



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

3rd Session – 11th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 14 – Number 10

OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)

THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISSETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Thursday 19th October, 2017

CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON-MEIGUEL

EDITOR: LILA RODRIGUEZ-ROBERTS
Telephone: 623-4494

(TYPESET BY THE HANSARD STAFF, PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CARONI,
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO— 2022)

CONTENTS

	Page
APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2018) BILL, 2017	
[Sixth Day]	
Standing Finance Committee 	313
... 	426

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 19, 2017

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2018) BILL, 2017

[Sixth Day]

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

[*Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George*]

1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now resumed and we are now considering Head 15, the Tobago House of Assembly.

Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly, \$2,175,683,000.

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

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, without prejudice to section 75(1) of the Constitution, the Tobago House of Assembly shall, in relation to Tobago, be responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy in respect of the matter set out in the Fifth Schedule.

The Deputy Chief Secretary and Secretary for Finance and the Economy in his budget presentation for the fiscal 2017/2018 indicated that the budgetary proposals were predicated on the following thematic areas: building economic resilience, fostering innovation and creativity, supporting our tourism industry, revitalizing our agricultural sector, developing our human capital, providing housing opportunities, enhancing health care delivery, fostering and stimulating rural development, holistic development of young adults, preserving our pristine natural environment, and empowering and building communities.

Divisions were realigned and one new division created for greater efficiency and achievement of the strategic mandate using the existing complement of staff. The staff complement is as follows: total number of the public officers, 1,707; total number of vacant positions, 1,075—551 with bodies, 524 without bodies; total number of contract employees 1,827; total number of short-term employees, 266; total number of daily rated, 7,725.

Madam Chairman, a consultant has been engaged to perform performance management systems, increase in the internal audit staff, establishment of the procurement unit in anticipation of the procurement legislation, and assessing proposals for the Assembly's accounting framework. All financial statements of the Tobago House of Assembly, up to financial year ended September 30, 2016, have been submitted to the Auditor General. The Tobago House of Assembly is also being asked to share in the burden of adjustment, and reductions will require the THA to suppress expenditure and utilize the facility of virement and transfers of funding to meet critical needs to address any shortfalls in areas which are critical to the revitalization strategies.

Madam Chairman, we would also like to indicate that the Tobago House of Assembly is particularly pleased that in the statement made by the Minister of Finance that consideration is being given to the THA being allowed to borrow on its own and not through the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 15 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,175,683,000 for Head 15, Tobago House of Assembly, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditures*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Member?

Dr. Rambachan: Can we ask the question of something that the Minister said in her presentation for clarification?

Madam Chairman: Well, I would think that if maybe you could tie it to a line Item, I would have no difficulty. Okay? Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies which is page 64, but I would want to suggest Members that we go straight to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of Assembly* for the very reason that the first thing is just a summary and the details are in the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure* and we are at page 11, Division 01 - Assembly Legislature. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 11; 001, General Administration. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, one simple question. Can you tell me the number of employees directly hired by the House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: We had given that information last year. What is the category of employees you wish?

Dr. Rambachan: The full—

Hon. Imbert: No, but what do you want?

Mr. Charles: Permanent, contract and daily-paid workers.

Hon. Imbert: All right. I will give you the information that we have. Total number of public officers 1,707; total number of contract employees 1,827; total number of short-term employees 266; total number of daily rated workers, 7,725.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central. Okay, Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Would the Minister care to tell us what percentage of workers in Tobago are employed directly first by the THA, given these figures, and indirectly subsequently.

Hon. Imbert: I do not think we can provide that kind of information.

Mr. Charles: Is it 70 per cent, 80 per cent?

Hon. Imbert: We cannot provide that kind of information. I can provide you the number of employees in the Assembly which I have done, and that is what we can do.

Mr. Charles: So, as Minister of Finance you have no sense of what proportion of the population—

Hon. Imbert: That is not relevant to the line Item under discussion.

Mr. Charles: It is because it is part of the planning in Tobago, but—

Hon. Imbert: Well, I will defer to the Chairman on this, but I cannot speak about the demographics of Tobago, the population of Tobago.

Mr. Charles: But you must have a sense—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I will defer to you on this.

Madam Chairman: Member, I think that is information that maybe somebody could get from CSO as far as the total population and then do their calculations. Member for Naparima, you are okay?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite. Okay, so we go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 11; 001, General Administration, pages 11 and 12. Sub-Head 03—Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: 02.

Madam Chairman: Head 02, 001, General Administration.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, just two questions. One has to do with 28, Other Contracted Services—no, no, sorry. My error. Janitorial Services and the reason I ask is that I noticed in most of the other entities that we have examined we have seen an increase for this Item and I just wanted the amount—although there is no increase I just wanted the amount explained. And the second issue is that I wanted to understand if there was a constituency office—this is line Item 64—for each Assemblyman who has a ministerial or a secretarial portfolio?

Hon. Imbert: Well, Madam Chairman, I am a little confused on the first Item because there has been no change. I am not sure, therefore, what the question is; and the second question was not clear either. What exactly is the issue with constituency offices?

Dr. Tewarie: No, I just wanted to know if this is representing the cost of all the secretaries in the—

Hon. Imbert: No, this would be just like the national Parliament. This would be a provision to deal with the elected Members of the House of Representatives.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, so it is their offices?

Hon. Imbert: Elected. Just as the same way that local government representatives have offices in Trinidad, Members of Parliament have offices, then in addition, the elected members of the House of Assembly would have offices.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So it would be for each. All right.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Contract Employment, I noticed that the salaries under personnel is \$4.3 million, but Contract Employment amounts to \$2 million, why is Contract Employment so high? Madam Chair, I know we did not deal with the summary pages, but the Contract Employment in the summary page is \$220 million. That is the page we skipped before we came to page 11. So my general question: Why is Contract Employment so high in the Tobago House of Assembly?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Hon. Imbert: I can answer that. The number of vacant positions at present is 1,075. So that there is a delay in the appointment of public officers as applies in Trinidad as well.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 12; 001, General Administration. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item number 66, under General Administration, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions, I noticed that the amount spent was 1.488 and the estimate was 1.5.

Madam Chairman: Member, we are at Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, I will come to it again.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 12; 007, General Administration, page 12. Division 02 - Office of the Chief Secretary; Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 13; 001, General Administration, page 13. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, that 01, is the salary of the Chief Secretary and the Assemblymen in that \$4.5 million?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Rambachan: Where would one find it?

Hon. Imbert: Under Legislature.

Dr. Rambachan: In this very document?

Hon. Imbert: This book. [*Hon. Imbert displays book*]

Dr. Rambachan: Where?

Hon. Imbert: In this book. [*Hon. Imbert displays book*] When we get to that we could deal with it.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?

Hon. Imbert: When we get to that Item, we could deal with it.

Dr. Rambachan: Sure. No problem.

Madam Chairman: Member, when we looked at Division 01 - Assembly Legislature, Sub-Head 002, Information, page 14. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 34, University Graduate Recruitment Programme. I see a decrease of \$1 million, but throughout all other Heads you had allocated to maintain this line Item in the different Heads, but in Tobago House of Assembly I see it has been done away with.

Hon. Imbert: I am somewhat confused at what you said. There is no increase.

Mr. Lee: No, I said that you have decreased it. It is no longer a line Item for 2018.

Hon. Imbert: It has been removed.

Mr. Lee: Yes, it has been removed, but in the other Heads that we have done so far it has been maintained even though the Government of the day has not done anything about it or instituted it.

Hon. Imbert: The House of Assembly is a semi-autonomous body. They can address this issue in the way that they deem appropriate. They do not have to follow Trinidad.

Mr. Lee: Okay, they do not have to follow Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mr. Lee: They are a law unto themselves.

Hon. Imbert: Semi-autonomous. They are not a law unto themselves. That is a bad statement you just made.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Official Overseas Travel, No. 27, I would like to find out what overseas travel was involved for the \$400,000 fully spent—completely spent.

Madam Chairman: Okay Member, we are still on 002. I know the print is quite fine. Okay, so are we finished with 002? And if so, I will go on to 007, Public Administration. Member for Tabaquite, you can now ask your question. We are on page 15.

Dr. Rambachan: All right we have gone fast, so they got away. But you see, Madam Chair, with your permission, going through the Items like this is important, I agree, but in the summary pages the real expenditures of the Tobago House of Assembly can be seen. When you look at individual Items of Contract Employment, on each one of these categories of the different Secretariats that is one thing, but when you look at page 4 and you see Contract Employment in 2017 of \$220 million and the Minister says there are 1,075 persons employed under

Contract Employment I am trying to equate \$220 million with 1,075 persons, and that is where my difficulty is coming. So if I am a little behind, it is because I am trying to reflect and see how are these figures tallying because \$220 million on Contract Employment is in my view a very large sum for a place like Tobago.

Madam Chairman: But your question just now was in respect to overseas travel?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, but that has gone. You had gone past that. So I am now on page 15 with you and I am back to Contract Employment, and here you have Contract Employment of \$5 million and now a budget of 3.3, and I ask the question again because I cannot reconcile 1,075 persons—unless I have something missing—to that very bigger figure of \$220 million.

Hon. Imbert: We are not speaking about that. We are on page 15, line Item—

Dr. Rambachan: Line 16.

Hon. Imbert:—16, which is a figure of \$3.3 million. So I do not know why you are using a different number.

Dr. Rambachan: Maybe I should have sought the permission of the hon. Chairman to really deal with the summary pages where the breakdown of Estimates are given in total so you would have a total view of what is happening in the Assembly and not this disparate way.

Madam Chairman: But Member, may it help you then if you ask how many people are employed under this—

Dr. Rambachan: I asked that and that is the whole question. I asked that and he said 1,075.

Hon. Imbert: No, I did not say that. I said there are 1,827 contract workers.

Dr. Rambachan: All right. So even 1,875 total.

Hon. Imbert: 1,827.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. Good. And even that in total of the contract workers that should equate to the \$220 million being spent on Contract Employment as given on page 4 of the Assembly document and I am finding it difficulty reconciling it, and therefore, I am saying that a clear enough picture is not being given to the taxpayers of this country, and Tobago, who are contributing to the expenditure of Tobago under the law.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask what line Item is the Member on?

Madam Chairman: The Member is on Item 16 on page 15.

Hon. Imbert: And the figure there is \$3,329,000, not \$200 million.

Madam Chairman: Member, would it assist you if you found out how many people were engaged—

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, I would move on, but I find it disconcerting that we cannot deal with the global figure which reflects really what the expenditure on Contract Employment is in Tobago unless there is some other explanation. So I will move on.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at Item 16, Contract Employment and Item 22. The first one is \$3.3 million and Short-term Employment 837, and I am trying to understand, Madam Chair, why this reliance on contract and short-term employee? Is there something that we do not understand?

Hon. Imbert: I answered that. I said the Public Service Commission has been tardy in filling the posts on the establishment hence the need to hire people on contract—I explained that—and that there are 1,075 vacancies on the permanent establishment that have not been filled by the service commission.

Dr. Rambachan: So the follow-up question—and it would not be allowed, I know—is that why do we not correct that problem if we have a problem that creates this situation? And we are asking the question why this—because it cannot be an optimal way of operating a public service, and I go on.

Hon. Imbert: Perhaps you want to move on to the next Item?

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me just ask on Item 16, Contract Employments for the \$3.3 million, how many individuals this applies to and also the Short-Term Employment? If we can get that in writing or you have it now.

Hon. Imbert: We will get it for you.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, we have the answer?

Hon. Imbert: No. I said I will provide it for him.

Madam Chairman: In writing?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, yes. Of course.

Madam Chairman: Okay. We did not understand that.

Dr. Rambachan: I am sorry.

Madam Chairman: That is all right. 008, Tobago Emergency Management Agency, pages 15 and 16. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just a follow-up on a question that was asked by the Member for Caroni Central under line Item 37 on page 16. I just wanted to have a sense, Minister. We have an increase here by 50,000, but I wanted to have a sense whether—similarly with other Ministries and agencies we saw that there were outstanding bills that accounted for increases under this particular vote across the board and when I look further down, which we will come to, it is a similar pattern developing here at the Tobago House of Assembly. Can you indicate whether or not this is MTS, whether these are private service providers, and whether or not these increases represent moneys or funds to be utilized for outstanding bills?

Hon. Imbert: Private contractors.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, can we then have a list of who these private contractors are?

Hon. Imbert: It will be provided for you.

Mr. Padarath: And the values of these contracts and the time period, please.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Occupational Safety and Health, page 16; Item 010, Information Systems Department, page 17. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 16, Contract Employment. The question is: Could we ask for all, the contract employees?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Right. And in response to the Minister, in Trinidad all the other Ministries—if the problem is the service commission, why do we not see a profusion of contract employees in the other Ministries, like Foreign Affairs, for example? He is in charge, so go ahead. We will deal with it. He is in charge.

Madam Chairman: So Minister, no response?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chair, the point is the Government has no control over the Public Service Commission. It is an independent body under the Constitution appointed by His Excellency in his discretion. The Government has no *locus*, cannot influence the service commission in any way in terms of filling positions.

And as the hon. Attorney General has reminded me, there are Privy Council decisions to this, and therefore, it is wrong of the Member to imply that the Government could somehow compel the service commission to fill these vacancies.

Mr. Charles: You clearly did not understand what I said. I did not say to compel.

Dr. Rambachan. And that is why I have asked for this—

Mr. Charles: I just asked why it is not applicable to Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I do not know why the Member is behaving this way. I am simply explaining very calmly. There is no need to get on like that, and that is why I have asked since this is the work—

Mr. Charles: Let us move on. Let us move on, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, you had your say. Madam Chair, he had his say, I will like to have mine.

Mr. Charles: Can I have my say after you have your say?

Hon. Imbert: And therefore, can we move on, please?

Madam Chairman: Members, let us move on. Minister of Finance, I think after having that comprehensive answer, I am sure this question is now resolved. Sometimes we need to all be reminded.

Hon. Imbert: I agree.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Please. 011, Planning, page 17; 012, Land Management, page 18; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 18; 001, General Administration, page 18; 002, Information, page 18; 007, Public Administration, page 19; 008, Tobago Emergency Management Agency, page 19. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, through you, to the hon. Minister, line Item 04. With respect to the decrease in the area of Minor Equipment for TEMA I know up to today TEMA has had to address several issues, could the hon. Minister indicate whether or not this would affect the operations of TEMA in terms of delivery to the people of Tobago with respect to emergency case situations?

Hon. Imbert: What exactly is the—could you repeat that?

Mr. Padarath: What is the operations of TEMA? We have a decrease of Other Minor Equipment of \$700,000. I noted that up to today that TEMA has been involved in several emergency cases in Tobago and I am wondering how this would affect their operations.

Hon. Imbert: The Tobago House of Assembly gets its funding in a block vote and they have their authority to move money around between Heads. I am certain if they require equipment, perhaps a vehicle or something like that, they will make the appropriate adjustments. It is not a large sum. In the context of a \$2 billion allocation, 87,000 is not a huge sum. I am sure they can find that money from another Head if it is necessary.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Occupational Health and Safety, page 19; Item 010, Information Systems Department, page 19; Item 011, Planning, page 20. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Can I ask, Madam Chair, if the powers made available by the planning and facilitation Bill have been transferred to the House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: That would have required proclamation of the relevant section. I am not aware that that was done.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, I would like to say that that section of this Bill has not been proclaimed. The only sections that have been proclaimed thus far dealt with the development of the administration. So that question is not relevant.

Hon. Imbert: He knows that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, you have another question?

Dr. Tewarie: No, I would just respond by saying the question cannot be deemed to be not relevant. I got the answer.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. 012, Land Management, page 20; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 20; 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister care to tell us what is this partnership for political and economic? It does not continue, so I would imagine—the budget is 04 and it is 300,000. I just want to know what it is.

2.00 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: You want to know what that is?

Mr. Charles: Yes. What does that expenditure relates to?

Hon. Imbert: Apparently this is expenditure related to the new arrangements for Tobago in terms of internal self-government and so on. So it is part of that process.

Mr. Charles: Okay. And with respect to 005, Non-Profit Institutions, could we just get a list of the organizations involved subsequently?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: No, it was asked, Madam Chair.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister, line Item 01, similarly, a follow-up to Naparima and Tabaquite, not only a list, but also if we can be provided with the amounts that have been given to these non-profit organizations over the past financial year. And 02, if you could provide some clarity in terms of what is the role, function, operations of this Ecclesiasties Desk.

Madam Chairman: Minister, are you in a position to give a response with respect to the nature of the Ecclesiasties Desk?

Hon. Imbert: Assistance to churches. Assistance to religious bodies.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I have a question under 007.

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached there as yet. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 03, what is meant by Representation office and who are the beneficiaries of this annual amount of \$250,000? Tobago freeness. Freeness, free money.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that this is an allocation to assist with minor upgrades to constituency offices.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, just to go back to line Item 02, the Ecclesiasties Desk, I would like to have some further clarification on this. Is it an operational unit that is involved at the THA or is this sum of 250—quarter of a

million dollars representative of contributions that have been made to religious organizations? And if so, if we can have a provision of who these organizations were and the sums that were allocated over the past fiscal year totalling \$250,000.

Hon. Imbert: Donations, so we will give you a list.

Mr. Padarath: Donations. Okay.

Hon. Imbert: You will recall that your Government did that as well in an effort to win the 2015 election which failed. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, you still have a question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I have a question under 007.

Madam Chairman: 007, we have not reached there as yet. Are we finished with 005, Non-Profit Institutions? Okay, so we are moving on to 007, Transfers to Households. Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could we have a clarification of 33, Urgent Temporary Assistance? What is that and how is this \$1 million going to be spent in 2018?

Hon. Imbert: This is what is colloquially known as “food cards”. Conditional cash transfer I believe is the official name and also known as “food cards” for needy people.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, Mr. Minister, if I could just follow through with, through the Chair, the criteria for such in Tobago falls under or falls in line with the Ministry of Social Development’s criteria?

Hon. Imbert: In accordance with the Tobago House of Assembly Act, this is one of the delegated authorities to the Assembly.

Madam Chairman: 009, Other Transfers, page 21. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I suspect 01 line Item is incomplete so I do not know what it means, Establishment of Comprehensive Economic what? And could you tell us what that money—the moneys have been allocated so far for the last two years, what have been the outcomes, the achievements of it and what is \$1.6 million going to be used for again? So I do not know what is the economic something, it is missing.

Hon. Imbert: Well, that is a very long question. The answer is very short. This is for strategic planning. The THA is constantly trying to improve itself and to generate economic activity in Tobago.

Mr. Karim: So the THA, they are spending \$4.8 million in three years to do a strategic plan? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Imbert: It is for strategic planning.

Mr. Karim: Yeah, strategic planning, yes I know. Strategic planning, I understand, \$4.8 million.

