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**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Monday 19th October, 2015

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Appropriation Bill, 2015

Monday, October 19, 2015

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 19, 2015

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2016) BILL 2015

[Sixth Day]

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

[*Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George*]

1.30p.m.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Financing Committee is resumed and we are at Head 03, Judiciary, the sum of, \$363,140,800. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not the exceeding five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: I will defer to the Acting Attorney General on this. Mr. Young, could you explain what the Judiciary is all about?

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Judiciary, as everyone is aware, is a separate arm protected by separation of powers, and as would have been heard by the hon. Minister of Finance in his budget presentation and is contained in the PNM Manifesto, which is now adopted as government policy. This Government is moving towards giving the Judiciary something it has been clamouring for, for years, and rightly so, which is financial autonomy. So we are in the process of making that a reality and we fully support the efforts of the Judiciary and the important position that it plays in governance of Trinidad and Tobago and in the protection of the separation and the independence of the Judiciary. Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 03 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$363,140,800 for Head 03, Judiciary, 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*.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001 Judiciary Trinidad; Item 002 Judiciary Tobago; Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, Item 001 Judiciary Trinidad.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Goods and Services, Judiciary Trinidad, page 13, Item 16, I notice there is a \$55.55 million for contract employment, I am trying to get an understanding of what the nature of that contract employment is and I have another question with regard to training also.

Mr. Imbert: Could you repeat the question?

Dr. Rambachan: The question is on Item 16 Goods and Services, page 13. There is an amount of \$55.55 million for Contract Employment. What is this contract employment in the Judiciary about?

Mr. Imbert: Well, as you could see from the amount, it is quite a lot of contract employment.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: We can give you a list of the positions and so on. What exactly do you want to know?

Dr. Rambachan: So these positions are not filled, or are they vacant positions that exist?

Mr. Imbert: Some of them would be to supplement the Judiciary's capacity, in terms of posts that may not be filled on the establishment, but quite a significant proportion is contract staff outside of the establishment. That is just how it is. If you want a list—they have an approval to contract 1,082 contract officers.

Dr. Rambachan: They have approval to contract that?

Mr. Imbert: That is what I am advised, and that they have filled 590 out of that 1,082. They have approved establishment of 1,259 public officers, of which 910 positions are filled and, well, the balance 349, would be vacant and, in terms of judicial officers, 172 approved positions, of which 108 are filled.

Dr. Rambachan: And now you are saying they have 1,082 positions for contract?

Mr. Imbert: They have an approval for 1,082. The total posts are 2,542. That is the approved total, of which they have 1,637.

Dr. Rambachan: 1,637?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. There is a shortfall of about 800 if my maths is right, or 900, somewhere around there.

Dr. Rambachan: So, in terms of the—since that is the case, then the Judiciary is only operating with 64 per cent of its personnel?

Mr. Imbert: Based on the information provided to me, the total complement of posts is 2,542. The total staff currently on board, 1,637.

Dr. Rambachan: And my question is therefore: is the Judiciary operating on 64 per cent of its required human resources?

Mr. Imbert: I am giving you the numbers.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, may I ask if we are testing the hon. Minister of Finance on the maths?

Dr. Rambachan: No, I am not testing him, Madam.

Madam Chairman: I think the answer is clear with respect to the number of contract posts and the number that are filled. I think we need to really use our time prudently today.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, I am using my time very prudently because, with due respect, you would appreciate that the delay in justice is a matter of great concern and the length of time it is taking to determine matters in the country is of great concern and if the Judiciary is operating at 64 per cent of its human resources, I want to know what is being done in order to ensure there is a full complement where we are voting moneys for that.

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, if I may.

Madam Chairman: One minute. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, that is not the question that you asked, and all I am saying is if we can use our time today to be a little more direct, with respect to what we are asking.

Hon. Young: If I may, Madam Chair, in an attempt to clarify and more for the purposes of the public looking on, it would be very misleading to suggest that the Judiciary is only using 64 per cent of its personnel as it currently stands. This is only with respect to contract workers and the Member and others would be aware that you have permanent staff that would not be captured by the contract workers. So presumably they would be using their full complement and contract workers are not always to be fully utilized, as we have seen happen since we have come into office.

Mr. Imbert: And not just that. Let me just clarify something else that I have been advised by the Judiciary and it goes to the decision we have made. We had put it in our manifesto and now we have a decision—well we are fulfilling that

manifesto commitment that we are going to give the Judiciary complete responsibility for all of the things necessary to make the Judiciary function effectively, one of which would be accommodation. I was told here that even if all of the positions were filled tomorrow—and the word used is “magically”, if they were all magically filled tomorrow—in other words they were able to recruit, interview, locate suitable people, get them to agree to terms and conditions, et cetera, et cetera, the accommodation is inadequate. So, as we move towards giving the Judiciary full autonomy, in terms of also providing their own accommodation, then they would be able to solve these two problems—one, to be able to recruit, and also two, to be able to provide the necessary accommodation for all their staff.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, just—I was not trying to be anything. 1,637 of 2,542 is the number the Minister said, I did not say that and 1,637 of 2,542 is 64 per cent. So it does not just refer to the permanent workers. It refers to the entire cadre of workers, the 2,542 that we are talking about.

Mr. Imbert: It does not matter. As the Hon. Chairman said, we do not have to do arithmetic here.

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, I was just clarifying what I said. I was not trying to test your maths or anything.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, it is all right.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On the very heading 16, Contract Employment, I notice a drop in \$1.4million. Is there an explanation for this, that positions were filled or an anticipation that you would not need \$1.4 million more with the contract employment allocation?

Mr. Imbert: The allocation was made by the Ministry of Finance. Now, as you know, we are going to be engaging in extensive discussions with the Judiciary, with a view that by the end of fiscal 2016, they would have the required autonomy in order to do their own procurement, acquire their own buildings, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and all of the allocations would be reviewed and by the time of the mid-year review there would be a lot of reallocation, consistent with the outcome of those discussions. So this is certainly—if I do the calculations that the former Minister—Member for Tabaquite—wanted me to do, this represents 2 per cent of the total allocation. So I am sure that by March or April, we would be able to resolve this, and if they do need any more, they will get more.

Item 002 Judiciary Tobago; Item 003 Judiciary Family Court; Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 Judiciary Trinidad; Item 003 Judiciary Family Court; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies; Item 009 Other Transfers; Sub-Head 09: Development Programme Consolidated Fund; Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$363,140—

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I am dealing with the Development Programme.

Madam Chair: Well, I was about to put the question.

Mr. Singh: Yeah, I know. Well, I was about to catch your eye and I did not. So, now that I have caught your eye. Madam Chair, I am not seeing any allocation for the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court. I notice under the Development Programme it was transferred—the refurbishment of Magistrates' Courts—to the Office of the Attorney General. I then looked under the Attorney General. I did not see anything about the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court and I do not know, because I know currently the constituents of Chaguanas West are really inconvenienced. They have to travel to Tunapuna in order to get justice.

Mr. Imbert: Can you tell me what line Item you are talking about? You cannot talk about a line Item that is not there. So what line Item are you talking about?

Mr. Singh: No, no, I am dealing with the development expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: I know, but which line Item it deals with?

Mr. Singh: And it deals with refurbishment of Magistrates' Courts, line Item 003 on page 5.

Mr. Imbert: Line Item 003, on page 5. Okay, right. And this is transferred to the Attorney General's office.

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: And what happen, you went in the AG's office and you did not see it?

Mr. Singh: I did not see anything for Chaguanas Magistrate.

Mr. Imbert: Well, when we get there we would deal with that. Okay?

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you, Ma'am. In light of the earlier response from the Minister of Finance, these Items are project No. 001, 003—11; project 021—3 transferred to the Ministry of the Attorney General—we are on page 5, yes—

and Legal Affairs. How does this fly in the face of the stated policy of the Government to provide the Judiciary with this autonomy? Clearly autonomy is not undertaking their own work or their own rehabilitation of facilities and construction, and so on. They are in the hands of another Ministry to provide physical infrastructure. It asks the deeper question of what the Government understands autonomy to be, but certainly it is not in the case of facilitation, construction and the provision of accommodation.

Mr. Imbert: Which line?

1.45p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: The decision to move these items to the Ministry of the Attorney General—

Mr. Imbert: So, when we get there we will deal with that.

Dr. Moonilal: But you have moved it from the Judiciary. It has gone. What influenced that?

Mr. Imbert: That is no longer a line Item here, so when we get to the AG, consistent with how we had dealt with local constabularies. When we get there, we will deal with that.

Dr. Moonilal: “I am asking why it leave?”

Mr. Imbert: No, when we get there, we will deal with that.

Dr. Moonilal: Not why it arrived there?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the members from the Judiciary who have attended to assist the committee, and they are relieved. Could we move on to Head 38: Environmental Commission.

Head 38.

Madam Chairman: Members, we are at page 271. Head 38: Environmental Commission, \$12,019,300. I now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement, not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: If I may, Madam Chair. The Environmental Commission is an environmental tribunal set up under the Environmental Management Act. It plays basically an appeal role on issues that may arise coming out of decisions by the

Environmental Management Authority. It is staffed with the head of the commission being someone with the qualifications of a judge of the High Court, and then members from other professional expertise areas dealing with the environment. It is a fully functioning commission and one that I have appeared at before in my previous life, and one that we take very seriously, as this Government moves towards the promotion of environmental concerns in Trinidad and Tobago.

Question proposed: That Head 38 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$12,019,300 for Head 38: the Environmental 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* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 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 09, Development Programme; Item 005, Multi-Sectorial and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 38 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the representatives of the Environmental Commission for coming and assisting us. You all are relieved. May we move on to Head 26: Ministry of Education? We are at page 186.

Head 26.

Madam Chairman: Head 26: the Ministry of Education, \$7,781,013,421. I now invite the Minister of Education to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Garcia: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. My Government has been in the forefront of every major advance in education in this country. During this period we are committed to preserve, maintain and expand where necessary our system of free education and training at all levels. Towards this end, we will ensure that the GATE system remains relevant, easily accessible and available to all citizens who need support.

We will give active support to our two public universities. We will implement a suitable school maintenance programme. We will promote and encourage

continuing education. We will ensure that our system of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels prepares our young people for the challenging world of science and technology.

And, therefore, Madam Chairman, as we discuss our budget, our plans, our programmes, all our activities will be guided by these philosophical statements. Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That head 26 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$7,781,013,421 for Head 26: Ministry of Education 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, and we are at page 187 for the information of Members.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, the detailed information at 187 is summarized in 186, and I would just like to draw to the attention and ask a question on 186 in terms of—since Education now comprises ECCE, primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education. In the 2015 revised estimates, we had for salaries and cost of living, \$2.845 billion which is about 60 per cent of the budget for education. But in 2016, the salaries and cost of living is \$2.865, just a mere increase of \$19 million. Is this increase for—that is salaries under tertiary education? Or could you explain the increase in the salaries of \$19 million?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have given an undertaking to explain the variations in Personnel Expenditure for every single Head and Ministry. I will do so for the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. So—

Madam Chairman: Could I take the liberty to say, hon. Minister of Finance, that you do so for every Head to be considered today for Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, as I did with all the ones in the past, I am giving that undertaking for every remaining Head of expenditure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are we on—

Madam Chairman: We are on page 187, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I just want to draw to the attention the increase, \$2.351 billion on Current Transfers and Subsidies on page 186. Could the Minister indicate—

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Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister, please, we are at page 187, Current Transfers and Subsidies—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could I go further down, Madam Chair? Sure, sure.

Madam Chairman:—would be in some pages to come. Let us make some prudent use of our time today.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But the overall picture is critical.

Madam Chairman: I have determined, please Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you do not want to give an understanding of the overall critical picture?

Madam Chairman: No, we will get it—

Dr. Gopeesingh: How can we go into detail when we do not know what is—

Madam Chairman: We will get in the pages to come, please hon. Member. May we proceed. Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Secondary Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance have increased on secondary education by \$43million from 1.357 to 1.40. Does that include any—is that the increase in salaries for the teachers? And if you look back, 2015 estimates was 1.085, and the revised estimate was 1.357, and I could indicate that that was—the difference there was to pay outstanding arrears of nearly \$300 million for the back pay and new salaries in 2015. So \$300 million was paid for back pay and arrears in salaries for 2015. Now, the increase in 2016, the \$43 million, is that for increase in salaries or back pay and salaries as well?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the undertaking that I gave just a few seconds ago is for every, single Item of Personnel Expenditure. You will get an explanation for everything. This is subsumed within the overall allocation for Personnel Expenditure.

2.00 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you consider back pay to be a part of the Personnel Expenditure? Is it included there when you are thinking about providing the information? Would you be providing information on back pay?

Mr. Imbert: As I said, at least 15 times, the change in Personnel Expenditure would be a combination of additional responsibilities or reduced responsibilities. Arrears of salary or no arrears of salary, increased salary or no increased salary.

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You would get an explanation for every single Head, Sub-Head, Item and Sub-Item with respect to variations in allocations for Personnel Expenditure. So, there is no point as we get to each Sub-Item that you ask the same question over and over and over again.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 005.

Mr. Imbert: It is a Sub-Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Primary Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I see a decrease in salaries again.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I have to draw it to his attention, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I understand your concern, but I believe that the undertaking binds every Head, one, and every Item under each Head that refers to Personnel Expenditure which would be salaries and cost of living, wages, allowances, back pay arrears. I think so.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is not just the matter of the provision and the information, Madam Chair, it is the matter of the significance of the decrease. In other words, if salary X was for Primary Education and there is a decrease, does it mean that the teachers are going to be getting less salaries? And this is Primary Education, \$18 million less than 2015 in 2016. What does that signify?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, in the hope that this would be the last question on Personnel Expenditure, an increase or decrease is either an increase or reduction in responsibilities, an increase in salary because we do not reduce salaries in Trinidad and Tobago, and arrears of salary, or not, as the case may be. Everything.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you reducing people's salaries?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, it is absurd for the Member to ask whether we are reducing people's salaries. We do not reduce salaries in Trinidad and Tobago, we increase them. So that, Madam Chairman, he would get the explanation for every item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you firing people, hon. Member?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni—Members, please, let us just try and maintain—[*Crosstalk*] Members, please, let us try and maintain some degree of civility as we proceed.

Hon. Member for Caroni East, yes, I have noticed really how dedicated you are to this process, and on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, I commend you, but I also would like us all to be very prudent with the use of our time. The undertaking says that explanations will be given. Okay, so let us go on.

Item 010, General Administration; Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture; Item 012, Technical/Vocational Education; Item 013, Teachers' Colleges; Item 014, National Examinations Council; Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, I just want to ask, I saw the transfer of Scholarships and Advanced Training from the Ministry of Public Administration to the Ministry of Education. Could the Government give—

Madam Chairman: Page 191, I believe.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Can they give an understanding of the rationale for moving it from public administration scholarship which has been predominantly taken care of by the Ministry of Public Administration and now being brought to the Ministry of Education, and that would involve the open and national scholarships and so on as I see further down.

Mr. Imbert: You will get it in writing. [*Desk thumping*] Okay, you will get the answer to that question in writing.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, this includes Primary Education, District Services and so on that head. Could I move to page 195?

Madam Chairman: Are we under Item 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services?

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, I would hold until some questions earlier.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Under Goods and Services, page 192, I notice again there is a very large sum for Contract Employment, \$197.5 million which is an increase of \$13.5 million. I am trying to understand in all these areas of

contract employment, what does this relate to? Does it relate to teachers? Does it relate to administrative staff? Why the need for this high level of contract employment if you already have all those wages and so on for normal teachers? Is this additional teachers or teachers who have to be replacing other teachers who do not come to work or you do not have teachers or what have you?

Mr. Imbert: I am tempted to tell you to ask your colleague, the Member for Caroni East, but you will get that answer in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I am still on 193.

Madam Chairman: I am certain, hon. Member for Caroni East, you will get your turn.

Dr. Moonilal: Just a question.

Mr. Imbert: We are not going back.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is what I am asking. Are we going to go back to page 192?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: It is Goods and Services, the same Goods and Services. Yes. Item 43, 193; there is a slash here in the allocation. The allocation has been slashed for Security Services, and I am wondering if there is an explanation that you would have \$11.5 million slash for Security Services.

Mr. Imbert: That would have been a budgeting measure, and we will consult with the Ministry during the year. It is interesting how you all are describing a 2 or 3 per cent variation as a slash, but it is a budgeting measure. We will consult with Education.

You see, a lot of money was spent on a lot of things, for example, \$169 million in security. We really have to go in there and see whether it was necessary to spend \$169 million, whether there was any duplication. You asked why it was reduced, I am explaining why. We have to look at the expenditure in previous years, look at the contracts for Security Services, determine whether the Government has been receiving value for money, determine whether these contracts are transparent, determine whether they are not inflated, and as a result as a budgeting exercise, we have made a small reduction in the allocation for \$169 million to \$157 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wanted to ask the hon. Minister, through you, whether the Contract Employment, page 192, includes the contract for remedial teachers in

primary and secondary schools and the teachers doing the moderating for the Continuous Assessment Component in the primary schools. Is that included in \$197 million?

Hon. Garcia: We will give you that answer in writing, okay?

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Ma'am. Under Security Services, page 193, what I would like to know is how much of that money of the \$157.5 million or \$169 million is paid to MTS for Security Services in the schools and how much is paid to other security companies.

Mr. Imbert: I would give you a breakdown of all the providers and the money that is allocated to them.

Madam Chairman: That would be in writing.

Mr. Imbert: Definitely in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Secondary Education on page 193, the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation Storage. I saw it is for Bishop Anstey and Trinity College East which was a BOLT arrangement. Could the Minister, through you, Madam Chair, give us an idea of how many more years that we have to service this BOLT arrangement, whether one or two more years?

Madam Chairman: Would that be furnished in writing?

Mr. Imbert: Of course.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is 08.

Madam Chairman: That would be given in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, thank you very much. On page 195, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, Madam Chairman, we notice a—

Mr. Imbert: Does that mean that we are done with 06 and 07?

Dr. Moonilal: No. We are under a heading.

Mr. Imbert: No, you have gone to 008.

Dr. Moonilal: We are not going by page, we are going by heading.

Mr. Imbert: You have skipped two Sub-Heads.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I am entertaining under the various Items, so it does not matter because I cannot anticipate what order the questions will come.

Mr. Imbert: No problem, sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Ma'am. The Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, we notice a very severe disinvestment well, to me, a slash in the provision for that by \$13.6 million and the biggest chunk of that is in Materials and Supplies and Short-Term Employment. My question is: what would explain such a slashing of the budget for the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre by \$13 million where the most significant ones are Materials and Supplies and Short-Term Employment?

Mr. Imbert: We will put it in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: You will put that in writing too, okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just one area on Fees on page 193. Goods and Services, No. 23 on page 193. There is a reduction of fees of \$269,000. Could we get an appreciation of what fees have been reduced and the reduction?

Hon. Garcia: What number you are on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. 23 on page 193. Is it CXC fees or what fee is that?

Madam Chairman: Goods and Services, page 193, line Item 23.

Hon. Garcia: I have been advised that we are going to give you that in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You do not have any idea what?

