



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

3rd Session – 11th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 13 – Number 8

OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)

THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISSETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Monday 16th October, 2017

CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON-MEIGUEL

EDITOR: LILA RODRIGUEZ-ROBERTS
Telephone: 623-4494

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

CONTENTS

	Page
APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2018) BILL, 2017	
[Sixth Day]	
Standing Finance Committee 	1
... 	177

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 16, 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: Good afternoon everyone, and the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will now resume. I wish to invite the Committee under announcements that the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar MP, Member for Siparia and Dr. Fuad Khan, MP, Member for Barataria/San Juan, have asked to be excused from today's meeting of the Standing Finance Committee.

Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 81(2) and (8), the estimates containing the details of the financial requirements along with the Appropriation Bill have been referred to this committee for consideration. The documents before the committee therefore, include the:

Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, Draft Estimates of Development Programme and the Appropriation (Financial Year 2018), Bill, 2017.

In accordance with Standing Order 85(1), the consideration of the clauses of the Bill will be postponed until after the consideration of the Schedule which lists the Heads of Expenditure to be approved. The Heads will be considered in the order submitted by the Leader of the Opposition.

As regard our proposed work schedule, you are reminded that the Committee agreed to meet as follows: Today, beginning at 1.30 p.m.; tomorrow Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.; Thursday, October 19, 2017 at 1.30 p.m.; Friday, October 20, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.; and you are reminded that the start time for Monday, October 23, 2017 is still to be determined. Hon. Members, you are also reminded that we agreed that we will consider a minimum of eight Heads of Expenditure each day in order to complete our work programme in the five allotted days. You are also reminded that the procedure for each head of expenditure shall be as follows:

1. The Head and the amount to be approved will be announced by the Chair;
2. The Minister will then be given the option to make a brief opening statement;
3. The Chairman will then propose the question, that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule;
4. For each Head of Expenditure the Chairman will call the Sub-Head followed by the Item. The Sub-Items shall not be called. Discussion can ensue under Items called or the relevant Sub-Item and clarification sought. Once the committee moves to another Sub-Head, questions from a previous Sub-Head will not be entertained.

This procedure will be also repeated for the Development Programme. Once this is concluded, the Chair will then put the question that the sums stand part of the Schedule. The procedure will be repeated for each Head of Expenditure.

Hon. Members, you are reminded that in accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in the Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. We have invited the accounting officers and the technocrats for the various Ministries and entities to arrive at specific times during the day, so I want to urge us all to try to adhere to the agreed schedule, okay.

So that we now move on to the first Head okay, and we begin with Head 43: The Ministry Works and Transport

Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport, \$2,343,542,325.

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

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chairman, let me begin by sharing a brief overview of the Ministry listed as Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport. The Ministry of Works and Transport is responsible for the provision of quality infrastructure and regulatory framework in road, drainage, coastal and the building sector. In addition, the Ministry also provides the land, sea and air transportation service. It is a large sectorial entity that comprises over 23 technical and administrative divisions, statutory authorities and State.

Specifically, in keeping with its mandate, the Ministry provides the following services to its clientele, the general public, among others:

- National planning for roads, drainage and transportation: air, sea and land;

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

- Construction and maintenance of highways, major and secondary roads;
- Construction and maintenance of bridges and landslips;
- Construction and maintenance of major watercourse and existing drainage system,
- Land reclamation and coastal management in collaboration with stakeholders;
- Advice on, as well as the construction and maintenance of government buildings and facilities and the Ministry of Works and Transport buildings and facilities;
- Advice on maritime related matters;
- Advice on the purchase, repair and maintenance of the transport fleet of state agencies;
- Traffic management;
- Registration, classification, licensing and inspection of vehicles;
- Issuance of driver's permits;
- Enforcement of laws under the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act;
- Management and control of shipping within Trinidad and Tobago waters;
- Registration, licensing, surveying, inspection and classification of ships;
- Enforcement of the maritime law; and
- Navigational and monitoring of air service agreement.

As we start, I would like to bring to the attention of this House, that in reviewing the records of the *Draft Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2018*, we have identified variances between the Ministry's records of expenditure in some areas to what has been provided in the revised estimate for 2017 in the draft budget document. In this respect, it would be identified from the onset that this is based on the time when the revised estimates would have been collected and the actual figures available to the Ministry as at 30 September, 2017. It has been a challenging year, but the Ministry has been seeking to stay the course and to allow the marriage of procedure, process and implementation to take its place. I stand ready to answer all questions and, where not readily available, to submit some in writing at the earliest possible opportunity. I thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 43 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,343,542,325 for Head 43: the Ministry of Works and Transport is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure.

Dr. Rambachan: Just for clarification, Madam Chair, what page are you on?

Madam Chairman: Page 274.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, thank you. Under Personnel Expenditure, Madam Chair, there is a decrease of \$5,380,495 under Personnel Expenditure. And I am asking the question, what is the reason for this cut of \$5.4 million? And in view of the fact that there will be wage increases according to the union agreements for 2018, have you included any of these in the figures for 2018?

1.40 p.m.

Hon. Sinanan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there is a reduction in the daily-rated employees of \$1.8 million. This is as a result of workers retiring and those posts have not been filled at this time. There is also—we are at this point in time conducting a need analysis to ensure that the positions that are available will be filled shortly.

Dr. Rambachan: The second question is, so that you are not sure whether you are going—are you sure or are you uncertain whether you are going to fill those positions?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, that is why we are conducting a needs analysis.

Dr. Rambachan: The second part of the question was, given that there are union agreements, have you included in these figures any of the increases for 2018?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, wherever there are final agreements, those figures have been taken into consideration.

Dr. Rambachan: But there was in 2017, Minister, \$492,487,500, Salaries and Cost of Living and Wages and Cost of Living, \$290,350,000. In 2017, that was revised down to \$461,338 and \$263,67—

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, what page?

Dr. Rambachan: I am sorry, page 274.

Hon. Sinanan: What item you are on?

Dr. Rambachan: 01 Personnel Expenditure.

Hon. Sinanan: So you are going by the overall figure?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, yes. I am trying to establish whether, in fact, you have really included any increases in wages that are going to come due to union agreements in 2018 or whether these figures reflect—I am asking whether they reflect a wage freeze or is retrenchment contemplated.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, the Government has said on several occasions there is no wage freeze as a policy and the Government has also stated that there is no retrenchment at this point in time.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. But if that is so Minister, how is it that the figures have decreased from Revised Estimates of 461 to 455 which was originally estimated at 492 and from 263 to 261, not reflecting. If you look at it in terms of the percentage, what would be the percentage increase added to this in terms of the wage agreements that have been reached?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, if you look at 30, there is a significant reduction in the traveling claims and the overtime allowances. What we are trying to do at the Ministry is to minimize these additional expenditures that have been treated as runaway horses.

Dr. Rambachan: In overtime allowances? Overtime allowances, Mr. Minister—

Hon. Sinanan: And travelling.

Dr. Rambachan:—has increased by \$708,000 and overtime allowances for monthly-paid officers increased by \$256,000. So that on both of those they have increased. Only monthly-paid officers' allowances have gone down by \$6 million. It is lower down. But if the allowances are going down—

Hon. Sinanan: You see, you are dealing with the general administration. If you go into the actual—

Dr. Rambachan: But the general is the accumulation of all the actuals in the suns. So if, in fact, your monthly-paid allowances which are—monthly-paid allowances, in my view, which will be the union determined, is it that really you

are not going to be employing or you are reducing the number of employed or there is general unstated policy of a wage freeze?

Hon. Sinanan: None of the above.

Dr. Rambachan: The figures, Mr. Minister, do not reflect that. I am still looking at the page 273, under Item 04. Can I look at it?

Madam Chairman: On the summary page?

Dr. Rambachan: On the summary page, Ma'am. But I guess we can go on and I would take it as we go on.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Just for clarification Minister. You indicated that the Ministry is currently engaged in a manpower audit exercise.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes Sir, for the daily-rated employees.

Mr. Indarsingh: Daily-rated, not for monthly-rated?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: And could you clarify for us how many existing vacant posts within the Ministry and in the relevant divisions?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, what we will do is submit that to you in writing by divisions.

Mr. Indarsingh: But you have no idea at the moment?

Hon. Sinanan: No, I do not have that with me right now.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. Additionally, my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, I just want to follow up on what he was asking. Is there any outstanding back pay for the expired agreements or what have been settled? What is the current status of the collective bargaining process as it relates to monthly-paid and daily-rated employees?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, we have been settling the arrears as they are confirmed to us, but we can give you a detailed listing of all the outstanding.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, could you advise this meeting, is there any outstanding—

Hon. Sinanan: Go ahead. Finish your question.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Indarsingh: Is there any outstanding—sums of moneys based on collective agreements that was settled between the employee and the respective unions in terms of the bargaining units? Are there any outstanding moneys?

Hon. Sinanan: At the end of the day, the answer to that is no.

Mr. Indarsingh: None?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: What is the current status of the collective bargaining process as it relates to monthly-paid and daily-rated employees and for what period? Could you advise this meeting, please?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chairman, we do not have that information. It is with the CPO and we will have that, again, in writing produced to you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 14. Could the hon. Members indicate—Sub-Item 14. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many committees are in place at the moment, Cabinet-appointed committees?

Hon. Sinanan: At this point in time we have budgeted \$434,000 because we expect to have the air service agreement committee established, the steering committee on the overseas—the operationalization of the MVA transport authority, and those are two steering committees that are expected to come on stream in this fiscal year.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, well one of my questions was answered by the Minister. I was going to ask a question on what were the Cabinet-appointed committees. But the other question I want to ask, I just want to understand clearly from the Minister, am I correct in saying that you have indicated that there has been no loss of employees over the year, that there are no plans to hire employees, but that there is a review of daily-paid employees? Am I correct?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, you indicated that—through you, Madam Chair—you are doing the manpower analysis, the needs analysis. When did that start and who is doing it and when will it be completed?

Hon. Sinanan: This project started in 2016 by PwC and there is a report that is being reviewed internally.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Singh: Just for my and for those who are listening, the PwC completed a review of the daily-rated workers required for the Ministry?

Hon. Sinanan: Which is being reviewed at this time.

Mr. Singh: The report is completed? It is being reviewed by whom?

Hon. Sinanan: By the Ministry.

Mr. Singh: By the Ministry. And what is the period of time that you have allotted for the review?

Hon. Sinanan: The shortest possible time. I expect that to be done shortly.

Mr. Singh: So it goes back to my initial question. When was it completed, the review by PwC?

Hon. Sinanan: Let me just make a correction there. It was Ernst & Young who did the study and it was submitted in April of 2017.

Mr. Singh: April of 2017. So that, therefore, you want to review what you said about the shortest possible time.

Hon. Sinanan: Well no, these things do take some time, I mean.

Mr. Singh: Could you enlighten us, through you Madam Chair, as to the recommendations of that report?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, I do not have the details of the recommendations at this time?

Me. Singh: Could you provide the Parliament with a copy of those recommendations.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Singh: And could you indicate to us what was the cost of the Ernst & Young report?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have those figures at this time, but I will be willing to submit them to you.

Mr. Singh: And did the union participate in the consultative process with Ernst & Young?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, I will have to get that information to you.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, line item 14, going back to “Remuneration to members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees”, you mentioned that one of those Cabinet-appointed committees will be dealing with the MVA. Now, most recently, a few months ago, we have dealt with moving traffic offences into violations. Could you give us a sense of timeline as well as the report coming out from this Cabinet-appointed committees that will help to flesh out the fruition of that particular piece of legislation? What support is being provided by the Cabinet-appointed committee to ensure that this is not just on the statute books but rather implementation would be coming forward?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we do have an operationalized committee in place and we are looking at the third quarter of this year to have this committee in place.