Hon. Imbert: I got the question and I will deal with that in context now. I think the gentleman to your left could have spent a couple hundred million dollars on this same exercise in Trinidad.

Mr. Karim: I am asking you the question.

Hon. Imbert: Strategic planning.

Mr. Karim: \$4.8 million?

Hon. Imbert: That is essential in a \$2 billion budget. To spend four—and not even \$4 million, “yuh have it wrong”; \$1.6 million to plan strategically how to use \$2 billion is money well spent.

Mr. Karim: You know the mathematics well, I am doing the addition so—and you are very good at that. Madam Chair, can I go on to line Item 02, please?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Karim: To get some details as to what this information technology limited for \$5 million has been allocated to do? I am saying it slowly, \$5 million. If we could get an idea as to the impact of it?

Hon. Imbert: That is something that we are seeking to pursue in Trinidad as well, the use of call centres as an area to generate activity and employment. This for a call centre—establishment of a call centre in Tobago and Tobago has really been quite successful in this area.

Mr. Karim: Might you be able to indicate, through you, Madam Chair, if it has been quite successful, how many persons have been able to—

Hon. Imbert: No, they have attracted a call centre. That is why you have the \$5 million there for 2018. Obviously, there is nothing in 2017 so you could not have done anything before.

Mr. Karim: I was just using the English language that you used.

Hon. Imbert: All right, thank you.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Mr. Karim: But I could get a sense as to what is the projected amount of jobs that this \$5 million allocation—

Hon. Imbert: Okay, you want the number of jobs. What else? That is all, jobs? Anything else?

Dr. Tewarie: The amount of investment?

Mr. Karim: No, he said \$5 million allocated.

Hon. Imbert: We will give you the information on the number of jobs and the kind of work being done.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Back to the Establishment of Comprehensive Economic, I suggest—is the last word “plan” or is the last word “planning”.

Hon. Imbert: I beg your pardon?

Dr. Rambachan: Under 009, 01, is it Establishment of Comprehensive Economic “planning” or “plan”?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: No. Is it “plan” or “planning”?

Hon. Imbert: “Plan”.

Dr. Rambachan: Is there a document that has been produced that therefore reflects the plan?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, yes, I have seen it.

Dr. Rambachan: Is this a document that has been done internally or by consultants?

Hon. Imbert: A combination of both.

Dr. Rambachan: Who are the consultants and will the Minister care to name the consultants?

Hon. Imbert: Anything else you want to know?

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I do not want to engage in any tit for tat with you, but you know you made a statement here just now—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman—

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, hold on—suggesting—

Hon. Imbert: What this is all about? Why is he haranguing me? Why is he haranguing me?

Dr. Rambachan: You see, if you make a statement, you must allow us to respond to the statement.

Hon. Imbert: What is this all about?

Dr. Rambachan: No, but, Madam Chairman, there is fairness involved in this.

Hon. Imbert: Fairness in what?

Madam Chairman: All right, I just want to say this to all us of here. I think we are still in the season of light and I think we are engaged in a process of bringing light and therefore, if we could all take a little look at our individual attitudes and see how much lighting, not lightening, how much lighting there is. Please, so I would ask all Members.

Hon. Imbert: In view of the fact that the Member has a long list of questions, we will provide the answer in writing and this is why I am asking you, is there anything else you want to know. So that the scribes will take note of your questions and you will get a written answer. [*Crosstalk*] The scribes, the scribes, the people who are recording what is going on.

Dr. Rambachan: No scribes took note of the questions asked by the casino workers outside of your house yesterday.

Hon. Imbert: You sent them?

Madam Chairman: Again, Members, remember I talk about the—[*Crosstalk*] Excuse me? We move on. Division 03 - Finance and the Economy: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 22; General Administration, page 22. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma'am, I really wanted to ask a question on the section before 009, would you allow me?

Madam Chairman: On this one occasion.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, as again, I said, if we—and I am not accusing anybody, but if we try and focus, I think we will all get far. Okay? And this is the only question I am allowing us and we are moving on.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, and I want to preface this by saying to the Minister of Finance that the question is asked not in mischief, I am just trying to establish something. [*Crosstalk*] No, it is not in mischief. If it is in mischief, I would ask it.

Madam Chairman: Member, I take you at your word.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. The \$5 million here is for the Tobago Information Technology—[*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: You are on 002?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. And when he asked what questions would you like answered, the Member for Chaguanas East said employees and I said investment and he acted as if it is not an appropriate—I am interpreting—question. But the reason I wanted to ask is because this is a state investment of \$5 million and I wanted to know if there was any—he said that there was a company, there were workers, so I wanted to know if there was a private sector investment also attached to this. That is all.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. So I think that is by way of clarification, okay, so I think that the Minister would have got—Minister, are you in a position to answer that?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, I can answer and the answer is no.

Mr. Singh: A follow up on that question.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and as I said, this is the last thing we are taking on this.

Mr. Singh: Yeah, sure. What was the procurement process for the acquisition of that private investor?

Hon. Imbert: I said there was not one.

Mr. Singh: “Was not one, or.”

Hon. Imbert: Was not. The answer is no. No means no, it does not mean yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Division 03 - Finance and the Economy: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 22; 001, General Administration, page 22. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question in 003, Customs. Can I ask that question?

Madam Chairman: No. We are at 001, General Administration; 002, Finance and Accounting; 003, Customs. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, I am taking line Item 01 under 003 Customs and 03 together. I am assuming it is inter-related? Salaries for 01 for Customs, I am assuming these are Custom Officers? Is that correct?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Lee: So 01, the salaries for Custom Officers at \$380,000 estimated for 2018. First question is, how many officers this applies to and then line Item 03, the overtime for these same officers of \$4.5 million in overtime. Why is there such a wide disparity between overtime and the actual salary? Eleven times higher in the overtime than the actual salaries of the officers.

Hon. Imbert: First Item is for administrative staff, second Item is for the actual officers themselves who get paid for working on weekends, beyond normal working hours, on public holidays, et cetera, as occurs in Trinidad.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, I know. So 01 is administrative staff, it does not apply to Custom Officers.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, office staff. The overtime is paid to the officers who actually do the Customs inspection, same as Trinidad.

Mr. Lee: Yeah. So their salaries of overtime would not apply to the Trinidad allocation under the Ministry of Finance for Customs?

Hon. Imbert: The Tobago House of Assembly has delegated authority under the Tobago House of Assembly Act under the Fifth Schedule. Check it out.

Mr. Charles: I thought National Security—

Hon. Imbert: This is the Ministry of Finance, to the Member for Naparima who is talking over there. Customs is a division of the Ministry of Finance, not National Security. *Comprendre?* [Laughter]

Mr. Lee: I did not ask for national—I was dealing with the Minister of Finance, Naparima, you would have to, you know. So can I get how many officers this overtime applies to, please?

Madam Chairman: Would the answer be provided in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Pointe-e-Pierre, are you finished? Okay, so can we go on to 004, Inland Revenue, page 23; Co-operatives, page 23; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 23 and 24; 002, Finance and Accounting, page 24; 003, Customs, pages 24 and 25; 004,

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Inland Revenue, page 25; 007, Fiscal Policy Research Unit, page 25; 008, Budget Division, page 26; 011, Business Development Unit, page 26. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Contract Employment in the Business Development Unit, I would like to know whether under those officers, are there any officers employed to give the Tobago House of Assembly advice on the loans that they now have permission to borrow?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: Line Item 16.

Hon. Imbert: No.

Madam Chairman: 012, Consumer Affairs, pages 26 and 27; 013, Co-operatives; 015, Financial Literacy Secretariat, pages 27 and 28. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Item 16, what do these people do in this Financial Literacy Secretariat and how many persons have benefited from this Unit of \$1.751 million?

Hon. Imbert: Going backwards? “Yuh gone back to another page?”

Dr. Rambachan: No, page 27.

Hon. Imbert: Page 27. Yeah, but what line Item are you on?

Dr. Rambachan: 16.

Hon. Imbert: Contract Employment?

Dr. Rambachan: This is the Financial Literacy Secretariat. I want to know what are these people doing, these contract employees.

Hon. Imbert: Fifty thousand dollars?

Dr. Rambachan: \$1.5 million. Contract Employment.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. This is an outreach programme assisting businesses and individuals to become financially literate and these contract employees engage in training and other outreach efforts.

Dr. Rambachan: And I suppose you could provide us with a comprehensive list of the number of programmes held, the number of persons who benefited.

Hon. Imbert: Sure.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. You are finished with Financial Literacy Secretariat?

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we are now calling 016, Youth Energised for Success, page 28. Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair. Could the Minister tell us what is this Youth Energised for Success focused on and under Contract Employment, how many persons are employed and under the Short-term Employment? Because I see Contract Employment, there is an allocation of \$148,000 and Short-term Employment, there is an allocation of \$1.5 million.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Indarsingh: What is the focus of Youth Energized for Success?

Hon. Imbert: We will put it to you in writing. But I want to make the point, Madam Chairman, this is not new. These programmes have been here for years and this same question was asked last year and an answer given, but we will do it again.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the hon. Minister of Finance could add to that to tell us for this investment of \$2 million for the last fiscal, how many youths have been successfully energized? So we could know the return on the investment.

Hon. Imbert: I will let you know how many youths were energized. You want it in energy levels too? [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: 017, Emergency Social—Member for Princes Town, do you have a question under 016?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, going back again on the areas of Short-Term Employment, line 22 and Contract Employment, line 16, the Youth Energised for Success, what is the mandate? But more importantly, what benchmark do you use in terms of measuring these mandates in terms of the success of it?

Hon. Imbert: I have just indicated we will provide you with details on the programme, purpose, intent, successes, et cetera. So we will give you a document that will explain all of that.

Madam Chairman: 017, Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit; 018, Communication Unit, page 29. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair? Could the Minister just give us under 28, Other Contracted Services, what this \$1.4 million—\$1,468,000 is being spent on?

Hon. Imbert: We will send you that in writing.

Madam Chairman: 019, Economic Management and Research Unit, page 29; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 30; 001, General Administration, page 30; 002, Finance and Accounting; 003, Customs; 004, Inland Revenue; 007, Fiscal Policy Research Unit; 008, Budget Division; 011, Business Development Unit, page 31; 012, Consumer Affairs; 013, Co-operatives; 015, Financial Literacy Secretariat; 016, Youth Energised for Success, page 32; 017, Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit; 018, Communication Unit; 019, Economic Management and Research Unit; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 32; 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I would like to know, Madam Chair, the Contribution to Non-Profit Organizations, which organizations and in what amounts benefited from the \$2 million and for what purposes.

Hon. Imbert: In writing. It will be provided to you in writing.

Dr. Rambachan: And I would also like to find out as a subsequent question, are these transfers or subsidies given en bloc or is it based upon expenditure of these organizations or do you just give them a blank cheque as it were and you have no way of auditing and accounting for what has been given.

Hon. Imbert: Blank cheques are not given.

Dr. Rambachan: Do you audit or do they have to submit accounts for what was spent and how it was spent?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Maybe we need a forensic audit into the THA to find out if that is true.

Hon. Imbert: No. So you do not believe what I am saying?

Dr. Rambachan: I do not trust you.

Hon. Imbert: What? Madam Chairman, please.

Madam Chairman: Members, Members.

Hon. Imbert: I am simply—

Dr. Rambachan: No, if he wants to behave like that, I could behave like that worse, “yuh” know.

Hon. Imbert: No, Madam Chairman, I want to make a point. As Minister of Finance, there are many entities that do not have a line Minister. It is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance to provide the answers at these sessions provided by the technical staff. The technical staff have told me that there are audits and there is proper accountability. I have no reason to doubt them and I take great offence to that comment made by the Member for Tabaquite. I am simply repeating what the technical staff of the THA have told me and I believe them.

Madam Chairman: And Member for Tabaquite, I am certain you did not mean it in any way as insulting. But what I would want to say to Members is that if we allow ourselves to let the banter get beneath our skins, we may find ourselves in some sort of difficulty. [*Interruption*] Just one thing. I know this is a very trying process but I just want to remind Members, this is the first of eight and therefore, we all will have to exercise great restraint in the course of today. Let there be light. Let us move on.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, on the basis—about light, I understand what you are saying but let us also appreciate, Madam Chair, that for years, the Tobago House of Assembly did not present audited accounts which we could have verified and therefore, one has to ask the question, the context of the performance and auditing of statements.

Madam Chairman: All right and I hear what you say, Member for Tabaquite. But I think I do recall in the brief opening statement that there was a comment with respect to the audited accounts and while I cannot remember the year, I think it did strike me that they were up to date.

Hon. Imbert: Up to 2015. Sorry, 2016. So please take that back.

Madam Chairman: All right, okay. So Members, we are now—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I just want to put on the record and repeat. I think sometimes, as you have correctly said, these things need to be said. I am advised that all financial statements of the Tobago House of Assembly, up to the financial year ended September 30, 2016, have been submitted to the Auditor General and all statements up to 2015 have been audited.

2.30p.m.

Madam Chairman: All right, so now that we have been provided with some information that should guide us, we move on to 007, Households, page 33. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good day, 03 line Item, Payment of Superannuation Benefits to Former—whom? That is a typo there. To former whom for \$2 million?

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 03.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but what is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Former whom?

Hon. Imbert: Members of the THA.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, but it is not stated there.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, well I am stating it now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, so former Members of the THA.

Hon. Imbert: Correct.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you have got to fill in the typographical error that was made?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, we will.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay.

Madam Chairman: I think maybe it is because the space allocated was not sufficient with some of the descriptions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted some clarity.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is fine.

Madam Chairman: So let us move on. Anybody else on 007, Households? We move on to 009, Other Transfers, page 23. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Item 15, Madam Chair. What is the project?—Interest on Project Financing Repayment. What is the project?

Hon. Imbert: At Studley Park. This is interest payments on financing for the

operations at Studley Park.

Dr. Tewarie: At?

Hon. Imbert: Studley Park.

Dr. Tewarie: Studley Park. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, are you all right?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. I am okay.

Madam Chairman: Can I move on? Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 17, Tobago Cassava Products Limited. Is this a company owned by the Tobago House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: And is it a producing company? Are they producing products, and if so, how many people are employed and what is their income?

Hon. Imbert: Well, you will notice that there is no allocation. It is being transferred to another division. And what do you want to know? How many people are working there?

Dr. Rambachan: I want to know, yes.

Hon. Imbert: And what else?

Dr. Rambachan: What kind of income they have been earning because you have given them \$3 million every year.

Hon. Imbert: So you want to know how many people work there and the revenue that they generate?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah.

Hon. Imbert: Sure. The information would be provided.

Dr. Rambachan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, Item No. 15, the Interest on Project Financing Repayment of Studley Park, in 2017 it was \$10 million and you have estimated for 2018 to be \$7.4 million. Could you give an understanding of what was the cost of the project so that these payments are being made and how

many payments again got to be made on interest and principal? If you do not have it, could you provide it in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: This is Item 15?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right, I believe Minister had undertaken to provide the details of that.

Hon. Imbert: I told him yes to his question.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Naparima.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, just one more, Madam Chair. The Studley Park Escrow Account, in 2017, \$10 million was allocated. We are not able to see what has happened with the Escrow Account under the revised estimates. Could the Minister indicate if that \$10 million is still in the Escrow Account or if it has been paid and there is \$5 million being placed in 2018. So, in 2017 it was \$10 million and in 2018, \$5 million. Two questions.

Hon. Imbert: In 2017 it was zero.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In 2017?

Hon. Imbert: It was zero.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So what has happened to the money that was there?

Hon. Imbert: No money was put into the Escrow Account in 2017.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, and it still remains there?

Hon. Imbert: No money was—there is a dash. No one money was put in.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, fine. The rest explains itself. Thanks.

Hon. Imbert: Well clearly, and the dash explains itself too.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is all right. I got the answer that I needed.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair, Item 27, Venture Capital. There is a \$500,000 decrease. Is this not an area that you would want to encourage, you know, to develop new businesses in terms of diversification?

Hon. Imbert: Well, the Venture Capital programme in Trinidad has not been

successful since it was initiated some 20-plus years ago. These types of programmes come and go. The THA has an allocation of \$1 million for 2018. If it needs to be supplemented, it will be.

Mr. Charles: Could you give us an idea of the projects that benefited?

Hon. Imbert: We will give you a list.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro, did you want to ask a question? Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, just under 26, Project Financing Repayments, I see that there is an increase in this line Item of \$9,277,534. Could the Minister just clarify for our benefit?

Hon. Imbert: This is for the building at the corner of Shirvan Park and Milford Road. It is a Division of the House of Assembly, built using a BOLT arrangement and payments fluctuate.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: On 26, does the liability for these payments therefore rest with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and not the Tobago House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: The Tobago House of Assembly gets its funding in the main from the central government. You know that.

Dr. Rambachan: So it is still indirect. So then my next question comes. Given that in the opening statement the Minister stated that the Tobago House of Assembly will now be able to borrow money on their own, would the Government still be liable for the payment of those moneys borrowed by the Tobago House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: It will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. In some cases the House of Assembly has indicated it would have the ability to service the debt itself. In other cases, they might come to the central government and we will make a decision with respect to whether we will provide the funding for debt servicing as the case may be.

That is simply an opportunity for them to get their projects moving, to allow them to approach the market. They have a credit rating of their own. The Assembly went out on its own and got an international credit rating, which now allows them to borrow.

Dr. Rambachan: But would you agree that that credit rating was based upon the assumption that the Trinidad and Tobago Government would provide the support and the guarantees?

Hon. Imbert: No. It is without a Government guarantee.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 25, Establishment of Public Private Partnership Unit, \$2 million I am assuming was spent in 2017, thereabouts. What is this unit about and is it just for administrative or is it just for finding projects, or?

Hon. Imbert: Over the last two years, with the advent of this PNM administration, there has, quite naturally, been a far better relationship between the Minister of Finance and the Tobago House of Assembly and the central government as a whole. The THA is exploring options, in terms of its development programme, in terms of achieving development in Tobago, and private/public partnership is one of those options. So that this money is to develop the policy and create the bureaucracy and the infrastructure necessary to successfully execute private/public partnerships.

Mr. Lee: So, could the Minister at least give us in writing how this \$2 million was spent and what the 1.5 will be spent on next year?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same line Item 26, Project Financing Repayments. Could the Minister indicate the total cost of this project that he spoke about, and over what period of time the financing repayments would be made? We saw you spent \$5.7 million in 2017, and you expect to spend \$15 million in 2018. What is the total cost of that project that you said at the corner of Shirvan Road and whatever, and how long do you expect that this project financing repayment will continue for and the value, the total value for it?

Hon. Imbert: You have asked the same question twice.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Hon. Imbert: But the answers is yes to both of the same questions twice.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is the answer, Minister?

