



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

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

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Friday 20th October, 2017

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

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, October 20, 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. Annette-George]

10.00 a.m.

Madam Chairman: Good morning everyone. Kindly have a seat. Hon. Members, I am advised that I do not have as yet a quorum, so might I suggest that we wait another five minutes and see if we do get the numbers. Do we have one now? Okay. So I think maybe in five minutes we will get one. Welcome Minister, sorry to keep you back. I will rise and I will come back in five minutes.

10.31 a.m.: *Standing Finance Committee suspended.*

10.33 a.m.: *Standing Finance Committee resumed.*

Madam Chairman: I wish to announce that the Leader of the Opposition, Mrs. Kamla Persad Bissessar SC, MP, Member for Siparia; Mr. Rushton Paray MP, Member for Mayaro, have both asked to be excused from today's meeting of the Standing Finance Committee.

Hon. Members, you would recall that the start time for Monday, October 23, 2017, is still to be determined. Whip, have you had discussions? Okay, so it is agreed?

Mr. Lee: I still have to talk to the Leader of Government Business.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we will determine that later in the day.

Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$118,856,290.

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

Hon. Khan: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is a pleasure to be in this House to articulate the budget of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. As you are aware, this is a small Ministry. We do not spend much on personnel expenditure, recurrent expenditure and/or capital. Most of the serious

investment in the energy sector comes through the private sector, which is the energy companies and the state companies, Petrotrin and the NGC.

On the revenue side, which we will not be dealing with today, we are a collector of significant revenue, both in terms of royalties, the petroleum impost and the petroleum levy. We manage the subsidy budget, and you will realize that pre-judging the situation, the subsidy budget has been dropped from \$503 million to zero, based on the increase in the diesel and super fuel prices.

So I am here at your disposal to ask any question, to present any level of the clarification you may need, and hope that me and my staff will do the Ministry well and to do the Government well. So I thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$118,856,290 for Head 40, Energy and Energy Industries, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following 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 263. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 263. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you and morning, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Morning.

Mr. Lee: To the Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. In 2017 you had a revised figure of \$700,000; nothing for this year. Could the Minister indicate what committees utilized that \$700,000? And he can provide in writing at a later date who sat on those committees and the remunerations of the individuals on those committees.

Madam Chairman: Member, you are looking back, or do you want to know what committees have been disbanded?

Mr. Lee: Well yes, what the \$700,000 in 2017 was utilized for.

Hon. Khan: Some of the committees are as follows: the joint steering committee on the unitization of the cross-border hydrocarbon reserves with Venezuela. There is a Cabinet-appointed committee and the technical and the

ministerial level that deals with the cross-border gas, primarily Loran-Manatee; there is a power requirements committee; there is the extractive industries transparency committee; there is a major mineral advisory committee because mining licences are not granted without the approval coming through this committee for onward forwarding to Cabinet; there is another important committee called the permanent local content committee, that you would realize the energy sector, while it is highly capital intensive with significant foreign direct investment, a lot of that money goes back to the United States in particular because of the nature of the industry. So the local content committee tries to capture as much value to the local economy; and finally there is the energy efficiency services companies committee which monitors energy efficiency.

Mr. Lee: Follow-up question to the Minister. In writing you could provide the list of the members who sat on those committees, please.

Hon. Khan: Yeah. Okay.

Madam Chairman: So Member, you are really looking back? You are not looking for this year?

Mr. Lee: No, there is nothing for this year.

Hon. Khan: There is nothing for this year.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 264 and 265. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 08, Rentals/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage. There is an increase based on the revised estimate of 2017 of \$2.3 million. Could the Minister indicate what are the plans? Is it new accommodations, or is it an increase in prices, or is it arrears?

Hon. Khan: No. That is for some new accommodation in the Valencia area where we have a lot of mining inspector staff that have to be housed down there because we are on a drive to bring greater level of regulation on the mining industry, so that that staff is very much needed; and we would also be on a drive to clamp down in a serious way on illegal mining in north-east Trinidad.

Mr. Lee: So these officers will be based in the north-east area?

Hon. Khan: Yes, in the north-east area.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, good morning. Minister, through you, and through the Chair, Item No. 16, Contract Employment. There is a significant increase there, can you advise us what it is for?—and what—well, that is the first question.

Hon. Khan: As you know, or probably you do not know, but the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries just had a renewed structure approved by the PMCD and the Service Commissions because we really need to beef up our technical capability in the Ministry because it calls for significant monitoring of the oil companies, and with that new structure 26 contract positions were created which we hope to implement in this fiscal year. Most of it are for engineers, chemical engineers, petroleum inspectors, geologists, geophysicists, and what have you. So this is money, if I can say so myself, well spent, or will be well spent.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, I agree that you do need greater technological capability there in the Ministry. Most of this will be for monitoring of oil production, and therefore, revenues due to the country?

Hon. Khan: Revenues, contract management, and compliance which is an important aspect in the industry, and the level of ministerial oversight will be—

Dr. Tewarie: Will be greater.

Hon. Khan: Yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: This includes quarrying, or just the oil side?—oil and—

Hon. Khan: No. It includes quarrying also.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is oil, gas and quarrying?

Hon. Khan: And quarrying.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head—Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning everyone. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. I see that there is an increase by \$2.6 million, I just wanted to enquire as to whether this increase has to do with the desilting or the dredging of the route of the LPG vessel that brings that commodity to Sea Lots at the NP compound because that is a problem that we are facing.

Hon. Khan: When you look at the development programme you would see that money budgeted there. It is \$22 million, but this additional sums, that the variance is around \$3 million—2 point something—is basically— Apart from existing contracted services, there are two important contracts that will be awarded this year. One is the—well, I do not want to say the Ryder Scott Report because Ryder Scott is a company, but the natural gas reserves audit which is due this year. The last one expired last year. So that will be a major contract to again

quantify the natural gas reserves of Trinidad and Tobago which is very, very fundamental to the planning process and to the national economy. There is also a major claim before the committee for the limits of the Continental Shelf in Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, the population is not very aware of this, but right now we have a presentation towards the commission for the extension of the Continental Shelf, which is part of the law of the sea, which will define our international boundaries beyond the 200 miles exclusive economic zone. That has some significant consequences especially on the Atlantic side, where we share borders with Barbados, Suriname and Guyana, and you know that whole basin there is proving to be quite attractive for hydrocarbon exploration. So this is a significant thing. We have somebody on the commission right now as we speak. She is a senior geophysicist at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and she is doing yeoman service, and this could have very, very far-reaching economic consequences for the country and we are working assiduously on this.

Mr. Lee: To the Minister, line Item 58, Medical Expenses. Normally this is a small item. I noticed in 2017 it went up to \$275,000.

Hon. Khan: Well, yours truly. It is medical expenses you—

Mr. Lee: For the Minister? Meaning for you?

Hon. Khan: Most of that was spent on me for my operation, yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: We are glad that it was successful.

Hon. Khan: Well, praise the Lord for that.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, if you can advise, what type of vehicle is expected to be purchased using this allocation?

Hon. Khan: Most of it will be pickups for the quarry sector because on the oil and gas sector where we monitor the various companies, a lot of the engineers are travelling officers who use their own vehicles, but in the mining sector, in particular, where we have to go through this rough terrain in the north-east Trinidad, that is where most of that money will be spent.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewari.: Would you mind if I ask a question on 28? It is really to provide some information to the Minister really.

Madam Chairman: Member, but this is contract services?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: To provide information?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, because he made a point about the seabed expansion.

Madam Chairman: And you think it is really necessary that we go back?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, fine, I can also tell him outside.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies. We are on page 266. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: We are on Households?

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households, page 266. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Based on the shortfall in subsidy resale of petroleum products, nothing is budgeted for this year, so is it safe to say that there are no more subsidies on petroleum products?

Hon. Khan: No, no. There is still some residual subsidy which is 21 cents on diesel per litre and 29 cents on super, but that money will be met by the petroleum production levy because remember the oil companies are taxed their levy to assist in the subsidy. The estimate for that tax this year is \$264 million and that very likely will cover the cost of the residual subsidy that still exists on liquid fuels. And I am advised hereby there are subsidies on LPG also.

Mr. Lee: And that will be met by the same—

Hon. Khan: By the \$264 million coming from the petroleum production levy.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I am on 009, Other Transfers.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I am now moving to Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 07, Natural Gas Export Task Force. An allocation of \$2.2 million—what is the remit of this body and what is the composition and what is the expected outcome of this task force?

Hon. Khan: You realize that there is a Natural Gas Master Plan that was presented recently. It was tabled in Parliament. It is a very comprehensive document, making some very, very far-reaching and serious recommendations to be implemented. This Natural Gas Export Task Force is a body that was set up to assist in that implementation process and to provide professional advice. Through it, we do take on a lot of international consultants to further advise on some of the main strategic issues as it relates to the international trade of gas. So that is what this money is allocated for. The National Gas Export Task Force is chaired by former Minister of Finance Mr. Wendell Mottley and I could probably provide the names of the other members for your edification as a written response.

Mr. Singh: Is there a time period for their report and will the report—

Hon. Khan: No, no, there is a continuous work in the process.

Mr. Singh: Continuous.

Hon. Khan: Yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: Is this committee going to be involved in negotiations with the companies, or is it just advice to the Ministry?

Hon. Khan: Well, it is basically advice. They do not involve in direct negotiations because we have to be very careful who has the core responsibility to perform that job. But they work extremely closely with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and with the Cabinet Standing Committee on Energy.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 267. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, the Establishment of the Quarries Authority. Is this authority functional at the moment?

Hon. Khan: No, it is a proposal which we have budgeted some money for. From a policy point of view, I think I want to review that whether we really do need a quarries authority, but it is budgeted there and a decision will be made on that shortly.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 04, Equity Injection - ALUTECH Limited, 2017 estimate, the original estimate was \$661,000. In 2017, they had a revised estimate of \$35,171,000 and this year it is 661. Could the Minister explain, what was the cause for this extraordinary injection in 2017, which was not originally budgeted for?

Hon. Khan: As you are aware, the former PNM administration had a policy position to become deeply involved in the aluminium industry. That is the basis for the using of the gas for the aluminium smelter plant in Point Lisas. That was the basis and the rationale for the building of the TGU plant in La Brea. As we speak, we are very much exposed in the electricity grid system for paying for unused power in take-or-pay arrangements with the power generation companies.

That project was cancelled largely because of—I think, the Opposition, if I should say so myself. However, we still feel that we can salvage a downstream aluminium industry based on imported ingots, and that is the rationale for the Sural initiative because in the first plan we would have been producing our ingots for downstream work at the e TecK Park in Tamana. We still feel there is the potential. The work is still being done for a downstream aluminium industry especially for aluminium wheels because strange enough, over this time of depressed commodity prices, one of the few prices in the world that has not been depressed is aluminium and that is largely because of the motor car industry and aluminium wheels which has now become ubiquitous throughout the motor car industry. So that is the rationale for that.

Mr. Lee: Just a follow-up question, Madam Chair. Seeing that you injected 35 million this year and a small amount budgeted for 2018 of 661, do you envisage another equity injection, more than 661?

Hon. Khan: Well, Sural is a joint venture partnership, so the partner has to invest some equity now. There is some kit that exists, as we speak, down at the e TecK Park in Tamana, and then there is a building that will be used by the company. So all this we hope should take some traction and pick up some speed this year.

Mr. Lee: Just another last point. Minister, it is interesting—but nothing was mentioned, at least I missed it—no statement was made about this in the budget statement for 2018.

Hon. Khan: Well, I mean, in the grand scheme of the budget it is a small investment. The major investment was in the smelter plant and that has been scrapped for reasons better known to you all.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, as I understand it, therefore, this is an injection in a company that will produce basically mag wheels, is that it?

Hon. Khan: Yes, it is.

Dr. Tewarie: The state equity ownership is how much?

Hon. Khan: I have been advised it is 60/40—60 for the State and 40 for Sural.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Would that \$35 million injection, that would have been within the ambit of the 60 per cent ownership?

Hon. Khan: Uh?

Dr. Tewarie: It would have been within the framework of the 60 per cent ownership, or would that have increased the equity participation?

Hon. Khan: It is capital to progress the project.

Dr. Tewarie: As a 60 per cent partner?

Hon. Khan: Well, that is the framework.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. Okay. One more—sorry.

Dr. Rowley: Let me clarify something here because I do not want it to be misunderstood and then come back. There is some settlement with respect to the closure of the project where the minority partner would have had claims against the State. Those matters are still in negotiation. However, both partners had agreed to go forward, and some of that settlement consideration would be taken into account. So that \$35 million is not directly into investment going forward. It will contribute in some way to whatever comes out in the settlement of the claims. There is a figure. A small figure, \$5 million? There were a number of arbitration proceedings which were triggered—

Dr. Tewarie: I am aware of that.

Dr. Rowley:—by the closure of the project by the last administration. Those arbitrations have been concluded. We have settled them, but the partners have agreed to go forward into a new business on the 60/40 arrangement. So I want you to have that in your mind as we go forward.

And while I am on this subject, Madam Chair, let me add something else. This is not the end of it. We are in discussions with the Chinese Government with respect to settlement of another claim with respect to the closure and abandonment of the smelter project. As a matter of fact, that is a much larger sum we have been dealing with and that is still in the pipeline. As a matter of fact, only tomorrow morning, or is it today?

Mr. Young: Today.

Dr. Rowley: Today, we have a meeting with the Chinese on that matter. So that is in the pipeline. It is not in the budget, but it is on the table.

Dr. Tewarie: One more question, on the 01, the quarries issue. Minister, you said that you are going to review this to determine how you are going to go forward, but you know at the present time based on the auditor's report of 2016 only five quarries basically have legitimate contracts with the State, and the other 50-plus quarries are in fact either waiting for contracts to be renewed or in fact are not registered at all as quarrying enterprises under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. So this is a matter that really requires attention because it is a bleeding of revenue from the State.

Hon. Khan: We are very much seized of that, Sir, and all steps are being put in place to regularize that in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to ask a question on Item 03, but I want to follow up on this ALUTECH matter. I was of the opinion that because of the failure of Sural to make their equity injection in ALUTECH, that is one of the reasons for the failure of the company. So I just want to—so you can respond to that down the road. With respect to Item 03—

Dr. Rowley: Madam, Madam—

Madam Chairman: Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, thank you very much. Those statements are completely incorrect and I do not wish that that position be advanced as anything serious. There is no such position. The failures, and the arbitrations, and the liabilities that we are dealing with and facing now are as a direct result of the UNC shutting down the aluminium project which started with a smelter and down-streaming. What I just mentioned about the Chinese Government has to do with the UNC closing down the smelter. That was being funded by the Chinese Exim Bank. We have liabilities there in the approximation of about US \$100 million.

The ALUTECH was the down-streaming from that. So once we stopped that project, ALUTECH could not go forward. The ALUTECH equipment, US \$40 million worth of it, has been in a warehouse ever since. What we are trying to do now is to restart that project so as to save the down-streaming side based on imported ingots since we have killed the smelting side of it. That is one of the conditions in the conversation with the Ghanaians who had a smelter. We were hoping that we would get ingots from them or from the open market.

10.30 a.m.

What is in front of us is the possibility of sourcing aluminium ingots from the open market and having a downstream industry restarting the ALUTECH end of it. So what you have said there is completely incorrect and the opposite of what happened. This is the outcome of the country under the UNC shutting down the aluminium industry starting with the smelter. So we have no smelter on the table now but we are looking at ingots for down streaming, and that is where the ALUTECH, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago joint venture partnership is still going on, on a 60/40 basis. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Singh: Thank you. Prime Minister, perhaps out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of transparency, there ought to be an appreciation given to the Parliament and to the country of Sural's equity injections in whatever the incarnations are throughout that whole process from the smelter to ALUTECH.

Dr. Rowley: Well I mean, there is transparency. There is nothing more transparent than the shutdown of that project. [*Desk thumping*] I have just said that as a result of that, it triggered certain arbitrations which have gone on, which have been completed. The State has liabilities which we are in negotiations with but the partners have agreed to continue to try to and salvage the downstream of it. There is nothing else to say.

Mr. Singh: No, I am merely asking, through you, Chair, of the equity injections by Sural in whatever company incarnations with respect to the smelter and ALUTECH. I am asking for that.

Dr. Rowley: You want to close that down too?

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members. In terms of—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, I want to make it very clear here that I do not know what he is telling me. We just said we are proceeding to try to get a company on a 60/40 to salvage what has been damaged before. So there is nothing that is being hidden, so the word transparency is not on the table. There is nothing more to say at this point in time. If we agree—

Mr. Singh: We are making an equity injection and there is a partnership and there a consortium of Trinidad and Tobago together with Sural. We are making an equity injection and I want to know: What is Sural's equity injection? That is a simple matter for me.

Dr. Rowley: But it might be simple for you but I do not want you to mislead the public. I just told my colleague from Caroni Central that as we deal with the

60/40 arrangement, the liabilities which we are exposed to arising out of the arbitrations which we have lost, will form part of that discussion. Did you get that clear?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: And that is where the matter is at the moment.

Dr. Tewarie: But I understood that. I mean, if I think—

Madam Chairman: One minute, Member, in terms of I am recognizing Chaguanas West. I think you have finished with 04. I think you have a question with 03.

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Do you wish to pursue that?

Mr. Singh: Yes, I will pursue that, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I will come back to you, Caroni Central.

Mr. Singh: 03, Environmental Indemnity to the Power Gen. Company of Trinidad and Tobago. There is an allocation in this line Item of \$3.7 million. Could the Minister indicate as to what stage of the dismantling of this power plant, what progress has been made and whether or not there is—what is the projected cost of this environmental indemnity?

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity. Chaguanas West, and for the benefit of the public, this is a very important point that needs to be made. It seems that in 2014, under the UNC administration, the then Cabinet took a decision to wholly indemnify the shareholders and foreign holders of PowerGen for any environmental claims, any works that needed to be done to dismantle it. So we were shocked when we came in and saw that you all, as a Cabinet, added language in terms where it made it express and clear that the Government and the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago have to pay all of the costs for dismantling this plant, that the foreign shareholders of PowerGen would have made profits for over the years, expatriated their profits back to wherever it is and you all, as a Government, instead of protecting the taxpayers, put us under an express indemnity and liability for all of the costs and so far, the cost has been estimated, I think at over \$10 million just for the environmental clearance and the removal.

So we questioned why would a Government that is supposed to protect the taxpayers and the public of Trinidad and Tobago, take a position to take on the

liability for foreign shareholders who have only expatriated profit, made money off of us, and taken their money outside. Why would the then Cabinet have taken a decision to put—and I repeat it for the public of Trinidad and Tobago—express language that says, we, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, would pay for all of the dismantling, any environmental cost, anything that changes, et cetera and not protect us, the taxpayers. Thanks for the opportunity.

Mr. Singh: It is my understanding, through you, Madam Chair, and I would like the Minister of Energy to respond to this. The 1994 power purchase agreement—it is my understanding that the 1994 power purchase agreement included a clause dealing with the whole question of indemnity in the event, so that therefore, if there is an addition, I would like the Member to provide that to the Parliament to the clause.

Mr. Young: Madam Chairman, again, I thank the Member for Chaguanas West for that because it shows yes, in the initial agreement, there was a clause that could have been interpreted, because what the clause said is if there is any change of law, any environmental issue that arises, the Government would pay for it. But then when a decision was taken in 2014 via a Cabinet Note, taken in 2014, to dismantle—and they never told the public that they were going to be dismantling the Wrightson Road plant—they added additional language. So we would be pleased to bring the additional language. They had took it out of the 1994 language to now say when we are dismantling going forward in the future as we plan to, we will pay all of the cost. So we did not even have an opportunity because we examined it to see if we had an opportunity to protect the taxpayers, but because of the express, clear, unambiguous language added in 2014 that expressly dealt with that particular circumstance, they saddled the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago with tens of millions of US dollars once again whereas it should have been—it is a little ironic. We were just talking about equity and sharing equity with partners. They did not do that. They put all on us, the taxpayers.

Hon. Khan: Madam Chair, let me just add something. I have the Cabinet Minute here and it specifically states undertaking environmental remediation work, not only at facilities in Wrightson Road, you know, in Point Lisas and in Penal. So every year we get a bill. Good? And the date of this is December 05, 2014. We were sitting on that side then. So in other words, apart from the Wrightson Road decommissioning, we get bills annually, sometimes in a million, a million and a half, two million, for remedial work in Penal, for remedial work in Point Lisas, only to the account of the Exchequer.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, I would think that this conversation could end with a simple answer to a simple question. Why would the Government of Trinidad and Tobago have done that?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I come back to line Item 04, hon. Minister and my question is: Sural could not have provided any documentation, any agreement as to the injection of any funds on their part. They could not have provided anything except to say that—

Madam Chairman: Member, is that a question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is. I am allowed five minutes, not so, as a preamble? Okay. Yeah, so I am continuing. The only thing they could have provided was a verbal agreement that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, at that time, would inject 100 per cent of the cash injection. My question is: Why is it that the Government fostered that burden on the population of Trinidad and Tobago and why would they have taken the decision to pay US \$40 million for a project that has not been proven and why would you continue to inject equity into a project that will not bear fruition?

