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THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Monday 23rd October, 2017

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 23, 2017

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2018) BILL, 2017

[Sixth Day]

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

[*Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George*]

1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Before we start, could Members please ensure that their devices are on silent.

I now call this Standing Finance Committee meeting to order. Under announcements, Hon. Members, Mr. Rushton Paray, MP Member for Mayaro; Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, MP Member for Caroni Central; and hon. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP Member for Tobago East have asked to be excused from today's meeting of the Standing Finance Committee.

So we shall resume and we are at Head 67: Ministry of Planning and Development, \$368,620,740.

Head 67: Ministry of Planning and Development, \$336,852,740.

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

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Planning and Development is a collaborative Government Ministry, responsible for providing the necessary policy, guidance and development, technical support, advice and feasibility assessment for national advancement. The Ministry leads a development planning process and is central to public policy formulation. The mandate is national development concentrated on four main pillars which are: economic development, social development, spatial development and environmental development.

Madam Chairman, as you and others would recall from the budget package for fiscal 2018, the Ministry of Planning and Development produced four publications, which set a new course for sustainable, economic and social

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development. These documents are the *National Development Strategy*, our *Vision 2030*; the *National Performance Framework 2017—2020*, designed to track our performance in the short-term; the *Public Sector Investment Programme 2018*, which is aligned to national goals and strategies and the *Tobago Public Sector Investment Programme 2018*, which is focused on Tobago development.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry is responsible for the Public Sector Investment Programme, which is the Government's development programme to support the nation's social and economic transformation agenda.

Like last year, the programmes and projects selected for funding were guided by the Vision 2030 and have met the following criteria: projects that make a transformational difference, projects that generate employment and projects that generate revenue.

Madam Chairman, the agencies which fall under the purview of the Ministry are: the National Trust, the Advisory Town Planning Panel, the Environmental Management Authority, the Institute of Marine Affairs, the Chaguaramas Development Authority, the Economic Development Advisory Board, the Central Statistical Office and CARIRI.

The Ministry is also the focal point for all the international development institutions that operate in Trinidad and Tobago, that is to say, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That *Head 67: Ministry of Planning and Development* stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$336,852,740 for Head 67, Ministry of Planning and Development is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of 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 346, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Couva South.

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Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, 001/14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. There was no allocation in the Revised Estimates for 2017. Could the Minister provide the meeting with the information of the number of committees that are now, or will exist, based on remuneration and for what purpose?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The committees that—okay. There are two committees and that is the Vision 2030 Task Force and the San Fernando Waterfront Executive Committee.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Salary 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. I read somewhere today, that the Ministry is giving consideration to the establishment of a national statistical institute. First question, is this correct, and if it is, is the intent to transfer the salaries here, or the jobs here, to that institute, or is it something distinct?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: This announcement was made several years ago, that we are working on a national statistical institute of Trinidad and Tobago in order to make the CSO an independent institution. So that information that you did read is correct.

In addition to that, what we have done is set up a committee that is examining how the transition will take place and it will entail some examination of the jobs that would be needed for the statistical institute. But throughout this task force operation, we have had the union on board with the Government. So it is being examined thoroughly.

Mr. Charles: So the intent is a smooth seamless transition from the CSO?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: A smooth seamless transition, yes, to the National Statistical Institute.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, 2018 estimate is a small amount of \$200,000.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: 22?

Mr. Lee: Line Item 22, under short-term.

Madam Chairman: Under Central Statistical Office?

Mr. Lee: Yes. Page 351? No.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We are not there yet.

Mr. Lee: Sorry.

Madam Chairman: I am sorry.

Mr. Lee: Sorry, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I listened to the Minister, and based on the question my colleague from Naparima would have posed, the \$2 million increase in the 2018 estimates, under 01, salaries and cost of living, will cater for? This \$2 million increase will cater for what?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The increased allocation is to facilitate newly-appointed officers.

Mr. Indarsingh: Newly-appointed officers.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Newly-appointed officers.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under the CSO?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Under the current system.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just a follow-up to the Members for Naparima and Couva South on line Item 01. I know you have been speaking about this for quite a while, a project that, really, you have inherited. But can you say at this point whether or not there is a target date with respect to actual implementation?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Mid-2018, and it is not a project that I inherited. It is a project that was started under the last administration that went—very little was done during the last five years and now I am restarting the project.

Mr. Padarath: So you are looking at 2018.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: As a year of implementation?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yeah.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Follow-up question. The question about reliable statistics. Given the salary allocation, do you think, in your view and this is not a trick question just a—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Member for Naparima, before you go any further, you cannot trick me. So go ahead.

Mr. Charles: And there is no intent to trick you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay, yes.

Mr. Charles: Where are we, in your view, if we say one to 10, and 10 is the ideal timely statistical information that could help us in planning, where are we at this stage?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay. Unfortunately, there had been some drawbacks that occurred during the previous administration, when you know that the CSO did not have a home for a little while and that sort of thing. What the CSO has been doing now is bringing itself up to international standards. So we have been using the UN. We have had assistance from the IDB. We have had assistance from Sweden, Statistics Sweden. So we are moving in that direction. And we have rebased the GDP. So we are moving closer to a 10. I would not say that we are—I would say we are probably around a six. And we are also looking at core indicators. We have moved the core indicators up-to-date, like the GDP, as I said before, and the labour force indicators. So we are moving consistently in a positive direction.

Mr. Charles: Just for clarification. Did the interaction with the UN not start during our time?

Madam Chairman: Member, I am not going to allow that question under salaries and cost of living. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, to the Minister. In the context of 01, where you said that this \$2 million increase will deal with additional staff, the recruitment, if I am to recollect what you said correctly, and

under 08, Vacant Posts, there is an increase in the 2018 allocation of an additional \$1 million, how much staff does the CSO intend to recruit or how many vacant posts?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Let me clarify. The increased allocation is to facilitate newly-appointed officers who were previously under contract or delegated authority. So that is what the \$2 million is for.

Mr. Indarsingh: So how many you would recruit with—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Just now. With regard to 08, it is—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Indarsingh: Just now. If I could ask you, would the \$2 million now, and you say they are moving from contract to within the permanent establishment, how many persons will come on board, 10, 15, 20?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: One hundred and eleven members of staff were regularized.

Mr. Charles: Were regularized.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes, yeah, from years of being under delegated or short-term appointments and they have been appointed now as public officers, hence the increase to facilitate the payment of salaries.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: And with regard to 08, it is to facilitate the movement of staff from short-term delegated authorities similarly into regularized posts on the establishment of the CSO.

Mr. Indarsingh: And how many under this line Item?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: I do not have that figure in front of me right now. But if you wish—if you do not mind, Madam, I can come back to that if I can get the figure?

Mr. Indarsingh: Certainly. No problem.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division; Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit; Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division; Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 349 to 350; Item

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002, Library Service Unit; Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, 2018, you have a small amount of \$200,000 allocated, but the revised figure for 2017 was \$4,250,000. The question I am asking is, these individuals who were employed on short term, what they did at the CSO and what became of them presently?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: That is the same regularized staff that I spoke about earlier. The same staff that was regularized, that is the same people.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning; Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit; Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division; Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases at page 355; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Library Service Unit; Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office; Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division; Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit; Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division; Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 357; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 12, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, \$100,000 allocated. Could the Minister tell us if and when the climate change agreement is going to be ratified to facilitate benefits arising out of this expenditure?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We have recommended to the Cabinet that it can be ratified based on our assessment of what Trinidad and Tobago will have to do with regard to climate change recommendations, the recommendations of Paris 21 and that Note will be before the Cabinet shortly for the Cabinet's adjudication.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, International Bodies; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions; Item 006, Educational Institutions; Item 007, Households. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under 03, Settlement to Cane Farmers Re: transition 2007, in 2017 there was an estimate of \$50 million, then it was revised to \$13,250,000 and in 2018, back up to \$15 million. Madam

Chairman, in relation to, through the line Minister, under this particular transition, could you indicate to the meeting how many cane farmers have accepted this settlement so far and how many are still to accept?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you Member for Couva South. The total number of cane farmers is 3,481. The total number of cane farmers who were paid under \$12,000 in tranche one, or who were owed under \$12,000 in tranche one are 1,153. Thirty-six contracts have been processed and paid in full. The total number of cane farmers in tranche one who are owed over \$12,000 is 2,328. One hundred and twenty-eight contracts have been processed with partial payment. Two hundred and twelve are yet to accept the agreement. The total number of cane farmers in tranches two and three are the same 2,328. Four hundred and ninety-one contracts have been processed and paid in full. The total number of cheques that have been created is 655. The total payout value is \$14,424,760.13.

Mr. Indarsingh: Follow-up, Madam Chair. In relation to this particular settlement to the cane farmers, is there any matter pending before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Not as far as we know.

Mr. Indarsingh: Not as far as you know?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Not as far as we know, no.

Mr. Indarsingh: And have cane farmers been asked at any point in time to accept any quantum of money less than what they had advocated for?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We have told the cane farmers that there is a certain amount that is available to be accepted, and some of them have come in and have accepted what we have indicated.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad.

We now go to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. And if we can go to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, page 497. 02, Institute of Marine Affairs; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 497 and 498; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment

Purchases, page 498; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head, 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households.

We now go on to 49, Chaguaramas Development Authority, page 506. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households; 009, Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 149. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 001, Pre-investment, page 149 to page 152. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 003, can the hon. Minister indicate how many regions of our country have now benefited from this exercise initiated in 2013, and how many more are to be covered and when is the projected completion date?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay, this is the seismic micronization project we are talking about. This is a 10-year project which commenced in 2013, being done in collaboration with UWI. The objective of the project is to perform micro-tremor measurements and seismic refraction tests in selected areas in Trinidad and Tobago for the creation of microzonation maps for use in land use planning and disaster management.

Mapping for the Cities of Port of Spain and San Fernando is complete. The 2018 estimate is for payment of salaries, workshops, advertisements and continued tests for the mapping of densely populated areas. As I said, it started in 2013 and it is a 10-year project.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 006, Relocation of Squatters, \$5 million. Could you tell us who, what, when, why, where and how?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yeah. This is for the San Fernando Waterfront Redevelopment Project and the sites are to be identified for the temporary relocation of squatters, following which the funds will be used for site planning, physical structure development, construction of homes, and the sites have not been identified as yet, but they are still being negotiated with the Land Settlement Agency.

Mr. Charles: Right. And this is scheduled to start next year, mid-next year.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yeah, this year.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 007, Relocation of PTSC Maintenance Facilities, \$5 million. I am just curious why that would fall under—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The entire San Fernando redevelopment project is under the Ministry of Planning and Development and it is being executed by UDeCOTT. There are other agencies which are involved. So PTSC is involved. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is involved, but the Ministry of Planning and Development is the overarching Ministry that will be pushing this San Fernando Waterfront Redevelopment Project.

Mr. Lee: Second question, line Item 008, Upgrade of Plaza San Carlos, \$5 million.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, I did not hear what you said.

Mr. Lee: Or Kings Wharf also?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: All in San Fernando, yes.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We are redeveloping the entire San Fernando waterfront and it is a whole project for that area.

Mr. Lee: So then can I jump to the next page, Madam Chair, as we are talking about San Fernando?

Madam Chairman: Once you are within the same Item.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just express some shock that the Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre does not know that Plaza San Carlos is the waterfront in San Fernando? I am just a bit shocked, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, once you are within pages 149 to 152.

Mr. Lee: Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister of Finance. To the Minister of Planning and Development, line Item 001, Minister. I see a feasibility study expenditure allocated for 2017. Just for my clarity, is a feasibility study still going on given that—?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No, the feasibility study was completed in 2014, and the project is now at implementation stage.

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Mr. Lee: So these costs that are allocated to line Item 001, is it just arrears of the feasibility plan or—it is on page 150.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Page 149?

Mr. Lee: No, page 150, line Item—

Madam Chairman: 001?

Mr. Lee: Yeah.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: There is no money.

Madam Chairman: There is no money there.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No money there.

Mr. Lee: Sorry, the Minister of Finance has me a little bit rattled there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just to come back to the line Item 006 to 008, you indicated that it is the San Fernando Waterfront Project.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I heard you mention UDeCOTT in all those different state companies.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, I am not hearing you clearly. Can you repeat?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I heard you mention UDeCOTT and a number of other state agencies. Does that mean that there is no PPP sector involved? It is not a—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: At this time, no.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just in terms of the monetary allocation under 006, 007 and 008, all are related to the San Fernando water project.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Waterfront Redevelopment Project.

Mr. Indarsingh: Project. These sums, under these line Items are final sums or could they increase in the future?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: These are sums that are expected to be expended within this fiscal. It may carry over, but this is for this fiscal.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow-up again with line 006 to 008, Relocation of Squatters. Have you all identified any area where these squatters will be located?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes, that is what I said. The sites have not been identified as yet.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay, thank you.

2.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, hon. Chair. Is page 153 included?

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached page 153 as yet—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay. When you reach 153.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, did you have your hand up?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right, so we now go on to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 004, line Item 016, Development and Revision of Core Economic Indices. Could the hon. Minister indicate what is this allocation—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Where are you?

Madam Chairman: We are at page 153, M. 016.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What does this allocation do exactly? And I will ask the other question when you tell me.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: This is for CSO research.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and what result is anticipated from the research?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, as the name suggests, it is to determine what are the core indicators of economic development and so on, and that is the research that we will be doing. In addition to that, as I said, we are updating the GDP, we are updating the labour force so these are the core economic indices of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is it that you are utilizing a foreign entity, local, is the UN involved?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No, it is the CSO, the CSO, but of course the UN has been working with us on making sure that we are at an international standard, but it is the CSO itself that is doing this.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 153 to 156. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, hon. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item on page 153, 050, the Establishment of the Planning Unit. Again, when will this project start? And when would it be in fact—

Madam Chairman: You have gone back?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, did you not say page 153? You said page 153.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right, go ahead please. Sorry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, thank you, Chair. So when will this project start? And how will the results of the survey affect policy?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: This unit will be set up in this quarter, the fourth quarter of this year, and thereafter we will do the—sorry, let me make sure I am saying the right thing—it is for the various censuses that have to be conducted, and we will start in 2018. We will be starting in the first quarter of 2018.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And line Item 051, can you explain this project and its value please?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The Development of Trade in Services, that one?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The Development—yes, Trade in Services Statistics.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: First of all, that—well. What has happened is that there are a number of new service areas that have been coming on stream and also existing service areas. So we need to have a list of statistics as it relates to the trade in services by industry and by products. Because that has not been done before, we have it in patches around the country but the CSO itself does not have a database from which it can work.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So if you currently have policies regarding other trade in services, it means that it will—it may impact in terms of changing whatever current policies that your Government may have?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, the thing is that right now as I said it is not located in one area. There are different industries and different services and different economic indices that exist in different parts of the industry. But we want to make sure that the CSO has a database of all the trade in services, in particular the service industries and the various trades.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure Development Fund, page 246; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 246 to 247; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 67 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

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

Head 26: Ministry of Education, \$5,472,977,967.

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

Hon. Garcia: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is my distinct honour to participate in this discussion on the 2018 budgetary allocation of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education was allocated almost \$843 million for capital and other developmental projects under the Public Sector Investment Programme and the Infrastructure Development Fund, and a little over \$5.1 billion under Recurrent Expenditure. This allocation is evidence of the importance that this Government places on education and rightfully so. Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Education is committed to providing quality inclusive education for all of our students from early childhood level to the tertiary level.

A major initiative being rolled out this year is a project entitled Creating a Culture of Student Achievements. This project has two components: The first is a primary school Standard 5 remedial initiative which seeks to identify students who are at risk of underperforming at the Standard 5 level and treat with the causative factors such as learning disorders or psychosocial factors. The second component of this project, referred to as the Form 1 Initiative, will provide remediation and support for the 1,367 students, who scored lower than 30 per cent in the 2017 SEA exam, and who were assigned to secondary schools.

Fiscal 2018 will also see the roll-out of the student monitoring system to support and to promote teaching and learning at the primary level. This will replace the primary level national test.

2.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry will continue its construction, maintenance and upgrade programme at the nation's institutions of learning at all levels. The Morvant/Laventille Project which commenced in fiscal 2017, will receive continued focus in fiscal 2018. The Ministry, with input from the Ministry of Health, has developed a project to provide targeted intervention for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, also known as ADHD, and a Note will be submitted to Cabinet shortly for its consideration.

I should add, Madam Chairman, that in keeping with its policy of equity and inclusiveness, the Ministry has an ongoing focus and the provision of special education services to students diagnosed with special education needs. The Ministry has also been on a drive to regularize and rationalize its human resources where several endemic problems exist. This will continue in fiscal 2018. In the interest of time, Madam Chairman, I will stop here.

