allocation of \$1 million for recreational facilities. There are approximately 163 grounds within the jurisdiction of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. Also, the Waterloo cremation site, \$300,000, as it relates to the maintenance of that cremation site. So \$300,000 for maintenance of that cremation site and cemeteries throughout the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, which has a land mass bigger than Barbados, Mr. Minister. You would appreciate the inadequate allocation of resources there.

Hon. Khan: Point well taken.

Mr. Karim: I noted the Minister's desire to have approximately 100 municipal police, that strength, but for the Chaguanas Borough Corporation line Item 156 under Municipal Police Equipment, I notice that there is no allocation for 2016. Is there a reason for it?

Hon. Khan: We are still in the formative process of putting that policy in place, so I can expect a revised estimate in March, because I am still consulting with the Minister of National Security as to what type of administrative structure and what type of command chain, to use a military term, that that will be established in.

Mr. Karim: So we look forward to March for an adjustment?

Hon. Khan: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Municipal Police Station, page 139, Chaguanas Borough Corporation, this will apply I suppose to all the corporations in terms of the question I am about to ask. The only municipal police station ever built in the last 11 years was built in Chaguanas while I was the mayor of Chaguanas. It is a complete police station. Hon. Minister, you are saying that you are going to have 100 municipal officers per area. You have to house these 100 officers in every area, but you are going ahead with your plans next year, but you have made no provision in your budget for accommodation for your 100 municipal officers at all. You only have one police station that was built, as I said, and that was during my time as mayor.

Hon. Khan: Probably the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is unique in the sense that this budget estimate was cast in the old mould. A new mould is going to be created within six to nine months, and very

likely now we will reassign allocations to these issues, because remember, all the policy positions that we have articulated in local government came through the electoral process. We have now won election, we have adopted the manifesto as policy, so we did not have sufficient time to put our footprint as it were on the draft estimates. So stay tuned.

Dr. Rambachan: One follow-up question. Yesterday we were told on police that there are 911 officers short, or just under 1,000 officers short, in the police service and it takes quite a time to train officers. Do you have a plan in place as to how you are going to attract 1,400 officers into the police service? Chaguanas, by the way, only has four officers right now at the borough. So 1,400 officers—and over what period of time do you intend to train these 1,400 officers to have them functioning as proper municipal officers?

Hon. Khan: Member for Tabaquite, I will be working closely with the hon. Minister of National Security who is an established military and crime prevention person. I am sure I will be well guided, and we will come up with a comprehensive plan in that regard.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, Item 151, Procurement of Major Vehicles and Equipment. I think that if you go through all the allocations for the various corporations, you can see that they get a set figure of \$500,000. From my experience, I think that as you seek to move from this transition from local government into this new realm you speak about, that you ought to contemplate having some kind of central equipment that would allow for vacuum masters to be utilized by all the regional corporations, because the demand is higher than contemplated.

Dr. Moonilal: I must thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I have two questions for the hon. Minister. I am on page 143, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. It is very evident here that this budget has been slashed violently. Drainage and irrigation programme has been slashed by 42 per cent, local roads and bridges programmes slashed by 50 per cent, \$4 million for all the local roads and bridges in a very, very large regional corporation. I am asking you: Do you consider this adequate to meet the needs of the people in the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation?

Secondly, hearing you excited with the new Rural Development and Local Government Ministry and this portfolio and, of course, myself taken aback by

your Gorbachev initiative of change, I want to ask you: What really is new in this Ministry, apart from the rhetoric of newness?

Hon. Khan: That is a policy question; it is not a line item.

Dr. Moonilal: Or should I listen Tuesday?

Hon. Khan: Specifically to the \$4 million, I just want to draw your attention that most corporations, if not all, have been assigned \$4 million in that line item, so it is not any discriminatory point. Obviously, it is under-resourced as we speak, but so is the national budget under-resourced.

Dr. Moonilal: I never intended to accuse you of discriminating. I was just accusing you of slashing the budget.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, line item 408 seems to be a new project. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: I know it is almost time for lunch, but if we could just settle down a bit so we can proceed.

Mr. Karim: Will the Minister, Madam Chair, through you, be kind enough to give us some details of 408, that new project, \$750,000?

Hon. Khan: I am not seized of it as we speak—[*Interruption*] no, no that is tourism.

Madam Chairman: Can we go to the Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 004, Social Infrastructure. We are on page 313.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Once again we note for the IDF that has been slashed by almost 50 per cent, from \$112.5 to \$50 million. I want to speak of line item 003 on page 313, Development of Rural Communities, an allocation of \$25 million. If the Minister would kindly provide details of which rural communities are to be developed under this? What are the projects? What are the projects under the development of rural communities? This may be something new that you can do under rural development. Of course, this is a line item that was there anyhow under local government.

The other one which is 007, Upgrade of Community Infrastructure in South and Southeast, again a continuing line item, but \$25 million—if you would provide us with a list of the projects and, of course, the location of the projects, in which communities they will be undertaken.

Hon. Khan: Will do, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The allocation for the Self-Help Programme moved, it is gone. I thought it is a Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, but what we see here is reduction in the development programmes for rural development, in terms of funding. So even though you tried to merge both, I thought it would be strengthening it rather than—

Hon. Khan: The thinking on Self Help is social, because you are looking at the underprivileged; they need assistance to fix a house or to get a drain there. So that is more in the realm of social development.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that has been slashed altogether out?

Hon. Khan: That is ubiquitous; it is not rural or urban. It is just a ubiquitous service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I understand when we go there we will talk about it.

Dr. Tewarie: In the development budget here on page 313, what we have is a total allocation of \$50 billion for rural development. The Minister indicated that this will be revised in the March revision of the budget, that the numbers will be revised in March. Can I ask, since the local government entities are being underfunded, by his own admission, and this \$50 million for the central Rural Development Ministry seems to me an underfunding also, would the increases come at both central and local government level, or is there a strategy involved in that? It relates to the earlier question I asked of what Rural Development would do in relation to the local government entities.

Hon. Khan: It is premature to say, but I think it will probably come at the central level in the first instance, because until the local government reform is complete in its entirety, it may not be appropriate to pump additional funds when you do not have the administrative infrastructure in place.

Dr. Tewarie: So real allocation to the local government entities will only come post-legislation?

Hon. Khan: I did not say that.

Dr. Tewarie: I am just asking, you know. I am not trying to be smart.

Hon. Khan: As I said, it is cast in the old mould. There is funding there to continue most of the work that they have been doing over the years, and as the reform process kicks in we expect significantly increased funding, very likely in the 2016/2017 Budget.

Dr. Rambachan: Hon. Minister, you had said earlier in a response to the Member for Siparia that when we came under the development fund you would have some response to the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation administrative building. But I do not see anything in here to suggest that there is any activity that is planned for the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation administrative building, although it is with the—

Hon. Khan: The Penal/Debe regional building falls under PSAEL; PSAEL has awarded a contract for its construction. Initially some of that funding will come from the \$25 million that you see there.