Hon. Khan: Madam Chair, I think the Prime Minister adequately answered all matters pertaining to ALUTECH. The money has to do with settlement of litigation and/or reviving the project. To say the project is not proven is wrong. What is there to be proven? That you can take aluminium ingots and make motor car wheels. There is nothing to prove in that. So I think the Prime Minister has adequately answered it and I have nothing more to add.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, can the Minister—

Madam Chairman: Member, Member, I have allowed some background about the 2017 Estimates, what we are really looking at is 2018 Estimates which is a \$5 million figure. Okay? So I would also suggest that further interrogation is always permitted under another forum. Okay? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, just to ask the Minister based on what the Prime Minister indicated, the Prime Minister indicated that moneys were here to pay back—the moneys that were assigned, so I just want to know where is the written agreement that there is in fact—

Madam Chairman: And all I am saying, Member, that is something under the 2017 Estimates and I am saying that you are allowed an opportunity to interrogate that further if you wish but I would not allow it in this forum. Okay. Member for Caroni Central.

Okay, so hon. Members, we now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are going to another book, page 106. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral Services, page 106. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 003, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiatives. In 2017, we budgeted \$18 million, \$1 million was spent in 2017, and 2018, a budget amount of \$7 million. Could the Minister state what the status of the project in respect to energy efficiency initiatives is? Because there has been a lot of talk in the last two years or so under your Ministry. And what is the strategic plan for this project going forward?

Hon. Khan: The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries obviously has to champion the cause for renewable energies. We are signatory to the Paris agreement where we are committed to generate 10 per cent of our power by 2021. Now, having said that, the Ministry's budget for renewables is not specifically for renewable energy projects. It is for education, it is for smaller projects like solar lighting on grounds and a couple of matters like these.

But on the major renewable initiative, we have proposals coming through the national energy for some wind farms in south-east Trinidad, and we are a little handicapped by solar because solar's footprint is so large, it calls for one megawatt of power, it calls for a hectare of land for solar panels. But I just want for clarification purposes to say that we have, right now, invitations for proposals for a waste to energy project which will be placed at the Beetham landfill, and that will use municipal waste to generate electrical power. While *sensu stricto* that is not classified as renewable, it comes close in a real way.

And the other thing I need to say is that Trinidad and Tobago has been championing the cause for CNG. Okay? So again, whilst CNG is not technically classified as renewable, it is the cleanest form of fossil fuels. All our power-generating capacity comes from gas from turbines. We are one of the few countries in the world like that, outside of the Middle East. And with our major thrust in CNG, we have taken a decision at the Cabinet that all Government vehicles, by next year—we have a target of 30 per cent—will be CNG and all new purchases will also have to have the CNG conversion kit.

We are going to expand the gas station network for CNG. You all famous Couva roundabout fiasco where you built a lot of things resembling tanks there, I do not know what they are. We will be converting that into a flagship CNG station.

We have a CNG station carded for Tobago, because there are some CNG buses that will be placed in Tobago and we are starting to market Tobago in a greener way, so that will be there also. So I think we are coming close to our target of 10 per cent of renewables and I think if we can get the wind farm project going which has the capacity to generate 50 megawatts of power and to sell on the national grid, that will be a help.

I have one caveat to say. Again, based on—it is a corollary to the Alutrint project because we have—there was a time just under the last year of UNC regime, we were paying—T&TEC was paying TGU \$45 million a month in a take-or-pay contract for unused power. We have spare capacity in this country now to take us until 2021. So if we bring in a big renewable project and buy power, we still have to pay for power that we are not using. “So yuh understand.” When you take a decision, it has consequences, serious consequences. So it is not only affecting Sural and downstream and aluminium smelter “eh yuh know”, we have a big plant in TGU. As a matter of fact, we have cut down the \$45 million deficit. You know why? Because of the Gandhi Village substation, we are now taking most of the power from TGU because they have more efficient generation of power in using less gas to generate electricity and we are paying the take-or-pay component of it to PowerGen.

Mr. Lee: This is a follow-up question to the Minister. As far as renewable energy and the legislation is, what is the status with that, as respect to T&TEC?

Hon. Khan: We have been working on that. That is the feeding tariff for grid connections of non-utility scale distribution of electricity and the FITs and that is in progress.

Dr. Tewarie: My question was on the renewable energy sector there but I would not pursue the matter now.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Part of my question was asked by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and answered by the Minister with respect to the feeding tariffs and the necessary legislation. But I want to deal with the issue of this waste to energy. I saw your RFP and I was taken aback by the fact that you had a very short time period, October 30th. But the point I want to ask: What is the extent of the subsidy that the Government will be providing for a waste to energy plant?

Because it is my understanding that it costs around 41 cents to produce a waste to energy, 8 cents with natural gas and about 12 to 15 cents for solar production of energy. So when you embark on a plan to create a waste to energy

plan, that requires the whole separation of waste and so on, that is all very well for the society environmentally. The question is that, having regard to the subsidy required for that to be economically effective, what is the extent of the subsidy that will be provided?

Hon. Khan: Well, I think that question is premature because the requests for proposals are now out, it will be concluded at the end of this month. You have to see what models, economic and/or technical models, that are being presented for the waste to energy facility and then you start to talk that language. But to talk about the extent of subsidy, if there would be any at all, is extremely premature at this time, Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Through you, Madam Chair, so hon. Minister, you are telling me that having regard to the worldwide overall cost associated with waste to energy plants and I am not dealing with the toxic ash disposal issue, as against in which we have a natural gas base power generation taking place, and in which we have the potential for solar, which is much cheaper, you are saying that you are depending upon the RFPs to come in and then you will see?

Hon. Khan: Yes, well we will have to.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: I would just like to make a point. There is a point of view that renewable energy is cost effective; it is not. Renewable energy is far more expensive than energy produced by hydrocarbons, it is far more expensive. The technology is continuing to evolve. But in Europe where there was a big drive among the EU, in fact, they have agreed to 20 per cent of energy from renewable sources by the year 2020. They have had to give tremendous subsidies for wind power, for solar power and so on. So that it is not the panacea that people think it is, the technology is improving but it is more expensive than energy from conventional hydrocarbon sources and I think people need to know this. There is a view that it is equivalent and it is cost effective; it is not at this time.

In fact, I had seen a presentation made to the Ministry of Housing some years ago to produce a solar energy pack for a house, a typical HDC house and it was upward of a million dollars per house to provide the solar panels and so on for a HDC house. You will agree this is not cost effective to put solar energy equipment on a HDC house costing a million dollars just for that, it is not cost effective. So whereas there is a drive, we must look at the ozone layer, we must look at global warming. Do not believe that renewable energy is cheaper than conventional energy.

Mr. Singh: Well, Minister, I think we are both speaking from the same hymn book because I am dealing with the issue of the subsidy and with respect to environmental issues, the cleanest burning fuel is natural gas. So it is not a problem with respect to ozone layer in the context of Trinidad. So my question was and like yours, it is very expensive to engage in renewable energy although it may be the flavour of the period.

Hon. Khan: Yeah, if I should say so myself, well said.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 005, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives. Will this initiative address the issues of A&V fake oil issue?

Hon. Khan: The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives deals with—they are an independent group voluntary, that is the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries on behalf of the Government and all the major oil companies and certain NGOs are signatories to. What they do? They track Government revenue as it relates to supposed revenue that came from the oil companies. And I am pleased to report that their last report did, in fact, indicate that it was very, very little variation from the revenues that the Government said it received from the energy sector and from what the energy sector actually said that it paid the Government. And I think that we were one of the few countries in the world where there is virtually 100 per cent congruence in that regard.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: In light of the fact that you are looking at saving and protecting, regarding the same A&V issues, what will be done to prevent further issues like that arising in the future?

Madam Chairman: What Item are you on?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Item 005.

Madam Chairman: But 005, I think the Minister explained it was extractive industries which said nothing with respect to what you are speaking about.

Hon. Khan: There is absolutely no relationship between the two Items.

Madam Chairman: All right, so might we go on? Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. 007, the Environmental Policy Grant Project from the EU, I see no money has been allocated, but I recall earlier this year that the EU representative indicated that we stood to lose \$18 million because we had not developed certain policy initiatives with respect to sustainable

development and environmental policy. Could the Minister give us a status report on whether we were able to access that \$18 million?

Miss Olivierre: Now, there are a number of aspects on this EU grant policy. In one case, we did benefit from the EU consultant helping us to develop a roadmap for the renewable energy sector and the handover ceremony for that was early in September. Might have been September the 5th, I stand to be corrected on the date. But also in the mineral sector. So there was an initiative that the Ministry would have spearheaded where we committed to developing an automated system for monitoring some of the work done in the mineral sector and we were able to have that IT work completed in time at the end of last year, so that we were able to access some of the funding on the EU grant.

Mr. Charles: So you are saying specifically that \$18 million has been accessed?

Miss Olivierre: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: No, I am okay.

Madam Chairman: So hon. Members, we will now move on to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, this is at page 221, same book; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, Infrastructure Development Fund. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, 001, under Industry, Development of Industrial Sites, \$20.6 million was spent in 2017 and 58.6 is budgeted for 2018. Could the Minister, if he does not have it now, in writing—*[Interruption]* Or, sorry, sorry. So \$21 million is identified this year. Could the Minister in writing or if he does not have it now, identify those locations?

Hon. Khan: No, I can answer now. I think I want to preface what I say. For those of you who are familiar with budgets in the past, especially during the so-called “better” years, you would have seen where through the PSIP, the Government funded a lot of the development of industrial sites. Okay. Based on our economic constraints now, we have taken a decision that the investment and the development of industrial estates, which falls under the remit of the NGC group of companies through the national energy, they will have to fund that from an economic basis because it is a business they are in. Our money will be better spent on other utilities in the country. So the development of industrial sites here,

this \$21 million is a residual cost largely to deal with the relocation of people in the La Brea area which is at the Union Estate in what is called a buffer zone where you cannot be within a certain radius of the industrial estate and this \$21 million, I think, is to relocate around about 60 families outside.

Mr. Lee: Six zero?

Hon. Khan: Yeah.

Mr. Lee: And it is specifically for La Brea?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, for the Union Estate.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. 011, the Dredging of the Sea-Lots Main Channel and Turning Basin, does that have to do specifically with the NP vessels?

Hon. Khan: Yes, it is specifically—

Mr. Charles: And nothing to do with *Galicia* or anything?

Hon. Khan: No, nothing to do with *Galicia*. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, it has to do with the NP turning bay and that is to bring fuel from Pointe-a-Pierre and lubes in particular for the lube plant.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Could you indicate the procurement process that has taken place or could you name the contractor?

Hon. Khan: No, that contract was awarded, I think, since in UNC time from my understanding. I am not sure who the contractor is.

Mr. Charles: So it is not an annual renewal, it is a roll-over contract?

Hon. Khan: No, no, it is a roll-over contract. Yeah.

Mr. Charles: You are assuring the House of that?

Hon. Khan: Yes, it is.

Mr. Charles: Could I continue? In terms of Item 005, Development of New Port Facilities, I see \$15 million. This is with respect to the Moruga port?

Hon. Khan: No, no, no. This, again, what I said before, most of these port developments that fall under the national energy, which is the Brighton Port which is in La Brea and Port Galeota which is in Guayaguayare. Again, there is a major development plan for Port Galeota. This is some partial funding, again, for some residual cost. I have instructed the National Gas Company, through the

national energy, that they have to fund these projects from a commercial and economic point of view. There seems to be good traction now with the Port of Galeota in terms of the people are coming with proposals because based on our dynamics with the Guyanese, there is serious consideration for using Port Galeota as the base to service, at least in the initial stages, the offshore operations in Guyana. That is supposed to begin in 2019, 2020.

11.00 a.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 011, the dredging. Is there a commencement date?

Madam Chairman: Member, I think from the response—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: He said it was a rollover and it is a continuation of the—*[Interruption]*—I know, but he said that there is going to be the dredging and the dredging does not happen all the time. If it did, then you would not have—

Madam Chairman: You want to know the actual date when—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Minister, would you be able to provide that in writing?

Hon. Khan: Yes, I will provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I was just going to ask on the Galeota Port, I imagine the \$15 million is allocated for that. What remains to be done there?

Hon. Khan: The Galeota Port services the east coast. Because of the depth constraint and the draught, it was only smaller vessels could operate out of Galeota. Galeota has operated since in the days of AMOCO to service the offshore operations. The trend in the service boats operation now with offshore facilities, especially where the drilling is now further and further offshore which is not shortfall trips, it calls for larger vessels because the economics of making the trip is something prohibitive. So that will call for some dredging and building of new piers and what have you. And then when you are looking at Guyana you are saying that it is estimated that the trip out of Galeota to the offshore facilities in Guyana will take 23 hours which is not particularly bad.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: I withdraw.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 40 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, PS.

Hon. Khan: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Head 18: Ministry of Finance, \$5,651,049,870.

Madam Chairman: We are going to page 78, and in the interest of time, we then go to page 105, in the Statutory Boards. [*Interruption*] No, no, no, I am just calling out the pages. Yes, he is but in the interest of time. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you Madam Chairman, I am very pleased to hear that the Member for Caroni Central, purporting to speak on behalf of the Opposition, is not asking any questions. [*Interruption*] Well, that is what I heard.

The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the collection of revenue and the release of funds to Government Ministries, Departments, statutory authorities and state enterprises in order to service the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Now, in the past I have used this technology, “in the service of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago”, and it appears that Members opposite through—I believe know better, seem not to understand what that means. To service the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago simply means, to make funds available to pay inescapable commitments, such as salaries, pensions, gratuities, social welfare payments, debt servicing and also to make transfers, subsidies and other payments to all of the agencies of the State that together provide service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So the main responsibility of the Ministry of Finance is to collect revenue and release funds in the service of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Question proposed: That Head 18 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$5,651,049,870 for Head 18, Ministry of Finance, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Head and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, 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.* We are at page 78, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration.

Hon. Imbert: This is the part where they have no questions?

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 01, Item 002, Budget Division, page 79; 003, Customs and Excise Division, pages 79 and 80; 004, Inland Revenue Division, page 80. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, 003, Customs and Excise Division—

Madam Chairman: We are at 004, Inland Revenue Division.

Dr. Tewarie: Did we pass 003? I had a question, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, we passed 003 some time ago and I called the pages.

Hon. Imbert: And the Chairman was very explicit.

Dr. Tewarie: I had a question on page 80. Can I ask the question, Ma'am?

Madam Chairman: 004? We are at 004, Inland Revenue.

Dr. Tewarie: All right, 004, 01. How does this \$1 million increase take into account the Revenue Authority issue and the property tax?

Hon. Imbert: There is no connection.

Dr. Tewarie: There is no connection?

Hon. Imbert: No. This is the Inland Revenue Division, which is completely separate and distinct entity from the proposed Revenue Authority, and therefore the Revenue Authority is not in any way connected to this line Item.

Madam Chairman: 005, Treasury Division, page 81; 008, Investment Division, page 81; 009, Central Tenders Board, page 82. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Central Tenders Board, 009. Did the Central Tenders Board engage in any way with the following projects:

- the highway to Manzanilla; and
- the road to Toco?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Tewarie: No?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask how they—what is the source of funding for the highway to Manzanilla?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item would that be?

Dr. Tewarie: I was following up on your answer.

Hon. Imbert: I am just asking what line Item would that be?

Dr. Tewarie: I am still on the Central Tenders Board.

Hon. Imbert: And since I said that the Central Tenders Board was not involved then I cannot see how you could ask the supplementary question. They are not involved. You should have asked that in the Ministry of Works when that was being examined.

11.10 a.m.

Madam Chairman: 010, Evaluation Division, page 82. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 08. Can you identify how many posts are presently vacant for this line Item?

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, we will provide that for you in writing but, however, you should note that the implementation of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Property Act is now contingent on the appointment of the Procurement Regulator by His Excellency the President. I want to make that clear because there is a misconception, pervasive misconception, which I see in editorials and so on, that the Government or the Parliament is somehow holding up the implementation of the public procurement Act.

The Act that was passed by this Parliament requires His Excellency the President, in his own discretion, to appoint the Procurement Regulator. The Office of the President advertised the post and received applications at the end of August. It is my understanding that the Office of the President is now in the process of evaluating the applications and will make that appointment in due course. Until then, the Act cannot be proclaimed any further because without a Procurement Regulator you cannot proceed and, therefore, we have to maintain the Central Tenders Board until the Regulator is appointed and the Procurement Board can come into effect.

In that case, even though there is an Item here—and it is very small, as you can see—it is unlikely that any vacant posts in the CTB, the Central Tenders Board, will be filled in this fiscal year because we expect in 2018, the procurement Act will become operational, and that repeals the Central Tenders Board and removes the Central Tenders Board from our procurement system.

Madam Chairman: Member, Vacant Posts was under Valuation.

Hon. Imbert: Oh, I am terribly sorry. I apologise profusely, but I am glad everybody is giving me the chance to say what I just had to say. We will send you the information in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And also the classifications.

Hon. Imbert: Certainly.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask a follow-up question?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Do these vacant posts have anything to do with the assessment of properties related to the property tax?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it is for 50 persons dealing with that exercise.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, I am fine.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, page 83; Financial Intelligence Unit, page 83; 017, Office of Supervisor of Solvency, page 84. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I notice there was no allocation for 2017—sorry, not no allocation, no expenditure, and I just wanted to find out what happened.

Hon. Imbert: We will look into that because we did have somebody acting in the position. A new person has now been appointed by the Public Service Commission, somebody from the Treasury, so we will let you know what went on there, but we are now building that office because Service Commission has appointed an Inspector of Solvency, finally.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, pages 84 to 86. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment. Are these contract employees on the establishment and you intend to hire more or is it something else?

Hon. Imbert: Yes. There is a provision for 16 additional—sorry, not 16, there is a provision for additional persons in our IT unit, our building management unit and the legal and advisory sections of the Ministry.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. No. That is another item. Under Goods and Services, I wanted to ask, under 28, which is Other Contracted Services, what are those for?

Hon. Imbert: Legal and advisory.

Dr. Tewarie: Legal and advisory?

Hon. Imbert: We have a lot of legal matters.

Mr. Chairman: There is an explanation in the explanation column.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. The Member already asked the question. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Budget Division, page 86. Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: No, I had another question under the Item you just left.

Hon. Imbert: I have no problem answering the question but go ahead, if you do not mind, Madam Chairman.

Dr. Tewarie: Just two questions really: one is on 36, Extraordinary Expenditure. I just wanted to—

Hon. Imbert: But there is no provision for it eh, and there has been none since 2016.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I notice—I am going to raise this Minister because I see it as a pattern, which I will draw to your attention which is the increase in Janitorial Services, 37 and the increase in Security Services, 43. So you can either respond or—

Hon. Imbert: I will explain. A collective agreement was signed with MTS workers and it has taken effect.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. So this is an increase in salaries for existing, and this is both janitorial and security?

Hon. Imbert: No, just security. Janitorial is still outstanding. We are working on that right now.

Mr. Chairman: 002, Budget Division, page 86; Item 003, Customs and Excise Division, pages 87 to 88. Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes on 28, Other Contracted Services, just an example, is it the Items identified on the right here?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. I will not pursue that, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Well, let me just say because it is important. We are going to this year, finally, as long as there is no further obstacle, operationalise the scanners, the container scanners. That is what that is about. I say as long as there is no further obstacle. [*Crosstalk*] I think you are aware. I think you are aware.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Inland Revenue Division, pages 88 and 89.

Dr. Tewarie: I will just—I know you gave an explanation just now. You said negotiations on Janitorial Services, I note the increase, \$1.1 million. Is that for the same matter Minister, anticipating negotiated increases?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Treasury Division, pages 89 and 91; Item 00—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Madam Chair, line Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance. Can the hon. Minister indicate how much equipment is expected to be repaired when you do repairs and is there a listing?

Madam Chairman: Member, where are you?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 90.

Hon. Imbert: What line Item?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 15, Repairs and Maintenance—

Madam Chairman: Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings, Item 21? Item 21?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 15.

Madam Chairman: Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance—Equipment?

Hon. Imbert: Member, this is labelled in a funny way, but what it is, it is the upgrade of the Integrated Human Resource Information System, which is very, very important. At the present time, the present antiquated system only allows one payroll cycle per month. So if you have an extraordinary requirement to pay at the middle of the month or whatever, you cannot use the IHRIS system for that. So we are upgrading the software to bring it to best in class, best practice. So that is what that is for.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, 02, on page 89.

Hon. Imbert: On page 89, we passed there, man. Madam Chairman, what is that? What is he doing me?

Dr. Tewarie: Items 37 and 43, the increases there for Janitorial Services and Security are quite substantial.

Hon. Imbert: You are talking about Inland Revenue?

Madam Chairman: Members, at page 90?

Hon. Imbert: He is saying 89.

Madam Chairman: At page 90, 37 and 43.

Hon. Imbert: That is where he is?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please, and that is where we all are.

Hon. Imbert: I heard 89, but it is the same thing.

Dr. Tewarie: No, but they are more substantial than could be accounted for by negotiating settlement or—

Hon. Imbert: No. We have additional facilities. Come on, we have a big Government Campus across the road.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is additional employees?

Hon. Imbert: We have additional responsibilities in terms of Security and Janitorial Services because the new buildings, Customs and Board of Inland Revenue. It is a big building, it demands more.

Madam Chairman: 008, Investments Division, page 91. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 28, Other Contracted Services. The budgeted amount is \$70 million. The footnote says:

“Includes provision for divestment of State Enterprises and Special Audits.”

Hon. Imbert: What we are doing is what should have been done years ago. We are going to be taking a critical look at the efficiency of state enterprises. So we will be doing a number of special audits of the hundred-odd state enterprises for the first time to look at them to see where we can achieve savings and greater efficiency. So that is what that is for.

Mr. Lee: And the other first part of that footnote was “divestment of State Enterprises”.

Hon. Imbert: Well, we have a plan in the coming year, for example, we were looking at a public/private partnership with respect to VMCOTT. It is in the conceptual stage at this point in time, and you need specialist expertise to do these things, you cannot do it by vaps.