Hon. Imbert: You asked us whether we would provide in writing, the value, the cost and the tenor of the facility.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Hon. Imbert: I am putting it into proper language.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I just wanted to—

Hon. Imbert: You asked that twice.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wanted a definitive answer.

Hon. Imbert: And I will answer “yes” twice to those two questions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good, so I wanted a definitive answer.

Hon. Imbert: So, “yes” is not definitive?

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister, and I just wanted really to get this right, at least in my mind. Line Item 25, with respect to Establishment of Public Private Partnership Unit, is the Minister saying that after spending \$2 million, we are still at the establishing phase, or are there any plans in place or any expression of interest with respect to public/private partnerships, with respect to product or market development?

Hon. Imbert: Still in progress with the assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank.

Mr. Padarath: Are there any, at this point, expressions of interest?

Hon. Imbert: They are not at the point where they would invite proposals for PPPs. They are still in the developmental stage.

Mr. Padarath: So we are saying, after \$2 million, nothing in effect?

Hon. Imbert: I am not saying that. I am saying that they are developing the capacity to engage successfully in private/public partnerships. That is something. That is not nothing.

Madam Chairman: Division 04 - Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 34; 001, General Administration; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and Forestry; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 35; 001, General Administration, pages 35 and 36; 002, Agriculture, pages 36 and 37. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah. Could I ask a general question about agriculture? I mean, it is difficult to find a line Item. I just wanted to find out if there was any increase in agricultural production that is aligned to the hotel industry in Tobago? Any increase over, let us say, the last year or two years.

Hon. Imbert: Could you just attach that to a line Item, please? Well, if you cannot, I cannot assist you.

Dr. Tewarie: All right, I will find the appropriate line Item.

Hon. Imbert: Sure, and I will assist you then.

Dr. Tewarie: Right.

Madam Chairman: 003, Marketing, page 37; 004, Natural Resources and Forestry, page 38; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries, pages 38 and 39; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 39; 001, General Administration; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and Forestry; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries, page 41; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 41; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 007, Transfers to Households; 008, Subsidies. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Just for some information from the Minister of Finance. Both subsidies of 150 and subsidies for fishermen of 450, what are these subsidies about?

Hon. Imbert: Boats and fishermen.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, but what does it, the details of it, what kind of subsidy? What would a boat qualify for, for the subsidy?

Hon. Imbert: All sorts of things associated with a boat, an engine.

Mr. Lee: So would your boat or anybody's boat qualify? I do not know. I am just trying to find some clarity in what would the qualification be.

Hon. Imbert: Fishing boats, pirogues, artisanal fishermen.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chairman, I see the Minister is getting angry.

Hon. Imbert: I am not.

Mr. Lee: No, he is not getting angry.

Hon. Imbert: I am simply responding. I am telling him artisanal fishing. I am sure he knows what that means.

Mr. Lee: And the subsidy for fishermen, what qualification or how would one qualify to access that subsidy?

Hon. Imbert: You would have to be a bona fide fisherman or fisherwoman.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. On subsidy 008, Item 04, Agricultural Incentive Programme; has this Agricultural Incentive Programme helped the agricultural sector to provide increased supplies based on demand by the hotel industry in Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: You want a long answer or a short answer?

Dr. Tewarie: You know what I want. I want a very good answer. That is all.

Hon. Imbert: I am told, I am advised, by the technocrats that the answer is yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Can it be quantified, Madam Chair?

Hon. Imbert: Well that is kind of difficult, you know. To link a subsidy to production is kind of quantum physics, you know. Quantum physics. But we will see what we could do for you.

Dr. Tewarie: I want the island to make progress in self-sufficiency.

Hon. Imbert: We will see. We all do. We all do. We all do. We are all interested in this. We would see what we can provide for you in greater detail.

Madam Chairman: 009, Other Transfers, page 41; Division 05, Tourism, Culture and Transportation; Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 42; 002, Tourism. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 01 and 02, under salaries, could we have an appreciation of how many people are employed for those salaries with the Tobago aspect of the tourism sector? And under wages of \$17 million, how many are employed to pay the wages for \$17 million? So, both salaries, how many there, and for wages how many personnel for the \$17 million in the THA tourism sector?

Hon. Imbert: We gave a breakdown of the total for the Assembly. If you want a breakdown by Division we can do that. Okay? So we will do that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, thanks.

Madam Chairman: 007, Culture, pages 42 and 43; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 43. Member for Caroni.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same on line Item 16, if the Minister would be kind enough to provide the information on the amount of personnel under Contract Employment, under Culture?

Hon. Imbert: We would do it for all. You would get a list for all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: So no need to ask each one.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I would not ask anymore. If you said all, that is fine.

Hon. Imbert: That is the second time I have said all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, well. Repetition is good for the soul.

Hon. Imbert: I never heard that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry to repeat, hon. Minister, but similarly as a concern raised by the Member for Caroni East. Line Items 37 and 43, again, very astronomical allocations in the area of janitorial services and security services. So across the board, in all divisions, instead of having to repeat and annoy you, if you can provide the service providers and the details of these service providers, in relation to existing contracts.

Hon. Imbert: Are you on page 44, Item 37?

Mr. Padarath: No, I am on page 43, Items 37 and 43.

Hon. Imbert: Page 43? Five hundred thousand is astronomical?

Mr. Padarath: Yeah.

Hon. Imbert: No man. Come on.

Mr. Padarath: Well, my main concern with respect to Janitorial and Security Services is that I would like to find out who are the service providers, seeing that you have indicated that they are private service providers. What existing contracts, and the details of the contracts with respect to these service providers? Because when you look across the THA and in other Ministries as well you see very high figures for janitorial services and security services. We were advised

that in other Ministries this was with respect to outstanding bills. But again, these high costs are seen under the THA. And if it does not reflect outstanding bills and it is really for private service providers, I think we would like to have an idea of who these service providers are and the details with respect to the contract details and values.

Hon. Imbert: You know, the typical wages of the security personnel now. You talking about 12 people? You find that is terrible and huge and enormous? Twelve people?

Mr. Padarath: Astronomical.

Hon. Imbert: Twelve people is astronomical? Come on, be serious. These are small amounts of money.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, it still does not change the fact that I would like the details.

Hon. Imbert: You would get the details of the 10 or 12 people.

Mr. Padarath: Right, it could be 10, 12 or 100, we still want the details. These are private service providers.

Madam Chairman: The details would be provided in writing. Yes? Okay, so can we move on? 002, Tourism, page 44. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item No. 62, what accounted for the \$22 million increase in 2017, under Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

Madam Chairman: Page 44, Item 62.

Dr. Rambachan: Which, for this division as \$41.1 million on the whole, nevertheless.

Hon. Imbert: As you would know, the mainstay of the Tobago economy outside of the House of Assembly is the tourism sector and, therefore, it is necessary to spend money on marketing Tobago as a tourist destination, and that is what this expenditure is for.

Dr. Rambachan: So you allocated \$8 million and you spent \$30 million.

Hon. Imbert: We have to rebuild the Tobago economy. What is wrong with you? "Yuh doh like tourists?"

Dr. Rambachan: It is good the country is hearing your insults and your refusal to answer.

Hon. Imbert: You could say what you want, you know, but you know that Tobago depends on tourism and I would not allow you to deny them that opportunity.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 62, the same Item. Could the Minister indicate in that \$30 million, which was spent in 2017, whether—and you talk about destination, Promotions, Publicity and Printing—are there any advertisements abroad about the greatness about Tobago and the uniqueness about Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Could you indicate on which television stations abroad?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide you with a list.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Hon. Imbert: I am being told here they have television programmes in the United Kingdom. They use billboards. They use all forms of advertising.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in the same line Item, would you be able to provide value for money, in terms of how many visitors we receive from utilizing this methodology, in terms of, okay when persons come in you would be able to say that they read this or they got this information from the television, so that you are able to see whether the publications and the materials that you are using are in fact impacting?

Hon. Imbert: To do that sort of research would require some expenditure. We would have to hire an agency. But I would say that every dollar spent on promoting Tobago is a dollar well spent.

Madam Chairman: 006, Transport; 007, Culture, pages 45 to 46. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 89 and 90, Cultural Programmes 90, Folk and Arts Festivals, an allocation of 1.5 in line Item 89, 90, Folk and Arts Festivals, \$3 million. If we can just have a list of the cultural programmes, the target areas and the breakdown of expenditure there. Similarly with the folk and

artist festivals, whether or not these are for organizations or whether these are really for projects under the THA as well. If that point could be clarified, I would be grateful. If it is whether this allocation is for organizations who apply or whether or not these are programmes that are actually put on by the THA?

Hon. Imbert: Well, I invite you to come to the next Heritage Festival so you can see that these are programmes put on by the Tobago House of Assembly, indigenous programmes.

Mr. Padarath: But are there, in this allocation, included in the subventions for organizations that are involved in that exercise?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mr. Padarath: So this expenditure of \$4.5 million is under THA for culture for the Tobago Heritage Festival?

Hon. Imbert: It is for—I invite you to spend a little more time in Tobago. There are series of festivals throughout the year. The Heritage Festival is just one of them.

Mr. Padarath: Okay, and, therefore, with these allocations, I would like to have an idea of which ones, hon. Minister, so I could familiarize myself maybe, in anticipation of a visit.

Hon. Imbert: We would send you a comprehensive list.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Sorry, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same line Item, but Sub-Head 91, the Tobago Heritage Festival of \$20 million and the explanation is given there of \$20 million being spent for the Tobago Heritage Festival; \$8 million Tobago Folk Festival, \$3 million and Tobago Music Festival, \$1 million. Could the Minister indicate who manages this expenditure? Is it the Assembly or is it the Ministry of Tourism or is it the Ministry in the area of culture? Could you just give us a simple explanation? This expenditure of \$20 million on festivals, who is responsible for that expenditure?

Hon. Imbert: Under Schedule 5 of the Tobago House of Assembly Act, this is a delegated authority of the Assembly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you just indicate which organization or who it has been delegated to, if you have the answer?

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, no. Within the nation state of Trinidad and Tobago—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Hon. Imbert:—these matters are delegated to the Tobago House of Assembly by the Parliament.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Fine, thank you. But I am just asking.

Hon. Imbert: You never looked at the Act?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am asking: Is it the Tobago House of Assembly that manages the expenditure of the \$20 million?

Hon. Imbert: All right, let me explain what the word “delegate” means in this context. Under the Tobago House of Assembly Act, there is a Schedule of matters, of activities, of projects, of programmes that the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for. They have delegated authority to manage and operate these programmes under the House of Assembly Act. So it is the THA itself that is managing these activities.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, may I remind the hon. Minister of Finance that this Government is a PNM Government and the THA is controlled by the PNM. Is it that there is one policy for the central government and another one for the THA? And I ask that in relation to if we look at the Tobago Heritage Festival, the Tobago Museum, Tobago Folk Festival, Tobago Music Festival, Carifesta, \$20 million, and the Minister wants to tell us that the rationale is that THA is a separate entity and that there is no continuity, in terms of central government and THA, even though they are both PNM controlled, how do you then rationalize \$20 million is being spent for all these festivals in Tobago and you give \$500,000 for Divali? Is it that you are saying there is a separate policy?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this is ridiculous. This is ridiculous!

3.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: I am not going to allow that question.

Hon. Imbert: Ridiculous. These are festivals in Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Give me a chance please, please. I am just asking, line 94 and there is no malice in this, I am just asking if we can just get an idea, because it may be a good idea, and we in Trinidad could learn from Tobago, that this Tobago Indigenous and Traditional Art Academy, if it is being conceptualized within COSTATT or it is a stand-alone et cetera, so that you could inform us and help us in Trinidad. So "doh" quarrel.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, really, I object. You just have to ask the question. You do not have to insult at the beginning of the question. This academy is being established by the Assembly in collaboration with the tertiary education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Charles: And can you make the results of this thing available to us so that we in Trinidad could benefit from what I think is a good idea.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, but it is at 2018. No, no, no. A wrong impression has been created by the Member. There is no allocation prior. This is a 2018 allocation.

Mr. Charles: When the project is finished, that we would, you know, benefit from whatever comes out of this idea? We can move on, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite. I am just asking if you can remind me, is it Mahatma Gandhi who said "if we operate at an eye for an eye we will all end up blind"? Thank you. Let us proceed. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Simple question, Madam Chairman, to the Minister of Finance for clarification. I heard the Minister just say that the \$20 million here is a new Item. When I saw the blank—

Hon. Imbert: No, I never said that.

Dr. Tewarie: Did you say that?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So, is it—as I understood, before that it was simply elsewhere and transferred here?

Hon. Imbert: It is simply the reorganization and realignment of the divisions in the same way when you have a change of Government. You have different Ministries, different Departments go here and there.

Dr. Tewarie: That is what I understood. I was just surprised that I heard you say; I may have been wrong—

Hon. Imbert: You are wrong. I never said it was a new Item.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 46; 001, General Administration; 002, Tourism; 006, Transport; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 005, Non-profit Institutions; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair, I am on line Item 13, the Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan. Could the hon. Minister indicate when this plan is expected to be completed? And what would have been the final cost over the period of time? I know it is rolling so that it continues, but if you can give us the period—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, if the Member knows it continues then you know that it continues, so do not ask when it will end, it continues.

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us then. Madam Chair, could the hon. Minister indicate so far, if he can give us the calculations on how much have been spent on this rolling plan?

Hon. Imbert: Is that not in the document?

Mr. Karim: Yes, I just want you to give me—if you could?

Hon. Imbert: Is it not in the document?

Mr. Karim: So, it will be \$61 million plus \$30 million, 91 million so far? Has been spent with an allocation of \$40 million in 2018. Which will be \$131 million? Is that—am I calculating correctly there, Sir?

Hon. Imbert: All the numbers are there.

Mr. Karim: So the question is, for the last two fiscal, including the projected estimates for 2018. This three-year rolling plan would have cost the taxpayers \$131 million? Am I correct?

Hon. Imbert: All the information is there. But, you should know, that this includes the cost of airlift to Tobago which is an essential ingredient in the tourism sector in Tobago. Airlift is not cheap.

Mr. Karim: Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to let us know, what are the components of this three-year rolling plan, please? And the problem?

Madam Chairman: All right, can we then move.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, can I get your attention.

Madam Chairman: We can all get there. I have noted you. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Madam Chair, line Item 15 and 19. 15, how many small properties were able to benefit from this programme? And also 19 is the Zip Line the sole responsibility of the THA or is it a PPP arrangement?

Hon. Imbert: It is the THA's responsibility and we will provide you with the numbers in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the Minister indicate whether this expenditure for 2016, 2017 and proposed for 2018 of what my colleague—

Madam Chairman: Under which line Item, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 13 of \$131 million on the three-year tourism plan, 61 million then \$70 million—

Madam Chairman: What is the question please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question I want to ask is: Does that include this one for \$40 million for 2018? Is there any area inside there for the Sandals project?

Madam Chairman: Member, I believe the Minister said that he will give all the components of this Item.

Hon. Imbert: I will, but the answer is no.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, but can I ask while I am still—would you permit me. Madam Chair, Item 17, the Tobago Tourism Festivals, here we see another \$18 million allocated for 2018, and we saw for Tobago Heritage Festival on page 46, \$20 million, which he explained just a while ago. So in addition to this \$20 million for Tobago Heritage Festival, this additional \$18 million estimate for 2018 that is \$38 million that we see for festivals for Tobago. Could the Minister explain this \$18 million for Tobago Tourism Festivals as separate and distinct for the Tobago Heritage Festivals of \$20 million that is \$38 million in festivals for Tobago, Minister?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, I can explain. You have the jazz festival and the culinary festival.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you then Minister, give us an idea—what has been spent on the Tobago Jazz Festival for '16, '17 and what you propose to spend on '18, for the Tobago Jazz Festival?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And could you indicate the value of the investments brought in as a result of the Tobago Jazz Festival?

Hon. Imbert: That again will be akin to quantum physics, I can give you the amount spent—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is nothing to do with physics, it is quantum, but quantity of dollar. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Imbert: I have answered their question.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town—

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you are, if you are—

Madam Chairman: Member, Member.

Mr. Padarath: Madam respectfully, it is the same question that the Member for Caroni East is asking. What is the expenditure? But also what is the amount of revenue that has been derived from these events the jazz festival and the culinary festival?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Can the—Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 19, my colleague from Cumuto/Manzanilla had asked a question. I just want to make sure my question is. Is there a justification for State involvement in Zip Line Management? If I understand this to be moving from one place to another place on a line. What is the justification?

Hon. Imbert: I suggest you ask the Member for Caroni Central, who established a zip line at Chaguaramas during the UNC tenure, ask him.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, but it was not State sponsored. It was a private sector investment.

Hon. Imbert: It is currently funded by the CDA as it was under your time.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Tewarie: I started it, but it was a private investment.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, it is just with respect to line Item 20, if we could get some information with respect to this Tobago Tourism Agency Limited.

Madam Chairman: The question from Chaguanas East on Item 20.

Mr. Karim: Yes, just to get some information with respect to this new line Item, this Sub-Item really of \$1 million.

Hon. Imbert: You heard that we are separating tourism promotion, marketing, et cetera, into an agency in Tobago and an agency in Trinidad. This is for the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the Minister—based on what he promised to give us, the detail of the expenditure of \$38 million for festivals in Tobago: Would he say that it works out to \$760 per individual in Tobago of 50,000 people for a festival—\$760 per person for a festival in Tobago per year?

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh:—50,000 people into \$38 million.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you agree that it is costing the Tobago House of Assembly \$760 per person for festivals in Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is. The calculation is correct?

Hon. Imbert: There is a lot of tourist traffic that comes from Trinidad and other parts of the world, so your maths is wrong. You cannot just look at a notional figure of the residential population of Tobago. There are lots of visitors that come to Tobago for these festivals as part of the overall tourism effort, and you know that because you go there.

Madam Chairman: All right. Division 06, Education, Innovation and Energy, page 49; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 49; 002, Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education. Member for Caroni Central.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Dr. Tewarie: Minister, I just wanted to understand the allocation here on 002, 01 which is \$115 million in relation to what is allocated to the central Government. This is the Division of Education under the Tobago House of Assembly, is that correct?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: Again, delegated authority under the Tobago House of Assembly Act.

Dr. Tewarie: I just wanted to clarify.

Hon. Imbert: Well, I am glad you know.

Dr. Tewarie: I just wanted to clarify.

Hon. Imbert: “Let them others fellas know nah.”

Madam Chairman: 003, Library services; 004, School Feeding Programme; 005, Sport; 007.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I hope the hon. Minister will give us an appreciation of how many personnel under line Item 2.