I thank my colleague, Minister Dr. the hon. Lovell Francis, my Permanent Secretaries, the Chief Education Officer and other senior staff of the Ministry who are with me today to provide support in answering any questions which may arise. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$5,472,977,967 for Head 26, Ministry of Education is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, 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*

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Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.* We are at page 172. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Secondary Education. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, through you, may I say a special hello to your technical officers and your technocrats of the Ministry. I want to say a warm welcome to them.

Under Item 32, under 005, you have a very small expenditure for substitute teachers. In 2016, only about three-quarter million; 2017, \$800,000 and in 2018 now you have only \$300,000 for substitute teachers. Have you abandoned that issue of having substitute teachers in schools? Could you give us some comment on that?

Hon. Garcia: Madam Chairman, that idea or that initiative has not been abandoned. It is simply that we are in the process of employing as many trained and qualified teachers as possible that will not give rise to a large number of substitute teachers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Primary Education; Item 010, General Administration; Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture; Item 012, Technical/Vocational Education. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, would you—if you cannot do it now—be kind enough to give an appreciation of how many employees there would be in the tech/voc education system and how many you have at the different centres for tech/voc training and education?

Madam Chairman: That would be under 01?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Sorry, 012. I might have probably gone beyond you.

Madam Chairman: Yes, 012, 01. That is what I am asking.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

Hon. Garcia: Member, you wish to be provided with? Could you tell me again, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you tell me the number of employees you have in the tech/voc areas and the different time—

Hon. Garcia: Throughout the system?

Dr. Gopeesingh:—they would have been employed? If you do not have that now, it is all right. You could provide it in writing.

Hon. Garcia: All right. We will make that available to you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 014, National Examinations Council; Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on 02, under Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: We are moving on to there now. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Are you there, Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 08, Rent/Lease—Office Accommodation, I see \$7.7 million. Those are for buildings still rented outside of the main administration building—you still have some centres outside of the main area of the Ministry of Education? You are paying some rent for what area of the Ministry of Education now?—since I thought everything would be encapsulated in the Ministry of administration's new building.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, we have some buildings that we are still paying rent for. You would like a list of those buildings?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just give a simple explanation, where they are and what it houses?

Hon. Garcia: All right. We still have some, for example, the Teachers Credit Union that houses the Port of Spain Education Division. We have Broadway Properties, we have N. Dharrie and Company Limited, Coastal Winds Limited, Henry Patrick Smak Limited and these are really to house certain areas that we have not yet been able to accommodate in the new towers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Secondary Education; Item 006, Primary Education; Item 007, District Services Division, page 179; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; Item 09, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 22, Short-Term Employment under ECCE, could you just give a little explanation of that, the Short-Term Employment under ECCE, \$3.5 million?

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Hon. Garcia: Under ECCE, you will realize Member that we are trying desperately to ensure that all our ECCE teachers are trained. In some instances, where for some reason or the other, either one of those teachers proceed on maternity leave or sick leave, we are bringing persons on Short-Term Employment.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Ma'am. We are on page 186?

Madam Chairman: We are moving to Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit.

Mr. Lee: What page is that?

Madam Chairman: That is page 180. Item 010, General Administration, pages 180 and 181. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 16, under Contract Employment, can I make a similar request for an understanding of where these contract officers will be? How many and where they are placed under TEST? Your TEST here means Tertiary Education and Skills Training. Is it? TEST in this book is Tertiary Education and Skills Training?

Hon. Garcia: TEST is really the accounting unit that was a separate Ministry before, but since we still have two different accounts units then we have it under TEST. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Just the number of officers under Contract Employment and what areas.

Hon. Garcia: You will be provided with that list.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And instead of duplicating the questions, hon. Minister, there are a number of areas all through the education system where you have Contract Employment, instead of myself repeating the same questions, could you help by providing the number of employees under Contract Employment and where they are positioned?

Hon. Garcia: Okay. We will supply you with that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 001, Eastern Caribbean Institute. Have you reached there, page 181?

Madam Chairman: Are we finished with 001, General Administration? Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under 01, Travelling and Subsistence, how many officers have we now at ECIAF? Is this institute—what is the status of this institute? Are they pursuing degrees or diplomas now?

Hon. Garcia: Let me answer your first question. Under ECIAF, we have 97 positions there. You asked how many positions we have there.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: That 97 is for both agriculture and forestry? I am asking about the travelling officers.

Hon. Garcia: Travelling officers? Okay, I will have to give you that information. And your next question?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: If the course that is being pursued in both agriculture and forestry, if it is diploma now or is it that they have moved on to the degree programme? That is the same thing with the travelling with ECIAF, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but is it coming under Travelling and Subsistence?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, because we have officers who conduct those courses.

Hon. Garcia: What was the line Item there?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The same Travelling and Subsistence with the officers.

Hon. Garcia: That line Item does not talk about that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, I am talking about the officers, and officers conduct those courses. So I am asking if the course is—

Hon. Garcia: Under which line Item?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 01, Sir.

Madam Chairman: But this is Travelling and Subsistence.

Hon. Garcia: Exactly.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay, we will move on.

Hon. Garcia: Travelling and Subsistence.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: We will move on, you are in slumber.

Madam Chairman: Item 014, National Examinations Council, page 182. Member for Naparima, are we under 014, National—

Mr. Charles: Yes, 014, line Item 01. How many vacancies exist in the National Examinations Council? Oh, we passed that. Okay. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: We are under Travelling and Subsistence.

Mr. Charles: Sorry.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we are moving on. Item 015, Spanish Secretariat; Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same request for Contract Employment that I mentioned earlier under Item 16, if you can provide that.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, the same information will be provided to you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. We are at page 183. Item 001, General Administration. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under Item 04, Other Minor Equipment, there is a substantial increase of \$59 million. Could you just indicate what is that meant for? Is it for the laptops? Is it for textbooks? What is it for, the \$59 million?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, that increase is for the procurement of laptops.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: My colleague asked the question, Madam Chair. I will pass.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Primary Education; Item 007, District Services Division; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit; Item 010, General Administration (TEST), page 184; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Caribbean Examinations Council, hon. Minister, there is a revised estimate of an increase of \$11 million. Could you just give an appreciation of what is responsible for us paying more to the Caribbean Examinations Council from \$10 million to \$21 million? What accounts for that?

Hon. Garcia: The \$11 million here would represent fees that were owed. So this allocation is an effort to pay those fees that were owed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Charles: Are we on 004?

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached there as yet. 04, Current—or you are talking about 004? We are under Sub-Head 04, we are now at Item 002 which is Commonwealth Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies. That is where you are at, Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: No. You go ahead.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Educational Institutions, pages 186 and 187. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 35, Direct University Services—Current. In 2017—well, the question will be: what is that? And the second part of the question, you have a \$46 million increase for 2018 over 2017, what would be the rationale for that increase please, or what was responsible for the increase?

Hon. Garcia: I will get back to you in a minute. Okay? We will come back to this in a while.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 29. Hon. Minister, could you give us an idea of the — well I am very happy to see that there is increased funding for private special schools, but could you give us a little explanation of the increase of \$13 million?

Hon. Garcia: I am having a difficulty in hearing you. Could you—?

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Could you give us an appreciation of the reason for the increase in the funding for the private special schools? I am very happy to see that, but I just want to get an idea, from \$12 million to \$25 million, an increase of \$13 million, is that for fees owed before or—?

Hon. Garcia: Well, one new school was added and that school resides in Rio Claro, so that would have incurred additional expenses. In addition to that, when our school supervisors and other officers of the Ministry of Education did their audit, it was revealed that there are some outstanding sums that we had to pay and this is why we had to increase the allocation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is the one I had asked you the question about in Parliament that you had to—anyway, do not worry about that. That is good. That

is good. Madam Chair, can I ask under Item 34, Grants for the Expansion of Universal ECCE?

Madam Chairman: Yes you may.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is a reduction of \$2 million from \$20 million—\$2.7 million. Just give a little explanation on that if you can.

Hon. Garcia: This is an arrangement that we are looking at very carefully. What we have found is that a number of the persons who are conducting these private ECCE centres, they have indicated that they are no longer interested. In addition to that, on the other hand, we have some persons who are charging exorbitant fees, in spite of the fact that they are getting subventions from the Government and we are looking at it. We are going to do an audit to determine how we can proceed further.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. So that is a rationalization process.

Hon. Garcia: Exactly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Thank you. Council of Legal Education, Item 38, the increases for that. Is it because you are opening the south campus?

Hon. Garcia: Where are you? Where are you again, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 38. Council of Legal Education. From \$17.9 million to \$20 million. Are you having more students coming in or is it an increase in salaries or what?

Hon. Garcia: This is because of the increase in recurrent expenditure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Thank you. And while I am there, Madam Chair, may I have your permission for Items 41 and 44, which relate to Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. Item 41, \$27 million for the complex, but under Item 44 you have Subsidies Mt. Hope Students, which I understand and appreciate. Could you give—the 41—and tell us how many students now you are subsidizing at the Mount Hope Medical Complex under student subsidies in 44?

Hon. Garcia: That information will be given to you subsequently.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. You cannot give it now. All right.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry. Madam Chair, 006 on the other page. I did not realize you—can I just ask some short questions there?

Madam Chairman: Educational Institutions?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Under NTA—Minister, you would remember we had made some noise last year about the reduction. You still continue to decrease it for the National Training Agency. Why? Why is there a decrease in the subvention for that?

Hon. Garcia: Again, to quote your own words, it is a rationalization of the whole tertiary education sector. What we have found is many of these tertiary education institutions are providing the same service, and in an effort to save, we have decided to rationalize the services that have been provided at these tertiary education institutions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, I was asking you the questions on 48 which is UTT. All right. Item 51 is a separate question. The decrease in funding under the Higher Education Loan Programme. You moved it down from \$16 million to \$10 million, \$6 million less where the students now might find much more difficulty and they may require more help than before.

Hon. Garcia: That was a budgetary cut we received.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, but if there are more applicants for it, you will seek the intervention of the Minister of Finance?

Hon. Garcia: Of course. And if it is necessary we will have to vire money and in our mid-year review we might have another look at it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, thank you. Another, Health Economics Unit, Item 52, there is an increased subvention. This is something that we need the intervention of the Health Economics Unit in the health sector, but you have that under—well, it is under tertiary education now. You could give us an idea? Are you planning to introduce a new system? The Health Economics Unit, are they going to come in to give some assistance in the Ministry of Health? There is an increased subvention here.

Hon. Garcia: Well, as you know Member, we are working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health in the provision of these services. So we will be collaborating with my fellow Minister, the Minister of Health, in order to ensure that this sector is well taken care of.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is something that we need in Trinidad to bring—the Health Economics Unit—to start a programme for.

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Hon. Garcia: And, Member, you will realize that one of the initiatives that we have embarked on with the Ministry of Health is the reduction of sugary drinks in our schools.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, I applaud you on that. That is good.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 63, Student Nurses Stipend, Mr. Minister, is a new line Item and in this allocation of \$3,870,000, does that cater for any outstanding stipend?

Hon. Garcia: No, it does not cater for outstanding stipends, it caters for stipends that are supposed to be paid to our student nurses.

Mr. Indarsingh: Absolutely, this will cater for an ongoing payment going forward?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Through you, Madam Chair, there was nothing allocated under 2017. Is it now you are starting the School of Nursing, or why was there no allocation in 2017 when we thought that the School of Nursing was going ahead and we were training nurses? There is nothing under Nurses Stipend as well for '17.

Hon. Garcia: This is for COSTAATT, eh. COSTAATT is one of the agencies that is providing training for our nurses.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that comes under the COSTAATT budget?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you have it now under Educational Institutions. Why you have it now under this item? It is a new Sub-Item. Why you brought it there? It is no longer under COSTAATT.

Hon. Garcia: I will provide you with a detailed explanation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Okay.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 48, Minister, UTT. Given that there is almost—there is \$200 million allocated and given almost \$162 million cut in the last two years, can you give us an idea of which campuses and/or programmes will be affected by this reduction?

Hon. Garcia: Well, at present, we are having some discussions with the board of UTT to decide how best they can make full use of the resources that they are given. So, at this point, I am unable to say which campuses will be cut or which programmes will be cut.

Mr. Charles: Okay. And Item 46, National Training Agency. I see again, there is a \$25 million cut in two years and the question is: Is there some plan, long-term plan for the NTA, whether to close it down or retrench staff or hold it at some viable option?

Hon. Garcia: As I explained a while ago, we are in the process of rationalizing tertiary education services. That is one. And two, again, NTA is looking at areas where they can provide their own sources of funding and this is the reason why we have a reduction in the allocation.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair, my questions were asked by my colleague, the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on the next page, 188.

Madam Chairman: Member, could you kindly speak in the mike?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry, I am going on to 188. You have not reached there yet.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Couva South

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, with respect to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, line Item 50, could the Minister indicate for the period, let us say between September of 2015 to 2017 currently, how many institutions, tertiary level that is, have been accredited by the said council and what are these institutions?

Hon. Garcia: We have had one within the recent past and that is ROYTEC.

Mr. Indarsingh: One?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: And between 2010 and 2015, you have that information?

Hon. Garcia: I do not have that information at hand. That could be provided to you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lee: The question was asked, Madam Chair. It is okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households. Member for Caroni East, page 188.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Items 15 and 18. The Student Support Services, hon. Minister there was almost \$7.3 million allocated in 2016 for the Student Support Services Programme, but in 2018 you only have \$2 million, so it is a reduction of nearly \$5.3 million over the two-year period. Can you tell us what has accounted for this reduction on a very important programme that you speak about and the country speaks about and the necessity for it?

Hon. Garcia: This allocation dealt with the Homework Centres and we have seen a reduction in the number of Homework Centres, and this is the reason why we only have an increase of \$1 million over the 2017 figure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But Minister, we had 404 Homework Centres, but this cannot account for—this Student Support Services Programme, is it for the Homework Centres or is it for the Guidance Counsellors, Guidance Officers, School Social Workers, et cetera. Are you mixing it up?

2.40 p.m.

Hon. Garcia: In addition to the Homework Centres, which I just explained, this Vote is used for funding diagnostic testing for students and programmes to help students, in addition to the Homework Centres.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, I would like to see the reintroduction of those 404 Homework Centres, it will help the students tremendously. And Item 18, the THTTI, Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute, from \$18.6 million in 2016 now down to \$6 million, is there a reduction in the number of students coming in, or the reduction of the programmes in the hospitality institute?

Hon. Garcia: That is an area where we are seeking the advice and the input of our Attorney General. There are some problems associated with the THTTI, and we are moving ahead to have those resolved.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 09, Early Childhood Care and Education, \$20 million allocated in 2018, and I am asking, Minister, is this for salaries, training of staff, or does this involve the buildings? And if it involves the buildings, is Ben Lomond Early Childhood Centre and—

Hon. Garcia: It does not involve buildings.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for the benefit of the meeting and the national community, 19, Retraining Programme for Displaced Workers. Minister, could you advise the meeting, or can you say how and where displaced workers can apply to be trained?

Hon. Garcia: I will get that information to you, subsequently.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the displaced workers who apply, under this particular line Item, will they be paid or entitled to some form of stipend, and so on?

Hon Garcia: That is a question I am unable to answer at this point.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister or Ministers, from line Items 19 to 32, with a few exceptions, there have been marked reductions in the allocations from 2016 to 2018 in programmes like Helping Youth Prepare for Employment Programme, MuST, that is the Multi-sector Skills Training Programme; Servol, Servol's Human Development, National Commission for Higher Education, Bursaries. So in all these there were very appropriate funding in 2016, for instance, Retraining Programme for Displaced Workers, \$18 million down to \$9 million. The Helping Youth Prepare for Employment Programme was \$37 million in 2016, now \$14 million; the MuST Programme was \$49 million in 2016, now \$20 million, et cetera. Could you tell us why there is reduction in the programme when these are extremely necessary now based on what is happening in the country, and we need to step up on tech-voc training and education?

Madam Chairman: Member, I will only allow your comparison between last year, because looking at these figures, when you look at 2016 as against 2017, the very categories you have called, there were significant reductions in 2017, in the estimates, so that I am certain you would have asked that then. So if you want to compare—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: I am not going to allow 2016 to 2018 on these Items.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. If I can ask, under the Revised Estimates for 2017 you would see massive reductions in the expenditure, therefore massive reductions in the programmes. If we look at the 2017 Revised Estimates, in fact, that is the amount of money that basically has been spent. Could you just indicate what is really happening there?

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Hon. Garcia: When we look at the Revised Estimates for 2017 and we compare it with the Estimates of 2018, what we see, in fact, is an increase. We are not seeing a reduction.

Dr. Gopeesingh: A small amount but it is drastic in comparison to 2016.