Hon. Garcia: No, we are not in a position to give you that right now, okay?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Ma'am, page 195, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit, 22. Madam Chairman, to put in writing again, this violent slash in the allocation for Short-Term Employment from \$13 million to \$3.7 million a decrease of \$9.7 million for Short-Term Employment in that unit, another one for writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You will give the answer in writing to Dr. Moonilal. On page 194, under Primary Education, No. 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, there is a \$6.2 million increase which is good, but could you just let us have an understanding, the reason for the increase on repairs and maintenance of buildings. We spent 1.3 last year which is good. If you are spending more to repair building which is good, but could you give a little explanation on it?

Hon. Garcia: Well, first of all, this is for minor repairs, okay. It does not include the larger repairs.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Is this meant, Madam Chair, to give the primary schools a certain amount of money for themselves so that they can conduct their own repairs?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think if it is meant to do so it would be good.

Hon. Garcia: There are 126 primary schools that would be involved.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is government primary schools?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, government primary schools, and they will be given the sums of money to engage in minor repairs.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, you will share that money between the schools depending on the size of the school?

Hon. Garcia: And depending on the need of the school.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you should give all equitably depending on the sizes of the schools and the amount of children in the school.

Hon. Garcia: Well, the Ministry of Education will decide that, determine that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks, good.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we have reached Item 008, we have reached Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre. That is where we have reached. So anything else on Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre?

Dr. Gopeesingh: In addition to what my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East asked on the Short-Term Employment under 22, it is a significant reduction in ECCE.

Madam Chairman: Is that under 008?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That was under 009.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I have not reached 009 as yet. We are at 008 and, therefore, if there are no questions, I would then take you, hon. Member for Caroni East. I now recognize you under Head 009.

2.15p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under line Item 22 the Short-term Employment of ECCE—there is a marked reduction. May I be privileged to just indicate that in 2015 the

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\$13.5 million was used for the payment of students in the ECCE centres. Teachers who would have been new teachers who came on board for the ECCE centres, \$13 billion—certificate in education—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, and the question is?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why is there a significant reduction of \$9.7 million? What is the reason?

Madam Chairman: Can we get that in writing, please.

Hon. Garcia: At least at this point I can say that this allocation is for the payment of cleaners—cleaning staff.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For the ECCE centres?

Hon. Garcia: I have been informed that this is for payment of the cleaning staff.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you should be further advised, Minister.

Hon. Garcia: I am happy that—

Mr. Imbert: You got a response; that is what it is for. You do not need a written response anymore.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Better check it. It is not for that.

Madam Chairman: Item 010 General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to ask on 009 under Goods and Services at page 196; same thing here Early Childhood Education brought forward, a reduction of \$9.6 million. From \$20 million to \$11 million. Are you all cutting across the board on early childhood education centres?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, that brought forward would have come from the various items—under the various items.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I stand corrected; thank you.

Madam Chairman: We are at 010, General Administration. Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture. Item 014, National Examinations Council. Item 015, Spanish Secretariat. Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division.

Dr. Lee: Under the Scholarships 016, Item 16 Contract Employment, this came over from the Ministry of Public Administration, and in 2015 the revised

estimate was \$19.1 million, and it has gone up to \$30 million. Could we just get an explanation in writing if possible?

Madam Chairman: Can we go on now to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The minor equipment purchases have been reduced by \$16 million. If you look at line Item 03, the heading, Minor Equipment Purchases—could you give us an understanding of the decrease? Why this decrease for minor equipment purchases? I will just preface it to indicate that the laptop programme was under this Item, and \$64 million spent in 2015. Does this mean that the students are not going to be provided with the laptops or have any of the students received laptops so far? Have you purchased any so far?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, this will be answered in writing, because you are considering 01, 02, 03, 04 in that question that you have asked.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am only considering 001 which is under Minor Equipment.

Madam Chairman: But the summary—what you are referring to there is the summary.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Basically, the largest part of that is the \$15 million for minor equipment.

Madam Chairman: What therefore is your question? Do you want a breakdown with respect to decrease of the \$15 million?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes; what would have caused you to decrease the expenditure for minor equipment. Is it because you are omitting the expenditure on the laptop programme?

Hon. Garcia: No. In fact, there is a budgetary allocation for laptops, so we are not omitting the laptops.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are not omitting them?

Hon. Garcia: No, we are not omitting laptops.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And you will help to direct us to where that allocation is in this?

Hon. Garcia: No, the allocation is under 04, under Minor Equipment, and you have the 2016 estimate of \$45 million and that will take in the laptops. To

answer your other question which you just asked, yes, laptops will be provided, but right now we are reviewing the infrastructural needs of the schools before we give out these laptops. Of course as you would know, even in our budget presentation and in other discussions we have been saying that the schools must be properly equipped so that the students can use the laptops effectively as a learning tool.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will debate that with you when it comes to a debate, because what you have indicated is not necessarily, in fact, so.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, your question has been answered.

Dr. Rambachan: I just have a very straightforward question. Has a contract been given out for the acquisition of laptops for all students who have entered secondary school in this first year, and is that included in this \$45 million?

Hon. Garcia: We will put that in writing for you. We will give you that information in writing.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Item 005, Secondary Education. Page 199, Item 006, Primary Education. Item 007, District Services Division. Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre. Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit.

Dr. Rambachan: I asked this question because in my own constituency I have had several requests from the primary schools which have ECCE centres that they do not have furniture and furnishings for their schools. I see \$45,000 here as not being able to provide the kinds of equipment and furnishings they need in school. Has the Ministry undertaken a survey of these schools in order to determine their needs and, therefore, to make an appropriate allocation?

Hon. Garcia: This is the allocation that was determined by the Ministry of Finance, and I can assure you that the Ministry of Education will do that survey that you are talking about, because we ourselves have been getting a number of requests from the schools, and as the Minister of Finance has been saying repeatedly there will be a midterm review and, perhaps, if there is need for increase that will be taken up in the mid-year review.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I just want to indicate that a similar situation exists at the Munroe Road Early Childhood Care Centre, which was opened recently and the necessary requests have been made, and similarly at the Munroe Road

Primary School where the instructions were given to go back to the school, but the necessary equipment and furnishings are not yet there.

Hon. Garcia: I can simply say we are looking at it.

Mr. Imbert: Are you talking about page 200, 009, 03? That is the line item you are on? I am just asking: Is that the line item, page 200? Which line is it?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Furniture and furnishings, he was speaking about the Munroe Road—

Mr. Imbert: You are saying yes, he is saying no. Is it page 200?

Dr. Gopeesingh: He asked about the Munroe Road ECCE centre.

Mr. Imbert: I know that, but is the line item page 200, 009, 03, is that it?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, well this is the furniture for the unit, not for the facilities.
[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Can we have some order, please! Can we go on to item 010, General Administration. Item 015, Spanish Secretariat. Sub-head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations. Item 004, International Bodies.

Mr. Indarsingh: Not under “International Bodies”, Madam Chair. I want to ask a question under “Educational Institutions”.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Mr. Indarsingh: You are very near.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Educational Institutions.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under “Grants to Assisted Primary Schools”, I see a very deep slash of \$16.5 million. What would have been the rationale for that? Could the Minister be so willing to advise the national community?

Hon. Garcia: We will provide that information in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: And similarly for the local school boards, because I am sure that the parents of the school children are looking on, and they would want to know what is happening.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask, is that 04, 006, 28?

Madam Chairman: 22—006, line item 22. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: No, he said local school boards.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: 28.

Madam Chairman: 22; page 202, 006, that is where we are, Educational Institutions, line item 22. Is this answer going to be provided in writing?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Why the slash, and are we abandoning the school boards? I am asking.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, they are constantly—well, I am going to answer. Madam Chairman, [*Crosstalk*] what is that, is there a debate going on down there? I am answering the question.

Madam Chairman: Could you go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: If the hon. Member would look at the 2015 original estimate, it was \$1 million; so the 2016 original estimate is also \$1 million. All we have done is restore the original allocation for 2015. What happened during the year is that the Minister of Education would have vired money, as required, from Head to Sub-Head, and there was a virement from some other Head into this, and if the new Minister of Education feels the need to reallocate funds and put more money into this Head, then he too will be given permission to vire or transfer into this Head. But the allocation is the same as it was originally for 2015, so it is wrong to use these words like “slash”.

Dr. Bodoë: My question refers to page 203 under 41, and I note the allocation to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex of \$53 million. In the same vein, I am wondering if the hon. Minister will be giving consideration to a similar allocation, perhaps in the mid-year review, for the San Fernando Teaching Hospital.

Madam Chairman: What is the question, please, hon. Member for Fyzabad?

Dr. Bodoë: Whether consideration will be given in a similar vein to the San Fernando Teaching Hospital?

Mr. Imbert: That is not an educational matter; that is health. When we get to health we will deal with that.

Mr. Karim: I am on 006, Educational Institutions, line Item 19. I notice that there is no increase with respect to the Servol Junior Life Centres. May we have a list of those centres that are going to benefit from this identical allocation, please?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, you will be provided with that list.

Mr. Charles: This is a follow-up to the question asked by my colleague, the Member for Couva South. I am dealing here with 006, 09, the \$16.5 million reduction to grants to assisted primary schools. I would like the Minister in his answer to specifically indicate whether Jordan Hill Presbyterian and Brothers Road Presbyterian will be affected in any way by this reduction to denominational schools.

Madam Chairman: So that answer, could it be given in writing, please?

Hon. Garcia: Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why these slashes?

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, hon. Member for Caroni East.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Through you, Chair, line Item 29, Grants for Students Enrolled at Private Special Schools. This grant, is it given to the school or can parents of children who are mildly autistic or encounter other challenges apply for this grant from the Ministry of Education, please? Thank you.

Hon. Garcia: The grant is given to the schools, not to the individuals, to the schools.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, do you have a follow-up question on that?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So is it that if a parent applies through the school, can it be done in that way or is there any special provision for parents who have children who are challenged in any way to apply for assistance for special schools, because they are very expensive?

Hon. Garcia: I have been advised that the fees identified here are for the schools. Your question does not relate to what is here; it is fees for the schools. What you are asking for can be taken up later on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, it is a question on grants to assisted primary schools, 09. The slashing of \$16.5 million, does it mean a reduction in the amount of money—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, you are on what, line Item 006, 09.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 09.

Mr. Imbert: What line Item are you on? Did we not move to 04?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Does it mean then that the assisted primary schools will be getting less money?

Madam Chairman: But, hon. Member for Caroni East, I believe that Item was dealt with and there is an undertaking to get it in writing.

Mr. Imbert: We passed there already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: He said he would give it in writing?

Madam Chairman: Grants to assisted primary schools? Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Are you present?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, he made a statement—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to ask a question. I am not finished, Madam Chair.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair, 006, 30, Textbook Rental Secondary Management Unit Secondary Schools. Can the Minister give some clarification for the decrease by \$1.5 million in 2016?

Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. The textbook rental provision is based on the condition of the textbooks in the schools, the need for supplementation of the textbooks in the schools, it would vary from year to year. If you look at 2014, you would see the provision was only \$4 million, then it went up to \$20 million in 2015 where they purchased new books to replenish the stock, and then it is going back down to \$18.5 million. So it varies from year to year depending on the demands in the schools; that is how it works. It is a stock of books, they are supposed to be returned and you replenish the stock as and when required.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, I just want one clarification. On six, Education Institutions 9, Grants to Assisted Primary Schools, the word “assisted”—

Mr. Imbert: This is now the third time.

Dr. Rambachan: I asked for clarification. The word “assisted”—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Rambachan:—is it specifically related to denominational schools or are there other schools on that list, and what is the list of those schools?

Madam Chairman: I would suggest in the response in writing, that the question asked by the Member for Tabaquite also be addressed. Can I please move on?

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is directed to the Minister of Finance who just indicated to my colleague from Fyzabad, when he asked the question about Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the \$53 million there, and he indicated that the San Fernando Teaching Hospital is under health. But what I think I would like to know, the \$53 million for Eric Medical Sciences Complex, what is that for?

Mr. Imbert: As you know there is an educational facility at Eric Williams.

Dr. Khan: I am very glad the Member has said that, now he understands the San Fernando Teaching Hospital is an education facility.

Mr. Imbert: Do you not know that our medical school is at Mount Hope? Are you not aware?

Dr. Khan: So you cannot say it is health. No offence, Member, this is a real question, and the thing about it you are being a little facetious with the part with health. You have to understand, the San Fernando Teaching Hospital has two floors for the University of the West Indies training medical students. He is looking up in the air now. He does that all the time, you know. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: I suggest if you look here, you will not be distracted.

Dr. Khan: My question is this, can he follow up with the question for the Member for Fyzabad and indicate to us whether the San Fernando Teaching Hospital/UWI medical student facility will be getting some money to continue so we would not have to pay GATE to Grenada and Mona, Jamaica? That is all we are asking. It is not a health question.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, these questions keep coming in the form of a speech, and they bear no relationship to the line Item. Madam Chairman, I am asking you to allow me to answer the question without interruption from the other side.

This allocation is for the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, where the medical faculty of the University of the West Indies is located. How can you ask

about San Fernando on a line item that speaks to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex in Mount Hope? Find the line item with respect to San Fernando and ask the question there.

Dr. Khan: Had it been a line Item, Madam Chairman—if the line Item was more specific—this says Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. It does not say faculty—

Mr. Imbert: There is only one of those; it is in Mount Hope.

Dr. Khan: No, it did not say Faculty of Medicine, University of the West Indies, and that is where the confusion lies.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, I think the difficulty comes in the way the question—what is asked maybe not what is intended. Therefore I think Members have to watch the question they are asking; phrase it properly.

Dr. Khan: I will be guided. Can I ask just one question to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Khan: On line Item 41. Would you consider, Minister of Education—I am not speaking to the Minister of Finance, he seems to be in a different place—putting the medical education and nursing education under the Ministry of Health where it belongs?

Hon. Garcia: I will consult with my Minister of Finance. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, let us try and proceed.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Education to clarify whether the Higher Education Loan Programme, Item 51, with the allocation of \$30 million, is consistent with the plan by the Government to deal with means testing, and whether the allocation is appropriate?

Madam Chairman: This is line Item 51, and you are asking whether the allocation is appropriate?

Mr. Singh: Having regard to the announced policy.

Madam Chairman: And “appropriate” there means sufficient?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I will try my best today. “Ah go try.” I answered a question on GATE already, because the allocation for GATE is in the Ministry of Finance, and we went through a long, long explanation as to you have a special GATE fund into which funds are transferred. There was a balance already in the fund and, therefore, you have in excess of \$700 million in the GATE fund. The GATE fund is where we are looking at the question as to whether a means test should be introduced for wealthy people or not. It has nothing to do with this.

This is the Higher Education Loan Programme, and this is a programme to provide funding for expenses that are not associated with tuition, because the “T” in GATE is tuition, Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses. This is the Higher Education Loan Plan which is for funding, a loan to students for accommodation, for books, for transportation and for all their other expenses associated with university. It has nothing to do with a means test. A means test deals with a grant, not a loan, by definition. Please!

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Madam Chairman, Item 24, Grants to Government Secondary Schools. [*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: May we have a little order, please!

Mr. Charles: The question relates to again—Minister of Finance will you permit me to ask the question, please?—006, Item 24. The question I am asking is: Why would the grants to government secondary schools be decreased by \$1.5 million, in the context of the fact that there are challenges in the government secondary schools in terms of the performance at the exams, and your stated concern that you are looking at government secondary schools. Perhaps you may want to put that in writing, and I will also, at the same time, take the opportunity on 32 to ask: Why is there an increase to private primary schools of \$500,000, and a decrease to assisted primary schools by \$16 million, but an increase to private primary schools? I am sure there is a justification which the Minister would enlighten us on. So it is two questions.

Mr. Imbert: I can answer both questions. In the first instance it decreased to—grants to government secondary schools is 1 per cent of the allocation, and in a budgeting exercise one provides the funds that are required, consistent with the information provided. A decrease of \$1 million in \$100 million is just 1 per cent. So that if during the year the Minister of Education feels he needs that additional \$1 million out of his overall budget of \$7,000 million, I am sure the Minister could find \$1 million out of \$7,000 million elsewhere and do a transfer.

Similarly with respect to the second question, again this is an allocation based on the information and the requests coming from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Finance. I want to make the point, when you are a Ministry and you have an allocation of \$7 billion, there are some things you cannot touch. You cannot touch direct charges, you cannot touch teachers' salaries, but there are lots of other Heads where you can move funds around to meet the exigencies of the service. So a 1 per cent change in a Head, in my opinion, in the context of what I have just said, is not significant and will be dealt with.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, as a follow-up question, a 1 per cent change is not significant, but it points to a direction. The question is: One would assume that it is policy that the government schools would be prioritized and, therefore, to cut the government schools and increase the denominational schools is inconsistent with your stated policy.

Madam Chairman: Remember what we are entertaining here are questions. Remember, Members, we are dealing with questions here.

Dr. Gopeesingh: My question has been lingering for a while, on the question of number 20, under 006 and 202, Fees for Students at Private Secondary Schools. There has been no allocation, no increase—

Mr. Imbert: You are going back again?

Madam Chairman: One minute, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, my hand has been up—

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. Hon. Member for Caroni East, we are at Educational Institutions. Is your question within Educational Institutions?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, my hands have been lingering to ask this question for a long time. [*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: We will never finish.

Madam Chairman: We have to finish and we shall finish.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have had my hand up for the longest while.

Madam Chairman: Is your question under the line Item Education Institutions?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: I will allow it. What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The fees for students at primary schools remain the same.

Madam Chairman: And the question is?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are there more students now within the private secondary schools which we will need to pay more money for?

Madam Chairman: Can I suggest that that answer be given in writing, please? So we are moving on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, just the last one on 22. The local school boards—

Mr. Imbert: May I make a request to you? Before we continue—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I have not recognized you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The local school boards—the Minister attempted to give an answer for himself.

Madam Chairman: What line Item are we under?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. 22. The local school boards for secondary schools, we began paying the increased fees last year—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I do not want a statement. What is the question?—because we dealt with this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question is: why have they decreased the expenditure for local school boards for secondary schools when last year we had to pay \$4.4 million?

2.45 p.m.

Madam Chairman: I believe the answer for that was—when you look at the estimates for 2016 they were the same as the estimates for 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, that is what I was coming to.

Madam Chairman: And we said that would be given in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In writing.

Madam Chairman: All right. So can we go on? And we are moving on to Item 007 Households. We are moving to Item 007—hon. Member for Siparia. I have determined we are moving to Item 007 Households. That is quite right. Item 007 Households. We are on page 204 for the guidance of everybody. Item 009 Other Transfers. Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: No. I just want a question under Households line Item 25 Servol.

Madam Chairman: Item 009 Other Transfers. Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I see a reduction on Item No. 02 under Transfers to State Enterprises of \$14.5 million less for the School Feeding Programme. Can you explain why you are cutting the expenditure for the School Feeding Programme from \$250 million to \$235 million? Are you going to leave out some students who are now receiving meals in schools? Are you cutting meals for students by \$14.5 million?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, before I answer this, I had a question I would like to ask it now if you do not mind.

Madam Chairman: I would really like the hon. Minister of Finance, if we could deal with the question.

Mr. Imbert: I will, but I am seeking your indulgence just to ask one question.

Madam Chairman: To ask a question.