Dr. Rambachan: So if I may confirm, from this \$25 million here, some funding will be given for the start-up of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation building?

Hon. Khan: Very likely.

Dr. Rambachan: There is a difference between very likely and it is going to happen.

Hon. Khan: Member for Tabaquite, that sod was turned the Sunday before the election, okay.

Dr. Rambachan: The sod could have been turned, but the contract was awarded.

Hon. Khan: The contract was not awarded as yet, and I am just checking the time lines with regards that; I am checking the integrity of the process before we move further.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, Item 009 to 013 which relate to a number of things like pavilions and play parks, sporting infrastructure and sporting equipment, no funding is for that? Is that being transferred somewhere else or is it going to be done by the Ministry of Sport, 009 to 013? I am sure you need some pavilions in your constituency.

Hon. Khan: I will give you a written response on this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You think it might be transferred to Sport?

Hon. Khan: I am not sure; I will investigate this and give you a written response. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I just wanted to make a general statement.

Madam Chairman: I was going to put the question with respect to the Ministry of—

Mr. Imbert: Before you put that question, just a general statement to respond to some questions asked earlier.

Madam Chairman: Go ahead, hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: The hon. Member for Tabaquite had asked what system would be used to try and reduce waste and so on. We had been working for many, many years in a committee to establish a new procurement system and progress was made, and I fully expect that in 2016 we will fully implement the new procurement system. I am certain that we will be able to cut out wasteful expenditure with the new procurement system, because there is going to be focus on value for money with the new system. Value for money—I mean, it is something that myself and the Member for Caroni Central had been at loggerheads for a long time, but the fact of the matter is we made progress. As a Parliament, we made progress.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Members, it is now 12.31 p.m., I suggest that we break now for lunch and resume at 1.30 p.m. This committee meeting is now suspended until 1.30 p.m.

12.31 p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee resumed.*

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon, hon. Members. Let us reconvene the Standing Finance Committee meeting. We will be dealing with Head 61 Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Head 61.

I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for this opportunity to make brief opening remarks as we examine the provisions in the estimates in respect of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The Ministry's team, headed by the Permanent Secretary, is committed to addressing the issues raised and providing clear and meaningful responses to all concerns either now or in the shortest possible time.

The core responsibilities of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development are summarized as follows: functions related to community enhancement; housing; urban development; and squatter regularization. The implementing agencies include the Housing Development Corporation HDC, the East Port of Spain Development Company, the Land Settlement Agency, the Sugar Industry Welfare Committee, the Rent Assessment Board and the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago which is the project management company used by Government Ministries and Departments to provide management services.

The services provided by the Ministry are essential to comfortable and healthy living, physical and human growth and development, and for the general development of a modern society. The demand for those services, particularly housing, has grown to almost unmanageable proportions. This growth in demand is most marked at a time when the country faces numerous economic challenges. In this context, we recognize that spending by government should not be a reflex action, but a measured approach to responding to the needs of its population. Notwithstanding the challenges, we intend to meet our obligations whether statutory or moral. Consequently, we will ensure prompt, meaningful and effective responses to the needs of our clients. In the process, prudence and value for money will be at the forefront of our guiding principle. We will eliminate wastage, corruption and mismanagement where ever it exists.

Chair, let me state clearly that it is my Government's intention to return to the original values and key principles that drive social housing. In the process our programme will prioritize areas of greatest need and build houses where are needed whether it is in the north, the south, the east or the west.

In closing, let me state that we intend to make a meaningful impact on the policy objectives outlined by the Government, setting and achieving realistic targets. We shall improve the quality and quantity of housing stock and to deliver to those most in need affordable houses. Our agencies will ensure meaningful consultation with the people they serve and reflect the views of the public in their operation.

Finally, we shall ensure transparency and accountability in all our actions and procedures. I thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 61 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,409,017.035 billion for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is comprised of moneys

proposed for the expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001 General Administration and we go to page 369 of the *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* page 369. 01 Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. I am now on page 373.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on page 373 number 20, the Education Tower. That would be of benefit to the Minister of Education as well because I was waiting for it for about four or five years. How much—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East, we have not reached that page as yet.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have not reached page 373?

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 009, Other Transfers. Item 0011, Transfer to State Enterprises.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. That is where I come in.

Mr. Chairman: Right. You can proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Education Tower, how much of it in terms of the outfitting, how much of it has been completed and how much has to be done again, and what cost has to be paid for the completion of the outfitting of the Education Tower? What time frame are we looking at?

Mr. Imbert: This is simply an interest payment. Right. If you want to know about how much interest it is, we can answer. This is just an interest payment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. But it is a fit out—No. A fit out.

Mr. Imbert: It is a payment on financing. [*Crosstalk*]It is a financing item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What am I fighting for? It is your Minister of Education should be fighting for that.

Mr. Imbert: What is your question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you do not want to answer, that is your business.

Mr. Imbert: It is a financing Item. It is an interest payment.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: Proceed. Proceed.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfer to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Through you to hon. Minister, I just wanted to find out—the Land Settlement Agency, will they be continuing with the programme of where persons were drawn to acquire lands? Will that still be continuing? No. I am just asking.

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes. I have been advised, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Just before you go there—before going to Sub-Head 04 still—[*Crosstalk*] No. No. No. You moved too fast.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to ask on 04 at page 374.

Mr. Chairman: Where are you?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 374 on 04 the Item number 22 which is the Brian Lara—

Mr. Chairman: Proceed, Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: Are we going back?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Proceed? Thank you, Chair. Number 22, the principal payment on the Brian Lara Cricket Academy which is \$49.7 million. Could you say then, what is the total payment that we have to make for the Brian Lara Cricket Academy? You said the principal payment is \$49.7 million. What is the total amount we have to pay for UDeCOTT for the Brian Lara Cricket Academy?

Hon. Mc Donald: Member for Caroni East—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald:—if you read Head 61 properly you will see that from Item 16 to 23 those are new Sub-Items added. Yes?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 16 to 23? Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Up to 374, 16 all the way the down to 23.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes? These are new ones added and I think that came in from Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, I believe. Yes? So, we will have to provide you with that particular information. It was not at this Ministry before.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Mr. Imbert: We will put it in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It a new Sub-Item. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Statutory Bodies.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Just a quick question. Of course, the Land Settlement Agency has been returned to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The \$40,992,000 for the Land Settlement Agency, would this include as well expenditure on staff requirements for the Land for the Landless Programme, and is that programme continuing?

Mr. Imbert: “You in de corner or what?”

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. So, we will now proceed to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme* and we are on page 170, Consolidation Fund; Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Moonilal: Me.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: All right. Let me start here now. The 086 page 170.