Madam Chairman: Is it related to the—

Hon. Sinanan: Certain areas have been implemented.

Mr. Padarath: Could the hon. Minister confirm, Madam Chair, through you, whether or not the committee has actually met?

Hon. Sinanan: No, no. The operationalized, that committee have met and have been meeting for quite a while.

Mr. Padarath: But then Minister, you just indicated—

Hon. Sinanan: This is a different committee here.

Mr. Padarath: This is a separate and apart from.

Hon. Sinanan: This is separate and apart from the operationalized committee with comprises members from the different Ministries.

Mr. Padarath: But is it again, a separate Cabinet-appointed committee or is it a subcommittee of the original committee?

Madam Chairman: Which committee are you talking about?

Hon. Sinanan: Which one are you talking about? Are you speaking about the operationalized?

Mr. Padarath: I am asking whether or not—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. For clarification, the line Item refers to a Cabinet-appointed committee. I believe the Minister said that a committee under

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

the MVA for the transport committee is to be established. This is what this line item relates to, so I am allowing questions relating to that.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, through you, again to the hon. Minister. I just wanted the clarification of whether or not that original committee, the MVA committee that you spoke of, is separate and apart from an operationalizing committee?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, it is.

Mr. Padarath: And has that operationalizing committee met?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: And what support is that giving in terms of the fruition of this piece of legislation, if you can give us an idea of how advanced that is.

Madam Chairman: Well, Member for Princes Town, I will not allow that if you are talking about the operationalized committee. I would not allow that kind of questioning for this. From what we understand, that is a committee of public servants, so it does not fall under this line item. Is that all you wish to ask? Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just, Madam Chair, again, through you, and I heard the Minister indicate to my colleague from Caroni East—and I am seeking just a bit of clarification as it relates to the manpower audit exercise. It was done in full concurrence with the bargaining, the recognized majority unions as it relates to the daily-paid and monthly-paid bargaining units?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chairman, this was a request coming out of the CPO's office. It is for daily-paid workers and it is a needs analysis.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I am following the information. I am just seeking further clarification in relation to what you outlined for my colleague the Member for Caroni East. Was it done with the full agreement and—

Hon. Sinanan: As I said to the Member for Caroni East, we will get that information to you.

Mr. Indarsingh: So you have no idea—

Hon. Sinanan: No, at this point in time.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Indarsingh:—as line Minister an exercise—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, in the interest of us making full benefit of this exercise, if you are tying it to a line Item, yeah I will allow it. You will have an opportunity for general questions in another forum. Okay?

Mr. Indarsingh: No problem.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you under Sub-Item 002, Highways—

Hon. Sinanan: 002—

Dr. Gopeesingh: On page 274—

Madam Chairman: Might I ask before we go to there. Just for order sake, I can take it, but I just want to ensure that we are finished with 001.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. All right fine. I am waiting.

Madam Chairman: Are there any more questions with 001? Okay, so then we are moving on to 002, and I would take the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister could you or our technocrat explain the difference between in Sub-Item 01, which is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances which is \$9.76 million and “Wages and C.O.L.A (including Leave Pay)” which is \$105 million? Probably I am missing something. The difference between one line item of salaries and the other one is wages. What is the differentiation there? Probably a technocrat can help us there?

Hon. Sinanan: One is monthly and one is daily-paid.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And which one is monthly, salaries?

Hon. Sinanan: The salaries.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The salaries is monthly. Thanks. I wanted to get—I appreciate it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. The item there, “Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances” you have a variance by an increase of \$323,000. How do you explain that? Is it for an increase in the salary itself because you said that there was no increase in numbers?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: There are some vacant positions that we expect to fill.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, so that will cover the potential hiring?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. As we go down the line then, Madam Chair, through you, we are likely to see opportunities for new hiring in the system?

Hon. Sinanan: Once the vacant posts exist.

Dr. Tewarie: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Under Highways, Sub-Item 002, what percentage increase is included there under “Wages and C.O.L.A” in line with the union agreement? What percentage is catered for?

Madam Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. We have settled all the negotiations, outstanding payments and the negotiations are conducted by the CPO. So I do not know if that will answer the question.

Dr. Rambachan: In a three-year agreement, you will have 4 per cent, 5 percent or 6 per cent every year. How much have you included? If the agreement was 4 per cent for this particular year, have you included that percentage in this 2018 estimate?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, that would have been taken into consideration.

Dr. Rambachan: All right, if you included it, in 2017 the Wages and C.O.L.A was \$106,000,800 and in 2018 it is down to \$105 million, a drop of \$1.8 million. So it could not be that you are keeping the same workforce and increasing by the percentage and get a figure that is lower.

Hon. Sinanan: You are presuming that nobody will retire during that period. We did have and we do expect normal attrition during this period, and that was taken into consideration as well.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I am not satisfied but, you know, I am listening to you, but it does seem to me that there is an unstated policy of not filling positions and of very silently reducing the labour force, the daily-paid labour force in the Ministry of Works and Transport. But in line with that, I would like to just look at the item just below that. Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts-Salaries & C.O.L.A (without

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

incumbents). I see throughout the different divisions you have allocated money under that in 2018, and here you have allocated \$500,000. Are you going to fill those positions?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, this is the money that we have been given. So the answer is yes, we intend to fill, but we have to wait for Service Commission because they are the ones who will approve that.

Dr. Rambachan: Finally, how many persons are employed at the Ministry of Works and Transport now, in terms of daily-rated and monthly?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, at the daily-rated we have 3,866; the contract workers is 323 and the establishment is 1,549 and the short-term contracts are 57, bringing a total—

Dr. Rambachan: What do you mean by “establishment”, the salaries, monthly-paid and so on? Right.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow up on the Member for Tabaquite. Hon. Minister, how many positions are vacant in each category?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, that we will produce that for you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair, I am looking at 02, Wages and C.O.L.A; there is a decrease of \$1.8 million but at 29—that is on the next page—I see an increase in Overtime—Daily-Rated Workers. Why would you decrease Wages and C.O.L.A and increase—and I suspect that the numbers are reduced, but at the same time you are reducing the numbers but increasing overtime. That is looking at 02 and 29.

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, that budgeted figure is for arrears that is outstanding, claims and so on. Sorry. Traveling claims, outstanding traveling claims.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just again, a bit of clarification because I am trying to follow all the information that is coming out here. In relation to vacant posts and a commitment to fill vacancies and then I am hearing about a manpower audit exercise, so if the manpower exercise says that there must be a rationalization, a downsizing of the workforce and so on, is there going to be a contradiction of the stated policies here or the information that is being given to this meeting?

Hon. Sinanan: The needs analysis is for the daily-rated employees and the monthly-paid is what we are doing the manpower audit on. The vacant posts are for the monthly-paid employees.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. Member for Caroni East, could you just ensure that your mike is switched on? Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, thanks, thanks. Hon. Minister, if we look at the bottom of page 274.

Hon. Sinanan: What page we are on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: We are still of 002, Highways, under the line Item carried forward, there is a differentiation between actual expenditure in 2016 of \$135 million versus 2018 estimates of \$125 million which is about a \$10 million differentiation and that is following from what my colleague from Tabaquite was asking. What will be responsible for the entire \$10 million less under this item here? If we go to the—

Madam Chairman: Caroni East, one minute please. It is so unusual, but it is really difficult to hear you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh sorry. *[Laughter]* I thought my voice was loud. Can you hear me now? The differentiation in short, hon. Minister. The 2016 actual is \$135 million and 2018 estimates is \$125 million, a \$10 million differentiation. Any explanation? Was 2016 to pay arrears on salaries or wages or arrears and wages or that is by attrition of staff?

Hon. Sinanan: You are at 274, right?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, page 274, it is a sub-total. It is carried over on the next page. If we get an idea here now it will help us.

Hon. Sinanan: You are dealing with 2016 to 2018?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Actual in 2016, \$135 million, estimate for 2018 \$125 million, a \$10 million differentiation.

Hon. Sinanan: From 2016 to 2018, you are going to where?

Dr. Gopeesingh: At the bottom of page 274.

Madam Chairman: But the question is really what accounts for the difference between 2016 and 2018.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: What I would say though, Member for Caroni East, I think you do have 2017 here and I guess in 2016/2017 you would have asked a particular question. So if you could maybe look at it in terms of what currently we are looking at.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, there is a decrease from the previous year which was a decrease from the previous year.

Hon. Sinanan: Well, I could give you the \$3 million. There is a decrease of \$3 million from 2017 to 2018. There is a decrease of \$3 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What accounts for it?

Hon. Sinanan: The total on page 275.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there any explanation for this, Sir?

Hon. Sinanan: So the \$3 million would have been based on what we identified before. I cannot give you from 2016 to 2018.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But 2017, 2018.

Hon. Sinanan: It is just a \$3 million difference.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Differentiation?

Hon. Sinanan: Right and we would have made that up to you with the employees. Member, if you look at line Item where we have the \$1.8 million, we explained that and then if you go to the allowances.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you partly answered it when you indicated to—

Hon. Sinanan: We answered. Well, that is the reason for the \$3 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The attrition aspect.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. That is the \$1.8 million.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to know whether it was in relation to previous arrears on back pay and so on.

Hon. Sinanan: No, no.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

2.10 p.m.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. In respect of just the Highways, 275, the decrease of \$2.960 million, given that in 2018, this year, you would be doing a number of projects that you probably were not involved, the Toco Road, the Moruga Road, the overpass, is it that the Highways Division can do the same work, increased workload with reduced numbers or static numbers or are these projects allocated elsewhere? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at 2017, the estimate was \$4 million; 2018, it is \$4.3 million. The revised was 6.8. We sought to pay for outstanding arrears in 2017, which we do not have in 2018, so there is an increase in 2018.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite? We now move on to 003, which is on page 275; 003, Traffic Management. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Minister, I want to raise a matter that has to do with traffic management on the highway but relates to something in my constituency. There is a portion of the highway just under a popular eating place called Highway Roti Shop, and it has been widened and is able to accommodate parked vehicles. However, that has turned out to be a traffic hazard, and we have had a situation where accidents—

Madam Chairman: Member, excuse me, in the interest of time, I cannot allow that type of question under this consideration. It may be a question regarding your constituency that you can ask at another opportunity, okay? So that if you have another question you want to ask under the line Items here, I will allow it. Member.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, I simply wanted to ask if the accommodation could be made on the highway to make it safe, that is all.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask a question? As far as I can see, we are on Personnel Expenditure, 003 Traffic Management, Wages and Salaries, I really do not understand, so I could ask you, perhaps you understand the relevance.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla—I think the Member understands we are moving on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to confirm, Minister, Traffic Management, is it limited to traffic wardens or is it expansive? And if it is, what it includes, please?

Hon. Sinanan: This does not include the traffic wardens.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, just again Minister, I see Government's Contribution to NIS has been reduced by \$425,000, any particular reason?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is what we had received for this period. This figure is what we would have received for this period.

Mr. Indarsingh: It does not satisfy me, but I really—

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Would it be this is what you receive and you would just accept it, would it be that you will be in debt to the NIS?

Hon. Sinanan: We will request money as required in the mid-year review to ensure that we make the necessary payments and contributions.

Mr. Indarsingh: But just on that—

Dr. Rambachan: Follow-up question, sorry.

Madam Chairman: Just for a minute, I would recognize the Member for Tabaquite, so after I will come back to you.

Dr. Rambachan: But Minister, how is it that a Ministry can be in debt to the NIS when you prosecute private companies when they are in debt to the NIS? Is the Ministry observing the tenet of the law?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport. You want to defer to the Minister of Finance on this?