Mr. Imbert: Just one.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on, please, to 02/011?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, we are almost at the end of the book, I just want to know if we are going back again. So what is your ruling on that? Are you going to allow them to go back to previous pages in Education? I just want to know.

Madam Chairman: No. We are not going back.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: But I want us to understand that if we are on an Item and the Item spans pages.

Mr. Imbert: I understand that.

Madam Chairman: Right. Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about previous cycles.

Madam Chairman: No. We are on 011—

Mr. Imbert: Thank you.

Madam Chairman:—commencing on page 205 and there is a question on the line Item 02.

Mr. Imbert: So that is 011: 02 National Schools Dietary Services Limited.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: [*Crosstalk*] I got the question. I am going to answer it now. The revised estimate for 2015 was \$250 million. The 2016 estimate is \$235,500,000. Madam Chairman, we have recognized at the level of the Ministry of Education that there was a lot of overspending in 2015, and therefore, we have chosen to reduce allocations to a number—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: I am waiting for the rest—the Members opposite to stop.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, kindly proceed.

Mr. Imbert: We have chosen to reduce allocations where there was a lot of questionable expenditure, a lot of allegations of contracts being awarded under very questionable circumstances; and this one, the National Schools Dietary Services Limited is a company where we are going to be looking very closely at the contracts that were awarded in 2015. And we do believe that we can provide the same amount of food to the same amount of children with the same amount of diet and nutrition in it, and quite possibly of a higher quality for less money because of what happened in this country in 2015 [*Desk thumping*] because of the corruption, the waste and the mismanagement. So that is the answer.

Madam Chairman: All right. Members, any other questions under 011 Transfers to State Enterprises? Therefore, we are going on to Sub-Head 06. Could we have some order, please?

Mr. Imbert: You would get more food for less.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Sub-Head 06 Current Transfers to Statutory Board and Similar Bodies? Item 004 Statutory Bodies. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 53, NALIS. Could you give a rationale for moving NALIS from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Communications? You have moved it from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Communications —NALIS. And NALIS has libraries in each one of the secondary schools.

Madam Chairman: So the question is—

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question is why are you moving it from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Communications?

Hon. Garcia: That answer would be supplied to you in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Really you should be able to—

Madam Chairman: Member, please. [*Crosstalk*] Member, please. Sub-Head 09 Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, Item 003 Economic Infrastructure. Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Dr. Karim: Madam Chair, when you get to F 001, if I can ask a question there, please? On that same page.

Madam Chairman: Any questions under Item 003 Economic Infrastructure? Therefore, we go on to 004 Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Karim: Madam Chair, sorry. I was going to ask on F same page 86 Support to Non-University Tertiary Education.

Madam Chairman: So, you are looking at Financial Services?

Dr. Karim: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Dr. Karim: Thank you. Would the hon. Minister indicate—because this is really a European Union grant to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to facilitate research projects in a number of areas beneficial to the education sector. Would you be kind enough to let us know what projects have been selected for implementation utilizing this fund?

Hon. Garcia: First of all I would like to state that not all projects that have been submitted will be funded this year. Those that will be funded will be given to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Item 004 Social Infrastructure. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Fund.

Dr. Karim: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East, are you at Infrastructure Development Fund?

Dr. Karim: Yeah. Under IDF page 87, D, may I be permitted to ask?

Madam Chairman: IDF is not on page 87, D, you know, Development Programme is on 87. So, we are now on IDF. Members, please. We are on the Infrastructure Development Fund which is page 291. Item 004 Social Infrastructure. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line item 002 on Pre-Primary Improvement/Refurbishment/Extensions to ECCE Centres. There is no allocation there, as well as no allocation for procurement of furniture and equipment ECCE centres. Does it mean that you have abandoned everything for refurbishment and improvement of ECCE centres? Why is there no allocation whatsoever in these two line items for improvement/refurbishment/extension and procurement of furniture and equipment for ECCE centres? None. Absolutely none.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Education, are you in a position to give this response orally?

Hon. Garcia: Not at the moment, but we will furnish you with a report, as soon as we can, in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have no rationale for it?

Hon. Garcia: We will give you that report in writing.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Might I thank the representatives from the Ministry of Education for attending and assisting the committee. They are relieved.

[*Head 67*].

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the hon. Minister of Planning and Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Planning and Development is established as the leader in physical, socio-economic and environmental planning to provide guiding national policy development, strategic direction and budget support through the Public Sector Investment Programme, the Multilateral and Regional Financial and Developmental Institutions programmes to drive the transformation of Trinidad and Tobago to be more diversified, competitive, innovative and people-focused. The core institutions placed under the Ministry will ensure that there is evidence-based policy planning, results-placed planning and links planning, budgeting and results to achieve the Government's agenda for sustainable inclusive development and gender-based planning.

The Ministry of Planning and Development therefore is charged with the responsibility of coordinating the development of the Vision 2030 for Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry is mandated to cooperate with all the relevant agencies to prepare and implement strategies that would lead to the achievement of the goals of the Government's vision for the advancement of our twin-island state.

As a consequence, through its various divisions and agencies, the Ministry prepares the Public Sector Investment Programme which is the capital expenditure component of the national budget. It contributes to the prioritizing of Government's development programme and relates it to the national budget which, as I said, will be a gender-based budget. The Ministry interfaces with Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank and the European Union. It also interfaces with the United Nations Development Programme and technical cooperation.

The Ministry also monitors those statutory bodies under the ambit of the Ministry ensuring that their financial affairs are conducted in a manner ensuring that principles of value for money, transparency and accountability are strictly adhered to.

Unfortunately, Madam Chairman, this Ministry and Trinidad and Tobago has had to suffer the ignominy of spending over \$40 million on a forum on competitiveness with the result being that our competitiveness index fell and our corruption index rose. Additionally, we have had the situation in the CDA which falls under this Ministry of over \$18,000 being spent monthly on rental of a vehicle for the non-executive chairman, and the situation of the company of a son of Minister being given \$4 million for public relations work not completed.

Madam Chairman, with the realignment of the environment function, the Ministry's role is also to ensure that consideration is given to the environment in all Government's development plans and programmes and emphasis will therefore be placed on this new focus of the Ministry.

Madam Chairman, thank you very much for this opportunity and the Ministry of Planning and Development will be working hand in hand with all Government Ministries to achieve the Government's vision. Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 67 stand part of the Schedule

3.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$445,151,850 for Head 67, Ministry of Planning and Development 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*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, and we are on page 427 for the information of Members. Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Under General Administration I am looking at the general increase on page 426. Can that be explained simply by the incorporation of the Ministry of the Environment with the Ministry of Planning and Development?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes, Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Might I respond to the Member on the matters raised in the general comments of the Minister?

Madam Chairman: No, no. I am very sorry, hon. Member for Caroni Central, we are dealing with the line Items.

Dr. Tewarie: So, I have to wait till I get there?

Madam Chairman: Please! Item 001, General Administration? We are moving on to Item 003, Technical Co-operation? Item 004, Central Statistical Office? Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division? Item 006—

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask something on this Central Statistical Office?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Minister of Planning and Development, would it not be true to say that when you came to the Ministry that there were significant advances made?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you refer me to the line Item?

Dr. Tewarie: Central Statistical Office.

Madam Chairman: No, I am sorry. [*Interruption*] One minute please, Members.

Dr. Tewarie: Did you call 004?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I will entertain a question on Item 005 because I was about to move on to 006. So, if it is that I

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have moved a little too quickly and somebody wants to ask a question on Item 005, which is Urban and Regional Planning Division, I will entertain that. If not, I am moving on to Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit.

Dr. Tewarie: But, I did not get 004, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: I called 004, hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, maybe you are faster on the draw than I am, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: I am very sorry, I called and I paused. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma'am, this is not a school, you know; this is a Parliament.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Mr. Hinds: What? What? Nah!

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I really would prefer if you retract that statement.

Mr. Hinds: Immediately.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma'am,—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I will really prefer that you retract that statement.

Dr. Tewarie: Retract what, Ma'am?

Madam Chairman: That this is not a primary school.

Dr. Tewarie: I did not say primary, I said it is not a school.

Madam Chairman: Whatever it is.

Dr. Tewarie: If that is offensive—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: If that is offensive to you, Ma'am, I withdraw it. It was not meant to be offensive.

Madam Chairman: I have heard you, may we go on, please. I now recognize the hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Ma'am. With respect to the Green Fund Executing Unit, the Member articulated that it is their intention to expand to Tobago. But I

see that the allocation remains the same, so I just wanted to know, how can there be a reconciliation of the policy position indicated by the hon. Minister and the allocation remaining the same?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Member, there had been no previous movement into Tobago. We are of the view that if we need more than this in order to do that expansion into Tobago, we will be able to get the funds in order to do that. But, based on what has happened with the Green Fund, we feel that this allocation is adequate and that Tobago will be covered.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division? Item 089, Environmental Policy and Planning Division? Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, and we are at page 430? Item 002, Library Service Unit? Item 003, Technical Co-operation? Item 004, Central Statistical Office? Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 004, 08, Rent /Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, we are seeing a sharp increase by \$11.45 million for rent/lease. Can the Minister explain that?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Member, you may know that the Central Statistical Office has recently been moving to new accommodation, having not been adequately accommodated for perhaps four years, and they are moving to new accommodation and this would explain the increase for the accommodation. A lot of members of staff of that division were operating from home, but just prior to us coming into office they were moved to new accommodation, so that explains the figure.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I think, hon Member, you would agree that most of your units at the Ministry operate very effectively and efficiently, and the Central Statistical Office is no exception, and that the move that was made was moved—

Mr. Hinds: Question.

Madam Chairman: One minute please, proceed, hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: The move that was made at the Central Statistical Office was to take care of problems that have been long-standing as indeed have been a number of the reforms that took place there including bringing the unemployment statistics up-to-date for the first time in a decade or so.

Madam Chairman: And hon. Member for Caroni Central, the question is?

Dr. Tewarie: The question is—

Mr. Imbert: What line Item?

Madam Chairman: One, minute please, hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Tewarie: Without planning politics, have there not been significant advances in the rehabilitation of the Central Statistical Office in keeping with the recommendations that were made?

Madam Chairman: And hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you guide me with respect to which line Item you are referring?

Dr. Tewarie: Central Statistical Office, 004.

Madam Chairman: Yes, and line Item—which one of the line Items are we addressing?

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister made a response—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I believe we have already addressed that issue. So that I am willing to entertain a question on any of the line Items under 004 which are numbered 01 to 96.

Dr. Tewarie: I cannot find it in a line Item.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so hon. Member for Caroni Central, what I will do is—*[Interruption]* Members, please! I will entertain the next person. If you can find the line Item that you want to pose your question under I would revert to you. Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. I am looking at Item 08, which is an \$11 million increase, and I am contrasting that with 16 Contract Employment where there is a \$200,000 decrease. Training, Item 17, page 432, there is a decrease; short-term employment there is a decrease. The question I am asking is, it seems to be skewed—the increased expenditure—in terms of rent and property, rather than human resources, and would he agree that, given the challenges with the Central Statistical Office, attention should be paid to the human resource development?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. In answer to the Member for Naparima, I would like to indicate that because of the fact that we are trying to regularize the employment at the CSO, the short-term employment

is being reduced and actual bodies who can actually do the projects and proceed with what is necessary for the advancement of the CSO, those persons are in fact being employed.

Additionally, we are working with the IDB and Statistics Sweden. We have done work with Statistics Sweden in order to deal with the issue of training and in order to ensure that we have an independent statistical unit that will be developed over a short period of time in order to ensure that the CSO gets to the standard that it should be as an independent institution to provide accurate statistics. So, that explains the increases and decreases where you see them.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: You are welcome.

Dr. Moonilal: Just a follow-up with the hon. Minister in the response. You had already indicated your Government has indicated a policy decision to establish another institute to deal with statistics. It was described to us earlier in the budget statement. Why are you going to make this sort of investment in the statistical unit which you intend to close down, in the first place?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: As usual, the Member for Oropouche East seems to be misleading this House. We have never said that we would be closing down the CSO. [*Desk thumping*] This Government has said, from day one, and even when we were in Government previously, that the intention is to make an independent statistical institute and, consequently, we are back on that road with the assistance of the IDB and other agencies, and we are moving assiduously in that direction. We have never indicated that we will be closing down the CSO. We have indicated that we will be developing an independent statistical institute that will include staff of the CSO, persons from the Central Bank and the University of the West Indies. We said that. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I would just say, Ma'am, that the Member is seeking to mislead this House, because she is continuing what we started—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central. Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you relate what—

Dr. Tewarie: You all are too unreasonable. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Could we stop the crosstalk, please, Members and let us have a little order! Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you identify a line Item and the question that relates to that line Item?

Dr. Tewarie: The Item with the CSO, Ma'am; there is no specific line Item there. The Minister is making general statements that are untrue.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member!

Dr. Tewarie: Which she knows to be untrue.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, the statement—

Dr. Tewarie: I have no problem with her progress.

Madam Chairman:—that the hon. Minister made was in relation to a particular question that was asked—Why suppress, why make an investment in a unit that you intend to close down?—and, therefore, the answer related to the question that was asked.

So, I am asking you, can you, therefore, relate your question to a line Item? If not, I will proceed, and I go on to Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division. Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit? Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division? Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division? Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, we are at page 435 for the guidance of Members. Item 002, Library Service Unit? Item 003, Technical Co-operation? Item 004, Central Statistical Office? Item 005, Urban and Region Planning Division? Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit? Item 008, Project, Planning and Reconstruction Division? Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division?

We are moving on now to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, which is at page 438 for the guidance of Members. Item 001, Regional Bodies? Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies? Item 003, United Nations Organizations? Item 004, International Bodies? Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions? Item 006, Educational Institutions? Hon. Member for Caroni Central, Item 006, Educational Institutions.

Dr. Tewarie: Item 006, Caribbean Industrial Research Institute. This is an institution that plays an important role in the development—well, I better wait till we get to the development budget. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members, could we have some order, please! Item 007, Households? Item 009, Other Transfers? Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad?

We move on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. We are at page 440 for the guidance of Members. Item 004, Statutory Bodies?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, Chaguaramas Development Authority.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, Ma'am, in your opening statement you made some allegations about Chaguaramas Development Authority—

Madam Chairman: So, we are on line Item 49?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Dr. Tewarie: It had to do with some allegation about the chairman and something about a public relations firm. Was the Minister involved in this?

Hon. Member: “Ooooh”.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me! [*Interruption*] Might I, please? Are we on Item 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And this is under Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, but she made—

Madam Chairman: So, hon. Member for Caroni Central—

Dr. Tewarie: It has to do with the use of money, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I am not going to allow your question because it is not under Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, the Minister made the allegation and you are protecting the Minister.

Madam Chairman: Honourable! Hon. Member for Couva South, do you have a question on a line Item here?

Mr. Indarsingh: I am just supporting what the Member for Caroni Central said.

Madam Chairman: And I have ruled, hon. Member for Couva South, that I am not allowing the question. Any other question under Item 004, Statutory Bodies? Hon. Member for Caroni East.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: As far as I see, the hon. Member was on line Item, Chaguanas Development Authority, 49, and he is being prevented from asking his question.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East. [*Interruption*] Hon. Member for Caroni East, I would really wish that we be guided in our words. The hon. Member was never, never prohibited from asking his question. Can we go to, Sub-Item 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, and we are on page 196 of the Draft Estimates for Development Programme Consolidated Fund; Item 001, Pre-Investment? Item 003, Economic Infrastructure? Item 004, Social Infrastructure? Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Programme, and we are at page 345 for the guidance of Members. Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 67 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I want to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives from the Ministry of Planning and Development for coming to assist the committee, and you all are relieved.

Can we move on now to Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities? And for the guidance of all Members we are now proceeding to page 276 of the *Draft Estimates for Recurrent Expenditure*.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I raise a matter at this time while we wait for technical people? Ma'am, I could understand the need to move quickly and so on, but I just want to observe respectfully that this process could be undermined by such haste, and such attempt by Members of the Government to bulldoze the process, that we have on this side. When we catch ourselves simply to move to a page, you are already there and announcing another page. I know we are pressed for time today due to no fault of ours, but I would just ask for us to just concentrate, but follow the process with much more consideration. Then there is a risk that we can defeat this very process by an undue haste to get through the Heads, respectfully.

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, if I may? We take great offence on this side to the suggestion that the Government is bulldozing a process that, for the record, is really one driven by the Opposition. One would have thought that they would have researched their line Items and been prepared and listening to it in a manner where they can contribute and ask the questions on time.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, both comments are noted.

I am proceeding now to the Head under consideration, Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities. Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities, the sum of \$3,976,709. I would now invite the Minister of Public Utilities to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: Madam Chairman, the public utilities sector has been allotted the sum of \$4.425 billion in fiscal 2016. The Ministry will be aiming to restore public confidence and rebuild this nation's trust in the delivery of public utilities. In this regard, I intend to manage the affairs with the Ministry, utilizing the core values of service excellence, partnership, transparency, accountability, integrity, trust and mutual respect. Good governance in the spending of public funds must therefore be the order in fiscal 2016 for the Ministry of Public Utilities and the agencies under its purview; those are: WASA, T&TEC, CEPEP, SWMCOL and TTPost. In addition, stringent reviewing, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects will become priority.

Question proposed: That Head 39 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$3,976,709,000 for the Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities, 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*. For the guidance of Members, we are at page 276, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Personnel Expenditure, General Administration, I see there is a decrease by \$15,350,000. I would like to find out the reason for that decrease in the context of the personnel of the Ministry of Public Utilities?

Madam Chairman: And the hon. Minister of Finance will give that answer in writing under his general undertaking. Can we go on to Head 002, Meteorological Services?

Mr. Singh: No, Ma'am, I am not yet complete.

Madam Chairman: You are still under 001?

Mr. Singh: Yes, I am still under 001.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: There is a decrease of \$2.2 million in Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Is this part of the general undertaking?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, everything under 01 for every Head will be dealt with under that general undertaking. Item 002, Meteorological Services. Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate.

Mr. Singh: Similarly, Madam Chairman—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh:—in 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the Electrical Inspectorate, there is a decrease of \$950,000.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, that would be covered by the undertaking. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Chair. Through you Chair, Minister, can you indicate on line Item 42, 02, Goods and Services, why there is a decrease in the street lighting?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, please, we are still under Sub-Head 01, and we have now reached the Electrical Inspectorate, 005.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Oh, sorry. Okay.

Madam Chairman: We are now going on to Item—Member for Tabaquite, did you have a question under that? All right, so we are going on to Item 007—

Hon. Member: Item 006.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Government Printery.

Mr. Singh: There is a significant increase—

Madam Chairman: Is this Government Printery?

Mr. Singh: Yes. Yes, Ma'am. Significant increase, could you explain?

Mr. Imbert: It has gone to another Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Is there not an explanation there in the explanation column, saying transferred to Head, Ministry of Communications?

Mr. Imbert: It is there in black and white.

Madam Chairman: All right, so we will take it there, please, hon. Member for Chaguanas West. All right, can we go on, please? Item 007, General Administration. We are moving on to Sub-Head 03, and this is at page 298 for the guidance of Members.

Hon. Member: Page 278.