Madam Chairman: Where are you, Member?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 005, Sport, line Item 02, Wages and C.O.L.A., \$22 million spent or estimated to be spent in 2017, 2018 no estimates for the—

Hon. Imbert: Because it has gone somewhere else.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give us an indication of how many personnel in the Sporting Division to account for the \$22 million per year in expenditure under Wages and COLA?

Hon. Imbert: But, you know, Madam Chairman, for the fourth time to this particular Member, I said I would give a breakdown of every single division and I asked, I pleaded with the Members do not after I have done that, when we come to each Division, ask for a breakdown of individual divisions. We are giving you all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, based on your track record—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member, Member, let us do not go there. Okay, please. 007, Happy Haven School Tobago Council, page 50; 008, Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language; Head 02, Goods and Services, page 51; 001, General Administration; 002, Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education, pages 51 and 52; 003, Library Services, page 52 and 53; 005, Sport; 006, Youth, pages 53 and 54; 007, Happy Haven School, pages 54 and 55; 008, Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language, page 55; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 01, General Administration, page 55; 002, Primary Secondary and Vocational Education, page 56; 003, Library Services, page 56; 008, Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 56; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 006, Educational Institutions, page 57. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chair, line Item 20, can we get a sense as to how many schools—these private secondary schools—and how many students are engaged in this fee for students and if you have an idea as to the cost per student? So the number of schools, the number of students and the cost per student.

Hon. Imbert: Yes. And while we are on that, I am advised by the Parliament that the THA always provides the answers to the questions and, therefore, it is wrong as several Members have continuously said to falsely state that the answers are not provided.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, can I continue to get an idea as to what—if we can get an explanation of line Item 21, Tobago Science and Technology Tertiary Education, what is that really?

Hon. Imbert: Again, delegated authority for tertiary education, higher education. Just like secondary and primary. They do have higher education in Tobago, by the way, for your information.

Mr. Karim: The UNC started it. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers, pages 57 and 58. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 01, just an explanation of Basic Grants, and you could do that in writing.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 01, Households, School Feeding Programme. Will the Minister or the THA be able to tell us how many contractors and how many meals are provided? You could give it to us in writing, no problem.

Hon. Imbert: No problem, but coming back to the earlier question from the Member for Naparima, those are grants for the assisted schools. You know you have denominational, government, that kind of thing. Those are grants for assisted schools. With respect to school feeding, do you want the number of people who are fed, children that are fed and the number of contractors?

Mr. Karim: I do not know if you will be able to tell, hon. Minister, are all of these contractors paid up-to-date or are they owed?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide as much information as we can within reason.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 09, Early Childhood Care. In 2017, \$3 million was spent but there is a decrease of 2,500. So only \$500,000 is allocated this year for Early Childhood Care as opposed to \$3 million spent in 2017. Is there an explanation why there is the decrease in spending on ECCE, which your Government says is the bedrock of education which we anchored? Line Item 09, why you have a decrease?

Hon. Imbert: Whatever is required will be provided.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, if I may be allowed to add to what the Minister just said, there was a loan negotiated from the IDB for Early Childhood Centres. Five were supposed to be built in Tobago; under the last administration, they built none.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do not say that.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: They built none in Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, do not go there.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And so we are in the process of renegotiating the loan in order to engage the IDB to ensure that we get the five schools built in Tobago, and that is why there is a decrease in the amount because the IDB will be funding the loans. Not one of the five schools were built in Tobago. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member, please. Member?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to correct the record.

Madam Chairman: Member?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The IDB had engaged in discussions with the THA and they had—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. Member for Caroni East, I am not recognizing this. All right. Member for Naparima.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Mr. Charles: This Building Grants to Assisted Schools, only \$150,000. That seems to be pretty small.

Madam Chairman: Item 02?

Mr. Charles: Building Grants to Assisted Schools.

Madam Chairman: You have gone on to 009?

Mr. Charles: Or sorry, sorry.

Hon. Imbert: We could go there, you know.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So we are now going on to 009, Other Transfers, pages 57 to 58. Member for Naparima.

Hon. Imbert: I think he asked the questions. I just want to repeat. The Tobago House of Assembly gets a block allocation every quarter, and they have the authority to vire and transfer and if additional funding is required for this, it will be found.

Madam Chairman: Division 07 - Community Development, Enterprise Development and Labour: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure 001, General Administration, page 59; 002, Community Development; 003, Culture, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 60; 002, Community Development, pages 60 and 61; 003, Culture, pages 61 and 62; 004, Labour; 005, Occupational Safety and Health, page 63; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration, page 63; 002, Community Development; 003, Culture; 004, Labour, page 64; 005, Occupational Safety and Health; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 005, Non-Profit—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, no, no, 04.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 005, Non-Profit Institutions—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, Madam Chair, I want to ask two questions on 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies—

Madam Chairman: And Member—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, I put up my hand, but I am not recognized. Or, you are now there. Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member, there is no way I can fail to recognize you. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 64 to 65. Yes, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the recognition always, appreciated. The Regional Complexes, line Item 16. Could we get an appreciation of what these Regional Complexes are? Is that the main complex?

Hon. Imbert: You want a list? A list you want?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, what are the regional complexes, if you want to just tell us that?

Hon. Imbert: So you want to know where they are, the names, that kind of thing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not in all that detail, just give an idea.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, we will provide you with those details.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Small Grants. What does that entail and how does one qualify to get a small grant?

Hon. Imbert: Assistance to cultural groups.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: What did you say, hon. Minister?

Hon. Imbert: I said this provision is for assistance to cultural and community groups to develop the art form, et cetera. It is done in Trinidad. Your government did it.

Madam Chairman: 007, Households. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 22, under 04, Developing Communities through Heritage. This is in addition to the \$20 million for the Tobago Heritage Festival. I am just asking what does that mean.

Hon. Imbert: I think this is self-evident. The Heritage Festival is in a particular location. This is a community programme.

Mr. Charles: But does it not involve community presenting in that?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, but this is outreach in the community itself. You are not familiar with community programmes in the community?

Mr. Charles: All right. Let us go on.

Hon. Imbert: You are not aware of that?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Madam Chairman: 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers; Division 08, Infrastructure Quarries and the Environment; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 66; 002, Maintenance of Roads; 003—Excuse me?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I hope the Minister will provide—if he wants to say it for the fifth time—the number of personnel that is responsible—

Madam Chairman: I think we do have that, Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: —02 for \$171 million.

Madam Chairman: We do have that. 003, Maintenance and Buildings.

Hon. Imbert: Terrible, terrible repetition.

Madam Chairman: 004, Transport; 005, Electrical Inspectorate; 007, Mechanical Workshop, page 67; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, pages 67 and 68; 002, Maintenance of Roads; 003, Maintenance of Buildings, page 69; 004, Transport Division; 005, Electrical Inspectorate, page 70; 007, Mechanical Workshop; 009, the Environment; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 71; 001, General Administration; 002, Maintenance of Roads; 003, Maintenance of buildings, page 72; 004, Transport; 005, Electrical Inspectorate; 007, Mechanical Workshop; 09, the Environment; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 73; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers.

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Under Other Transfers, 01, Studley Park Enterprises Limited, \$10 million. It appears to be a new Sub-Item. Could the Minister enlighten us what this—I keep seeing Studley Park throughout. Studley Park Enterprises, what is that?

Hon. Imbert: My understanding is that they are going to convert the quarry into a body corporate. So this is to create the company organization and structure to make them more efficient.

Mr. Lee: So the quarry was in another—

Hon. Imbert: It is a division.

Mr. Lee: It is a division. So now you are creating a corporate entity?

Hon. Imbert: A body corporate.

Mr. Lee: A body corporate. And this is start-up funding?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, seed capital. You are done?

Mr. Lee: Thank you so much.

Madam Chairman: Division 09 - Agriculture, Marine Affairs, Marketing and the Environment: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 74; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and the Environment, page 75; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 76; 002, Agriculture, page 77; 003, Marketing, pages 77 and 78; 004, Natural Resources and the Environment; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries, pages 79 and 80; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 80; 001, General Administration; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and Environment; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 81; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 007, Households; 008, Subsidies.

Division 10 - Health, Wellness and Family Development: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 82; 001, General Administration; 002, Hospitals; 003, Health Centres; 004, Public Health and Environment; 005, Social Services, page 83. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 004, Public Health and the Environment. Sorry. I will pass on that.

Hon. Imbert: Why you so?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I do not want to annoy you.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 83; 001, General Administration; 002, Hospitals, page 84; 003, Health Centres, pages 84 and 85. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the Minister. With regard to Item 16, Contract Employment, I note that from 2016, an expenditure of \$8,000 you have gone up to \$600,000. Can the Minister indicate what sort of contract employment this will entail?

Madam Chairman: Member, you are under what Head? Excuse me? Health Centres?

Dr. Bodoë: Health Centres?

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Bodoë: At line Item 16. Just to have an idea of what is involved in this expenditure.

Hon. Imbert: I will get back to you in writing.

Dr. Bodoë: Sure, thank you.

Madam Chairman: 004, Public Health and the Environment. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Again, I notice a decrease from 2016, \$22 million to \$10,000,400, just to get an understanding of what this expenditure would entail.

Hon. Imbert: We are going forward into 2018 and the figure is almost the same. So what is the issue?

Dr. Bodoë: Sure. But I am just asking what—

Hon. Imbert: We discussed that last year. You asked that question last year.

Dr. Bodoë: Did I?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, I will check the record.

Hon. Imbert: We will provide you with information. Again, we will provide it again.

Madam Chairman: 005, Social Services; 007, Probation Services; 008, Litter Eradication Programme; 009, Gender Affairs; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 86; 001, General Administration; 003, Health Centres; 004, Public Health and the Environment; 005, Social Services; 008, Litter Eradication Programme; 009, Gender Affairs; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 88; 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Madam Chairman: 007, Households. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you advise at line Item 06, the Children's Authority, what aspect of the Children's Authority will be established in Tobago?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Hon. Imbert: It has not been established yet. It is being established, work in progress.

Mr. Charles: I am looking at Households 003, Assistance for the Aged. I see it is only \$30,000. Do you have any data on the number of elderly persons this \$30,000 relate to homes or is it one home?

Hon. Imbert: It is a consistent sum, but, I mean, we can provide you with some details.

Mr. Charles: Yes, I have a concern for the elderly.

Hon. Imbert: So you should.

Mr. Charles: And you too.

Hon. Imbert: We all do.

Madam Chairman: 009, Other Transfers. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, the allocation, the other transfer to Tobago Regional Health Authority, I notice a decrease of \$36.3 million in the 2018 allocation. Can the Minister indicate how this is expected to affect the health care services provided by the TRHA? In particular, will any services be cut, for example?

3.40 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: It has a symbiotic relationship with the THA with respect to the TRHA. We will deal with it if it is necessary.

Dr. Bodoë: Does that mean for that allocation, Minister, I am trying to understand?

Hon. Imbert: If it is necessary.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Division 11, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 90; 001, General Administration; 002, Settlements; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 90 and 91; 002, Settlements. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am noticing line 002, Settlements, coming up, is it a new line Item? Can you identify what this will in fact be used towards?

Madam Chairman: Travelling and Subsistence.

Hon. Imbert: There were no travelling officers associated with this subdivision before. You know travelling officers get travelling allowances and benefits.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Labour; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 92; 001, General Administration; 002, Settlements; 003, Labour, page 93; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 93; 007, Transfers to Households, page 93. Division 12 - Planning and Development: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 94; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 94 and 95; 002, Planning; 004, Land Management, page 96; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration; 004, Land Management. Division 13 - Sport and Youth Affairs: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 97; 001, General Administration; 002, Sport; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 97 and 98; 002, Sport; 003, Youth, page 99; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 100; 001, General Administration; 002, Sport; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 007, Transfers to Households.

Hon. Members, we now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Different book. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 20; Consolidated Fund, page 20; Item 002, Productive Services; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 21 to 31; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 31 to 43; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 43 to 46.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 15 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives of the Tobago House of Assembly for their assistance.

Head 16: Central Administrative Services, Tobago, \$43,617,000.

Madam Chairman: Head 16, Central Administrative Services Tobago, \$43,617,000. I now invite the Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Central Administrative Services Tobago is a Department of Government responsible for coordinating and administrating central government services in Tobago. CAST comprises of the following units: administrative services, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, Registrar General and Meteorological Services. CAST aims to be an innovative,

technologically-driven service organization propelled by a highly skilled workforce facilitating a sustainable development of Tobago. For fiscal 2018, CAST received an allocation of \$43,617,000, \$33 million on the recurrent and \$10,617,000 under development. Our allocation would be used to complete those initiatives we started last fiscal year in our thrust to contribute to sustainable development of Tobago and the empowerment of the people.

Until the Metrology Act is fully enforced, the Weights and Measures Inspectorate will continue to work towards ensuring all weighing and measuring instruments in Tobago are accurately calibrated so that the people of Tobago receive value for money. The Met Office in Tobago can now boast of operating a new state-of-the-art facility that is outfitted to serve as a shelter in the event of a natural disaster. MET is currently working towards regularizing staff and introducing different services that would benefit our farmers, marine interests and other stakeholders. In that regard, MET will install additional automatic weather stations across the island and produce educational videos for school outreach. The Registrar General's Office will be giving Tobagonians access to computers to facilitate members of the public doing online land researches. In addition, the office of the Registrar General will continue the public education and sensitization efforts regarding insertion of names on birth certificates for those Tobagonians who were not registered at birth. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 16 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$43,617,000 for Head 16, Central Administrative Services Tobago is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are at page 66, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Trade and Industry; Item 005, Meteorological Services, page 67; Item 007, Registrar General; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 68 and 69; Item 002, Trade and Industry; Item 005, Meteorological Services, pages 69 and 70; Item 007, Registrar General; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 77; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Meteorological Services; Item 007, Registrar General, page 72; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 72; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 72. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We are at page 48. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 48; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 48.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 16 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives from CAST, safe journey back.

Head 77: Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Fisheries, \$771,704,362.

Madam Chairman: We now move on. Head 77, Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Fisheries, \$771,704,362. We are now at page 386 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, \$771,704,362. I will now invite the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in the hours after the delivery of the budget, there were reports and discussions on the reduced allocation to the Ministry, and the sum of \$544 million was the sum being quoted. I just want to clarify, as I open, that the \$544 million represents the recurrent expenditure to be funded out of the Consolidated Fund. But the Ministry is funded out of different accounts, and previously the media gave an account of it, the combination of the recurrent that comes out of consolidated and the transfers and subsidies, and the allocation for the development programme comes up to \$795 million. The reforestation project which is a major project of the Ministry which crosses the 41 constituencies in the country is funded out of the Unemployment Fund, \$98 million in the last fiscal.

There is in the Ministry of Finance allocation, an allocation to ADB of \$50 million for this fiscal and an allocation of \$2.6 million for the Seafood Industry Development Company. There is in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government an allocation for \$6 million for the Moruga port for which the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is the ultimate beneficiary. There is an allocation in e TeCK for the Moruga Agro Industrial Estate, an allocation of \$69 million for which the Ministry is the ultimate beneficiary, and based on previous announcements by the Government the allocation for CEPEP of \$350 million for this year, the Ministry is supposed to share in one-third of that in the approximate sum of \$116 million. That brings us to \$1.136 billion, Madam Chair, and I have not included in that the allocation for EMBD for recurrent for this year, Caroni 1975 Limited and Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited, which was transferred to the Ministry towards the end of September. The philosophy of the Ministry remains to have a manageable PSIP and to focus on priority areas. In this fiscal year, our priority areas are land administration and the continued investment in the Ministry's IT infrastructure.

I just want to make a comment on the budget and the way it works, because I know, for example, my colleague, the Member for Mayaro, has made some comments on the spending of the Ministry, and I guess I would address it during the discussions on the allocation. But notwithstanding what is allocated through the budgetary process, spending is dependent on the cash flow and it is dependent on the work that is done in the Ministry through its contractors, and I would comment on it, I am sure, as we go along. And I will close by saying, a very important part of the work of the Ministry is the work that is done across the country for farmers and fishermen, and this Ministry has been hampered in some way by having 20 per cent of its public service positions vacant. Out of an establishment of 2,010 there are 404 public service vacancies, and I guess that every current Minister and every past Minister understands that there is only so much you could do to get those vacancies filled, and I look forward to having the full complement of the Ministry so that we could get the business of our fisherfolk and our farmers, our state-land users done across the country. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 77 now stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$771,704,362 for Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies* and the *Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 386. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 14, can you indicate how many Cabinet-appointed committees are there and what their functions are, please?

Hon. Rambharat: Member, I would have to give you that response in writing. There are several standing committees of the Cabinet and they have various functions of the Ministry, many of them are statutory functions.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Agriculture, page 387. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister just indicated that there are 404, I think, vacancies within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, and I see that there has been an increase of \$1 million for Wages and COLA. Could you provide an explanation what has accounted for this increase of \$1 million?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, the increase, in most cases, covered those increases in statutory costs, or increases which were negotiated by the trade unions. In this case it would, most likely, be the increase in statutory costs.

Mr. Indarsingh: You sure is an increase in the statutory costs?

Hon. Rambharat: Yes, I could verify it and provide the response to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, under Agriculture you have an allocation of \$41.5 million for Salaries and COLA and \$77 million under Wages and COLA, you could say about \$118 million, when you open your statement you said that your goals were IT, infrastructure and land management, the focus, what goals have you set for the agricultural sector in terms of increased food production to justify these kinds of expenditures in Salaries and COLA and Wages and COLA?

Hon. Rambharat: From the outset, my appointment, I have made the point that it is not just to set a production target for food production. The first thing we have to accept is that we have food production. People talk about diversifying into agriculture; agriculture has long been an economic contributor. What has happened over time is that the significance of it as contributed to GDP has declined, but we have production. The key thing we have to do is to effect a behavioural change in the case of individuals in this country who have a preference and a habit of purchasing imported products, imported products that we produce here, in some cases fresh fruit and vegetables that our farmers produce, and it is offered for sale, and, in some cases, processed food that can be substituted with local production. So the target we have set is to effect the behavioural change in this country by putting produce and production closer to consumers, making it available, and promoting the idea of supporting local production through changes in consumption patterns.

Dr. Rambachan: Your Wages and COLA does not support people actually producing agricultural products? Your people in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries do not actually go and plant, except for forestry and seeds?

Hon. Rambharat: Exactly.