Hon. Mc Donald: One?

Dr. Moonilal: One seven zero page and 086. The Road Rehabilitation Works in Fenceline Communities, I notice there are no allocations made for this. Now — is it that in the coming fiscal that there will be no work to assist fenceline communities where—this is really the work of the agencies in Ministry. Is it that in the coming fiscal there will no work to assist fenceline communities where—

Mr. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Dr. Moonilal: I am on 086.

Mr. Imbert: I know. But what line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: It is Social Infrastructure.

Mr. Imbert: Road Rehabilitation Works in Fenceline Communities. Okay.

Dr. Moonilal: Are you good there? I am asking why no funds at all have been made available for fenceline communities road rehabilitation works that is fundamental? There is a policy in several Ministries and in this Ministry as well, where when you do heavy construction in an area, invariably you bring roads and drainage and so on into disrepair in surrounding communities that you affect because of your heavy construction, so that we provide an allocation so that the relevant agency will do repairs and assist, so that reduces the social tension, unrest and so on by villagers surrounding heavy construction projects. Now it has been reduced to nil, you know. What is the reason for this?

Hon. Mc Donald: I have been advised that that particular work or those specs have been transferred to EMBD.

Dr. Moonilal: No. Could I please?

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes. Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: The EMBD would also have a fenceline protection policy adopted by their board as a special purpose entity, but the HDC and others as well will also have fenceline communities' policies. So that it is interesting therefore, the moneys allocated here is zero. For example, in an HDC estate you are going to construct somewhere, you will do some damage in neighbouring districts and so on, you will have no allocation to assist.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, the point is noted. The responsibility has been transferred elsewhere. However we will look at the funding to make sure adequate funds are provided for this.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005—

Dr. Moonilal: No, hold on, I have several questions. If you could just permit me so I could exhaust my questions here.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, sure.

Dr. Moonilal: The Housing Estate Rehabilitation and Maintenance of HDC rental apartment housing units. Now, over the years in 2014 you would see here we had expended over \$30 million; that went to \$10 million, \$10 million. Now, you have cut that by half. That has been slashed by half. Does the Minister believe that this is adequate to undertake rehabilitation and maintenance in the many, many HDC estates across the country, that this figure of \$5 million will

suffice? This is more in the vicinity of about \$75 million.

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes, Chair. I have also been advised that the refurbishment programme will be funded by HDC's expected rental income of some \$11 million each month. So, even though there is a shortfall we would be able to make up the shortfall by using some of the rental income to carry out our refurbishment work in the HDC estates across the country.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Moonilal: No, I have not finished as yet, I am still on HDC. You are aware, Madam Minister, that HDC could be owed over a hundred million dollars in rental income? My next question—

Hon. Mc Donald: Mr. Chair, I am also aware that the annual income of HDC rentals across the country amount to some \$132 million. But, I am also aware that there is also an element of delinquency inside of there. Yes?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Of just about 30 or just a little over 30 per cent. But I assure you that this administration, we are working assiduously to reduce that figure.

Dr. Moonilal: Good. The residential lots programme at 234, \$5 million. This is also—

Hon. Mc Donald: Residential—

Dr. Moonilal: The Residential Lots Programme (Land for the Landless), you are there? The Land for the Landless Programme developed by the former administration. In 2016 you have an estimate of \$5 million for that. I am asking you, is this adequate to develop for land development and preparation for the distribution of lots pursuant to the policy of land for the landless? And the deception, the hypocrisy and the mamaguy. What mamaguy is this?

Mr. Chairman: Are you through?

Dr. Moonilal: Then the final question Minister from me or you want to wait for her to—[*Crosstalk*]—and the mamaguy, and the mamaguy. [*Interruption*] The Minister of Finance is disturbing the Finance Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Members!

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes, I am answering.

Dr. Moonilal: Do you want me to put the next question or you want to answer now?

Hon. Mc Donald: Okay, ask. No, ask the next question.

Dr. Moonilal: And if you could just tell me briefly, the increase in the Housing Opportunity Programme from 53.9 to \$103 million, what more in your scope for that programme you anticipate would lead you to such an increase?

Hon. Mc Donald: He is on line Item. He is on page 170.

Mr. Imbert: What is your problem? We increase it.

Hon. Mc Donald: Mr. Deputy Chair, I am being confused here, you know. [Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: That is an absurdity, you are asking about the increase.

Hon. Mc Donald: I am being confused, what question—

Mr. Imbert: That is an absurdity!

Hon. Mc Donald: Should I proceed to answer my questions?

Mr. Chairman: Members! [Interruption] Okay, Members! [Interruption]

Dr. Gopeesingh: A lot of deception and “mamaguy.”

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Hold on. The Member for Oropouche East, proceed with your question so that the Minister of Housing and Urban Development can respond. [Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: I do not know why he is jumping up like that.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members.

Dr. Moonilal: But, I want her attention otherwise I will have to repeat again. So, let me repeat my repetition. [Interruption] It was a simple thing, it was not anything that big. The mamaguy.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hypocrisy.

Mr. Chairman: All right, she is gathering the information.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, sure.

Mr. Imbert: The Member was asked an important question as to why we have doubled an allocation for housing and we will get the answer very quickly.

Hon. Member: Not for housing. The land for the landless.

Mr. Imbert: Opportunities for housing and housing are different?

Dr. Moonilal: Chair, if you do not have it you could put it in writing. I mean, is not that they have to—you are not compelled to answer now.

Hon. Mc Donald: One second.

Dr. Moonilal: They are not compelled. Tell them put it in writing “nah man,” I want to get to some more important matters.

Hon. Mc Donald: Member for Oropouche East, that \$103 million you are seeing there, if you turn to page 171, what you have there, all the IDB in collaboration with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, you see all those squatter regularization, home improvement, new housing subsidies, et cetera, from 002, 005, 011, 017, that figure is an amalgam of all these various programmes. That is what that \$103 million is all about, right, in total.

Dr. Moonilal: Just to correct the Minister of Finance, so the Housing Opportunity Programme is really a squatter regularization programme, your home improvement grants, your sector institutional strengthening programme and your Design and Programme Administration—

Mr. Imbert: That is not housing related. Home improvement grants? You are putting things on the record which are not correct.

Hon. Mc Donald: One hon. Member at a time, please.

Dr. Moonilal: You do not know how to proceed.

Mr. Imbert: You are putting things on the record that are not correct.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East will respond and then if the Minister of Finance has a reply we will entertain. Member for Oropouche East, please.

Dr. Moonilal: So, I am understanding you, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, that that is the amalgam of increases for those programmes. That is what you are saying, it is not a house construction, a home construction programme. I have asked two or three questions before, if you have any responses now or you want to commit it in writing?

Hon. Mc Donald: What is the first question?