3.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Page 278, sorry. Sub-Head 03—and this is at page 278 for the guidance of Members. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, line Item 16, Contract Employment. There is a small increase and it includes Provision for Graduate Employment. Is this confined to graduate employment or does it include additional employment?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister for Public Utilities.

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: It includes additional employment.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Street Lighting, line Item 42, under Goods and Services. There is a decrease of \$7.6 million in Street Lighting. What does that mean in the context of the lighting-up programme that the hon. Member talked about?

Mr. Imbert: What line Item?

Madam Chairman: Page 279, line Item 42.

Mr. Imbert: Well they light already.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Utilities are you in a position to give that answer orally or you will give it in writing?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: I will give it in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite. Item 002, Meteorological Services. Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Similarly, Item 16, Contract Employment. There is an increase by \$1.855 million for Contract Employment. This is an employment different from the electrical inspectorate having regard to the fact that, previously, under General Administration there was a decrease of \$2.2 million.

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: That is contract employment for electrical inspectors.

Mr. Imbert: Let me just deal with the particular question. If you look at the original allocation for that Head for 2015 you will see \$3.5 million. Member for Chaguanas West?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Right. So if you look at the line Item 2015, original, you see \$3.5 million. Okay? But they were only able to spend \$395,000. So during fiscal 2015 they were not able to fill the positions. So now they got an increased allocation because they anticipate they would fill the positions in 2016 that they could not fill in 2015.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, General Administration. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases. And we are at page 283. Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Meteorological Services. Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate. Item 007, General Administration. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 285. Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations. Item 004, International Bodies. Item 007, Households. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Utilities Assistance Programme I see that there has been an increase of \$1.4 million from the previous allocation in 2015 of \$4.6. And whether this is sufficient to meet the expansion of the programme and how many households—individuals—will be impacted by this increase?

Madam Chairman: Could that be in writing, please?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: It will be given in writing.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers. Item 011—I am sorry, hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I sit in the back. You have to cast your eyes at times. The CEPEP programme - Other Transfers remains at \$609 million, so that therefore, the programme will be sustained in its current form?

Mr. Imbert: We did not want to do any radical surgery on CEPEP until we understood what was going on. If you look at the allocations for this programme over the years, it has gone from \$300 million to \$600 million. There has been a doubling of expenditure and it is a very large jump in the number of persons employed. So we felt that we would just put the allocation and then spend the time over the next couple months reviewing it to see whether we should continue with this level of expenditure in CEPEP.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Ma'am, for the record we still have five minutes to ask a question? But I want to proceed. Bearing in mind the statement

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from the Minister of Finance, my question to the Minister of Public Utilities, over the last year CEPEP generated revenue to the tune of more or less \$22 million. Do you have a further strategy in the coming fiscal year for generating more revenue from CEPEP to offset this expenditure which the Minister indicated was a concern?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: When we make a comprehensive examination of CEPEP we will put it for you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I was still on Item 009.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers.

Mr. Singh: Yes. In dealing with the T&TEC repayment loan, item 13, T&TEC - Repayment of Loan to the National Gas Company. Madam Chair, there is a decrease of \$8.709 million. And I just wanted to—whether it is in writing, whether this loan now is completed with this payment or how much money is outstanding for that T&TEC loan to the National Gas Company. And similarly, in item 14, Repayment of Loan – Re. Cove Power Station. There is an allocation of now, \$1.856 million and whether or not that loan has been repaid by T&TEC on the issue. A decrease, both decreases.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister for Public Utilities. Will the response be given in writing?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: That response will be given in writing.

Mr. Singh: And just for clarification, and I would like the hon. Member to clarify whether the T&TEC loan to the National Gas Company—whether it is related to the TGU in that regard?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: No, it is not related.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Sub-Head 06.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Item 004, Statutory Bodies. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. In this instance I want to refer to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies*, page 213 under Goods and Services. It relates to WASA. And I noticed under Goods and Services, line Item 12, Materials and Supplies have been cut by \$29.8 million and Other Contracted Services have been cut by \$70 million. Is this an indication that WASA is in any way cutting down on its programme of the expansion of water mains to communities that now do not have water mains?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. We made the allocations and the answer is, no.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. In dealing with Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, item 51, the Water and Sewerage Authority. In the allocation of 2.257, I would like to get a breakdown of the revenue generated by the Water and Sewerage Authority so that therefore it offsets the subventions to WASA and also the loans over the period. So that therefore—because from my understanding how it operates, is that you have revenue generated in terms of its operating expenditure and recurrent expenditure and then you have the additional government subventions on an annual basis to deal with the additional moneys due to the enterprise.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Let me just deal with that. If you go to page 210 of the same book.

Mr. Singh: Which one?

Mr. Imbert: This one. *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies*. Okay, all your questions will be answered there. All right?

Mr. Singh: It means based on the figures at the end of the day they have a net surplus of about \$28 million.

Mr. Imbert: I do not know what you mean by that. We have appropriation to the Ministry of Public Utilities for a transfer to the Water and Sewerage Authority in the sum of \$2,257,949,000. And as the Member has correctly pointed out that transfer is required to supplement their income. You always have to add it. You see how expensive WASA is?—\$5 billion, eh. Real money.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. In the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies*, page 214. I noticed in line Item 68 under Goods and Services, Sub-Head 02 Water Trucking. In light of the fact there is a dry season—I mean we are in the wet season but it has not rained as much—is it prudent to really reduce at this time any services with water trucking? Another question which is not related but if you could probably answer it in one. Item 69, Road Reinstatement—WASA, there is also a decrease and I was wondering if it is that you are going to not have much work in reinstating a lot of roads that are outside. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: I can answer that. I can tell you that we certainly would be assisting the Ministry of Public Utilities in providing funding for water trucking and road reinstatement. And if additional funds are required they will be provided because it is a very serious matter.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, thank you. I ask the question about the cuts and other contracted services and materials and supply. And that is related also to road reinstatement where there is also a cut, because if you are cutting back on the number of roads that you are going to put water you will also slash on the reinstatement. So obviously they are at some programme.

Mr. Imbert: What line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: I am asking the question now on Current Transfers and Subsidies for Payment re: Voluntary Early Separation Plan (VSEP), for which \$64million has been placed in 2016. Is it the intention of WASA to offer VSEP programme to its workers this year?

Mr. Imbert: What line Item are you on, please?

Dr. Rambachan: I am on page 214 of the other book, under Current Transfers and Subsidies, O4, 08. I am asking whether it is the intention of WASA to have a VSEP programme in 2016.

Mr. Imbert: Well, obviously. There is an allocation for it.

Dr. Rambachan: So you going to have a VSEP programme?

Mr. Imbert: Well, you have had it for the last three years. You have had a VSEP programme for the last three years.

Dr. Rambachan: I just want to know whether you also have it.

Mr. Imbert: Just continuing what you are doing. The same thing you were doing for the last three years. In fact, we have less money than you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance I think the question is answered. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure.

3.45p.m.

And for the guidance of Members, we are on page 125 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Minister, through the Chair, if you can identify on line Item 586, Lighting of Parks and Recreational Grounds, if there would be any grounds or parks lit in Cumuto/Manzanilla, and if I can get that in writing, please.

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: We will put that in writing for you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. We now go to the Infrastructure Development Fund. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you are under Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 126, Transport and Communication?

Madam Chairman: We are at page 129, Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. That is where it commences. And we now move on to the Infrastructure Development—do you have a question?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And this is under Item 005, please?

Mr. Singh: 005—

Madam Chairman: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Appropriation Bill, 2015

Monday, October 19, 2015

Mr. Singh: 047, Madam Chair, Development of an Integrated Water Security Programme for Tobago. I want the Minister to indicate whether or not that includes the de-silting of the Hillsborough Dam which has been on the books for over several generations.

Mr. Imbert: For the last five years.

Mr. Singh: Before that too. Because it ought to be part of the integrated water security for Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Utilities, are you in a position to give that answer already?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: I will give that in writing. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Singh: I just want to respond to the hon. Minister of Finance. The allocation is always smaller.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, I have recognized the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and he gave the answer that it will be in writing. Anything else under Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services? Therefore, can we go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund? Item 003: Economic Infrastructure, and that is at page 309.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 39 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Public Utilities for coming and assisting the committee, and you are now relieved.

Can we go on to Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration? For the guidance of Members we are at page 233 of the *Draft Estimates for Recurrent Expenditure*. Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration, \$1,184,531,491. I would now invite the Minister of Public Administration to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Mitchell: Madam Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to make this opening statement to outline briefly the purpose of the Ministry of Public Administration in the national landscape and to answer questions on the Recurrent Expenditure and Development Programme budgetary allocations for 2016.

In essence, Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Public Administration has responsibility for ensuring that systems and processes are in place for the effective

management of the public sector; to lead the transformation and modernization of the public service into a new diamond standard of excellence; to be responsible for helping create a suitable enabling environment for the uptake and usage of information and communication technology, both nationally and by Government.

This means that for the financial year 2016, the Ministry of Public Administration has assumed a wider portfolio compared to the previous budget cycle. While the Scholarships and Advanced Training Division has been transferred to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Administration has been given responsibility for ICT and also the Property and Real Estate Services Division of Government.

Assuming additional responsibilities during a time of increasing financial constraints is a challenge. However, the team at the Ministry of Public Administration—and I believe that every challenge also presents an opportunity. Reduced cash flows force us to be more efficient and rigorous in making the best use of limited resources. We become more innovative and inclusive as we increasingly partner with other stakeholders, both within Government and also from the private sector and civil society. Our focus is sharpened as we work to implement a smaller number of high priority programmes and initiatives.

I am therefore confident that by improving internal efficiencies, partnering and collaborating with all Government and national stakeholders, and above all, by harnessing the considerable pool of talent that makes up the staff of the Ministry of Public Administration, we will be well placed to achieve our work programme for the coming financial year and beyond.

Thank you for this opportunity, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 31 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,184,531,491 for Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Subheads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

Subhead 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. And for the guidance of Members we are at page 233. Hon. Member for Fyzabad, Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Bodoë: I was just going to go to page 232, just to get a broad picture because there is an increase of one billion, zero twenty-nine—

Appropriation Bill, 2015

Monday, October 19, 2015

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Fyzabad, we are at page 233, Item 001: General Administration.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ask later on.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Science and Technology. Item 005: Property and Real Estate Management Services. Item 006: Public Management Consulting Division. Item 007: Public Service Academy. Item 009: Public Service Transformation Division. Item 015: Strategic Services and Information Technology Division. Item 019: Diamond Division.

Subhead 02: Goods and Services, page 236. Item 001: General Administration. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The page referring to Item 16, the increase in Contract Employment of almost \$7 million, if the Minister can give an undertaking in terms of the explanation.

Hon. Mitchell: The Ministry's six-year plan was approved in late fiscal 2015, so it is expected that the contract positions will be filled in 2016.

Dr. Bodoë: Can the Minister indicate how many contract positions can they expect to be filled?

Hon. Mitchell: We will put that in writing.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Science and Technology. Item 003: National Information and Communication Technology Centre, Secretariat. Item 005: Property and Real Estate Management Services. Hon Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chairman. This will be Item 08 in terms of the allocation for Rent, Lease of Office Accommodation and Storage. If the Minister could perhaps indicate in writing, the allocation—08, Rent, Lease—of \$486,100,000.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Administration, are you in a position to answer?

Hon. Mitchell: We will put that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Item 006: Public Management Consulting Division. Item 007: Public Service Academy. Item 009: Public Service Transformation Division. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: In relation to line 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions, I note that there is an increase of \$8,050,000 there. Can the Minister indicate what would account for the substantial increase in allocation?

Hon. Mitchell: This is attributable to the hosting of the 2016 Biennial Conference of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management. Cabinet agreed to the hosting of this conference in fiscal year 2016 at a cost of \$19.8 million.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 015: Strategic Services and Information Technology Division. Item 018: Strategic Human Resource and Management Division, ICT Secretariat. Item 019: Diamond Division. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line 23, fees of \$800,000. Can the Minister indicate or give an idea what those fees will be for?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister for Public Administration.

Hon. Mitchell: This was an audit consultancy to audit the Diamond Standard Programme.

Madam Chairman: Subhead 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. And for the guidance of Members we are at page 245. Item 001: General Administration. Item 002: Science and Technology. Item 003: National Information and Communication Technology. Item 005: Property and Real Estate Management Services.

4.00 p.m.

Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division. Item 007, Public Service Academy. Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology Division. Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division (ICT) Secretariat. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Members we are on page 248 for your guidance. Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations. Item 004, International Bodies. Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

We now move on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, and is at page 105 of the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Consolidated Fund: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Sorry, are we on page 106?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: I was going to refer to Item 021, Enhanced Career and Succession Management Processes in the Public Service and to note that there is a decrease of \$500,000. Could the Minister indicate what sort of training is involved under that Head and why would there be that decreased allocation?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Administration.

Hon. Mitchell: Madam Chair, the cost varies from year to year, but it deals with leadership training to the Public Service.

Madam Chairman: Hon Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: At page 106, 046, E-Government and Knowledge Brokering Programme, from \$107 million Revised Estimates in 2015 to \$20 million in 2016; could you give us some degree of understanding? And if that was spent in 2015, although it was budgeted at \$50 million, why is there a significant decrease in the E-Government, particularly when the Government is speaking about improvement in broadband connectivity across the country?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister for Public Administration.

Mr. Imbert: No, I will take that. This project is funded by IDB loan and it ends in December of this year. So it is on phase basis. You know you have different demands for funding at different times.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The IDB component is utilized already? I see the Government has \$20 million, GORTT, that means IDB component has been spent and the government part is \$20 million.

Mr. Imbert: Member for Caroni East, forgive me. That is what it says.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I am asking you whether that is the transfer?

Mr. Imbert: But that is what it says, and you ask me if this is a misprint?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under IDB loan it has nothing written.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, so you asking me if that is a misprint?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am asking you whether in fact they have spent all the money under the IDB loan.

Mr. Imbert: There is no allocation for it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much was the IDB loan?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much was the IDB loan? You have nothing for it now, so how much was the IDB loan originally?

Mr. Imbert: IDB facility comes to an end in December of this year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are still not answering the question.

Mr. Imbert: We have no allocation for it in 2016.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It has none now, but what was the original IDB loan?

Mr. Imbert: Which line Item would that be?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same line Item.

Mr. Imbert: You want to go back?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Same line Item.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could that be given in writing?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, whatever the question is.

Dr. Gopeesingh: He does not know the answer.

Madam Chairman: It will be given in writing. Members, please. Hon. Minister of Finance and hon. Member Caroni East. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Page 106, Item 040, Development of a Business Continuity Plan for the Public Service. I know that there is no allocation in 2016. Could an explanation be given, Minister?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Administration.

Hon. Mitchell: This plan is ongoing. This is ongoing. There is one final payment to be made in the second quarter of 2016, and after the mid-year review, yes, we will get funding.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: 054, Establishment of a Virtual Call Centre in the Public Service, I see that there is no allocation for that, Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: This project is more or less complete. It is in the testing phase right now and we expect that it would be launched soon.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That was the question.

Madam Chairman: Therefore we now go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and we at page 303 of *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 31 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Public Administration for attending and assisting the Committee. You are relieved.

Head 11.

Madam Chairman: Members we are at page 49 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Head 11: Registration Recognition and Certification Board, \$5,601,340. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and allow me the opportunity to extend to you my own personal congratulations regarding your ascension to such a prestigious position. We pray that Almighty God would grant you wisdom in guiding this House. A warm good afternoon to my colleagues on this side and also the Members of the House on the other side, in particular, the Member for Siparia.

Madam Chair, the Registration Recognition and Certification Board was created by the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01, and the purpose of the Act really is to make better provision for the stabilization, improvement and promotion of industrial relations. The board is responsible for the processing of applications for certification of recognition; petitions for variation, particularly variations of bargaining units; agency shop orders; membership in good standing; and worker within the meaning of the Act.

The Registration Recognition and Certification Board, Madam Chair, under this new administration, there would be certain realignments to ensure that the work of the Board enhances the rights of workers in Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 11 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$5,601,340 for Head 11: Registration Recognition and Certification Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives from the Registration Recognition and Certification Board for attending and assisting the committee. They are now relieved.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you everyone.

Madam Chairman: Can we move to Head 30, Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development?

Head 30.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, \$212,147,500. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I thank you, Madam Chairman, and I thank you for the opportunity to share a few brief remarks with you and the Members of this committee as we prepare to consider the funds allocated to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has committed, among other things, to the promotion of sustainable economic growth, the provision of a clear framework of the rights and responsibilities in the workplace, strengthening tripartism, social dialogue and consultation, and to small business development and entrepreneurship.

As the name of the Ministry suggests, Madam Chairman, our work is pursued on two main planks: labour administration and small enterprise development.

4.15 p.m.

These two broad areas of work are fundamental pillars of the economy which require sustained effort and targeted investment in order to facilitate positive impact at the levels of the individual, the enterprise, the community, the economy and indeed, the country.

Our work, Madam Chairman, has far-reaching impact and extends beyond the traditional role of Ministries of labour; at one time, regarded only as facilitators of industrial peace and harmony. While this aspect of our work remains paramount, there are many other developmental areas of work on the labour administration and small enterprise agendas which we propose to pursue in fiscal year 2015 to 2016.

In this regard, some of the key areas the Ministry proposes to focus on in the new fiscal year include the revision of the Industrial Relations Act, simplification of the recognition process for trade unions, Occupational Safety and Health, promotion of the rights of workers, the Fair Share Programme, green business, small enterprise and co-operative development and entrepreneurship.

Madam Chairman, we are committed to efficient and effective use of the funds that we have been allocated—although we would wish that the Minister of Finance would have allocated us a little more—and to monitoring and evaluation on an on-going basis. We will keep national development at the forefront of our planning and implementation and most importantly, Madam Chairman, we will enhance the consultative approach and keep in focus the promotion of decent work and growth and development to small enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago. Our focus will be people-centred and nation-driven. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 30 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$212,147,500 for Head 30, Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development 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. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure—for the guidance of Members, we are at page 222—Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and to the Minister, under 06, Remuneration to Board Members, I see that there is an increase of remuneration to \$2,847,000. Is the Minister willing to provide a breakdown and whether new boards are being remunerated?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Absolutely. I am advised that four new boards have been established, and they are: the Business Advisory Board for Integrated Business Incubator System, the Enterprise Investment Fund Board, Social Dialogue Task Force and lastly, Trinidad and Tobago Small and Micro Enterprise Council. I trust that that meets with the—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough to provide us with a list of the names of the directors of these various boards that you have mentioned together with their qualifications?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Absolutely. Through the Chairman, would you like it now?

Madam Chairman: That will be given in writing.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Subsequently.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: And I just want to remind Members that with respect to Personnel Expenditure, the general undertaking given by the hon. Minister of Finance also applies, so I will just entertain questions under this Head if it falls outside of that.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just want to find out, under Personnel Expenditure, whether that includes the transfer of the On-The-Job Training Programme to this Ministry?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, it does not.