Hon. Garcia: But we are seeing an increase. We are not comparing 2016.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, the Chairman indicated that, but I wanted to draw to your attention that that is a significant area that you, as a Government and a Ministry of Education, should be paying much more attention and having much more resources in those areas.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just come in here on a general point? Could the Member suggest areas that we should cut in order to increase these Votes?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, that is your job, Minister. You cannot ask me to do your job.

Mr. Imbert: No, I am asking you since we are short on funds.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are the Minister of Finance, you know the overall.

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell us what area we should cut in order to provide additional allocations to these areas?

Dr. Gopeesingh: When we come back across there on that side—

Mr. Imbert: So you have no ideas? So you do not know where to get the money from? Okay.

Madam Chairman: So Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I wanted to ask under 07, but—

Madam Chairman: Member, I think we have to go on to Other Transfers, 009.

Mr. Indarsingh: But you would not allow me one final question?

Madam Chairman: I allowed you many final questions. Item 009, Other Transfers. *[Laughter]* Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am looking at 011, which is further ahead, you want to go there?

Madam Chairman: No, just let me ensure that there is nobody under 009. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles:—at 011.

Madam Chairman: 011, Transfer To State Enterprises. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under line Item 02, National Schools Dietary Services Ltd., NSDSL, there is a marked decrease of \$43 million from the 2017 Revised Estimates which was \$200 million, and the estimates for 2018 is now \$156 million. There is a decrease of \$43 million, is it that there is going to be a reduction on the number of meals served and the number of students receiving the meals of \$43 million? That is a very significant and important aspect of the education system.

Hon. Garcia: I can give you the assurance—and indeed the national community—that there will be no reduction in the provision of breakfast meals and lunches to be served.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But, Minister, if there was \$200 million spent in 2017 under your revised estimates, and 156 is given this year you will be short of \$43 million.

Hon. Garcia: There is the amount of \$32,172,933 that was owed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. And that was paid in 2017?

Hon. Garcia: Some of it was paid in 2017, yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So are you carrying over debt from 2017 into 2018?

Hon. Garcia: No, but let me reiterate, as with everything else we have received some budgetary cuts, however, we had been assured by the National Schools Services Limited that everything is going to be put in place so that our children, those who are in need, will not be disadvantaged. We are determined not to reduce the quantum of meals that will be served. We are going to ensure that in discussions with our caterers they are going to use every means possible to ensure that there is value for money.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, they do a great job, but do you have anything outstanding for these caterers for last fiscal year?

Hon. Garcia: Yes. The last time these persons received their stipend was towards the end of May in 2017, and we are looking forward to paying the caterers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, but you have to acknowledge that there is a marked cut of \$43 million for the school feeding programme, and what you are going to do leaves a lot—we would have to ask the questions later on.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, under 08, Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme Limited, YTEPP, Mr. Minister, you have decreased the allocation for 2018 by \$9,383,600. Is this a signal that there will be retrenchment in this particular programme? And if so, how many, and which centres, and so on, are to be closed?

Hon. Garcia: You are asking a question and you are providing answers, and those answers are not accurate. There will be no retrenchment.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, could you provide some information as it relates to the decrease in the allocation, what is the reason?

Hon. Garcia: If you look—[*Interruption*] Yes, if you want to find out—

Mr. Indarsingh: If the Prime Minister wants to make an intervention we will allow him, you know.

Hon. Garcia: No. No. The Prime Minister is coaching me. That is part of it too. That is his responsibility.

Mr. Indarsingh: However, that is the reason for his presence.

Hon. Garcia: Ask the question again, Sir?

Mr. Indarsingh: I am simply asking, Mr. Minister, there is a decrease of \$9,383,600, you said there is no retrenchment, no centres will be closed, could you provide an explanation or rationale for the decrease?

Hon. Garcia: The board of management of YTEPP has indicated that they are going to ensure that we get value for money in what is being done in those centres. I have first-hand information where that is concerned, where those YTEPP centres are concerned, and, of course, there are areas where we can ensure that efficiency would be the hallmark of their operations.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we move on to—Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 09, National Energy Skills Centre, in 2017, \$18.1 was spent and budgeted; 2018, \$18 million. Could the Minister state if any NESC centres have been closed and where are they located if any was closed?

Hon. Garcia: There are three NESC centres that are earmarked for closure, and the reason for that is simply because there is a drastic drop in enrolments. In one centre the enrolment is one, and the other two the enrolment is three each.

Mr. Lee: And where are those locations?

Hon. Garcia: One in La Brea, one in Point Fortin and one in Moruga.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Could the hon. Minister explain as to why this drastic drop and what outreach measures are being taken to capture a student cohort for these areas?

Hon. Garcia: NESC was originally established to provide support for the energy industries, and, as a result, the training that is offered, or that has been offered would be at the higher end of the tech-voc ladder. In other words, the level three training was that which was embarked upon. What we have noticed and what we have been told is that in those areas the great majority of persons who needed training, and who were interested in being trained, they were trained over the years. However, the need now is for us to revisit that programme and look at the lower level training so that persons will have the requisite skills at level one and level two.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: A follow-up question to the Minister in this same line Item, could the Minister state how many years the centres at Point Fortin, NESC, was in existence, and also Moruga?

Hon. Garcia: I do not have that information.

Madam Chairman: How many years they were in existence?

Mr. Lee: Yeah, these centres that they are now contemplating closure.

Mr. Imbert: What line Item is that, please?

Hon. Garcia: That is a question I am unable to answer at this point.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, hold on, Minister. What line Item is that, please?

Mr. Lee: Line Item 09.

Mr. Imbert: And is that relevant to the 2018 appropriation?

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: How?

Mr. Lee: Because he is contemplating closure.

Mr. Imbert: How you know that?

Mr. Lee: He said so. He said so just now. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: He was not supposed to be talking to you about that. That was not written in the budget.

Mr. Lee: It is a line item, Prime Minister.

Dr. Rowley: It is not written in the budget. There is not a thing in the budget about closure; that is a speculation. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you on 06?

Madam Chairman: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. We are going on to the book, *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly*, 01, National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001 General Administration, page 155. That is where you are, Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on the book now. No, that is all right, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 156; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 156; 007, Households; 12, Board of National Training, page 161; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001 General Administration; Sub-Head 001, General Administration. Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: I wanted to ask, what page is that?

Madam Chairman: We are on 12, Board of National Training.

Mr. Charles: 001?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

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Mr. Charles: Just for my information, what is the Board of Industrial Training, what does it do?

Madam Chairman: The Board of National Training?

Mr. Charles: The Board of Industrial Training.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Charles: I have heard this and I am a bit lost.

Hon. Garcia: That is an agency that has been in existence for quite some time that was supposed to supervise on tech-voc training. Over the years we have had the emergence of other training institutions. NTA, in particular, was given that job, and, again, as I have stated previously, we want to rationalize this, but at this point the Board of Industrial Training is not in active operation.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 161; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 009, Other Transfers; 13, Trinidad and Tobago Commission for UNESCO; Sub-Head 01; 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration; 56, College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago, page 171; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Charles: Item 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, a reduction of \$7 million, it this what this reduction entails?

Hon. Garcia: Which line Item again?

Mr. Charles: Item 04, Current Transfers—

Madam Chairman: No. No. We are now at 01—

Hon. Garcia: We are not there as yet.

Mr. Charles: Oh, okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay?

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 171. Member for Caroni East, 001, General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Item 16, under Contract Employment there is a \$7.8

million reduction under Contract Employment, just a little explanation, please, hon. Minister, for COSTAATT.

Hon. Garcia: As with many other departments at the Ministry of Education we are trying to ensure that the posts that are on the establishment, those positions are filled and, therefore, it would negate the need for contractual employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Basically, how many people you feel are going to be affected? Let us say somebody had a three-year contract, how many people would be affected for non-renewal?

Hon. Garcia: That is information that I do not have at hand.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you be kind enough to provide it?

Hon. Garcia: We would try to get that for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks. You have any idea about how many positions—permanent positions—are to be filled at COSTAATT?

Hon. Garcia: That is information I would get for you also.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 006, Educational Institutions; 007, Households.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, you are aware we are at 007, Households?

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Oh God”, you ran a little fast there for me, but anyway. Can I go back to 006?

Madam Chairman: You are aware?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 006, just one question there on the School of Nursing.

Hon. Member: The Chair has passed there already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. A \$7 million reduction for the School of Nursing from \$25 million to \$18 million, when the Minister indicated that—

Madam Chairman: Any question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Is that as a result of decreased intake of students, or why you have a \$7 million reduction for the School of Nursing?

Hon. Garcia: It is not a reduction, what had happened previously is that COSTAATT was paying out of its allocation the stipend for the students, the student nurses who operated from the University of the Southern Caribbean. COSTAATT is no longer required to do that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there going to be a programme at the University of the Southern Caribbean or there is no programme?

Hon. Garcia: The University of the Southern Caribbean is a private institution, and we are looking at that because stipends have been paid in the past for students who were enrolled at a private institution, and we want to find out what is the rationale behind this. So this is something that we are looking at very carefully.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So if there are students there now, hon. Minister, what would happen to the fate of those students?

Hon. Garcia: We have not taken a decision as yet, we are looking at it very closely, bearing in mind the important thing is that it is a private institution.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But, hon. Minister, I am aware that the University of the Southern Caribbean had received about \$90-something million from the last PNM administration before 2010.

Madam Chairman: But, Member, we are under Households, School of Nursing, so I think you have asked the questions as relate to that. Okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just let me clarify this, if you would give me a—

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but I am not allowing questions about the University of the Southern Caribbean.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, the School of Nursing, so the School of Nursing would be concentrated on which campuses now or where?

Hon. Garcia: COSTAATT has a School of Nursing in El Dorado.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. That alone?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, that is COSTAATT, the former girls' camp.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. We are aware of that, which Minister Karim implemented.

Hon. Garcia: Not at all.

Mr. Imbert: “Doh try dat.”

Hon. Garcia: Not at all, a PNM administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You were Minister in 2002. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, are you finished? Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 70, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 70; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 71 to 74. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Educational Services, Item 002, Scholarships, President's Medal and Non-Advanced Level Examinations and 003, Scholarships/Full Pay Study Leave for Teachers, my question is, when is the scholarships for the academic year 2017/2018, arising out of CAPE, going to be announced?

Hon. Garcia: I do not want to tell you the exact date, but we are working on it. The reason for the delay is the fault of CXC. We only got the required information from CXC last week. And, as I speak, officers of the Ministry of Education are working assiduously in an effort to have these scholarships issued as soon as possible. Now, a Note has to be presented to Cabinet for Cabinet's approval. So we are hoping that this can be done as quickly as possible.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you for the clarification, Minister. As a follow-up, just a ballpark figure, what would be the number of scholarships, both open and additional, and further additional?

Hon. Garcia: Cabinet had taken a decision two years ago that we will have a cap on scholarships, and that cap stands at 400.

Mr. Singh: Four hundred?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Madam Chair: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 005, because I did not hear when you moved to G, and the question is refurbishment and customizing of the Waterloo facility, and I see no allocation for 2017 and 2018, is this facility earmarked for closure?

Hon. Garcia: There was no allocation because it was completed. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Charles: No, this is Waterloo. This is Waterloo.

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Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 003—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 003, Scholarships/Full Pay Study Leave for Teachers, there is no allocation for 2018, does it mean that you are not giving any scholarships for teachers anymore, and what will happen with the retraining programme, and so on?

Hon. Garcia: The majority of persons, those who are student/teachers sent on scholarships to UTT have completed their programme, and they completed their programme in June 2017.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks for PP, the PP Government.

Hon. Garcia: Okay. A few are awaiting final results, or have requested deferral for various reasons. No request was made for funding.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So we have the full complement now because of the PP Government ensuring that the primary schools have all certified teachers with bachelor's degree.

Hon. Garcia: You know, if I go to answer that question—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Minister, “doh” worry, “doh” worry. I just have one more, Programme of Development Scholarships.

Madam Chairman: Number, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 008, and 009, Post Graduate Scholarship, reductions there as well for Programmes of Development Scholarships and Post Graduate Scholarship; \$3 million reduction of Post Graduate scholarship, and \$1 million reduction on Programme of Development Scholarships. Is the Government's emphasis not continuing for development scholarships? And also, why is there a reduction for post-graduate scholarships? What is the policy of the Government on those two areas?

Hon. Garcia: Okay, let me answer by first stating that funds will be allocated to the payment of 15 scholars' entitlements. There were no new scholarships awarded in 2016/2017. And with respect to post-graduate scholarships, funds will be allocated to the payment of 98 scholars' entitlements; 24 additional persons are

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expected to access post-graduate scholarships awarded in October 2016/2017. No new awards were made under this programme in 2017 for start-up in 2017/2018 fiscal year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And what would be your criteria for the award of these post-graduate scholarships now?

Hon. Garcia: Well, first of all we are looking at the developmental needs of the country, and that is one of the things that we are looking at.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, I agree with that, but the other aspect, there was a policy where people over 50 were entitled to do post-graduate, were given post-graduate scholarships, which I think your Government has decided not to do anymore, so what is the rationale for your scholarships now?

Hon. Garcia: Is that a line Item, Sir?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Post Graduate Scholarship, 009.

Hon. Garcia: No, when you talk about people over 50 being granted scholarships, I do not know what line Item you are referring to.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That falls under the Item. What is your policy now for giving post-graduate scholarships to account for the \$10 million that you are giving?

Hon. Garcia: The policy with respect to the GATE has been explained over and over, and I am sure you are fully aware—

Mr. Imbert: And in the budget statement.

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Madam Chairman: This is not the page, this is Post Graduate Scholarship.

Dr. Gopeesingh: This is Post Graduate Scholarship, this is not GATE.

Hon. Garcia: Madam Chairman, the Member is a bit confused, I can understand why.

Mr. Imbert: Always.

Dr. Gopeesingh: My brain is as alert as ever.

Hon. Garcia: He is confused. [*Crosstalk*]

3.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 005.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, line Item 003 under (g), following up on the Member for Caroni East. You indicated for 003 that there were no applications for scholarships for full pay study leave for teachers. I am asking, if there are requests, would the hon. Minister consider in light of the fact there is no allocation?

Hon. Garcia: If there are requests for?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Requests for scholarships, for full study leave for teachers?

Hon. Garcia: In keeping with our operations, certainly we will consider it. That does not mean that at this point I am making a definite statement that we are going to grant it. We will give it active consideration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 74 and 75; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 204.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, 74.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 204 to 207; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 207.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister; thank you PS and other representatives of the Ministry of Education.

Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, \$263,953,450.

Madam Chairman: Members, we go to page 157. I will now invite the Attorney General to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs is now a combined ministerial entity, pursuant to the Government's policy for merger of Government Ministries in an effort to achieve cost saving measures.

As is the case, the Office of the Attorney General conducts a range of affairs prescribed properly under *Gazette* and also pursuant to constitutional roles, in the civil law, the criminal law and a number of entities that are supervised by the

Office of the Attorney General—there are 15 in total—and also as coordinate function for courts of superior record. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 23 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$263,953,450 for Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, page 157, sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Attorney General, there is a reduction under Item 23 of Salaries and Direct Charges, a reduction of \$17 million from the \$27 million in 2017. What is the explanation for that?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. I thank the hon. Member for hitting the nail on the head. This particular reduction you would see actually has a ripple effect. If you were to turn to page 160, you would see a new Head called the Criminal Law Department. It is under Head 009, and you will see that there is provided some \$18,657,000. What we sought to do is, in view of the importance of the Office of the DPP, we have, for the first time, created a new Head to govern and perhaps provide the gap between a sort of a semi-autonomous understanding between the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the DPP, and therefore you would see reductions across a number of areas, all of which flow into this new Head 009.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Did this need any type of parliamentary intervention to create this new department?

Hon. Al-Rawi: No, Sir. The Criminal Law Division falls under the ambit of the Attorney General's Office and has for years. What has gone on is that they have been stymied in their operation because moneys were fungible, insofar as they were pooled into one pot. By doing a disaggregation this way, it really signals out the importance of the Office of the DPP from the AG's perspective.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So these would be basically payment for salaries for officers of the DPP?

Hon. Al-Rawi: All of the Head Items under the new Head 009, across the various Sub-Heads, Minor Equipment, et cetera, are captured there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks for the explanation.

Mr. Charles: Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, 2016, \$64,000, Revised Estimates 2017, \$60,000, and it has not been increased. Are there new Cabinet committees established or there is an increase in pay to existing?

Hon. Al-Rawi: No. What happened was, you recall that we had merged the two ends of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General's Office, so the harmonization has now really been brought to bear. So there are no new committees per se, and this is just really bringing it to account.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Law Commission.