Mr. Lee: So VMCOTT is the only state agency on the table right now?

Hon. Imbert: Well, I mean, a public offering is a form of divestment, you know, when you do the divestment of shares in FCB, in TTNGL and then we are also looking at divestment of equity in TGU and so on. You need specialist expertise to do these things, you cannot just do it arbitrarily. We do not want to fall into the trap that your Government fell into with the FCB IPO. Our IPOs have been clean. They have been clean. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Lee: Thank you so much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Might we proceed please? 009, Central Tenders Board, page 92; 010, Valuations Division, page 93; 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, page 94; 014, Financial Intelligence Unit, pages 94 and 95. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 16, Contract Employment, I see the significant sum of \$6 million. I know what the Minister said yesterday about employment, permanent employment, but given the sensitive information available in the Financial Intelligence Unit, and the fact that somebody could be employed for three years and then at the end of the contract, he goes into the private sector and whatnot and he has knowledge of that kind of information. Is it the best practice to have a significant number of bodies—and perhaps you can give us the number—employed as contract officers and having access to sensitive information on citizens of the country?

Hon. Imbert: The inability of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to compel the Public Service Commission to fill vacant public service posts has not

changed in the last 24 hours. We are still constitutionally unable to compel the Public Service Commission to fill public service posts in the timeframe that we would like.

Mr. Charles: Mr. Minister—

Hon. Imbert: All we can do is ask, we can meet with them.

Mr. Charles: The question is—

Hon. Imbert: No, but I am making a point. Yesterday this came up and nothing has changed between yesterday and today. We are still constitutionally unable to compel the Service Commission to appoint people.

Mr. Charles: Have you enquired what the blockages in terms of output are? Could it be that the Service Commissions are not fully resourced and, therefore, that may be the bottleneck? So, therefore, to say that you have no responsibility whatsoever is to me unacceptable.

Hon. Imbert: I did not say we had no responsibility. Hon. Prime Minister.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chair, just to clarify. It is not being said at all that we have no responsibility. We just do not have the authority. On the contrary, depending on the posture of the commission, they may or may not meet with us. There are commissions and chairmen who took the position that they are an independent body and, therefore, they do not have to speak to the Government.

On the other hand, the current board I, as Prime Minister, in following up on exactly what you are talking about, requested to meet with them. We met with them, it bore some fruit but, of course, the tree is the problem. The whole question of the role of the Service Commission as managers and suppliers to the public service is a fundamental problem which has to be addressed away from this exercise.

Madam Chairman: Item 017, Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency, page 95. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Travelling and Subsistence. I notice there was nothing spent in 2017, but there is an allocation of \$50,000. Just to enquire, I know you had indicated earlier that there is supposed to be an increase in staff and so forth. Is this allocation in anticipation of—you intend to employ more staff?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 96; 001, General Administration; 002, Budget Division; 003, Customs and Excise Division; 004, Inland Revenue Division, page 97; 005, Treasury Division; 008, Investments Division; 009, Central Tenders Board, page 98; 010, Valuations Division; 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal; 014, Financial Intelligence Unit, page 99; 017, Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency, page 99; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 001, Regional Bodies, pages 99 to 100. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 12, Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility. I notice that there is a substantial decrease of nearly \$15 million in 2018 over 2017. That is the first question. Why? And, secondly, have we ever benefited from this insurance scheme? For example, are people who are suffering currently from losses from the floods, would the country be able to benefit from this and distribute to people?

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that last year there was a one-off payment to include extraordinary rainfall in this catastrophe risk insurance coverage. It was not there before. So that last year we took a decision—this Government took a decision—to include extraordinary rainfall as a risk within this insurance policy. I am told that the country has benefited from this insurance cover in the past, and we are currently looking to see whether it is applicable to current periods of heavy rainfall.

Dr. Rambachan: So, while this was paid in 2017—well, it will be 2016/2017—is it then that we may not have or do we have coverage for 2017/2018 that would include, for example—

Hon. Imbert: Obviously we do. If we paid it last year, obviously we do.

Dr. Rambachan: We do?

Hon. Imbert: Obviously. We paid it last year.

Dr. Rambachan: So, just to clarify, you are saying that it is possible that those who are experiencing losses from the floods now, through this facility through the Government, can be compensated?

Hon. Imbert: You have to understand the *raison d'être* behind this insurance coverage. This was set up in the Caribbean really to deal with the effects of hurricanes, tropical storms, earthquakes and catastrophic events of that nature. The extension of the policy towards, you know, heavy rainfall, is something that

we are exploring right now—let us say, the extension of payments to countries, as a result of losses suffered from heavy rainfall is something we are currently exploring with the insurance provider to see whether Trinidad and Tobago can get some money out of this insurance to assist with damage caused by heavy rainfall. For the first time this is being done.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. I think it is good, it is commendable that we have bought insurance for floods because, obviously, we have been having an unusual amount of floods over the last couple of years, last three years in particular. I think that we should have, in fact, invested again or invest again next year.

Hon. Imbert: No. Member, you have got to listen very carefully. I said it was a one-off payment to include rainfall and now we are covered for rainfall in this year. To get into that is like you want to join a Members Club—let me use that analogy—you pay an entry fee and then you pay an annual subscription. So we pay the entry fee, the analogous entry fee, to have the coverage extended to extraordinary rainfall, and now we pay an annual subscription where coverage for extraordinary rainfall is now a routine item in the policy.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. But Minister, in 2017, you paid \$23,625,000. Okay? And you are paying the same \$23,625,000 in 2018. You just said that you have to pay, in addition to your entrance fee as it were, you now have to pay a maintenance fee on the insurance for rainfall. I do not see that maintenance fee as it were included under the \$23,625,000.

Hon. Imbert: Member, let me just clear up any misunderstanding you may have. We are now covered for extraordinary rainfall.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Hon. C. Imbert: Clear?

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Item 04, 01, Contribution to the Caribbean Development Bank. I am seeing an increase of \$15.5 million. The question I am asking is, I am seeing various contributions by Trinidad taxpayer to institutions of the Caribbean. For example, CSME, I saw some moneys allocated, the Caricom Secretariat, UWI, CARPHA, IMPACS, et cetera. Do we have a sense of the total amount of money that the taxpayer is putting out to this enterprise called Caricom, so we could have a sense of what

Trinidad and Tobago is doing in a beneficial manner for Caricom? Because we tend to hear that we do trade and how we depend on their trade, and I do not think there is a counter-narrative about how much we do for Caricom.

Hon. Imbert: Before I answer that, let me just deal with something that has come up. The cover for extraordinary rainfall was effective from the first part of this year, 2018. I am told in the first quarter of 2018, we became eligible for that—sorry, 2017. Actually, I am now being told 2017. So I just want to make that clear. So we are covered as of now. As we speak, we are covered for that, but what it means is something that has to be looked at. It is the interpretation. It is really for catastrophic events.

With respect to Caricom, I am afraid I am not qualified to deal with that matter. That question should be directed to the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. I can only deal with payments made by the Ministry of Finance, but our membership in Caricom—what we get out of it, the sense of it, the whole spectrum, I am not qualified to answer that. I direct that question to the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 100; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004 International Bodies, pages 100 and 101. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I can go over to page 101 under Treasury Division, line Item 03, Expense in connection with International Financial Institutions. Firstly, just a sense of appreciation, what those expenses are for? In 2017, we had budgeted \$36.9 million. In 2018, we budget \$43.2 million, but in 2017, revised estimates, we only spent or contributed \$67,000. I am just trying to understand this new amount of \$7 million-plus from the budgeted to the estimates.

Hon. Imbert: One of the—well, I do not want to use the word “bad”—consequences of being a member of the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and so on is that from time to time some of the poorer member countries ask for additional relief from these institutions, and a request is then made to all Member States to increase their capital contribution to these bodies, and it is really by majority vote. So, as Minister of Finance, from time to time, I would get a request to vote as a governor of the World Bank, for example, with respect to increase capital contributions, but we really do not have any say in this. Even if we say no, it is carried by the majority of members in the World Bank. The choice you have is you drop out or

you go with it, and I think there are far more benefits to this country to be continuing as members of the World Bank, the IDB and so on. So this is increased capital contributions. The \$7 million is the IDB in particular.

Mr. Lee: A follow up. So is it fair to say that we were able to save \$36 million as projected in 2017, because you did not contribute?

Hon. Imbert: We did not have to.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: We dodged that bullet.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: Okay?

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007, Households, page 102. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Minister, under VSEP, Item 17, Central Tenders Board, there is a new Sub-Item. What is the intention of this VSEP?

11.40 a.m.

Hon. Imbert: Well, if you took a look at the Procurement Act, you would see that the CTB workers have options, just like the RHA situation 20 years ago. They can opt to be separated. They can opt to be seconded. They can opt to be transferred. They can opt to be redeployed within the public service in some other position. So this is simply to give the workers of the Tenders Board the option if they want to be separated to pay their separation package, but it is optional to them.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: It was answered, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, page 103. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Item 39, Office of Procurement Regulation, I see the allocation there to establish the office. So, Minister, based on what you said previously, given that we might have a procurement regulator as determined by His Excellency the President, we can assume proclamation of the legislation and establishment of the office.

Hon. Imbert: But we are targeting this fiscal year, because we have done a lot of forward planning. All Ministries and agencies have been asked to determine the type of procurement unit they should have because large Ministries would have fairly large units, small entities, like the Parliament, for example, might just need a couple of people. In some cases, you know, they can take staff from within. In fact, we are promoting that. We do not want to increase the size of the public service so where you can, redeploy people from within. So this is all in the expectation that once a procurement regulator is appointed by His Excellency, we can move swiftly to implement the Act.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you. Item 41, Madam Chair, Business Stimulus Programme, can I take it that this \$50 million is related to your budgetary—

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it is exactly what I announced in the budget. We put these programmes in the Ministry of Finance. For now, we are going to disburse. We would not be doing the evaluation per se, but we have the funds here. So as soon as the other entities do their evaluation, we will disburse. We just put the money here for now. Okay. It may find its way into other Ministries in due course.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So this will be a multiple Ministry—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, no, no. We are setting up the programme, as I indicated, we are going to use a group of successful private sector entrepreneurs and businessmen to evaluate applications for the \$100,000 grant for the small businesses, and once the group of entrepreneurs say, well, this is a good idea, it then goes to a ministerial committee just to make sure it is consistent with Government policy, and then an application would be made to the Ministry of Finance for disbursement. So the funds are just residing in the Ministry of Finance for disbursement, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Caricom Development Fund, Item 23 under Transfers. There was \$140 million allocated but not actually given, according to the Revised Estimates, and now you are allocating \$70 million. How do you decide on what is the quantum that you are allocating?

Hon. Imbert: This again is another agency, like the IDB, the World Bank, and they asked for additional contributions and additional capital contributions all the time.

Dr. Rambachan: Is there a reason why the \$140 million was not given?

Hon. Imbert: We were able to reschedule, you know, because of our budgetary constraints we were able to reschedule and we would do it in tranches rather than in one lump sum.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah. Can you explain the G. Pan Patent, please, an additional \$3.954 million in this year?

Hon. Imbert: Well, to maintain the patent you have to pay. If you do not pay—all patents come with a cost. It is an annual fee.

Dr. Rambachan: And this is worldwide?

Hon. Imbert: That is my understanding.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 104. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: No, Madam Chair, I was just going to ask whether you were calling Treasury Division, because I had a question under there.

Madam Chairman: No, anything could have been done once we were under the Item. We said we were not calling the Sub-Items when we initially set the table with respect to our procedure. Okay? So once I called the Sub-Head and the Item, you were able to call anything, and that is why I have been calling pages. So we are now at 011, Transfer to State Enterprises, page 104. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 87, Government Information Services Limited, \$19 million. I take this, this is separation package estimation?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Items 42 and 57, if you can, not necessarily now, but in writing, indicate what this allocation specifically will deal with in these two entities. Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: It is for subsidy of the air bridge.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I am safely on 104, 011. Hon. Minister, may we get some clarification or some explanation with respect to line Items 40 and 42 please, SMCL and Caroni (1975) Limited? The allocations are for what?

Hon. Imbert: I will deal with 42 now. As you know, Caroni (1975) Limited is still existing because there are a number of matters that still have to be resolved, such as disposal of property, and things like that. So this is to pay the operating cost of that company as it continues on its long pathway towards final closure.

Mr. Karim: I know you said something just now, but might you be able to give me some examples of the 14 million going to be used for, because it is quite a sum of 14.4 million that you allocated to Caroni?

Hon. Imbert: Well, Caroni has long-term debt, eh, so there is debt service involved.

Mr. Karim: And with respect to SMCL, 40?

Hon. Imbert: Same, same thing. That is another company. The Ministry of Finance has—Trintoc is still on our books, for example, because, you know, when you go to move to wind up these companies, some of them have all sorts of matters in the court, pending litigation, claims, mortgages, loans. It is a long tedious process, and successive governments have had to grapple with this challenge. As I said, I use Trintoc as an example, Trintoc went out before I even came into this Parliament, as far as I know, and they are still trying to deal with residual debts and obligations of Trintoc. It is a very laborious exercise.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to page 104, Item 70, and then I have another follow-up. Alutrinc, Operating Expenses, could you explain this Operating Expenses for Alutrinc?

Hon. Imbert: That is the minimal operating expenses of the company, like board fees and office accommodation. It is a small number, as you could see.

Mr. Singh: So it is still operational?

Hon. Imbert: It is the same problem, we have litigation.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: I think the political leader, the Prime Minister, was very clear on the litigation that you have gifted us with respect to the Alutrinc matter, and gifted the country.

Mr. Singh: Then that follows up—

Dr. Rowley: Let me clear that up again, the operation of the company was closed down but the company was not shut down because the company is engaged in its business, as per what I discussed earlier on. Alutrinc still exists.

Mr. Singh: Okay. And that raises the other issue, line Item 88, Madam Chair, ALUTECH Limited. There is no allocation, but there is an allocation as we saw previously under Energy. There is an allocation under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the equity injection of \$35 million last year and 661,000—

Hon. Imbert: That is because that is an active company. The distinction is that Ministry of Finance is given the responsibility to wind up and close inactive companies. So that an allocation for an inactive company would be in Finance, but an allocation for an active company would be Energy, in this particular case.

Mr. Singh: Okay. Thank you for the clarification.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Agricultural Development Bank, I see there is an allocation of \$95 million in 2017 that was not released or used and now there is \$50 million in 2018. Is this money for capitalization of the bank for lending purposes? What is this money?

Hon. Imbert: This is—listen—sorry, “doh leh me” use that terminology. As you well know, the loans at the ADB are heavily subsidized, and this is for subsidy. The ADB had enough money last year to meet the subsidy requirements. This is for this year. Okay. So they did not need to rely on the Ministry of Finance to give them money last year to subsidize loans to farmers.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. And similarly, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company, the \$45,837,000 that you are giving this year, is this also to subsidize the 2 per cent and 5 per cent loans?

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, definitely. Those are heavily subsidized loans and that is what that is for. The Government pays the difference between the commercial rate and the subsidized rate.

Dr. Rambachan: And finally 57. Caribbean Airlines, this \$37 million that you are allocating, how much of this is fuel subsidy really when in fact fuel prices have fallen?

Hon. Imbert: I will answer you, none,

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?

Hon. Imbert: None.

Dr. Rambachan: So, why are we continuing to subsidize Caribbean Airlines?

Hon. Imbert: We are not subsidizing them. We subsidize the costs of providing a transportation service between Trinidad and Tobago, for example.

Dr. Rambachan: Oh, this is the Trinidad and Tobago service.

Hon. Imbert: Caribbean Airlines provides the service for—

Dr. Rambachan: I know, but I am just clarifying, this is specifically in the air bridge?

Hon. Imbert: I think I have said that twice. Shall I say it three times?

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, back on line Item 57, where you indicated it was for fuel subsidies. With the removal of the fuel subsidies, I do not know if it impacts on jet fuel as well, and if it does, do you anticipate the Government increasing the cost of travel on the air bridge?

Hon. Imbert: Let me just clear this up. The passenger pays three hundred dollars, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, this Government, and the one before, your Government, pays \$100, so Caribbean Airlines gets \$400 for every passenger that travels on the air bridge. Jet fuel is not subsidized, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: The Agricultural Development Bank issue, you clarified the issue for the Member for Tabaquite, but in the Budget you had an agri-business allocation, where will that reside?

Hon. Imbert: All three, the housing construction initiative, incentive money, we put that in Finance. The Small Business Development Incentive Funding in Finance. The Farmers Incentive Programme, we put the money in Finance, but of course, it is going to be the agricultural people who will assess the applications from the farmers, and so on. Okay.

Dr. Tewarie: And, secondly, Item 68, I see for the IFC we have an increase in allocation of about \$18 million and—

Hon. Imbert: Well, it seems that the IFC is finally beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel in terms of business processing, outsourcing, which is really a fancy term for things like call centres, and also providing, what they

call back-office services, shared services, and so on. So the TTIFC has told me that they intend to make a major thrust into attracting international companies to come to Trinidad and Tobago to use Trinidad and Tobago as a centre for business processing, outsourcing, and that is what that funding is for.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, so, basically, the focus will be on business process—

Hon. Imbert: No, we are continuing to try to attract an international bank to set up headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago to realize the objective of the International Financial Centre, but in the meantime, the IFC is pursuing other initiatives to more or less achieve the same thing, but more from a ground-up level; a bottom-up rather than a top-down level.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, fine.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to just go back to line Item 57, Caribbean Airlines Limited. Hon. Minister, you indicated that this was the subsidy for the air bridge to Tobago. The question I want to ask is, is Caribbean Airlines subsidized for any other route, including your responsibility through the Tobago House of Assembly? Any other route of Caribbean airlines in addition to the—

Hon. Imbert: Not at all, and that is one of the challenges faced because you took all Caribbean Airlines money to buy planes and then you mortgage the planes, and tell Caribbean Airlines pay the loan.

Mr. Karim: So Caribbean Airlines, you do not give them any money to subsidize any route, including that on behalf of the Tobago House of Assembly to any destination in North America? To any destination in North America via TAB? If you want, I will repeat the question.

Hon. Imbert: I understand. In the discussion yesterday, we spoke about THA's allocation for airlift. It is the Tobago House of Assembly that pays these foreign carriers to bring tourists to Tobago, and that they have an allocation for that, for airlift. As far as I am aware, Caribbean Airlines does not subsidize any other route, or make any payments on behalf of the House of Assembly, or anything like that.

Mr. Karim: Can I just, again, for clarity of the records, ask, specifically, from your knowledge, the Tobago House of Assembly does not use any financing to subsidize any route for Caribbean Airlines out of Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: I am not aware that the THA makes any payments to Caribbean Airlines for flying anywhere. You may have information that I “doh” have.

Mr. Karim: Okay. You might want to check the routes that maybe Caribbean Airlines use through Tobago to a North American destination.

Hon. Imbert: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 014, Loans to Other Governments, page 105. We now go to, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just a quick one, when I asked the question earlier on, on line Item—

Madam Chairman: Where are you?

Mr. Karim: I am on page 105, line Item 04, Caroni (1975) Limited.

Madam Chairman: You gone back?

Mr. Karim: No, no. Page 105.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay.

Mr. Karim: Can I go ahead?

Madam Chairman: Just let me call the Item.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: All right. Thank you very much. We are now at Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 105; Item 004, Statutory Boards. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. When I asked the question earlier on, on line Item 42 on page 104, the hon. Minister indicated that that allocation was for debt servicing, but I am seeing here again, 04, Caroni (1975) Limited, Debt Servicing. Might you be able to give us some details as to what this facility was secured for and how long again it has to go?

Hon. Imbert: Some old loans. If you want a list, a list of the old loans of Caroni, it is no problem.

Mr. Karim: You could put it in writing so we could take a look.

Hon. Imbert: That is what I said, if you wish to get it, these are loans going back 20, 30 years, you know, but if you want to get it, no problem.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: As we are here let me just call, because the Member took us to 07, Debt Servicing. So let us just deal with it as we have already begun. 07, Debt Servicing. So 001, Interest, Local Loans; 009, Interest on Overdraft, page 106; 011, Principal Repayment, Local Loans, page 106. Okay, so we are at Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004 Statutory Boards. And we are going to the other book, *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of Assembly*; 07, National Lotteries Control Board. We are at page 147, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Page 147, 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Can I go down to Good and Services in that same page?

Madam Chairman: 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 147 and 148. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure of \$3 million.

Hon. Imbert: We will find out for you.

Mr. Lee: Also, Contract Employment, line 16, I noticed in 2017 you did not do much Contract Employment, only \$63,600, but this year you budgeted 4.3.

Hon. Imbert: Well, if you look at the original allocation—

Mr. Lee: I know, it is 4.4.

Hon. Imbert:—it was 4.4, so there is always an intention to try and beef up the staff, but it does not always materialize. So there is another intention this year.

Mr. Lee: Okay. So could you just indicate in writing what those positions might be?

Hon. Imbert: Proposed.

Mr. Lee: Proposed.

Hon. Imbert: Sure. Yeah. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 149. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair, I do not know if the Minister might guide me, I am not seeing a line Item, but I would just ask a general—is there any debt by say, lottery agents, or—

Hon. Imbert: You really have to refer to a line Item, you know. I cannot give you that kind of leeway.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, I understand. Okay, I will pass, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Hon. Imbert: Item 83, Money for Prizes On-Line Games, and I see a decrease of \$25 million. Is this that they anticipate less business?

Madam Chairman: Member, you have gone back. We are at Sub-Head 03.

Mr. Charles: I am on page 148.