Mr. Karim: Okay. But the OJT Programme has been transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes, indeed it has. We are still working out the logistics in terms of how it would operate.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Co-operatives; Item 003, Friendly Society; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development be kind enough to give a little understanding of the requirement for increased expenditure by OSH Authority?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I gather, Madam Chairman, the hon. Member is under 004. Yes?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Actually, there are some long-standing problems with regard to OSH—as you may or may not be aware—where they have been presently housed cannot accommodate the entire unit and some 17 officers are

operating from home; a situation that is causing me and the rest of the Ministry grave concerns. We are attempting to locate alternative accommodation so all the employees can be housed under one roof and they will all report for duty eight to four, Monday to Thursday and eight to quarter past four on a Friday.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 22, Short-Term Employment. I note that there has been a slash by \$2.1 million and if the Minister would be kind enough to explain why is the allocation cut in this regard?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am sure the Member for Siparia and her colleagues would be happy to know that our Government will be reviewing the position concerning contract employees and we will be looking at converting those contract positions into permanent positions on the establishment. We have to bring contract employment back on track.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You mean off track?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, back on track, meaning contract work is for a specific period and then people go off; and where work is of a continuous nature, people really ought not to be on contract five years, 10 years, as the case may be.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. Would you be kind enough then to supply us with a total number of persons who are at present on contract employment in your Ministry in writing?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We will. Madam Chairman, subsequently, of course.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under Goods and Services, 08, Rent/Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage, there has been an increase of \$2,320,000. Could the Minister provide us with an explanation?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Certainly. Through you, Madam Chairman, the estimates for 2016 for this Item were increased due to the increase in rental for the following subunits: Duke Street, San Fernando and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Co-operatives.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chairman, through you to the Minister, Item 002, Co-operatives and if I may be allowed, Item 003, Friendly Society. We have had some challenges with co-operatives—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, permit me? I am having difficulty in following the hon. Member. Could you please assist?

Madam Chairman: I expect that he is at page 225, 002, Co-operatives.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Okay.

Dr. Tewarie: Right, and the Friendly Society is on the next page at the top.

Madam Chairman: Well, hon. Member, I will ask if you ask each in its turn because then we would be jumping all about the place. So, in terms of Co-operatives.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, it is just one general question.

Mr. Imbert: Just ask which Sub-Head or Sub-Item.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, we will get that. I would ensure that we get that. Let us just hear the question.

Dr. Tewarie: 002 is Co-operatives and because the question was of a general nature, I wanted to relate it also to 003.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, the way we would like to proceed on this is to have questions with respect to the various line Items. So I am prepared to hear you both on 002, Co-operatives and on 003, Friendly Society when we reach there. So if you could relate each question for each Item to an Item here, you may proceed. So we are in 002, Co-operatives.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. In the case of Co-operatives, these are institutions that we have all grown up with in the society.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, he is not on a line Item.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. Minister of Finance. Yes, hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: And they have served a useful purpose but they find themselves—these institutions find themselves in a difficult situation because of the transformation of the entire financial framework. And there are differences of opinion as to how these things should continue to operate. The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, do you have any plans to address that particular issue? And I wanted to ask in the case of Co-operatives on the one hand and then Friendly Societies on the other.

Madam Chairman: No, no, we are going to go to Friendly Societies. Your question? You have given us a statement.

Dr. Tewarie: The question is: Is there an approach by the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development that would allow her to review the operations of these institutions and perhaps find a modus operandi that would strengthen them and make them more relevant to the current environment?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you put that in the context of one of the line Items 01 to 66 under 002?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, it has to do with the functioning of the institution. These moneys are allocated to allow them to function. [*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, please. Can we, therefore, hon. Member for Caroni Central—maybe you can ask the question under 003 when you frame it. Item 003, Friendly Societies; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority.

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister is not going to answer the question?

Madam Chairman: Members, please. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. Line Item 08, Rent/lease, Office Accommodation and Storage, I note that there is a marked increase with respect to this Item and perhaps, the Minister would be kind enough to explain where the increase would go.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Most certainly, Madam Chairman. The OSH agency have identified temporary office space for 27 of 57 administrative staff and that is not acceptable. We would want everyone under the same roof but they had proceeded to identify these temporary quarters for which to accommodate 27 persons.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This for that. And where is it located?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: They are located on Duke Street. You mean this accommodation?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, the one that you said they have now identified.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Right, one Alexandra Street. Alexandra Street.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, just the OSH unit. One Alexandra Street.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, not one, Alexandra Street. No. 9 Alexander Street. Not one, No. 9.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Given the Minister's statement about addressing the issue of contract employment and ensuring that persons in the public service and so on, get within the—what she would call the permanent establishment, I see that there is an increased allocation of \$1,854,000 for Contract Employment at OSH. Could we get the rationale for this, please?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, we will supply that information at a later date.

Madam Chairman: All right. Hon. Members, it is now 4.30 p.m. and I suspend this meeting and we will resume at 5.00 p.m.

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

5.00p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee resumed.*

Madam Chairman: Meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is resumed. We are at Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment and Purchases, and we are at page 227. Item 001 General Administration; Item 002 Co-operatives; Item 003 Friendly Societies; Item 004 Occupational Safety and Health Authority.

We are on to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 003 United Nations Organizations; Item 005 Non-Profit Institutions.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, if the Minister is so kind, as it relates to 03, the National Trade Union Centre and 07, the Joint Trade Union Movement, for the information of myself and the viewing public, if I could be guided so to find out: Which is the labour federation that is most representative of labour in relation to the International Labour Organization?

Also, if the Joint Trade Union Movement is a registered labour federation and if so, when was it legally incorporated? Further to that, when did the Joint Trade Union Movement and the National Trade Union Centre apply for what we would call under this particular Head as non-profit institution for funding or what was the rationale to provide this level of funding? We see \$5 million to the National Trade Union Centre and \$10 million to the Joint Trade Union Movement. What was the rationale for this allocation, in terms of the disparity and what was the reason for the said funding?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I am unable to answer that question. I would suggest that question be directed to the Minister of Finance who made this allocation.

Madam Chairman: And in any event, therefore, that question, the response will be in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Is there another question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Is there another question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair. I am now willing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South, [*Member for Couva South continues to speak*] we cannot both speak at the same time.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chairman, you are using this—[*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South, I would ask you to be very guarded in what you say.

Mr. Indarsingh: I will speak and if you want to prevent me from speaking, well you could do what you so desire.

Madam Chairman: Exactly, and I now desire that we move on to another speaker. We are under 005 Non-Profit Institutions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under 03 and 07, have these organizations accepted the funding that were—have they made the desire to accept the funding for NATUC for \$5 million and JTUM for \$10 million?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, through you, as the entire population is aware, because both labour bodies made public statements, the Joint Trade Union Movement declined at this point in time and indicated what their priority areas are, and the National Trade Union Centre accepted, and we will work within those boundaries.

Madam Chairman: Item 009 Other Transfers. Hon. Member for Caroni East, we are at Item 009 Other Transfers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line item 02, hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. Could you just give a little explanation of the Fair Share Programme because it seems to be a new Item with \$3 million allocated. I did not see anything on revised estimates, or was it under a different Ministry?—because there is nothing here to suggest. It seems to be a new Item.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: It is a new line Item, Member for Caroni East, and these Items have been moved from PSIP to recurrent expenditure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: From PSIP to recurrent?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South do you have a question?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Madam Chair, my colleague, the Member for Caroni East already asked the question.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Will the Minister be kind enough to advise what is responsible for the decrease of \$5 million to Cipriani?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There are no arrears to be paid at this point in time, although negotiations are outstanding.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That was the question and the Minister has answered.

Madam Chairman: We now move to Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. We are at page 98 of the Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, Item 003 Economic Infrastructure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under Business Services, 003, the Implementation of the Fair Share Programme. Hon. Minister, you have just indicated that it had been moved from consolidated to recurrent but I am still seeing \$600,000 under the consolidated, do you want to just give a clarification on that?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes, certainly, I am informed that the importance of the programme to entrepreneurship—we cannot overstate it. However, there needs to be more measures to solicit greater support for the programme by encouraging, and if necessary, legislating government Ministries and state agencies to provide more procurement opportunities for these small businesses.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to 011 and 019, the establishment of community-based business incubators, if the Minister is willing to give a little more or clarify this a bit and give some further information, as it relates to the National Enterprise Investment Fund. And in your statement, as it relates to increased remuneration for boards I could recollect you said four new boards will be established. Will these boards be tripartite in nature, or?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Through you, Madam Chair, I wish to assure the Member for Couva South and the rest of the country that, indeed, every aspect of this Ministry would have tripartism as a functional and realistic and genuine part of our operations.

With regard to your first question regarding the community-based business incubators, in recent months the Ministry has been reviewing the performance of the programme in general, and the incubators in particular, to improve the performance of IBIS and it has been determined that there is a need to rationalize the number of incubators and the Ministry has indeed taken steps to remove the least effective one from the programme and this Ministry will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the other incubators, with the objective of finding the most optimal distribution of incubators that can efficiently and effectively support entrepreneurship development in Trinidad.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That brings me to the question, hon. Chair and hon. Minister, on 019. Do you feel comfortable with just \$1 million funding for the establishment of new business clusters, based on what you have indicated a while ago and your philosophical approach towards diversification of the economy? Do you feel that \$1 million is enough to help you in trying to get new business going, and so on, based on the two numbers: 011 and 019?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, Member for Caroni East, if I could enlist your assistance in squeezing some more out of the hands of the Minister of Finance, in that regard, I indeed welcome your assistance.

But we recognize that the business clusters have proven to be useful tools in supporting small businesses. Indeed, you are correct because most of the more successful economies in the world, when you examine small businesses, comprise the largest percentage. And we are hoping to start small and to expand, so that 2016 to 2017, where you see a healthy increase, I trust you will support this Ministry in that regard.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair, two questions, through you, to the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. On 011, the Establishment of the Community-Based Business Incubators, is there a criterion which the Ministry would be using to establish these incubators?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes, yes, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And what are the criteria, if I may ask?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We will provide it subsequently.

Madam Chairman: In writing.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: In writing, yes, of course, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: My other question is on 009, the Determination and Impact of the Minimum Wage Level on the Economy. When do you plan to start the process of determining the impact and will it be made public, the determination? Thank you.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Actually, to be quite honest, we have not established a timeline. But, of course, at the moment you will appreciate as the new Minister I am still drilling down into the functional areas of the Ministry but all of that is part of the operational framework and, of course, we will make it public because minimum wage is an issue, in particular people who are at the lower strata. They are interested in knowing what is happening in that regard.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I do not think only the workers, but also the employers would also be concerned.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Employers. Certainly, I agree with you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: No, no, no. I was just asking whether NEDCO—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, do you have a question? You started by saying no, no, no.

Dr. Khan: Yes, yes, I have a question.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Dr. Khan: The NEDCO, the line Item NEDCO, I am just asking if you are in agreement with the Minister of Finance—since you are saying that you need to develop small business—for attacking the business by increasing the Green Fund and the business levy almost about 300 per cent?

Madam Chairman: One minute please, hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

Dr. Khan: Is that NEDCO?

Mr. Imbert: What—

Madam Chairman: Please, hon. Minister of Finance. We have one Chairman here. We are at Item 003. Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, could you direct me to—

Dr. Khan: Line Item NEDCO.

Madam Chairman: Unfortunately, I am not seeing a line Item, so if you could tell me the number it might help me.

Dr. Khan: 017.

Madam Chairman: All right. The National Enterprise Investment Fund?

Dr. Khan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Well you could forgive me for not seeing that as NIDCO.

Dr. Khan: No, I said NEDCO.

Madam Chairman: You could forgive me for not seeing that as NEDCO.

Dr. Khan: You would learn the—

Madam Chairman: Does that? Is that—so if that is not NEDCO what is the question?

Mr. Imbert: You are wrong.

Madam Chairman: What is the question?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question, even if you are wrong?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Khan: He is attacking me, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Khan: The Minister of Finance is attacking me.

Madam Chairman: No, I do not see any attack happening here. Do you vacate the question then hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan? Thank you very much.

Mr. Indarsingh: Chair, I will ask some questions later on, when you reach general public service.

5.15p.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, Chair, would the hon. Minister be able to say whether the establishment of the Heroes Park and Museum in Fyzabad—what stage have we reached in it, and whether this \$2 million will be enough to complete it?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes, the \$2 million will be sufficient to complete the project.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, the question was asked by the Member for Caroni East.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. We are at page 101, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; that is where it commences.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just crave your indulgence just to ask a small question on 100, which is Welfare Services, Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour.

Madam Chairman: Are we going back?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just for a short thing.

Madam Chairman: You see hon. Member for Caroni East, when I indulge one—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will ask the Minister privately.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. No, hon. Member for Caroni East, I assure you, you do not have to ask the Minister privately. You know that there is a question that you can ask if you wish.

So we are going on to the Consolidated Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, under the Infrastructure Development Fund page, and we are at page 300.

Mr. Indarsingh: 300?

Madam Chairman: I had mentioned Item—I had called Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services nobody indicated that they wanted to speak.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no.

Dr. Tewarie: Chair, I would like to—

Miss Ramdial: 06.

Madam Chairman: Is there an Item under 06?

Dr. Tewarie: General Public Services, Administrative Services.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, let us just all sort of follow what is going on. [*Interruption*] Members, please if we could have some attention. I called under Sub-Head 09. I called 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services which

commences at page 101, all right? We are not going here page by page. I waited a while, there was no indication from any Member that they wanted to speak. Therefore, I called the other Item, Item 005, which is under the Infrastructure Development Fund, and that is Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and that begins at page 300. So are there any matters to be raised under Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services under the Infrastructure Development Fund, which commences at page 300? Hon. Members, the question is—

Dr. Tewarie: Ma'am, do you want us to participate or not?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I want everybody to participate. I think I have given—[*Interruption*] we both cannot speak at the same time, and this has been happening repeatedly. I had asked Members from since maybe three, four days ago—they were given rulers and markers, and I had asked Members to facilitate this process in the allotted time that is fixed by the Standing Orders, whether they could flag their pages to assist in the flow.

We had established from the first day we were not going page by page, but Sub-Head and line Item in any order once it was within the relevant Item or Sub-Head. So that is if Members do not want to be bound by the rules, I really do not think it could lie in anybody's mouth to say that they are being prohibited from participating in the process and, therefore, I move on.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 30 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development and the representatives of the Ministry for coming and assisting; and they are now relieved.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Head 70.

Madam Chairman: Head 70, Ministry of Communications. Might I ask Members while the change is being facilitated of the representatives, if they can look at the Heads and the Items and the Sub-Items? It begins at page 219 of the *Development Programme* at page 473 of the *Recurrent Expenditure*.

Dr. Moonilal: Ma'am, could I just say, I mean, again with respect, you are also talking very fast, and some of us when we are opening and even turning the page, where we already identified questions or so on, it is passing quickly. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: I am guided, hon. Member for Oropouche East and, therefore, we are at page 473 of the recurrent estimates and we are at page 219 of the *Development Programme*.

Head 70, Ministry of Communications, \$312,121,380. I will now invite the Minister of Communications to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Communications is responsible for leading Government's communication, coordinating, monitoring and guiding policies and standards throughout government agencies.

The Ministry also facilitates access to public information, for citizens and the media, providing printing services and archival research services. The Ministry has responsibility for state owned media companies, the Caribbean New Media Group and the Government Information Systems Limited; the Information Services Division; the National Library and Information System Authority, NALIS; the Government Printery; the National Archives; Freedom of Information, data protection, content generation and the Film Censors Board.

The Ministry is a monitoring authority and a policy centre, with the overarching goal of ensuring transparency and accountability in government activities as a key element of good governance. As such, the Ministry of Communications has been continuously seeking to improve the quality of information and information services that are provided internally to Ministries and state agencies, and externally to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Although recently reconstituted following the realignment of ministerial portfolios, the agencies, divisions and state-owned enterprises which comprise the Ministry have been drawn from several previous Ministries, and the estimates, therefore, do not reflect easy comparisons with previous years.

The increases and decreases represented in the budget estimate to a large extent reflect this as well as the Government's commitment to eliminating waste, mismanagement and corruption which have been found to be quite prevalent in some of the agencies, [*Interruption*] and I emphasize some of the agencies falling under the Ministry. With those words, Madam Chairman, I am prepared to answer any questions or concerns the committee may have.

Question proposed: That Head 70 stand part of the Schedule,

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$300,121,380 for Head 70, Ministry of Communications 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*; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. In respect to Item 08, I will be grateful if the hon. Minister would indicate to us what are the vacant posts, in which of the institutions or sub-institutions over which he has charge, and his time frame for filling them?

Hon. Cuffie: I think I will definitely have to put that in writing given the complexity of the response.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Government Printery; Item 003, National archives; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Charles: Under Contract Employment, I see a fairly high figure of \$5.3 million, and the question is, in the Ministry over which he has charge, what is the proportion of permanent employees to contract employees? And this \$5.3 million refers to how many contract employees and in which subunits?

Hon. Cuffie: I will also have to put that in writing for you.

Mr. Charles: And while I am at the floor, Item 08, Rent/Lease of Offices and I want to know if the Minister has any plans for the acquisition or ownership of space for the various units over which he has charge?

Hon. Cuffie: Well, I can tell you that the Government is now relooking at its real estate holdings, and apportioning Ministries and office space to the various Ministries.

Mr. Charles: Yes, but the plans for acquiring—doing the cost/benefit analysis as to—

Hon. Cuffie: That has—

Mr. Charles:—whether you would be engaging in that in your desire to save cost?

Hon. Cuffie: That does not fall under the Ministry of Communications. It falls under the Minister of Public Administration which handles government real estate holdings.

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Mr. Charles: Well, the question is will you be pursuing with the relevant Ministry to ensure that we get value for money in the lease or purchase of property?

Hon. Cuffie: Member, you are asking answers. We will always be pursuing getting value for money on all our operations.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Government Printery; Item 003, National Archives.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you Ma'am, under the Item, Rent/Lease, Office Accommodations, but particular storage, there is a lot of historical information housed at GISL and in various places in the Government. What attempts are being made by the Government in order to secure this great historical and valuable information that we have? But more than that, to move it from its present form, some are on cassettes, some on reels of tape and so on going back to the '60s, and to put it in a digitized form if you may, to secure it. What is being done by the Government to ensure that we have this historical information properly secured?

Hon. Cuffie: We would have gotten to that under the Development Programme. There is an ongoing digitization project where funds have been allocated for not just GISL, but also the National Archives, NALIS, they are all involved in digitizing information so that we can put it in another format .

5.30 p.m.

Item 005, Freedom of Information Unit. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. I am sorry Members. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Government Printery.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Chair, through you, if the Minister can advise for line Item 12, exactly what Materials and Supplies would be required to the tune of \$2 million?

Hon. Cuffie: I did not hear the question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: We are on 002, Government Printery?

Madam Chairman: We are at 03. We are at page 478.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, never mind.

Madam Chairman: It begins to the bottom of the page, 002, Government Printery. So, if I would just call it again. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 002, Government Printery; Item 003, National Archives; Item 005, Freedom of Information Unit.

And for the guidance of Members, we are now at the foot of page 479, we are commencing there. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies: Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 006, Government Printery; Item 007, Households.

Dr. Rambachan: I note that on Households 03, there is an enhanced gratuity for the closure of the Government Information Services Division. Now, I know you have GISL Services Limited and Services Division, is this stating that this division is going to be closed and, if so, how many employees are going to be put out of their jobs?