Mr. Charles: Item 06.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached that as yet, but—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Under 02, remuneration—

Madam Chairman: We are under Item 002, Law Commission. You are on page 158? Yes, Remuneration to Board Members? Okay, sure.

Mr. Charles: Can the Minister explain the increase of \$130,000?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Again, it is just really to bring the sums to book. So there has been no de facto or de jure change, it was really just a matter of applying the correct ranges and salaries to this across the board, so it is the sum that fits the purpose.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 009, Criminal Law Department; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 161; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Lee: To the Attorney General, line Item 16. I want to take line Items 16 and 22 together, Madam Chair, to the Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Mr. Lee: 2017 estimate was \$27.5 million in Contract Employment, line Item 16, but the expenditure for 2017 was \$40.9 million, a very substantial increase there. Could the Attorney General account for what was that over budgeted amount?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Well, actually it was the sum brought to book at the mid-year review, so the original estimate that you would see at 2017 of 27.5 was underestimated, and in an effort to maintain full employment in this end of the Ministry, at the mid-year we sought the appropriation of further sums of money. You recalled that the Attorney General's Office was one of those, and Legal Affairs, and therefore, this represents the ability to keep on staff 1,062 bodies, in particular, 142 legal staff at permanent basis and 98 at contract, and in the non-legal staff, temporary at 434, contract at 242 and short-term at 144 bodies.

Mr. Lee: Follow-up question to the same line Item 16, Attorney General. I have to go back to 2016, actual was \$28 million. The estimate for 2017 was \$27 million. The question I have to ask, are these new hires in 2017 mid-term review?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. No they are not. In fact, if you were to claw back the actual number of bodies in 2015, there were 1,142 bodies. In 2016, there were 1,132 bodies and, in 2017, there were 1,062 bodies. What happened was, we lost 165 people in 2016 as a result of the phenomenon now referred to as ghost gangs, persons who lacked qualifications. There was an inability to trace their employment status, there was no physical presence or attendance at work. Twelve persons were offered long-term contracts and therefore they moved from that particular position, and at the Attorney General's end, no persons were terminated. So this represents the value for money figures as they were cleaned up.

Mr. Lee: Help me clarify, Attorney General. I am just trying to look at the numbers here. If you say there is no increase in employment or bodies for 2017 mid-year review, but the actual salaries for 2016 was \$28 million, what accounted for—is it new salaries or—

Hon. Al-Rawi: It was the merger of the two Ministries.

Mr. Lee: Or, the merger of the two Ministries. Also line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, would that also account for that?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Item 23, Minister. Fees—do these fees relate to external legal advice or do they relate to the auditors who are completing the audit? And I have a follow-up question depending on your answer.

Hon. Al-Rawi: The fees represented there are the total fees at the Ministry end. I actually have a breakdown of the fees here. The actual amount identified

here, you would notice in 2016 we started with \$68-odd million; in 2017 we went to \$50 million. We were at \$47 million as the revised estimate, and now at 2018 we have gone down to \$40 million.

That actual amount of \$50 million will in fact have been spent by the year end. It represents a payment of \$38-odd million to external entities, specifically for the DPP's office. So roughly \$40 million of the \$50 million was spent at the DPP's office in specialized work that the DPP is funding, which we put in priority to the AG's office, and the AG's office itself spent approximately \$10 million, and of that \$10 million we started clearing arrears. So we cleared \$1.43 million of arrears of inherited fees and, in essence, we then spent roughly \$8 million for the year in external fees, which represents approximately 6 per cent of the year on year spending of my predecessors.

So we have managed to drop the spend on external fees by 94 per cent on local attorneys, by using the Solicitor General's and Chief State Solicitor's Offices more efficiently.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister state if the audits that are being conducted, if the moneys were allocated from this sum?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Again, no I would say. Let me put that clearly. There are audits at the DPP's Office in particular in relation to the Clico matter that are funded under the \$40-odd million that the DPP's Office has spent, so there would be sums included there. Are you referring to audits under the current investigative climate?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Hon. Al-Rawi: There are some audit sums, yes, Sir.

Mr. Charles: If that is the case, could you indicate who are the auditors and the sums paid to them?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Just give me a moment, I actually have it here. It is PricewaterhouseCoopers and Ernst & Young. The Ernst & Young total spent was \$14,196.32, and the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) sum spent was \$340,267.50 spread across two particular matters involving again a linkage into criminal investigations and not necessarily civil investigations.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister state the agencies, Ministries, state enterprises that are being audited by these audit companies?

Hon. Al-Rawi: I would prefer not to. It is the subject of ongoing investigation and litigation.

Mr. Imbert: Just let me come in here. You should really have asked this question when the Ministry of Finance was being examined. We have a figure of \$50 million for special audits of state enterprises.

Mr. Charles: So you are not prepared to say which agencies are being audited?

Hon. Al-Rawi: It would be improper for me to disclose too prematurely.

Mr. Imbert: But the Ministry of Finance will be auditing all?

Mr. Charles: May I just ask—you say it would be improper—

Hon. Al-Rawi: At this stage.

Mr. Charles:—but an audit is an audit. It gives you a basis for determining whether things were done wrongly in it.

Hon. Al-Rawi: I will draw the distinction between an audit by an auditor for the purposes of section 66 of the Constitution provisions, as opposed to an audit for corruption or for other matters. For instance, at the EMBD and other areas where there were massive allegations of corruption and significant misbehaviour in public office, et cetera. So those matters, some of them are now in the public domain and there is a lot more to come as well. So it would be premature to speak to the litigation and criminal investigation side of it just yet.

Mr. Charles: Well, the other side that is not criminal and litigation, would you care to give us any info?

Hon. Al-Rawi: The other side we have no part of. The section 66 Auditor General issues fall under the Auditor General's Head or the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Charles: Could you tell us how many audits have been completed, or is that premature at this stage?

Hon. Al-Rawi: That has no business under the Attorney's General Office, Sir, sorry. You mean, audits under the section 66 route?

Mr. Charles: That are being conducted by the Auditor General's Department.

Hon. Al-Rawi: That is not my Head, Sir.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

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Madam Chairman: Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. AG, I am using lines 12, Materials and Supplies, 16, Contract Employment, Other Contracted Services, 28, and 22. I am linking all these to ask you one question. I am seeing all these, no allocation. We have no allocation for 12, 16—

Hon. Al-Rawi: There is an allocation, it is just under a different Head.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The question I am asking, is it then that at one time we used to get deeds maybe in four weeks, and I am looking at all the decreases.

Hon. Al-Rawi: But there is no decrease here, Ma'am. The explanation is that all of these have now moved. As we have merged the Attorney General's Office and Legal Affairs into one Ministry, all of this bracketed 004 has now moved across under General Administration under 001. So it is all provided for.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Under Legal Affairs?

Hon. Al-Rawi: This Head 004, Legal Affairs, is now merged into General Administration, Head 001.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay, I will ask it then.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution; Item 009, Criminal Law Department; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Under 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Hon. Minister, can you advise on line Item 04, if Other Minor Equipment includes recorders, SIM cards and phones?

Hon. Al-Rawi: I fail to understand an iota of logic in that question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is either it includes it or not, Minister.

Hon. Al-Rawi: The heading is Minor Equipment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I do not know. I am asking. I do not know what other line Item I would find it under.

Hon. Al-Rawi: I cannot even identify a scintilla of logic in that question.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Law Commission. Member for Caroni East, is your hand up?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs, page 168; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 009, Criminal Law Department, page 169; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. AG, I am looking at 01, Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, and the estimate of \$28 million. Does this allocation include payments for attorneys, both civil and criminal?

Hon. Al-Rawi: The Legal Aid and Advisory Advice Authority is regulated by statute. The primary purpose under law is for exactly that. Why would it be anything else but that?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: How many attorneys?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sorry, I do not want to be pejorative. Forgive me, Member for Oropouche West, I did not mean to come across that way, but it is just it was a little obvious. I was trying to understand.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: That is okay. I know you do not want to be supercilious here. *[Laughter]*

Hon. Al-Rawi: That is a very nice word, Member for Oropouche West. That is a lovely word. The number of attorneys on staff, just give me a moment. Regrettably, I do not have it on hand. If you want I can look for it for you, but it depends upon the number of matters that actually go, so it is a moving target. It would be on a needs be basis. There is a pre-approved panel of attorneys that are actually selected, and then matters are assigned. So it is a number which is constantly in flux.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I am not sure if you could answer this, hon. AG, but is there any intention or plan to increase the payments with respect to criminal attorneys, because sometimes criminal matters take one month, murders especially?

Hon. Al-Rawi: There are two things that drive the answer to that. Firstly, that there was an interpretation summons recently put in court on the part of the Law

Association and other persons as to the application for the understanding behind how attorneys should be paid on the maximum end of \$30,000 per matter or not. It was related to the experience in the Dana Seetahal excursion in the matters that she handled.

That judgment is currently being further considered, and that also ties into the second limb which is the reform that we are doing for legal aid and advice. We are proposing to build out a national centre where we morph the Legal Aid Authority into a public defenders department. We are far advanced on that. It does not involve legislation per se as it is currently formulated, it is a structural change. And so with those two limbs in gear, it may very well be that that is the consideration and it is under active watch.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, on the same line Item, 01, Legal Aid. Would you be able to advise how many persons access legal aid and how many cases were successfully defended? You do not have to give me now.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure, we can get that for you. I actually have it on my computer but, unfortunately, not printed out.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, we are at 170? I just missed it.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Page 170, yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Police Complaints Authority, 01. Hon. AG, how many complaints we have thus far at the PCA.

Hon. Al-Rawi: That is the subject of their annual report and they have reported, and it is laid in Parliament.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Do you have a—

Hon. Al-Rawi: I do not. It is submitted to Parliament pursuant to its obligations.

Mr. Charles: A follow-up question on Police Complaints Authority. That \$700,000, I think the person in charge of the Police Complaints Authority has complained about resources, staffing and empowered. Is this \$700,000 likely to alleviate the kinds of problems that he has?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Hopefully so. It is a combination of better arrangement and utilization of facilities. For instance, some of it will come about by way of legislative amendments which we hope to bring in the coming weeks concerning the PCA; and, secondly, just by the sheer fact of doing more with less.

Mr. Charles: So what is this \$700,000 going to do?

Hon. Al-Rawi: It will provide additional funding to them.

Madam Chairman: Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head, 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 66; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 66 and 67.

Mr. Lee: To the hon. Attorney General, line Item 018, Strengthening Information Management of the Registrar General's Department; \$50 million was allocated in 2017, 2.5 was spent, and I guess the balance of \$30 million, which is an IDB loan—Could the Attorney General state what is the status of the strengthening in 2017, and what are the plans for 2018 to spend that?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure, thank you, hon. Member. This is one of the major points of activity at the Legal Affairs end of the Ministry. We have road mapped the work to be performed, so we are digitizing all of the records at the Registry. We have finished the records on the—as you would know, there are two types of registration instruments. There is the Real Property Ordinance and there is what we call the old law of title instruments.

We have done the RPO, the Real Property Ordinance digitization from 1970 upwards, and that is complete. We are now doing the pre-1970 records. What we have done is we have processed mapped out approximately 470 deeds under the old law system, and having then processed, mapped them out, we are now in a position, having retained a consultant, put on board more bodies to do scanning, et cetera. We are now in a process of working the arrangement forward.

It will have to be supplemented, because we are accelerating five years of work into one, and we have come up with conservative estimates to complete the digitization of approximately those 500,000 deeds, so that we can have a fully digitized registry, which would, of course, do two things: improve the ease of doing business but, more particularly, allow for the identification of fraud and evasion at the Registry. So this is a huge and very important project that has the utmost priority of the Attorney General's Office.

Mr. Lee: When do you feel that this project will be completed?

Hon. Al-Rawi: The project itself, both that which is already approved under the IDB side which is the RPO side of it, we are hoping in the next 18 months to be far advanced, if not complete. But the other side of it, we are hoping to complete

it within a 12-month period from start. It is of utmost importance, and it anchors into the follow the money transactions.

If I can just be permitted one last word on this. It is revolutionary, ground-breaking and has the potential to crack the back of criminality in this country.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Singh: Thank you for the desk pounding. I am dealing with, on page 67, Item 005, under Public Buildings, Establishment of a Chaguanas District Office. Could the hon. Attorney General explain what is this?

3.40 p.m.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. It is tied in to the legal aid end, so it is for the district office for the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority which is why you would see a relatively modest sum there; it is meant as a satellite receiving office for the Legal Aid Authority.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 003 on page 67, Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Refurbishment of Magistrates' Courts.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We do not see any allocation whatsoever at all—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Because we have taken it under the Judiciary's heading instead.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So when we come to Judiciary—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—we will get an explanation for it?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes. And that work has, in fact, commenced and it may very well need to be supplemented as we work out the value-for-money questions there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When we come to there, we will—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. To the Attorney General, page 68. I want to take line Items 012, 013 and maybe part of 014, about the DPP's—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Lee:—Outfitting of Accommodation. Based on the legislation that you have brought to Parliament over the past 12 months or so, and it talked a lot about improving the human resource capacity and the office structure of the DPP, I see very small allocations here of \$500,000, and then during the course of 2015, the only major work I am assuming that would have been done in the DPP was in Tobago of \$2.3 million. Could you explain what is really happening with the DPP—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Absolutely. Apart from—

Mr. Lee:—or is it just talk?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Far from talk, my friend. Let me put it into context for you. Firstly, you would have seen the creation of a new Sub-Item, Head 009, for the Office of the DPP.

Secondly, you would have seen that we took 90 per cent of our legal fees and we prioritized it to the Office of the DPP. Those two are a first in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and demonstrate the commitment of a Government that is serious about the Office of the DPP.

Thirdly, it is in the public domain that we have improved the staff complement of the DPP by factors never experienced before.

Fourthly, the DPP is currently sitting upon two very important matters which he will no doubt bring to fruition shortly. Firstly, the first limb, the appointment of officers by way of promotion in the Office of the DPP. We are awaiting the DPP's sign-off on those positions. As soon as they are signed off, the staff complement, again, improves and that is entirely in the DPP's hand. We remind him approximately every Monday, every week, of every month.

And secondly, it is in the outfitting of the offices of the DPP. The three offices now provided for the DPP are awaiting his signature in respect of the south office and the north office. The buildings have been allocated, their outfitting has been

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arranged. We are awaiting the DPP's sign-off of those plans. We did receive the sign-off of the DPP's office for Tobago, and the Tobago department has, in fact, had significant advance.

The Property Management Division is currently in final negotiations for a certain bit of those aspects. There is more. There is also the fact that we have introduced a computerized environment for the first time for case management in the DPP's Office, and the advancement of case management officers in conjunction with the Criminal Procedure Rules. Again, this is ground-breaking, never-been-done-before attention to the Office of the DPP, so this is far from just talk.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Attorney General, Madam PS, and the other technocrats.

Head 03: Judiciary, \$336,636,750.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, we will be sharing this Head, the Minister of Finance and I. In his desire to create the autonomy for the Judiciary, the Minister of Finance is deeply involved in this exercise.

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

Hon. Imbert: I will defer on that to the Attorney General.

Madam Chairman: Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: [*Laughter*] Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago needs little introduction insofar as the separation of powers principle is involved. But this year the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago has excellent, ground-breaking and revolutionary news in its achievements which find themselves in these Heads of Expenditure in particular in the operationalization of reforms at the criminal side of the equation with the Criminal Procedure Rules and with the legislative amendments that they have supported via the Parliament's introduction of Bills debated.

And secondly, by achieving a first of its kind in the introduction of the Family and Children Division of the court which is an in-tandem exercise between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Office of the Attorney General with the Judiciary. Put into simple form, the Judiciary in conjunction with the

Government's very aggressive and accomplished legislative agenda will have passed the Family and Children Division Bill; implemented all protocols; secured the location of two buildings to function as courts in Trinidad and Tobago; amended 18 pieces of laws; coordinated with international agencies and local agencies; and have received approximately 13,000 applications for persons to fill positions.

To have achieved all of that in a 15- to 16-month period has never happened in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, and for that the Government wishes to express its profound gratitude to the hon. Chief Justice and to the Judiciary for a job most well done. Thank you.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$336,636,750 for Head 03, Judiciary is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Head 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 11.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, Judiciary - Trinidad, page 11; Item 002, Judiciary - Tobago, page 12; Item 003, Judiciary - Family Court, page 13; Item 004, Judiciary - Children Court, page 13. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 14; Item 001, Judiciary - Trinidad; Item 002, Judiciary - Tobago, pages 14 and 15; Item 003, Judiciary - Family Court, pages 16 and 17; Item 004 Judiciary - Children Court, page 17. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, 04 Judiciary, line Item 08, \$3 million. It is a new line Item, new Head, sorry. Where is the location of this Children Court and the rent and—where is the location of the Children Court?