Dr. Moonilal: Whether the rehabilitation and maintenance of HDC apartments and housing units, whether you believe the \$5 million would be adequate?

Hon. Mc Donald: But I just answered that question, Member for Oropouche East, when I said that the monthly rentals would be able to take care of the shortfalls. So, even though it had been reduced by \$5 million, we would be able to make up that figure—that deficit by utilizing our monthly rentals.

Dr. Moonilal: So, your answer stands for, whether it is fence-line communities, whether it is rehabilitation and rental, upgrade; you would be using rental money?

Hon. Mc Donald: We will be using it.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Hon. Mc Donald: What is next?

Mr. Chairman: Item 234. Member for Oropouche East, you got your answer for 234?

Dr. Moonilal: Well, I got a response. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So, I can now proceed to the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same questions I had my colleague ask them.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima, you still have a question?

Mr. Charles: Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, can you proceed, please.

Mr. Charles: I am looking at Housing Grant and the reduction from \$25 million to \$9.5 million, and I am asking that question in the context of what the Minister of Finance told us about how we will continue to strengthen programmes, and expand programmes, which we had established and which still exist, and we will review and strengthen the administration of home improvement grants and home improvement subsidy programmes to assist families experiencing financial difficulties. And yet we see an inconsistency with the draft. So, we want to know if that is a question of mamaguy and deception, again.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. Apart from the efficiency that will result from cutting out waste, corruption and mismanagement, if you look lower down you will see there are new projects: Surveys of Squatter Sites, Residential Lots Programme, and there are a number of increases. And the net increase which was pointed out by the Member for Oropouche East is in the order of 100 per cent. So what this

administration has done is simply reallocated its priorities. For example, we are increasing home improvement and housing subsidy from \$16 million to \$25 million; we are increasing squatter regularization from \$32 million to \$72 million. So, it is simply a question of reorganizing priorities, which has resulted in a vastly increased allocation to this Head. And we are also cutting out corruption, waste and mismanagement. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Let us proceed. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 173. Infrastructure Development Fund: Item No. 004, Social Infrastructure, page 327, and we are in *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Still under Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and we are at Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 004 Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to ask a specific question.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: The page is 328, Support to Industrial Development Initiatives. The Ministry of—Madam Minister, I noticed here—you are with me?

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal:—Invader's Bay - Infrastructure Development, you have an allocation in 2015; in 2016 there is absolutely no allocation. Could I have an explanation for this in terms of two things, whether you would be pursuing this industrial development project. What do you anticipate to do, bearing in mind there is no allocation here for the Invader's Bay project?

Mr. Chairman: What page, 328?

Dr. Moonilal: Page 412.

Hon. Mc Donald: You are looking at the right Head?

Dr. Moonilal: No, no, no, page 328.

Mr. Chairman: The Invader's Bay project, Item 001.

Hon. Mc Donald: That is under UDeCoTT?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. If you want to commit it in writing then, your response?

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes, I think we better commit this in writing. *[Interruption]* Yes, I understand your question.

Dr. Moonilal: If you could make the commitment that you will put it in writing.

Mr. Imbert: The thing is, though, Mr. Deputy Chairman, this project is the subject of tremendous controversy, litigation, accusation, allegation of corruption, waste and mismanagement, and therefore we have to look very closely at this project as we go forward. It is very complicated and we have to be very careful, because it is in court and a series of allegations of breaches of the law.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy—

Mr. Chairman: One second, Member for Caroni Central, you caught my eyes first.

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister of Finance is concerned about what is put on the record, and while he may be correct about allegations, and while he may be correct about issues, it is the Invader's Bay item. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Members, it is there. It is a line Item.

Dr. Tewarie: That is right. There is no allegation or issue as far as I am aware that has anything to do with corruption, waste or mismanagement [*Desk thumping*] and I want to make it very clear that the evidence will be available in the documentation in the Ministry of Finance in these same allocation documents of no State funds being expended on this project except for legal fees and for consulting fees for PricewaterhouseCoopers, which is relatively minuscule in the scheme of things.

Mr. Chairman: A response from the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much. If that is so, then perhaps you may be able to explain why there was an allocation of \$50 million in 2015. But, I can assure you there are many allegations of corruption, waste and mismanagement with respect to this project.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: And if you think otherwise you are dreaming.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Tewarie: Chair, it is important to clarify that none of that \$50 million was spent.

Mr. Imbert: Why was it allocated? Why was it allocated?

Dr. Tewarie: It was allocated because of agreements which had to do with responsibilities of the State as opposed to responsibilities of the private sector entities. [*Interruption*] Of which no funds—

Mr. Imbert: Many allegations.

Mr. Chairman: Members! Members, there are no questions being asked at this time so I would like to move on to the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have accepted the Minister's response that there will be no work and no development at the Invader's Bay project.

Mr. Imbert: That is not true. That is not what we said, Mr. Deputy Chairman. [*Crosstalk*] He has put a misrepresentation on the record—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Members! Minister of Finance, let the Member for Oropouche East complete his question and then I will proceed to you shortly.

Mr. Imbert: Sure, no problem.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Chairman, at 3.29, I am following your direction, Item 230. I consider this the scandal of the year, that in the budget statement, a lot is made about housing, about building more—housing, building affordable houses, going back to Legoland-type housing estates, and you have a violent slashing of the housing budget, the accelerated housing programme from \$300 million to \$160 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is deception. That is deception.

2.00 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, that cannot finish one housing project in the Ministry of Housing. This is the end of housing, the collapse of the sector, because the sector is driven by the accelerated housing programme. In 2014 \$650 million was expended. And today, when they have violently slashed the budget to \$160 million it means that in two to three months or less the housing sector that contributed in no small measure to construction activity, to employment, to economic growth and income distribution, that sector will collapse by Christmas 2015.

And I want to ask the Minister of Housing whether the Minister is convinced that \$160 million is sufficient? What do you intend to do with \$160 million in the housing sector for fiscal 2016? And I am not prepared to accept the cliché about waste, corruption and mismanagement. That does not have a place when you come to the social infrastructure to housing. We have promised 100 homes a week, not one has been distributed since September 07. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: May I?

Mr. Chairman: He has five minutes.

Dr. Moonilal: I have five minutes. And I have four more left.

Mr. Chairman: Continue, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: My question to the Minister of Housing is to explain to the finance committee what the Ministry expects to do with \$160 million, and also bearing in mind the Minister of Finance has declared that the borrowing limits have been met. He cannot borrow money to finance the housing construction programme anymore. Is this the end of housing and the housing sector?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, he asked the same question three times.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Right, give the answers.