Hon. Cuffie: This is an inherited provision and an inherited figure. I think that this has been carried in the budget for the last five years, so we have no additional plans.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, through you, line Item 01, just to ask, page 481.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, we are still at 007, Households.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Right 007, is it continuing? No?

Madam Chairman: I believe page 481 starts at 011, Transfer to State Enterprises.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay.

Madam Chairman: Are you at 007, hon. Member for Naparima? So, I now move on to Item, 011, Transfer to State Enterprises. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla that is where your question is?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, Madam Chair, thank you. Hon. Minister, what has accounted for the significant increase to this state enterprise, which aims to be self-sufficient, in allocating \$18 million as opposed to the previous figure, an increase in \$18 million?

Hon. Cuffie: The allocation is as a result of a mandate from the Telecommunications Authority that television stations need to prepare for digital transmission. So, the allocation is meant to assist both GISL and Caribbean New Media Group in getting ready for going digital.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mr. Charles: I would just like to ask the Minister, the allocation for last year for Caribbean New Media Group was \$18.5 million. Am I correct?

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Hon. Cuffie: No.

Mr. Charles: What was it?

Hon. Cuffie: I think it was—

Madam Chairman: This is under 01?

Mr. Charles: This is under 01 and 02. The same \$18 million and Caribbean Information Services Limited.

Hon. Cuffie: No, it was not the same \$18 million.

Mr. Charles: It was not? I am looking at page 339 under the Ministry of Trade. The Caribbean New Media Group, the revised estimates for Caribbean New Media Group was \$18.5 million. Am I correct? And for Government Information Services was \$18 million. So, therefore, your expenditure for this year represents almost the same as it was last year. I am asking this in the context—I thought that some cost savings in your desire to reduce expenditure that by combining these two institutions you would have effected some cost savings, but I am not seeing it reflected in your 2016 estimates.

Hon. Cuffie: And that is because part of the allocation is for the digitizing of the operations of the television stations of both organizations. So, the allocation is not really meant to supplement the revenues that they get. Now, the fact that it is still at \$18 million reflects the fact that they have not gotten far in terms of getting that going. I think with proper management that they now have, they will be getting that going.

Mr. Charles: Oh, I thought that the expenditure last year, could it be Minister that the expenditure last year was reflective of the real amounts to run an organization and now that you have come in, there is no way for any cost-saving measure as reflected in items 01 and 02.

Hon. Cuffie: Is that a question or a statement.

Mr. Charles: I am asking you, I am asking.

Madam Chairman: I think when you asked the question relating to the figures, the hon. Minister gave the answer why it remains the same amount in the estimates as last year.

Mr. Charles: And I followed up by asking him, is it an alternative interpretation.

Hon. Cuffie: I take that to be a rhetorical question.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, you said that part of this money is for digitization of the station. Is digitization of the station not a capital expenditure that should come really under development? Then how are you including a capital expenditure like this under recurrent?

Hon. Cuffie: It is digital transmission and CNMG, well we have not gotten to the development programme yet, but neither CNMG nor GISL has that under the development programme. Digital transmission is part of the ongoing operations of both organizations.

Dr. Khan: This is to the—Madam Chairman, through you,—to hon. Minister. I have seen your chairman indicate that there is a dire need to privatize those two entities. She said that in her utterances in the last couple months. If that is the case, the digitization of those entities should be taken by the private sector if that is the way it is going. So, why are you putting money into it when you could be going for privatization?

Hon. Cuffie: Because it is a mandate of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for all television stations. So they cannot wait until, you know, whatever plans obtain before they satisfy the mandate. It is an ongoing mandate.

Mr. Charles: I, perhaps, need some correction or clarification from the Minister, because when I look here—and we will get to that—under the development programme, I see institutional strengthening, digitization of Government's media assets. Is this separate from GISL and CNMG?

Hon. Cuffie: Yes, it is.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So, we go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies—this is at the end of page 481, it commences there—item 004, Statutory Bodies. We move on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme.

Dr. Gopeesingh: NALIS, on current statutory boards.

Madam Chairman: Line item 53.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 53. Hon. Minister, the estimate on that previously was under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. You have a significant reduction for NALIS, I think I see more than \$10 million. Have you thought it out to see why you are having such a reduction? What would suffer as a result of the reduction for NALIS?

Hon. Cuffie: Well, actually, the reduction is based on the allocation that was given last year. So we simply give the allocation—that was allocated, but the money released was \$150 million. So we simply gave what was the least to them last year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But, they would have suffered as a result of the deficiency in the release.

Hon. Cuffie: I agree with you, they did suffer and I intend to ask the Minister of Finance to increase the allocation in the future.

Dr. Moonilal: Which Minister of Finance, this one?

Hon. Cuffie: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, and that is at page 219 of the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Consolidated Fund, Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The 726, Upgrade of Public Library Facilities. If you forgive me hon. Minister, I know that would have been under the Ministry of Education before, but I am not finding the amount. Is it the same amount from last year for the Upgrade of Public Library Facilities and mobile libraries and Training of Librarians? Is it the same?

Hon. Cuffie: I would have to check that and get it to you in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, all right, I would check it too as well then.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Could I have a list, certainly in writing, at a later time of 726, the libraries to be upgraded and the facilities where the \$3.5 million is committed?

Hon. Cuffie: We will provide it.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mr. Charles: For my information and, perhaps, the general public, could the Minister explain what are the media assets referred to in 001?

Hon. Cuffie: Okay. In terms of government media assets, that refers to the assets held at GISL in terms of photographs, electronic tapes and those kinds of things. Those are being digitized. And before you ask, the assets held at the

National Archives refer to the archival material. There is also digitization going on at NALIS in terms of newspapers and the material held there.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. And for the guidance of Members, this commences at page 354.

5.45 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 004, Public Buildings, I just want to ask the hon. Minister, the Heritage Library which forms part of the National Archives as well in terms of storing—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, could you please guide me? You are on page 354 or 355? Where are you? We are under the Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005, which I said commenced on page 354.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Nah”, I am not there. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: And that is where we are at.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 70 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the members from the Ministry of Communications for coming and assisting us, you are relieved.

Head 05.

Madam Chairman: Members, for your guidance, while the change of technocrats is being facilitated, this is at page 9 of the draft estimates for DP and for the draft estimates of recurrent, this is at page 23. Head 05, Parliament, \$134,726,000. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: The Parliament is an institution in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is bicameral. It is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate. It is referred to as one of the powers in Trinidad and Tobago. In the context of the separation of powers you have the Legislature, you have the Executive and you have the Judiciary, and this is where the concept of separation of powers comes in.

The Parliament performs many functions. In addition to providing the necessary support to elected Members and appointed Members, the Parliament

also provides services in terms of support to committees, whether these are standing committees or joint select committees or ad hoc committees. The Parliament also puts on training to assist both new and old Members in terms of improving their knowledge and their skillset, and in terms of institutional strengthening.

Question proposed: That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$134,726,000 for Head 05, Parliament, 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*. For the guidance of Members we are at page 23, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001 General Administration; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration—Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item number 64, Operations of Constituency Offices, reduced by approximately \$15 million from \$32 million, how would that affect the running of the constituency offices very significantly? Could the Minister of Finance indicate why this has been done and on what basis this has been done?—and if he understands that the running of constituency offices will be severely restricted by a decrease of close to \$15 million?

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I asked the question already.

Hon. Imbert: Which is?

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you are celebrating you would probably be able to give the response.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Explain the reduction—if you want me to repeat it again, “doh fall asleep”—you have a \$15 million reduction for constituency offices which will affect the 41 constituencies of Parliament, what is the reason for it and do you understand that there are going to be major significant management issues for each Member of Parliament here in their constituencies? Why did you reduce it?

Hon. Imbert: What page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 25, line item number 64—from \$32 million last year to \$17.5 million this year.

Hon. Imbert: It is hoped that the Parliament could achieve efficiency by utilizing more government buildings to house constituency offices. We have a number of new Members who are not entirely happy with the idea of occupying rented accommodation that might have been occupied by someone from another political persuasion. So, in 2016, the Parliament will be reviewing all of this rented accommodation to see whether there are suitable government properties that can be used to provide accommodation for Members of Parliament. If the Parliament requires more funds at the end of this exercise then the Parliament would make the appropriate request to the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Madam Chairman, thanks a lot. I direct this question to the Minister of Finance, as well as the Parliament, Sub-Head 02, Item 58, Medical Expenses. In 2015 we had a—

Hon. Imbert: You are done with rent?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, could you guide—Item 58, yes, we are here with you, Medical Expenses. Hon. Minister of Finance, we are now directing ourselves to the question posed by the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan and it relates to line Item 58, Medical Expenses.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The allocation was \$5.5 million in 2015, that was for the medical expenses of parliamentarians and it was supposed to be given out by Parliament, and the House committee, I think, had a delay in developing that process; I saw in 2016 you put \$200,000, which is \$25,000 more than the \$175,000. I would ask, are you going to revisit that Medical Expenses for parliamentarians—for medical insurance for parliamentarians, and the others?

Hon. Imbert: If you look at 2014 it was \$195,000; if you look at the 2015 it was \$175,000; in 2016 it is \$200,000, it is an increase, what is the problem?

Dr. Khan: It is not an increase.

Hon. Imbert: It is not?

Dr. Khan: So what is \$5.5 million?—that is a decrease?

Hon. Imbert: That is the estimate.

Dr. Khan: Exactly, so I am asking a question, why is it not continuing?

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Hon. Imbert: The revised figure for 2015 was \$175,000—

Dr. Khan: But there was a reason to put in the \$5.5 million, but I am asking if you are going to revisit it.

Hon. Imbert:—and what is that? That you could not manage the programme? What was the problem?

Dr. Khan: There is no problem. I think the problem is that you are not revisiting what I am asking. That is the problem right now.

Hon. Imbert: What is the problem? It is \$175,000 in 2015 and \$200,000 in 2016, what is the problem?

Dr. Khan: And that is not enough. It is not enough.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, Minister of Finance, the question is whether the Government intends to revisit the House—

Dr. Khan: Madam Chairman, I have a question on this line Item, why is it only on that side—

Hon. Imbert: Another question? A second question?

Dr. Khan: No. Why is it when you are on that side—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, I cannot allow that, all right? Hon. Minister of Finance, there is a question regarding Medical Expenses—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this has a lot to do with the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan in his previous incarnation. There was an original allocation of \$5.5 million but only \$175,000 was disbursed, and it has a lot to do with the Member for Barataria/San Juan in his previous incarnation. I can assure you that we on this side—since you on that side did not attend to the medical needs of ordinary Members of Parliament when we were over there—now that we are over here we are going to make sure that Opposition Members of Parliament get the medical attention that they deserve, unlike what you did when we were in the Opposition.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: To the Minister of Finance—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East—could we just have a little order so the hon. Member could ask the question, please.

Dr. Moonilal: I would like the attention of the Minister of Finance, he is engaged in another conversation at this time.

Madam Chairman: Direct your question to me, Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I heard the Minister of Finance earlier, in explaining the decrease for Operations of Constituency Offices, spoke to the issue of rent. Is he suggesting that the almost \$15 million slashing of the Operations of Constituency Offices is for rental alone? And what are the implications of this slashing of the Parliament budget for the smooth operations of constituency offices? Are you also eradicating sub-offices of Members of Parliament by such a violent slashing of the funds?

Hon. Imbert: No, I am not suggesting that that entire figure is for rental of offices.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just want to ask two questions on the medical matter and then one on the Operations of Constituency Offices. On the medical matter, from what the hon. Minister of Finance was saying, I want to ask him whether he is implying that this Medical Expenses is only for Members of the Opposition or for all Members of Parliament? That is the first question. Secondly, how many applications were received last year? How many applications were received in 2014 and 2015 for medical expenses? How many were actually honoured and how many were refused?

Hon. Imbert: You had two questions there, right?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: The first one—you know, there are some things I really do not think should be out there in the public domain but since you brought it up, the medical programme for Members of Parliament—now, Ministers are entitled under the decision of the Salaries Review Commission to medical treatment paid for by their Ministries, so this medical plan is only necessary for persons who are not entitled to medical treatment under the Salaries Review Commission report—

Dr. Rambachan: My Ministry did not pay for my—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, please.

Hon. Imbert: Look, look, look, look, the Salaries Review Commission has granted to all Cabinet Ministers free medical treatment, that has been so for 30

years, so if your Ministry did not pay for your medical expenses under your management, I am sorry. However—there is an aspect of this I did not want to bring up—the implementation for this medical programme for ordinary Members of Parliament was stuck in your Cabinet for one year, and the general election came and went and it remained—the Cabinet proposal remained in your Cabinet unresolved. So that is why ordinary Members of Parliament, Opposition Members of Parliament, like we were on this side, were not able to access these funds because your Government refused to settle the implementation mechanism for this medical programme for Members of Parliament. “And doh tell me yuh doh know, and doh tell me yuh doh remember”, because those are the facts.

6.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Hon. Imbert: “Stick de ting in Cabinet for a year.” [*Crosstalk*] And you are laughing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you no longer wish to speak?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, Madam Chairman, thank you. Just going back to line Item 21, just to ask, will this amount be sufficient, Madam Chair— through you to hon. Minister—in light of the fact that there are a number of government buildings that need to be refurbished, particularly my own, which has to be rebuilt?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, are you under Operations of Constituency Offices?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No. No. No. I am dealing with—[*Crosstalk*] Yes. That and also—Yes. Constituency Offices—

Madam Chairman: You are under 64?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. The refurbishment of constituency offices is not paid from that item. It is paid for under another vote. Okay? So there is a provision under another vote.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, with the violent slashing of \$15 million from the constituency office fund, even though the Minister says they are going to get government offices for some of the Members of Parliament, if you get government offices for 40 Members of Parliament, that is only going to reduce the budget by \$7 million. \$15,000 at 12 months is \$180,000 for each office, by 40 offices it is \$7.2 million. What else is affected by the other \$7.8 million? Because he has removed another \$7.8 million. Admitting that you are getting government offices for all 40 or 41 Members of Parliament is going to reduce the budget by only \$7 million. What about the other \$8 million? That would have significant repercussions on the management of the offices.

Hon. Imbert: The Parliament is going to, as I said, review the allocation of offices. For example, if you had rented premises where a UNC Member was occupying, a PNM Member may wish to go into government accommodations, so the Parliament is going to review the allocation of offices. In addition, how many of you all have left us? Eleven of you all have left us. Eleven of you all on that side have left us. So they had to pay severance to your employees. They had to pay severance to your employees because so many of you all have left us.

Dr. Gopeesingh: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Imbert: No. It has been paid.

Dr. Rambachan: They are entitled to severance—

Hon. Imbert: No. No. No. You see, you all thought you all were going to win the election, so you did not provide for severance for your employees.

Madam Chairman: Members, could we kindly move on to another Item, please? Hon. Member for St. Augustine.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am a bit perplexed and that is why I will ask this question. Will there be a—

Dr. Gopeesingh: His colleagues are perplexed as well.

Mr. Ramadhar:—reduction in the budget for staffing at those offices?

Hon. Imbert: I do not know how to say this. The budgetary allocation for this line Item is predicated on a request to the Parliament to try and accommodate Members of Parliament in government buildings where possible, and to try and avoid paying rent. That is number one. Number two, after the election of 2015, of September 7, a number of members of staff were severed. They were only paid up to September 7, and then they were paid their severance benefits. Now, we do not

anticipate in 2016 that we are going to have a general election. So we do not have to have a provision for severance benefits for employees. And so many of you all have left us so we had to pay a lot of severance in September. Do you understand now? So we do not have to pay severance in 2016.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes Ma'am. My question to the hon. Minister of Finance: Is the Minister of Finance—and this is related No. 58—saying for the record that there were Members of the Opposition who made requests for medical expenses within our policy framework and were denied reimbursement for medical expenses? Just to be sure.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: The second question, is the Minister aware that when persons move into a constituency office, whether of one party or another, they can choose to go to any other office once it is proper. They are not stuck.

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: The Operations of Constituency Offices—because you are using this thing all the time about looking for government buildings. MPs in rural areas on many occasions do not have access to government buildings and bungalows because there are none, but they can move from one premise to another if it is so convenient. So raising this issue of government buildings really is an attempt to distract; obfuscate and distract.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Moonilal: Do not mislead the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, what is the question?

Madam Chairman: Members, please. I think we have exhausted—*[Crosstalk]* I think we have exhausted Sub-Head—*[Crosstalk]* I think we have exhausted—hon. Minister of Finance—we have we have exhausted the discussion on Sub-Head 002, Item 001. We now move on to Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases. *[Crosstalk]* Hon. Minister of Finance. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001—Members, if this continues I will have to suspend this sitting. Item 001 General Administration. Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. *[Crosstalk]* Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

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Dr. Rambachan: I had my hand up because under General Administration, Minor Equipment Purchases, the funding for—

Madam Chairman: Could you just point me to the line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: Sure. No. 04 Other Minor Equipment.

Madam Chairman: Members. Members, this Item affects us all. So I expect your cooperation.

Dr. Rambachan: Furniture and Furnishings and Other Minor Equipment, both of them. Right?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Under this Item does this include the provisions for furniture and so on for the parliamentary offices of Members of Parliament? Because I have a question to ask.

Madam Chairman: This is page 27.

Dr. Rambachan: 27.

Madam Chairman: Item—

Dr. Rambachan: 03 Minor Equipment Purchases.

Madam Chairman: Three and 04. Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: My answer is—no.

Dr. Rambachan: It does not?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, since March this year the sign for my office collapsed. I have no sign for my office.

Hon. Imbert: You were in government then?

Dr. Rambachan: Why is it that—

Hon. Imbert: You were in government then?

Dr. Rambachan: I want to know whether the replacement of a sign for my office since March, by the Parliament, has not been done. And my desk which is also—

Madam Chairman: You want to know if that will come under Furniture and Furnishings and Other Minor Equipment?

Dr. Rambachan: When will it be done under this vote?

Madam Chairman: No. Well I cannot allow that question, but if you want to ask if it falls under this vote? I will allow that.

Hon. Imbert: Could I just get the timeline? March of which year?

Dr. Rambachan: This is the Parliament. It was reported to the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: What is the timeline, Madam Chairman? March of which year?

Dr. Rambachan: March of 2015.

Hon. Imbert: When you were in Government.

Dr. Rambachan: It does not matter. It was reported to the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: Ask yourself.

Dr. Rambachan: You do not expect me to put it up myself.

Hon. Imbert: Ask yourself.

Madam Chairman: Members, let us move on, please. Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, Member for Diego Martin West cannot use insulting language like crazy people. And so on.

Madam Chairman: I do not think we have a Member for Diego Martin West present.

Dr. Rambachan: Diego Martin North/East. Yes. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: I would like us all to be guided. It is now 6.09. We have the business of the people to proceed with. Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. Sub-Head 04 [*Crosstalk*] Members. Members. Hon. Minister of Finance— [*Crosstalk*] hon. Minister of Finance [*Crosstalk*]. This meeting is suspended for five minutes.

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

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

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. Item—Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidises.

Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies. Item 004 International Bodies. We move on to the Development Programme and Sub-Head 09, Consolidated Fund, and we are at page 9. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: I am on 06.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, on line Item 005 Televising and Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings. Can you advise what accounts for the increased allocation and also what does this expenditure entail? Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah. The broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings began several years ago, nine years ago. A lot of the equipment that was purchased at the inception is now obsolete and is in need of upgrade. So the increased allocation is simply to modernize and upgrade the equipment.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Ma'am, thank you very much. I am on page 9, of course, 013 and my question to Minister of Finance is, on the assumption that this is indeed the general accounting office that has been cited in the budget, it is not. It is the establishment of just an accounting office. Is this an accounting office for the Parliament itself?

Hon. Imbert: The short answer to that is—yes. There was a project—was it UNDP?—that looked at the way the Parliament manages its affairs, and it has been recommended that a budget office be established and this is what this is for.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Could I then—and my follow-up—what really then is the general accounting office cited in the budget?

Hon. Imbert: That is something completely different.

Dr. Moonilal: Because that was supposed to be also under the umbrella of the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: No. That is different.

Dr. Moonilal: But is it provided for here then for the Parliament?

Hon. Imbert: The general accounting office has to be established, and the general accounting office will give real-time information on whether expenditure is in line with projection.

Dr. Moonilal: Is it an office under the ambit of the Parliament?

Hon. Imbert: Where did you see this in the budget speech?

Dr. Moonilal: Then it is not?

Hon. Imbert: I am asking you.

Dr. Moonilal: In the budget presentation there was a reference to a general accounting office.

Hon. Imbert: Obviously a general accounting office.

Dr. Moonilal: In the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: In the Parliament? Could you show me the page?

Dr. Moonilal: Well I will get it for you. Let us proceed and I will just check on it.

Madam Chairman: So, we will return to that question. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Are we finished with it or are we on to F?

Madam Chairman: We are under Sub-Head 09, Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: So that anything under that Head is entertained.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Great. 007 Equipping the Security Unit of Parliament. I see there is a revision downwards. Is it that they have been equipped sufficiently or almost sufficiently?

6.20 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, Item 007 Public Buildings: Equipping the Security Unit of Parliament. Page nine.

Hon. Imbert: That is for the Chamber. This is for this building. What was your specific question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I was asking, it has gone down, is it that we are more or less on par as to where we are supposed to be in terms of being equipped?

Hon. Imbert: In this building?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I would assume so. If it is for this building, yes.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Madam Chair. I just quickly got the budget document because the Minister was asking where in the budget. It is at page 42, Mr. Minister, where you said that a:

“General Accounting Office which will be an independent office of Parliament...”

Hon. Imbert: Right.

Dr. Moonilal: For:

“...continuous real-time assessment of...budget performance”—et cetera.

I am asking then, bearing in mind what you said in the budget, where in the estimates are you providing for that, this general accounting office.

Hon. Imbert: We are on Development Programme, but I am advised that the allocation you are looking for is in Recurrent. You have passed that line Item.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: But there is a \$3 million allocation.

Dr. Moonilal: There is a \$3 million allocation, then, could I ask one follow-up question on this, because it is a very critical matter. Could you provide us with, in writing, a policy statement—

Hon. Imbert: Certainly, yes.

Dr. Moonilal:—as to what this is, how is it to established, how it is to function under the Parliament? So that we will have a clear idea of what this entails and what is the relationship with the Auditor General’s office if any at all.

Hon. Imbert: I will forgive the Member, but this matter was before your Cabinet since June.

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Dr. Moonilal: Having made the statement in the Parliament surely you would be aware of the policy.

Hon. Imbert: You will get the framework, but I am just indicating my befuddlement at your unfamiliarity with the fact that this was before your Cabinet since June.

Dr. Moonilal: And that is fine. So you will provide it to all Members who were not in Cabinet at the time. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. This is at page 276.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I want to thank the representatives of the Parliament for coming and assisting the committee, and they are relieved. Head 78:

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. And for the assistance of Members we are now going to page 562 of your *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year 2016*.

Head 78.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, \$4,792,928,472. I will now invite the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you, Madam Chair. However, in the interest of time I forego my opening statement.

Madam Chairman: I am indeed grateful.

Question proposed: That Head 78 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,792,928,472 for Head 78: the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services 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. Hon. Member for Couva North.

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Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 001, line item 08, Vacant Posts - Salaries & COLA, \$3.2 million. I know that the Minister would give this in writing but just to reiterate and reconfirm a list of the vacant posts existing.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, hon. Member, it will be provided to you in writing.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Social Welfare. Item 004, Gender Affairs Division. Item 005, Child Development Centre. Item 006, National Family Services. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the hon. Minister, line Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. It is not reflected here on this page for the 2015 estimates, because it belonged to the Ministry when it was under a different name as you may well know, hon. Minister. But what we are saying is that we put those Ministries up for the 2015 Revised Estimates; it would have been \$28 million under this Item. We now have an increase to \$33.2 million, and would you be kind enough to give us an explanation as to why the increase? Is it that they getting additional accommodations somewhere else?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We budgeted for the relocation of the Head Office of the Ministry. So that would be responsible to an extent for the increase.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And relocation to where?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We had proposed relocating to One Alexandra Place but that has been changed and we are now seeking an alternative accommodation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So you have not yet found alternative accommodation?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, but we would have budgeted for it because we propose moving the Head Office.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Do you know what One Alexandra is now for? It has been changed.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Sorry, I did not hear the question.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I know the Ministry had spent a lot of time outfitting One Alexandra, with money, and a lot of money for outfitting that accommodation at One Alexandra for the Ministry under a different name, but this Ministry basically. Are we to understand that you are saying that it is not going to happen? And how much money was expended by the then Ministry of the People and Social Development which you have now inherited? It is a lot of money.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, for Siparia we have not spent any money on One Alexandra Place. Alexandra Place would have already been outfitted, so we would not have expended sums there.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 2015 under your Revised Estimates. No moneys were expended?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, no moneys were expended on One Alexandra Place.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: By that specific Ministry?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: That is correct.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, we will check into it Madam, I thank you for your answers.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: You are most welcome.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I know that there were some moneys expended in terms of the IT Unit being conducted in the building to provide for our services. Could you advise what will become of this now? That is under line item 08.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: I am advised that the building is under the purview of the real estate administration. We would not have expended sums to outfit the building.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, I know that. Not an outfit. The building is outfitted through the Ministry of Local Government. I was referring to the IT, in particular, the IT, there was—

Madam Chairman: Please refer me to the line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 08. I am on line Item 08.

Madam Chairman: Other office accommodation, rent/lease.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: In following up with the hon. Member for Siparia who requested a breakdown in moneys expended, the hon. Minister had explained that there were no moneys expended due to the fact that it came under another Ministry. But I am saying that during the time 2015, there were inadequate IT services available and as such the Ministry had undertaken the project of implementing—

Madam Chairman: And therefore the question hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla that you wish to direct to the hon. Minister?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What happens, is it that the cost that the Ministry had put into it is that going to be entirely lost? As far as I am aware the Ministry at that time, the Ministry of the People and Social Development was in fact responsible for payment.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member I am advised that funds were not expended on outfitting the building, but, in light of your question I will investigate and put the response in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. And also item 09, hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chair, have you considered whether the purchasing of vehicles, as opposed to leasing, is cost effective?—because I know that you do have a mix of purchase and lease.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We are currently in the process of reviewing that and at the end the exercise, based on what we determine, we will look at the decision on the way forward.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am dealing with item 22, Short-Term Employment. I see that there is an allocation of \$27.5 million for this and I would like to know the nature of that short-term employment and the duration. Is it beyond the three months that is generally envisaged and the numbers to accommodate this \$27.5 million?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Currently there are approximately 572 short-term employees within the Ministry and they are generally employed for up to

three months. The Ministry is responsible for a number of projects and until we decide whether those projects are to be permanent projects or not, a number of persons are brought on short term to man those projects.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Also 16, Contract Employment we see a high figure of \$26,790,000. Can we get a list of these vacant positions, please, from the Minister?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, I will submit that in writing.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, would any of these short-term contracts be employed in the recently approved six-year plan for both the retention as well as the new creation jobs?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The 572 persons who are currently in short term, they are in short term. We have approval for approximately 1,059 contract positions, 610 of them were approved in the six-year plan, but we have not started filling those vacancies as yet.

6.35p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, you said 600 under the six-year contract. Have any of those done three years already and then now are waiting to get the other three years? Or it starts ab initio for the six years from the future?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: The six-year plan is in respect of additional positions. There may be persons who are currently on contract—well we advertise who may be suitable and fill some of those vacant contract positions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For the other three years.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But a significant amount is open at the moment, waiting to be filled?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

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Madam Chairman: Item 002: Division of Ageing. Item 003: Social Welfare. Item 004: Gender Affairs Division. Item 005: Child Development Centre. Item 006: National Family Services. Item 007: Disability Affairs Unit.

Subhead 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration. Item 002: Division of Ageing. Item 003: Social Welfare. Item 005: Child Development Centre. Item 006: National Family Services. Item 007: Disability Affairs Unit.

Subhead 04: Current Transfer and Subsidies. Item 003: United Nations Organization. Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, would you be able to advise if Vision on Mission will be a part of this programme? I am not seeing their—

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Remember, they have gone to the Ministry of National Security.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under the other social programmes, 02, \$15 million is allocated and you said here, 02, number 31, “Transferred from Head Ministry of People and Social Development”. There is no figure allocated to any one of these from 03 to 23, so 21 of them. Your Ministry will play it by ear to determine how much you will give to each one of these, out of the \$15 million? Because there is no allocation for each one of these. There is a blank on our book. But \$15 million has been allocated for about 21 of these social programme areas. What is your policy? When it comes to your understanding, you will determine how much your Ministry will give to each one of these centres?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Subventions are granted to these institutions and it is normally based on a fee for service. So the different institutions will be granted different amounts.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That determination is made in your Ministry for each one of these areas?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: It is subject to Cabinet approval.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you will go to Cabinet for each one of these and then ask Cabinet's support out of the \$15 million allocation?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item 006: Educational Institutions. Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 01: Adult Education Programme. When I was reading the Singapore budget they talk about universal primary, universal secondary, universal tertiary education, and now they are going to universal adult education where people are trained for the four or five or six jobs that they will have to change in their careers. Are we following this model? So the question I am asking is: what constitutes adult education? Is it 21st Century or is it—could you explain? Thank you.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Currently, the adult education is provided in two categories: academics and craft, and the academics is really to bring people up to at least the secondary level, and then we treat with the craft training.

Mr. Charles: So therefore, it does not involve—and I am just asking, eh—monitoring changes in the marketplace and aligning our adults to prepare for those jobs. It is a little different?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, hon. Member. We have not gotten there as yet.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto-Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, under Educational Institutions, I only see Adult Education Programme. If my memory is good, I know that under Gender, there was a facility being put in place for the autistic society in terms of the educational aspect of it. Could you tell me if that project and the programme will be considered by your Ministry?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: That programme has not been approved as yet, but it is something that we are looking at, the whole issue of autism.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, could you tell me, on line 06, what is the rehabilitative programme about, and which NGO will it function under? I have a couple questions, Chair.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Most of the programmes that we implement, there has a rehabilitative aspect to it because, at the end of the day, what we want to do is to ensure that we lift people out of the situation that they are in. So most of these programmes would have a rehabilitative component.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Agreed. But I just saw it separate as a line item and I was wondering if there was another programme that you had in place as opposed to what would have been incorporated in the other programmes.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: This refers to the programme that we call the SEED and the RISE-UP.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. 13 under 007: Relief for Underprivileged New born, I see an allocation of \$10 million. Is this the new name for the Baby Care Grant?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, this, in fact, refers to what you are calling the Baby Care Grant. Yes, it does.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you very much, and thank you, Madam Minister for keeping this going.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, thank you. I was just looking at the allocation for the disability grant of \$465 million. Could the hon. Minister provide, in writing, the number of beneficiaries of this disability grant?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: That would be provided.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, just to—I do not want to assume that because there is a \$10 million budgeted for the relief for underprivileged mothers—I do not want to assume because it is a line item—that, in fact, that it will be kept. Can you advise if the programme will be, in fact, maintained?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, this is something that we would have to take to Cabinet because the approval by the previous Cabinet was granted up to September 2015. So to continue, we would need to get the necessary Cabinet approval. So this would have to go before Cabinet.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And my other question, Number 12, the People's Card, I see there is an allocation of \$33 million. This, I would assume, is the Biometric Card? That is the first question.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, it is.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And again, I do not want to assume, would the Minister continue the programme of the Biometric Card, or do you have intentions of discontinuing it?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: The Biometric Card system is continuing at present. However, we recognize that given the cost and given some of the issues with the system, we are doing a review, and it is based on the findings of that review that we will determine whether we proceed with it in its current form or if we would need to change the form.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is there any consideration as to the business persons who would have contributed, in no small way, in having their systems converted? Will you be taking those things into consideration?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: I am not sure I understand, hon. Member.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: When the card was brought on, you had to have the equipment for it to function on and business persons would have had to invest, to acquire these equipment, and as such, I am asking when you are reviewing, if there is a consideration at all for you to discontinue with the programme, would you be looking at how it would impact on businesses as well?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, is that a line Item here?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: I think it is more a question of policy and, therefore, I would ask the Minister to give you that answer in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So we are moving on to 009: Other Transfers which begins on page 575. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, through you, Chair, 01, the GAP Programme, I do believe it has been oversubscribed and as such I am asking if you have any intention to increase the staffing to facilitate persons who are out there who will require this programme?

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Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: At present we are at the maximum and the requests currently outstrip what we have in place. So we are reviewing it with a view to seeing whether we can facilitate the additional requests.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Item under 009, 02, the NSDP programme---

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, I think you—009? All right, I am sorry. Yes.

Mr. Singh: You thought I was ahead of myself?

Madam Chairman: I thought that you were ahead of us.

Mr. Singh: Yes, Madam Chair. I just wanted to find out what will the NSDP in the context of Social Development be doing in relation to the other areas of the NSDP?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: The functions are similar. What we do is we provide assistance to needy families with respect to wiring of their homes, plumbing of the homes, that type of assistance and it is more centred in the rural areas.

Mr. Singh: Same thing like before.

Madam Chairman: Subhead 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Item 004: Statutory Boards. Subhead 09—Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just a little observation. I wish the word “retarded” will be removed from this Trinidad and Tobago Association for Retarded Children. We had envisaged that we would have changed that, if it is by the legislation, but perhaps the new Government could look towards removing that word.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Your advice has been accepted.

Madam Chairman: Subhead 09: Development Programme. And we are going to page 263 of the Estimates for Development Programme. Consolidated Fund. Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Hon. Members for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 036, the Establishment of a Substance Abuse Rehabilitation, would you be collaborating

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with the Ministry of Health in light of the fact that I do believe that they will be embarking on a similar programme?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, hon. Member. That is something we will be doing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Ma'am, to the hon. Minister. I am at page 263, 042. Could you provide, in writing at a later time the list of the Community-Based Telecentres on which expansion works would be undertaken?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Line Item 112, the Street Dwellers Rehabilitation and Re-integration Project, does this include Queen Street, hon. Minister.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, this one relates to Riverside Plaza.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Does 044 relate to Queen Street?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, that refers to Queen Street.

6.50 p.m.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just an observation, Minister, and it would be a grave oversight. I have not seen anything at all for Autistic Society, and prior to our demitting office there was something in place for the Autistic Society. I would implore you to please look at it. It is a serious need, please.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you. I will look at it.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Fund: Item 004, Social Infrastructure. And for the guidance of Members, it is on page 370.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 78 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for coming and assisting the committee. You all are relieved.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: We now move to Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General. While the representatives of that Ministry set up, for the guidance of Members, we are at page 151 of the *Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Head 23.

Madam Chairman: Head 23, Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs, \$442,735,550. I will now invite the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman, Members of the committee. What we have happening post-September 07 is a decision by the hon. Prime Minister to merge the operations of what were three Ministries before into one: that is, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and some aspects of the Ministry of Justice. We have now had created one Ministry known as the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, and an unprecedented and very fortuitous and good move by the Prime Minister, if I may say so. He has an Attorney General and a full Cabinet Minister dealing with these two Ministries.

The Ministry of Attorney General and the Attorney General have certain constitutional responsibilities. All suits brought for and against the State are done in civil suits and are done in the name of the Attorney General. The Attorney General provides advice to the various other Ministries and to Cabinet, and what we have now is this merged Ministry with a lot of responsibilities and increased portfolio, and challenges as we have outlined in our budget debates as to what happened in the last five years, and we are in the process of dealing with some of these aspects, clearing it up. And I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the two Permanent Secretaries who are new to the Ministry, who have done a fabulous job in assisting us over the short period of time that we have been in Government and also the members of staff who have also been assisting us tremendously.

Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 23 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$442,735,550 for Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 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; Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, for catching me before you proceeded. Item under Goods and Services, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. I notice there is a significant increase by \$8.3 million from last year in the allocation for 2015/2016, could I get an explanation as to why is that increase?

Hon. Young: Through you, Madam Chair, this increase is to deal with—what this line Item goes to, as it says, is rent and lease from third parties on behalf of various offices that fall under the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. So we have 10 different landlords and, of course, as it is to be expected and as happens with third party rentals, you have escalation in the rental charges to the Ministries, and that has amounted to over an annual period in \$8.3 million increase for the period going into the next fiscal year.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, line Item 16, Contract Employment. I noted a decrease of \$10.6 million under this line Item. I do not know if the Minister would kindly tell us what accounts for this decrease in 2016.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, through you, to the Member for Siparia. What this is, as I had said in the outset, we now have a merger, a morphing of the three Ministries. So what is happening as a result of that is you are having a filling of vacant positions, these contract positions.

We had a number of vacant positions in the two main Ministries— Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General— so we are filling those. So some persons who were traditionally contract workers would merge into those vacant positions, and then, of course, by definition, when you are merging these Ministries there is a reduction in the numbers. Also, what this line Item goes towards is, you would see the note includes provision for graduate employment.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: How many?

Hon. Young: There is a programme there—we will provide the number of graduates in the graduate programme to you in writing. The specific numbers.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, hon. Minister. At this time how many contract positions exist? I have already asked you the percentage for graduate employment. I guess we will get that in writing if not available.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution. Sub-Head—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Stop there, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: We are now moving on to—you have reached us?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am looking for the 008 that you just said.

Madam Chairman: The 008 is on page 160 towards the middle of the page, National Centre for Dispute Resolution. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property office; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution.

We now proceed to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, and that begins at the foot of page 162. Item 005, Non-profit Institutions; Item 007, Households. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: I saw, Madam Chair, Item under Households, 03, Contribution to the Secretariat of the Council of Legal Education. There was an Estimate of \$4.3 million and the Revised Estimate there is not anything nor in the Estimate of 2016. Could that be explained?

Hon. Young: My understanding, Madam Chair, through you, to the Member for Chaguanas West, is that was a one-off payment to the Secretariat of the Council of Legal Education actually approved by the former Cabinet. So payment having been made, it is not a continuation of an annual expense or expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers. Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad. We now go on to the Development Programme, the Consolidated Fund. It is found at page 70 of the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Item 004, Social Infrastructure. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am just making sure I am on the right Head. Okay, 005.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. The hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, through you, I am looking at 011 Information Technology and Computerisation Legal Aid Advisory Authority.

7.05 p.m.