Hon. Al-Rawi: They are—

Hon. Imbert: Opposite the Queen's Park Oval.

Mr. Lee: Queen's Park Oval.

Hon. Al-Rawi: There are two Family Courts, two Family and Children Courts. There is one in Fyzabad and there is one in St. Clair on Elizabeth Street. So those are the two offices. One is referred to as our south court and the other one is our north court. You would note in all the Items that we have just traversed, I should point out for the record, that these are brand-new Items for children and for family division; this is a first in the budgetary cycle for Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: Could I just clarify, are you on page 13?

Mr. Lee: No. Page 17. Yeah. We have passed 13 already.

Hon. Imbert: So you are on Goods and Services?

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. So one is there by the Oval and the other one in Fyzabad.

Mr. Lee: Correct. And the other question is: When would we see these courts opening?

Hon. Al-Rawi: The Fyzabad court is ahead of the Port of Spain court right now. We were hoping to have them operationalized for the month of October. As a result of some budgetary constraints, we were not able to have that done, but we are certainly hoping for openings this year in both locations.

Mr. Lee: So we do not have a time?

Hon. Al-Rawi: This year. We have November and December this year. This will be a landmark event for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Lee: You have a lot of landmarks there.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir. Very much so, for the first ever.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001 Judiciary - Trinidad; Item 003, Judiciary - Family Court; Item 004, Judiciary - Children Court; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 19; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, we are at page 4. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 4 to 5; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 190; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 190.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Head 62: Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, \$371,603,900.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts has a mandate to build resilient, culturally rich communities. Our focus is citizen-centred development of our human capital upon which the strength of our nation rests. To this end, the work of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts involves programmes focused on policy formation; skills training; artist development; community entrepreneurship; community and performance infrastructure; immersion in culture and the arts; personal development; support for community initiatives; heritage preservation and support and development of the cultural tourism product.

The staff and executives at the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts continue to work assiduously to do more with less and deliver quality programming to the deserving citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 62 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$371,603,900 for Head 62, Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts 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 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 317. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 317. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, with an allocation of \$100,000. Could the Minister indicate at this point, how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees fall under this particular Vote, and if she would also indicate what is the mandate of these Cabinet-Appointed Committees?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairman, there is one Cabinet-appointed committee, the Artist Registry and that committee is mandated to be a registrar and a repository for all the artists registered in the country, and that gives them their bona fides and it also runs the Mentoring by the Masters Programme.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you. Minister, could you also indicate what are the number of persons on this one Cabinet-appointed committee?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Twelve persons.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister just provide some kind of explanation as it relates to 01? What is the reason for the \$1.3 million or approximately \$1.4 million increase?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have staff that have to come on and that provision is made for the staff that comes on.

Mr. Indarsingh: How many staff will come on, Minister, and what is the process that this staff will be recruited by?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: All staff are recruited by advertisement in the paper and they go through the normal processes.

Mr. Indarsingh: And how many?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Also through Service Commissions. We do not have a number at this point in time.

Mr. Indarsingh: Would you be so kind to probably provide in writing the numbers and provide a breakdown in terms of the classification?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Under General Administration the number of staff to be hired?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, yeah. What type?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: If the Member so requests.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I so request.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Community Development Division. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 08. Could you indicate at this point what is the current complement or the total number of staff at the Ministry and how many vacancies there are with respect to on the establishment?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have 514 members of staff and we have 257 vacant positions. Sorry. Established officers, we have 183 vacant positions.

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Madam Chairman: Item 006, Item 007, Item 008, page 318; Item 008; Item 009, page 319. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, under 05, Goods and Services and 02, with Telephones, 05.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached Sub-Head—you are under Sub-Head 02?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. This is where you are, Member for Oropouche West?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I am looking at 05, Telephones, and \$720,000. Could you give a reason for such a high bill or allocation?—\$720,000

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This is the bill for the entire Ministry and we have, as I would have stated, 514 staff. We have over 21 offices country-wide, and I do not think that this is an exorbitant bill.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: What is the Ministry's policy with respect to the use of phones when officers go abroad?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: There is a government policy for the use of cell phones and we comply with that policy.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment. We see an increase of \$1.3 million in this particular area, a total estimate of \$9,780,000 with 6.7 having been spent in 2016. One, can you indicate to us how many persons are on contract employment in the Ministry; which areas you intend to increase with this allocation of \$9.7 million, two; and three, whether or not there are existing contracts that are up for renewal in this financial year; and how that will impact on this in terms of whether or not those contracts will be continued or whether or not these will be additional persons being brought in?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have a total of 454 contract positions at the Ministry. The increase in that Vote is to satisfy the procurement unit, sorry, which has to come on—a total of 13 persons. We also have a number of positions being filled mainly at the National Academy for Performing Arts, both the north and south campus, and that is to be able to satisfy those needs.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, line Item 09, Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment, an increase by \$176,000. If you can give us an idea with respect to the rent/lease part, at least, how these funds will be utilized and which particular locations are you looking at for such an increase?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. That Vote covers our photocopiers and all other equipment like that across the divisions. And if you would notice, Member, in 2016 the expenditure was just shy of \$500,000, it went down to 400 in 2017, and so the increase really is just an estimate of what we will use, it is not necessary that we will use all of that, but it is just an estimate given for what we will use.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Similarly, Minister, line Item 10, Office Stationery and Supplies, an increase of almost a quarter of a million dollars, which seems to be a steep increase in this particular area. What would have accounted for such an allocation?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Again, the same estimate applies. This is an estimate as was seen; the entire allocation was not utilized for that in the last fiscal, and so this is just an estimate as to what we will need in the rest. If we do not use all, it just remains lower than it should be.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, then would you agree with me, if you look at some of these Items, Office Stationery and Supplies on line Item 10, 09, Rent/Lease and so on, if we were to take your logic that some of these moneys will not be utilized and these are really estimates therefore, why are we seeing significant decreases in other substantial areas where these areas are actually seeing increases?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Which line Item are you on?

Mr. Padarath: The logic does not follow.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Which line Item are you on?

Mr. Padarath: 09 and 10.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: But those are not decreases. You have mentioned decreases. Which line Item are you referring to with the decreases?

Mr. Padarath: When we go along, I will raise it.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Please do.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Community Development Division. We are at page 321; Item 005. Member for Princes Town, are you aware?

Mr. Padarath: I am on 328, the brought forward, Madam, from page 319 on to 320.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So I will ask you to stick with us, please.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: You are still under General Administration?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Item number?

Mr. Padarath: Line Item 21 under 001, General Administration brought forward on to page 320.

Madam Chairman: Your question.

Mr. Padarath: Yes. Madam, if we look at line Item 19, there is an increase with respect to Official Entertainment. Could the hon. Minister indicate what anticipation in terms of Official Entertainment we are looking at for line Item 19 to warrant an increase of \$700,000 if we are looking at value for money and saving and all of that in the area of Official Entertainment.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, through you. We are not looking at any particular increase, it is an estimation given if there is to—if we have to, in any case, entertain official guests. As you would notice, we are very focused on value for money and ensuring that we spend money very wisely. You would notice the spend in 2017 was a very low \$20,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you. Minister, line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings, an increase of \$425,000. If you would be kind enough to indicate to us which buildings are we referring to under this Vote Item?

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Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have offices at Jerningham Avenue, as well as St. Ann's that require work done on their sewer systems and so on and this is to cater for that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, I am on line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, an increase of \$100,000. If the Minister would be kind enough to indicate over the last fiscal year what were the official overseas travel that occurred in her Ministry, and for the purposes? And if we can get a similar approach with respect to fiscal year 2017/2018?

Madam Chairman: You want it in respect of 2017/2018?

Mr. Padarath: Last fiscal year and what projections are there for 2018?

Madam Chairman: And what are planned for this year?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: There were three overseas trips by the Ministry, two were taken by myself, one by the PS, and for 20—three, four because it was CARIFESTA, there was one to Bahamas, and there was one to Abu Dhabi to a parliamentary conference, and the PS took one to Paraguay; those were the four that were covered under this Vote. And for 2018, there are no trips planned at this time.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam Minister, line Items 37 and 43, and it is something that I have raised continuously. Again, if you can provide explanation, I see a heavy increase of \$355,000 for Janitorial Services, Security Services, a quarter of a million dollar increase. Are these for outstanding bills, and/or whether or not these are private service providers or whether or not this is MTS?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Some would be to pay outstanding bills. We have quite a number; with 21 offices you would imagine that we have quite a number of service providers, MTS being one of them, and there are various numbers of janitorial services and security that perform services at our offices.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you. Madam, in that case would you be able to provide us with the list of service providers including MTS and the values of those existing contracts?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We can provide that in writing.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, \$270,000 increase. Could the hon. Minister indicate at this point what plans and programmes are being set up in the Ministry that would account for such an increase of over a quarter of a million dollars in the area of Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

4.10 p.m.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This Vote covers all of the Ministry's advertisement for contract positions, various bulletins and so that we have to cover. Again, Member, the allocation is made, and every effort is made within the Ministry to ensure that we get value for money as much as possible, so the allocation is there, it is an estimate.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you. Minister, line Item 99, Employee Assistance Programme, I just really wanted to have an idea of how many employees have accessed this particular Vote?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Hon. Member, we do not have the actual numbers available to the entire Ministry. If the Member would like it in writing, we can provide that.

Mr. Padarath: Sure, that will be helpful.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister just informed this meeting in relation to 22, Short-Term Employment, \$1,710,000. How many persons will be employed via this line Item, and how they are utilized throughout her Ministry?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have 74 short-term employees that appear on that Vote. They span across the National Theatres Company, the National Academy for Performing Arts, both north and south campus, and that is being regularized at the moment by the executives of the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Community Development Division; Item 005, Mediation Centres. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 08 line Item. Just to ask a couple questions: First of all, how many centres are there and the locations? And what are the success rates in terms of how many persons have actually accessed the Mediation centres?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Member, insofar as this deals with rent/lease, I do not know if the success rates fall under this line Item. I can give you the number of centres that we have around the country—Mediation Centres. Just one minute. [*Hon. Minister peruses document*] So we have centres established in Port of Spain, San Juan, Cunupia, Couva, Point Fortin, Tunapuna, Arima and Penal-Debe.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is there any intention to establish more?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Yes, we do have more that have been approved by Cabinet, and we would do our best to see if they can be established on a phased basis.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and can you identify where those proposed sites will be?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: At this time we do not have any of those that are actually on the way to being established, so I would not want to give an undertaking that we are establishing in any particular area.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and is it that these Mediation Centres were located based on a need in those areas?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: They were located to service the entire country, so they were located all over in different districts.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, my question leads into probably what—

Madam Chairman: What line Item?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, line Item 66—leads into probably the issues raised by the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla and expanded on in answer by the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. Line 66, Minister, an increase of \$147,000 under this particular Vote, and my question really—and you sort of pre-empted that, by speaking about the expansion of these centres. Could you give us then an idea, because then the success rates will really follow in terms of what the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla was asking, that if we are expanding—as you have indicated—

Madam Chairman: Member, one minute, is 66 you said?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Madam Chairman: This is Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Ma'am. I am speaking about increase here, and in terms of the increasing role of these additional centres, I am trying to raise with the hon. Minister. Whether or not this will cater for those that we are seeing, the increase here under this particular Vote in tandem with what is to come, or these are for the existing centres?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This Vote really deals with the thrust of the mediation department to do community empowerment sessions in conflict resolution, anger management, and so on throughout the country, as well as sensitization series which would indicate to our citizens what services are available under the mediation division.

Mr. Padarath: So therefore, Madam Minister, the increase that we are seeing here for \$147,000, it could be that with the expansion of these mediation centres that the allocation here, the increase, could really account for these other centres that would be forthcoming over the next—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, this increase is to deal with the empowerment series as well as the sensitization series that they are undergoing right now.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, same line Item 66. When you spoke about the empowerment, if you are empowering persons—I am coming back again—what is the success rate like? Can you indicate, through the Empowerment Programme?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I do not know what success rate the Empowerment Programme should have. This programme it goes out, and people come to the programme in order to learn things about conflict resolution, anger management, and so on.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: In other words, Chair, through you, do you have a monitoring and evaluation programme? How would you be able to determine if this Empowerment Programme is in fact impacting? I mean, you are having—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That is determined by the number of persons that would access mediation services, the programme itself, over the year.

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. So, would you determine therefore if there is a mediation programme that has been followed through, would you say that if there is a return of that particular individual, because there is a recurrent problem, would you determine that the first mediation was in fact not successful? How do you measure it?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, I am not sure that this question falls to this line Item. I think I have explained sufficiently that this line Item deals with two specific programmes, and others of the mediation department, which involves empowerment series, anger management, conflict resolution, and also sensitization series, encouraging persons to use the mediation division and their services as an alternative to the courts.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 66, the hon. Minister indicated that this Vote will be used to encourage persons through sensitization, et cetera, to utilize these services. Minister, really, for my own information, can you really give us an idea of which specific locations you had given in the past few minutes in terms of those where the centres are identified? In terms of where do you see the highest participation rates?

Madam Chairman: This is under conferences?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Is this under—again, Madam Chairperson, I am very glad about the interest in the mediation division, but I feel as though there are other avenues to get that type of information. I also remind the Member that I would have sent letters to each office asking them to engage in the series. *[Interruption]* The sensitization series. So, maybe there is another mechanism by which they can get the information they are seeking. I do not see it ties to this line Item.

Mr. Padarath: I shall be grateful.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we are moving on. Item 006, Best Village. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma'am. Line Item 43, the issue of Security Services, an increase of \$50,000. Again, under Best Village, whether or not this is MTS, or whether or not this is private security? And if it is private security, if we can get the details with respect to the service providers and the values of these contracts?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We would have to provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing under Best Village. With respect to an increase of \$115,000, could the hon. Minister indicate with respect to the Best Village Programme, why such a large increase?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, under this Vote comes the marketing of the Best Village Programme and, as the Member may know, \$115,000 increase, when we are speaking about doing ads, doing social media thrust and so on, really is not a large increase. But we are intending to push the Best Village Programme a lot more into areas that do not traditionally participate in the Best Village Programme. We see that programme as a very important one for our young people in engaging them in positive activity. So we want to ensure that we allocate just a bit more here to be able to do more in pushing this programme across the country.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, is it then that through the Best Village Programme over the next year we will not only see additional target areas in terms of geography, but we will also see additional areas in terms of talent and so on?

Madam Chairman: This is for Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Again, the question is a little bit tangential. However, Member, thorough discussion of the categories of Best Village cannot be had under this line Item, but we can have that on another forum.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. Minister, as you raised it in some form, I was just trying to get an idea of whether these are some of the plans of the Ministry that we will see forthcoming.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: You can certainly raise it under another line Item—

Mr. Imbert: Is this the correct line Item?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, it is.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, it is not. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: I did not think so. I think you are trying something there.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Arts and Multi-Culturalism; Item 008, Culture Division; Item 009, National Diversity; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 326; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development Division; Item 005, Mediation Centres; Item 006, Best Village; Item 007, Arts and Multi-Culturalism; Item 008, Culture Division; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, line Item 06. I just want to ask the hon. Minister, does this allocation take into account the operationalization of the Plum Mitan Community Centre?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, it does not. This is an open Vote where community centres in need would be able to get assistance with their light bills and their operational activities. So, the Plum Mitan Centre, not directly for the Plum Mitan Centre, but the Plum Mitan Centre, we expect to be operationalized in fiscal 2018, and therefore any assistance to that centre in terms of their operating expenditure is carded for there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town. Member for Fyzabad. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 05, Contribution to Community-Based Organizations, there is an allocation of \$7.3 million for 2018, an increase of 2.3, almost \$2.4 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate, with respect to these Community-Based Organizations, over the last financial year, those who would have benefited, and whether or not these are standing Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or whether these are based on applications, actual applications?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Notwithstanding the name given to this line Item, this line Item really deals with the programming of the Community Development Division, specifically the Community Education Programme, the community development days, community festivals, the craft markets, and so on. So, this does not deal with that kind of funding that you are referring to.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. And if we look at line Item 15, Madam Minister, Contribution to Cultural Organizations, an allocation of \$8 million with a decrease of \$1 million. Again, this particular Vote, whether or not these are standing contributions, or whether or not these are based on actual applications, and what would have accounted for the decrease in this particular area?

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Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: These are based on applications, and the decrease in this area would be as a result of our constrained economic circumstances, and that is how it would be.