Mr. Imbert: And you know we have been saddled with over \$3 billion in contracts entered into by the former Ministry under the former Minister without any Cabinet approval and without any source of funds. We are also on this side very concerned about the fact that the cost of a house has doubled under the tenure of the former Minister. And, therefore, since the 2015 revised estimate was \$300 million, we have allocated \$160 million and the Minister will do a review, especially of those billion dollar contracts that were entered into just before the general election and at the end of the Minister's review, then we will look at this again. But we cannot continue like this with a rogue Ministry entering into contract of billions of dollars without any source of funds.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, in light of the question asked by the hon. Member for Oropouche East in terms of the violent slashing of the housing budget, the question is this, in the light of the need for housing does the Minister have any plans to incentivize the private sector to provide housing to the population on accelerated basis? If the Minister is saying that there is no money and it has \$3 billion, the private sector has money, has land. Is there any plan to incentivize this sector?

Hon. Mc Donald: Member for Tabaquite, this is something that we will be looking at and certainly will be evaluating. But I note with care, that earlier this year, the former Government had an agreement with Republic Bank with respect to this same public/private partnership and when I look at the terms of the agreement, believe me, I am very, very, very concerned. And whilst I think that there are indeed opportunities I think that we should tread cautiously and it is something that we can look at.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. Under the same line Item 230, Accelerated Housing Programme. I heard you say earlier that you were using rental income to make up shortfalls in certain items. Would that be used there, as well?

Hon. Mc Donald: I did not say for all. A specific question, Member for Siparia was asked, and that was with respect to repairs and maintenance of HDC estates.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So you will use rental income.

Hon. Mc Donald: I quoted the figure. I said that the Ministry collects approximately \$11 million a month re: rental. And where there is this shortfall by some \$5 million we will make it up from there. That is what I said. I never said it was supposed to be for construction.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well following up on that then, is the Ministry then allowed to keep rental income? How I understand it, rental income will go into the revenue into the Consolidated Fund as property income.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, it is earned by the HDC.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And kept by the HDC.

Mr. Imbert: It is a statutory corporation. Of course, that is their income. You are quite right, that is one thing that does not require Cabinet approval. But those billion-dollar contracts that you did not alert your leader to, those require Cabinet approval.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line Item 001, Urban Redevelopment, \$15 million was allocated in 2016. Would the Minister kindly share with us what this is? How are the projects to be determined? Which projects are to fall under this \$15 million of Urban Redevelopment, 2016? It seems to be a new item.

Hon. Mc Donald: Thank you, yes it is. It is the East Port of Spain Development Company that has been placed under the Ministry of Housing, and the funds will be allocated to do the following. I can tell you, renovation works to pan yards, Community Enhancement Projects that include, roads, drainage, steps, other access routes, latrine eradication programme. [*Crosstalk*] That is right, children's play park and other upgrades to community recreation facilities. So that allocation—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Members, let us hear the Minister please.

Hon. Mc Donald:—is for Port of Spain East Development Company, which is a new item and new unit under the Ministry of Housing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum—oh, you are still continuing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We have page 330.

Hon. Member: We have more.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We have more. Next page.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I note on page 330 under the Item 003, which is the last item on the page, the construction for Couva Children's Hospital, no allocation has been made in 2016. Is this—page 330. What does it mean no allocation is being made in 2016? And I am asking why, is it that the hospital construction is complete?

Mr. Imbert: Well you opened it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking you Minister, you are in charge now.

Mr. Imbert: Well I have assumed that you opened a complete building.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Minister, through you, line Minister, can the line Minister answer? There is no allocation and I am asking does it mean that the construction is complete.

Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that this project was being financed through a Government to Government loan facility with the Chinese Government. And therefore there would normally be no obligation on the part of the Trinidad and Tobago Government to finance the construction of this hospital. And since—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Let him finish please.

Mr. Imbert: Why are you getting on like this?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is totally incorrect.

Mr. Imbert: All right, you can say that if you wish. But my understanding is that this project is being financed by the Chinese Government.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Chairman, whilst that may be true—
[*Interruption*]

Appropriation Bill, 2015

Saturday, October 17, 2015

Mr. Imbert: May be true? Is true.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Whilst that may be true and we take him at his word, we see 2014—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: You opened the hospital. It is her hospital.

Mr. Chairman: Members. One Member at a time please. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 2014, an allocation was made of \$130 million. In 2015 an allocation estimated at \$140 million, revised in 2015 at \$109.2 million and then in 2016 nothing. So the Minister's explanation that this would have been built with funding through the Chinese Government which is true, we take that word—

Mr. Imbert: True now. You remember.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Can we please be allowed to complete?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let me make a statement, please. One person at a time will address the Chair and then individuals will have the opportunity to respond. Kindly proceed hon. Member.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The question is—thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mc Donald: Perhaps I could provide a response.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, please, the Minister has indicated that it was funded by the Chinese Government. And therefore no allocation—I am trying to explain the no allocation in 2016 by virtue of that. I have pointed out that in the estimates every year that is shown in these estimates which is, 2014, 2015, an allocation has been made. So the question still remains why no allocation in 2016.

Mr. Imbert: Now, Mr. Chairman, I really find that we are just going around in circles. The hon. Leader of the Opposition was the Prime Minister that promoted this project, secured the financing from the Chinese Government, cut the ribbon and opened the hospital with great fanfare just before the election. So it is just wrong for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to say or pretend that she does not know.

Now the fact is, this project, if you are paying attention, has been transferred to the Ministry of Health and I think we now need to investigate since this project

was supposed to be fully funded by the Chinese, why the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was spending money on this project. And I can assure you there will be an investigation into that. But if you want to know what has happened to the allocation, it has gone to the Ministry of Health.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Could have done that 10 minutes ago.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, added to that, the question also was, is the building completed?

Mr. Imbert: I am shocked that the person who cut the ribbon and opened the building with great fanfare before the election will ask me to that answer. I will have to investigate that as well and find out why the hon. Leader of the Opposition opened this building with great fanfare and is now asking whether it is completed or not. When I get over my befuddlement and my astonishment, I will investigate.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The question remains unanswered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why is he so garrulous? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, will the question be placed in writing, please?

Mr. Imbert: I will most certainly give the results of the investigation as to why the hon. Leader of the Opposition opened that building and is now asking if it is completed or not. That will be put in writing the results of that investigation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Laughter*] You see this robber talk and gun talk, it will get you very far. Through you, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Imbert: Is that a question?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: With respect to the hospital—[*Crosstalk*] I am asking a question and I have not completed what I am saying.

Mr. Imbert: You want to know about robbers and so on.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And so, still under the same item, with respect to the hospital, the question was asked whether it is completed. In this budget debate it was made out by the other side that the hospital was opened incomplete, the hospital would be done in phases and so on and that is why the query is there. So I await the investigation and answer.

Mr. Imbert: So you do not know.

Mr. Chairman: Await the report in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will await the report in writing, Sir. Investigation.

Mr. Imbert: So that was not a question. Mr. Chairman, that was not a question?