Dr. Rambachan: Is this a reference to those people?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, this is something you understand as well as I do, that we have inherited a structure. In the case of the permanent establishment from the public service, we all inherit a structure, and in the daily-paid establishment we have workers who are on the payroll. One of the ways in which we can help food production generally is by increasing the productivity of the workers, and I am sure you have heard me across the country; in your time as Minister you would have been doing the same thing, appealing to them. We have limitations in what we can do as Ministers, and the Permanent Secretary and the directors of the Ministry have a responsibility to ensure that people show up for work and they are productive. But when I was here last time before the Standing Committee, and we discussed livestock, for example, I made the point that the Ministry is too inward-looking. In other words, our resources on labour and feed, and so on, go towards tending a flock, tending our own livestock, and what we should be doing is putting those resources behind getting the right skills and the right people to support the production of the farmers. That would not happen overnight, and last year before the Standing Committee, I talked about a review that we had commissioned and the final report was delivered at the end of August, and in this fiscal year we will implement it. That report recommends, in some of the areas of the Ministry, a consideration of private/public partnership. Because we have assets, we have Mora Valley, we have Aripo, we have Mon Jaloux; we have physical assets placed in the hands completely or partially of the private sector that would reduce the burden on the Ministry, but also provide the boost in food production that we need when it comes to livestock, for example.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, one final question, are you therefore suggesting that you are not getting value for money out of the spending of this \$118 million now at the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries as you would expect to get in boosting even further food production?

Hon. Rambharat: I would answer it in this way: given a completely free hand to reorganize how we spend that wage bill, how we utilize that, I would not be doing it in this way. We ought to be spending it behind high quality technical people, paid well and highly motivated to do the job, and it is a flexibility that we do not have, so it takes a lot longer to get certain changes done within the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just heard the Minister refer to the Aripo Farm, are you willing to provide us with a suggestion on this particular farm?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, I could provide you with—the status in what context?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, its present state of operation.

Madam Chairman: Might I ask what line Item we are under, Member for Couva South?

Mr. Indarsingh: In terms of wages and salaries, and so on.

Hon. Rambharat: Well, I could provide that to you in writing in terms of the different categories of livestock up at the farm and the cost of the labour at the farm, but I could also say that Aripo, that particular asset is one that presents itself for the infusion of private sector interest, and it is something that the Government intends to explore.

Mr. Indarsingh: So you are telling us that the Government is pursuing a policy of private sector participation in the operations of that farm?

Hon. Rambharat: Of that farm and any other asset of that nature in which there is private sector interest, and in which we believe that we would be making a better contribution to the farmers by we working the way in which we deal with the asset— of course, anything like that would be based on a public advertisement of the interest.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. And the Government will return the majority shareholding, or—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, what line Item are we under? We are at Item 002.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair, based on what the Minister is revealing to the meeting, I am just seeking some additional information and clarification.

Madam Chairman: And again I ask, under what line Item?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chairman, we are on wages and salaries, and I am very concerned whether people at this farm and other farms may be sent home, and so on, within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

4.10p.m.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 387. What I am seeing is an increased allocation under both Heads for 2018 estimates, 01 and 02. Both allocations have been increased. So are there any other questions under 002, Agriculture? Item 003, Animal Production and Health, pages 387 and 388.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, similar to what we spoke about under agriculture, again, we are spending \$34.5 million under Animal Production and Health. What I am concerned about is the spending of the money yes, but spending of the money should be in relation to some targets, and I am looking at 01 and 02 under Animal Production—I am separating health for a moment, animal production—and asking whether you have set targets in terms of increasing the amount of kilograms of pork, lamb, chicken, goat, duck, the number of heifers available that you are breeding and so on? Have you set targets for this year that will cause an increase in animal production and meat?

Hon. Rambharat: As I said before, the target that we have set is the implementation of recommendations in the report that we commissioned. In implementing those recommendations, the recommendations call for reduction of the Ministry's activities in certain areas, the removal of duplication, the focus on certain types of activities in relation to private livestock farmers and so on. So the implementation of that report will lead to a greater focus on private sector production, and that is what we are working towards.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Minister, could you clarify for us, in the context of animal production is there a livestock board in relation to this—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I ask what line Item that is, please?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chairman, I am asking this in the context of Animal Production.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask what line Item it is please? Which line Item in Animal Production?

Mr. Indarsingh: Wages and Salaries.

Mr. Imbert: How could a board be associated with Wages and COLA? You should know better than that as a union man and a former Minister of Finance. You should know better than that. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, I will give you an opportunity to find the question that you would like to relate to a line Item.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 01. Mr. Minister, under this Item salaries, you would have a number of highly paid technical people working for you, experts in the field. Are you using these experts, in any way, to resuscitate the buffalypso in Trinidad?

Hon. Rambharat: I would not say resuscitate because we do have the buffalypso. The problem with the buffalypso, something that we have lived with for about 14 years now, is brucellosis and, again, we have to make the decision to accelerate the culling of that herd in Mora Valley. Mora Valley is maybe 90 per cent a brucellosis herd. So we will only deal with brucellosis in the country, and we will only be able to grow the buffalypso herd if we get rid of the animals and if we expand the herd on a farm that is free from buffalypso, and that is the direction we have to go.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Horticulture, page 388; Item 005, Land and Marine Resources, page 389.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, horticulture provides a very lucrative market in terms of export earnings and foreign exchange. What are you doing, again, using wages and so on, \$13.57 million plus \$1.9 million, that is about \$16 million, in order to boost horticultural production so that we can earn foreign exchange? Do you have a programme, a mapped out programme over time that you are going to implement?

Hon. Rambharat: The most important thing we did as a Government, because when I came in I was told by the local producers that the administration that preceded us did not show a particular interest in having local flowers used in floral arrangements sourced for government functions and so on, particularly anything relating to the line of Balisier flowers. So what we have done is one of the most important things we have done is to ensure that public spending—when we spend the taxpayers' money on floral products, it is from local production. That is one. And two, that horticulture Vote covers not only floral production, it covers the maintenance of the Botanic Gardens, the Savannah and ornamental production and so on. There is renewed interest in local horticulture production. Some of the people who went out are getting back in, and it is an interest that we continue to encourage.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Land and Marine Resources; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, I do not know whether this is within Surveys and Mapping or in the next category, Land Management. Under Salaries and allowances, Item 01, whether the surveys have been completed in the Munroe Road area for the allocation of lands? So I do not know whether it is this Heading or the next one.

Hon. Rambharat: It is a combination of the two, and the fact is that—

Mr. Singh: 01, surveyors within the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: 01 is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

Mr. Singh: Yes, you have employees of the Land and/or the Survey and Mapping Department.

Madam Chairman: Yes, and what is your question?

Mr. Singh: Whether they have completed the surveys at the Munroe Road area for the allocation of that?

Hon. Rambharat: They have been completed.

Mr. Singh: So the next question that follows off really, consequentially, when will there be allocation in that area?

Hon. Rambharat: I hope soon.

Mr. Singh: It is dependent upon the State Solicitor Department?

Hon. Rambharat: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, line Item 08, Vacant Posts. Can the hon. Minister indicate how many qualified persons in mapping currently hold positions in this unit?

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, I will have to provide that answer in writing.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on now. Item 007, Land Management, page 390.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under line Item 01, Salaries and cost of living, can you identify how many persons are in fact employed in the land management? And I have a subsequent question.

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, I will have to provide that in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: When the hon. Minister provides it in writing I would like to also find out if the number of persons employed would be enough to deal with the need to process land tenure and regularization of farmers, please.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Fisheries; Item 010, Forestry.

Mr. Paray: Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Can you provide us in writing the members of that committee; and if you can give us an idea of what is the function of that committee; and three, is this a new committee since I saw no spending was made in 2017 on that committee?

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, I will provide the information in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line Item 02, Wages and COLA. The estimate for 2018 is \$52 million, Forestry Division. Could you give us an appreciation of where most of these personnel are allocated for employment, whether it is in the reforestation programme or the nursery programme? Give us a little idea of the different areas.

Hon. Rambharat: Well, this Item deals with daily-paid workers who are deployed in forestry across the country. It is not the National Reforestation Programme which is a programme where we use contractors. These are daily-paid workers working at the conservancies all over the country.

Dr. Gopeesingh: At the?

Hon. Rambharat: At the forestry conservancies all over the country.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And where do workers for nurseries and so on? That is another contracted area?

Hon. Rambharat: The nurseries are in eight areas across the country and we have daily-paid workers at those nurseries too.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Does that come under this Item?

Hon. Rambharat: Yes, it does.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there any move to increase the amount of nursery products across the country, because there is always a shortage, and the private sector chips in, but it is very expensive for the people?

Madam Chairman: Member, I will not allow that under Salaries and Wages. Do you have any other question under—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no, that was my main question.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 391; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Paray: Minister, Item 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage. Can you identify if this is the building that is being rented for the Forestry Division? Where is it currently located, and if you can identify if this building contract would have been renewed in fiscal 2017?

Hon. Rambharat: I will have to provide that response in writing, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Agriculture, page 393.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 117, Training. Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that we had to destroy 200,000 citrus plants, would you not think that there would be need for adequate training and this amount here allocated is in fact very low?

Hon. Rambharat: I do not think it is very low, particularly for what you have identified as a training need. I think the allocation is sufficient because we have allocations for training throughout the Ministry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I noticed that it is in fact decreased by \$171,000 in general admin and there is no line Item in the Animal Production and, again, with what you just indicated with the culling of the buffalypsoes, I mean, you would need training to help persons understand what they are dealing with and to also bring about a new understanding of the various diseases that may impact upon the industry.

Hon. Rambharat: As I said, I think across the Ministry the allocation and the resources for training and for dealing with citrus greening and the buffalypso, the resources exist.

Madam Chairman: Are we on page 393, Member?

Mr. Paray: Are we still under Sub-Item 02, Goods and Services?

Madam Chairman: We are under Item 02, Item 002. So we are on page 393. Item 003, Animal Production and Health, page 394; Item 004, Horticulture, pages 394 and 395; Item 005, Land and Marine Resources, page 395; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping; Item 007, Land Management; Item 008, Fisheries, page 398; Item 009, Agricultural Land Administration Division; Item 010, Forestry, page 399 to 400; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Agriculture; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I am in line 04, SFC, Sugarcane Feed Centre. What is the status of this institution, is it still in tilapia production? And with respect to the fingerling production, what is the status?

Hon. Rambharat: The SFC continues to operate aqua culture projects, livestock projects and abattoir and other activities relating to agriculture.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Is it still into tilapia production?

Hon. Rambharat: Yes it is.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And what is the quantity or the amount produced per year?

Hon. Rambharat: I would have to give you that in writing.

Dr. Rambachan: Is the Sugarcane Feed Centre breaking even?

Hon. Rambharat: It is not.

Mr. Paray: Minister, Item 01, Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development. I notice there is a \$500,000 reduction in the funding for that training and development. In lieu of the importance of the diversification into the fisheries, what impact do you think that that reduction could have on that area in the development process?

Hon. Rambharat: We do not anticipate any problems with the reduction. The reduction is based on the CFTDI focusing on what we believe that they are good at, and that is the training part of their activities.

Mr. Indarsingh: In relation to the Sugar Cane Feed Centre, Mr. Minister, is it involved from a research and development point of view, in the area of dairy.

Hon. Rambharat: No, it is not.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Mr. Charles: Item 06. Given that the age profile of farmers, at least in the Naparima constituency, are over 50 or in many cases over 60, the country should be trying to get a new generation of farmers and to encourage people, because law, engineering and medicine are the areas they want to go in. If in Item 06, 4H Young Farmers Club, in 2017 \$500,000 was allocated, but only \$256,000 was spent, and given the allocation of \$400,000, do you not think this is an area we want to emphasize? I know in the colonial days every primary school had a garden outside and students were encouraged to join clubs like these.

Hon. Rambharat: We believe the allocation for 4H is sufficient because we have other activities in the Ministry and its agencies directed toward youth, and we have a new programme coming on this year that we believe will make the desired impact.

Mr. Charles: Not disagreeing, are you satisfied—and this is from a country standpoint—that younger people are being encouraged to take up farming?

Hon. Rambharat: I believe the young people who have grown up in farming families have an interest in farming. I also have said publicly that I believe security of tenure of land is a big factor in keeping them interested.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, going back to the Sugar Cane Feed Centre, 04, Mr. Minister, is this there any outstanding liabilities for the employees of the Sugar Cane Feed Centre?

Hon. Rambharat: I cannot yes or no. To my recollection no, but I could provide the response in writing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line 05, Rural Women Producers Network. What does this entail, because I am seeing only an allocation of \$25,000? How far would \$25,000 take this network?

Hon. Rambharat: The Rural Women Producers Network is essentially a private organization working with women across the country. They receive funding from other agencies, and this is the contribution that the Ministry on behalf of the taxpayers make to them, and they seem very well satisfied with it.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And how many women?

Hon. Rambharat: It is women across the country. I could find out from the network how many women they work with. I could provide a response in writing.

Madam Chairman: Members, it is now 4.30. It is agreed that we will take the suspension now. We will resume at five o'clock.

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

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

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

Mr. Chairman: We resume after tea. We are under Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, and we are at Item 007, Households, page 402 of the Recurrent Expenditure. We will go with the Member for Mayaro first.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister, under line Item 01, Agricultural Incentive Programme, can you give us an idea what is the outstanding sums owed to farmers under this particular programme?

Hon. Rambharat: We estimate it is about \$19 million.

Mr. Paray: And what provisions are being put in place to settle these sums?

Hon. Rambharat: There is an allocation for this year, \$12 million that would go towards settling what we have already, and we will deal with any shortfall in the mid-year.

Mr. Paray: Just to expand on the subsidies, the issue around the rice farmers. They are still complaining that they have not received their full backpay and so on from the rice mills and so on. Can you give us an idea of what is the outstanding amount and what provisions your Ministry is putting in place to settle those amounts this fiscal year?

Hon. Rambharat: I will have to give you that in writing, but I know that it is payment to the rice farmers for the 2017 crop.

Mr. Paray: One more question, Minister. Under line Item 04, Relief for Flood Damage, any idea of the amount that is owed to farmers in terms of their claims for past damages, and taking note of the extensive flooding today, what can you put in place or what will you put in place to deal with—I am sure that quite a number of claims are going to be coming fast and furious at your Ministry, based on just the flooding alone today?

Hon. Rambharat: Well the farmers are very familiar with the process for compensation for flood damage. The Ministry's officers have been out since yesterday and into today, and as fast as the claims come we will deal with it. But I will tell you this, by October 27th, we would begin the payment of \$12 million in compensation to 663 farmers arising out of Bret and the special arrangements the Government made for Bret.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, line Item 01. You indicated that there is \$19 million owing and yet you have here \$12 million in your 2018 estimates, that means therefore there will be a huge shortfall. How does the Minister plan to disburse and differentiate and determine who will get payment and who would not?

Hon. Rambharat: The Minister does not disburse. The Ministry disburses based on a well-established process. This figure will go towards settling some of what we currently have on hand to pay.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The new incentive programme that you have put forward, where young farmers will be getting \$100,000, would this be coming out from line Item 02 or 01?

Hon. Rambharat: No, that is a different line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is the line Item here at all?

Hon. Rambharat: It is in the provisions, yes.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister be kind enough to give a breakdown of the recipient of this \$12 million, and in particular, how many would come from my constituency, if that is possible?

Hon. Rambharat: Sure, we will provide it in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 05, Tourism Development Facilities. Over the last two fiscal years, you may have consumed about over \$3 million. Just for information, could you indicate what are these facilities, where they are?

Hon. Rambharat: The Ministry has a few what we call “tourism development facilities”. They include the Diego Martin Water Wheel, the Lopinot Visitor Centre and facilities of that nature, and every year we do some maintenance work on all these facilities.

Mr. Karim: Any in central Trinidad or South?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, not under this line Item, but Caroni Bird Sanctuary is in Central Trinidad and that is one of the areas that we have resources that we put towards the maintenance.

Mr. Karim: Mr. Deputy-Chair, just a follow-up question on line Item 02, the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture. I recognize that you had allocation in 2017 of \$1 million, but a very small amount was utilized. Could you indicate what was the reason for that, the low level of utilization?

Hon. Rambharat: That is because of an assessment we made on YAPA, and having spoken to past participants, including the Parliamentary Secretary who is a past participant, the general concern is, coming out of the programme with some training but not a lot, not having access to land and not having access to financing. And earlier I referred to a new project that we launched in this fiscal year, which combines access to land, financing from ADB and the training, and we tie it into the incentive programme announced in this year’s budget up to \$100,000 for those who qualify. We put all four together, and we believe we have a package that would be an incentive to young people in people in particular who are serious about agriculture.

Mr. Karim: So this would be a subset of that?

Hon. Rambharat: It is, yes.

Mr. Chairman: Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 403. Member for Couva South, you are with us. Item 010, Transfers Abroad, page 403?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Deputy Chair. I had my hand up as it relates to 009, Other Transfers.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I will give way to you, proceed

Mr. Indarsingh: 01, Livestock and Livestock Products Board. Mr. Minister, could you give us a status on the functioning of this particular board?

Hon. Rambharat: There was a delay in the appointment of this board, as I previously referred to study commissioned on the livestock sector and the work that has been done. We intend to appoint the Livestock and Livestock Products Board as soon as we believe there will be a role for that board to play.

Mr. Indarsingh: So at the moment there is no timeline?

Hon. Rambharat: There is no timeline.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Mayaro, you okay?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line No. 03, Expansion and Development of Farmers Market. Can the hon. Minister expand on what is this?

Hon. Rambharat: We have farmers markets across the country. The main driver of the farmers markets is at NAMDEVCO, and this allocation is to supplement in instances where the Ministry itself wants to do something on a farmers market.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 03, I notice that the farmers market in Chaguanas is being held at the Ministry's head office by the Divali Nagar. But is there any intention in the future to utilize the NAMDEVCO facility which was earmarked for a farmers market at Woodford Lodge?

Hon. Rambharat: I have asked NAMDEVCO, based on a request by the mayor recently to discuss with the corporation the use of that facility in Woodford Lodge as a wholesale market, and NAMDEVCO is already doing designs for a designated space east of the new building in Chaguanas to house a permanent farmers market.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. 06, is there is functional land survey board?

Hon. Rambharat: Yes, there is.

Mr. Chairman: Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 403; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 404; Sub-Head 06. Minister, you have something? Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 404; 004, Statutory Boards, page 404. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, can you give a status on the ASTT in terms of whether they are fully funded? I understand that they are—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item to be specific, Member.

Mr. Paray: Sorry. 08, Mr. Chairman, Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago. I understand that there were some challenges with their office space and vehicles and so on. What is the status of that organization?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, there was no challenge under this administration. I believe the challenges arose under the previous administration and we have actually granted a very small increase this year to the ASTT.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Members, we now proceed to Draft Estimates of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly for the financial year 2018.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. 08, Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 515; 001, General Administration, page 515; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 515; 001, General Administration, page 515; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 515; 001, General Administration, page 515; 09, National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 520; 001, General Administration, page 520; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 520; 001, General Administration, pages 520 to 521; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 521; 001, General Administration, page 521. Sub-Head—
Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Under Current Transfers and Subsidies, Other Transfers, 02, Support for Agro Packing Houses (NAMDEVCO). Mr. Minister, I see that you have virtually no allocation under the 2018 Estimates, so does that mean that the packaging house at Brechin Castle will remain closed and not be utilized for the benefit of the stakeholders within the agricultural fraternity?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: Member, in response to a question asked by you in the House, I did indicate that the packing houses at Brick Field and Brechin Castle are going to be the subject of a request for expressions of interest issued by NAMDEVCO for the purpose of exploring private/public partnership in those two facilities. The zero allocation is simply based on the fact that NAMDEVCO is allowed to hold PSIP funds from previous years and they hold a surplus in relation to that line item.