I notice that in your recurrent expenditure there was a decrease and moneys were not allocated. I just want to know in tying the two: will we have a functioning Legal Aid Authority in light of the fact that there are not any moneys allocated? We have for IT, but we do not have for the—if you could bear with me, go back on the expenditure on page 170.

Hon. Young: Are we going back?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, it is just a comparison. You do not have to go back if you do not wish to, but I just want you to understand the question. On page 170, 01, you do not have any moneys allocated, yet in the current book that we are in—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members.

Hon. Young: If I may, Madam Chair, through you, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, what you are seeing here is actually there were sums in the former year. Remember, as I said, you would have a merger now of MLA into the Ministry of the Attorney General, so previously, it had fallen under the Head of Ministry of Legal Affairs, but now it is all in one Ministry, so it has been provided for. And if you actually look at the estimates and actual expenditure for the previous years, under the line Item that we are exploring now, which is the computerization of legal aid you will see that it is consistent with what was revised in the estimates in the previous years. So we have obviously provided for Legal Aid Authority because it plays a very important part in the society.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, thank you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, line Item 18 which is the Strengthened Information Management at the RG's Department. Would the hon. Minister give us an idea of what this project entails?

Hon. Young: What is happening here is actually in 2015, we had the revised estimate expenditure of 10.8, approximately \$10.9 million. There is an IDB loan for the strengthening of the Registrar General's Department. Pardon?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: \$26 million.

Hon. Young: Correct, \$26 million and what this is really for and being utilized for is the provision and the change to the digitization of the land registry. As you would be aware, Member for Siparia, there is a whole system in Trinidad.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Hon. Young: We are trying to get it to move towards the RPO and to build up a proper land registry system. So this is specifically to achieve that and it is an ongoing project.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, hon. Minister, for your very kind response.

Dr. Moonilal: On page 71, under Administrative Services—no, I am on the next page actually, page 72. I wanted to ask—this is the question I asked when the Judiciary came up earlier in that there are about 11 Items that have been removed from the Judiciary to the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs; 11 Items where most, if not all, involve construction. My two questions are, one: does the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, does that Ministry have the capacity to manage construction projects of this nature involving courts throughout the land? Do you have internal capacity to do that or would that be sub-contracted to a special purpose company?

And secondly, is this not a policy contradiction with your own stated policy of autonomy of the Judiciary where the Judiciary is now dependent on a Minister of Government and a Ministry to provide them with physical infrastructure and facilities?

Hon. Young: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, through you, first of all, it would be recognized, as I had said when dealing with the Judiciary, that what this Government has undertaken to do is to provide financial autonomy. Of course, that is a process that has to have a transition. We found ourselves having to prepare a budget within three weeks and this is part of the transition arrangement. So this money is going to be passed over to the Judiciary through various measures. We are working it out. We are going to work out with the Judiciary how we can achieve this. Right?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Inaudible*] the separation of powers.

Hon. Young: And also—correct. Traditionally, the Ministry, as you would be aware, the Ministry of the Attorney General has been a conduit to get to the Cabinet for Judiciary decisions, et cetera.

To answer the first part of your question, as you would be aware being the former Minister of Housing and Urban Development, and having UDeCOTT under your supervision, what would happen, with all—a lot of the Ministries—is you would then sub-contract as a Ministry to a NIPDEC or a UDeCOTT, et cetera, to handle the whole project management aspect for you, but it would come from your part of the budget and your part of expenditure.

However, these Items here are found as a transitional arrangement to be able to achieve what it is we said we would with respect to the financial autonomy of the Judiciary.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask in a simple—just to simply follow up. What was the reason for moving these 11 Items to the Attorney General when the Attorney General will always be that conduit to the Cabinet for finance and so on? But now the Attorney General becomes a client Ministry of a construction company, and that creates another level of bureaucracy, whereas before it was the Judiciary simply conducting their own repairs, facilitation; and with great respect, I am not sure that the Ministry of the Attorney General has the internal capacity through project management and so on to even work with a construction company.

Hon. Young: But it would not be through project management, Member for Oropouche East, it would be the Attorney General's office and who better suited to deal with contracts than the Attorney General's Office and making sure that contracts are properly adhered to and moneys are expended properly, as you will see over the next few months. But it will not be the Attorney General entering into the construction contracts, it will be utilizing the companies, as I said, such as the UDeCoTTs, the NIPDECs and the other, as you mentioned, special purpose companies who are better suited to do this, so it is really a management role.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I had asked the question when we had dealt with the Judiciary with respect to the refurbishment and under Item 003, Refurbishment of Magistrates' Courts, I see that under 005 which is the one of the Items transferred from the Ministry of Legal Affairs to the AG's office, the Establishment of Chaguanas District Office. Is this the Magistrates' Court or is it a district office of the Ministry of Legal Affairs? If it is a district office of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, what is happening with the refurbishment of the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court?

Hon. Young: Through you, Madam Chair, as you would see at line Item 003, there is a sum of \$8.4 million set aside for Refurbishment of Magistrates' Courts. Again, coming in with just three weeks to prepare the budget, this sum was put here as a specific allocation to then meet with the Judiciary and find out how sums should be allocated towards the refurbishment. You have raised the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court issue, it is something that will be raised with the Judiciary and attract the attention of this Government.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on page 71, line Item 025, Drafting of Campaign Finance Legislation, to the hon. Minister, I am just curious to find out \$1 million for the drafting of a campaign finance legislation. What would that entail?

Hon. Young: Well, I know, through you, Madam Chairman, it may come as a little bit of a shock and a surprise, the former administration spending \$10 million for constitutional reform. But what we intend to do over the next year, and actually starting in January, is start off the campaign finance reform consultation by inviting the OAS to co-host with us a massive conference, and we have already begun discussions with some of jurisdictions—Jamaica, the United States and others that have campaign finance legislation—to come and attend that conference so we can start it, kick it off as an educational process and then continue that process with a move towards legislation that will be implemented before the next time it needs to be utilized in 2020. So this is just for the next fiscal year period.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, Item 011, Fill-out of the Ministry of Legal Affairs Tower, Government Campus, \$2 million has been set aside for it. Could the Acting Attorney General, the hon. Minister, give an idea of how much is required to complete the outfitting of it and when is it due to be completed?

Hon. Young: Yes, actually, again, because of the limited time period within which to prepare these figures, this sum of \$2 million was an allocation by the Ministry of Finance. My understanding is, it will require more than that. We are in the process of doing it. It is actually a contract with UDeCOTT, so UDeCOTT is in charge of outfitting. The UDeCOTT has given a date of a November move for the two Ministries—Legal Affairs and Attorney General—into the tower. I do not think that is realistic having paid a site visit myself. I suspect it will be sometime either in December or early next year that this physical move will be able to take place.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to IDF?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I had my hand up quite a while. I thank you very much. I refer to the line Items that have been transferred on page 72 from the Judiciary to the Ministry of the Attorney General with respect to construction projects. My question is, given that all matters against the State, the Attorney General is made a party to those and therefore is directly before the courts, given the whole principle of the separation of powers, this is where now the Judiciary will have to depend on the said Ministry of the Attorney General to say, “I am building your court”, “I am not building your court”. They will be directly dependent on the same Ministry which will be a party before the court in all matters against the State. And I ask the hon. Minister whether he could give the assurance that whether he is comfortable that there will not be a breach of the separation of powers with respect to these construction projects? The Judiciary is dependent on your Ministry.

Hon. Young: Correct, and that is how it has been traditionally. But it is actually an interesting conversation that you raised because if you left it, let us say it was completely in the hands of the Judiciary and there was a dispute, and it does not go to arbitration, you will then have a situation where the Judiciary is being called upon to decide a dispute with itself and a third party. As I said earlier, and as I was reminded by the hon. Minister of Finance, this is a transitional period. What you have said has been noted and will be taken into account as we go through this transitional period to execute towards the end game.

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

Madam Chairman: Infrastructural Development Fund, Item 005, this is at page 287, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank you the hon. Minister and the members from the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs for attending and assisting the committee. You all are relieved.

Head 28.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Health. This is at page 209 of your *Draft Estimates Details of Recurrent Expenditure*. Head 28, Ministry of Health, \$4,834,775,768. I will now invite the Minister of Health to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

7.20p.m.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, according to Government's policy document, "Let's Do This Together" the vision of the Ministry of Health entails a society with integrity and morality in public life is of the highest priority and the Government of the day serves the public good above all else and where decisions are made and actions taken in the best interest of all concerned. In this regard, a data-based scientific, holistic and evidence-driven support mechanism, driven by compassion and respect for the rights and freedoms of all citizens are key pillars of this development.

In light of the above, Madam Chair, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that the quality of public health care services and the management of health institutions continue to be a major concern to the citizens of this country.

More importantly, the focus of this administration is to modernize the existing facility programme with scientific evidence-driven strategies complemented with an efficient, well-managed health care system that is capable of delivering health care services in accordance with global standards. Critical to this effort is collaboration amongst all stakeholders within the health system to ensure the delivery of a first-class health care system.

Madam Chair, before I close my opening statement, I was recently asked by a media practitioner what did I find when I went into the Ministry of Health and I knew what they were trying to get from me. And my answer was, what I found in the Ministry of Health was a team of dedicated professionals whose only objective is to help this administration modernize the health care system.

My team is behind me ready and willing to support, and I must mention the role played by the Permanent Secretary who joined the Ministry of the Health with me on the same day. So I pay tribute to them and I am now ready to answer questions. Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 28 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,834,775,768 for Head 28: Ministry of Health 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*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001 General Administration.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair, and may I congratulate the team from the Ministry of Health for the good job they had done and are also doing as we speak?

Just one thing, Minister and Minister of Finance, I notice there is a decrease in the allocations for salaries and cost of living allowances. Could you just give me a slight explanation as to why is this, and when we are going to commission the Couva Children Hospital and other hospitals?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Are you referring to line Item 01?

Mr. Imbert: Ditto.

Dr. Khan: Ditto?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under the Item would you be giving a list of all those who are employed and those who are sent home? Minister, this decrease in the Item, are you going to give us a list of those who are employed and those who are going to be sent home? Because there is a reduction in the salary.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member for Caroni East is like a recurring decimal. This Item involves arrears and, therefore, you cannot draw any conclusion unless you see the build-up of the figures. I give an undertaking, as I have given now 19 times, that on every Item of Personnel Expenditure you will get a breakdown. So you will see if it is increased salaries, increased responsibilities, increased employment, or arrears.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that goes for all the regional health authorities?

Mr. Imbert: Everything.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 004 Vertical Services; Item 005 North-West Regional Health Authority; Item 006 North-Central Regional Health Authority; Item 007 Eastern Regional Health Authority; Item 008 South-West Regional Health Authority; Item 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention. And the undertaking by the hon. Minister of Finance with respect to Personnel Expenditure binds all of these Items.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001 General Administration.

Dr. Khan: Just one more thing, the heading 16, I notice there is an increase of \$15 million for Contract Employment. Could you indicate what positions would be given to that heading? Also training has decreased by \$3 million plus. I would like to know exactly why is that?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you for the question. The answer is that is to cover the graduate employment and when we also get the six-year rolling plan.

Dr. Khan: So, could I ask the six-year—

Hon. Deyalsingh: If you want more details we could—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: About six-year plan and the position for the six-year plan.

Hon. Deyalsingh: We could provide that to you in writing. Thank you.

Dr. Khan: And training, Minister?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, in writing. Thank you.

Dr. Khan: Training decrease.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the hon. Minister give an idea of the graduate employment that you would need in this area? How many that you contemplate having graduate employment? And if you speak about graduate employment, what type of graduates are you looking for to fill these positions in the Ministry?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, for the 22nd time, for the 22nd time, I am going to issue guidelines to each Ministry, with respect to the type of persons they should employ and the terms and conditions of employment for graduate employment. That will take place shortly after this. I have said that now for 22 times. Do I have to say it 44 times?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we are running out of time. I am now going to put the question.

Question put.

[Continuous interruption and crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, not at all. Madam Chair, we object to that.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We object.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, and I note your objection.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Undemocratic.

Madam Chairman: The Standing Orders are quite clear; that five days have been allotted to this process. The Standing Orders are also quite clear that at 7.50 p.m., and if we are not familiar with our Standing Orders; Standing Order 81(6) and 81(7) govern this process. So I now put the question.

Question again put.

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Hon. Members: No. Division.

Dr. Khan: We want a division.

Dr. Tewarie: We want a division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Deyalsingh, T.

Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.

Hinds, F.

Young, S.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.

Forde, E.

Cuffie, M.

Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.

Olivierre, Miss N.

Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.

Garcia, A.

Smith, D.

Mitchell, R.

Francis, Dr. L.

Leonce, A.

Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.

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Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Ramadhar, P.

Karim, F.

Rambachan, Dr. S.

Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.

Tewarie, Dr. B.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Lee, Dr. D.

Indarsingh, R.

Ramdial, Miss R.

Singh, G.

Khan, Dr. F.

Charles, R.

Padarath, B.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Paray, R.

Question agreed to.

Head 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Madam Chairman: I thank the hon. Minister and the Members of the Ministry of Health for their assistance. They are relieved.

Head 17.

Question proposed: That Head 17 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Mr. Singh: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

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Imbert, C.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Deyalsingh, T.

Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.

Hinds, F.

Young, S.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.

Forde, E.

Cuffie, M.

Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.

Olivierre, Miss N.

Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.

Garcia, A.

Smith, D.

Mitchell, R.

Francis, Dr. L.

Leonce, A.

Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Ramadhar, P.

Karim, F.

Rambachan, Dr. S.

Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.

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Tewarie, Dr. B.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Lee, Dr. D.

Indarsingh, R.

Ramdial, Miss R.

Singh, G.

Khan, Dr. F.

Charles, R.

Padarath, B.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Paray, R.

Question agreed to.

Head 17 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

7.35p.m.

Head 35.

Question proposed: That Head 35 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Deyalsingh, T.

Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.

Hinds, F.

Young, S.

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Monday, October 19, 2015

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.

Forde, E.

Cuffie, M.

Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.

Olivierre, Miss N.

Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.

Garcia, A.

Smith, D.

Mitchell, R.

Francis, Dr. L.

Leonce, A.

Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Ramadhar, P.

Karim, F.

Rambachan, Dr. S.

Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.

Tewarie, Dr. B.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Lee, Dr. D.

Indarsingh, R.

Ramdial, Miss R.

Singh, G.

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Khan, Dr. F.

Charles, R.

Padarath, B.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Paray, R.

Question agreed to.

Head 35 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Tourism.

Head 62.

Question proposed: That Head 62 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Deyalsingh, T.

Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.

Hinds, F.

Young, S.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.

Forde, E.

Cuffie, M.

Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.

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Olivierre, Miss N.

Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.

Garcia, A.

Smith, D.

Mitchell, R.

Francis, Dr. L.

Leonce, A.

Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Ramadhar, P.

Karim, F.

Rambachan, Dr. S.

Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.

Tewarie, Dr. B.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Lee, Dr. D

Indarsingh, R.

Ramdial, Miss R.

Singh, G.

Khan, Dr. F.

Charles, R.

Padarath, B.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Paray, R.

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Question agreed to.

Head 62 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you representatives of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts for coming.

Head 65.

Question proposed: That Head 65 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Deyalsingh, T.

Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.

Hinds, F.

Young, S.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.

Forde, E.

Cuffie, M.

Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.

Olivierre, Miss N.

Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.

Garcia, A.

Smith, D.

Mitchell, R.

Appropriation Bill, 2015

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Francis, Dr. L.

Leonce, A.

Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Ramadhar, P.

Karim, F.

Rambachan, Dr. S.

Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.

Tewarie, Dr. B.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Lee, Dr. D.

Indarsingh, R.

Ramdial, Miss R.

Singh, G.

Khan, Dr. F.

Charles, R.

Padarath, B.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Paray, R.

Question agreed to.

Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the members of the Ministry for coming to this meeting.

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Head 13.

Question proposed: That Head 13 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Deyalsingh, T.

Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.

Hinds, F.

Young, S.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.

Forde, E.

Cuffie, M.

Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.

Olivierre, Miss N.

Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.

Garcia, A.

Smith, D.

Mitchell, R.

Francis, Dr. L.

Leonce, A.

Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

Appropriation Bill, 2015

Monday, October 19, 2015

NOES

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Ramadhari, P.

Karim, F.

Rambachan, Dr. S.

Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.

Tewarie, Dr. B.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Lee, Dr. D.

Indarsingh, R.

Ramdial, Miss R.

Singh, G.

Khan, Dr. F.

Charles, R.

Padarath, B.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Paray, R.

Question agreed to.

Head 13 is ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Now, for considerations the clauses of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put: That the Bill be read a third time. [*Interruption*]

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Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, may we have some order please? Hon. Members, at this time, the meeting of the House is suspended. We shall revert here in about 10 minutes.

7.51p.m: *Sitting suspended.*

7.59 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

**SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, pursuant to Standing Order 89(2), I have appointed the following Members to serve on the sessional select committees of the House of Representatives for the First Session 2015/2016 of the Eleventh Parliament.

Standing Orders Committee

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	-	Member
Mr. Anthony Garcia	-	Member
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith	-	Member
Dr. Fuad Khan	-	Member
Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh	-	Member

House Committee

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	-	Chairman
Mr. Colm Imbert	-	Member
Maj. Gen. Edmond Dillon	-	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member
Dr. Roodal Moonilal	-	Member
Dr. Lackram Bodoie	-	Member

Committee of Privileges

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	-	Member

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Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	-	Member
Mr. Stuart Young	-	Member
Dr. Roodal Moonilal	-	Member
Mr. Ganga Singh	-	Member

Statutory Instruments Committee

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Miss Nicole Olivierre	-	Member
Mr. Stuart Young	-	Member
Dr. Lovell Francis	-	Member
Dr. Fuad Khan	-	Member
Mr. Rushton Paray	-	Member

Business Committee

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Mr. Colm Imbert	-	Member
Mrs. Camille-Robinson Regis	-	Member
Mrs. Cherry-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn	-	Member
Dr. Roodal Moonilal	-	Member
Mr. David Lee	-	Member

I now call on the Leader of the House. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I crave your indulgence to congratulate the Minister of Finance. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, I would like to ask that having regard to the fact that the Parliament was still engaged in the budgetary process, I beg to move that the time for the appointment by the House of Representatives of Members of Joint Select Committees pursuant to section 66(a) of the Constitution be extended to Friday, November 13, 2015.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjournment

Monday, October 19, 2015

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, at this point I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, before I put the question, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate those of you who have made your maiden contribution during this first budget debate of the Eleventh Parliament. As the Speaker, it was an honour to serve as Chair of the Standing Finance Committee of this House which, as you are aware, is a relatively new initiative.

I appreciated what I interpreted as your robust enthusiasm for effective Parliamentary scrutiny that was evident over the past five days. To me, it is a clear signal that this session will generate vigorous participation by both sides in the work of committees, especially the financial and administration oversight committees soon to be appointed.

Hon. Members, on your behalf, I also thank the many accounting officers, Permanent Secretaries and technocrats from the various Ministries for their support to the Standing Finance Committee. [*Desk thumping*] Not to be left out is the Director of Budgets and the staff of the Budgets Division [*Desk thumping*] as well as the Government Printer and the staff of the Government Printery [*Desk thumping*] who worked tirelessly to ensure that the budget documents were prepared on time.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.07 p.m.