Mr. Padarath: Can we ask the hon. Minister to provide, Madam, through you, on line Item 15, those who would have applied over the last financial year, together with those who would have been successful and how much was actually granted to these organizations?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Certainly, we would provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 19, the National Museum and Art Gallery, an increase of \$1 million—and I do not mean to be facetious about this at all. But when you look at the allocation of \$3.5 million under this particular line Item, could the hon. Minister indicate what would have accounted for this particular increase, whether or not it would have to do with any additional pieces of art that are being purchased at this time?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No.

Mr. Padarath: No. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Minister, with regard to Item 04, Original Complexes, could you provide, perhaps in writing if you want, the complexes and the allocations for 2017 and the projection for 2018?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This deals with the staff and the operational costs for the complexes. You want for all 17 centres, you want these?

Dr. Bodoë: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Imbert: You do not really want that.

Dr. Bodoë: Well, I actually—

Mr. Imbert: You really want the fund, you do not really want that, all complexes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: All complexes—the staff of all complexes are paid by the Ministry under that line Item, and their operational cost.

Mr. Singh: If you could put that information in writing, please.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: You want for all 17 centres, you want the breakdown that goes for each centre?

Mr. Imbert: You do not really want that.

Mr. Singh: But we will take it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West?

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 007, 09, Music Schools.

Madam Chairman: All right, we have not reached 007 as yet, but we will take you there. Item 007, Households. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Yes, Madam Chair. Item 09, Music Schools in the Community, an allocation of \$1.5 million seems to be a new project and I would like to find out the location of those Music Schools, because I am supportive of the idea.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: “Hmm mm.” It is not a new project. It has been going on for quite a number of years, and it is located in five regions around the country. We will provide it in writing to you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, line Item 08, Hosting of Cultural Camps, an increase of \$200,000 from the last financial year. Could the hon. Minister indicate which target areas we are looking at in terms of geography with respect to the hosting of these cultural camps for 2018? And, also, with respect to the last financial year, those that would have operated, the locations for those?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: These cultural camps are camps run by private persons. They apply for funding—for assistance from the Ministry, and it is a nationwide call, and the Ministry responds by vetting the camps that apply, and they happen all over the country. What it is you are requesting? So, we cannot give you for 2018, because, obviously that call has not been made.

Mr. Padarath: The list for 2017, last financial year, in terms of which particular locations these cultural camps were located in? And as we are on that as well, hon. Minister—and having said this is really pretty much a subvention to private—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, it is not a subvention, it is a grant.

Mr. Padarath: Well, as a grant, can you also indicate what the criteria for this grant is?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: When the call comes out—we can indicate for 2017 the schools that came in and the call that was made at that time for you.

Mr. Padarath: So it is free money?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Free—

Mr. Padarath: You cannot say who you give it to and what the criteria is.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: But, Member—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I indicated to you—

Madam Chairman: Member, that is not correct. The Member said she would provide the listing.

Hon. Gadsby-Dolly: For 2017.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know a question was asked on number 09, Music Schools in the Community. I see it is a new Item. I would like to understand whether these are schools that will be set up by the Ministry, or these are existing schools, and how are they going to access this \$1.5 million if it is existing? What is the philosophy and thinking behind this please?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: These are schools that are existing. Some of them are pan yards that are existing, and in five locations around the country where classes are offered in music literacy, both in steel pan as well as they have one instrument that goes with that, and they learn that, and then they do a performance, and that is what happens. It has happened for the last five years, I believe. So, that is how it is organized.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Is the Minister aware that there are other music schools that deal with other types of music? For example, East Indian music, and there are music schools which equally need funding, and not just pan schools?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The music school in Central actually learns the pan as well as the dolak and the tabla and they perform—it is a very nice performance. I am sure they may have invited their MPs to come along, and I did not see any of their MPs there at the performance in NAPA, but it was quite lovely to hear the fusion of the steel pan along with the dolak and the tabla. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite. [*Crosstalk*]

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Dr. Rambachan: You know, there seems to be some problem with me asking that question?

Madam Chairman: No, no—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Certainly not. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Please, Members!

Dr. Rambachan: But I have no prejudice in asking the question.

Madam Chairman: Member!

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I have not shown any prejudice. I am just saying that it is a lovely fusion.

Dr. Rambachan: But as if something was wrong in asking the question. [*Interruption*] But, for example, there is the Shivnanan School of Music in Penal that hosts about 300 children a year.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Member, we are well aware that there are other music schools in the country. And as a matter of fact, we are establishing our links with the neighbourhood music schools as we want to have a closer link with them. But you asked about this programme and I explained what this programme is about. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rambachan: So this programme is specifically for pan?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, it is not.

Hon. Member: She just said no it is not.

Dr. Rambachan: Let me get my clarification, “nah”. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Charles: He is asking if it offers a diverse—

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima, I am recognizing the Member for Tabaquite. [*Interruption*] Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair, no more.

Madam Chairman: No more? Okay, so we go on. Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 09, the National Philharmonic Orchestra, an increase of \$100,000. Could the hon. Minister give us an indication of what is the state of play with respect to the National Philharmonic Orchestra? What are the future plans for the utilization of it?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The National Philharmonic Orchestra, the members are part-time. They are not full-time members of the Ministry. They play the traditional orchestra instruments, and they have been over the past few years contributing to the national landscape with respect to the classical music and the orchestra type music, and the plan for 2018 is to continue to have them do just that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, just as a follow up to the Minister. I remember last year the Member for Tabaquite enquired whether or not additional instruments were being utilized in the National Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Minister had indicated at that point that there was an attempt. Can the hon. Minister indicate what other instruments have been incorporated into the National Philharmonic Orchestra?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, I am sorry, but I do not recall that answer being “there being an attempt”. The National Philharmonic Orchestra has always had the normal chamber orchestra instruments, and that is how it remains.

Mr. Padarath: So, there is no additional components, whether it is the African drumming, or the East Indian drumming, nothing like that?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Not additionally. A philharmonic orchestra usually has certain type of instruments, and that is what it is.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, thank you. Line Item 01 under Transfers to State Enterprises, the National Commission for Self-Help Limited. An increase of 2.3, almost \$2.4 million, and I am sure that many in the national community would be particularly interested in this particular line Item, Madam Minister, with respect to all the floods that are occurring. Can the hon. Minister indicate those that would have applied during the last financial year, how many of those applications have been processed and been successful? But also we can have as well, how many actually applied for the last financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, this deals with the staffing of the National Commission for Self-Help, and they actually received at the last count \$9.6 million for 2017, and therefore the increase that is registered here

really is not so much of an increase. It is just a matter of a snapshot at that point in time. This deals with their staff.

Mr. Padarath: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, let us now go on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of Assembly*. We are at page 477; 20, Queen's Hall, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 477; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration, page 478; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007, Households; 21, Naparima Bowl, page 483; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007, Households.

We go on to 22, the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. We are at page 489. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 490; 007, Households; 008, Subsidies; 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, we are at page 137. Page 137. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 137 to 140. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 006, Museum of the City of Port of Spain, Carnival Museum. Can the hon. Minister indicate how far we have reached with this project, and what progress has been made seeing that an allocation of \$1 million is being put in place in this particular Vote for the next financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, at this time that allocation is given to refurbish the building. There are a number of areas that need refurbishment, and that is the allocation for this.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, page 138, line Item 051, Refurbishment of Queen's Hall. In 2017, you spent \$2.8 million, and we have identified you spent \$4.5 million this year. What sort of major refurbishment is going on at Queen's Hall that requires this kind of expenditure?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, as you know, Queen's Hall is one of our very seriously utilized performance spaces, and so they routinely undergo quite a number of upgrades, and they have a three-year plan which they are upgrading the seats, the audio and lighting, and various other aspects of the facility. So this would cover some of that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 044, Upgrade of Facilities at the National Auditorium. I think this is meant to be the National Academy for the Performing Arts. Yes, this particular Vote, \$1.5 million, could the hon. Minister indicate what scope of works is intended for the next financial year, and what areas were targeted in the last financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Speaker—sorry, Madam Chairperson, as you would know, the auditorium was closed in 2014 and continues to be so. Substantial works were done to be able to reopen the building and have it available for use, but there are quite a number of areas that need to be refurbished. So, for example, there was some work done on the car park to make it easier for the patrons to get into the car park, especially in the rainy season; work done on the railings to ensure that the differently-abled can get into the building as well; work done on some of the kitchen areas to bring them up to speed; some of the seating also, the stage, the audio and lights. All of those are works that are being undertaken at NAPA.

4.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 052 on page 38. I notice there is no allocation. I just wanted to know if the Establishment of the National Cultural Information System is in fact disbanded or is it put on hold.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: In light of our economic circumstances, Madam Chairman, we have, we prioritized this project. It remains important, but we have other priority projects in front of it at this point in time.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If the hon. Minister could indicate, what would this system achieve? What is the projected—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I do not have this before us.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Line Item 056, Hosting of Carifesta 2019, and it is listed as a new project of \$500,000. Does the hon. Minister envisage that there will be a variation in terms of additional sums needed for the Hosting of Carifesta beyond \$500,000?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This year we are concentrating on the Carifesta plan and the establishment of the Secretariat. That would be sufficient at this time, if more is needed it would be provided.

Mr. Padarath: So, Madam Minister, this is really for the Secretariat in putting the plans in place and this is not really the actual “hosting cost” that we will be looking at?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Certainly not, Member. Carifesta is 2019 and that cost will be dealt with in the subsequent budget.

Mr. Padarath: And therefore, if you have a plan, is your projection of what the budget will be for Carifesta 2019.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That is not under this Item.

Madam Chairman: But that is not in this budget.

Mr. Imbert: That is not in this budget; that is in next year’s budget. You are a “seer man”? You looking in the future. [*Crosstalk*]

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

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, same line Item, 056, I noticed there was an allocation in the Tobago House of Assembly. Is this the same Carifesta? Is it—?

Mr. Imbert: No, there is more than one.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, good. I just wanted—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: There is usually one Carifesta for the region. [*Crosstalk and Laughter*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So therefore, is it a duplication? This is what I am trying to find out.

Madam Chairman: Member, I am sure when we were dealing with the Tobago House of Assembly and other Heads before, we were told about the schedule, Items under the Assembly Act and what the Assembly is responsible for. And I remembered considerable issues and questions were raised about funding for these various festivals, Carifesta, et cetera, for the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I understand that, hon. Chairman. I was just wondering, you know, with the \$38 million that was assigned there, what it is that we were doing on this side, if there was you know—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I think I addressed the question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: I believe the Minister of Finance wanted to add some clarification.

Mr. Imbert: I would also make the point the allocation in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts is for the national effort. Tobago being a semi-autonomous entity would also have its own contribution and participation in Carifesta. So the two are not related. There is only one Carifesta though, they “doh” have two.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am glad to hear that. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 140; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 239; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 239 and 240. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam Chair, line Item 03, Construction of Community Centres, an allocation of \$30 million in this particular area. If the hon. Minister can indicate whether or not there are areas earmarked for these construction of the community centres and as a follow directly, 005, Refurbishment of Community Centres, an allocation there as well. If the hon. Minister can indicate which ones are being earmarked to be refurbished and constructed in the next financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairman, we are formalizing that list and as soon as we have, we will share it with the Member in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 010, Construction of a Children's Homework Centre in Carenage, identified as a new project, \$4.7 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate what process was used with respect to selecting this particular area of Carenage as opposed to any other area in Trinidad and Tobago and whether or not this will be the only one that will be constructed in this financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairman, this line Item is very specific as to Carenage. That area is an area that needs—and we all know we have quite a number of areas in this country that need attention and it is important for all children in this country to be able to have a homework centre at which they can focus on their homework. We are very glad to afford the children of Carenage that opportunity and I am certain that as funds become available other areas of the country will also benefit from homework centres and we know that there are homework centres already operating around the country and so we are concentrating this effort, this fiscal on Carenage.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, I am very happy to hear all that the hon. Minister had to say, but she dodged the main question really, which I would like a response to.

Madam Chairman: Member, what is the question you want to ask?

Mr. Padarath: How did we arrive as one new project under 010, the only construction of a homework centre will be in Carenage in the constituency of Prime Minister, Diego Martin West. What about the rest of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I dealt with it, Madam Chair—[*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: I believe the Member—

Mr. Padarath: So is it that the children of Diego Martin West are important but the rest—

Hon. Members: “Oh Lord!”

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Hon. Member: “Wheey!”

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The children all around this country are important. Just like the sports people of Siparia are very important, because there are two stadia right next to each other. [*Crosstalk*]

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Madam Chairman: Enough. The Member has answered the question. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman.

Mr. Singh: The question was asked already.

Mr. Imbert: Let me just make a general comment, please, Member for Princes Town. Member for Princes Town in this year's budget the best effort has been made to be as equitable as possible. There have been years in the past, under your administration, where not a single nail, a grain of sand, cubic metres of concrete, blade of grass was touched in my constituency. So we are being equitable as opposed to your inequity. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members, can we—Member for Caroni East, can we resume some order please. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Items 003 and 005. Can we get a listing, hon. Minister, which community centres—

Madam Chairman: 005?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That was asked.

Madam Chairman: We dealt with that already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no. I want to get the listing of—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That was asked and the commitment was made already.

Madam Chairman: That was dealt with already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay, good.

Madam Chairman: Okay, good. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Members, [*Crosstalk*] hon. Members, [*Crosstalk*] hon. Members, the question is, that the sum of \$371,603,900 for Head 62, Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 62 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

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

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, when are you giving us tea?

Madam Chairman: All right. Members, there is agreement, we are going to do Head 06 and Head 37 before we take the break. [*Crosstalk*] So Members, we will be doing Service Commissions and then Integrity Commission.

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, as agreed by both the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip, we have a change in the order of the various Heads. We will now be doing the Integrity Commission—[*Crosstalk*]—Minister of Finance, are you with us here? We will now be doing the Integrity Commission, then Service Commissions and then we will go to the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications.

Head 37: Integrity Commission, \$11,261,800.

Mr. Chairman: Head 37, Integrity Commission, \$11,261,800. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: The Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago is a creature of statute established by an Act of Parliament. It has three main purposes: to make provisions for the prevention of corruption by persons in public life by providing for public disclosure of assets and liabilities and so on; to regulate the conduct of persons exercising public functions; and to preserve and promote the integrity of public officials and institutions among other things.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$11,261,800 for Head 37, the Integrity Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 245; 001, General Administration, page 245. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: How many persons are employed at the Integrity Commission that reflects Salary and Cost of Living of \$850,000?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item for the records.

Dr. Rambachan: Line Item 01, Sir.

Hon. Imbert: The number of public officers on payroll at the Integrity Commission, 12, at this time, but there are vacancies.

Dr. Rambachan: Twelve. So this \$850,000 annually is correct?

Hon. Imbert: In these estimates, under this particular Head, this always refers to public officers on the establishment. The rest of the staff will be found under Contract Employment, Other Contracted Services, Short-Term Employment and so on. I am answering a specific question. This particular Head refers to monthly paid officers on the establishment, 12.

Dr. Rambachan: I saw it there. Sure. I saw \$6.8 million and I am just trying to be clear on what is reflected.

Hon. Imbert: The answer is 12.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I was moving to page 246 if there are no more questions there.

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached page 246 yet. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: This is just a point of clarification. Given that it is the Ministry of Finance that allocates money, and I am talking about 001, Salaries and whatnot, what steps are taken to ensure that there is an arm's length relationship between the Integrity Commission and the Ministry of Finance? [*Crosstalk*] No, it is a question.

Hon. Imbert: Well, the accounting officer at the Integrity Commission would make a request to the Budgets Division or the Permanent Secretary in the Minister of Finance for a release of funds. The Minister of Finance only gets involved in the Infrastructure Development Fund. As you may appreciate, it would be impossible for the Minister of Finance, on a daily basis to look at every single request from every single Ministry or agency in Trinidad and Tobago under Items across the board. It is impossible.

So, the Minister of Finance only gets involved with the Infrastructure Development Fund, which is projects managed by state enterprises and statutory authorities and so on. So I would not, as Minister of Finance, I would not see a request coming from the Integrity Commission, unless there is a requirement for supplementary allocation or something like that where I would have to make some sort of arrangement to give the Commission additional funds. So it is beyond arm's length. I am completely disconnected from the process.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

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Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 245. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Item 16, Contract Employment of \$6.68 million. Could we get an understanding of how many contract officers are there and if there are vacancies existing in that area?

Mr. Chairman: 001, General Administration, pages 245 and 246, and you are on line Item 16, Contract Employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, how many officers, personnel and how many vacancies, if there are, to be filled?

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that they have 14 persons on contract at this time, but they are presently making the necessary requests and arrangements to hire another 36 contract officers. If that answers your question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If there is a request for another 36 officers, where is the additional subvention for that?

Hon. Imbert: What Item are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 16, Contract Employment.