Mr. Chairman: No, Sir. That was a statement. So I cannot make a statement now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: A statement on your hypocrisy.

Mr. Imbert: So the other side could make statements and I cannot.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You have been doing that all day.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mamaguying us all the time.

Mr. Chairman: No question was asked hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Therefore a statement was allowed to be put on the record and we on this side cannot respond to that.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: I am assuring this Parliament, we will find out why that building was opened and whether it was completed or not and we will advise national population through the medium of this Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: There being no further questions, hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$1,409,170,035 for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We would now proceed to Head 37: Integrity Commission. I would also like to thank the Minister of Housing and Urban Development and her technical team, her technocrats from the Ministry, thank you for coming and do have a good evening. So as we change we will move on to Integrity Commission, Head 37.

2.15 p.m.

Head 37.

Members, we are on Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and we will be proceeding to page 268, Integrity Commission, Head 37.

Welcome, to the Integrity Commission technocrats. Thanks for coming and we proceed now, Members.

Head 37, Integrity Commission—\$19,822,600. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: I will most certainly take less than five minutes. The Integrity Commission is a creature of the Integrity in Public Life Act and has as its responsibilities the examination of declarations filed by persons in public life and the investigation of reports of irregularities and impropriety within the State system.

Question proposed: That Head 37 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$19, 822,600 for Head 37, the Integrity Commission, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now proceed. 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, and we are at page 268. 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration; 09, Development Programme, which will be the other booklet, *Draft Estimates of Development Programmes*, and we go to page 121. 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chairman, Administrative Services, 001 and 002. Those are new projects for the Integrity Commission. That is the drafting of whistle-blower protection legislation and reform of the Integrity Commission. Those are new Items on them, right?

Hon. Imbert: I believe these allocations were put in by the Ministry of Finance. It is part of the manifesto; it is part of the budget statement that we intend to implement a system of whistle-blower protection. So that is what this is for, [Interruption] whistle-blower protection. A whistle-blower is somebody who blows the whistle on corrupt activities. This should have been in place for the last five years. A whistle-blower is—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Members—

Hon. Imbert:—somebody who reveals corrupt activities. This should have been here for five years. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: 001—

Mr. Chairman: Any further questions?

Hon. Imbert: If you want to be flippant about it, you can be. You can be flippant.

Mr. Chairman: Members.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have been asked a question; I will answer it. The funds are for drafting of legislation. It is there in black and white. It is there in black and white!

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, any further questions?

Dr. Gopeesingh: What type of majority—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are an amendment Government, “yuh know”. You are amendment Government.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I am speaking.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 37 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you members of the Integrity Commission’s technical team. Thanks for coming and do enjoy the rest of the evening.

We will now proceed to Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission. I will just give two minutes in order for the technical team and the Minister of Finance to assess. We will now be going to the Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and we will be proceeding to page 40, Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission.

[Technocrats enter Chamber]

Thanks for coming. Welcome.

Head 08. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: The Elections and Boundaries Commission is an independent commission who has as its responsibility—

Hon. Member: Which—

Hon. Imbert: Who, which—has as its responsibility the management of the conduct of elections in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Question proposed: That Head 08 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$102,653,200 for Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditures under the following Subheads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

I now proceed to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure: Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: On this same page 40, Election Expenses, I note that Election Expenses for 2015 in which a general election was held is less than Election Expenses projected and allocated for, for 2016 by 100 per cent increase, and we would like to know why that may be so.

Hon. Imbert: I am a little lost there. Look at the Revised Estimates and you will see the 2016—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Two million.

Hon. Imbert:—2016 estimate and the revised—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am guided, hon. Minister—\$2 million.

Hon. Imbert:—they are identical. No, it is almost the same. It is only \$11,000 difference. But I must say—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Five million----I am sorry.

Hon. Imbert: Look at the bottom line, it is \$98,411,000 and \$98,400,000; it is just \$11,000 difference.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure.

Hon. Imbert: But I want to make a point though. The EBC had requested a 164 and spent 98 and it is something we will have to look at; go back to their request of 2015 and see whether maybe they are carrying bills over, or whether this 164 was justified, to see whether we need to supplement their allocation. The fact is that the 2016 and the 2015 revised are identical. But it is something we will need to look at.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Deputy Chair, could we get an understanding from the Minister of Finance who is the person that we have to ask the questions to because it is an independent institution, whether this increase in expenditure will

incur a deep introspection—

Hon. Imbert: There is no increase. It is identical.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, one minute. Look, you have under column here, \$1 million.

Hon. Imbert: It is \$11,000 in \$98 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Whether it is an increase that is immaterial.

Hon. Imbert: But it is important.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question I want to ask is the allocation, whether that includes a deep introspection and an analysis and cleaning out of the EBC list because of the questions that have been asked from time to time, that the election list contains that list of names of a number of people who are already dead or out of the country. And so, when we say that it is 1.013 million on the EBC list, many attempts have been made in terms of saying that that list is not, in fact, so and there are people who are dead and people who are out of the country on that list; and whether that is going to facilitate the EBC to do its proper work to clean up that list so that we will have a proper list in the future at election time.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I would love to answer that question if it was associated with a line Item. Could you direct me to which line Item you are talking about?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, that is associated with the line Item, Election Expenses.

Hon. Imbert: Where is this? What page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 40, 002—

Mr. Chairman: Page 40, 002, Election Expenses.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So it could include the other line Item, 03, which is Overtime. And if we are giving overtime, we should give overtime to people who can help in that. And it is an easy thing, Mr. Deputy Chairman. All they have to do is to look at the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the list of the death certificates over the last 10 years, match those, versus the names that are on the list, because they will have the amount of people who are there—

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, he is not addressing the line Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking the question. I have five minutes—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Members, the hon. Member has five minutes—

Hon. Imbert: To ask on a line Item—on a line Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I cannot ask a question in five minutes. I have to give a preface to my question.

Hon. Imbert: You cannot talk about the world, the moon and the sun and the stars.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have to give a preface to my question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister—proceed, Member for Caroni—

Hon. Imbert: Irrelevant! Irrelevant!

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not irrelevant at all. It is very relevant to a proper understanding of the democracy and the transparency as far as election is concerned. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I gave you the line Item already.

Hon. Imbert: Overtime?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you deaf?

Hon. Imbert: Overtime?

Mr. Chairman: Members—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Election Expenses.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you blind or are you deaf?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East and Hon. Minister of Finance—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, Mr. Chairman. I am referring—there is a line Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I gave him the line Item already.

Mr. Chairman: He has identified the line Item, Mr. Minister and he is giving an explanation and asking a question.

Appropriation Bill, 2015

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Dr. Gopeesingh: And if he would not be so rude to be disrupting me all the time in my trend of thought.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed. Members, on both sides—Members on both sides—

Hon. Imbert: By the way, Mr. Chairman, he uttered some very pejorative language just now. I would ask you to ask him to withdraw that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What withdraw?