Madam Chairman: We are on page 148 but we are at Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. I believe you have gone back to General Administration.

Hon. Imbert: It is just as a point here, the arithmetic seems to be wrong.

Mr. Charles: There is a decrease in the allocation.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 148; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 52. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 52; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 52 to 54. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I would just like to ask the Minister of the progress on the project Development of an Integrated Financial Management Information System.

Madam Chairman: Item, could you give us, Member?

Dr. Tewarie: Item 017.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: Well, we are continuing to upgrade the infrastructure. In terms of completion date, and so on, that is what you are looking at?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah. I know this has been going for some time.

Hon. Imbert: This, again, is a very laborious exercise. We are hoping to finish it within the next two or three years. It is very, very difficult, because you are changing out your software across the entire financial system in every

Ministry, and so on. It is not an easy exercise. Governments have been trying to do this for many, many years—

Dr. Tewarie: I know that.

Hon. Imbert:—as I am sure you will appreciate.

Dr. Tewarie: But it would make so much more difference, you see.

Hon. Imbert: I could not agree with you more. We will get real-time information in terms of revenue, expenditure, overdraft. We are really pushing hard for this.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am at Item 059 on page 53, Implementation of Property Tax Regime. There is an allocation of \$15 million estimate. Could the Minister explain what will this allocation be utilized for?

Hon. Imbert: Well, it is essentially for accommodation, staffing, and I would say ancillary services. We are trying to do all of this in-house at this point in time. If we have to outsource, we may come in the mid-year for a supplementary allocation. But we have recruited over 100 persons, and we would be recruiting more in 2018 to do the valuation. That is the most difficult thing in all of this. The starting point is the valuation of properties, so you have to get that done, the assessment and the valuation, before you could proceed to collect the tax. So that is the focus in 2018, to complete that valuation exercise.

Mr. Singh: And I see in Item 063, Establishment of the Gaming Commission, the—

Hon. Imbert: Well, that depends on you, waiting for your support and your vote. You have been very supportive so far, but we hope that support continues. We want to bring that to the Parliament before the end of this calendar year and get this Gaming Commission Act passed, and we expect your support for that. *[Interruption]* But it is your legislation.

Mr. Singh: Minister, me and my colleagues make our presence felt progressive, in that sense, at the Joint Select Committee as you are aware.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but it has been in a committee for a year and we had attempts to have meetings, and for one reason or another, Members were not available. We kept trying. We eventually had meetings in September. I would really urge Members opposite to work with the Government and let us get this

gaming commission established. You see what is going on outside there, unregulated casino gambling. You see it for yourself, so let us work together to get this done.

Mr. Singh: Lest the national community think otherwise, Madam Chairman, my colleague, the Member for Couva South and I have attended all meetings of the Joint Select Committee.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but it has been going on for one year. That is enough time, we need to get this thing done, so I am pleading with the Opposition, work with the Government to pass the Gaming Control Bill.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 057, allocation of \$15 million.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Karim: Line Item 057, just to get a little update with respect to that allocation.

Hon. Imbert: Our plan is to establish the revenue authority in fiscal 2018, so that is what that is for. That is the plan, otherwise again we will have problems with revenue collection if we do not do this.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

12.10 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: 059, Property Tax Regime. I just wanted to ask the Minister if there was any intention to bring the 2009 legislation for revision to the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Tewarie: The answer is no? The 2009 tax remains? The 2009 legislation remains?

Hon. Imbert: The waiver or the amnesty as the case may be, if that is what you are asking about, of the imposition of property tax expired at the end of 2015. We do not have any plan to extend that amnesty, if that is your question.

Dr. Tewarie: And which legislation will govern the implementation of the property tax?

Hon. Imbert: The current one with some tweaking.

Dr. Tewarie: So it will come to Parliament? That is what I am asking.

Hon. Imbert: The current one with some tweaking, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Public Buildings, can I ask on that?

Madam Chairman: Yes, you can.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 114. I notice there is not really an allocation for the refurbishment of the Trinidad House. Can the Minister indicate—

Hon. Imbert: They are moving out.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Hon. Minister, I am not seeing a line Item for it, but I am not seeing anything with the refurbishment of the Parliament, the Red House.

Hon. Imbert: That is not a matter for the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima? We thought you vacated. We got that indication; we do not know why, but we are sorry.

Mr. Charles: No, I am asking on 045, Whistleblowing Technology. My question is, what is that? And I note in 2017, \$1 million was estimated, none spent and there is a reduced allocation this year. Has the Government lost interest in whistleblowing, given experiences that are taking place currently?

Hon. Imbert: At all.

Mr. Charles: So therefore, what is this technology?

Hon. Imbert: That is to set up the database.

Mr. Charles: And why is it reduced? Why was it not spent in fiscal year 2017? Can I assume that you have lost interest?

Hon. Imbert: Well, it is not a Ministry of Finance matter, but I have some limited understanding of what transpired. My understanding is that the Whistleblower Bill was sent to a Joint Select Committee and got stuck, because it did not receive the support of the Opposition. That is my understanding.

Mr. Charles: That is not so.

Hon. Imbert: That is what I was told.

Mr. Charles: My understanding is that you have lost interest along the way.

Hon. Imbert: At all.

Mr. Charles: So you are saying, you are giving a commitment to the national community that whistleblowing is a high priority for this Government—

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it is.

Mr. Charles:—and we could look forward to the \$500,000 being spent this year?

Hon. Imbert: I would hope so, and it is the highest priority.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 18 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Mr. PS and all the other technocrats from the Ministry. You all are discharged.

Head 02: Auditor General, \$37,188,250.

Madam Chairman: Members, we are now at page 5. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Office of the Auditor General is the supreme audit institution for Trinidad and Tobago with the responsibility to audit public expenditure.

Question proposed: That Head 02 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$37,188,250 for Head 02, the Auditor General, 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 5, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 01, Salaries and Cost of Living. I notice there is a decrease. Is this office adequately staffed?

Hon. Imbert: No. There has been a problem. When I was Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament in Opposition, there has been a

problem. It is the same problem with the Service Commission not appointing permanent public officers to posts. So, you know, the Auditor General's office continues to try its best to get the Service Commission to make the appointments and uses its best efforts now with the staff that it has.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Has this impacted on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Auditor General being able to generate the reports on a timely basis?

Hon. Imbert: What we discovered when we were in the Public Accounts Committee is that it hampered the ability of the Auditor General's Department to do what is called "value for money audits" which is the modern trend. They are limited in terms of the number of value for money audits they can do. They do financial audits as a matter of course, but in terms of the number of value for money audits they can do with the resources that they have, they are limited. So that is an area that even then I was looking to see how we could support them to increase their capability to do value for money audits.

Mr. Singh: Consistent with that, Minister, could the Auditor General give us some appreciation of the number of vacant posts that need to be filled? You can provide it in writing for purposes of speed.

Hon. Imbert: Fifty-three at this point in time.

Mr. Singh: Fifty-three out of a complement of how many?

Hon. Imbert: Three hundred. There are 22 staff on contract, we are trying to fill the gap.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Tobago Services, page 5; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 6; Item 001, General Administration, pages 6 and 7.

Mr. Singh: Under Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure, I know that there was a ruling by the Equal Opportunity Tribunal against the Office of the Auditor General, not the current incumbent, the previous holder of the office, and that there were damages to be paid in the sum of \$500,000. Is it under Extraordinary Expenditure? I see no allocation for that.

Hon. Imbert: Treasury is handling that.

Mr. Singh: Treasury is handling that?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Tobago Services, page 7; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 8; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04,

Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies, page 9.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, we are at page 2. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 2; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, I can go to Administrative Services right?

Madam Chairman: Excuse me?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 001, Administrative Services.

Madam Chairman: Yes, we are on page 2 and everything there is under 005.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, I just want to ask what process is being utilized to strengthen the Auditor General's Department.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that they are in the process of accessing a grant from the European Union to reorganize the division and to make it best in class, best practice. We are getting the best available advice from international specialists.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 02 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I want to thank the Auditor General and the other members from the Auditor General's office for coming. Thank you.

I am going to call one more Head before we break for lunch.

Head 20: Pensions and Gratuities, \$ 100,000,000.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 123. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: The Pensions and Gratuities Department is responsible for the assessment, evaluation of applications and claims for the payment of pension and gratuities and the actual payment of these items. That is it.

Question proposed: That Head 20 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$100,000,000 for Head 20, the Pension and Gratuities, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure

under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 123; Item 007, Household, pages 123 and 124.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 19, Heads of Mission. I would just like to make the point that I was paid all my benefits under the caring Government of the Member for Siparia, but those Heads of Missions who retired, who demitted office after the last general election, 90 per cent of them have not been paid a single cent. In fact, the last payment they received was the salary for the month in which they left. So the question is: Could the Minister explain what is the delay in paying pensions to these ex-diplomats?

Hon. Imbert: There is no special relationship between ex-diplomats and delays; delays are across the board. As I have said in this Parliament before, and let me just repeat, in the 2014, 2015, 2016 period, there were a number of protests by the Public Services Association, shutting down the various Government Departments that deal with the calculation of pensions on the grounds of occupational safety and health and that sort of thing. So that for months at a time these Departments were closed down, and as a result there was a tremendous backlog that has built up. I can speak for parliamentarians.

When I came in here as Minister of Finance, many parliamentarians approached me to assist them with getting their gratuity payments. In my own case, my documents had gone to the department from the Parliament since around August of 2015, and I did not get my own gratuity as a Member of Parliament for a year. There were a lot of other Members in the same position. It is because of the tremendous backlog. But additional staff has been hired, and this is an area of focus for the Ministry of Finance to try and break that backlog, and get pension and gratuity payments back on track. So it is not confined to diplomats, it is across the board.

It is one of the things as Minister of Finance I have to deal with all the time. I get letters and requests all the time to assist people to get their pension and gratuity. And I must say, the Treasury reacts very quickly as soon as I ask them to deal with it, but there is a big backlog.

Mr. Charles: Minister, this is just for information. This problem has been ongoing prior to the work stoppage that you alluded to. It seems to me, and I ask the question, why do public servants have to wait two years in some instances to get—when we know they are going to retire so therefore the information—

Hon. Imbert: I will explain that. I will use a Member of Parliament to explain that. The Member of Parliament is not here at this time, this is Couva North. The Member for Couva North has had some difficulty in getting benefits from her previous position as a Minister, because she had moved from Ministry to Ministry to Ministry to Ministry, maybe four or five different Ministries. In order to pay the pension or the gratuity, as the case may be, you have to get the pension and leave records from each Ministry, and it is a cascading effect. So you have the first one before you get the second one, before you get the third one and before you get the fourth one, and the records in the public service generally are in such bad shape that sometimes you would get three out of the four Ministries, because public servants move around, they do not just stay in one place.

So you get three or four Ministries that a person has been in. In the case of missions, someone might be posted in one country and then come back to head office, and then be posted to another country, and you have to get the pension and leave records from all these different places. In some cases, it is a manual system wherever it is; in some cases it is automated. It is really a very, very difficult situation. I am hopeful that when the integrated financial information system's software and infrastructure is fully modernized and fully upgraded, we can finally bring an end to this problem. But that is the reason. People do not stay in one place. They move from one area of the public service to another, and the recordkeeping in each area is different unfortunately.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. It was answered for 01 and 02 through the extensive explanation by the Minister.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 20 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister. Hon. Members, I now suggest we take the suspension for lunch. We will resume at 1.30 p.m.

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

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

Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister, \$250,074,590.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Office of the Prime Minister as the centre of Government is committed to being the hallmark of excellence in the public service. OPM's strategic plan focuses on achieving operational efficiency, while building and enhancing the ability of the office to provide the necessary support to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the public service in achieving our agreed mandate.

For fiscal 2018, OPM received an allocation of \$303,764,590; \$242,184,590 under recurrent, \$7,890,000 under the Consolidated Fund, \$53,690,000 under IDF. These allocations will go towards achieving the following: One, restoration of our historical buildings; two, promoting and protecting the rights of our children, women and men; three, reducing the level of child abuse and gender-based violence; four, improving the management and operation of our community residences and reducing the incidence of HIV. To this end, OPM will continue to meaningfully engage all stakeholders. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 13 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$250,074,590 for Head 13, the Office of the Prime Minister, 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*, and we are at page 58.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page, 58 Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Gender Affairs; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 59 to 60.

Mr. Padarath: To the hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Prime Minister, line Items 05, 19 and 27. When the hon. Prime Minister spoke in the budget debate, he provided us with some figures with respect to these particular line Items from all the way 2012 to present day. Madam Chair, the question that I would like to ask with respect to these particular line Items is that the figures that were provided to us by the Prime Minister in his budget contribution is inconsistent, what appears to be inaccurate and inconclusive, in that if we take line Item 05 first, the *Hansard* would reflect that the hon. Prime Minister indicated that we were bringing that particular Vote from \$120 million to \$35 million. However, when you look at the 2017 Revised Estimates, it was only \$1.6 million in General Administration, and \$30,000 in the Gender Affairs Division. How then did the Prime Minister amount to moving to \$35 million, when right here in black and white it says \$1.6 million plus \$30,000?

Then we look at—

Hon. Young: Taking one question at a time.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Hon. Young: To start with that question, assuming that the Member for Princes Town is accurate in what he is reflecting, it actually reflects well on the Office of the Prime Minister, because if these are the estimates, they are much, much lower. So once again we have incurred significant savings.

What I can say about the historical information that was provided at the time, that information was compiled from the telephone bills, and we did not worry to particularize at that time the telephone bills for various advisors to the then Prime Minister, various questionable office holders to the Prime Minister, and the types of bills we saw of \$90,000 a month on some occasions for cell phones for some people who sit here now currently, but those figures are at \$90,000 a month on some occasions.

Those figures that are here now as you are aware, these are the estimates versus the actual. So this is what we estimate to spend this year under the telephone Item, and it also included arrears.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, when we look at these figures that were provided, even the past figures—

Madam Chairman: Which one are you on, Telephones?

Mr. Padarath: We are on the same one. The Prime Minister said in 2011, \$163 million for the Office of the Prime Minister. The actual figure was 2.3. When you look at—

Madam Chairman: Member—

Mr. Padarath: Madam, the point that I am trying to make—

Madam Chairman: Member, wait please. What we have before us are 2016 Actual, 2017 Estimates, 2017 Revised Estimates, 2018 Estimates. I have nothing with 2011. But in any event what we are discussing here are 2018 Estimates. I may allow some discussion if you want to ask some reason with respect to movement from 2017 to 2018, but I am certainly not going to allow 2011.

As I have told Members before, there are other opportunities to interrogate any other information available to Members, but not in this meeting. So you want to go on to Item 19 now, within the confines that I have set out?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Ma'am. Madam, Official Entertainment under Item 19. With respect to the 2017 expenditure, we see \$3 million in 2017 under Total Entertainment, whereas the 2017 Revised Estimates indicate 1.26.

Hon. Young: Sorry, I think it is \$3.6 million was the actual for 2016.

Mr. Padarath: 2017.

Hon. Young: 2016 Actual.

Mr. Padarath: Sorry, yes, you are correct.

Madam Chairman: Member, you mind therefore if I go on and come back to you, to give you an opportunity to identify your figures exactly?

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a bit of clarification. In terms of this 2018 Estimates from the point of view of Telephones of \$2 million, does this cover all the offices under the Office of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Young: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could you give us a breakdown in terms of the respective officers that this \$2 million will be allocated to?

Hon. Young: Office of the Prime Minister.

Madam Chairman: What is actually the question? You want to know what offices are covered by this or you want to know each office and each sum?

Mr. Indarsingh: Under the purview of the Prime Minister.

Madam Chairman: You just want them to identify the offices?

Mr. Indarsingh: Because there is the perception out there that probably, I do not know, if just the Prime Minister is using telephones to this particular sum.

Madam Chairman: The Prime Minister or the office?

Mr. Indarsingh: Office of the Prime Minister. So I want to know what the different agencies are and so on.

Hon. Young: Ma'am, the perception is a correct perception. There is one Office of the Prime Minister and \$2 million has been estimated for the Office of the Prime Minister, the different arms that may fall under the Office of the Prime Minister. For example, the Cabinet Secretariat, for example; Gender Affairs, for example; the National Security Council. It is actually very much, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Is that not in the public domain in a *Gazette*?

Hon. Young: It is, and it covers all of those.

Mr. Indarsingh: So it covers a range of offices?

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, and the Member knows that, eh.

Mr. Indarsingh: I have a responsibility under this meeting, Madam Chair, to ask. If people are offended or Members are offended—

Madam Chairman: Member, just, okay. All right.

Mr. Indarsingh:—Madam Chair, that is their responsibility.

Hon. Young: Nobody is offended.

1.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member, just hold up. Hold up. Let us—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: I am not wasting—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South. Member for Couva South. Member for Couva South [*Crosstalk*] and other Members, I just remind you all, again, about light. Okay? I have said, Member, in terms of this you are entitled to ask the question if it covers all the Offices of the Prime Minister, which I think it was answered. In terms of asking for a detailed listing of that, I am not allowing that because that is in the public domain in the *Gazette*. Okay? You have another question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Please, proceed.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under Head 31, Expenses of Prime Minister's Establishment, Madam Chair, in 2018 it is estimated to be \$9 million and an increase in the allocation of \$1.8 million. Could we get some clarification on this particular Head?

Hon. Young: Yes, that increase is really to deal with some capital expenditure that we expect to incur with the maintenance of both the Office of the Prime Minister and the Diplomatic Centre.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: And under 43, Madam Chair, Security Services, there is an increase to this particular line Item to \$3.5 million, an estimated increase of \$1,200,500.

Hon. Webster-Roy: That will include some of the safe houses that will come on stream.

Mr. Indarsingh: Safe houses.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Some of the safe houses, as well as the security at Tower D in addition to the head office.

Mr. Indarsingh: Security at Tower—

Hon. Webster-Roy: Tower D.

Mr. Indarsingh: Tower D.

Hon. Webster-Roy: And some of our safe houses to come on stream.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. There is no special security unit at the Office of the Prime Minister existing?

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, as the Member is very aware and is actually reflected here where you see it dropping from over \$3 million previously to these figures. When the current Prime Minister came into office he reversed the previous decision. Actually Cabinet took a decision to reduce expenditure and we now utilize the Office of the Prime Minister and the Diplomatic Centre and residence—now utilize the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force which has resulted in substantial savings to the taxpayers, and that is what is being reflected there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Prime Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, could you indicate to us that substantial sum of \$13 million? How many persons we are talking about and in what capacities? I have a follow-up question.

Hon. Young: Yes. Under Contract Employment, Head Office, there are 117. The number of contract officers, there are 117 positions under the contract establishment available. The number of contract officers are 43, so leaving a vacancy of 74. Under Gender and Child Affairs, there are 93 contract positions and there are 49 positions filled, leaving a vacancy of 44. So a total of 210 in the contract establishment with only 92 being utilized, which is less than half, leaving a number of vacancies of 118.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, just a follow-up. The next line Item, Item 17, Training. There has been a marked increase from 17 to 18 in terms of training. Could you indicate to us what this figure is being used for?

Hon. Young: Well, it is not—we have the training programme. When you say it is a marked increase, it is an increase of—

Mr. Karim: Under 2017 Estimates and the actual was 344, so there was an increase in the amount that was allocated, and that was more or less increased, not by very much, by \$55,000.

Hon. Young: Correct, \$55,000.

Mr. Karim: So I just want to get a sense of—

Hon. Young: The Office of Prime Minister has taken a decision to make sure that the public officers and all of those personnel that fall under the Office of the Prime Minister are given sufficient opportunities for training and to better themselves, so we think it is worth the extra \$55,000 for the year to do so, which works out to less than \$5,000 additional a month.

Mr. Karim: This training will be tenable locally or will it be foreign or both?

Hon. Young: The vast majority, in fact, I am not seeing any that is foreign, all of it is local.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel. What I am trying to get at similarly with respect to when I raised line Item 05 is whether or not the Estimates in this book—the figures are correct or the figures given by the hon. Prime Minister in his contribution were correct? Which one? When you look at line Item 27—

Madam Chairman: Member. Member, just one minute. Just now. In terms of—these are Estimates and I think for the number of days that we have sat here, what I have heard is that these are Estimates to be spent.

Mr. Padarath: There is a vast difference in terms of what was told to us and what we are seeing here.

Madam Chairman: Estimates for 2018? Is there a vast difference to the Estimates for 2018?

Mr. Padarath: The expenditure of 2017.

Madam Chairman: Well, we are interrogating here the Estimates for 2018. What I have said is if you wanted to look at 2017 actual to maybe interrogate 2018 in terms of, “is this realistic?” “How yuh come up with it?”—that kind of

thing. I will allow it. If it is you want to interrogate the figures past for some other reason, I am saying that you have another opportunity to do that, but not here. Okay?

Mr. Padarath: Okay. The 2018 figure for line Item 27, I note that we spoke about the gazettement, and on 17 occasions for the past 24 months, it has been noted that the Prime Minister has travelled on 17 occasions.

Madam Chairman: This is Item 27?

Mr. Padarath: Yes. For 2018, Madam, we see—

Hon. Young: If I may correct that. The Member persists in trying to get this imaginary figure of 17 travel trips by the Prime Minister—

Mr. Padarath: It is gazetted, Minister.

Hon. Young:—and that is not so. [*Crosstalk*] As you would know or maybe it was different under your time, but when this Prime Minister travels on personal trips, he pays for it. I do not know what went on previously. So whilst his being out of the country—what I assume you are saying is gazetted—is there is then appointed an Acting Prime Minister. Those are not paid for under the Office of the Prime Minister, any personal trips this Prime Minister makes.