Mr. Imbert: I can come in here. There is no question of the Ministry being in debt. In fact, the Minister said the opposite. He said they will make the payments as and when they are required, so there is no debt. No debt has arisen.

Dr. Rambachan: Does the Minister of Finance make similar provisions for private sector companies who may not be able to meet their payments like the Ministry of Works and Transport not being able to meet its payments?

Mr. Imbert: That is not so. The Minister said the payments will be made as and when required. So that that question is not relevant.

Dr. Rambachan: Very relevant.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I fully endorse what the Member for Tabaquite is saying, and, additionally, Minister, say for example if someone retires and goes to the National Insurance Board seeking, or applies for his or her retirement benefits and they have been told that payments have not be made up, or contributions have not been paid on their behalf, what is their position, Minister?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, the Member is taking a stand—

Mr. Imbert: Let me deal with that. I just want to make it crystal clear that the Government treats very seriously the question of obligations to the National Insurance Board, and Ministries will be given the necessary funds or transfers, and virements will be approved, or supplementary funding will be made available as and when required. So this entire discussion does not arise. It has not arisen and will not arise.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman, through you to the Minister of Finance, in giving that response just now. I have a concern, under Traffic Management, 003, you have 01 Item of \$1.6 million budgeted for Salaries and Cost of Living; 02, Wages and COLA, budgeted 12.7; under the 05, Government's Contribution to NIS, Items 01, 02 would have taken into account a certain number of employees on the payroll; 07 should also take into account the salaries and wages related to Item 01, 02—

Mr. Imbert: 07? There is no 07.

Mr. Lee: 05, Minister. Okay, sorry, I apologize, 05. So I am trying to understand why would you not budget the correct amount for the employer's contribution in relationship to the number of employees and the quantum that you would have budgeted for wages?

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. I recognize that you have not been in a Cabinet Government before, but when these estimates are done, if supplementary funding is required, they will be made available. [*Crosstalk*]

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Member: It was not meant to be pejorative.

Mr. Imbert: I am being very serious. In any budget these are merely estimates of expenditure; that is why we have a mid-year review around April or May of every year, and if there is a shortfall in any area it will be supplemented. In addition, during the period prior to the mid-year review Permanent Secretaries have the authority to request a transfer or a virement from another Head in order to supplement a Vote if additional funding is required. So there is no problem.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima. So we are moving on to Item 004, Central Planning Unit, which is on page 276. Item 005, Drainage, which is on page 276. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 29, the Overtime for Daily-Rated Workers, the analysis that was done by Ernst & Young would incorporate all these things in the context of overtime and the manpower requirements. In the area of Guayamare, which is part of my constituency that is part of the central drainage area, you have significant staff shortages, and that is why I am interested in the recommendations of the Ernst & Young report, and I just used the line Item to make that request, to reinforce that request, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I want to follow up with the Member for Chaguanas West, in that regard, what is the complement that is required in the Drainage Division and how many do you really have now? How many vacancies then are there in the Drainage Division given that we have all these drainage problems?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, we will submit that to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the hon. Minister can also indicate the amount that would be required also for the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla—Sangre Grande?

Hon. Sinanan: The entire drainage department. We would do it for the entire drainage department.

Madam Chairman: Do it for the entire drainage department, all right, thank you. Can we move on to Item 006, Mechanical Services, which is on page 277. Item 007, Maintenance, which is on pages 277 and 278. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, on both items, Sub-Items 01 and 02, I

presume that Maintenance here refers to the maintenance of mechanical equipment, and what have you, in the Ministry.

Hon. Sinanan: No, it is not mechanical, mechanical is under the Mechanical Services, that is 006.

Dr. Rambachan: What does Maintenance refer to then?

Hon. Sinanan: The buildings, and so, government buildings, Ministry of Works and Transport buildings, things like that.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Construction, page 278. Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme, page 279. [*Interruption*] Okay, I am sorry, I did not see it. Member for Tabaquite.

Mr. Rambachan: Under Construction, is the Minister aware that these funds here of \$11 million, \$11 million on the average, being paid to on Wages and COLA and \$14.5 million on Salaries and Cost of Living? Is the Minister aware that a lot of times these people just do not have any materials to do their jobs and that we are probably spending money here without getting productivity and any returns for it?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, this is one department that I am looking at. There are a lot more challenges than just not material, there are some physical infrastructure challenge, and we are looking at this very closely to get some value for money out of this department.

Dr. Rambachan: Is the Minister therefore saying that we are not getting value for money at this point in time?

Hon. Sinanan: We can get a lot more value for money.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Anything else on Item 008, Construction? Therefore, we move on to Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme, page 279. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many persons are employed in this programme and the regional distribution of that employment?

Hon. Sinanan: This is the monthly paid staff, eh, this is not the daily paid URP, you want the monthly paid staff on the establishment? Okay, we would

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

submit that in writing to you, because what we are dealing here with is the monthly paid staff.

Madam Chairman: Anything else on 012? Can we move on then to Item 013, General Administration (Transport), page 279. Item 014, Transport, page 280. Item 015, Maritime Services, page 280 and 281. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 281. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Sub-Item number 16, Contract Employment, could the hon. Minister indicate the reason for the substantial increase in that allocation from '16 to '17?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure. You said there is an increase, Contract Employment?

Mr. Karim: Well, I am looking at from 2016 onward to 2018.

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the—okay, I have 2017 to—

Mr. Karim: Well, if you look at '17 you will see the figure is about \$12.4 million, up from a \$7 million estimate.

Hon. Sinanan: This is page 281.

Mr. Karim: Page 281.

Hon. Sinanan: Sixteen, this is what we would have used in 2017—

Mr. Karim: I was just asking what might be responsible—

Hon. Sinanan: The revised figures and the estimate for 2018 is the exact, is the same figure.

Mr. Karim: What caused that increase from the year before? Page 281, Minister of Finance.

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at the Short-term Employment Vote, it went down significantly in 2017, so what it meant is that the short term, we moved people out of short term to the—

Mr. Karim: You moved them out of short term?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, into more sustained employment. So that is why the short term went down significantly and the contract employees went up.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 08, can you account for the decrease in the Rent/Lease of Office Accommodations? And if you can provide the answer for how many properties are currently leased or rented, and what is the monthly cost and storage spaces as well?

Hon. Sinanan: We had some arrears, through you, Madam Chair, in 2017 and we tried to address it. Those arrears have been paid, so in 2018 we do not have that amount of arrears again.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. If the hon. Minister can indicate what properties are currently leased or storage spaces.

Hon. Sinanan: We can submit that to you in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Item 28, under the same Sub-Head, would you indicate, Minister, an example of what Other Contracted Services involves?—just one example would do? Page 281, Item 28, under Goods and Services, General Administration.

Hon. Sinanan: This could account for things like consultancy fees, and so on.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, when we look at Short-term Employment, can you give us an idea of the areas that are being targeted with respect to Short-term Employment?

Hon. Sinanan: You want to break that question down a little bit?

Mr. Padarath: What would account for a line Item, like line Item 22, with respect to Short-term Employment?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, this will account for a service that you need for like a short period of time. Let us say if you want to do an audit in the audit department and you want to bring in some for a short period of time, maybe a two months, a three months for a specific project.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, line 17, Training, I would just like to enquire who will be utilizing this training and what skills will be targeted to be improved upon?

Hon. Sinanan: At this point, the Ministry is developing its training plan, and this is basically for the employees, and this is for the employees of the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West, you have any further question?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, I just need to know if any special skills that would have to be targeted or no?

Hon. Sinanan: We are looking right now at things like project management, and so.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Hon. Sinanan: And also things like maritime.

Madam Chairman: Okay, are you finished, Member for Oropouche West?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West, you have no question? Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just to follow up from Member for Oropouche West, Minister, are you satisfied that an allocation of \$57,000, an increase of—well, it is \$80,000 really to focus on training for your entire Ministry? And how many employees will benefit from this exercise?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, what we are trying to do at the Ministry is more with less. We are thankful for whatever we get, and I just want to draw your attention that each department does have a separate Training Vote. So this Training Vote here is for the General Administration. So other divisions do have a separate Training Vote.

Madam Chairman: Okay, are we finished with Item 001, General Administration? So we can go on to Item 022, Highways, pages 282 and 283. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, we are doing Goods and Services, Item 002, Highways, it is on pages 282 and 283.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Karim: Can I ask a question with respect to line Item 34 on 282?

Madam Chairman: So we are going back to Goods and Services.

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, I just want Members to remember what the agreement was. Okay, so I allow it on this intervention, but I am going to try to call the page, right?

Mr. Karim: That will help.

Madam Chairman: I will try and raise my voice when I call the page, okay?

Mr. Karim: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So we are on page 282, and we are on line Item 34. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. If the hon. Minister could give us a status on this University Graduate Recruitment Programme, which was first mentioned by the Minister of Finance in the 2016 budget?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this Item has appeared in the last three budgets but financial constraints have prevented us from activating the programme. Hopefully this year we can do it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: On page 282, Madam Chair, Water and Sewerage Rates, Item 06 under Highways, I noticed that there is an increase—

Madam Chairman: Okay, just hold up one minute, please, Member for Chaguanas West, are we finished with Item 001?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 002, Highways, pages 282 and 283. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you. The first question I have is with respect to Item 06, Water and Sewerage Rates. I noticed that in '16, '17 there was no allocation, but in 2018 there is a \$60,000 allocation, which I am sure WASA will welcome, but I want to know, are there any arrears owed to the Water and Sewerage Authority by the Ministry or Works and Transport and/or its agencies to that utility?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: The reason why, through you, Madam Chair, is that this year we have a line Item for the figure. It was being paid before under General Administration. So it was being paid before and now we have a separate line Item for it.

Mr. Singh: Part of the question, are there any arrears owed to the Water and Sewerage Authority for rates under the Ministry of Works and Transport and/or any of its agencies?

Hon. Sinanan: I would hope not, and I am not aware of any.

Mr. Singh: But if when you check, please provide the Parliament with the necessary update.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Singh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 04, Electricity, there is an increase of \$124,000 here, is this in anticipation of any impending rate hikes?

Hon. Sinanan: The answer to that is, no.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, Item 28, under Goods and Services, page 283, Other Contracted Services, the Minister, in a previous question asking what these were for, said it is likely to be consultancies. Now, I am mentioning this one here, which is \$5 million, and there was one before which I did not flag, another \$3 million, is the answer to this one also the same?

Hon. Sinanan: No, General Admin will be a different type of contracted services, this is Highways. So this Vote here would be used for works, physical works under Highways.

Dr. Tewarie: So these are physical contracts, contractual obligations?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, infrastructure works.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, line Item 43, Security Services, an increase of \$400,000 here, could you indicate if this—well, I am guessing it is private security services—what would account for an increase of \$400,000 for Security Services?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: What we have in 2018, through you, Madam Chairman, is some outstanding bills, so we have requested some additional funding there. The increase is for outstanding bills.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, through you, Madam, would you give us the undertaking to indicate out of this increase of \$400,000 how much you anticipate would have been used for bills from the past, or whether or not really, in truth and in fact, this may be adding to this year's bill? So if you can give us the undertaking of how much will be used to clear out outstanding bills, and what those outstanding bills would have been, and what are the Contracted Services for this financial year?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you. Madam Chairman, on page 283, are we dealing with Traffic Management?