Hon. Imbert: He said I was blind and deaf.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking you a question.

Hon. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, [*Crosstalk*] hon. Members.

Hon. Imbert: We must have decorum here.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members—

Hon. Imbert: We must have decorum.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us ensure that we maintain the decorum of the House.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: All right? I am asking the hon. Member for Caroni East to continue, make your question and let us get on with the business of the—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chair, there have been statements across the country, from election to election that the EBC's list is not a clean and accurate list of the citizenry who are eligible to vote.

Hon. Member: Correct.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And years upon years—I have been associated with the politics from since 1994, Mr. Chairman, 21 years. I was elections officer of the United National Congress for two general elections and three local government elections. We spoke to the chairman of the EBC on many occasions: Mr. Karim, myself, Mr. Mark. We went to the EBC indicating time and time again that that EBC list has names of people who are no longer alive and it has names of people who have migrated out of the country and who are not here living for at least five years, and all I am asking—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, he is coming to the question.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, am—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking whether money will be spent under Election Expenses or Overtime—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, he start up again?

Mr. Chairman: He is finishing the question. I was just drawing your attention.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He is not listening and then he cannot answer the question.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—whether money will be spent to do a cleaning of that list so that Trinidad and Tobago could get an accurate list of voters for any election to come. Thank you very much.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: So, hon. Minister, any moneys identified in the budget to clean up the electoral list? That is the question.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am having a problem here. I asked what line Item this was. I was referred to page 40, 002, 03, Overtime, and the question has to be framed in the context of that line Item. I kept asking the Member to identify and explain how a house to house field survey could possibly be associated with the Overtime Item, and I was prevented from making this point. I would like to know how the Member expects that a house to house survey could be covered under the Overtime vote. Explain that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I could answer that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the direct question that was asked is whether it is moneys have been allocated to clean up the electoral list?

Hon. Imbert: This Item. It has to be on this Item. It cannot be on every Item.

Mr. Chairman: Therefore, could you give an answer then?

Hon. Imbert: The point I was making is that the Member made all sorts of remarks, but what this has proven is that he has no understanding of the system of allocation of funds, and, Mr. Deputy Chairman, there is no way that the—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are hypocritical again.

Mr. Chairman: Members! Hon. Members! Member for Caroni East, please, please.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, what is happening here is that the Member is making a speech about matters that have no relationship to this line Item, and he cannot ask me a question about some other Item and try to bring it under this Item. And for the record, this is Overtime and this is Overtime expenses that will be incurred by workers at the EBC during an election when they are working beyond normal working hours. They are working on Saturday, they are working on Sunday, during an election, and this could not possibly be the line Item for a house to house survey to clean up the list.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the answer is no. I proceed to the Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The answer is no, you have not used any money for Overtime.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, we are under Goods and Services right? Just clarifying.

Mr. Chairman: 02.

Dr. Rambachan: So there are two Items I want to target. On page 41, Item, Contract Employment, which is No. 16, and also you have Short-Term Employment, No. 22, and then on the following page under Elections Expenses you have Short-Term Employment, 22 again, under any of these Items—these three Items—are there any moneys there included for a cleaning up of the election list and the hiring of personnel for doing that?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, on page 41, line Item 16, Contract Employment, also line Item 22, Short-Term Employment on the same page, and then we proceed to page 42, line Item Short-Term Employment, and the question is: whether any moneys are allocated under these Items for cleaning up the electoral list?

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, might I say on the outset, I find it passing strange that Members who have been in Government for five years are all of a sudden fascinated with cleaning up a list that they should have allocated funds for during the period that they were in Government. But be that as it may, the house to house survey that is required to clean the list as it were, the last time that was done was in 20—Mr. Deputy Chairman, everybody over there is just muttering and mumbling. I would ask, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I can answer the question, but I cannot do so if there is a barrage of crosstalk on that side. I am

asking you to ask hon. Members opposite, since they are fascinated with this, could they please allow me to speak without interruption?

Mr. Chairman: You can proceed, hon. Minister. [*Interruption*] Members! Member for Caroni East, please. Go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, please, I am hearing you also.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Firstly let me say no funds were allocated in the last five years to do that activity. In this fiscal year, since that activity requires considerable forward planning, the EBC has been given funds to do limited field checks. I can assure you since we are extremely interested in doing the necessary national survey to clean up the list, which we had hoped that the other side would do. We would be giving the EBC the necessary funds after they have done their necessary planning. This involves examination of approximately one million registered voters, and it is not something that will be done by vaps. So I can assure you, that within our term, we will be giving the EBC the necessary funds to do a national house to house comprehensive survey as was done in 2001 to clean up the voters list. But for this year, they have funds under these Items to do limited field verification.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Deputy Chairman, that begs the question: Is the EBC, as an institution, not obligated to us to ensure fair and democratic elections, that on a continuous basis of updating that they will have a continuous plan and a programme for updating and cleaning up their list? Why is the Minister now saying that they have been given money for a limited intervention, when this, I presume, should have been a continuous programme of updating that the EBC will have as part of its activities?

Mr. Chairman: And that is in reference to the same three line Items we just identified.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: Which Item are you on? This will be Contract Employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Overtime.

Hon. Imbert: We are not on Overtime.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I am asking direct response to what the Minister answered.

Hon. Imbert: What line Item?

Mr. Chairman: The same three line Items he identified.

Dr. Rambachan: The same three line Items.

Hon. Imbert: Contract Employment, what are the other two?

Mr. Chairman: Short-Term Employment—

Hon. Imbert: Short-Term Employment, Contract Employment, what is the third one?

Dr. Rambachan: Contract Employment again. Two Short-Term and one Contract.

Hon. Imbert: Two Short-Term—

Dr. Rambachan: Contract Employment and Short-Term Contract. On page 41, Items 16 and 22, and on page 42, Item 22. My question is very simple, you know. Does the EBC have a continuous programme for updating its list as part of its responsibility?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: I just wanted to be clear on which line Items we are talking about because this exercise is the examination of the Heads of Expenditure. So now that you have asked whether under Head 02, 001, 16 and 001, 22, and you are telling me that over the page which will be 002, which we have not reached yet—I assumed we have not reached that yet, 22—you are asking whether there is funding allocated to do the national survey. Let me just state at the outset, no funding was allocated for the last five years to do a national survey. A national survey is not done every year. That would be a pointless exercise.