Mr. Indarsingh: And just to follow up, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Chair, if this expression in what we would call public/private partnership does not become a reality as we have seen with the Couva Children's Hospital—

Mr. Chairman: Let us stay on stream, please.

Mr. Indarsingh:—what is the Ministry's position?

Hon. Rambharat: I think we have to take the step of exploring, issuing the expressions of interest, and based on the outcome of that, we would determine what happens next.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: 10, Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 528; 001, General Administration, page 528; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 528; 001, General Administration, page 528; 11, Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 533; 001, General Administration, page 533; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 533; 001, General Administration, page 533; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 534; 001, General Administration, page 534; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 534; 007, Households, page 534.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme* and we now go to the development programme booklet, and we now go to page 170. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 170; Item 001, Pre-Investment, pages 170 to 171; Item 002, Productive Sectors, pages 171 and 172. Member for Mayaro.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Mr. Paray: 003 as yet, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We are now coming to that one.

Mr. Paray: Okay. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 172 to 177. And I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, line Item 287, Upgrade of Fish Landing Sites, can you identify which of the sites are proposed to be subjected to upgrades in fiscal 2018?

Mr. Chairman: Member, you could provide that information now, Minister?

Hon. Rambharat: I would provide the information in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Will be provided in writing. Item 004, Social— Okay. Sorry. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: That is okay. That is okay. 038 on page 173. Can the hon. Minister indicate what exactly will this \$200,000 be used for in terms of whether it is for research, breeding, tracking? What can the hon. Minister indicate what this would be utilized for?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, 038, line Item. What will be the—

Hon. Rambharat: Sustainable Management of Wildlife Resources?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Sure.

Hon. Rambharat: That is for the ongoing work being done to review the Conservation of Wild Life Act with a view to bringing to Parliament a Bill for amending that piece of legislation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So it is more or less consultation fees.

Hon. Rambharat: It is. It is work in relation to the redrafting of that piece of legislation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is this internal or is it an external source providing this service?

Hon. Rambharat: At this time, it is internal.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, line Item 040, Upgrade of Recreational Facilities at Caura River Recreation Site. I do recall that at some point of time there was the conversation about that site being managed by public entities to be self-sufficient, in that they are going to start charging for using the service. Can you tell us who specifically will be responsible for managing that facility, and where would the funds go in terms of whether it is going to go back to continue the improvement of the facility or does it go back to the State?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, at this time that facility is managed by the Forestry Division of the Ministry. At this time there is no plan to introduce user fees for the facility. The facility does not lend itself for the charging of fees or anything like that at this time.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West. No, Chaguanas East, sorry. My apologies.

Mr. Karim: Mr. Chairman, I am on page 173, line Item 033.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, could you give us some more information with respect to the \$500,000 allocation to Outreach, Community Empowerment and Mobilization Planning Project.

Hon. Rambharat: That is in relation to the environmental bus that goes around the country supporting education in schools.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Line Item 536, Establishment of Community Based Aquaculture Programmes, could the hon. Minister identify where these establishments would be based; and what exactly will they be responsible for in terms of the programmes?

Hon. Rambharat: I will provide the locations in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Line Item 538 to the Minister. In 2017, I think it was part of the whole budget, it was the establishment of the one of these packing houses for fresh produce. Could you say what happened to this project and why it is not continuing or is it off the radar?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Hon. Rambharat: I just answered in response to the Member for Couva South to say that the packing house is going to be—the two are going to be the subject of expressions of interest, and there is no provision there because NAMDEVCO, which is responsible for the packing house, holds in its account a surplus on account of previous funds allocated.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 177 and 178; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 178 to 180, Infrastructure. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: What page are we on?

Mr. Paray: We are on page 179.

Mr. Chairman: Item?

Mr. Paray: General Public Services, Items 205, 206, 207, 208. Minister, when you first started your contribution, you referred to a comment that I made in terms of the ability of the Ministry to spend money and that you would expound on that at some point in time when you make your contribution in the Senate. What I want to ask and I am looking at these four Items, eh, and Mr. Chairman, if you permit me just to read them out.

Upgrade of the Cadastral Management Information System. In 2017, there was a \$1 million estimate; nothing was spent in 2017. Item 206, Development of Land Management System, \$500,000 estimated, nothing spent in 2017. Line Item 207, Reestablishment of State Agricultural Land Information System, a million dollars was estimated in 2017; again, nothing was spent. Line Item 208, Development of an Electronic Document Management System for State land, \$500,000 estimated; nothing was spent.

And looking at these four Items, Minister, looking at the criticality of what are the end results of these systems that are deployed in terms of land tenure, land management, I still stand by my comment that I feel that there is something hindering either you or your Ministry or your ability to get these projects going based on the fact that allocations were made—barring that funding is made available, but really we should be trying harder to fight for that funding, taking note of the criticality of this. Any explanations as to why these things would not have been dealt with in the last fiscal year, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: Well, Member, there was a JSC dealing specifically with the issue of state land allocation in food production which the report was laid and the Ministry has prepared its response. And the point I wanted to make is that some of these projects have to go through a cycle of—we are talking about an issue of state land management that dates back to 1962, a massive backlog of more than 30,000 files in relation to agriculture alone.

So that what we did in the last fiscal was to work on the development of the project. Some of the hardware and software that were required were purchased under the general IT allocation under the PSIP. And in this fiscal where we have to bring bodies in on a project basis to do, for example, to accelerate the Electronic Document Management System, and to do some of the other work, the allocation would be used for that in this fiscal. But since we had the allocation under the general IT spend, the hardware and software were procured in the last fiscal under that Item.

Mr. Chairman: Economic Infrastructure fund, page 255; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 255 and 256. I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister line Item 289, could you provide a listing of the upgrades of the different fishing facilities that you have targeted for 2018?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, I could tell you that the allocation is meant to deal with the Carenage fishing facility which would come on stream at the end of this calendar year, and for the beginning of work on the proposed Alcan fishing facility on Alcan Bay, and that is what allocation is for.

Mr. Lee: Nothing for Claxton Bay? I thought I saw something where I read the Claxton Bay fishing depot was in the budget.

Hon. Rambharat: You did?

Mr. Lee: Yeah.

Hon. Rambharat: That is what the allocation is for.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, as we are on line Item 289, fishing facilities, can you just give me an update as to where we are heading with the Galeota fishing facility and whether we are making any progress for the Ortoire facility?

Hon. Rambharat: The Ortoire facility we expect to commission soon, and the Galeota facility, the Guayaguayare fishing facility we have some additional items which are going to be delivered to that facility in the next few weeks in support of what the Government has committed to do to support value-added in that particular area. We have some additional facilities that are going to be delivered to Guayaguayare.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you have a question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. One question: 001, is it “J. Other Services”? Is it there? Right? Could hon. Minister indicate, what is the Food Basket Road Programme all about?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: That Item is for infrastructure works or repair works in what is called the “food targeted food baskets’ in the country where, beyond what we have allocated for road repairs under the recurrent and under the PSIP, that is a specific Item in the event we have to do work in one of the targeted areas.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 256.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 77 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Mr. Minister and junior Minister and Permanent Secretary, thanks for coming, and the other technocrats. Do have a good evening.

Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, \$1,496,600,504.

Mr. Chairman: So as I welcome the Minister of Housing and Urban Development. Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, \$1,496,600,504. You are all set, Mr. Minister? Welcome, Mr. Minister. Welcome Permanent Secretary and welcome to the other senior technocrats in the Ministry. I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for the formulation and execution of Government’s policy in the housing and urban development sectors.

The Ministry has overall responsibility in the implementation of relevant policy through its various units and affiliated agencies. The Ministry's core areas of responsibility include the provision of affordable housing solutions; home improvement and emergency repair grants; regularization of tenure for squatters under the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act; land settlement; urban development.

There are eight affiliated organizations or agencies which implement and promote the Ministry's policies, plans, programmes and projects: the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation; the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago; the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited; the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee; the Land Settlement Agency; East Port of Spain Development Company Limited; East Side Plaza; and New City Mall. Mr. Deputy Chair, thank you.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,496,600,504 for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban 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*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and we go to page 312. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 312; Item 001, General Administration, page 312; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 312; Item 001, General Administration, pages 312 to 313; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 313; Item 001, General Administration, page 313; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 314; Item 009, Other Transfers, page 314. I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the Minister, I am focusing here on Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: Line Item 01, Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah. Minister, we take note here that the 2017 estimate would have been \$354 million. There was a revised estimate for 2017 of \$636.7 million; this represents in a revised estimate for the same fiscal an increase of 80 per cent on that budgeted. Could I have an indication as to why this was revised by such a figure to 80 per cent—you are dealing with \$282 million, more or less—and why was there need in the first place to increase by 80 per cent to \$282 million for the HDC in the fiscal 2017? I will come to another question on the matter.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. To the hon. Member, you would recall in 2014 and 2015 the HDC would have contracted about \$1.2 billion in loans from ANSA Finance. The increase is allocated for the repayment of those loans.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Could the Minister confirm to me that the money in the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation Transfer of Subsidies 01, \$282 million in excess, was to pay outstanding loans for the HDC? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Mitchell: The increase? Yes. The increase is for the repayment of loans.

Dr. Moonilal: So therefore, a transfer to state enterprises at number 14 HDC interest payment on that—

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, what line Item have you gone to?

Dr. Moonilal: Well, let me stay on the Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Chairman: You are going ahead of the meeting at this time.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I then ask, for the 2018 you have an estimate of 672, which is a \$35 million increase from 2017. Would this be sufficient to meet the demands of the programme outlined both in the budget and in your contribution earlier in the debate, particularly the \$50 million incentive programme—would that be found in here as well?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: You are speaking about the new housing initiatives?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, correct.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes. That is an incentive provided for in the Ministry of Finance, but I can tell you that this subvention will take care of the HDC's recurrent expenditure, as well as the repayment of the loans.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Dr. Moonilal: But in this subvention at 01, this includes the accelerated housing programme?

Hon. Mitchell: No. It does not.

Dr. Moonilal: It does not include the accelerated programme? Okay. But the \$50 million is coming from this or separately from the Ministry?

Hon. Mitchell: That is from the Ministry of Finance.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Could I ask therefore, on the Housing Development Corporation, what has been the experience with the public/private partnership programme for the last fiscal?

Hon. Mitchell: Which line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: The same one for the expenditure of the HDC because it is a major HDC initiative.

Hon. Mitchell: Well, it is a major HDC initiative, but it does not form part of the HDC's expenditure.

Dr. Moonilal: The public/private partnership.

Hon. Mitchell: No. It does not.

Dr. Moonilal: So there is absolutely no expenditure out of the HDC on that programme?

Hon. Mitchell: Well, the administration of the partnership is done within the normal recurrent expenditure, it is an administrative action.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Does the Government, through the HDC, pay in a private partnership any expenditure to contractors for land development?

Hon. Mitchell: No.

Dr. Moonilal: Is there a guarantee by the Housing Development Corporation and/or the Ministry of Finance for the private/public partnership?

Hon. Mitchell: No.

Dr. Moonilal: The private provider of homes under the PPP is expected to secure a loan with their own guarantee?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Thank you. Everybody else, I want to move to another area.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on, I am coming there, I am coming there. Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, pages 314 and 315. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, concerning the UDeCOTT transfers and payment of loans, I am looking at the bridge loan facility for UDeCOTT. Could you indicate whether this would include the moneys outstanding on payments for Magnificent Seven projects?

Hon. Mitchell: Which line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: 05.

Hon. Mitchell: No. I cannot at the time. I can get that to you in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Then could you provide in writing—because I suspect that you would not be able to for the others as well—from 01 to 23, could you just provide a small brief on what exactly those projects are meant to be paid back for?—both principal and interest.

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, you said 23, but clearly identify the specific numbers, please, for the record?

Dr. Moonilal: For 01.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Dr. Moonilal: The 05, that is what I asked just now, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, that would be it, to 12.

Hon. Mitchell: The matter you first asked, was concerning Item 05?

Dr. Moonilal: Correct.

Hon. Mitchell: Yeah.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Hon. Mitchell: 05 was for the Couva Children's Hospital, Penal hospital, Ministry of National Security, police stations phase one.

Dr. Moonilal: Phase one. Would you have answers for the rest or do you just want to take a note and—

Hon. Mitchell: Yeah. Yeah. I will provide it in the interest of time.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask as well, has the UDeCOTT issued a contract for the completion of works at Stollmeyer's Castle?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Which line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: It is on the borrowing because the UDeCOTT has borrowed on that project.

Hon. Mitchell: Whether the UDeCOTT has borrowed, well when I provide you with the information you will see.

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 315.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. Head 18, Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Administration: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 461; 001, General Administration, page 461; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 461; 001, General Administration, page 461; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 462; 001, General Administration, page 462; 54, Land Settlement Agency, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 470; 001, General Administration, page 470, Sub-Head 02—

Dr. Moonilal: Could I? You moved from 64 to 70? Page 470 you are on?

Mr. Chairman: We are at 54, Land Settlement Agency, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 470.

Dr. Moonilal: You have finished Sugar Industry Labour Welfare?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I have been calling it through.

Dr. Moonilal: Member, there is a graph I want to ask one question on, but it is not under a heading so I did not know that you had moved. Could I just ask one question?

Mr. Chairman: What page you are on, Member?

Dr. Moonilal: 466. It is just a quick question that would require—

Mr. Chairman: 466?

Dr. Moonilal: Page 466, is it Details of Expenditure?

Mr. Chairman: And you are on Statutory Board and Similar Bodies?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Is it? Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 466.

Mr. Chairman: Page 466, go ahead.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, the development work for the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, I am seeing estimate for 2017 here as \$63 million, and revised estimate for 2017 at \$8 million, suggests that you were budgeting for work at \$63 million, and then you were revised that you did not need that type of money. But what explains this, if you could just tell us now or put it in writing?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: We took some time to appoint a board at SILWIC, so that would account for it.

Dr. Moonilal: Let me understand. You did not spend about \$55 million because you took some time to appoint a board?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Could the Minister advise at this meeting if there are any sums of moneys being owed in terms of a refund to ex-employees of Caroni (1975) Limited?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item, Member.

Mr. Indarsingh: In terms of you all—

Mr. Chairman: Page?

Mr. Indarsingh:—administrative expenses of the Sugar Industry Labour—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member, there is a clear procedure, page and line Item. Under what? You are under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Administration.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Based on that Item, we need to be specific in terms of your line Item, the comment and question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Page 466, Mr. Deputy Chair, Administration Expenses.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Right, question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Could the Minister inform this meeting if there are any sums of moneys that are being owed to former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited in relation to down payment on lands that they would have been entitled to via the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, can you assist?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. As I just told the hon. Member, the hon. Member would have written to my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries—the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is not the line Minister for SILWC, so that matter has recently been passed on to me, and I am looking into that matter. So, I can confirm later in writing to you.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, that would be dealt with by the newly appointed board in terms of relinquishing the liability?

Hon. Mitchell: The matter has just been passed on to me, I am investigating it, and I will report to you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, fine. 54, Land Settlement Agency. Land Settlement Agency we are going to.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, we are going to Land Settlement Agency.

Mr. Chairman: Right, okay, let me just read it. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 470; 001, General Administration, page 470. You are on that page or you need me to continue?

Dr. Moonilal: I am on page 468, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Just now, Member—

Dr. Moonilal: Land Settlement Agency. Deputy Chair, I do not know if we have the same book?

Mr. Chairman: Oh, that is the summary page, Member.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: And the details come next, which will be coming up on page 470.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, well I will wait.

Mr. Chairman: So, just follow with me so that you would be able to identify your question.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: So, General Administration, page 470; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services.

Dr. Moonilal: My question was on 01, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, sure. Minister, from Remuneration to Board Members, there is 100 per cent increase between 2016 and 2017 for the Land Settlement Agency, there will surely be an explanation. Could we have it?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 06, Mr. Minister.

Dr. Moonilal: Personnel Expenditure, 01—well, sorry. Yes, 06.

Hon. Mitchell: I will have to give that to you in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: The 06?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes, 06, Remuneration to Board Members.

Dr. Moonilal: Remuneration to Board Members, 100 per cent increase from 2016 to 2017. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 470; 001, General Administration, page 470; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 471; 001, General Administration, page 471; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 471; 007, Households, page 471; 009, Other Transfers, page 471.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Consolidated Fund, page 132 of the new book. Page 132, Consolidated Fund; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 132 to 135. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: If I could just ask the Minister on the Development Programme. Again, there was a revised estimate here from \$86 million to 117—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item.

Dr. Moonilal: I am at 09 breaking down to 236, Regularization and Regeneration of Communities Greater Port of Spain area. The question is, this is deemed to be a new project, a new line Item, could you indicate exactly what work would be done here as opposed to the Port of Spain East Development Company in this new line Item of 236? But also at 235 you have Rural Housing and Village Improvement Programme, \$5 million, it is a new project. Could I ask for both 235 and 36, some explanation as to what exactly is that, that both together they take \$10 million?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: With respect to line Item 236, these are squatting communities, designated sites in the Port of Spain area. Emergency infrastructural works will be done in these areas over the next fiscal year.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, could you just clarify for me. When we say squatter sites, these cannot be HDC buildings or HDC centres. This is what, squatter sites under the LSA?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: So this here deals with LSA, Land Settlement Agency?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes, Land Settlement Agency.

Dr. Moonilal: Fine. And 235?

Hon. Mitchell: And 235, this is indeed a new programme that deals with the reduction or the elimination of poverty housing in areas all across Trinidad. It is similar to the grants that the Ministry presently offers.

Dr. Moonilal: So, is it a grant programme?

Hon. Mitchell: It is a grant programme. It will be done using the Aided Self-Help approach where persons can apply, get grants, but it is targeted towards the elimination of poverty housing.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you give us an example of a Village Improvement Programme that could be funded under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development Grant Programme now?

Hon. Mitchell: There are Ministries all over. Sorry, there are rural villages all over Trinidad, in Sangre Grande, in Moruga, different areas.

Dr. Moonilal: And what would be the quantum of this grant?

Hon. Mitchell: We have not identified the details of the programme as yet.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Hon. Mitchell: Within two months.