Madam Chairman: No, we are not.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister, line Item 28, Other Contracted Services, could the Minister in writing give a listing of what makes up that \$22.7 million for 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we are move on now to Item 003, Traffic Management, pages 283 to 284. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 12, Materials and Supplies, there is a marginal increase of \$15,000, it has been brought to my attention, hon. Minister, that the persons who draw the white lines on the road, they have a shortage of paint and that therefore they are unable to draw the white lines because of that shortage, whether or not the addition of \$15,000 is sufficient to meet that demand that they have, having regard to the expansion of the road network and the need for more white paint on the roads.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

2.40 p.m.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, again, we are thankful for the increase of \$15,000 and if more paint is required we will go back to the Ministry of Finance in the mid-year review and request further funding.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, I just want to flag 28 again, Other Contracted Services, and to ask what these are likely to be.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, these are like routine maintenance on the traffic lights and so on.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, so these are maintenance contracts?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Minister, may I ask, how do you in the traffic management and transport arena, address the things such as transportation efficiency, traffic management, the possibility of park and ride and so on? Where does that figure in the Ministry?

Hon. Sinanan: Those come under traffic studies, so we will, from time to time—I can tell you now that we are doing some studies on park and ride. As a matter of fact, we do have a project that the Ministry is going to initiate shortly.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, this is something that predates you, predates a lot of us, materials and supplies. The length of time which paint lasts on the road seems to be decreasing. Have you been doing any quality checks now on the quality of paint being supplied which they are using on the roads? They do not seem to last more than a couple of weeks.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, we are using now the thermoplast paint which seems to be holding up a lot longer than the regular paint on the road.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 43, Security Services. A small amount of \$10,000. What would that be for? I am just curious.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, the Traffic Management Unit does have some facilities that require, from time to time, security, depending on the areas that they are working on. So that line item basically covers that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, in keeping with what the Member for Tabaquite asked under materials and so on, some of the highways need badly the cat eyes to help in traffic flow. There is no consideration here what I see from it. Is it something that you could contemplate, viring some funding from one area to another?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you have a small amount in any case, \$800,000, that cannot do anything.

Hon. Sinanan: I am still grateful for whatever little we get.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I know your hands are tied.

Mr. Singh: Page 284 with Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, for the traffic management area—Item 62. We are going into a new arena of law with traffic light violations, and I notice that in the context of the culture of the country that you have now less moneys being allocated for the publicity of that. Is it that you plan to? There ought to have been a campaign in order to educate people. But how are you going to address that issue in the context of the new law that has emerged in the context of the allocation that you have a reduction?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, Madam Chair, this is one of the line Items that once we are ready to roll that aspect of the traffic management out, we will be approaching the Minister of Finance for some additional funding. But that will be an entire campaign.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, on that issue. The traffic light management issue, will that be done by the private sector, these new traffic lights, or will it be done by the Ministry?

Hon. Sinanan: The Ministry.

Mr. Singh: Ministry?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, I just wanted to get from the Minister, Item 12. This Materials and Supplies, what does it really refer to, in terms of what materials? We spoke about paint. Are there other materials?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes; this is like the signage and so. Metal sheet signage, take for instance like the speed limit that we expect to—

Dr. Rambachan: But not material for the repair of roads?

Hon. Sinanan: No, no, no.

Dr. Rambachan: Because I want to ask you about Mosquito Creek.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, again on line Item 12, Materials and Supplies. Minister, I have been noticing on the highways that the issue of the cable barriers, the repair of those cable barriers continue to be a burning issue, in that, when there are accidents it takes a long while for the cable

barriers to be repaired, and in many instances when you drive from north to south, there are many instances where those barriers have not been repaired in months. Could you give us an indication of how through this vote and in any other area, a programme would be put in place to deal with the cable barriers? I know the reason for justifying the bringing on of the cable barriers was really to save lives, but if we have where it is not being repaired months on, then it is not really effecting what it was supposed to do.

Hon. Sinanan: The Item that you are speaking about is under Other Contracted Services, and it is something that we are looking at because it is a very expensive maintenance. I can tell you at the Ministry right now we are looking at doing a feasibility study whether we can continue to afford it, because the maintenance is very, very expensive.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, on the same issue can you indicate whether or not there is an existing contract with any company right now?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, there is.

Mr. Padarath: And could you indicate who the company is?

Hon. Sinanan: Is it UNICOMER? The company I think is UNISURE, but I could confirm that to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: So, can we move. Item 004, Central Planning Unit, this is at page 284. Item 005, Drainage, at page 285.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 05: Telephones. There is a significant increases in telephones of \$607,000. Can the Minister indicate what accounts for this increase?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, if you look at 2017, you would see it was an estimated \$900,000; 2018 is \$900,000. Because there was some need to verify the bills in 2017; that is where the increase is. It is really not an increase at the estimated 2017 over the estimated 2018.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I thought you would have looked at bringing it down in light of the fact that you have less money.

Hon. Sinanan: Well, we have. If you look at 2016, it was \$994,000 now it is \$900,000. There is a 10 per cent reduction.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is this for land lines or for mobile?

Hon. Sinanan: Sorry?

Madam Chairman: Can you speak a little more loudly, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is this mobiles or land line or a combination?

Hon. Sinanan: It is a combination.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15, Drainage, Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment. In 2017, \$150,000 was budgeted, the revised estimate is \$3,000, and now there is an increase. It is now \$100,000. In light of the floodings that we experienced this year, and the need for equipment and the maintenance of equipment to effect those repairs in Williamsville and the Guaracara River, et cetera, is \$97,000 in your view an increase adequate to deal with what we are seeing evolving in terms of the flooding?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chairman, what we are doing right now, again, in the Ministry, is the equipment for all the different departments to have a more holistic view of what is happening, rather than separate the drainage equipment, because we have one garage and what we are trying to do now is to get the garage a lot more efficient by having the vote—

Mr. Charles: So you are satisfied, Minister, that this \$97,000 is going to give us the kind of equipment repairs and maintenance to satisfy—

Hon. Sinanan: Again, \$97,000 is not much for equipment, but what we have decided to do is to pull it out as a project and have the vehicle maintenance looked at as a project, rather than each different—

Mr. Padarath: Madam, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 09, Rent/Lease Vehicles and Equipment, an increase of \$905,000. Minister one of the main complaints has been the dredging of rivers. Can you indicate with respect to this particular line Item whether or not this increase would see several of the rivers that have created serious flooding problems be addressed in terms of dredging, and whether or not you believe that this increase is significant enough to have an impact that is desired?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chairman, to answer the question in short, is that we are looking at the dredging as something that has to be done, and if it means that we have to move funding around to get most of the rivers, especially the mouths of the rivers clean, it is something that we are looking at seriously.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, following on that particular point, I know that whether it is south Trinidad or north Trinidad, we have been seeing, for instance, the Maraval River—my colleague from Naparima raised the Guaracara River, which has caused significant flooding in both parts of Trinidad and Tobago.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Would those two areas be prioritized with respect to this particular line Item for that funding to be utilized, or whether or not you have an existing list at the Ministry in terms of priority areas?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, most of those that you are speaking about is done under the DP programme, so this money here definitely will not be enough to do all that river cleaning and so, but we do have other programmes that we do river cleaning from.

Mr. Padarath: Certainly. So, therefore, Minister, can you then indicate what are the target areas with respect to the increase, with respect to this particular line Item, if it would not be used for those rivers and so on?

Hon. Sinanan: We could get you a listing and submit it to you, on our work programme.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 28 under Drainage. The contracted services referred here to, does this refer to the rental of equipment in part?

Hon. Sinanan: 09 is Rent/Lease of Vehicle and Equipment, and which is the other one you called?

Dr. Rambachan: 28, Other Contracted Services.

Hon. Sinanan: 28 is where we do projects, small projects.

Dr. Rambachan: So you are contracting out cleaning of a river?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, they have like the walls and so, and desilting. Some you do under 28, and some you do under the 09.

Dr. Rambachan: Would the rental of a pump at Mosquito Creek be included under this?

Hon. Sinanan: No, that is under NIDCO.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15, again. I see in the revised estimates only \$3,000 was spent for repairs and maintenance of equipment—only \$3,000. I knew you said that you were centralizing it and what. Are you satisfied that \$3,000 is adequate, given the problems that we experienced this year, and could that have been the bottleneck problem why we could not deal with the problems?

Hon. Sinanan: No. The answer to that is no. That would not have been the problem.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Charles: So \$3,000 is a misrepresentation here? My car costs more than that to maintain. You could give it in writing.

Hon. Sinanan: I will give it in writing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line 09, Vehicles. I am seeing here Vehicles and Equipment, but my question is, what vehicles are to be leased and from which company those vehicles would be leased from, and for what purpose?

Hon. Sinanan: I cannot say which company will lease the vehicles, but it is equipment that they would lease from time to time, and because it is drainage, from time to time you might have backhoes, trucks, things like that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Items 09 and 28, is there moneys owed to contractors who leased equipment or who contracted services over the period, and could you provide a listing of the moneys owed to those contractors if it is in fact so.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, we will.

Madam Chairman: Can we therefore now move on to Item 006, Mechanical Services, page 286.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, line Items 37 and 43. Again, we are seeing an increase of \$25,000, if you look at Janitorial Services under line Item 37, an increase of \$25,000. If you look at line Item 43, Security Services, an increase of \$95,000. Are there existing service contracts with companies and, therefore, if there is, why is there such a huge jump or an anticipated jump.

Hon. Sinanan: The answer to that, Madam Speaker, is we do have existing bills outstanding, and there is no increase in the price per say, but this is for—

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, the existing contracts that you have, could you indicate, and probably in writing, you may not have it right now, but under line Items 37 and 43 what is the period of the existing contracts that you have? And whether or not they are coming up for renewal or whether or not it will expire? How you wish to treat with that in terms of sending it to us in writing, is your prerogative.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So are we complete with Item 006, Mechanical Services, and therefore we go on to Item 007, Maintenance, pages 286 to 287.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Lee: Line Item 43, Security Services, under Maintenance on page 287, line Item 43, Security Services. Is the Minister saying in 2017 they had no security services provided, because I saw in the revised estimates it was zero, and in 2018 you have now budgeted 423, but in 2016 you had an expenditure of 423 also. Could the Minister explain what happened in 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, this is for the outstanding bills that we did not pay in 2017.

Mr. Lee: Just to add, so you are saying that this is arrears for 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: A combination.

Mr. Lee: Of budgeted and arrears?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: Sub-Item 06, Water and Sewerage Rates. I see that you have in the 2018 estimates a sum of \$200,000, an increase of \$195,000. Is it because you only allocated \$5,000 in 2017 and that therefore the addition is to pay the outstanding rates?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: You therefore do not budget for an increase in rates for 2018 then?

Hon. Sinanan: No, we do not.

Madam Chairman: So can we move on to Item 008, Construction, pages 287 to 288.

Mr. Padarath: To the hon. Minister, just for my information really, line Item 58 with respect to medical expenses. Could the hon. Minister give us an indication of what that is about?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, this is for the daily-rated establishment because from time to time we do send them for medical checks.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit, page 288.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I note under Contract Employment that while you had budgeted \$4.2 million in 2017, the revised estimate amount to \$2.669 million, and you are holding the same amount in 2018. Is it that you have reduced the number of employees in the Environmental Health and Safety Unit?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, this unit is currently being restructured, and the intention is to put some of the employees into the different units.

Dr. Rambachan: Are you suggesting that you are going to be closing down the Environmental Health and Safety Unit?

Hon. Sinanan: No, Sir, it is just that we want to transfer some of the employees—the monitoring aspect.

Dr. Rambachan: What is the function of the Environmental Health and Safety Unit, and I emphasize “safety”.

Hon. Sinanan: What they do, they look at the different buildings that we have in the Ministry to ensure that they are up to the—and any projects that we are doing, health and safety standards.

Dr. Rambachan: So they would oversee, for example, contractors who are working on the highway projects and so on?

Hon. Sinanan: What they would do is look at the contracts as well to ensure that the contract has the necessary requirements for health and safety.