The figure that you are seeing here reflected, and actually the only figure you see here that is an actual figure is the figure for 2016 where the Office of the Prime Minister only spent \$2.1 million. And we have heard during the same budget debates that you have referred to some of the fruits that have been born for the taxpayers, for example, negotiation of gas deals and other things that have come to fruition for the country of Trinidad and Tobago for these cost items.

So I do not know what you are talking about 17 trips. I think that was properly corrected that the number of official trips, if I remember correctly, is somewhere closer to the number seven.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, hon. Minister, for confirming that the Prime Minister has travelled 17 times since he has become Prime Minister.

Hon. Young: I am not confirming that—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Padarath: Similarly, when the past Prime Minister travelled—

Madam Chairman: All right, Members.

Mr. Padarath:—17 times he has been out of the country in 24 months.

Madam Chairman: And, Member for Princes Town, as I said, in terms of that kind of interrogation, I think it will be better done under another avenue that is available to you.

Dr. Rowley: Madam, I crave your indulgence to correct the record and to save the public from the excesses of the Member for Princes Town. That misinformation ought not to be on the public record, and all that is in this budget for analysis is the official business of the Estimates—

Mr. Padarath: Madam, what line Item are we on? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: No. No. No. No. Member for Princes Town, please, let us all try, let all of us try to restrain ourselves. Okay? And let us all try, [*Crosstalk*] I am speaking. Let us all try to conduct ourselves in a particular kind of way. It may not be a sitting of the House, but this is a committee of the House. Okay? Prime Minister.

Dr. Rowley: I just would like to have the record not reflect the inaccuracies as presented by a Member of this House, for whatever purpose the misrepresentation is regretted.

Madam Chairman: And I would have thought, Minister Young would have cured that. Okay?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam, may I just reiterate that I was the one who clarified that in my budget contribution. It was not the Prime Minister, I am the one who clarified it and it was not 17 trips, but he insists on stating that and it is not correct.

Madam Chairman: And as I say, we discontinue now and we move on to something else. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, through you, just a simple request based on line 65 which is that, could we have the list of Cabinet-appointed committees that cover the \$28 million of 2017 and the membership? And the list of potential committees to be covered by the \$15 million, \$15.250 million, for 2018? I am quite aware that membership would not probably have been addressed in many of them.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, the figure is actually not \$15 million. What the Member is looking at, that is the increase. The figure is actually \$43.250 million for 2018. If he looks across in the Explanatory Note, it says very clearly there, this is for the National Security Council, \$42.2 million, and then for commissions and committees just \$1 million has been provided.

The commissions and committees, if I may, that are covered there is the sub-committee of Cabinet to provide oversight for the implementation of restoration and refurbishment works to historical buildings, and it is not that anyone on that committee is being paid for that work, because as you are aware, that committee is chaired by the Prime Minister, includes the hon. Minister of Planning and Development, the Minister of Finance, the Attorney General and myself.

Then there is a Reports Review Committee to provide technical support to Cabinet which is comprised of Members of Parliament from the Government, and then a committee to make recommendations for the creation of office of the Head of Public Service. Again, so those are the items that are covered under the expense of Cabinet-appointed bodies.

Dr. Tewarie: And these are the only committees?

Hon. Young: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to line Item 65, it provides for this additional amount of \$43.25 million—the additional \$15 million, so the cumulative sum is \$43.25 million. What is—I noticed in the explanation, National Security Council \$42.25 million. What is the composition of this expense of \$42.25 million?

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, I cannot give the exact Items that that is for, but it is that certain apparatus that form part of the national security dimension in Trinidad and Tobago are covered under the National Security Council. So payment of certain bills, et cetera, for certain items that they operate.

Mr. Singh: Because I am trying to get an explanation and understanding. At the time of the presentation by the Minister of National Security, he indicated that \$50 million, as part of the presentation here, \$50 million is to be spent on SSA, and the question was, the accountability. And his answer was that the PS in the Ministry of National Security and the National Security Council under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister would have oversight over that money.

Hon. Young: Correct. That is something that is completely separate. As you may be aware, under the National Security Council, things like IMPACS and regional bodies that form part of the security apparatus for the region, for Caricom, et cetera, fall under the stewardship of the National Security Council.

So payment for those fees, our contributions to these regional security bodies are covered here.

Mr. Singh: Would the payment to forensic experts be within this allocation?

Hon. Young: I do not know what forensic experts you are talking about.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. My colleague from Chaguanas West raised a number of the issues, but could I just ask, because I see the breakdown of \$42.25 million for the National Security Council. In 2017, what was the allocation to the National Security Council?

Hon. Young: We have seen the Revised Estimates, it was \$28 million.

Mr. Indarsingh: Twenty-eight. So it does not include committees and so on in 2017?

Hon. Young: Well, you mean you want to know, out of the \$28 million—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yeah.

Hon. Young:—how much was for the National Security Council?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yeah.

Hon. Young: I do not have that information.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could you forward it in due course?

Hon. Young: I am certain we can.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 43, Security Services. I see an increase of over \$1.2 million. Can you indicate whether or not MTS is responsible for security services with respect to the OPM, or is it a private service provider, and if so, who?

Hon. Young: As we had just touched on this a short while ago, we see a drop from \$11.3 million being actually spent in 2016. I explained how we have reduced that all the way down to 3.5 now by using the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the TTDF. This figure that you are seeing of 3.5 would include private security contractors for the Gender Affairs Division, not for the Office

Prime Minister head office itself or for the residence, et cetera, and the firm that is utilized is Amalgamated Security Services, and at Tower D there may also be security at safe houses.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma'am. Just to make sure that I have it correct. You are saying that there are officers from the TTPS and the Defence Force that are utilized in different arms of the Office of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Young: Not in different arms. As I said a short while ago, the Cabinet took a decision to utilize the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force at the headquarters of the Office of the Prime Minister on St. Clair Avenue, as well as the Diplomatic Centre and residence.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, then how do you rationalize that, with what the Minister of National Security told us, that these officers could not be used in offices and so on because they were better served in terms of law enforcement on the ground?

Hon. Young: You would—well, surely this administration recognizes the significance and the importance of the Office of the Prime Minister and in particular the residence, which is an official residence, which is where this Prime Minister resides. He does not hold two residences with persons and personnel. My understanding was, previously the TTDF officials and the TTPS being somewhere in Phillipine, which when I have looked at the register under the OPM, I have not seen what residence the Office of the Prime Minister has in Phillipine in south.

Mr. Padarath: So you are confirming that there is one policy with respect to national security and there is another for the OPM and there is no—

Madam Chairman: I would not allow that. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 58, Medical Expenses, there is a projected increase of \$407,000 with an overall allocation of \$700,000 for 2018. Could we get some further clarification on this?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Okay. Member for Couva South, that would include medical expenses for all past and present Prime Ministers.

Mr. Indarsingh: All past and present?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So, we move on. Item 002, Gender Affairs Division, page 60. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item no. 16, Contract Employment, I notice there is a decrease. Will this decrease impact on the delivery of services of the Gender Affairs Division?

Hon. Webster-Roy: It is not projected to impact on the different services. We actually started recruiting more officers for the unit.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many persons are currently employed and what is the complement?

Hon. Webster-Roy: At the Gender Affairs we have number of offices 93, number of contract officers 49, number of vacant 44. But as I mentioned we have already started recruiting.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I understand that you have started recruiting, but you do not have an increased budget. You have a budget that is more or less same throughout 2017 and coming into 2018. So I just wanted to find out, is it that you are going to seek more allocation from the Minister of Finance?

Hon. Webster-Roy: What we will do is, if we need to do that, we will do that, but we will make internal arrangements as well.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 61; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations, page 61; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking Items 09 and 010, taken together, there has been a meagre increase of \$30,000 for St. Jude's Home for Girls and a half a million dollar decrease from the 8.5 spent in 2017. And given the challenges we face with at-risk youth, unresolved issues with gangs, violence in schools as reflected in social media, et cetera, should we not be putting more resources into this area rather than withdrawing?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Member for Naparima, this St. Jude's where it is currently located, we will have to move from there. Right?

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Apart from that, parts of the facility will no longer be under the remit of the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs. But the reason we have this reduction is because we are moving the institution.

Hon. Young: And if I may add, Member for Naparima, this administration takes very, very seriously and under the exemplary stewardship of the hon. Minister to my left, all issues related to children and all those who are at-risk, and we are very, very mindful of providing whatever levels of support that are necessary. So I can give an assurance that should these sums not prove to be sufficient during the course of the year, they will be addressed either at midterm or via applications virements.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, really on page 62 under Transfers to State Enterprises, so when you reach there.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Prime Minister, 05 St. Dominic's Children's Home, I am heartened to see an increase of 4.6, but could you just enlighten us what sort of improvements or the 4.6 would be used for?

Hon. Webster-Roy: St. Dominic's Home was able to do their strategic plan and there is a programme in place to improve their situation. Apart from that, we are hoping to use that particular facility to cater for children with special mental health needs. So that will be the dedicated facility to cater for those children who may not be able to cope in other settings.

Mr. Lee: Very good. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Just a follow-up, well I have my own question, but a follow-up, to Member on the St. Dominic's Children's Home, do you have a system by which the children who will be newly adopted into this system, [*Crosstalk*] when I say "adopted" I do not mean the physical adoption, I mean who will be taken into the home to assist with their special needs. Is there a policy document that you will be preparing to assist with how you determine which children will be—the targeted children whether it is from poor income families or—

Hon. Webster-Roy: All children entering into community residences would go through the Children's Authority. Right? And there are care plans and assessments done, and based on that, we will know what is the ideal situation to place a child.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And it will be at no cost to the parent?

Hon. Webster-Roy: No. No.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay. My question coming to 09, coming back on my colleague, I know that \$30,000 is really a very insignificant amount, but how does the Government intend to ensure that whatever moneys are allocated to the boys' home are, in fact, ensuring that the well-being and the safety of the young vulnerable boys are being adequately met? How are you dealing with—there are a lot of issues in the public domain on what is happening at the St. Michael's School for Boys. It is very, very, very disturbing. We are allocating moneys. What is the state, what is the Government doing to ensure that these most vulnerable young men, that their well-being and their safety are, in fact, given number one priority? When they go in, Madam Chair, we are supposed to expect that when they come out—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, what is the relevance to the line Item?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—that they are better coming out as opposed to being—

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, Member, I think your question or your statement or the concern, while it may be an important one, you have not tied it to what is here before us on the figures.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thirty thousand dollars is being assigned additional to the St. Michael's School for Boys which I am in total agreement, I think it is inadequate. But what is the Ministry doing to ensure that the children's needs are, in fact, being met? We are putting moneys into the St. Michael's School for Boys, but what is being done to ensure that the establishment really impacts upon our young boys who are going in there who are very vulnerable that they are impacted positively?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, how is this related to this line Item?

Dr. Rowley: It came from heaven.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Because we are looking at value for money, Madam Chair.

Mr. Indarsingh: She is entitled to five minutes and she utilized it well.

Madam Chairman: So, Member, [*Crosstalk*] well, while that may be so, I do not think that we should all just take the five minutes for granted, Member for

Couva South. We need to really use it well, as you said. Okay? Member, you want to find out how does the \$30,000 impact on the performance of the school?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: On the performance of the school. I am dealing with people-centred development, this is what I am looking at, not the establishment, not the institution —[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Yeah. But, okay. All right. All right.

Hon. Young: Madam Chairman, maybe I could answer it so we could move on.

Madam Chairman: Members, please. Member, I think that that question even if it were allowed under normal questions it would be a question on notice for a written answer. Okay? So that I cannot allow that here. All right? Do you have another question? [*Crosstalk*] Member, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I would like to find out on 10, St. Jude's Home for Girls.

Madam Chairman: You want to find out, Item?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: On Item 10.

Madam Chairman: 10?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: St. Jude's Home for Girls. Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I just wanted to understand with the moving, how will it impact upon the young girls who are at risk? In your moving, is there going to be any fallout in terms of how many of the young girls will be able to access the services of this home?

Hon. Webster-Roy: No. And we do not work towards placing children in St. Jude's. That is not the ideal situation.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Ecclesiastical Bodies, I was wondering whether or not these are standing subventions or these are actual application-based? And if so, will you be able to provide us with a list of all those that would have received a benefit from this particular Vote?

Hon. Webster-Roy: We will, in writing.

Madam Chairman: In what year, 2017?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, please.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Padarath: But if you could indicate at this point whether or not these are standing subventions or these are applications for funding?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Applications.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair; my colleagues raised the issues. So I will pass.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you. Sub-Head 007, Households, page 62. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 03, can the hon. Minister identify the projects to be undertaken by the authority that will improve and bring about—I mean, a number of legislation that has been passed, and how far have they moved ahead with this implementation?

2.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member, this money—this allocation here is for the Children's Authority, and what is the question you have asked?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: To identify the projects to be undertaken. I know there are a number of issues, a number of projects to be undertaken and I want to know how far they have reached with it.

Madam Chairman: Would this not be operational costs to fulfil the objectives and mandates of the—I do not know, maybe I might be—.

Hon. Young: You are right, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Then can the hon. Minister indicate what the \$55 million is for, please?

Madam Chairman: Exactly that, the operating expenditure of the Children's Authority. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members, please! Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 01, the Adoption Board Expenses, and this expenditure really—and the question has to do really with policy. Can you indicate whether or not this expenditure would be involved in any reform of the policy on adoption in terms of making it

more amenable in terms of the current day situation with respect to adoptions taking so long and are languishing in the public domain?

Hon. Young: No.

Mr. Padarath: So there will be no reform at this point?

Hon. Young: No, your question was does this cover that? The answer is no; that would be covered under Government policy, change of policy. That would be looked at by LRC and other areas.

Mr. Padarath: Can I ask then, hon. Minister, whether or not it is the intention of the Government to reform the adoption process for Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam Chairman: And I would not allow this having regard to the answers that were given and the Item that you are looking at. Item 009, Other Transfers, page 62; Item 011, Transfer to State Enterprises, page 62. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 01, Golden Grove Buccoo Limited. Earlier on with the Minister of Finance's presentation, there was an allocation of \$1 million in 2017 and there is now an allocation of \$5 million in 2018, and there has been a transfer of this state enterprise from the Ministry of Finance to the Office of the Prime Minister. The question is the rationale for the transfer, one? And two, what is this \$5 million going to be utilised for?

Hon. Young: That \$5 million, as you are aware, is an estimate. This is the special purpose vehicle that has been set up, and the lands for the Sandals project have been vested in this special purpose vehicle and this is the vehicle that will be utilised for the project going forward. So, as you would expect, there would be certain expenses to be incurred by the vehicle—surveying of lands, et cetera—and that is what it is going to be utilised for.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are on to another book, page 17. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 17; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 17 and 18. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item No. 085. Can the hon. Minister indicate what assessment centre is this?

Madam Chairman: C085.

Hon. Webster-Roy: The Authority is now working towards having an assessment centre established in Tobago in collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly. *[Interruption]* I know. *[Interruption]* I know, but the work was already started under the last fiscal.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Chair. Hon. Minister, there is an issue currently in Trinidad and Tobago with the assessment centres not being in the correct mandate as established by the Children's Authority, is it that this assessment centre—

Hon. Webster-Roy: The line Item, this is a specific assessment—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—will it work according to what was mandated by the courts when you are customising it?

Hon. Young: Yes, we will manage it properly.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And therefore, would you be able to rectify what is happening in Trinidad before we reach Tobago so it can be in alignment?

Hon. Webster-Roy: That was not aligned to that particular Item.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, if I may just intervene here with regard to the questions being asked on 085. As you would notice for 2018, there is no money being assigned to this line Item. The work was already started, and the work that is being done is being done based on what we had allocated for 2017, and the question, therefore, does not arise, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Do you have any more questions? Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, line Item 088, Establishment of a National Children's Registry. When you look at the 2016 figure, you see an actual of \$95,514, the estimate for 2017 being half a million with nothing spent. However in 2018, there is an allocation for \$1 million, can you indicate what significant progress is intended to be made over the next year, seeing that the UN has asked for us to conform with respect to this National Registry by 2019?

Hon. Webster-Roy: We will conform.

Mr. Padarath: Madam.

Madam Chairman: You have another question?

Mr. Padarath: While I look forward to the Minister conforming, we see that based on the figures, in 2016, \$95,000; estimate in 2017, \$500,000 yet nothing was spent. How do we then intend to conform if we are not putting the systems in place by not actually putting the infrastructure? Because you are seeing nothing was spent by the Revised Estimates of 2017, so therefore what comfort do we have, and that is why I am asking of the advancement and the progress with respect to this particular issue?

Hon. Young: Madam Chairman, the Minister has said it will be done. It is 2019—we have a little bit of time to get it done. It is not that difficult, and it is being done.

Mr. Padarath: Is it an admittance that nothing has been done so far?

Hon. Webster-Roy: No, work was done.

Mr. Padarath: Well, that is what I was asking, what has been done?

Madam Chairman: Members! Members, there is no admission, let us go on. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Prime Minister, line Items 084 and 090. Are there any linkages between the two line Items or are they separate?

Hon. Webster-Roy: They are separate.

Mr. Lee: Okay. So, line Item 090, Establishment of Places of Safety, where—I know it might be very confidential and stuff—not where—but what kinds of individuals would that involve?

Hon. Webster-Roy: I will give that in writing.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: And we now go on to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 18; 005. [*Interruption*] Yes you can, under 005.

Mr. Charles: What was the Strengthening of the Strategic Threat Assessment?

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, my colleagues may recall that this Item had come up previously. This is being housed out of the national security secretariat, and it is exactly as it says, strategic threat assessments. The country and the

national security apparatus are consistently doing threat assessments to various sectors for the whole country, so this is strengthening it by additional training and by additional resources.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, 196, same book. You have a question?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Princes Town. I am sorry.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 001, page 18. If we look at the estimate under this particular line Item, we would see that \$2 million was identified, \$2 million having been spent by the Revised Estimates but, in 2018, we see an allocation of \$1 million. Can the hon. Minister indicate to us what scope of work in terms of IT infrastructure in the Office of the Prime Minister this is being spent on?

Hon. Young: Ma'am, this is an estimate for any work that needs to be done with respect to the IT infrastructure. Hopefully and currently there is no scope of works.

Mr. Padarath: So, there is no project; it is maintenance?

Hon. Young: Correct.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 196, same book. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 196 and 197. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 002 to the hon. Minister—

Hon. Webster-Roy: 002?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—if you can identify, what do you mean by the modernization of the St. Michael's Home for Boys? And again, how will it improve the lives of the young men?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Okay. As again, the ideal situation is not for children to be in these institutions. However, we are going to upgrade four dormitories at St. Michael's, and by upgrading the dormitories we will have them in a more hospitable environment so they would be able to function properly.

Madam Chairman: Item—Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. 008, you had indicated previously that there were challenges—infrastructure—at St. Jude’s School for Girls?

Madam Chairman: Member, I think what the Minister said is that they are going to be moved.

Mr. Charles: Oh, moving.

Madam Chairman: And there is no allocation there.

Mr. Charles: Oh, no allocation.

Madam Chairman: I think I do recall that.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 197. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Line Item 008, Restoration to the Red House, can the hon. Minister indicate what is the status of the restoration?

Hon. Young: Certainly. As you are aware, the restoration is being supervised at a Government level by the same restoration committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister and the Members of Cabinet. I alluded to earlier, work is progressing. The public would have seen public tenders going out. Those tenders have been awarded as and when, and work is progressing quite well. So we hope to keep the date—I believe it is 2018—November 2018. So, work is progressing at the Red House.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Prime Minister, line Item 011. Could you indicate what was done with that \$500,000 allocation in 2017? And what you expect to be done with the \$5 million allocation in 2018? What will be the full cost of this construction, and by when is it expected to be completed?

Hon. Webster-Roy: In response to the first part of your question: the \$500,000 was used to demolish the building, as I would have mentioned.

Hon. Young: With respect to the rest of your questions, this is an ongoing project, the costs are still being looked at. We are managing the cost in a downward movement. Through UDeCOTT, this \$5 million would presumably be to get the—once the contract is awarded—project moving forward, and we hope that it will be completed within 12 to 18 months.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Madam Chair, just another question. With respect to the restoration of the Red House, the \$7 million that was utilized, if you could indicate what was done? What will the \$25 million be used for? And again, by when might we be expecting the full restoration to be completed and at what cost? If you have any estimates.

Hon. Young: I had just indicated that the full restoration is expected to be completed by November 2018. The \$7 million would have been used for work that was done during the course of this year. A number of contracts were awarded; for example, to treat termites, to also deal with the roof and these types of things. The \$25 million would be, if I remember correctly, I believe there are about 13 packages to be awarded, and there would be the mobilization and the completion of work under those packages.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 001, is it that all works to the restoration of Stollmeyer's Castle have been completed, since there is no allocation 2018?

Hon. Young: There is an allocation, I think, I was looking at it of \$44,000—no. Sorry, yes. Yes, the work has been practically completed. Yes. So very soon you all will be—the scope and use of Stollmeyer's Castle would be announced to the public once Cabinet has taken a final decision.

Mr. Karim: You know, this is a question that you might be able to answer off the bat. Cabildo Retrofit, 012, could you give us a sense of the—?