The time has come to do a national survey. The EBC has been given the same level of funding in 2016 that was given by the former Government in 2015, notwithstanding the fact that there is no general election in 2016. However, I am making a commitment on behalf of the PNM Government that we will do what the UNC did not do, and give the EBC the funds to do a national house to house survey. As I said, these things are not done by “vaps,” they are not done every year, and the EBC will be planning to do its house to house survey in fiscal 2016, and we will give them the funds to do it in fiscal 2017.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I repeat a very important question, a very important question. Bear with me, this is of national importance. Does the EBC not have as part of its continuing planning and programming the continuous updating of its list? That is the question I am asking. Is that part of the normal function of EBC or do we only have to wait for a national survey?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item are you referring to?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite—

Hon. Imbert: You have to refer it to a line Item.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, with due respect, you are trying to be cute.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, they are really becoming very insulting. What line Item are you referring to?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, your question you are asking, in relation to staffing?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 16, 22, those are the two. Contract Employment and Short-Term Employment.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Deputy Chair—

Mr. Chairman: But does it relate directly to staffing, hon. Member?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is for employment for people who can do the work.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is the allocation being made here for Short-Term Employment, for Contract Employment. Does it include work to be done and continuous updating of EBC list?

Hon. Imbert: I wish the hon. Leader of the Opposition had intervened long ago. The answer is, yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. So we will now proceed—*[Interruption]* Hon. Members!

Hon. Imbert: Why did you not intervene before?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia, your turn now.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: On page 41, Item 23, Fees, and I see we have an increase of \$163,000. So a total of \$263,000. Do these Fees include legal fees to be paid to lawyers for matters before the court?

Mr. Chairman: Page 41, line Item—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 41, line Item 23, Fees.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that this Item is for fees paid to the Registrar of Births and Deaths for extracting the information required for the continuous updating of the voters list, and for legal fees as and when required. I can say that I looked at the evolution of the list in 2015 and I did see who were deceased in my own constituency coming off the list shortly after their deaths were recorded in the Births and Deaths Registry. So I must compliment the EBC for that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, hon. Member. Sub-Head—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Did you say yes to the second, the Fees—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, I did say that it includes fees to the Registrar of Births and Deaths for the continuous updating of the list, and for legal fees as and when they are required.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. Members, I am moving on. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. We now move over to the Development Programme booklet and we are on page 12. Page 12, Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission. Consolidated Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

We now go to page—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Pages 12 and 13. On page 12, Sir, we see Multi-Sectoral and Other Services total translated on to page 13. [*Crosstalk*] Okay, I withdraw my query. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: You withdraw your query. Right! So we now move on to Multi-Infrastructure Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and we proceed to page 278 of the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Okay. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 08 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you members from the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Thanks for your time, thanks for your presence and do enjoy the rest of your afternoon.

2.45 p.m.

We will now proceed to Head 07: Statutory Authorities' Service Commission and this is the last Schedule we will be doing today. Statutory Authorities' Service Commission.

Hon. Members, we are in *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and we are on page 36. I must also now take time to say, hon. Members, that as the Deputy Chairman, please respect the Chair. Somehow after lunch, we were getting a lot of crosstalk and the decorum was getting a little out of hand. Whoever is sitting in the Chair acts as the Chairman of the committee, so please offer a little more respect, please. Thank you.

We are on the last Schedule for the day. I know we had a long day and let us move on. Welcome, Madam.

Head 07.

Mr. Chairman: Statutory Authorities' Service Commission, \$6,061,200. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: I will defer to the Minister of Public Administration.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Public Administration. Sorry.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you, again, Mr. Deputy Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before this committee to answer questions on recurrent expenditure as it pertains to the budgetary allocations for the Statutory Authorities' Service Commission. The Statutory Authorities' Service Commission derives its mandate from the Statutory Authorities Act and Regulations. The Commission is responsible for providing the human resources of the statutory authorities; appointing persons whose remuneration is on a monthly basis in pensionable offices; providing for promotion of officers and their confirmation as appropriate and exercising disciplinary control over all officers through discussions, warnings, suspensions, fines and dismissals.

At present, there are a number of authorities under the purview of the Commission and they are: the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago, the Arima Borough Corporation, the National Lotteries Control Board, the Point Fortin Borough Corporation, the Port of Spain City Corporation, the San Fernando City Corporation, the St. Dominic's Children's Home, the St. Jude's School for Girls, St. Michael's School for Boys, the Sugar Industry Labour

Welfare Fund Committee and the Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, for the opportunity to make these few introductory remarks.

Question proposed: That Head 07 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$6,061,200 for Head 07: Statutory Authorities' Service Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now proceed to Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure; Item 001 General Administration on page 36. Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services.

Dr. Bodoë: Reference to Sub-Item 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, I note a decrease here of \$901,270. Can the Minister, perhaps, explain that?

Hon. Mitchell: That is because the department is no longer relocating to a new accommodation. That is the Goodwood Building.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Sub-Head 03.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask a question on 02? Line item 28, Other Contracted Services, which has been slashed by a significant amount, \$377,000, almost \$378,000. Could the Minister indicate what would have caused this, please?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I can answer or the Minister can answer. Because the Statutory Authorities' Service Commission is no longer relocating to this building, there is no longer a requirement for outfitting, so that is why contracted services has gone down.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 07 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam, for attending this afternoon. Do enjoy the rest of your evening.

Hon. Members, we have now come to the conclusion of our Standing Finance Committee for today, Saturday, October 17, 2015. However, we still have some Schedules to complete which, as far as I understand, must be completed by Monday.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, we did say, if time permitted, we can examine the Office of the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister in the building and

available?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, that was not said.

Dr. Moonilal: But we have some extra time now. Is he available?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Dr. Moonilal: Let us proceed then. Monday.

Mr. Chairman: We need to resume on Monday, and according to a note from the leader—*[Interruption]* Hon. Members, a note from the Leader of Government Business is that we resume on Monday at 1.30 p.m. in order to continue the business of the Standing Finance Committee. Right.

According to the Schedule, we still have the Judiciary; Environmental Commission; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Planning and Development; Ministry of Public Utilities; Registration Recognition and Certification Board; Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development; Ministry of Communications; Parliament; Ministry of Social Development and Family Services; Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs; the Ministry of Health; Personnel Department; Ministry of Tourism; Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts and Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Those Schedules have to be completed and also Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, can I seek some clarification?

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: If the examination of the first few Heads drags on and we approach the appointed time of eight o'clock and we run out of time, what will be the procedure? The question will be put. That is my understanding. Am I correct? *[Interruption]* You all wasted time!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are in charge.

Mr. Imbert: You are in charge, not us. We are not in charge. You are in charge of this; you set the priorities.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. According to the Standing Orders, the work must be completed by 7.50 p.m. on Monday, October 19, 2015.

Mr. Imbert: Very nice and therefore, you will put the question at the appropriate time.

Mr. Chairman: At the appropriate time.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Appropriation Bill, 2015

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Mr. Chairman: Right, Monday at 7.50 p.m. So, Members, at 1.30 p.m. on Monday, October 19, 2015, we will resume the Standing Finance Committee meeting. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon. Thank you.

2.54 p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee suspended.*