Dr. Rambachan: And with the expansion of work that you are doing now—completion of the Point Fortin highway, Toco, Valencia, Manzanilla, what have you—by whittling down the size of the unit, are you going to be able to accommodate all of that work that has to be done?

Hon. Sinanan: What we do is we basically set the policy, and then you would have the different divisions, say NIDCO, whoever handling the projects, remember they too would have their health and safety departments. The Ministry deals basically with the policy.

Dr. Rambachan: So NIDCO has a health and safety department and a health and safety officer?

Hon. Sinanan: I will confirm that for you. But what we basically do is look at the contracts and the policy going forward.

Dr. Rambachan: But it is clear that the unit is being whittled own?

Hon. Sinanan: It is being restructured.

Dr. Rambachan: That is a neat way of saying that it is not being reduced.

Hon. Sinanan: Well, it is not being reduced.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, I want to focus on contract employment, but I want to ask a general question. When you were talking about drainage, Minister, you talked about the fact that a lot of the services are contracted. When we talk about the work—

Hon. Sinanan: I do not think I said a lot of the services are being contracted. We do have Contracted Services, but we also do a lot in-house.

Dr. Tewarie: From the Ministry?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: These are daily-paid workers who do this?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, that is the question I was going to ask. You have nearly 4,000 daily-paid workers. How are they deployed for all of these things? The Ministry of Works and Transport is a very extensive Ministry in terms of the production that it does for the country. How are they deployed in relation to these contracted services that you have?

Hon. Sinanan: I will send you a breakdown on how it is deployed, but remember we operate with districts, so each district will have their cadre.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is regional distribution?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit, page 289.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, line Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, we see an increase of \$107,000, but when you look at line Sub-Item 37 for janitorial services more has been allocated for that, an increase of \$115,000. The point I wish to make and ask of the hon. Minister is, in light of the legislation that was recently passed, moving offences into violations, where you will need stronger manpower, how then do you justify contract employment at \$107,000, with an increase of only \$107,000, when there is that required manpower that will be needed to effect the legislation, and then after you have on line Sub-Item 37, Janitorial Services at \$115 000? Again, is this \$115,000 for bills that have not been paid, outstanding bills? So I am particularly looking at 16 and 37. How do you reconcile the two?

Hon. Sinanan: So, of it will be for outstanding payments. What is the other question?

Mr. Padarath: The other one with respect to contract employment and the manpower that will be needed to effect the impending legislation with respect to the violations as opposed to offences?

Hon. Sinanan: Remember we are using a lot of technology going forward with the violations. We will be using technology, not necessarily more boots on the ground.

Mr. Padarath: Well, Minister, respectfully, I do not see one working without the other in this scenario, because remember this is not something that is existing right now. It is something that will have, according to the Member for Chaguanas West, it is a culture change as well. Really, I do not see the reconciliation between not having sufficient boots on the ground and using the technology to get the desired effect that you want.

Hon. Sinanan: It will be a combination of both, but it is not necessarily putting more boots on the ground.

Mr. Padarath: So in effect, hon. Minister, are you then saying that there is no additional human manpower resource available?

Hon. Sinanan: It is not just the traffic wardens will be implementing that. The police would have a significant role as well to play in it. So, to answer your question, yes, we have intentions of the new legislation, but it will not only be dependent on the traffic wardens.

Mr. Padarath: And if I am to get you right, there will be no additional support through the Traffic Warden Unit with respect to effecting the legislation? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Sinanan: They may be deployed differently.

Mr. Padarath: But no additional support for the unit?

Hon. Sinanan: I am not saying that at this point in time.

Mr. Padarath: Well, Minister, you may not be saying that, but the figures reflect that.

Hon. Sinanan: There is an appraisal of the unit that has to go back to Cabinet very shortly for the whole appraisal of the traffic wardens, which had started about a year ago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, the value of \$14.5 million, how many traffic wardens are now employed?

Madam Chairman: Member, could you just assist us with the line Sub-Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Sub-Item 16. How many traffic wardens are employed under that Contract Employment? A corollary to that question—

Hon. Sinanan: Could I circulate that to you in writing?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You do not have an idea how precise?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the figures right now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Seven hundred, 800? Hon. Minister, the question is that there is necessity for more training of these traffic wardens, and your budget for training is only \$7,000. Could you give that some active consideration somewhere along there, because as what my colleague was mentioning, the new legislation coming where there is increased penalties and fines for violation of traffic wardens, we need to have them fully trained?

Hon. Sinanan: We will give it consideration.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, I noted that in 2017 you had an allocation of \$17 million for traffic wardens under Contract Employment, and that was revised to 14.393, which means that there was a cut of about \$2.6 million between what you budgeted and what you estimated. Is it that you had a lot of traffic wardens who left the job, or what is the reason for that decrease?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, it was a combination between contracts coming to an end and yes some of the traffic wardens were poached. A lot of them even went into the police service.

Dr. Rambachan: You said some of the contracts coming to an end. Is it because they are kept on contract and therefore they do not have any promise of longevity in terms of their jobs, that they are seeking to leave the Traffic Warden Unit like they are doing, in numbers?

Hon. Sinanan: What we are doing now with the traffic wardens is a performance appraisal of the entire programme, and once that is completed—

Dr. Rambachan: A performance review.

Hon. Sinanan: Review, yes, of the entire programme, and that has to go to Cabinet and then the programme will be—

Dr. Rambachan: Does that review, Mr. Minister, include a review of the performance of the head of the traffic unit?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, everybody, the entire cadre in the programme.

3.10 p.m.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, have you been receiving complaints from traffic wardens about how they are being treated under Contract Employment?

Hon. Sinanan: I get complaints and compliments. So it is something that we take, but I do get complaints and compliments. I would not want to prejudge anybody at this stage.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Item 13, sorry, 16 self, is there any, in the future do you intend to make these positions not contract positions, but full time, full employees?

Hon. Sinanan: I guess that depends on the review. After the review that position will be taken.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, under Maintenance of Vehicles, for a long while traffic wardens could not come from San Fernando to Gasparillo because of the unavailability of vehicles for months. Remember, I referred that to you and for three months there were no traffic wardens. Are you aware that continues to persist over time, not in Gasparillo now, but from time to time they cannot be moved?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. From time to time they do have a challenge, but it is something that is being addressed. As you are aware, the Gasparillo problem has been solved.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. On 17, it has been touched on, the issue of training and probably finding additional resources. And on Contract Employment, Minister could you really be definitive as it relates to how many traffic wardens' contracts have not been renewed?

Hon. Sinanan: I will submit that in writing to you. I do not have exact figure now, so I do not want to guess any figure. I will submit to you in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: So those who were not renewed were subjected to a performance appraisal?—because I heard you say that something was being done for the consideration of the Cabinet.

Hon. Sinanan: It is the entire programme that we are doing the review on.

Mr. Indarsingh: On what basis were their contracts—whatever figure that you are to provide to this meeting, how or what was the basis not to renew their contracts?

Hon. Sinanan: The contracts had a lifespan and the contracts came to an end. But because we are doing the whole appraisal of the unit, that will be determined after the appraisal is completed.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Minister, who is doing this appraisal under Item 16, the Contract Employment? Who is doing this appraisal of the traffic warden unit?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. This is being conducted by PMCD in collaboration with the Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Singh: And when is that expected to be completed?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, I hope shortly.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, you indicated just now that you would be giving in writing the existing complement of the traffic wardens. Might I ask that you, on a divisional basis, in addition to saying the existing complement, what the desired complement is so we can see whether there is a shortage and what that shortage is? And maybe in your analysis or your appraisal you might want to indicate how you intend to fill that?

Hon. Sinanan: I can also include where they are located. Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, we are moving on to Item 011, Programme Monitory and Evaluation Unit, page 290; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme, page 290. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: This will be very brief. Unemployment Relief Programme is a programme designed to help those who are disadvantaged. I am looking at Item 08, \$3.6 million in rent. Is the Minister satisfied that such a rent is required in the circumstances?—given the fact that the administrative cost in these programmes tend to outweigh the actual amount of moneys that are disbursed to the people who are in need.

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. This is something that has captured my attention not only the rental, but the actual cost of administering the programme. I give you the assurance that this will be cut down significantly in 2018. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 013, General Administration, Transport, page 291; Item 014, Transport Division, page 292; Item 015, Maritime Services, page 293. Okay. So, we are now moving on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases at page 294; Item 001, General Administration, page 294; Item 002, Highways, page 294. Item 003, Traffic Management, page 294; Item 004, Central Planning Unit, page 295; Item 005, Drainage, page 295; Item 006, Mechanical Services, page 295; Item 007, Maintenance, page 296; Item 008, Construction, page 296; Item 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit, page 296; Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit, page 297; Item 011, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, page 297; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme, page 297; Item 013, General Administration, Transport, page 298; Item 014, Transport, page 298; Item 015, Maritime Services, page 298.

We now move on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies at page 298; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 298; Item 003, United Nations Organizations, page 299; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 299; Item 007, Households page 299. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 007/09, Debit Card System for URP Employees. Minister, could you tell us how this system works?

Hon. Sinanan: The debit card system was—yeah, 2008, there was a challenge with the cheque system at the time. You would recall that there were people lining up outside, was it the Central Bank?—the Treasury, sorry, the Treasury in Port of Spain and all the regional offices and so for cheques, and in 2008 a decision was taken to go to the card system, the debit card system, where once you sign up with the programme you are issued a debit card and your salary goes to the bank rather than you having to go line up to collect the cheque and so outside. And the challenge with that is that they had to provide all the requirements to open a bank account. It is something now that we are looking at now because of the different regulations at the financial institutions where it is a lot more difficult to open a bank account, as we are all aware, so it is something we are revisiting at this point in time.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Subsidies, page 299. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chair, this is the Port Authority towards the deficits in the operations. Given that in 2016, the actual cost was \$240 million, they say that the estimate in 2018 is \$358.8 million, an increase of a \$118 million. Given the fact that we are talking about you—or the Government has been talking about value for money and the dire circumstances in which we are in, is the Government

satisfied that the necessary stringency is be applied to this subsidy arrangement, and if so what steps are being taken to contain expenditure?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Yes, there is an increase in the 2017/2018. But the Member needs to be aware, this increase has resulted because one, we have a new cargo vessel; two, this increase takes into consideration the tender that is out now for a new passenger vessel which we did not have before, and it also takes into consideration the repairs and the dry docking for the two passenger ferries that are expected in this fiscal year. So, it is not an increase per se on the existing expenditure, but it does take into consideration a new fast ferry—sorry, another fast ferry and the dry docking of the two passenger ferries.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I am comparing like with like, 2016 to now, and the vessels that carried, satisfied the requirements of the coastal arrangement with Tobago.

Hon. Sinanan: “Uh hmm.”

Mr. Charles: It worked in 2016. Are you saying that there are costs, there are objective costs that explain this increase?—you talk about a new cargo vessel. Are you saying that cargo vessels have increased now compared to then, or there is some other thing that we are not aware of?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: When we looked at the request from the Ministry of Works and Transport on this particular Item it was recognized that the two fast ferries which were acquired about 10 years ago, the *Express* and the *Spirit*, were not in a condition to be in full service in 2018. This would require the port to lease ferries as replacements for these vessels. So that the situation in 2018 is a little different from 2016 when the vessels were in operation. Okay? So what is happening, we own the *Express* and the *Spirit* so there is no lease costs associated with the *Express* and the *Spirit*. There are, of course, repairs and maintenance, crew costs, fuel, supplies, that sort of thing. But since those two vessels are going to be refurbished in this fiscal and will not be then available for service on the route, you would have to lease vessels which were not required in 2016. So that is the reason for—that was the justification and we accepted it as being a reasonable justification.