Hon. Young: The Cabildo Retrofit is—when we came in as an administration, we met an astronomical budget, if I remember correctly, of almost half a billion dollars for the restoration of the Red House. That also included the construction of a new companion building. The decision that this Government, this administration took, was to reduce cost, to manage the cost, and what we decided was Cabildo Chambers, which is right opposite the Red House on St. Vincent Street, will be cleared and that would be utilized as the companion building, so as to reduce the cost and not have to construct a new companion building for the Parliament at the Red House, when it is put into use. So, this \$2 million would be to retrofit and to provide the same type of facilities that are provided here at this building at Cabildo for parliamentarians, for the staff, and other areas in a companion building.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item that deals with the Stollmeyer's Castle and/or the restoration of the Red

House, can you indicate at this point, whether there are any discussions to have the Prime Minister's office be at Stollmeyer's Castle or at the Red House?

Hon. Young: No, there are none.

Mr. Padarath: None.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 13 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Ministers. Thank you, Mr. PS, and the other technocrats.

Head 68: Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, \$302,407,827.

Madam Chairman: Members, we are now going to page 362 of the Recurrent Expenditure. I will now invite the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is the Government's lead agency for the achievement of national goals related to sport and youth development.

Madam Chair, our Prime Minister and our Cabinet have been focused, especially in our tenure, on youth development which has been ignored for several years, and we have put that on the front burner. With regard to sport, we are focused as in our policy from our manifesto to focus on the grassroots and development level of young people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are focusing on women in sport, and we have mandated that all NGB's, all Government bodies focus on these elements, including sports, that facilitate handicap aspect of it, the masters aspect of sport, and, of course, we want to ensure that our Elite Athlete Programme and our athletes that represent Trinidad and Tobago at the highest level are supported as best as possible.

This year, Madam Speaker, despite the challenges that we have had economically, and the cuts that we have had from the previous regime, we are told by several quarters, including the sport company, at the Ministry that this has been the best year that we have had in sport. So far, we have also been pushing the sport tourism drive to try to diversify the country from the oil and gas dependency, of which we have hosted the most international events in terms of sport, and the highest level of sport in the country, and we continue in that vein as we move on to 2018. I thank you, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 68 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$302,407,827 for Head 68, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 362; Item 001, General Administration, page 362. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with respect to line Item 01, can you indicate to us what is the current complement of staff at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, through you, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs currently has 562 members of staff: established, 398; and, on contract, 164.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Can you indicate to us at this point how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees there are with respect to Sport and Youth Affairs, and what is the specific mandate?

Hon. Smith: Madam Speaker, we will submit that information in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, at this stage, can I ask the hon. Minister, off the top of your head, can you say at least how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees there are?

Hon. Smith: No.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division, pages 362 and 363; Item 005, Youth Affairs, page 363; Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship, pages 363 and 364. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 01 under 006, the NYDAC, could you indicate for this level of expenditure—\$6.6 million—how persons are employed at each of these centres, and the enrolment of trainees at each of these NYDAC, if you have them? For

example, if you could tell me at Chatham Youth Camp, how many persons are employed, and how many trainees do you have; at Persto Praesto, if you could take those as two examples?

Hon. Smith: Persto Praesto, we currently enrol in terms of students, 31 students currently at Persto Praesto. And Chatham right now we are doing some repairs to that facility which was not completed. It was shoddily done in 2014/2015.

Mr. Karim: What do you mean?

Hon. Smith: Shoddily done meaning inhabitable. So, we are working on that now to get that back up and running.

Hon. Karim: Okay, so do you have any trainees at Chatham?

Hon. Smith: No, not currently.

Mr. Karim: What about the other centres?

Hon. Smith: Yes, I just said we had 31 enrolled at Persto Praesto.

Mr. Karim: No, do you have any—you do not have any other—

Hon. Smith: No, it is only two we have: Persto Praesto and Chatham, and our development at Persto Praesto—

Mr. Karim: How many employees at Persto Praesto and at Chatham?

Hon. Smith: We will give you that in writing.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head—Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, same line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, a decrease of \$100,000. In this area, do you foresee that there will be a cut with respect to staffing, or is it that contracts will not be renewed? Does this account for that decrease?

Hon. Smith: As I said before, we are working on getting the Chatham situation sorted out, so that is where you are seeing the reduction there with regard to the salaries.

Mr. Padarath: So therefore, Minister, you are anticipating that it would take one entire financial year to deal with that situation—because pretty much that is what your rationale is?

Madam Chairman: Member, I do not think that is a fair question from the response that was given.

Hon. Smith: Madam Speaker, under the last tender with NEDCO, with regard to the project that was done there, there are some serious issues that we have to go back and deal with, with the facilities there for 2014. So, that is the situation we are in.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 364 and 365. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 16, Contract Employment, again a decrease of \$2.7 million. Could the hon. Minister advance an explanation for this decrease of \$2.7 million in the area of Contract Employment?

Hon. Smith: Madam Speaker, I think—Madam Chair, this was discussed in most of the other Ministries that we actually were mandated to reduce in terms of the number of contract employees. I think this has been repetitively said in all the Ministries that we have gone through for the past few days.

Mr. Padarath: When you look at line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, there is also a decrease there. Is it that the hon. Minister is then saying that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, similarly to his explanation for other Ministries, will have an impact in terms of employees' contracts not being renewed? Am I just getting that rationale correctly, that he is saying across the board there will be cut in Ministries similar to the one in his own with respect to Contract Employment and Short-Term Employment?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair—

Mr. Imbert: Just a minute, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. I will just make a general comment: we have to make do with—do more with less. It is as simple as that. So the Ministries have been mandated to be efficient. That is all.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division. You have another question?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Sorry, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam.

Madam Chairman: You are still on Item 001, right?

Mr. Padarath: Correct. I am looking at line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, with an increase of \$315,000. Could the Minister indicate, one, whether or not overseas travel would also mean Tobago travel; and also if we could be provided with an update with respect to the list of trips that have been taken under this Vote in the last fiscal year?

Madam Chairman: I will not allow the first question. Member, I think at this level we need to respect our physical—our viewing audience. What is the second question?

Mr. Padarath: Madam, the second question is whether or not he could provide us with the list of Official Overseas Travel for the last financial year?

Hon. Smith: Yes, we could provide it, Madam Chair.

Mr. Padarath: All I am asking is if Tobago is included in these arrangements?

Hon. Member: This is Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, just for clarity. [*Crosstalk*] No, no, no, just for clarity, as the Member will know, since he has access to the overseas travel Vote in the Ministry of the Prime Minister in the millions of dollars. It is for overseas travel. Trinidad and Tobago is a unitary State. Tobago is not considered to be overseas.

Mr. Padarath: The expenditure of \$98,000; it could be—.

Mr. Imbert: That is about the same as your phone bill for the month when you were there. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Two million dollars to carry handbag. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Okay, so, having had an opportunity to vent, I am sure we could now get back to order and to business. Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division, page 365; Item 003, Dwight Yorke Stadium, page 366; Item 004, Youth Centres, pages 366 and 367. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 37. Again, we see and a point I have been making across the board, large increases in the area of Janitorial Services. Could the Minister indicate whether or not these are private service providers? And if so, what would have accounted for the increase by \$230,000 in this area; and whether or not he could provide us with the details of the service providers?

Mr. Imbert: I am advised, this is again related to MTS and the recent collective agreement.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Youth Affairs. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 16, Contract Employment, a decrease of \$915,000 in the area of Youth Affairs. Could the hon. Minister indicate which areas of Contract Employment will be affected by this in terms of the operations of the Youth Affairs areas?

Hon. Smith: We would provide that in writing, Chairman.

2.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, page 368. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance-Buildings, an increase of \$105,000. If the hon. Minister can indicate to us which buildings are earmarked for repairs and maintenance and the scope of works? And if we also look at line Item 28, Other Contracted Services, an increase of \$49,000, if we can have an idea of what that \$49,000 entails. And, line Item 40, Food at Institutions, another large increase of \$95,000. If he can indicate what would have accounted for this increase at the service providers and whether there are existing contracts with service providers with respect to line Item 40, Food at Institutions.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chairman, that is three different line Items with a lot of information with regard to our facilities. So we could provide the works to be done with regard to the repairs in writing. It is minor repairs, pretty much, Madam Chair, that will be done with regard to plumbing, electrical, general maintenance. We want to ensure that our buildings and facilities are kept up to scratch, and that goes for the youth buildings. In terms of 40, which is Food at Institutions, we are catering for trainees at these various centres at Persto Praesto, Madam Chair. So the meals that they get there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, with respect to line Item 66, an increase of \$47,000 with respect to Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions in the area of National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres. Can you indicate to us at this point what conferences, seminars and other functions are earmarked for the next fiscal year with respect to this Expenditure being increased by \$47,000.

Hon. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. As you know, we will be focusing heavily on the young people. We have started doing that from 2015 and we have a number of graduation ceremonies with the programmes that we host at a number of these various facilities that we have and this figure represents the graduations that we will be having.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 369; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division; Item 003, Dwight Yorke Stadium; Item 004, Youth Centres, page 370; Item 005, Youth Affairs, page 370; Item 006, National Youth Development Apprenticeship programme, page 370; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 371; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 01, Assistance to Sporting Organizations. Here we have an allocation of \$450,000. If the hon. Minister can indicate to us through writing, he might not have the information available now, but if we can get the list of sporting organizations to which financial support would be provided and whether or not this will be like a subvention in terms of standing subventions or whether or not there will be an application process.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, it is a lot so I will provide in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma'am. Line Item 02, Boxing Board of Control. I know the Minister in his budget statement, he indicated that there will be some reform in this particular area—if he would be able to provide us with some explanation in writing, possibly, in terms of how the reform with respect to the Boxing Board of Control.

Hon. Smith: You would have heard the Minister of Finance speak about a Sports Commission. We are in talks with regard to—even before our tenure here—doing some changes to the boxing board to completely have all the different hand-combat sports incorporated and the Cabinet is looking at that now to have a decision with regard to moving forward under the Sports Commission.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just following up on line Item 01—I have another question, as well, but following up on 01, will this assistance also include assistance to groups who will be preparing for the

Olympics? So is this allocation here to assist with persons or organizations? And, if not, if you can identify the line Item?

Madam Chairman: Line Item for what, please, Member? Because what the Minister undertook is that he would give a listing.

Hon. Smith: I already said I will give a listing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So you will include Olympics?

Madam Chairman: He will include in the listing what this pertains to.

Hon. Smith: Line 01.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is in 007 when you go there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 32, Contributions to Non-Profit Institutions with respect to Youth Organizations, an estimate of \$250,000. Similarly, if the hon. Minister can indicate whether these are standing subventions to Youth Organizations or whether or not these are applications. And if these are applications, what has been the disbursement for the last fiscal year with respect to this particular Vote?

Hon. Smith: No problem. Again, we will send it in writing; it is a list.

Mr. Padarath: And also, Minister, as we are close by, line Item 33, Trinidad Youth Council, an increase of \$50,000 this year, can you indicate whether or not there is any synergy with respect to the national unemployment policy document that is being prepared? Is it in collaboration with the Trinidad Youth Council?

Hon. Smith: Yes. Right now we are actually in the process of doing a new youth policy for the first time in four or five years and all that will be incorporated in this. We are working together to ensure that we work with the unemployed youth as well.

Mr. Padarath: Can you say if these policies are before the Cabinet or when could we expect it to be made public.

Hon. Smith: We launched the consultation process two months ago.

Mr. Padarath: So it is still in its—

Hon. Smith: Yes, yes. But in 2018, it will be sent to the Cabinet for approval.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Severance Benefit, could the Minister give us some information in terms of who would be entitled to this allocation? I see from the point of view of the Hosting of Vacation Camps, there is an increase of \$500,000. Could you provide whether this will be done on a constituency by constituency basis? And also, the National Mentorship Programme which has been transferred from the Ministry of National Security, how his Ministry intends to administer this particular programme?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, they are three questions. In terms of the Severance Benefits, that is the daily-paid and retirees. In terms of 03, Hosting of Vacation Camps, we did it successfully last summer with youths—eight or nine of our youth facilities across Trinidad and Tobago hosted camps for 400-plus youths around the country and we will continue doing that next year as well. The Mentorship Programme, as I said, we will finalize it with our youth policy and that is a major part of us moving forward with our youth policy which the Mentorship Programme will be part of that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, you answered part of my question which is in 04, Mentorship. Will there be a monitoring and evaluation unit attached so you can actually measure your level of—?

Hon. Smith: Yes, for the first time the youth aspect of it will be monitoring and evaluating, including sport as well. That is something that has been lacking in the past.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I was going to further the question on Item 04, how this programme is going to be delivered, but you indicated it is going to be part of a policy. Can you say by what time the policy might be expected to be completed so we can know how this is going to be disbursed?

Hon. Smith: Actually, we move earlier with the youth policy than it is anticipated and expected. It expires this year, fiscal year, but we move early to ensure that we can get it started, the process. I think we have done five or six consultations so far and it is hopefully within this quarter before December we will be taking it to the Cabinet to have it—so we could launch it early in January.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 03, Hosting of Vacation Camps. You said these were held at eight of our youth facilities. Are any of these located within the constituency of Naparima or close to the constituency of Naparima? And if they are excluded, could you tell us what attempts will be made to access the 25,000 young people in the constituency of Naparima? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Smith: All are invited to attend.

Mr. Charles: No, no, no. Are any of your facilities in proximity—?

Hon. Smith: Well, we do not have any in Naparima—

Mr. Charles: Or close to—?

Hon. Smith: The closest one will be which one, “boy”?

Mr. Charles: No, I am just asking.

Hon. Smith: Los Bajos, Tableland will probably be the closest.

Mr. Charles: Well, that is about 20 miles.

Hon. Smith: San Fernando.

Mr. Charles: No. So I am asking, would attempts be made in [*Crosstalk*] the interest of equity—Minister of Finance, please. [*Crosstalk*] Madam, I ask for your protection.

Madam Chairman: Members, please. Members, I recognize the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Nicely so. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would you make attempts in the interest of equity to ensure that the 25,000 young people under 30 in the Naparima constituency, at least one, will access it in this \$500,000 budget?

Hon. Smith: We have one in San Fernando, Madam Chair, which is not that far. However, there are 41 constituencies, we only have eight of these youth facilities. I am sure all the other MPs will also want to have a facility put in their location, but this \$500,000 does not represent fitting a facility in Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, may I ask that you advertise it nationally, so all of us can have an equal chance of accessing it, and it would not favor those in areas where the facilities are located.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, I will try my best and this Government to reverse the inequity that was given under the last regime in Naparima. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Indarsingh: You make me laugh there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 03 and 04. My question on these two line Items is the same, Madam. If you look at 03, an allocation of \$500,000; National Mentorship Programme, \$2.3 million. Madam, my question to the hon. Minister is with respect to these two Items, whether or not there has been any exploration of public/private partnerships, or gaining international subventions? I know the UN and the Commonwealth, as well as the Asian Development Bank, have programmes like these where countries can access those subventions. Similarly, other countries like ours have accessed these, whether these have been explored, together with public/private partnerships.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, we are looking at that.

Hon. Member: What line Item is that?

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, just to follow up, again on 03 and 04—

Madam Chairman: The Member is looking at 03 and 04.

Mr. Padarath:—is it that the hon. Minister is saying that in the future it will be looked at and currently it is not on the cards?

Hon. Smith: It is currently being looked at.

Mr. Padarath: And could you indicate at what stage is it at?

Hon. Smith: We are doing a new youth policy, Madam Chair, for the fifth time, which will incorporate all these issues that we have.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, could I ask the hon. Minister whether or not any advances have been made towards these international organizations that I have named, which have subventions for these? Has there been any advances—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: But what this have to do with this line Item?

Madam Chairman: I think the answer was, it is being looked at, and it would be considered under the new youth policy. I am sure the Minister, most probably, recognizes that you are pointing in a direction for more funding and he would take that into account.

Hon. Smith: Yes, Madam Chair, we are aware of it.

Madam Chairman: I think that is what I believe from the responses.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you for your assistance, Madam. I just really wanted to get the point as to whether or not it is being done or it will be done.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, that is about the fourth time he has made that line Item.

Madam Chairman: The Member is just summarizing what he said, Member, please.

Mr. Imbert: For the fourth time.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to ask the hon. Minister on the same line Item 04, in his statement he had indicated that there were consultations—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: How many times you are allowed to visit a—?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If the hon. Minister can identify—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask as a point of clarification, how many times is a Member of Parliament allowed to visit the same Sub-Head?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 100 times.

Mr. Imbert: Once, twice, three times, four times, five—because that is the sixth time that Member has gone on that Sub-Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: “Hmm”, if the hon. Minister could—*[Interruption]*

Madam Chairman: Member, could you kindly ask your question? I recognize you, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Just to identify with whom the stakeholders that the Ministry has consulted with. That is all. Thanks.

Hon. Smith: I did not hear the question, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You indicated that you had extensive consultations to develop this policy and not in the process.

Hon. Smith: We started the consultation process. They had the first one in Tacarigua and we are continuing with staff throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I just need to know—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Smith: It is ongoing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and if you can identify the stakeholders that you have been consulting with, you have started with and ending with.

Madam Chairman: There has only been one consultancy.

Hon. Smith: But apart from that, what that has to do with the line Item, Madam Chair?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Because it is a policy being developed.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but what the Member said, because there is not anything here mark youth policy.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, there is nothing to do with that policy here. Nothing.

Madam Chairman: But the Member offered it in terms of certain suggestions that were given from the other side that it will be considered with the policy. So, as I said, maybe your question will be facilitated in another forum. We move on. Item 009, Other Transfers, page 372. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Item 04, The Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, an allocation of \$80.2 million. I would like to find out the principal items associated with this allocation? And secondly, whether or not Walker Park falls within the ambit of this allocation for refurbishment and attention?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, we have a number of facilities that we are looking at. So I do not have it in front of me for Walker Park. Every MP has a facility that once worked, but I could tell you what the \$80 million is. As you know we—last year fiscal year we opened several new facilities as well, including the Brian Lara Cricket Academy and we have a number of others to open. And this number here relates to the maintenance and running of those facilities.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Follow up, Madam Speaker. I would inform the Minister, as Member, that the Walker Park has a historical legacy.

Hon. Smith: Yes, I am aware of the Park. I am aware of the Park.

Mr. Singh: Very well, so that therefore it ought to be included in your planning. The second question I have is with respect to Item 13, National Football Development Plan. This allocation of \$50,000, what is it meant to do?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, this is a small figure that we are working at with the Grassroots development that we are doing, that we are working with the TTFA. We are going to be looking at working with the schools and so on with this.

Mr. Singh: So this is just merely a kind of inception funding?

Hon. Smith: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. In this \$80,200,000, Mr. Minister—

Madam Chairman: What Item number?

Mr. Indarsingh: 04, Madam Chair. Is any allocation there for the Ato Boldon Stadium in Couva?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, as I said before, this figure represents all the facilities that we utilize, that we own and that we maintain and run on a daily basis. So, I think I answered that in the first. Ato Boldon is part of the stadiums that we run.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: So this means that part of this allocation will be utilized to complete a security review of the operations of that stadium?

Hon. Smith: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: When will it be completed?

Hon. Smith: They are finalizing it now.

Mr. Indarsingh: So we expect the stadium to be reopened for the use of persons in the Couva area?

Hon. Smith: The stadium is open for the whole world to come to.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no, no, Mr. Minister—

Hon. Smith: We have just hosted a game against the US there.

Mr. Indarsingh: We are speaking about the people who utilize the stadium for keeping fit and walking—

Hon. Smith: Oh, the people who use the roadway?

Mr. Indarsingh: Not the roadway, do not be rude and arrogant.

Madam Chairman: Member, Member, please.

Hon. Members: “Whey!”

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman.

Hon. Smith: What is that—

Madam Chairman: Member, Member.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am the Member of Parliament for Couva South—

Madam Chairman: Member!

Mr. Imbert: Why is he shouting?

Mr. Indarsingh:—and I do not expect you to be rude and arrogant to the people out there.

Hon. Smith: Do these people use the Ato Boldon Stadium? Do they use inside the stadium?

Mr. Indarsingh: They use the stadium—

Mr. Imbert: Save yourself.

Hon. Smith: Inside the stadium?

Mr. Indarsingh: Inside of the stadium.

Hon. Smith: No, they do not, Madam Chair.

Mr. Indarsingh: They do.

Hon. Smith: They do not use the inside of the stadium. They use the car park and the pavements outside.

Mr. Indarsingh: You are rude, arrogant and out of place.

Madam Chairman: Member, Member.

Mr. Imbert: Oh, no, no, Madam Chairman, come on.

Madam Chairman: Member.

Mr. Imbert: We cannot have this.

Mr. Hinds: Put him out.

Madam Chairman: Member, that is uncalled for.

Hon. Smith: They “doh” go inside the stadium.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Member—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I was elected to advocate on the issues affecting the people of Couva South and environs and I will do so. Nobody will stymie me in pursuing my responsibility.

Mr. Imbert: No, this is unacceptable behaviour. Rude and obnoxious.

Madam Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East, please. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Diego Martin North/East, Member for Naparima.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, I really think it is unfortunate that you took the response in that kind of way. It could be that the Member did not understand what you were asking, because from where I sit it was a really very broad question. So nobody is stopping you from your “representative” capacity. Okay. So all I will ask you to do is to just recoil a bit, okay. Nobody here is being arrogant, rude, nobody. Okay. We may sometimes misunderstand each other—but you see the Member for Tabaquite told us something yesterday, if we do not remember, but it is worth us recalling, that each of us took an “eye for an eye, we will all be blind”. All right. So let us recoil. Nobody is being rude, we striking that. Could you ask the question you want the answer for?—because you did not ask that question and I was sitting here.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I ask the—

Hon. Smith: And dealing with the line Item.

Mr. Indarsingh: This kind of—

Madam Chairman: Member, Member.

Hon. Member: “Oh God.” [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member, Member, you are well seasoned here. Okay. So ask the question that you want to ask.