Mr. Chairman: 16, Contract Employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you said that they need 36 more, you will need subvention for it. So where is that subvention?

Hon. Imbert: I am seeing here \$6.6 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, but you said that there are 14 officers now and there is an intention to have 36 more. So is this \$6.686 being paid for the 14 officers?

Hon. Imbert: No. Obviously \$6.6 million will hire more than 14 people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, how many they hired? That is what the question is.

Hon. Imbert: The Commission has a plan to increase its complement of contract officers, so they have told me, from 14 to approximately 50.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How many are employed at the moment and—

Hon. Imbert: I just said 14 are currently employed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And I am asking you if this \$6.6 million is for the 14 or would it include the 50—36 plus 14.

Hon. Imbert: All right. I will try my best to be as clear as possible although I thought I was. The provision is for all; currently they have 14.

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Mr. Chairman: Okay, I would like to move on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And also if the hon. Minister can identify line Item 22—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 22, short-term.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I saw that there is a marked decrease. Is it that you have—

Mr. Chairman: Increase or decrease?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Decrease.

Hon. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Mr. Chairman: 22, page 246. What is the reason for the decrease, short-term? Minister.

Hon. Imbert: The intention is to move people out of short-term employment into contract employment. As has been stated by many Ministers who have come here in the last week or so, you do not want to keep people on Short-Term Employment because they do not have proper terms and conditions of employment in terms of benefits. So you always want to move people out of short-term into more permanent positions.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can the hon. Minister indicate how many persons are on short-term contract at the moment?

Hon. Imbert: Six.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 247; 01 General Administration, page 247. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, not as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. So we go to the Development Programme booklet, Consolidated Fund, page 96. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 96. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 002, can we get an appreciation of the Reform of the Integrity Commission? And if—just \$500,000 for that, for the Reform of the Integrity Commission, what does it entail?

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Hon. Imbert: It is a project that involves recommended amendments to the Integrity in Public Life Act. I think \$500,000 is enough to pay a lawyer to do that. You want to pay more?

Mr. Chairman: Thanks, Mr. Minister.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 37 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam from the Integrity Commission and your senior technocrats. Do have a good evening.

Hon. Members, we now move on to Head 06, Service Commissions. I would like to welcome the Minister and the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry and your senior technocrats.

Hon. Member: DPA.

Mr. Chairman: DPA, Director of Public Administration.

Head 06: Service Commissions, \$77,164,500.

Mr. Chairman: I will now ask the Minister to give brief opening remarks not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Service Commissions are set out constitutionally and play a very important role as per the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. The primary function of the Department is to provide support services to enable the four Service Commissions: the Public Service Commission, the PSC; the Teaching Service Commission, the TSC; the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, JLSC and the Police Service Commission, to discharge constitutional responsibilities of staffing and the exercise of disciplinary control over the respective services.

Additionally, these Service Commissions deal with the hiring and disciplining and termination of various public officers that fall under their respective ambits.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$77,164,500 for Head 06, Service Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now

proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 33 of the Recurrent Expenditure booklet; Item 001, General Administration, page 33. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 01, salaries and cost of living. Given the fact that there are challenges experienced by the Service Commissions in making appointments on a timely basis, I think the Minister of Finance has alluded to that, have the Service Commissions ever indicated the need for more human and physical resources? And if so, is the \$32.2 million adequate for them to effectively carry out their remit under the Constitution?

Hon. Young: Yes, to both questions.

Mr. Charles: Excuse me.

Hon. Young: Yes, to both questions.

Mr. Charles: So there is a backlog in appointments in the Service Commissions.

Hon. Young: That was not the question you asked. You asked whether in the past the Service Commissions have asked for extra resources, yes, from since 2010 come forward they have. And your second question is, whether \$32 million is sufficient under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, the answer is, yes.

Mr. Charles: A follow up question.

Mr. Chairman: A follow up question?

Mr. Charles: So then what explains the lack of timely appointments? Is it a human resource problem?

Hon. Young: No.

Mr. Charles: Because you are saying this is adequate. So therefore, it is something else.

Hon. Young: That is a question that is actually best directed to those who serve in the Service Commissions. We cannot answer that.

Mr. Charles: But how could you answer and say the question is, yes.

Hon. Young: Constitutionally—

Mr. Chairman: One at a time please.

Mr. Charles: How could you say that the resources allocated are enough if you have no basis by the Constitution for interacting with them?

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Hon. Young: I do not think the Member for Naparima, respectfully, understands the Constitution and how Service Commissions are comprised. The membership of Service Commissions, they are appointed by the President, His Excellency the President.

Mr. Charles: Agreed.

Hon. Young: They are the ones charged with the responsibility of getting together, sitting down or standing up or doing whatever it is they do and hiring people and appointing people. The Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance are for the staff who do all of the hard work on the administrative side. They are not the ones who hire and appoint people.

Mr. Charles: So your job is simply, this figure simply represents a request and you grant it.

Hon. Young: This job—this figure as it says very clearly is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the staff at the Service Commissions. The staff at the Service Commissions, to answer you Member for Naparima, does not appoint or hire persons.

Mr. Charles: I am not talking about appointment.

Hon. Young: Which is what you asked about, a backlog.

Mr. Chairman: Members, Members, Members, I think the answer is clear. If you have another question fine, if not I would like to go to the Member for Fyzabad.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to add some clarity—

Mr. Chairman: Clarity, Minister of Finance?

Mr. Imbert:—in the way these estimates are prepared. The Service Commission, which is the independent body, would, through their accounting officer, who is the Director of Personnel Administration, make a request to the Ministry of Finance through the Budgets Division for an allocation for this particular Head, which is for their staff. If there are vacancies at the Service Commission, the independent constitutionally appointed body would make the necessary employments. If there is a need to supplement this Vote, I can tell you right now that the Government would make the appropriate arrangement to ensure that this Vote is supplemented.

So when the Service Commission, and if and when it fills whatever vacancies they may have in their establishment, or as happens all the time, they may wish to create additional positions within their establishment, this comes to Cabinet like every other division in the Government—when you want to increase or change this establishment you come to Cabinet, you get Cabinet approval and then funding is provided. If that happens and there are additional posts on the establishment which they fill, the Ministry of Finance would make appropriate arrangements to provide whatever supplementary funding is available. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line Item 01 also includes provision for Vacant Posts. Minister, can you indicate how many vacant posts there are at the current time?

Hon. Young: Yes. The number of permanent officers at the—this is at the Service Commissions Department?

Dr. Bodoë: That is correct.

Hon. Young: One hundred and forty-two. The number of vacant offices, 215; the number on establishment, 357; the number of vacant offices with bodies, 184; the number of vacant offices without bodies, 31; leaving a total vacancy of 250.

Mr. Chairman: A follow-up question, Member for Fyzabad?

Dr. Bodoë: Minister, can you indicate what challenges might be faced in terms of filling these vacancies? Because that would impact on the work of the Service Commissions.

Hon. Young: There is a very bureaucratic procedure that includes going out for public advertisements of posts to be filled, et cetera, and that is being undertaken by the Service Commissions Department.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West, question?

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I think it might be best within the bosom of the Minister of Finance to answer this question. Throughout all the Ministries, I did not see any allocation for this new creature which is a result of legislation, the Procurement Regulator.

Hon. Young: Where is the line Item with regard to Service Commissions?

Mr. Singh: No, no. What is the role of the Service Commissions in seeking to provide and facilitate those appointees?

Hon. Young: None.

Mr. Imbert: There is no line Item in the Service Commissions that could be attached to the appointment of the Procurement Regulator. That is a function of the Ministry of Finance to provide the funding and the President to make the appointment.

Mr. Singh: No, I am talking about the support staff in each Ministry because that is what is required now.

Mr. Imbert: We, as a Cabinet, have approved procurement units, different sizes, different compositions in each Ministry and as the Procurement Regulator is appointed and the board is appointed—because it is a regulator and a board—once they are appointed we can proclaim all sections of the Act and start to implement. That would be at an appropriate time close to the mid-year review or before, and we will make adjustments to the budget to suit. Okay?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, very often—

Hon. Young: Which line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: 06, Remuneration to Board Members. And I specifically here refer to the members of the boards at the commissions. Right?

Hon. Young: Correct.

Dr. Rambachan: Very often, it seems to me that the public servants get the brunt of the criticism with respect to what they perceive as the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the Service Commissions, when, in fact, judging from what you have alluded to, it is the boards that give the directions to the public servants and that the efficiency and effectiveness of the public servants depend on the effectiveness and efficiency of the boards. Is the Minister satisfied that the boards are carrying out their mandate in the interest of the country as they should, given what we hear of the experiences of people and the long length of time it takes to get appointments made? What is the Minister's view on this?

Hon. Young: I think it is obvious to any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who has been studying this for a while that, unfortunately, these commissions seem to be a bit outdated now and the way they operate. As you would be aware, they were set up under the 1962 Constitution and then continued, the 1972, and the time has come for it to be reviewed because the truth is there are backlogs in terms of dealing with the disciplinary side as well as the appointment side, et

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cetera. I am not going to cast blame or aspersion on any member of the board or any board, so to speak, but we must recognize that there are backlogs that are taking place and it seems to have ground to a halt on some occasions.

Dr. Rambachan: Does the Minister accept that because of the way the boards are operating it has led to frustration and to, really, situations which might be described as bringing to a halt the operations of certain aspects of Government?

Hon. Young: I am not sure whether that responsibility and blame lies at the feet of the board members but the answer to the situation you have described is, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Does the President, therefore, have a role, in the Minister's view, in terms of the quality of the appointments, to review these appointments—

Mr. Chairman: Member, I would not entertain that question. [*Crosstalk*] Members, I have already made the statement. Member for Tabaquite, you have another question?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. But permit me, I have five minutes. I just want to say this. It is fine and good to say that we cannot bring the President into our discussion but when the President has a major role to play—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, I know you have five minutes but I want you to be careful in terms of the discussion and the road that you are going down.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am very cautious—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, go ahead.

Dr. Rambachan:—but I have lived long enough in this country to understand that we are refusing to put blame where the blame is supposed to be put, and it is time that we begin to—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: What you mean by that? What line Item is this?

Mr. Chairman: Members, hold on.

Dr. Rambachan:—call a spade a spade.

Mr. Imbert: What line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: Board members.

Mr. Imbert: Board members?

Dr. Rambachan: Remuneration to Board Members.

Mr. Imbert: “How the President reach in that?”

Mr. Chairman: Members—

Mr. Imbert: Remuneration?

Dr. Rambachan: You see, “we fraid” to talk about the real issues in this country.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance and Member for Tabagite, [*Crosstalk*] any additional? Otherwise, I will go to the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. The Minister gave—

Hon. Young: Which line Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same 01. You gave the amount of personnel and we appreciate that. Could you break it down into the four service commissions, the amount of members on them, employed and how many vacancies in each one of the commissions? You gave a total picture of 380-something, and so on.

Hon. Young: Remember, Member, this is the Service Commissions Department. So the commissions and the composition of the commissions do not fall under this. This is really the administrative staff of the Service Commissions Department.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Where can we get the information about each one of the—

Hon. Young: From the President.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The President will give each one of the commissions, how many employed—

Hon. Young: He is the one that appoints them, yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Well, they came before the Joint Select Committee and they indicated that there were a significant amount of vacancies in the Public Service Commission, and that is the question I am trying to find out here.

Mr. Chairman: So you want the actual breakdown for each particular service commission.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Each one of four.

Mr. Chairman: So Minister, can that be provided?

Hon. Young: Well, I did provide it previously. There is one Service Commissions Department that provides the support for the various service

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commissions and that is what I answered the Member for Fyzabad with, and went through it in great detail.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, you answered holistically, but I am asking for the breakdown by—

Hon. Young: There is one department.

Mr. Chairman: He is asking for actual breakdown probably by actual vacancies.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is right.

Mr. Chairman: Are you in a position to provide that information?

Hon. Young: What do you mean by actual vacancies?

Dr. Gopeesingh: There are vacancies for the Teaching Service Commission, the Police Service Commission, the—

Hon. Young: But that is what I am trying to explain, with the greatest of respect. There is one—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, but you are giving a ballpark figure. We want it—

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Okay, Member.

Hon. Young: I cannot invent the facts to satisfy you. The fact is there is one Service Commissions Department under the establishment that provides the service and the support for the Teaching Service Commission, for the Police Service Commission, for the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, and that is the information I have provided you with. If you are asking for these various commissions, the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, the Police Service Commission—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I just want—

Mr. Chairman: For clarity?

Dr. Rowley: For clarification. Are these questions coming from people who used to run this country for five years?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Listen, we are talking about—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Prime Minister, we are talking about 2018, we are not talking about 2010 to 2015.

Dr. Rowley: These are people who were Ministers of Government and they are talking about Service Commissions at this time of the budget—

Dr. Gopeesingh: But we are talking about this time. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: That is not part of the budget.

Mr. Chairman: Members, Members—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: Well, let me answer the question for the Minister and the Government.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us get the clarity, Mr. Prime Minister.

Dr. Rowley: Nothing has changed with respect to Service Commissions since September 09, 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What you mean, no vacancies, no—

Mr. Chairman: Member, according to the information provided by the Minister, they are not in a position to provide it.

Dr. Rowley: No, the structure, the governance structure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Prime Minister, we are not asking about the structure, we are asking about the vacancies.

Mr. Chairman: So Members, I would like to move on at this time.

Dr. Rowley: No, Mr. Chairman, I would like to give it clarification, because I do not want to rush the Member out of his question. I thought I was responding to an explanation and a discourse about what the Service Commissions were; what they were doing; who were there and how they interact in the governance of the country. Now, he is telling me it is not that. So then what is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I am asking the question on the amount of vacancies now for each one of these—

Mr. Chairman: And the Member is saying—

Dr. Rowley: And that is a different question.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members. I will take a ruling on it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you came in late, Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East, the ruling is that the Minister is not in a position to provide it. It will have to be provided—

Hon. Young: Mr. Deputy Chairman, that is not the answer. The answer is I have already provided it to the Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Rowley: Somebody who knows.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we will move on. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 33; Item 001, General Administration, pages 33 and 34. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, I note an increase of about \$662,000 there—Item 08, Minister, if you can provide an explanation.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, Item 08, Rent/Lease, the increase.

Hon. Young: All right. During this period, there has been an increase in rent for one of the buildings which has led to this. There has been an increase in—sorry—some of the rentals for the various buildings that has led to this increase being provided. So there is a head office at Cipriani Boulevard; there is the DFL Building on Cipriani Boulevard; the Police Service Commission at the corner of Pasa Road and Churchill/Roosevelt Highway; storage facility in El Socorro and then there is also an office on Wilson Road, Scarborough.

Dr. Bodoë: So no new buildings have been rented, just increase in this rent?

Hon. Young: Correct.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002, Tobago Services, page 35; Item 003, Public Service Commission. Come, Member for Fyzabad, we need to ensure that—let us get the rhythm going. Go ahead.

Dr. Bodoë: Mr. Deputy Chairman, Item 16 on page 34, Contract Employment. Minister, I have noted that—if you could permit me to go back to 2016 and the expenditure of \$939—

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Dr. Bodoë:—and then in 2017, I note the expenditure of \$1.9 million.

Hon. Young: What—

Dr. Bodoë: It is line Item 16 with regard to Contract Employment.

Hon. Young: Yes, I am following you. So in 2016, it was under \$1 million. It was at 940, and it has now gone to \$1.9 million.

Dr. Bodoë: I am just wondering, Minister, whether that increase in Contract Employment would have been an attempt perhaps to provide the services not available for the vacancies.

Hon. Young: It is an attempt to make the Service Commissions Department more efficient and in particular in the area of supporting the Police Service Commission. So the Police Service Commission secretariat, a number of contract workers and positions were taken on in that area to provide the support in that area.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East, which line Item? Which one are we on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just line Item 23. Those fees are for legal fees?

Hon. Young: No, those fees would be for the—just give me one second—23?

Mr. Chairman: 23, Fees.

Hon. Young: Those fees, Member for Caroni East, are for acquisition of software licences, support and upgrades for the service desk, a remark of the grading software and teaching service systems, licence renewals for HP server support, backup executive, McAfee Secure and Fortinet which, as you know, would be firewalls, et cetera.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002, Tobago Services, page 35; Item 003, Public Service Commission, page 35; Item 004, Teaching Service Commission, page 35; Item 005, Judicial and Legal Service Commission, page 36. Member for Fyzabad, where are you?

Dr. Bodoë: Next Item.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, Police Service Commission, page 36. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Under 28, Other Contracted Services, Minister, I note an increase of \$1.4 million, thereabouts, under Other Contracted Services. Can you indicate, perhaps, what that would be for?