Mr. Charles: Minister of Finance, you are reiterating that you are satisfied that the necessary approaches were taken and systems were put in place to protect the taxpayers’ money?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Imbert: That is a quantum leap. What I am saying is that in 2016, we had the two vessels that we had acquired in 2005/2006 operating on the route, but now those two vessels require major refurbishment and therefore, there is requirement to lease vessels in 2018. That requirement did not exist in 2016 and therefore, we were satisfied that this request for additional funding to ensure a proper service on the inter-island route was justified.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a clarification. You are saying in addition to whatever is transpiring now we have need to lease two additional vessels to replace the *Express* and the *Spirit*?

Mr. Imbert: No, one. That was what was presented to us that there is need to lease one additional—

Dr. Tewarie: One additional.

Mr. Imbert:—passenger roll on roll off vessel ferry vessel. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, it was already 007 which has already passed. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member Couva South. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: It is a continuation of 009, Madam. I am on 009.

Madam Chairman: Okay. We are still on 008. Member for Caroni East, 008.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the hon. Minister of Finance give an approximation of the repair cost that he speaks about and the cost for the temporary replacement of one of the passenger ferries when it is being repaired. So that the one that is going to be leased in substituting for that one, what is the approximate cost for that, and what is the approximate cost for the repairs?

Mr. Imbert: I cannot give you those details, perhaps the Minister of Works and Transport can do that in due course. But what I can say is that when we considered the need to lease one additional passenger ferry and the need to refurbish the existing fast ferries, the additional amount for all of that work including the dry docking, refurbishment and leasing of the additional ferry, came up to the additional \$93 million. But I cannot break it down for you, the Minister of Works and Transport will do that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Rambachan: What is the procurement going to be used to effect the repairs of the two vessels?

Hon. Sinanan: Sorry?

Dr. Rambachan: What is the procurement process being used to effect the repairs of the two vessels that you are talking about?

Hon. Sinanan: That process is being done through the port procurement regulations, and as you are aware one is now at Caridock on dry dock, and the other one is expected to go on by the end of November.

Dr. Rambachan: The one at Caridock, dry dock was that done by open tender or was it a sole select?

Hon. Sinanan: I know it was carried out through the port's procurement regulations and I can follow that up.

Dr. Rambachan: Did the Ministry have any hand in approving the contract through the Cabinet or was it simply done by the port?

Hon. Sinanan: Those are operation matters at the port, the repair of vessels.

Dr. Rambachan: Is the Minister satisfied that procurement process that will be used by the Port Authority on this occasion was satisfactory?

Hon. Sinanan: Once—the port has its rules and regulations for procurement, and once it is followed.

Dr. Rambachan: Was there a report sent by the chairman of the Port Authority to the Minister, because these are moneys the port would not have, the moneys that are being subsidized by the Government, by the Cabinet, and does this have to have Cabinet approval?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. So that is why the appropriation of funding for these expenditures.

Dr. Rambachan: No. On this occasion, Mr. Minister, is it that the Port Authority was given full autonomy to go and have these boats repairs at Caridock or where have you and so on?

Hon. Sinanan: The port has the responsibility for managing the repairs of the vessels, and any procurement undertaken by the port must be done within the port's rules and regulation for procurement—

Dr. Rambachan: And given what has occurred—

Hon. Sinanan:—and approved by the board.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Rambachan:—and given what has occurred at the Joint Select Committee recently with respect to the Port Authority, did the Minister seek to satisfy himself that the process used by the board of the Port Authority and the Port Authority was valid, was one of integrity?

Hon. Sinanan: You would recognize that this vessel that is on dry dock went on dry dock a couple months ago. Okay? And subsequent to that we had the information coming out of the Joint Select Committee. I know that the board at the Port Authority, commissioners at the Port Authority are ensuring that all proper regulations are followed with any procurement at the port.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, there is a difference between the Estimates and the Revised Estimates of \$25 million for 2017. Could you help us appreciate the causative factor for that?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure. The \$25 million, through you, Madam Chair, would have accounted for the procurement of the *Cabo Star* together with the dry docking, expenses for the dry docking for the *T&T Sprit* for 2017.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Bearing in mind that the new vessels came on around about February to replace the *SS Galicia*.

Hon. Sinanan: No. It was not February.

Dr. Gopeesingh: February, March or around there.

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So we would probably be dealing with about six months'—

Hon. Sinanan: I think it would have been August.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—difference with increased costs. Can you give us the increased cost for fiscal year 2017 as a result of the introduction of these two new vessels for 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: Well there is just one vessel, there is just one vessel which is the *Cabo Star* which came on, I think, was some time around August.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right.

Hon. Sinanan: July. Right? Sometime around July, and there is an increase in the cost of the existing cargo vessel and the previous vessel, the *Galicia*. However, the cost might be in the range of about maybe about \$3,000 or \$4,000—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Per day?

Hon. Sinanan:—per day.

Dr. Gopeesingh: US?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the exact figure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. But could you give us an appreciation of what the increased cost is going to be for fiscal 2018 as result of that?

Hon. Sinanan: I cannot give you a cost for the two vessels because remember there is tender out now and we do not know what the price will come in for when the evaluation of that tender is completed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Just permit me, the hon. Minister of Finance indicated that the \$93 million would be as a result of the repairs, one, and two the rental for the substitution of one of the vessels.

Hon. Sinanan: Right.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that would come back to the original \$265 million, but there is also an increase cost for 2018 as a result of your new vessels leasing. So why this figure of \$358 million is probably an under reflection of the actual cost and is possibly higher.

Hon. Sinanan: Again, this is based on our estimation, and if there is an increased cost, I am sure the Minister of Finance make it available to you, but this is based on the estimations that we have.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chair. I would just like to follow up on questions asked by the Member for Tabaquite. Given the problems that we have experienced with procurement on the port, if there are problems, are you satisfied that the procurement systems meet the stringent requirements of the financial situation which we are in; have you reviewed it; have you looked it; and do you wish to give this House the understanding, the comfort that you are comfortable with the procurement approach by the Port Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: The assurance that I can give the House is that the commissioners at the port are reviewing the process for procurement at the port, and if need be, to make recommendations to the Ministry going forward. I can give you the assurance that the commissioners at the port are looking at this very seriously.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Given that this expenditure has to do with payment for basically replacements to run between Tobago and Trinidad, my understanding is that the contract for the *Ocean Flower 2* is cancelled, can you confirm that?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Yes. The contract has been cancelled, so there is no existing contract.

Dr. Tewarie: So there is no cost ascribed here to that?

Hon. Sinanan: To my information there is no cost incurred with the cancellation.

Dr. Tewarie: But a provision is made for another vessel.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And that vessel, based on our understanding of the cancelling of the contract is likely to be some other vessel procured, but not the *Ocean Flower 2*.

Hon. Sinanan: I cannot say that there is an evaluation process. There was a public tender. I do not know the vessels that participated, so that I cannot prejudge what the outcome of the tender will be.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, through you, are you saying, Minister, that the contract with the *Ocean Flower 2* is cancelled, but there is a chance that or a possibility that the *Ocean Flower 2* may, in fact, be considered as the procured vessel which will eat up part of the allocation here for that purpose in the 2018 budget?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through you, there was a public tender which you are all aware of. I cannot prejudge what the outcome of that tender will be, so I will not make any statements as to who the final, what the final evaluation will show up. That is an evaluation that will done by the port and the recommendations will come to the Ministry. I will wait until the recommendations come to the Ministry.

Dr. Tewarie: May I ask, who cancelled the contract?

Hon. Sinanan: The cancellation of the *Ocean Flower 2*?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, there seems to be a lot of questioning on this line Item. I think the Minister has been very forthcoming on this line Item.

Madam Chairman: All right. So Minister, are you answering the question?

Hon. Sinanan: Cancelled. This was a recommendation from the—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, just for the benefit of the public and to prevent any misunderstanding of that line of questioning, I seem to recall that the Port Authority issued a public statement which is a clear answer to that question, that the Port Authority cancelled that arrangement for reasons given. So, I do not want it left hanging here to give the impression that the Government did not want to answer the question.

Dr. Tewarie: But, Madam Chair, that is precisely the answer I wanted clarified. So the Prime Minister has indicated that the port cancelled the contract.

Dr. Rowley: That is it.

Dr. Tewarie: I then want to ask the Minister this question and he may choose to answer it as he feels a Minister should.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through you, the Port Authority is the government agent—

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. I understand that and I am not trying to make any—

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. So the Port Authority would have gone out for a tender on behalf of the Ministry.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Hon. Sinanan: On the advice of the Port Authority, the Ministry would have cancelled the contract for the *Ocean Flower 2*.

Mr. Young: If I may assist, Madam Chair?

Dr. Tewarie: This makes it a little confusing. You have two answers.

Mr. Young: No. No. I will clarify, if I may, Madam Chair? The contract was executed with the Ministry of Works and Transport. So the Port Authority—

Dr. Tewarie: For the *Ocean Flower 2*.

Mr. Young:—for the *Ocean Flower 2*. All right? So that contract then privity of contract is between the Ministry of Works and Transport and the owners of the *Ocean Flower 2*, so the notice of cancellation termination was done on the advice of the port who are the agents, but it was done by the Ministry of Works and Transport because that is the party who had contracted.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And for the new tenders, Madam Chair, which is what I am trying to make a connection with, those new tenders are being administered and managed by the Port Authority.

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: Is that true, Minister?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So any decision that is made whether it is for the *Ocean Flower 2* or for any other vessel will be by the port notwithstanding the fact that the Ministry cancelled the contract with the *Ocean Flower 2*?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: I just want to know the facts.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Then let me make this very clear, this is the standard arrangement. The Ministry—the Ministry is the client and whenever, whenever a decision has to be made once the port has made the selection, it has to come to the Ministry. And the reason I want to make this very clear is because there are some other questions being asked as to why the Ministry was approving vessel A, B, C or D. Every single vessel, whoever the vessel, whatever the vessel, when it is time to sign off on the port's choice, it is done by the Ministry.

3.40 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Well, then that leads me to a very direct question to the Minister. Were it to be the case, Madam Chair, that the port were by its tendering process to choose the *Ocean Flower 2*, which the Ministry has indicated—the Minister has indicated, the Ministry cancelled, would the Minister then consider at all taking that vessel for approval to Cabinet?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through you, I will not venture in presuming what is going to happen in a tender, and I will have no comment on that at this stage.

Dr. Tewarie: So, we will wait then.

Madam Chairman: So, we go on. Item 009, Other Transfers, page 30. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 02, Agua Santa. Agua Santa, my understanding is the bitumen producing plant of the Government.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: I see that there is an increase of \$428,000, which is welcomed. Madam Chair, I would like to find out from the Minister, what is the capacity of this plant? That is one. The production capacity of the plant and whether there is any intention, having regard to government policy, to start a recycling industry with the imposition of the environmental tax on tyres, and I know that there is a Cabinet Note seeking to have crumb tyre part of the creation of rubberised asphalt, whether or not the Ministry plans to utilise and set the tone for the other private sector in the creation of rubberised asphalt? One, and two, what is the production capacity of this Agua Santa plant for bitumen?

Madam Chairman: The Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure. Through you, Madam Chair. The Ministry at this point in time does not have plans for using the tyres in terms of the road bitumen. However, through the PURE programme, we are looking at techniques for landslips and so using tyres if possible. In terms of the capacity of the Agua Santa plant, it is 6000 tonnes per day. Sorry, the 6000 tonnes is annually.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. In respect of 05, Water-Taxi Service, there is a decrease of \$4,961,696 in terms of this particular line Item. Could the Minister provide the reason for this, and is there a contemplated increase in using the water taxi for the ordinary persons, price rise that is?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, Madam Chair, through you, there is no decision for any increase in price. The question is, if I get it right, you are asking about the increase in the water taxi?