Mr. Indarsingh: To my good friend, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Madam Chairman: I like that.

Hon. Member: Good start.

Mr. Indarsingh: Based on the completion of the security review, I am simply seeking an answer of when the stadium will be reopened for the benefit of the people of Couva and environs?

Hon. Smith: As soon as possible, Madam Chair.

Hon. Member: Say tomorrow, “nah”.

Madam Chairman: Nicely, we move on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 11. Could the hon. Minister indicate the number of disputes before the board and how many have in fact been—

Madam Chairman: That is 009/11?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—amicably resolved.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, for the first time, we will be doing this in Trinidad and Tobago, a Dispute Resolution Centre and we are working on that and finalizing that. This quarter it will be started and athletes, coaches whoever, any disputes that they have in sports will be able to go to a facility and do it behind closed doors rather than airing it out in the public. So this quarter it will be done.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Therefore, I saw that there was allocation in 2016, what was that for?

Hon. Smith: Getting things ready and doing—we did consultations at the Radisson and other places. We have been discussing and so on to get it going.

Madam Chairman: So Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 372. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, to the Minister, line Item 01, the First Citizens Bank Limited—Repayment of Loan—Brian Lara Cricket Stadium. I see under the 2018 estimates, \$67,872,986. Could the hon. Minister indicate at this point going into 2018 what is the outstanding amount on this loan agreement?

Hon. Smith: My team, my financier will put that in writing for you. They do not have it with them here.

Mr. Padarath: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, we are now at page 162, new book, Consolidated Fund. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 162, 163 and 164. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: I am on page 163, under Youth Development. If the hon. Minister would provide some clarity with respect to line Items 008, 009 and 010 which are all identified as new projects, but as you can see it just says implementation of the national youth policy, refurbishment of the training facilities, Youth Development Apprenticeship Centres and particularly though interested in 008 with respect to the implementation of the youth policy with an allocation of 1.5. If the Minister can, at a later date if not now, but flesh out really what is the intention of the national youth policy and what are the implementation measures? Secondly, 009, the Refurbishment of the Youth Training Facilities. Which facilities are these, what is the scope of works and similarly with line Item 010 with an allocation of \$4 million as a new project?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, I take the Member for Princes Town's advice and it is a lot so we will put it in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Looking at line Item 096 on page 162, we see the upgrade of swimming pools at a cost of \$2 million, an estimate there for 2018. Could the hon. Minister indicate which swimming pools, what are the locations and the scope of works for each, please?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, again it is a long list that we have. I could provide it in writing. There are several that we have done.

Mr. Padarath: Great. And also if we look at 117, Improvement to Indoor Sporting Arenas. Similarly, I know that that information may not be at your fingertips, Minister—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Smith: Yeah. I have it here but it is a lot.

Mr. Padarath: Sure, if you can provide it in writing and line Item 123, I was particularly concerned about this particular line Item to Conduct a National Sport and Recreational Census. What will be the objective of this census and how do you intend to utilize this information with respect to the data in improving the quality of service and delivery in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, considering all the problems that they have been plagued with over the past year?

Hon. Smith: Well, I think his timing is wrong. We did not have many problems the last year; we had that the previous six years. But nevertheless, the recreational census is for us to work with regard to, if you would have noticed there are a number of facilities that are lit throughout Trinidad and Tobago and a number of parks that are not being utilized and these lights are burning through the night. We are looking to do a census to see what the uses are and how we could get those facilities being used at the Grassroots level.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. 096, Upgrading of Swimming Pools; 124—construction of Diego Martin Sporting Complex and I am looking at Item 14, Refurbishment of Youth Training Facilities.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chairman,—

Madam Chairman: All right, we taking them one at a time.

Mr. Charles: All I want to do, all I want to know is, yes. If any of these improvements, name one related to Naparima constituency.

Hon. Smith: Chairman, let us move on.

Madam Chairman: Member—

Mr. Charles: So that I can go through them individually.

Madam Chairman: Member, might I say right, as the representative, upgrading means it exists.

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So I hope you know whether a swimming pool exists there.

Hon. Member: So, five years—

Mr. Charles: Yes and he knows too.

Madam Chairman: All right. So you are not asking that question?

Mr. Charles:—one by one or we deal with it collectively. I seek your guidance. Because all I am asking him is to name one, *solo, uno*.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, I was hoping that between 2010 and 2015 the inequity that was shown to Naparima, we have three more years, hopefully we could fix that.

Mr. Charles: So the answer is zero.

Hon. Smith: Zero based on 2010 to 2015.

Mr. Charles: Zero facility. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: It was intended, Member for St. Joseph, to be a light moment. All right.

Mr. Padarath: Let there be light.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Naparima just intended that to be a light moment.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Boring behaviour, man.

Madam Chairman: Member, as I said, he just intended it to be a light moment.

Mr. Deyalsingh: 41 constituencies—

Hon. Smith: In two years.

Madam Chairman: Member.

Mr. Charles: He is completely out of control. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: What line Item is this, Madam Chair?

Mr. Padarath: They take pattern from their Leader.

Hon. Member: Look how cool Terry is.

Mr. Imbert: May I ask what is the line Item we are dealing with?

Hon. Member: We move on, we move on.

Mr. Imbert: That has caused all of this.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Imbert: Misconduct on the part of the Opposition.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam, I will try not to annoy my colleague from St. Joseph, but just one more line Item. Line Item 008, Installation of Wide Area Network, on page 164, with an allocation of \$1 million. We saw an

expenditure of \$898,379 in 2016. If the hon. Minister can indicate with respect to this particular programme, under Administrative Services, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services—

3.10 p.m.

Hon. Smith: She did not call that. The Chairman did not reach there.

Madam Chairman: So we are now going to—

Mr. Padarath: Page 164.

Hon. Smith: “Yuh jump de gun.”

Madam Chairman: Yes. We are now going to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 164. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma’am, my apologies. Line Item 008, I am looking at, the Installation of Wide Area Network. As I said, an allocation there in 2016, \$898,000 having been spent, similarly in 2017 and now we are seeing in 2018 an allocation of \$1 million. We would like some details with respect to the Installation of Wide Area Network. I am guessing this is an ICT programme. If we can find out which areas are being targeted as it is very vacuous with respect to this wide area network.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, that is what the term is called “wide area network”. But nevertheless, most of our facilities had no internet access prior. Of course, a number of young people go there. They do homework, and so on, so it is something that we are doing—a programme throughout the country—where we are going to be having all of our facilities have this network.

Mr. Padarath: So, Minister, the Member for Naparima can take comfort that it will be affecting Naparima in a positive way?

Mr. Imbert: It is so wide, it must affect Naparima.

Hon. Smith: It is very wide.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, are you still on Consolidated Fund? This is Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Please proceed.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, 009, Develop a Domestic Sport and Research Database, if you can expand on that, please.

Hon. Smith: Yes. Madam Chair, as you know when we came in, this was part of our mandate—our manifesto—to do database and make decisions based on proper information, analysed data and we are continuing this process in 2018 and it has been working very well so far.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How does this differ from the census?

Hon. Smith: This is more micro-information rather than the macro. So we are going in-depth with regard to the various sports. We have been working with all the NGBs to get that information in, all the youth organizations to get that information in, so we could make proper decisions moving forward.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 250, the same book. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 250 and 251.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 68 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister, thank you PS and all the other technocrats.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we now resume [*Laughter*] and what took place in the little break remains in the break.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, \$372,450,800.

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

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to this honourable House. Madam Chair, we are indeed grateful for the opportunity to meet with the distinguished Members of this House, the Standing Finance Committee, to discuss our budgetary allocations for the fiscal year 2017 to 2018. Madam Chair, it is well known that this Government is forced to do more with less and ensuring value for money in not only this Ministry but all Ministries. When I assumed the responsibility as Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, I sought to inculcate these values and to promote the mindset that we must harness our internal resources and maximize our partnerships with stakeholders and international organizations to fulfil the mandates of this Ministry.

Madam Chair, I am very pleased to say that we, as a Ministry, have been doing remarkably well with the limited resources provided. This is also attributed to the innovation and creativity of the executive team and staff at this Ministry and their commitment in going beyond the call of duty. Madam Chair, we have been seeing the fruits of our collective efforts reflected in the developments in the labour market. For example, there has been a progressive and incremental decline in the unemployment rate from 4.4 per cent at the end of the second quarter of 2016, to 4.0 per cent in the third quarter of 2016, and then 3.6 per cent at the end of the fourth quarter of 2016.

So that, Madam Chair, over the past year we have made significant progress in our labour legislative and policy agendas as well as in the area of small enterprise development. We have held national stakeholder consultations on nine pieces of labour legislation to date and submitted four draft policy position papers to Cabinet on the amendment of the Industrial Relations Act, the amendment of the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, the Co-operative Societies Act and the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies Act, respectively.

Cabinet approved the policy position paper on the amendment of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies Act and it was referred to the Ministry of the Attorney General for the preparation of a Bill, and I am duly informed that a first draft from the hon. Attorney General's Office has been received by this office and we are currently reviewing that draft Bill.

Madam Chair, over the past year we have also revised and obtained Cabinet's approval for two major policies. That is the National Policy on Cooperatives and the National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS.

I am also pleased to report that we have made significant strides in the transitioning of the On-the-Job Training Programme from the National Training Agency to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, and that target was achieved effective May 31, 2017. As part of this process, we have sought to restructure this programme to place greater focus on the quality of training provided to trainees in line with their areas of interest.

Madam Chair, our initiatives in the past year with respect to small business development included rationalization of the roles of the various entities such as NEDCO and the Enterprise Development Division at the Ministry, to avoid duplication of efforts and to enhance efficiency, preparation of Fair Share clients and to embrace the new procurement legislation.

Madam Chair, in the fiscal year 2017 to 2018, we will undertake critical work in keeping with the National Development Strategy, 2016 to 2030 and the National Performance Framework, 2017 to 2020. Our top priority in this Ministry is to accelerate work on the labour legislative agenda with the intention of reaching the stage of legislative amendments to keep pieces of legislation such as the Industrial Relations Act of 1972 as amended, the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Additionally, we will work on developing three important national policies, namely: a Labour Migration Policy, a Policy for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in Trinidad and Tobago and a National Workplace Policy on contract employment in Government ministries, departments and statutory authorities.

Madam Chair, emphasis will be placed on improving the reach and accessibility of the services offered by this Ministry. For example, the newly occupied Tobago Campus of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies will be properly outfitted to afford the same high quality tertiary education to our brothers and sisters in Tobago as in Trinidad. The San Fernando and Tobago offices of the Occupational Safety and Health Agency will be relocated to more conducive environments.

In closing, Madam Chair, we look forward to a fruitful and productive session here this afternoon that will redound to the benefit of the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is within that context that we therefore avail ourselves to this esteemed House for the conduct of the exercise this afternoon.

I thank you, Madam Chair. [*Desk thumping*]

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$372,450,800 for Head 30, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, 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 Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and we are at page 206. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 206, Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Co-operatives. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, you taking any questions on 01?

Madam Chairman: No, we have reached item 002, Co-operatives. I called out the page and I was extremely pointed in asking the question, awaiting. I actually looked at you over my glasses because I felt you would have been asking a question. So we are at Item 002, Co-operatives.

Mr. Indarsingh: All right. I will come back.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. I will come back to you, Member for Couva South.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Item—Okay, next one.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, Item 002, Co-operatives? Or can we move on? Item 003, Friendly Societies. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under 06, Madam Chair, Remuneration to Board Members, I see an increase of \$477,000. Could the Minister provide clarification on how this is being disbursed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, quite simply, we were able to make good a commitment given to the stakeholders belonging to the Friendly Societies that we will reconstitute the Friendly Societies Council after a period of six years, and that is what we did. So that the increase is to take care of the payment of remuneration for those board members. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Indarsingh: I see that there was an allocation of \$177,000 for 2017. So that means, Minister, you were not able to reconstitute it in 2017.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I repeat for the benefit of my friend. The council was reconstituted in 2017.

Mr. Indarsingh: So in the revised estimate, the allocation of \$177, 000, was it fully utilized?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, no.

Mr. Indarsingh: What percentage?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We have not utilized any. That means we have not paid any board remuneration.

Mr. Indarsingh: So there was no reconstitution in 2017.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There was—

Madam Chairman: I think that question was answered by the Minister already. Okay? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, are you asking a question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Could the hon. Minister indicate—in fact, how many members are on the board, please?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There are nine members on the Friendly Societies Council.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Occupational Safety and Health Authority, I would like to find out—because there is perhaps a legacy—what is the status of the employees, now that you have the Occupational Safety and Health, of the Factory Inspectorate that served in the Ministry of Labour?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not understand in what context you are asking that question, in terms of their status.

Mr. Singh: Is there existing a department called the Factory Inspectorate in the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, Member for Chaguanas West, with the coming on stream of the Occupational Safety and Health Authority, they would have taken over the role played by the old Factory Inspectorate. So that is why I wanted you to contextualize your question.

Mr. Singh: My question is really, you had an establishment in the public service of Factory Inspectorate personnel. Is that eliminated and there is a new designation?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Oh, indeed, it was abolished. With OSHA coming on stream that old division was abolished.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Item 06, could you tell me how many persons are on the board and how does the board impact upon improving the—

Mr. Imbert: You got that answer already.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: She said nine.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, no.

Mr. Indarsingh: Why all yuh bullying—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, please—

Mr. Indarsingh: Allow her to ask her questions.

Madam Chairman: Please. I am allowing her to ask the question. Okay? Member, your question is?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just for the Government who did not hear, nine is for the previous remuneration.

Madam Chairman: Member, ask your question, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For Line No. 06, how many members constitute the board—wait—and also—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There are 16 members assigned to this board.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how does this board contribute to the betterment of OSHA in Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Actually, Madam Chair, it was this present board that has sought to strengthen the workforce within the OSH Authority and brought a higher level awareness of workplace responsibility to Trinidad and Tobago through the various arms of the media and social media.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the composition of the board, I would expect that there are representatives of Government, labour and the business community, Madam Minister—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I intervene here? The board is a function of statute. It is in legislation and that is in the public domain, so there is no need to speculate about it.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am asking a question in relation to the Remuneration to Board Members, Madam Chair.

Mr. Imbert: Remuneration to Board Members is handled by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Indarsingh: But there is a Line Item.

Mr. Imbert: As you know, since you were a Minister in that Ministry. So you know that the Ministry of Finance classifies entities such as this and puts them into a category for the payment of fees. You know that. You did that. So “doh” ask things that you know.

Madam Chairman: All right. The question is?

Mr. Indarsingh: I am asking whether in terms of the composition of the board, Madam Minister, is there a labour representative in keeping with the—being the most representative as defined by the International Labour Organization?

Mr. Imbert: It is in the public domain.

Madam Chairman: Member, would the Act not define the various disciplines for the Members?

Mr. Imbert: I just said that.

Mr. Indarsingh: The Act may define—

Mr. Imbert: May?

Mr. Indarsingh: You see, Madam Chairman, if I am allowed to finish my presentation. In another board that fell under the Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development, representatives of labour had to go to court to ensure that there was a representative on the board, most representative of labour as defined by the International Labour Organization. And that is my simple inquiry here this evening, but the Minister of Finance seems to be hell-bent—

Mr. Imbert: So what is the question?

Mr. Indarsingh: I already asked the question.

Mr. Imbert: What is it?

Madam Chairman: So the question is, is the member of labour certified under the—

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no, no. In terms of the composition of OSH Authority board, is there a labour representative. most representative of labour as defined by the International Labour Organization?

Mr. Al-Rawi: There is compliance with the statute.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, through you, yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: And could I ask who is that representative, Madam Minister?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The representative was Mario Als, and he has since been replaced—NATUC would have forwarded. I cannot recall the exact name but NATUC would have forwarded another name.

Mr. Imbert: NATUC's nominee.

Mr. Indarsingh: And if you are so kind to advise me in writing.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not have to—Madam Chair, I already provided the answer to the hon. Member of Parliament. I see no need to reduce it in writing.

Mr. Imbert: It is in the public domain.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, am I making, what I would call, an illogical request?

Mr. Imbert: Yes!

Mr. Indarsingh: To have the information forwarded to me as a Member of this meeting in writing?

Mr. Imbert: It is in the public domain.

Madam Chairman: Member, is this matter in the public domain?

Mr. Imbert: Of course, it is.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I am asking—the Minister said she cannot recollect and I am simply trying to avail myself of the information.

Madam Chairman: And I am just asking you whether this would be information in the public domain.

Mr. Indarsingh: I do not know if the board has been fully filled by the Cabinet and so on, and this is why I am seeking the information.

Madam Chairman: Yes. What I have been told by the Minister, it is a matter in the public domain, but I will also tell you if it is not, if you cannot find it, you will have another opportunity to get what you want. Okay?

Mr. Indarsingh: And I hope, Madam Chair, that you will certainly play your role in fulfilling that request on my behalf.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, On-the-Job Training Programme, page 207. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to Line Item 01, Salaries and COLA, can you indicate, since the programme is now at your Ministry and you indicated successfully transferred from the National Training Agency on May 31, 2017, can you say how many workers are permanently employed; how many are on contract and how many are on short-term employment? I see the Minister of Finance telling you—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Pardon me?

Mr. Karim: How many are permanent employees; how many contracts and how many short-term?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Consistent with the decision of the Cabinet to realign the On-the-Job Training Programme, under the current OJT programme—the current staff complement of the OJT Programme is as follows: You have 42 contract workers, 20 on the establishment with one vacant position.

Mr. Karim: Can I just—I do not know if I have the correct number. The previous count would have been about 116 before it was transferred.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Pardon me?

Mr. Karim: Previous to this realignment, would there have been 116 persons on the establishment?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Oh, you are asking if—

Mr. Karim: Yes, I am just asking, just to compare.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: What was the previous employee population prior to the transitioning?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There would have been 107 former employees.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Of those 107, Hon. Minister, can you say how many of those were retained or reemployed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: In keeping with best practices, all 42 contract positions were advertised. All former employees of the On-the-Job Training Programme were encouraged to apply for those positions. They were all interviewed and at the end of the interviewing process—a very transparent

process, I must say—22 of those former members are currently employed in the programme.

Mr. Karim: And how many would have been on the permanent establishment and rehired? Would they have been on permanent establishment? Did you have any?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, I am not aware that there were permanent employees. Member for Chaguanas East, as the former line Minister with responsibility for this programme, you would be well aware that all those positions were contract positions.

Mr. Karim: I just want to know, maybe what happened since I had left.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, they were transitioned under the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask what is the position that continues to be vacant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Pardon me?

Mr. Karim: Can I just ask—you said there was one vacant.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Mr. Karim: What is that position that continues to be vacant, and how long has it been vacant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The Monitoring and Evaluation officer and that position is a contract position.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, to the Minister again. If I could recollect, you said that 22 former employees are now in the reconstituted programme—have been employed in the reconstituted programme.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Twenty-two former employees, yes. They were successful at the interview process.

Mr. Indarsingh: And you said that there were 107 in the previous entity.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Indeed.

Mr. Indarsingh: Of that 107 in the previous entity, could you inform this meeting how many applied to become employed in this new entity?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Out of 107 members—

Madam Chairman: Member, under what Item are we?

Mr. Indarsingh: On the On-the-Job Training Programme, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: What Line Item are we?

Mr. Indarsingh: Salaries and Cost of Living, Madam Chair.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, may I ask for which year? Which year are you referring to, 2018?

Mr. Indarsingh: 2018, because there is an allocation of \$950,000 for Salaries and Cost of Living, Madam Chair, and I am simply, in the interest of transparency and good governance, I am asking in terms of this allocation how many persons in the old entity would have applied back in the new entity for employment?

3.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: The Minister has already said how many from the former entity are now employed, and the former entity was not under this Ministry.

Mr. Imbert: This Item, yes. It was somewhere else.

Mr. Indarsingh: It was somewhere else, but it was a reconstituted—

Mr. Imbert: Not in this line Item.

Mr. Indarsingh:—programme—

Mr. Imbert: It was in Science and—

Mr. Indarsingh: It falls under—

Madam Chairman: All right, Members.

Mr. Indarsingh: It falls under the same On the Job Training Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Not on this Item.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, Member for Couva South, I will allow you if you have another question to ask. If not, I will move on to Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Indarsingh: I feel like we do not want the country to know how many people reapplied for these jobs.

Hon. Member: Plenty.

Mr. Indarsingh: It is a cover-up on the part of the Government.

Madam Chairman: Member? Member, I just want you to be careful again with what you say, because you as well as I know there are opportunities to get that kind of information that you wish—okay?—but not under the process in which we are currently engaged. Okay? Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a very quick one. Hon. Minister, with respect to this allocation in 2018, is it correct to say that one of the persons who is currently on the establishment, the director, would have been that very director before you had the transition?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 208; Item 001, General Administration, pages 208 and 209; Item 002, Co-operatives, page 209; Item 003, Friendly Societies, page 210; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, pages 210 to 211. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, you are on 004?

Madam Chairman: 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, pages 210 and 211.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, could the Minister advise if the building that currently houses the Occupational Safety and Health Authority is fully OSHA compliant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I would like to enquire from the hon. Member of Parliament which one of the buildings to which he refers?

Mr. Indarsingh: In terms of the main building.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not follow the hon. Member.

Mr. Singh: Where is your headquarters located?

Mr. Indarsingh: Where are your headquarters located?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: From my information—[*Interruption*] Are you referring to the building on Duke Street or Alexandra Street?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I do not have jurisdiction over the Ministry. I am simply asking the questions. I expect the Minister to tell me where her head office is and which office is OSHA compliant and so on. I am not in charge of the Ministry, Madam Chair.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: With regard to Alexandra Street, we are awaiting the fire certificate.