Hon. Young: Yes, thank you very much, Member for Fyzabad. That is for the recruitment and engagement of a Police Commissioner and a Deputy Commissioner.

Dr. Bodoë: Can I indulge and ask how far along we are in that process, Minister? Just for the information of the public and the House.

Hon. Young: I think it was released recently and they have narrowed it down and they are going through the process right now. So what they have done is, they have completed the first phase and they are going on to the assessment centre phase now. Phase one and two have been completed.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 37; Item 001, General Administration, page 37.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Consolidated Fund, page 11 of the Development programme booklet; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 11. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Under Administrative Services—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Fyzabad, I will give way to you for the last time.

Dr. Bodoë: Just an update on the implementation of an Electronic Document Management System, 006. Minister, perhaps can you indicate to us the status of that project, how far along we are. It is at page 11, 006.

Hon. Young: We are currently awaiting releases to go ahead and purchase the software to implement it. Remember, this has to be approved. So once the budgetary exercise is over, then the Ministry of Finance can release the money so they can go ahead and implement the project.

Dr. Bodoë: In terms of the time frame for the implementation?

Hon. Young: Well, once they get the money—it will take about two more years. As you know, we have to flag every file and this type of thing.

Dr. Bodoë: Just to get an overview, thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 06 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you Madam DPA and your senior technocrats. Do have a good evening. Thanks for coming.

Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, \$973,032,390.

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Mr. Chairman: I will now invite—before I invite. Welcome, Mr. Minister, Madam PS and the senior technocrats at your Ministry. I will now invite the Minister to give brief opening remarks not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to use this opportunity to wish the substantive Minister of Public Administration and Communications, Minister Maxie Cuffie, who is currently away getting medical treatment, a speedy recovery and to let him know that we wish him all the best [*Desk thumping*] and we look forward to welcoming him back to the Parliament.

This is the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications that is responsible and charged with the responsibility of Public Administration and Communications for the Government.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$973,032,390 for Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, 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*.

[MRS. ANNISSETTE-GEORGE *in the Chair*]

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 217, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, my question again would be under 01, the number of vacant posts in the Ministry.

Hon. Young: The total number of vacant posts are 254 and we have a breakdown. You want the breakdown?

Dr. Bodoë: I can have that in writing in the interest of time. Or, if you want to—

Hon. Young: Sorry, that was the contract. So there are 254 vacant contract positions and then we have 524 vacant positions per the establishment.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

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Madam Chairman: 002, Science and Technology; 004, Government Printery; 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: With regard to salaries and cost of living—that would be 01, Minister—I am assuming that that \$1.2 million 2018 estimate is for the staff in that department. Can you indicate how many people are employed in that department, their role? And I am asking this question in view of the budget as allocated for the Property and Real Estate Management Services.

Hon. Young: Unfortunately, we do not have the exact figures here in writing so we will provide that to you in writing, in terms of the number of staff. But this is a very important body for Government services and, really what they do is do a sweep of all of the property that is available, owned by Government as well as whatever private properties may be available to be rented by Government and Statutory Bodies, et cetera. Sorry, it has just been provided. There are 23 members of staff in PRES D.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Minister. And my question to you would be—and if you may permit me, Madam Chair. I do not want to rush, but on page 226, the budget that you spoke about would be 447—

Hon. Young: On 226? We “gone” to 226?

Dr. Bodoë: I will ask it then.

Hon. Young: I “doh” mind if we just go straight to 226 and forget everything in-between. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Bodoë: I will ask it then, but I was trying to relate it to the expenditure.

Hon. Young: Well, when we get there.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay, sure. I will wait, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, sure. Thank you. Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 008, National Archives; Item 009, Public Service Transportation Division. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Madam Chair, again I am asking with regard to the number of staff employed in that division which, I am assuming, is a very important division based on the name of the division in terms of the transformation of the public service.

Hon. Young: We will provide that to you in writing.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 013, Information Division; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology Division; Item 019, Diamond Division; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 222; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Madam Chair, with regard to Rent/Lease, 08, I see a decrease in just over \$10 million, Minister. Could you indicate—

Hon. Young: And you would like to applaud us for saving the country 10 and a half million dollars in rentals? [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Bodoë: That is fine. Can you indicate what was the reason and would there be any impact in the services provided by the Ministry?

Hon. Young: There will be no impact. In fact, what this reflects is that you would recall that previously the substantive Minister made a statement to the public and to Trinidad and Tobago that when we came in we set about doing a regularization and also negotiating lease rentals downwards wherever we could. So this is a direct result of that savings. We also moved various Ministries and Departments into properties that are owned by the State and thereby foregoing and cancelling private lease rentals and arrangements. So that is what you are seeing here. That is part of the savings.

Dr. Bodoë: So this is a decrease we can expect going forward?

Hon. Young: Correct. We continue to do it.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Science and Technology; Item 003, National Information and Communication Technology Centre, Secretariat. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 23, Fees, the substantial amount of \$66 million, can you just explain—

Hon. Young: Sorry, where are you? Item 23, yes.

Dr. Bodoë: We are on page 224, Item 23. Can you just give us a breakdown or maybe an explanation of what those fees will entail?

Hon. Young: Yes. These fees are for Enterprise Wide Services and Applications and Infrastructural Support for key projects of GUARD, MDAs. A review will have to be undertaken to determine ways in which cost-saving measures and, of course, modifications may be applied. This is really,

predominantly in the area of software and the software and ICT support across all of Government services.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Minister. Madam Chair, likewise with 28, Other Contracted Services, can the Minister indicate that figure of \$100 million, an increase of over \$99 million, what comes under that Item?

Hon. Young: Again, this is all to do with the ICT software and hardware, the upgrade of it that supports all of Government services and other entities that rely on Government services. So, as you know, these things have a shelf life. Technology is moving at a fast pace and, unfortunately, with a lot of the items, they have reached the end of their shelf life. So we are upgrading and purchasing not only hardware but also software to ensure that Government is properly supported.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Government Printery; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 08, the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, and the allocation of \$447 million—

Hon. Young: Sorry, which Item?

Dr. Bodoë: On page 26, line 08.

Hon. Young: Sorry. We are under Item 08. Yes, I am with you now. Yes?

Dr. Bodoë: So, the \$447,000, if you can provide the list of the buildings that are rented. But I wanted to relate this back to the staffing of that department, and the question really would have been whether the staffing would have been adequate to oversee this enormous expenditure.

Hon. Young: Well, I mean, as you know, once you have negotiated leases and lease arrangements, it is normally for a period of time: three years; five years, et cetera. So the answer is, yes, because what we have been doing is actually minimizing the number of external lease rental arrangements with the Government, and once we have negotiated it and it is in place, it just runs. It runs like clockwork. And this here also covers loan facilities and loan payments. For example, the International Waterfront Project and these things, which as you know, where we are right now, there are loan arrangements to be covered. So this covers the loan payments for the International Waterfront Centre and other buildings; Government Campus, et cetera.

Dr. Bodoë: Madam Chair, Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. Minister, I note that in the 2017 allocation it was \$23.5 million but the expenditure was only 7.8. Would you be able to give an explanation for that? And the second question would be in terms of the 2018, \$13 million expenditure projected, you know, what sort of repair work is expected on public buildings?

5.40 p.m.

Hon. Young: We will have a shortfall, so it is expected that we will be asking for a supplement, either at the mid-year review or looking to vire money from elsewhere. With respect to the—that we were provided \$23.5 million in 2017 but only utilized 7.8. Again this would have been a management of cash flow. Right. So even though, as you are aware, you can budget a certain amount of money, it does not mean—well, under this administration—that we would expend all of that money. So we try to ensure savings throughout. So this is another area that we managed to have significant savings.

Dr. Bodoë: Just to clarify, it was not a challenge in terms of the execution of projects, so to speak. I just want to be clear on that.

Hon. Young: No, no. This is maintenance for existing things.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division; Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 008, National Archives; Item 009, Public Service Transformation Division; Item 012, Freedom of Information Unit; Item 013, Information Division; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology Division; Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division (ICT) Secretariat; Item 019, Diamond Division. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I will ask it under line Item 16, which is Contract Employment, but just to ask if the Minister can indicate how many entities would have been diamond certified in the year 2017?

Hon. Young: We have actually had a review of that programme and right now we are now doing business process management and customer service training. So we have sort of moved away from this Diamond Division and we have restructured it into those two areas.

Dr. Bodoë: So the expenditure for 2018 would be for what? Just to wind down?

Hon. Young: Well, for the staff to do those things and to ensure that—we are trying in selected Ministries—What we are trying to do is to make it more

efficient, customer service, and this type of thing. So it is staff that will go out to these various Ministries and come back and feed us the information, to tell us where we are falling short, et cetera, and then we will try to work with those various Ministries.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Science and Technology, page 234; Item 003, National Information and Communication Technology; Item 004, Government Printery; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services, page 235; Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division; Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 008, National Archives; Item 009, Public Service Transformation Division; Item 013, Information Division; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology; Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division (ICT) Secretariat.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 236; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 237; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies, page 238; Item 006, Government Printery; Item 007, Households; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 03 under Transfers to State Enterprises, there is a decrease of \$1.5 million and a \$15 million allocation in the 2017/2018 allocation, is this for the formation of the new TTT?

Hon. Young: It is not so to speak for the formation of the new TTT. As you are aware, there is an existing entity with equipment, assets, staff, et cetera, called Caribbean New Media Group, and when that is morphed into TTT, yes, it will be for those expenses.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima. No? So we now move on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and we will move right away to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. 03 - Trinidad and Tobago Telecommunications Authority, page 195. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration page 195; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001 General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, under 28, Other Contracted Services, I note an increase of \$1.75 million in the 2018 allocation. Can you perhaps give an explanation for that?

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Hon. Young: Yes, just give me one second. Right. What this is to facilitate is a digital radio consultancy and looking at things like channel spacing, and this consultancy is expected to assist when it comes to channel spacing and the directive for broadcasters, and the requirement for designated stations to move frequency, as you know, going from analogy to digital.

Dr. Bodoë: Minister, Item 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. I note an increase of \$2.3 million in the 2018 allocation, could you perhaps explain what—

Hon. Young: Yes. This is a provision for a new industry award signature event for 2018. The awards are expected to be a major people's choice awards to encourage the development of high standards of service provision and recognize the importance of consumer choice in service provision. Estimated cost is at this \$2.5 million.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you perhaps explain how that award will function or will be administrated.

Hon. Young: Well, as you know we have a very vibrant media sector in Trinidad and Tobago with television stations. We have more than one. We have a few of them as well as radio stations. So I assume what it is, is to create this sort of bonding and also a quality standard in the industry for people to aim towards and to achieve, like we say, in other developed nations.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 196; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007 Households; 009, Other Transfers. 53 - National Library and Information System (NALIS), page 200; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001 General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, this is just a—it is a broad question in relation to the expenditure under 01 of \$79 million annually on staff for the various NALIS facilities and so on, and the question really is, is there—

Hon. Young: Which line Item, sorry?

Dr. Bodoë: 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, \$79 million.

Hon. Young: Right. Okay.

Dr. Bodoë:—is there a system in place, perhaps—I know it might be difficult—to determine the value that this kind of expenditure would bring to the

population of Trinidad and Tobago. In other words, I am asking whether there are surveys, or studies and so on done, or reports and so on.

Hon. Young: As you quite rightly identify, it is very much an intangible. So the provision of, for example, national library services, the ability for our citizens and our visitors to go into these libraries, have access not only to hard books but also the Internet to do research, et cetera, is a very intangible product. But in measurement of developed nations, developed countries, I am sure that you all would accept, and you would accept, Member for Fyzabad, it is an important component because everyone does not have the same facilities in their homes as others. I mean, I went into the national library recently and I was very, very happy to see the level of maintenance and how much is being offered. So I think it is money well spent.

Dr. Bodoë: That is fine. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, pages 200 and 201; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001 General Administration, page 201; 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*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, page 88; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 88 and 89. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, hon. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 005, how many librarians do we have in the establishment?

Hon. Young: 005 on page 88?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Young: Under Training of Librarians, you are asking how many librarians we have?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Young: We will have to provide that for you, but we have 33 scholars currently being trained as librarians and that is what this covers the costs of.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 89 and 90. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 022, Public Sector Reform Preparation Programme, \$7.7 million identified this year. Could the Minister just enlighten us what sort of reform this would take?—as we have done many reforms in that sector.

Hon. Young: This is actually to pay the bills you all left behind.

Mr. Charles: Just so?

Hon. Young: Well yeah, it is the truth.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Item 001, Implementation of the ICT Plan. I note there was no expenditure in 2017, is there an explanation for that?

Hon. Young: Again, that would have been cash flow issues, and as we had discussed earlier when you alluded to certain big-number items, what we are doing now in this year we are going to try to cover as much as we can.

Dr. Bodoë: Sure. 046, E-Government and Knowledge Brokering Programme, it is still on the line, but I notice no expenditure in 2017, nothing allocated in 2018. Is it to say that this is completed?

Hon. Young: That is because we have completed, yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay. Would that be the same explanation for Item 054, Establishment of a Virtual Call Centre in the Public Service?

Hon. Young: That was transferred to another Ministry. That one was transferred to another Ministry. That is really to deal with scholarships, the scholarship programme.

Dr. Bodoë: The Establishment of the Virtual Call Centre in the Public Service, 054?

Hon. Young: Yeah.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay. It is just that it does not reflect here.

Hon. Young: I know. Sorry.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. 002, Public Sector Reform Preparation Programme. The Minister indicated that this is a bill that is outstanding that was left by the previous administration. Two questions: one, why is the bill only now coming due after two and a half years; and secondly, what have been the deliverables of this programme—

Hon. Young: That is a good question.

Mr. Charles:—and how are you utilizing this in your—

Hon. Young: Well, that is a good question. We asked ourselves after, why is it that you all engaged in this in the first place, there being so many previous consultancies to do with public sector reform, but you all as had happened throughout, had already contracted the State to do it. So we allowed it to run its course. We tried to manage it tightly and now we are just paying the final bill. There is a report that has been produced. There is a committee that has been set up that includes, for example, the Chief Justice and other persons who are heads of various important sectors in the public sector, and they are looking at it now currently to see what can be extracted and hopefully implemented.

Mr. Charles: Just for comprehensive information, who were the clients in respect of this programme?

Hon. Young: The client would have been the Ministry of Public Administration.

Mr. Charles: Right. And who did it?

Hon. Young: Who provided the work?

Mr. Charles: Who provided the service?

Hon. Young: Deloitte.

Mr. Charles: Deloitte. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: The question has been answered.

Madam Chairman: All right. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 214; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 31 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister; thank you, Madam PS and other members of staff.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$42,853,342,711 be approved as a grand total.

Question put and agreed to.

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Madam Chairman: We shall now move on to consider the Schedule of the Appropriation Bill along with the clauses.

Clause 1.

Question proposed: That clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, would you want to consider all together, 1 to 3?

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, after four gruelling weeks, I wish to report that a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago, for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2018, was considered in Standing Finance Committee and approved without amendments. I now beg to move that it be read a third time and passed, and we will be calling for a division.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put: That the Bill be now read a third time.

Hon. Imbert: Division.

The House voted: Ayes 21

AYES

Imbert, Hon. C.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Young, Hon. S.

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Forde, E.

Mitchell, Hon. R.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

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Garcia, Hon. A.
 Crichlow-Cockburn, Hon. C.
 Dillon, Hon. Maj. Gen. E.
 Webster-Roy, Hon. A.
 Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.
 Smith, Hon. D.
 Francis, Hon. Dr. L.
 Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.
 Olivierre, Miss N.
 Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
 Leonce, A.
 Mc Donald, Miss M.

The following Members abstained: Mr. D. Lee, Mr. R. Charles, Dr. S. Rambachan, Dr. R. Moonilal, Mrs. C. Newallo-Hosein, Mr. G. Singh, Mr. B. Padarath and Dr. L. Bodoë.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, 21 Members voted for; no Members voted against; eight Members declined to vote.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Members on this side for their contribution on the debate [*Desk thumping*] and I am really very disturbed that those on the other side did not vote—

Hon. Member: Like this is a speech.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Yes, it is a speech—that they did not vote for the pensions of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Dr. Moonilal is leaving the Chamber*]

Madam Speaker: Member?

Adjournment

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Dr. Moonilal: Ma'am, I am leaving.

Madam Speaker: There is no bar against you leaving, but again decorum and respect. I cannot not hear the steups. Okay. [*Crosstalk*] So for the public, for the public, if you will just apologize for that and you can leave.

Dr. Moonilal: I apologize to the public.

Madam Speaker: Sure. Thank you so much. Leader of the House.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. And I think it is quite unfortunate that that should happen. But, Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.06 p.m.