Mr. Indarsingh: No.

Hon. Sinanan: The decrease, sorry.

Mr. Indarsingh: The decrease, and how it will impact upon the operations of the water taxi?

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at the estimate for 2018, it is \$54 million. In 2017, it was \$36 million. There was a revised estimate of \$58 million. That was because of repairs that had to be conducted on the water taxis. So, over the estimate for 2017 and the estimate for 2018 is actually an increase.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Madam, I give way to my colleague.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Bearing in mind, hon. Minister, that the water taxi has been used to assist in the difficulties experienced in transportation to Tobago, what cost factor, or if any, has been attributed to that aspect for assisting in Tobago? Or if it is used—when it is used for Tobago, does the route suffer from South to North as a result, and what cost factor is involved in that?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. There has been no interruption in the service, because the water taxi would have been used basically on weekends when there is no demand coming from San Fernando to Port of Spain, and whatever cost would have been borne by the Port Authority.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So generally it might have been used more for the weekends than during the week?

Hon. Sinanan: Just for the weekends. Yes. When the need for more capacity arose.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I would stick with the water taxi, but I will go back to Agua Santa in a moment. Mr. Minister, \$54 million is going to be spent on the subsidy to the water taxi. What is the revenue of the water taxi in its operation from San Fernando to Port of Spain? How many passengers are moved? And thirdly, by how much are we subsidising each ticket, given the cost of operating the two water taxis?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, I would want to provide that in writing, but I just want to remind the Member that the water taxi is also a service. I said, just like how we have the PTSC and these other essential services. But I will forward it.

Dr. Rambachan: But you would agree that it is important for the taxpayer to know what the taxpayer is spending.

Hon. Sinanan: As I said I will furnish you in writing. But I just want to remind you that it is a service that is essential and is fully utilised.

Dr. Rambachan: Would the Minister agree that it might be worth the while of the Government to consider the more active decentralisation of services so as to cut down the amount of people who have to come to work in Port of Spain and therefore cannot get the transport that live closer to their areas, and therefore cut down on the cost of operations of these things, through active decentralisation, including decentralisation through local government?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: These matters are always under consideration, and that is part of local government reform as you know.

Dr. Rambachan: Which is two years been promised now, eh.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in terms, as the Minister indicated with respect to the provision of a service by the water taxi and sometimes deemed essential, are you contemplating any additional stops for the water taxi?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. It is no secret that the country has some serious financial challenges at this point in time, and the water taxi, as the Member for Tabaquite said, is a fairly expensive service. So immediately, there are no plans to extend the service. However, again, it is something that the Ministry would always be looking in terms of once funding becomes available.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I do not know if you have reached 011, Transfer to State Enterprises as yet?

Madam Chairman: I am about to call it. Member for Tabaquite, you still have on 009?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I said Agua Santa I was coming back to. Mr. Minister, you said that the plant is capable of producing 6,000 tonnes a year. Do we have how much the plant is producing now on an annual basis?

Hon. Sinanan: What we produced was 6,000 tonnes. It can produce more. What we use this plant basically for is for the new patching programme that we six to mend. So we use the Agua Santa plant to produce the material that we do a lot of in-house patching with. And what we are producing now is approximately 6000 tonnes.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Rambachan: Have you looked at the cost of producing 6,000 as against buying it at approximately \$700 per tonne, supplied and put in place? What does the 6,000 tonnes cost you? A tonne of asphalt now, laid, is about \$690 to \$700 a tonne. That is supply and lay.

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. Again, what we use it is for is patching. A comparative analysis was done and we can compare with what they did. However, in the past when you asked contractors to go out and patch it is difficult to manage that, the patching. So we decided with the new programme we have, we have 10 trucks now, patching on a daily basis, and I want to compliment the Highway Division who have intentions of putting an additional 10, so we would have at least two trucks in every area.

Dr. Rambachan: So, Mr. Minister, you are not contracting out the service to patch right now?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, hold on. Then that cannot be correct, because up to two weeks ago, COOSAL was patching the entire road from Oropouche junction to Fyzabad.

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, that job was not a patching job.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, it was patching. Patching about 40 something potholes left by WASA.

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, right. What we are dealing with here is the Ministry of Works. WASA probably would have contracted them. But once the Ministry of Works is doing patching it is all done in house. WASA on the other hand may hire contractors to do patching for WASA purposes. So if you saw COOSAL patching WASA holes, it meant WASA would have contracted COOSAL, not the Ministry of Works.

Dr. Rambachan: We have to check that Mr. Minister, because your people from Ministry of Works were there on the site.

Hon. Sinanan: I have the directors here and they are telling me that we did that patching there with COOSAL.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, are we going on to 011?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay, could you just allow me to call it. Member for Naparima, are you on 009 or 011?

Mr. Charles: 011.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we now move on to Item 011, Transfers to States enterprises, page 300. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-Item 07, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister of Finance. Could you indicate how much was paid for this rapid rail transit system? So far \$23 million in 2016, \$21 million in 2017, et cetera. And how much is still being owed for the complete payment of the rapid rail transit system? How much was paid so far and how much is owed, and how many years you estimate that we will complete the payment for the rapid rail project?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is question number one, Madam Chair, should I wait?

Madam Chairman: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. That information will be provided together with the amount paid on the \$1.5 billion loan for the Point Fortin highway. You will get both.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. I was going to ask for just a few more under this line Item. The motor vehicle for NIPDEC, that is 02, how much was paid? How much is to be paid? The four new fast ferries, that is 04 Item. The El Socorro overpass which we completed, and then the—

Madam Chairman: That is 05?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is line Item 05. Then—well, he said he would give—the Minister said he will give it for 12.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, to speed everything up, I will give all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You would give all?

Mr. Imbert: All.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Okay, thank you. How much was owed? How much was paid? And how much is to be paid?

Mr. Imbert: All the information.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Still asked by my colleague, that the repayment of the Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit system, in addition to the information he has agreed to provide, could he tell us the benefits of this loan? Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: I will provide the information on the cost and the payments.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Singh: Thank you Madam Chair. Item 01, Transfers to State Enterprises: VMCOTT, the allocation is \$10 million. Minister, this is an enterprise earmarked for privatization, for private sector involvement. Is it part of the policy to continue that process of private sector involvement in VMCOTT, or is it—because my understanding is it is earmarked for private sector involvement.

Mr. Imbert: This is in your time?

Mr. Singh: Your time.

Mr. Imbert: So, that is your understanding of what is going on in our time?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: We are looking at a public-private partnership. I answered you.

Mr. Singh: With respect to this specific organization?

Mr. Imbert: We are talking about this line Item, are we not?

Mr. Singh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite. And I just want to remind all Members please, just to ensure that their mikes are on and that they speak in the mikes.

Dr. Rambachan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Minister, VMCOTT was set up originally to repair public service vehicles; police vehicles, and so on. Is it that VMCOTT has not been repairing police service vehicles again, or they are incapable, and/or is it that they are not being paid by the police service and so on for doing these vehicles that it necessitates this kind of subvention for the year? Firstly. And secondly, I noticed that a lot of police service vehicles are now being repaired by private organisations, so what is it that has made VMCOTT—that is taking VMCOTT out of the original core business that they were prepared to do?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Over the last 10 years or so, VMCOTT has continuously had a reduction in the government fleet for several reasons, and maybe the time has come now, as the Minister of Finance said, that we look to reshape the model of VMCOTT. Because clearly the model is not working and the Government has taken a decision to look for a public-private partnership for VMCOTT.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, that lack of reshaping it, whether it is your Government or any other Government, has cost us \$50 million in the last five years. In a country in which there are 800,000-plus vehicles, and one wonders why VMCOTT cannot get it right. Therefore, how long are you going to take to make a decision on getting it right with a company like VMCOTT to save this country \$10 million a year?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, that has been the million-dollar question that I asked the first month I came into the Ministry, and I am happy that we are actually going into the direction now where we are paying a lot of attention to VMCOTT, because it cannot continue at the rate that it is going. VMCOTT has recently gone into the car washing business, which is something that I find very strange, because I do not understand why somebody like VMCOTT have to turn to washing cars to survive. So, I take your point that the direction of VMCOTT has to change, and let us see what, coming out of the Ministry of Finance public-private partnership—that might just be what VMCOTT needs to turn around.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, while I hear you, I do not necessarily agree with you. When people are placed to do a job, they must do the job and make the enterprise a profitable enterprise. And I think that in VMCOTT people are not doing their job, they are not marketing the services, and there is all the equipment, and you should take a drive down to south, and to see what really goes on there in VMCOTT.

Hon. Sinanan: Again, through you, Madam Chair, that is a problem not only at VMCOTT. If we look at the Port of Port of Spain, they should be a profitable organization as well. If you look at Petrotrin, they too should be profitable. And, it is something that we have to look at as to the whole attitude by everyone working in the public sector. And I agree with you, VMCOTT should be profitable, but it is not, and it cannot continue.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, on that same point with respect to the public-private partnerships you have indicated, can you tell us how advanced are these public/private partnership explorations? In that, have you identified companies that you wish—*[Cell phone rings]*

Madam Chairman: Excuse, somebody's device.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Padarath:—who might express interest with respect to the partnerships?

Madam Chairman: Excuse me please, Member, somebody's device! Okay, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, what can happen is that we can hear for the next three years about these public-private partnerships and they never come to fruition. What is the work plan with respect to these public/private partnerships, and how advanced is it at this stage?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, that being handled by the Ministry of Finance, the VMCOTT matter.

Mr. Imbert: Look, can we put an end to this. VMCOTT as a state enterprise is being considered by the Corporation Sole for a public-private partnership to deal with all of the issues surrounding VMCOTT, its efficiency, its profitability, its relevance, et cetera. So, we are looking at a private-public partnership for this enterprise.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. I am on Item 07. Can the hon. Minister indicate whether this sum that was engaged in for the feasibility study of the Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit System, whether any part of that study, or the study in itself is going to be used in the future for any purpose similar to what it was intended?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Member: Rapid rail.

Mr. Imbert: We still on that? I thought we passed that? [*Laughter*] I thought that Item finished?

Hon. Member: Answer the question.

Mr. Imbert: What is the question? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Karim: The question really is, whether the report, the feasibility study, any part of it, or the report is proposed to be used in the future for an investment that was due?

Mr. Imbert: We took a decision, because of the economic challenges facing Trinidad and Tobago, not to proceed with that project at this point in time. However, there was a lot of information on traffic patterns, traffic demand, vehicle population, the behaviour of drivers and passengers, and so on, which has been of invaluable service to the past government and this the Government.

Madam Chairman: So we move on to Sub-Head 06. Do you have a question, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Actually, just to add to the list that the hon. Minister of Finance, in his written response. If he can include what the line Item 17—

Hon. Member: 71.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, no. What services were provided? I know you would have had other things, but just to add what services were provided for the use of that \$100 million?

Mr. Imbert: Just let me clear up. A lot of these Items—if you are still on that one, 011—are loans taken out by previous governments, including the one you were in, and I would think that that \$400 million bond would certainly have been in your time.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we move on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and we move directly to the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and the Tobago House of Assembly. That is where the details are, and we start at page 391, Sub-Head—we are under 39, Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 391.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, just to give us a little time?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just give us a little time, three what, Madam Chair?