Dr. Moonilal: So, we expect in the coming days to have some type of outlined policy—

Hon. Member: He said in about two months.

Dr. Moonilal:—on the nature of the programme, the quantum of money to be provided, the policy for distribution.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: You will give that in about two month?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: If it is possible, could you remember in two months to supply us with a copy?

Hon. Mitchell: I certainly will.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks Member. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Just want to ask line Item 234. What replaced the Land for the Landless Programme, if anything replaced it?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: The Aided Self-Help Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask—

Mr. Chairman: Just now, hold on, hold on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you did not hear? Okay, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: The Aided Self-Help Programme.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, and my colleague from Cumuto/Manzanilla touched on the issue that I would like to follow up on. Indeed, in your contribution in the budget we heard about this Aided Self-Help Housing Programme announcement. Could you direct me where here funding is provided for that programme?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: There is no line Item that treats with the programme. The programme would be administered through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the LSA. But there is not additional funding.

Dr. Moonilal: Or there is no funding for that programme?

Hon. Mitchell: For that programme, no.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Dr. Moonilal: Because, as you can follow with me here, the Land for the Landless has no funding for 2018, because you have terminated by Cabinet decision?

Hon. Mitchell: All right. But this particular vote treats with moneys paid to contractors for the development of the lots that were—

Dr. Moonilal: Which particular vote? Just tell me the line Item?

Hon. Mitchell: This particular vote, 234, Residential Lots Programme, Land for the Landless.

Dr. Moonilal: Of which nothing is budgeted in 2018.

Hon. Mitchell: No, because we have closed the programme.

Dr. Moonilal: It is closed?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: So, I am asking now, so therefore having closed that, with no budget for Land for the Landless properly done, you have also in place no budget for the Aided Self-Help Housing Programme?

Hon. Mitchell: This particular Vote is for the payment to contractors for the development of the lots, the Land for the Landless Programme. Those lots have now been developed. The Aided Self-Help Programme will be funded by the normal Recurrent Expenditure within the Ministry of Housing and the LSA.

Dr. Moonilal: I understand that thoroughly. So there will be no new land development in the coming fiscal under the Aided Self-Help Housing Programme?

Hon. Mitchell: As I indicated in my budget contribution, we presently have 1,500 lots to be allocated in the first cycle and in the second cycle we will identify surplus EMBD lots, and other lots all across Trinidad for allocation in the second cycle.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, could you provide in writing—because you clearly would not be able to now—a breakdown of those 1,500 lots? Where they are? If they are completed or yet to be completed, those 1,500 lots?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Dr. Moonilal: And also, the lots that you are intending to take from the EMBDC, where those are? Are they finished? Completed? And when would you be in a position to distribute these lots that have been completed?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I go on? My colleague has—

Mr. Chairman: You have another question? I will deal with you one time you know, Member. You go ahead and then I will go to the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Dr. Moonilal: Deputy Chairman, you are threatening to deal with me one time? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Proceed. Proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. I am accustomed to that. Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 293. Line Item 293. Could I ask a question? We are seeing also a new project Item here, Minister, it is Home Ownership 101, if I am not mistaken?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you just indicate briefly, what really is Home Ownership 101 that you will need \$1 million to execute?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Home Ownership 101, I would have indicated this new programme in my budget contribution. This is basically a manual. The \$1 million is estimated, an estimated cost to produce the manual. This is a manual that will treat with all matters related to home ownership that would be made available for citizens.

Dr. Moonilal: Matters like what, for example?

Hon. Mitchell: Matters in terms of house construction, in terms of approvals, in terms of legislation, the landlord and tenant matters, in terms of real estate, agencies, in terms of mortgages. So, it is a manual that is aimed at educating the public.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Dr. Moonilal: At 292, Minister, you have the Emergency Shelter Relief Fund.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: I see head office here, this is the DP we are looking at. In 2017, you had \$1 million revised and you go for the same thing, could we have an account in writing of the 2017 fiscal, what has been done under the Emergency Shelter Relief Fund, homes provided, whatever it is that used—

Hon. Mitchell: The grants.

Dr. Moonilal:—the grants?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: And could you—to refresh our memory—put in writing as well, the policy guidelines for the Emergency Shelter Relief Fund?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: I will refresh your memory.

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, just following up on my colleague with the Aided Self-Help Housing Programme, you have a list of questions to be put in writing, and if you can also include in that, what is the process? Because there are a number of persons who would have gone through a lottery system and would have been entitled and qualified already, and therefore what would happen with those persons who would be waiting for their allocation? And also, if you can expand on line Item 237, please? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: That would be provided in writing, Minister?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Lovely. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, this programme that replaced the Land for the Landless Programme is Aid for what again?

Dr. Moonilal: Aided Self-Help Housing Programme.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could you—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member for Couva South, you continue to do it. Line Item, so that we would not have the toing and froing.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am sorry, Deputy Chair. Line Item 234.

Mr. Chairman: Residential Lots Programme.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. Is there any plan on the part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to take sites which are being prepared for the distribution of lands that are being owed to the ex-Caroni workers for distribution for residential purposes, and incorporate them into this new programme?

Hon. Mitchell: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you, Chairman. If I could take the Minister to 086. In 086, Minister, you will notice that there was no estimate for 2017, but there was a revised estimate for \$1.2 million for Fence Line Communities. Are these Fence Line Communities work under the Sugar Welfare, the LSA, or the HDC?

Hon. Mitchell: Sugar Welfare.

Dr. Moonilal: Sugar Welfare. Minister, could I ask then, if you could give us, in writing, at a later time, the breakdown of works done, and also some type of analysis of the—I dare say—contractors being owed moneys? I do not need cheques necessarily, but if you could give us some indication of how much has been paid, and what are the outstanding sums to contractors in the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund who have done fence line work and are yet to be paid? If we can see it in writing?

Hon. Mitchell: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Minister. Right, will be provided.

Hon. Mitchell: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 135.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: We are on 135. Minister, public buildings, 002. There is a new project here called Development and Management of Property. Would you care to—

Hon. Mitchell: Where is this? I am sorry, where is this?

Dr. Moonilal: 002. I am on page 135. You with me?

Hon. Mitchell: 135, yes.

Dr. Moonilal: At 002, a new project, Development and Management of Property. Could we just get an indication of what really is this business?

Hon. Mitchell: Right. If you know Independence Square, just next to the New City Mall, there is a shell of a building. That is 43 Independence Square. It is owned by the Government, and the particular line Item, the allocation is for the refurbishment of that property, and for the creation of an incubator facility, similar to East Side Plaza and New City Mall.

Dr. Moonilal: But, Minister, if that is what you say, you just have to put refurbishment of property at Independence Square. Why is it named Development and Management of Property that gives a generic feel that there is some work to be done throughout the country managing property and developing property? It is one property you are going to develop.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes. I am sorry. Hon. Member, I am sorry, I do not write these terms, or these headings, or these titles.

Dr. Moonilal: Maybe as your Ministry, you should get involved in it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I continue?

Mr. Chairman: Next question?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. The upgrading to East Side Plaza, \$2 million. *[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am hearing some mutterings from the Member for Laventille West there and he is disturbing my train of thought. He is saying something about cheques and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Members!

Mr. Hinds: I am entitled to contribute in this Committee. The Member for “Oropeach” East suggested—*[Crosstalk]*—Oropouche East suggested to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development that he get involved in the HDC affairs and I simply advised my colleague, do not accept no cheques on behalf of no contractors.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you. Member for Oropouche East, question? Point?

Dr. Moonilal: Question, I can reply?

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no.

Dr. Moonilal: Let me continue. Could I continue?

Mr. Chairman: Member for “Oropeach” East, we are on page 135.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to take objection to “Oropeach” East and so on. I think there should be more respect. We would like some more respect for the constituency from all Members. [*Desk thumping*] Yeah. I think it is a sign of contempt for the people of—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member for Oropouche East. [*Interruption*] Member for Oropouche East, let us go on with the people’s business.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Might be race or something. Upgrading of East Side Plaza, could I indicate, Minister, if we can get in writing at some time a sense of the \$2 million, what was done in 2017 with the upgrading of East Side Plaza? Just a sense of what was done with the expenditure allocated there.

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, you have a question on page 134?

Mr. Lee: Yes. To the Minister, 002, line Item, Social and Economic Programme for East Port of Spain. You spent \$5 million in 2017, could you provide a listing of the programmes and the quantum?

Hon. Mitchell: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 237; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 237.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Under the Infrastructure Development Fund, Mr. Deputy Chairman—Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am aware I have five minutes to ask a question but I will take less. We have here the Accelerated Housing Programme specifically.

Hon. Mitchell: Specifically.

Dr. Moonilal: Right. Thank you. And we have had an increase in the 2017 estimate from 160 to 216, I just wanted to have an indication of what would have

contributed to that in the Accelerated Housing Programme? So, I do not think it would be repayment of loans per se here?

Hon. Mitchell: These are for ongoing construction works.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you list now, or put in writing, the ongoing construction works that would have accounted for this increase of about 61—

Hon. Mitchell: I can tell you now there are about 23 developments under construction, so these are for the ongoing construction works.

Dr. Moonilal: You could tell me now or you could put it in writing. If you want to tell me the 23.

Hon. Mitchell: You want each project?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, please.

Mr. Chairman: Would be provided.

Hon. Mitchell: Are there any projects that you are particularly interested in, or you want all?

Dr. Moonilal: If it is 23, it is not that much. Is it?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes, many.

Dr. Moonilal: So, you could put that in writing, and tell us the new projects? Could you indicate what are the new projects started from 2016 as opposed to ongoing projects? Because your 23 you said were ongoing projects. The new projects started for turning of the sod, from 2016 under the Accelerated Housing Programme, you could put that in writing as well, if you so choose?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Under Accelerated Housing Programme, could I also have from you, Sir, a status—you can give it now, because it is something I think you may know off hand—on the Mount Hope, I believe, public/private partnership HDC initiative involving NH International? What is the status of that project?

Hon. Mitchell: That does not form part of the Accelerated Housing Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: What does it fall part of?

Hon. Mitchell: That is the PPP programme.

Dr. Moonilal: That is outside of the HDC?

Hon. Mitchell: No, it is outside of the Accelerated Housing Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Sure, no problem. Could I ask in the period 2016 to 2017 to date, which we are looking at, has the HDC started and completed and distributed any housing from a housing project?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes or no.

Hon. Mitchell: You would get that in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, it is yes or no.

Hon. Mitchell: You would get it in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, you would put yes or no in writing?

Hon. Mitchell: I will.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure. Minister, could you indicate to us in writing, if you so choose, what is the new policy for home distribution, housing unit distribution?

Hon. Mitchell: I am not sure if that is relevant to the Housing Construction Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: But, the distribution of public goods and services built by taxpayers' money is a serious policy issue emanating from the expenditure of public funds.

Hon. Mitchell: But, I am not seeing it in the line Item. I do not see how it is relevant to the line Item.

Dr. Moonilal: The Accelerated Housing Programme is to build house, we are asking you on what—

Hon. Mitchell: It is the Housing Construction Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. And when you construct is to distribute goods and services to citizens and so on. So, if you feel that this is not within the line Item, I am fine with that. That is something—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Minister, you know all that you have to provide. Consider it part of the manual. [*Crosstalk*] All right, let us move on, Member.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, under the Accelerated Housing Programme, the Housing Construction Programme, in the last fiscal, I believe you completed the Victoria Keys Housing Estate, could we have either now or in writing, the policy used by the HDC to distribute those units?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Could we also indicate, in doing that, the cost and the total—I would like to get, please, the total applicants, all persons who applied for units at Victoria Keys, as part of the distribution—

Hon. Mitchell: Okay. Sure, no problem.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, the colleagues in front are disturbing my questioning.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have any more question, Member for Oropouche East?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Members! Members!

Dr. Moonilal: I am not hearing now.

Mr. Chairman: What is that?

Dr. Moonilal: I am not—the Minister is occupied with the colleagues.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member, go ahead.

Dr. Moonilal: I do not have the attention of the Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: You have my full attention.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Minister, for Victoria Keys, I would like the names of all applicants. The names of the successful applicants [*Crosstalk*] and the cost per unit.

Hon. Mitchell: Mr. Deputy Chairman, let me just repeat. The Accelerated Housing Programme is the Housing Construction Programme. Out of this line Item, moneys are allocated and utilized for the payment of contractors for the construction of homes. It has nothing to do with the allocation of Victoria Keys.

Mr. Chairman: Next question.

Dr. Moonilal: I expect the Minister to clarify—you will talk about the construction of homes, but you are not prepared to talk to the distribution of housing units. You are not prepared to talk about the—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member, let us move on.

Dr. Moonilal: That is fine. Could I also ask the status of construction of three housing estates, the Fair Field, Union Hall and Cypress?

Mr. Chairman: Member—

Hon. Mitchell: Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman:—the Minister said he would provide all 23 as identified, there is no need to ask for any specific housing. He would provide it.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I also, in relation to that, ask for the list of outstanding payments owed to contractors in the HDC?

Mr. Chairman: What line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: On Accelerated Housing Programme, it is a construction programme.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, that could be provided?

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the Minister to provide information on outstanding payments owed to contractors—

Mr. Chairman: What period?

Dr. Moonilal:—during the period 2016 to 2018? The Ministers in front are shouting no, no, no.

Mr. Chairman: Member, you proceed. You proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: But they are interfering with my line of questioning to the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: I hardly doubt.

Mr. Young: The answer is no. That is currently under investigation.

Dr. Moonilal: Hold on. Could I then ask the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, the Housing Development Programme, the list owned to contractors, that is under an investigation by who?

Mr. Young: Everything at the HDC under your tenure is under investigation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members, Listen—*[Desk thumping]*

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Listen, Members—

Dr. Moonilal: Well then everything I asked about the HDC, the Minister just—well, the Minister was not forthright. He promised certain information to me, and now I am hearing that I cannot get any information at all because every single thing at the HDC is under investigation.

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member!

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Chairman, what is—this is happening—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member, hold on. [*Crosstalk*] Rest assured, whatever has been identified by the Minister to provide, will be provided. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West must say that.

Mr. Chairman: Anymore questions?

Dr. Moonilal: He said that everything at the HDC is under—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member for Oropouche East, anymore questions?

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, quite frankly, I do not think I could ask anything given this position of the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman: So that means no.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you very much.

Dr. Moonilal: There is nothing again I want to ask.

Mr. Young: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Hold on. Hold on. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$1,496,600,504 for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development stand part of the Schedule. [*Crosstalk*] Members?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, I thank you. Permanent Secretary and the senior technocrats at the Ministry, do have a good evening.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Head 28, Ministry of Health. I will just give the Minister of Health and his technocrats time to come in.

Head 28: Ministry of Health, \$5,302,113,490 .

Mr. Chairman: We go to page 192, Members, in the recurrent expenditure. Welcome, Mr. Minister. Welcome to your senior staff. I will now invite the Minister of Health to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. As soon as you are ready, Sir.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chairman. First of all, on behalf of our side, I think I should congratulate our colleague, the Member for Couva North for giving birth to her second child. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Chairman, the Ministry of Health and the RHAs have made some significant progress in the past two years. In making that progress, we realize that there is still a very long while to go before the taxpayers of this country get value for money for the \$6 billion plus that goes into the Ministry of Health.

Some of our major accomplishments have been the reduction of maternal mortality rates in Trinidad and Tobago; a positive impact of infant mortality rates; the clearing up of backlogs for some surgeries, but I think the game-changer, and if I had to borrow a term from the budget presentation, “Shifting the Paradigm”, has to be the launch implementation of the Non-Communicable Diseases Plan which is long, long overdue in Trinidad and Tobago. The reduction of NCDs is critical because if we do not get a handle on NCDs—diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and some cancers—no Government will be able to pour enough money into health to treat. This Government has a Cabinet approved NCD plan and the aim is to change the culture of Trinidad and Tobago from one of treatment of disease to one of prevention of disease.

In coming to a close with my opening comments, I want to say that I, and I am sure that I speak on behalf of all my colleagues, stand firmly behind and with the Minister of Finance in this budget. This is not a Colm Imbert budget, this is a budget of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and we stand with our Prime Minister, we stand with our Minister of Finance, who is the principal architect, and we stand with our Minister of Planning and Development. This is a budget that will secure the long term future of all workers in Trinidad and Tobago, their children and their grandchildren. I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 28 stand part of the Schedule

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$5,302,113,490 for Head 28, Ministry of Health is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found under the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 192, and I recognize the Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, thank you Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, line Item 14, Remunerations to members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees.

Hon. Deyalsingh: “Oh”, so we have moved to 14.

Dr. Bodoë: No, no. Sorry, same page, page 192.

Mr. Chairman: Page 192. Line Item 14.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Bodoë: If you could indicate how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees that are currently functioning?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sixteen.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay. So the increase of \$1 million reflects an increase for the same number of committees?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Well, you have to remember that many of these committees were not fully operationalized under your tenure. Under our tenure, we have actually reinvigorated a lot of these committees, so that is the reason.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate the committees in writing and the membership? Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure. Council of the Pharmacy Board of Trinidad and Tobago; Clinical Assessment Committee; Private Hospitals Board; Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board; Drug Advisory Committee; Food Advisory Committee; Opticians Registration Council; Psychiatric Hospital Tribunal; Council for Professions related to Medicine; Council for Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago; Antimicrobial Resistance Coordinating Committee—a brand new one; Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Those are some of them.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: You are welcome.

Mr. Chairman: Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, under line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Minister, there are newspaper reports of a lot of young doctors who are unemployed. Under this Item, can they be utilized in the primary health care?

Hon. Deyalsingh: When you say young doctors, what are you referring to? Interns?

Mr. Singh: Those who have now come out of internship.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Interns? Okay. The Government took a decision recently to approve new positions for interns and I am happy to say that as far as interns are concerned, almost all the people qualified as interns have in fact been employed at the RHAs. The last batch received their letters for a cycle starting in October. So we have done that. I can give you the breakdown. Cabinet by 2004, had approved 176 positions; Cabinet 2010, 120 positions, giving you 297. This Government, hearing the plights of those interns took a decision in July of 2017 to approve 75 more positions, giving you a grand total of 372.

Mr. Singh: So I take it now that all of those interns are accounted for?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Vertical Services, page 193. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, with regard to Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, 01, I am just trying to find out, with regard to the appointment of the director of women's health, under which Head that a payment has been made and the staff of the director of women's health.

[MRS. ANNISSETTE-GEORGE *in the Chair*]

Hon. Deyalsingh: That was earlier. Member, this particular Head 004, Vertical Services, director of women's health does not fall under Vertical Services.

Mr. Singh: Can you indulge me Minister, and indicate where it fall? [*Crosstalk*] I am just trying to find out the line Item.