Mr. Indarsingh: So it is unfit in terms of OSHA compliant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not agree with your perspective.

Mr. Indarsingh: So the building has not been fully certified by the fire services?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, the OSH Authority is awaiting the certificate from fire services, and the feedback is that that certificate is expected anytime because the building is compliant.

Mr. Indarsingh: How long has the Ministry been awaiting this particular report?

Madam Chairman: Member, I will not allow that under this Item.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. Could I find out, Madam Chair, what is the status at the Duke Street office?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am duly informed that the fire service certificate will cover Alexandra Street and Duke Street.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. Madam Minister, so the employees of both institutions are not fully covered by the OSHA Act?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not understand what you mean not fully covered by the OSHA Act. Which aspect of the Act are you making reference to?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, based on the difficulty the Minister is having, I rest my case.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I am not having a difficulty at all. I am merely responding to the hon. Member of Parliament.

Madam Chairman: I think the Member of Parliament has just conceded he is no longer interested in finding out the information. *[Laughter]* Okay? We now move on to Item 005, On The Job Training Programme, pages 211 to 212. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Just a minute.

Mr. Karim: Yes, sorry.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Mr. Karim: Yeah, page 211, line Item 08. Can you say what are these locations that are being rented and the cost of it if you have it?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The individual cost?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: What I can share with you is that the payment is for rent for three properties.

Mr. Karim: Which are these?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: 31 Sackville Street, Port of Spain; 3 Freeling Street, San Fernando; and 16 Warner Street, St. Augustine.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, are these properties currently being utilized?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No. With the realignment of the OJT Programme to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, we are in the final stages of arranging warehousing to store the furniture from these three offices.

Mr. Karim: Can you say, therefore, how long now these offices are not being used but rent is being paid?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I would say for approximately a three-month period. Four months.

Mr. Karim: Four months.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Mr. Karim: You have an idea as to what that total cost might be, just on the average, that are being expended—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Might you be able to give us that in writing?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Certainly.

Mr. Karim: Okay. The new locations you plan to go to, do you have an idea as to where they will be?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Actually, in integrating the On The Job Training Programme into the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, it is now a Division of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. So that we are utilizing the Ministry's satellite offices. However, the Head Office remains for the time being on Connector Road.

Mr. Karim: Oh, it stays at Connector Road? Okay. Just another question, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, might you be able to say how many trainees would have applied to be placed on the OJT Programme in 2017 by levels; how many; and how many in fact were placed?

Madam Chairman: Item?

Mr. Karim: Item No. 17, Training.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Karim: Sorry, Madam Chair. The number of applicants by levels, and the number placed for 2017 by levels.

Madam Chairman: This is for what year, 2018?

Mr. Karim: No, 2017. Well if you do not have it, well—You would have just been completed the transition, so you might have idea as to what it is because in May you moved, the transition.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, with regard to the current situation, the programme is still being integrated with a very interesting scenario emerging—a rather interesting scenario emerging—but what I can share with you, I cannot tell you at this point in time the placement for the period June 2017 to present, but I can share with you the period 2016 to 2017.

Mr. Karim: You have those, or you want to supply it in writing?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: In the central region, the number of persons who were placed—I can give you it by regions.

Mr. Karim: But I would like to have number of people who applied as well. So the number of applicants, the number placed. You see, that would give me a sense as to the responsiveness of the programme

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I cannot give you at this point in time the number of persons who would have applied; the number of young persons who would have registered for the programme.

Mr. Karim: Well, can you undertake to supply it in writing, the number applied by levels and the number placed by levels?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, we will—we cannot provide that information with immediacy because the programme, there is a verification exercise on the way. We have identified a number of ghost trainees in this programme, and therefore, we will have to await the outcome of the verification exercise.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, what I am asking for, and I want to repeat what I am asking for. All I am asking for is that you can do your audit. I am not asking about the consequence of the audit.

Madam Chairman: But that will be under Training.

Mr. Karim: But under Training, that same Item, I would like to find out how many persons applied by levels and how many were placed?

Mr. Imbert: Hold on a second, please. This line Item is Training.

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: So you are dealing specifically with Training?

Mr. Karim: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Nothing but Training?

Mr. Karim: The allocation is \$212 million. I mean, Minister of Finance, you were a Minister of Science and Technology too. You were in charge of the OJT Programme, and all I am asking for is an undertaking—

Mr. Imbert: Are you dealing just with Training?

Mr. Karim:—to give us some data. If you want me to ask the question further now, I will ask the question for you to tell us. Out of this allocation, how many persons you intend to hire for this amount of money for 2018? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: How many persons you intend to train?

Mr. Karim: You must have a projection, man. As a Minister, I would have had a projection.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member is being very belligerent.

Mr. Karim: No, no, no, please, I am not.

Mr. Imbert: You mean the trainees? What do you mean? Because they are being trained, they are not being employed, and you should ask your colleague down there what is the difference between employment and training. Are you referring to the trainees? Yes or no?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: So now you could deal with him.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, the OJT Programme aims to place approximately 5,000 persons at the end of fiscal 2017 to 2018.

Mr. Karim: Right. Right. That is one of the answers I am looking for, and later on, after that when you do your analysis, I will be able to ask you to tell me by levels. So what I am asking now is before this. Can you say, since you transitioned as of the 31st of May, can you give me some data for 2016, 2017, as to how many persons applied by levels and regions, and how many were placed by levels and regions? That data is readily available.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, you will be able to get the information how many were placed by levels. As I indicated, Madam Chair, this is a programme riddled with a lot of—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members. Member for Chaguanas West—

Mr. Karim: East.

Madam Chairman: East, sorry. East—there is no allocation under this Item for 2016 or 2017, whether Actual Estimates or Revised Estimates. So that I think I have allowed you sufficient time to exhaust this discussion. Again, I feel that you can pursue this in another forum. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. My colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East, raised a number of issues under 17. With respect to Contract Employment and the allocation of \$6 million, Madam Minister, could you tell us how many persons will be hired as contract employees and in what categories please?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I repeat, there are 42 contract employees under the On The Job Training Programme, with one vacant position.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am a little bit confused with line Item 17. The Minister of Finance was asking the question if we were asking how many persons were trained, or how many persons were placed? So it begs the question, does it mean that persons who are trained may not necessarily be placed?

Madam Chairman: Ma'am, I am not going to allow that question under Training 17, which is a 2018 estimate. I do not think the Minister could answer for the future based on what we have here. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 212; Item 001, General Administration, page 212; Item 002, Co-operatives, page 212. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: I withdraw.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Friendly Societies, page 213; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, page 213. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 213; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 214. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I see that under 03, there was an allocation of \$1 million in 2017 to the National Trade Union Centre and under 07 to an allocation again of \$1 million to the Joint Trade Union Movement, and I am not seeing any allocation for 2018. Is there any particular reason that there is no allocation; and did the Minister or the Ministry receive any grant for the Federation of Independent Trade Unions?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, that is a question I would suggest that the hon. Member direct to the hon. Minister of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Indarsingh: Ma'am, I cannot direct the Minister of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, can you assist?

Mr. Imbert: Could you just summarize your question, please, in a few words, without a preamble.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I do not know if—because in terms of the line Items 03 and 07, allocations were there for 2017. Any particular reason there is no allocation for 2018, and was any application for any support came from the Federation of Independent Trade Unions?

Mr. Imbert: Just a second, Madam Chairman. [*The Member for Naparima leaves the Chamber*] The Member for Naparima is playing some video game and he has gone now. Madam Chairman, there was a provision in previous years.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, we are dealing with what year?

Mr. Imbert: I said in previous years there was a provision—

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Mr. Imbert:—and one of the groups that was identified declined to accept the subvention, and the other one there were discussions and so on. As we move forward into 2018, we have to be aware of our challenging financial circumstances. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, whilst I am on the same page, I am on 009. So I will wait.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 007, Households. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I noticed that this line Item has a decrease of 235. Hon. Minister, can you say these numbers we have here from '16 and '17 what were they used for? Because the question I had asked before indicated that you did not have jurisdiction, but if you can tell me what these numbers were used for.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Which numbers are you referring to?

Mr. Karim: From '16, '17, under line Item 03, On The Job Training Programme.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: You are referring to 347—

Mr. Karim: Plus 280, plus 235, yeah.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: And you wanted to find out the reason for the decrease?

Mr. Karim: Yeah. No, the allocation and the reason for the decrease.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: What I can share with you is that since the OJTP was integrated as a division of the Ministry with effect from June 01, 2017, Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a sub-accounting unit staffed by established public service positions, and therefore, a new Item No. 005 has been created with regard to accounting for the expenses of the OJTP.

Mr. Karim: So you had responsibility for the OJT Programme since that time?

Mr. Imbert: Let me clarify. With the change of administration, the On The Job Training Programme was transferred from the previous Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, but it was being administered by the National Training Agency. So it was not a direct division of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. So the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development had responsibility in a contextual sense, but the programme was managed by the NTA. It is now being managed directly by the Ministry as a division of the Ministry. That is the difference.

Mr. Karim: So is it correct to say, Minister of Finance, that these figures represent some measure of responsibility on the part of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development for the OJT Programme?

Mr. Imbert: These figures represent the allocations given to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development for onward transmission to the National Training Agency in the prior years, and now in this year as a division of the Ministry.

Mr. Karim: And, therefore, would have been—

Mr. Imbert: I think you are asking answers.

Mr. Karim: No, I just wanted to clear it just to make sure—

Mr. Imbert: I mean, clearly the allocation is in the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. What are you asking?

Mr. Karim: So therefore, they have responsibility for the programme since that time.

Mr. Imbert: But clearly it is an allocation to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

Mr. Karim: Right.

Mr. Imbert: It is not in the Ministry of skills training.

Mr. Karim: Therefore, it confirms the question I was asking before. Anyway, I will end the question here.

Mr. Imbert: Why are you asking something that is obvious?

Mr. Karim: I will end the question here.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, page 214. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, Item 01, National Entrepreneurship Development Company. There is an allocation of \$20 million in 2018 and an expenditure of \$24 million in 2017, I would like to find out how many persons benefited from this allocation in 2017, the allocation of \$24 million?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Are you enquiring how many persons applied for loans?

Mr. Singh: Applied, and how many loans were granted?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Approximately 500-plus loans were granted for the period 2016 to 2017.

Mr. Singh: And how many applicants were there?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am informed that the applications would be just slightly over 500 which indicate the majority.

Mr. Singh: Could the hon. Minister undertake to provide a list of the applicants, a list of the persons who were granted loans, and the quantum and the nature of the business associated with those loans?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I am being reminded of the confidentiality of such records.

Mr. Singh: No, but this is state moneys, this is taxpayer allocation, there is no confidentiality associated when you access that. Maybe the part about the nature of the business, but certainly not the quantum and the beneficiary.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member for Chaguanas West is an experienced Member. Banking information is confidential. [*Crosstalk*] Leakage of confidential information can cause someone to lose their job, you know. We had no less than a Governor of a Central Bank being involved in that, you know, leaking information.

Mr. Singh: He is taking you to court, so that is a separate issue. He is taking you to court. Madam Chair, this is an allocation by the taxpayer of \$24 million. [*Desk thumping*] This is moneys being allocated by not a bank. This is moneys being allocated by a state enterprise, and that therefore public funds being

allocated by a state enterprise, the quantum must be and the persons who are the beneficiaries of this.

Mr. Imbert: This is confidential information.

Mr. Padarath: You could apply through the FIA.

Mr. Imbert: Exactly.

Mr. Singh: No, it is the FIA will—anyway—

Mr. Imbert: Exactly.

Mr. Singh: So that therefore, we ought to have an enquiry. Okay.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. 01, National Entrepreneurship Development Company and the Shark Tank concept that was in the budget, is it correlated to this company?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair. On Other Transfers, 01, just to follow up on the question posed by the Member for Chaguanas West. In terms of the pronouncement by the Minister of Finance, could he advise this meeting under what authority he is acting in relation to withholding that information from this meeting?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I think we have dealt with this issue effectively.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, Madam Chair, if I could ask, NEDCO falls under any special legislation that allows the Minister of Finance to make this broad pronouncement?

Mr. Imbert: I think that question has been asked and answered.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Members, we will now go to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. We are at page 185. 17 - Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 185. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, could the Minister advise this meeting as it relates to what the increase of \$1,683,000 reflects?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Would you repeat that? With regard to what?

Mr. Indarsingh: Under 001, General Administration; 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, the increase of \$1,683,000 what does it reflect?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: One second please, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am informed that it represents arrears of salaries with regard to the bargaining units.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, that will lead me, based on what the Minister has indicated under 12, Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers. So \$1,683,000 is being utilized for settlement of arrears, and we see another \$2,974,000.

4.10 p.m.

What is this being utilized for and for what period of collective bargaining?
“Ah kinda confuse.”

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, I am informed that the outstanding periods 2008 to 2010; 2011 to 2013, and 2014 to 2016.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Minister, so which Head fully disposes of the settlement to officers? Because you told me it was covered under 01 and I am seeing under 12.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, I am informed that the increase in allocation is meant to cover possible increases in wages and salaries for the two bargaining units at the college, the academic and non-academic staff.

Mr. Indarsingh: So which allocation will cover that?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The allocation under 2018.

Mr. Indarsingh: But which Sub or Item description, Madam Minister?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: 01.

Mr. Indarsingh: 01 will cover possible salary increases?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes. Sorry.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. And 12 will cover settlement of arrears to public officers?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: That is correct.

Mr. Indarsingh: And there is no liability to any of the bargaining units?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: For the period 2008 to 2010, we have not been able to fulfil that obligation for the non-academic staff.

Mr. Indarsingh: So could you quantify how much is being owed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, we undertake to provide that information in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. And there is no other period there is any liability?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There is an outstanding obligation to the contract employees to pay them increases. We have not been able to make that obligation as yet.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the daily-paid bargaining unit, Madam Minister, you said—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There is no daily-paid bargaining unit.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, if I could recollect, you—

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, may I ask what line item this is, please?

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Finance Minister, 01 and 12.

Mr. Imbert: And what is the relevance of daily-paid bargaining unit here?

Mr. Indarsingh: I am trying to get a qualified response from the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: If there is none, what is the relevance?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no. I am coming back—she said that there was an outstanding. The Minister said that there was an outstanding sum of money for the period 2008 to 2010 and she said that it will be quantified. I am trying to find out if this was for the period 2008 to 2010, what really is affecting the full settlement of liabilities for this period.

Mr. Imbert: “Let de man talk.”

Mr. Indarsingh: We are in 2017. That is all I am trying to find out, Mr. Finance Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much for that very lucid explanation. Minister, you could answer that?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: For the period 2008 to 2010, was signed this year. There was a situation where one of the bargaining units did not submit any

proposals for a new collective agreement, but signalled verbally that that particular union was prepared to accept what the other union had bargained for.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 185 and 186. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under Contract Employment, 16, Madam Minister, there is a decrease of \$2,521,000. Does this mean employees have not been rehired at the college and if so, how many?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Firstly, let me point out that the part-time lecturers at the college make up 75 per cent of the college's teaching staff and the college proposes to seek to monetize its facilities to close that gap.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purposes, 001, General Administration, page 186; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are on page 81. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 81 and 82; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 82 to 84; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 84 to 86. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, I know you said pages 84 to 86, but when you get to General Public Services, Admin Services, I would like to ask a question.

Madam Chairman: You could ask it now.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 085, Delinking the On the Job Training Programme from the National Training Agency. In 2017, there was an allocation of \$2 million, nothing was used and this allocation is now reduced to \$1.5 million. Could you say what this money was not used for and what it is going to be used for now? What was it allocated for that it was not used and what is it now being allocated—?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Are you referring to the 1.5?

Mr. Karim: Yeah, the 1.5, 2018 list.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Are you referring to the \$1.5 million?

Mr. Karim: Yes, hon. Minister.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: That will be used to procure and install a PBX system, procure and install a CCTV system and procure and install video conferencing.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 065, Establishment of a Social Dialogue Process in Trinidad and Tobago. I see that there was an allocation of \$400,000 for the Revised Estimate of 2017, and under 2018 Estimate, there is zero. So what that tells me is that the Ministry of Labour will not be pursuing any social dialogue initiative.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, just have the Member exercise a little patience while I locate—okay. Given that the social dialogue process has been established within the National Tripartite Advisory Council, that project would have come to an end and a new project has been submitted and it is referred to as the operationalization of the NTAC for which funding has been allocated.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, Item 071, Labour Migration Policy, Minister. Was a labour policy done in 2017? I see that there is an allocation and then a reduced allocation in 2018. You did not use the money. Did you do a Labour Migration Policy?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: This Ministry sought Cabinet's approval for the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee for the development of that policy and the Note was deferred in December 2016 to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and we are actively working towards identifying the various Ministries, line Ministries, for which that collaborative effort would be brought to fruition through approval.

Mr. Singh: "They park it up."

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, no, no. It is, I mean this is very high in our priority list for 2017 to 2018.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, labour, when you talk of a Labour Migration Policy, do you mean to Trinidad and Tobago or from Trinidad and Tobago or both ways?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Both ways would be examined.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So the Canadian initiative with the truck drivers would have been sort of a forerunner to this?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, that would have lied within the context of the 10-point plan.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Was it successful?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, we did have some exploratory discussions but our investigations indicate that the person with whom we were engaging, we did not want to finalize such arrangements with.

Dr. Tewarie: All right.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 075, Minister, the Development of a Register of Domestic Employees, there is no allocation in the 2018 and so on. What is the status? This has been completed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The register was established in 2012, as you are aware because you were assigned to the Ministry during that period, hon. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I am asking in the context of an allocation too of \$197,093 in 2016.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am in the process of responding.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but Member, the Minister has not yet given a response.

Mr. Indarsingh: I did not say anything in relation to 2012, Madam Chair, that is why I was a bit perplexed and that is why I attempted to bring it back to 20—the figures and the line Item before us.

Mr. Imbert: We are not dealing with 2012.

Madam Chairman: Member, if you would just give the Minister an opportunity to develop her answer, please, and I think then you may ask a further question. Minister.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you, Madam Chair. These issues always carry a bit of historical context and it is in that vein that I was sharing with the hon. Member for Couva South that the register was established in 2012 while he was there at the Ministry and since then, the work has been ongoing to populate the register. To date, 100 domestic workers have registered. There are challenges in domestic workers coming forward to register for fear of their job security and other reasons, Madam Chair, and persons on the register benefit from knowing their rights and responsibilities of the Ministry. As a matter of fact, I am sure the hon. Member may recall that this Ministry highlighted the fact that domestic workers are workers through television ads for which the National Union of Domestic Employees, with whom this Ministry is working closely, was very, very

appreciative and continues to collaborate with us in terms of addressing the multiple challenges faced by that sector.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, under 083, Nationwide Awareness of Workplace Rights and Responsibilities, there is a programme that is called—I see it on the television—Labourville. Is this covered under this particular line Item and if so, how much has been expended in this particular programme?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, Labourville yes, and I am happy to know that my Member of Parliament has been viewing the work of the Ministry in that context.

Madam Chairman: Couva South, are you finished?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I just asked how much does this Labourville programme cost in terms of under the allocation.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We do not have that figure readily available but we undertake to convey it in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: That is why I continue to ask for some things in writing, too.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 212; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 212, in the same book.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 30 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you, PS and the other technocrats of the Ministry.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you, Members of this honourable House. Do have a blessed weekend.

Head 11: Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, \$4,500,000.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board is established by statute and is responsible for the certification of trade unions, as well as matters relating to decertification and the other issues related to the certification of trade unions.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,500,000 for Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are now at page 52, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 52. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just a very simple question to the Minister. Under 06, Remuneration to Board Members. Mr. Minister, does this mean that there has been an addition to the board in terms of the complement of board members?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: So what is the 47,000 increase? Has the board been reclassified?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: So what is the justification for the increase?

Hon. Imbert: It is just an appropriate allocation to deal with the expected expenditure to the board, to members of the board. Sometimes you have more than you require, sometimes you have less than you require, sometimes you have exactly the correct amount. So it is an appropriate allocation to deal with the expenditure of the board. That is all.

Mr. Indarsingh: So you could foresee in terms of how many board members attend meetings going forward, Mr. Minister? Because this deals specifically with Remuneration to Board Members you know.

Hon. Imbert: But the difficulty I am having, the Revised Estimate for 2017 was \$528,000, the Estimate for 2018 is \$575,000. The difference is only \$47,000. So what is the problem?

Mr. Indarsingh: I am just asking a very simple question.

Hon. Imbert: The Budgets Division of the Ministry of Finance in consultation with this entity has determined that this is an appropriate allocation for this Head. What is the problem?

Mr. Indarsingh: It is not a problem, I am just seeking clarification, Mr. Minister, in the context of whether there has been an addition to the board in

terms of the numbers. That is all. Nobody is in any way having any problems with the board.

Hon. Imbert: We are of the view that this is an appropriate allocation for the payments to members of the board. We believe so. Okay?

Mr. Indarsingh: And that is final because you believe so.

Hon. Imbert: And any surplus funds, if such exist, will be returned to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay and you are committed to value for money. Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: There is no problem, “we happy with this”.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 52; Item 001, General Administration, pages 52 and 53; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 53; Item 001, General Administration, page 53.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the representatives of the board and I thank the Minister.

Hon. Members, I wish to commend you for your cooperation, tenacity, steadfastness over this week. May I wish you all a peaceful and peace-filled weekend. This Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Monday, the 23rd of October, 2017, at 1.30 p.m. I thank you, Minister of Finance. Pleasant weekend everyone, reach home safely.

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