Hon. Deyalsingh: So what I am saying, the director of women's health does not fall under this line Item. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: And he answered a question in Parliament about this that you asked already. So you very well know too.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you. It will be under other line Item.

Madam Chairman: Okay, 005, North West Regional Health Authority, page 193. Member for San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Just one question to the Minister. 005/01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. And it transcends all the Regional Health Authorities.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sorry. Sorry?

Dr. Khan: My question transcends all the other Regional Health Authorities, about the house officers who have not been employed. If you could just give us some information on that.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Well, this particular line Item has to do with Ministry of Health public officers, if I am correct—you are referring to 01, Salaries and COLA?

Dr. Khan: No, I am just using that, the Salaries and Cost of—005/01, the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. I know it is related to the—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: This is internal Ministry staff.

Hon. Deyalsingh: This is internal Ministry staff.

Mr. Imbert: That question is not relevant.

Hon. Deyalsingh: It does not apply to this line Item.

Mr. Imbert: Not a relevant question.

Dr. Khan: All right.

Hon. Deyalsingh: That is why—

Dr. Khan: I was just asking it in advance.

Mr. Imbert: This is internal Ministry staff. Wait until we get to the correct line Item. Behave.

Hon. Deyalsingh: We will deal with it in the correct line Item.

Madam Chairman: 006, North Central Regional Health Authority; 007, Eastern Regional Health Authority; 008: South West Regional Health Authority; 009, National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, which is at page 199. Sub-Head 03; Minor Equipment Purchases, page 200.

Hon. Member: She skipped.

Madam Chairman: Okay, sorry, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 196; Item 001, General Administration; Item 004, Vertical Services.

Dr. Khan: One question on that.

Hon. Deyalsingh: What—

Dr. Khan: Just on sub-heading 39, Drugs and Other Related Materials and Supplies. There is a \$630 million subvention. Could you just indicate— and there is an increase of \$65 million. Could I just get an indication of what that is—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. So this allocation relates to NIPDEC, the PAHO Strategic Fund and the EPI, for pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical items.

Mr. Imbert: And you should note that the allocation is less than the original allocation for 2017. What was actually spent in 2017 was less than the original and this is also less than the original.

Dr. Khan: That is why there is a shortage of drugs then.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, at all. There is efficiency, cutting out waste, mismanagement and corruption.

Hon. Deyalsingh: There is efficiency.

Hon. Member: From “all yuh”.

Mr. Imbert: Creating more for less, more for less.

Madam Chairman: Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Finished.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 005, North West Regional Health Authority; Item 006, North Central Regional Health Authority; Item 007, Eastern Regional Health Authority. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. Page 198.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no. Go ahead.

Madam Chairman: Item 0—

Dr. Khan: There is one question on the 008/01 and 01 in all the others, 005, 006, 007. Have the travelling officers received their moneys that they were supposed to have obtained for their VAT payments and motor vehicle tax on travelling officers? Minister.

Hon. Deyalsingh: By information, once they have applied, the answer is, yes.

Dr. Khan: They have been getting it. Okay. Well, at least they are paying something. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: These thousands of travelling officers, they get exemptions.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention.

Dr. Khan: Just one question on that. 009/66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars, et cetera. I am just looking here, there is no allocation at all for any Hosting of Conference, Seminars for NADAPP. Any special reason why?

Hon. Deyalsingh: We will revisit this for the mid-year review, Sir. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Khan: The reason is that drug addiction is a serious problem and I think they do not agree—

Hon. Deyalsingh: We also use the Ministry's hosting.

Mr. Imbert: We can move things around.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 200; Item 001, General Administration; Item 004, Vertical Services; Item 009, National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 201; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 001, International Bodies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, pages 201 and 202. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 20—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Contribution to Non-Profit Institutions. Can you indicate perhaps in writing how these funds will be allocated, the \$18,969,000?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes. Will do.

Dr. Bodoë: Which body is involved and the amount of allocation?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, on the same line Item, could you indicate whether or not there are any applications that are currently pending to be considered for contributions for Non-Profit Institutions with respect to Ministry of Health?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: Can you indicate which ones?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I will do that in writing for you, Sir.

Mr. Padarath: Okay, and in terms of what is the process to be considered and whether or not there would be additions subsequent to this listing?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Will do.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Minister, 01, Medical Treatment of Nationals in Institutions—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Khan:—has been decreased by \$12 million. Is that the APP Programme?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, it is.

Dr. Khan: It has been decreased?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes. For good reason we are now focusing on efficiency and we are not out-sourcing services to the private sector. We are doing a lot more in the public sector.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 01, Regional Health Authority—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: The expenditure of \$161,900,000 and I see the breakdown here. Of particular interest is the Vacant Posts and an allocation of \$20 million. Can you indicate, maybe in writing, what those Vacant Posts might be?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Bodoë: Also, in addition to that, with regard to Item (iii) and (iv), Paediatric Cardiac Surgery—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: And Gynaecological Cancer Screening and Surgery, can you indicate the expected number of cases in these allocation will fund?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Will do.

Dr. Bodoë: And with regard to Item (ix), Legal Settlement, just out of interest, with the 2017—can you give me the 2017 allocation or expenditure with regards to that Legal Settlement in the Ministry?

Hon. Deyalsingh: That will be provided.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: On the same heading, Regional Health Authority in number (v), Vacant Posts, I think we can bring in the question here about the number of House Officer positions that are available and how many House Officers have not been employed as a result of decreased posts?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I can give you that.

Dr. Khan: Or will that take care of it.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I can give you that now.

Dr. Khan: Yeah, sure.

Hon. Deyalsingh: So as far as House Officers are concerned, the number currently employed; South West Regional Health Authority, 460; North West, 198; Eastern 122; North Central, 419; giving you a total of 1,199.

Dr. Khan: Can I ask Minister, is there any house officers who have applied, have not been employed?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Khan: What is the figure?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Some house officers declined the positions for a variety of reasons. One, they do not get into the particular specialty that they want; two, some find that the distance travel is too far; some want a Priority Bus Route pass because they are afraid of traffic and so on.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodo: Minister, can you indicate in those categories, the numbers. Do you have a total of those numbers?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I can get that for you, Sir.

Dr. Bodo: And the second point would be, how many house officers remain to be employed?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Bodo: Who have applied and you have no reason to decline a position?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Bodo: Can you provide that figure now—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë:—or in writing.

Hon. Deyalsingh: No, not now. In writing.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair, and hon. Minister you mentioned that there were 122 for Eastern Regional Authority, and I just wanted to know, not now, if all the positions are filled by whatever?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I could get that for you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I have it here on a spreadsheet. I will send it for you.

Madam Chairman: 010, Other Transfers Abroad, PAHO; 011, Other Transfers Abroad, National Health Service Company Limited. We are now on page 204.

Mr. Imbert: Wow.

Madam Chairman: We now go on to Sub-Head—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Khan: [*Crosstalk*] Current Subsidies.

Mr. Imbert: No, we are not going back.

Dr. Khan: Behave yourself, “nah”.

Madam Chairman: Wait, just one minute. [*Crosstalk*] One minute. We went, 010, Other Transfers Abroad, PAHO, which is at the bottom of 203. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Khan: I want to speak a little bit about 04, 009, 03, 04, 05 and 06. Why is there such a decrease—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, we finished that.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but what happened is—

Dr. Khan: No, what happened here?

Madam Chairman: We were at 009, Other Transfers which included all of those, 01, 04, et cetera. [*Crosstalk*]

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Dr. Khan: I am just asking that we revisit it. If it is no problem, well no problem. I mean—

Mr. Padarath: The expenditure is so large.

Dr. Khan: It is just that the decrease is so large.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, where are you?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 203. I have questions on 03 and 09, line Items.

Madam Chairman: All right, so Members just one minute. Are there any questions on 10 and 11 which is PAHO and National Health Service Company Limited, which is at the bottom of pages 203 and 204? No?

Dr. Khan: There are no questions.

Madam Chairman: Okay, fine. So I realize that we must be getting a little tired. So I will allow us—“we” collectively. So I will allow us—I am allowing the Member for Barataria/San Juan two questions and I am allowing you one question.

Dr. Khan: Just one question.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Khan: The decrease of the regional health authority is significant. Any special reason why, rather than the usual rhetoric that the Minister of Finance gives.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. Under the North West Regional Health Authority—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I object to that.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I will explain—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: No, wait, wait, wait. Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop. I object to that. The Member cannot say the usual rhetoric. There are reasons for these things. It is not rhetorical. It is factual.

Hon. Deyalsingh: For the North West Regional Health Authority, in fiscal 2018 they are not obligated to pay any salary arrears for the monthly staff. That is a big chunk of it. Two, reduction in security cost of approximately \$6 million annually, we have discovered a lot of things there. Reduction of rental facilities, we are negotiating with private patient suppliers to reduce cost in treating

patients. We are also, as I explained to you, with the EPP and so on, and other cost saving strategies. Yesterday, we saved seven to \$10 million alone at North Central by providing 53 surgeries in three and a half days, whereas Eric Williams traditionally will do eight per year. That is the type of the savings and efficiencies we are bringing across all the RHAs.

Madam Chairman: That is why I allowed you two.

Dr. Khan: I only had one so far.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, that is why I allowed you two.

Dr. Khan: I have one more.

Mr. Imbert: And Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute.

Dr. Khan: The National—

Mr. Imbert: Hold a minute, hold a minute.

Madam Chairman: Just a minute. The Minister of Finance wants to add some—

Mr. Imbert: “Hoold.”

Madam Chairman:—clarification.

Mr. Imbert: To understand some facts. The back pay that we paid in 2017 in the regional health authorities was in the vicinity of \$500 million. That is no longer required in 2018. So the decrease is far less than \$500 million, which means more allocations are being made to the RHAs in reality rather than less. So do not accuse me of rhetoric.

Hon. Deyalsingh: And just to say, in the case of Eastern, with that explanation, they are actually getting an increase of \$56.7 million.

Mr. Imbert: Increases across the board, man.

Hon. Deyalsingh: So there are net increases.

Dr. Khan: I am allowed one more question, Minister. National Cancer Registry, I see you have \$0.7 million. Do you have a director for that?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Not as yet.

Dr. Khan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 09, School Health Programme. Can the hon. Minister indicate how many schools or children will benefit from this programme and how does the Ministry intend to target—what criteria will be used to target the schools?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay, these are to target children for hearing tests, audio testing and eye glasses. I could provide you with the list of schools, but that is what it is for.

Madam Chairman: So hon. Members, we now go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. And if we can go to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. We are at page 179. 14, Princess Elizabeth Home for Handicapped; Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 179; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 179; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 179.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, new book. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 77; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 77 to 79; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 79. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: I am sorry, Madam Chair, page 78, Item 018.

Madam Chairman: Are we on Multi-Sectoral? Are we on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Dr. Bodoë: No Ma'am. I was under Other Services. I did not realize you had moved on so quickly.

Madam Chairman: All right. [*Crosstalk*] So we will take Fyzabad and then we will move on to you. And I will just ask Members, you know, I know the print is very small and that might trip us up, so that is why I have called the pages. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 018. We are on page 78.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Page 78.

Dr. Bodoë: With regard to the Establishment of a Renal Dialysis Centre, can you give us an update as to—is this referred to the two Renal Dialysis Centre? Can you give us to an update as to what is the status?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I will give you an update in writing.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Item 005, 234, Hospital Refurbishment Programme, \$45 million. Do you want to expand on that Minister?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure. I have a whole spreadsheet here. Would you like me to go it through item by item?

Dr. Khan: Précis it.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Hospital Refurbishment, okay. Page what?

Dr. Khan: Page 79, 005, 234.

Madam Chairman: Under C.

Dr. Khan: Under C, C 234.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Right, Hospital Refurbishment. North West: electrical upgrade for St. Ann's Hospital, a roll-over project from last fiscal into the next fiscal; renovation of Ward 202 and construction of a second operating theatre at the Port of Spain General Hospital; renovation of the Allied Building to include the Bio-Medical Department; supply of four generators for Success Laventille Health Centre; Upper Laventille Health Centre, St. George Central Head Office and St. George West CMOH Building.

Eastern Regional Health Authority: completion and construction work on central stores and pharmacy building; air-conditioning; upgrade works including supply in installation of centralized air-conditioning system; lower floor facility of accident and emergency department; upgrade of the electrical system including refurbishment of the kiosk room, repainting of interior and exterior wall; replacement of gypsum ceiling at the Rio Claro Health Centre; upgrade of the Sangre Grande Hospital Network Refurbishment Programme; construction, renovation of staff quarters within close proximity to the Grande Riviere Outreach Centre; a dedicated operating theatre for the maternity unit at the Sangre Grande Hospital, it is in the design phase. Replacement of air-condition units in ward one and ward two.

Under the South West Regional Health Authority: to supply a new 180 tonne chilled water air/cold unit; upgrade of the labour ward; phase three is now in progress; labour ward roofing, including the NICU, the Neo-natal Intensive Care

Unit; conversion of old Ward 14 area to house the Hemodialysis Unit; upgrade of the Regional Administration Centre. Would you like me to give it to you in writing or call out—

Dr. Khan: No, no, I am happy. Could you just tell me if the electrical services of Sangre Grande Hospital is there?

Hon. Deyalsingh: We will supply it to you in writing.

6.40p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on Line Item 250, Health Services Support Programme. Can you indicate to us what it involves, please?

Hon. Deyalsingh: 250? Okay. Health Services Support Programme, this has to do with the NCD project which I spoke about earlier. It has to do with component one, implementation of the strategic plan to battle non-communicable diseases. That is what that is for. It will include the Diabetes in Pregnancy Programme, which is a very important programme; the Healthy Schools Initiative across all schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Just one question, Minister. We have been speaking about a linear accelerator for St. James.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Mr. Karim: But I am seeing nothing there in 2018 for that.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Well, if you would look under 001, Equipment and Vehicles, that has now been moved to another line Item because we have got past the tender stage and we are going to go into the award and—

Dr. Khan: They say “purchase”, you know. This line Item is “purchase”. So basically that is why I am throwing it out.

Hon. Deyalsingh: No problem. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, same book, page 209. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 209 and 210. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Minister, just a little bit on the National Oncology Centre. Number one, it is only \$5 million being given to that. Could you give me the status of that, or do you want to give us in writing?

Hon. Deyalsingh: The National Oncology Centre is before the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Dr. Khan: And also the construction of the Couva Hospital, nothing has been given and I understand that you were going to—have you finished construction of that hospital?

Hon. Deyalsingh: My information is the construction as originally designed is finished, but there are certain deficiencies that need to be addressed.

Dr. Khan: No, I say nothing was given in the Line Item.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Khan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad? Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 210. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: 003, Re-development of Port of Spain Hospital. Is that the central block?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 28 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Health and other officers.

Head 17: Personnel Department, \$57,740,000.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 74. I now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: The Personnel Department includes the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer who sets terms and conditions for public officers.

Question proposed: That Head 17 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$57,740,000 for Head 17, Personnel Department, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of*

Recurrent Expenditure and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel, page 74. Item 001, General Administration. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, and I see \$15 million has been allocated. And the question I would like to ask—and this is in the context of what we heard this morning when we asked the question about what was the reason for the large number of contract officers in the THA. The Minister of Finance indicated that because there was a problem in the Personnel Department, in terms of—

Hon. Imbert: I did not say that. You are mistaken. Wrong Head. Wrong Item. That is the Service Commission. That is not this Item.

Mr. Charles: Okay. I withdraw the question.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 08, Vacant Posts. Salaries and COLA, we have an estimate of \$1 million. Could we get some clarification what vacant posts are existing out there and what will be filled by this \$1 million allocation?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide that to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 74 to 75. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, how many officers do we have as travelling officers who get travelling and subsistence? And what are some of the benefits that accrue to them?

Hon. Imbert: Which Head is that?

Madam Chairman: 02, 01.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, Travelling and Subsistence, which is 01.

Hon. Imbert: 01? Where are you?

Madam Chairman: 02, 001, 01.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Page 74.

Hon. Imbert: You gone back there?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: No, we did not go back.

Madam Chairman: In Goods and Services, General Administration.

Hon. Imbert: You want to know how many travelling officers there are?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, and what are some—

Hon. Imbert: Okay, we will provide that in writing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And any benefits accrued to them with respect to purchase of vehicles and so?

Hon. Imbert: You will get that in writing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South. Do you have a question? Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 02, 001, 16, Contract Employment. In terms of the increase in allocation to \$5 million, could the meeting be advised of how many posts will be created in terms of Contract Employment?

Hon. Imbert: As you are aware, there is a problem throughout the service with the filling of vacancies. This is designed to partially deal with that problem. With respect to the contract positions within the Personnel Department, we will provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to line Item 28, Minister, might you be able to give us some details as to what will constitute Other Contracted Services for \$3 million?

Hon. Imbert: That is just purchases of a general nature.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 23, Fees. Can the Minister indicate what accounts for this increase—this big increase for fees?

Hon. Imbert: That is for propriety licences for software.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 76; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 76; Item 004, International Bodies.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Hon. Members we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, page 50. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 50. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. If the hon. Minister could please advise on line Items 034, 036, 037, 038, how it will be conducted; if it is a local company or international and what was the procurement process, please? Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Different—I was going to say “different strokes for different folks”, but it is different types of consultancy for different ones. We could give you a list and explain which one is local, foreign, et cetera.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 17 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, CPO, and members of the Personnel Department. You all are discharged.

Head 09: Tax Appeal Board, \$4,762,660.

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

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Tax Appeal Board is a superior court of record which handles appeals on assessments of tax.

Question proposed: That Head 09 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,763,660 for Head 09, Tax Appeal 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* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 48. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 48; Item 001, General Administration, page 48. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 48 and 49; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, page 50.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 15; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 15.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 09 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the representatives from the Tax Appeal Board.

Head 04: Industrial Court, \$25,165,108.

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

Hon. Imbert: The Industrial Court is established by law to handle industrial disputes.

Question proposed: That Head 04 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$25,165,108 for Head 04, Industrial Court is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the follow Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 21. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 21; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, page 21 and page 22. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 16, Contract Employment, could the Minister tell us in what areas will this increase of \$390,000 be utilized from the point of view of contract employment?

Hon. Imbert: This is simply to ensure that adequate funds are available for contract officers in the Industrial Court. It is not an increase in the complement of contract officers, it is simply to make sure that everyone who is employed is paid. You may recall in the mid-year review we had to do a supplementary allocation. So, we do not want to repeat that exercise.

Mr. Indarsingh: It is good to know that you are looking after the salaries of employees.

Hon. Imbert: Definitely. We always do.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, South Office, page 23; Item 003, Tobago Office, page 23; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 24; Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 7; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 7.

Question put and agreed to.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Head 04 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the members of the Industrial Court. Reach home safely.

Hon. Members the Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Friday, 20th of October, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

7.00p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee suspended.*