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

Mr. Chairman: Page 391 colleagues.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 390, would you start—

Mr. Chairman: Page 391, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, and we are going to 001, General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Could the Minister explain why there has been projected a \$5 million increase in salaries and cost of living for 2018 estimates over 2017 in an organization which is not earning its keep?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Rambachan: If the objective of the Government is performance management, if the objective of the Government is to get productivity and value for money, are we rewarding incompetence and lack of productivity by increasing salaries?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Mr. Chair, what was this increase? It is for the allocation for the increase in collective agreements, one. And two, for vacancies that have to be filled.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just connecting with what the Minister indicated, that the \$5 million increase in allocation is for settlement of increases and so on. Could the Minister advise if there are outstanding salaries or back pays as it relates to wage settlements that were realized between the employer and the recognized majority unions, and so on? And how much is owed?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Sinanan: So, there is one that is outstanding. [*Crosstalk*] Right, so there is one that is outstanding.

Mr. Indarsingh: For what period and the sum please?

Hon. Sinanan: What is the period? Yes, 2012/2014, and that is for the security.

Mr. Indarsingh: And how much is owed?

Hon. Sinanan: It is about \$80 million outstanding.

Mr. Indarsingh: About \$80 million that is outstanding.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could the Minister advise this meeting when this sum of \$80 million will be fully settled?

Hon. Sinanan: It was much more than that. It was \$200 before—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Minister, I am very aware of—

Hon. Sinanan: It was paid in tranches, and this year—the final payment is \$80 million.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. But, again, are you in a position to advise the meeting when will this sum of \$80 million be fully settled?

Hon. Sinanan: I will send that information in writing to you, once I—

Mr. Indarsingh: And, if I could ask, in terms of this allocation for salaries and cost of living, through you, Mr. Chair, could the Minister advise this meeting if he is aware of retirees who are currently employed at the Airports Authority, drawing sums of salary between 35 to \$50,000 a month?

[MRS. ANNISSETTE-GEORGE *in the Chair*]

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, I have no knowledge of that at this point in time, but I could check.

Mr. Indarsingh: But, Mr. Minister, could I point you in the direction of the property department at the Airports Authority and also a deputy general manager who retired sometime in June or July.

Mr. Imbert: May I just intervene here? The Minister of Works and Transport has said that he is not aware of that. You cannot get anything more out of him.

Mr. Indarsingh: With all due respect to the Minister of Finance, Madam Chair, the Minister said he is not aware. I sought to advise him, and to look in the direction. I do not want to name the persons, but I could inform you of their initials also.

Madam Chairman: All right. Here is what I suggest Member for Couva South. I think that as it is not here, they would have an opportunity to interrogate that matter in some further detail in another forum. Okay? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, Sub-Item 06, Remuneration to Board Members. 2016 has been consistent with 2017, what is your increase for a million dollars by \$400,000 this year?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, currently there are six board members. The full complement is 10. So, the allocation was made in 2018 for the full complement of the board.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: On the issue of salaries and cost of living, and so on, Mr. Minister you indicated that \$80 million was for the expired period, have negotiations began between the Airports Authority and the Estate Police Association for the current period, and so on?

Hon. Sinanan: No, the negotiations have not started.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Indarsingh: Any particular reason, Mr. Minister? Or are we suppressing the collective bargaining process out there?

Madam Chairman: Members!

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, is that a line Item question?

Madam Chairman: The question comes under salary and Cost of Living Allowance.

Hon. Sinanan: The question is whether—

Mr. Imbert: You indicated that negotiations did not commence for the current period, and I was simply asking, what was the reason, and if the collective bargaining process is being suppressed out there?

Hon. Sinanan: The answer is not being suppressed. It has not started.

Mr. Indarsingh: But what is the reason for the current period?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, if you want that I will submit it to you in writing. But I do not have that information.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the person next to you—

Madam Chairman: Member! Member, please! Are you asking a question—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I am trying to find out the reason, Madam Chair, for the non-commencement of the negotiations—

Madam Chairman: And the Member has indicated—

Mr. Indarsingh:—and for the current period.

4.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member, the Member has indicated that he will supply the reason for that in writing. Okay? It is not really a question that comes under a line Item here, but the Minister is prepared to answer and he said he will answer in writing.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, may I intervene just to draw your attention to the fact—I want, just for clarification. All the matters that we have here, and I think there are eight Heads, right? We are due to stop these proceedings at eight o'clock. Is that correct?

Madam Chairman: I believe what we agreed, Member for Diego Martin West—

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Rowley: That we would examine eight Heads.

Madam Chairman: We will examine eight Heads and we either stop at 8.00 or when the eight Heads are completed, whichever is the later.

Dr. Rowley: Whichever is the later. So we could go until midnight? Well, that means—my concern, Madam Chairman, is that, I notice a number of questions are being entertained that have nothing to do with the budget—

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. Rowley: And a lot of these questions are—

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. Rowley:—prosecuting matters outside of budgetary consideration. I do not think that the Government will be answering any more of the questions that are prosecuting matters outside of the budget. Because, like the last question, Madam Speaker, the last question about the progress of negotiations, that is not a budgetary matter.

Hon. Member: Why?

Dr. Rowley: If the Member wants to discuss the pros and cons of the pre-bargaining, whatever, that is a different matter, otherwise what we are going to do here is spend the whole afternoon dealing with one Head and then seven more Heads to come before daybreak and then tomorrow morning we will come back at 10 o'clock. Is that what you all want to do? I am just saying, Madam Chairman, is that I have been in this process before and we have—*[Interruption]*

Madam Chairman: Member.

Dr. Rowley: Whether you shut up or not is not my issue, Madam Chairman. I am not saying that. *[Interruption]*

Madam Chairman: Members, please.

Mr. Indarsingh: Tell us, tell us.

Dr. Rowley: I am addressing the Chair on a matter of procedure and all I am saying, Madam Chairman, is that if we allow the time allocated to be used for extraneous matter on agendas that are not budgetary we will find ourselves with difficulty as we fade into the night. That is all I am saying.

Madam Chairman: So we are on Item 002, Passenger and Cargo Terminals, page 391. Item 003, Airport Operations, page 391; Item 004, Runways, Taxiways, Grounds and Carports, page 391. Member for Caroni East.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just a short question, the reason for the increase in salaries by \$3.2 million. Is it more personnel going to be involved or what?

Hon. Sinanan: Is that 01?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, 004/01, Salaries and Costs of Living Allowance for personnel in runways, taxiways, grounds and carparks.

Hon. Sinanan: Right. It is a combination of the two, an increase in staff together with the preparation for the increase in salaries.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For the new bargaining process?

Hon. Sinanan: For the new bargaining process.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: I am on Item 005 when you reach there.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Chaguanas East. You are on 004.

Mr. Karim: 004. Hon. Minister, the responsibility for all runways and taxiways falls under the Airports Authority to collect the respective fees?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Karim: All runways?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Karim: Does that include Camden?

Hon. Sinanan: No. Camden is not included. Camden is not under the Airports Authority.

Mr. Karim: Who is it under if you are able to advise?

Hon. Sinanan: There is no allowance right now for the—

Mr. Karim: Will it be under the Airports Authority or the Civil Aviation Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: Neither.

Mr. Karim: So right now it is on its own?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. They do not report to the Airports Authority. The Airports Authority does not—

Mr. Karim: I just want to get it clear. The regulations indicate that all runways and taxiways of airports, is it under the Airports Authority or who has the responsibility or the jurisdiction for those?

Hon. Sinanan: No. Under the Act it is the Piarco International Airport and the ANR Robinson International Airport. And Camden is not a certified airfield. So it is not—

Mr. Karim: By the Airports Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: It is not certified.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So Item 005: Security, page 392. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the hon. Minister indicate the complement of security staff under the issue of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance? And secondly, overtime has been decreased considerably, and having regard to the fact that the airport is a—well—ought to have heightened security, how can you explain the decrease in overtime allowance by some \$6 million?

Hon. Sinanan: So the complement is 408 security officers.

Mr. Singh: Is that the optimum level of security officers that is required for the efficient operation of the airport?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, the manpower is sufficient with the technology that is being used at the airport at this time. It is a combination of the manpower and the technology.

Mr. Singh: And how do you account for the decrease in the overtime? What is the management?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, the reduction in overtime is due to more management with the technology at the airport.

Mr. Singh: Could you give us an appreciation of this technology that you speak about?

Hon. Sinanan: An increase in the surveillance system.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just on a point of clarification in relation to the response that was given to my colleague, the MP for Chaguanas West. Mr. Minister, the organizational structure in terms of the Airports Authority from a security point of

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

view, I just heard you through the representative of the Airports Authority indicate that there is a full complement of security officers existing at the Airports Authority?

Madam Chairman: Is that a question or a statement?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I am asking, taking into consideration my colleague asked and he was advised that there is an adequate complement of security officers at the Airports Authority.

Hon. Sinanan: There is a combination of security officers and technology that is being used at this time. A combination of two is adequate at this point in time.

Mr. Indarsingh: And is there a deficiency of security officers in relation to the organizational structure of the Airports Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, through you, Madam Chair, there is a complement of 408 members of staff and that is sufficient at this point in time.

Mr. Indarsingh: From a security point of view. There is no deficiency in terms of the numbers?

Madam Chairman: But, Member, you have asked that question three times. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Goods and Services, Electricity—

Madam Chairman: We are not there as yet.

Mr. Charles: We are not there. I thought we are going page by page.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, we are still under 005. Is your question there? Okay, so we now go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I apologize for jumping the gun. 04, Electricity and 002, Water and Sewerage Rates. I note that there have been no increases. Do you not think, hon. Minister, that it might have been prudent to put in a figure given that we know that increases are likely to come? And if this is done across Ministries, to the Minister of Finance, if this is done across Ministries it means that we might be approaching a significant shortfall in estimates for next year's budget.

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, maybe the Member of Parliament has more information. I do not know of any increase coming in this fiscal year for these different Sub-Heads.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-Item 23, Fees. Could you just explain what is that about? It is a small term but big in nature and 61, Insurance of \$10 million with an increase of \$4 million over 2017. What is that? Who is that paid to? Which insurance company or is it a number of insurance companies? And is it by tender that the airport goes out for tendering for this insurance?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, let me deal with the fees first. This Fees is a combination of legal fees and consultant fees. And the other one, the insurance, yes, it will be public tender.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you know the insurance company? Is it one or more than one?

Hon. Sinanan: One or more than one what?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Insurance company that—

Hon. Sinanan: Well, you will go to the international markets. So this is done on the international market because of the aviation insurance and so.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Could you give us the name of the company if you have it?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, I will have to get that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it a local or you do not know whether it is a local—

Hon. Sinanan: It is a local broker, but the insurance will obviously be foreign companies.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give us the name of the insurance company in Trinidad, the broker? And how much is paid to the broker and how much is paid to the foreign company for reinsurance.

Madam Chairman: That will be given in writing.

Hon. Sinanan: We will give that in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment. Madam Chair, ever so often the down escalator in the airport does not work. It is very, very often that you come and then you have the down escalator not working and I saw that there is not an increase in your equipment allocation. Similarly, the baggage—

Hon. Member: Carousel.

Mr. Singh: Carousel—the baggage carousel. And there is no increased allocation. If you are not going to have an increased allocation perhaps there ought to be a much better deployment of the moneys in order to ensure. Because I will tell you, Madam Chair, when you are walking down an escalator that is not working, you have serious hazards especially that the very old encounter.

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. The question is whether the \$3 million will be sufficient for the repairs of the escalator and the baggage carousel? Is the question, will the \$3 million be—

Mr. Singh: Is it part of the allocation, because there is no increase from year to year.

Hon. Sinanan: There is no increase, but, yes, that will be taken up in the repairs and maintenance. Yes, that will be sufficient.

Mr. Singh: Then, hon. Minister, can I get an annual breakdown of the repairs to both the escalator and the carousel?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Following the request for a breakdown, can we get a breakdown, hon. Minister for line Item 62, for Promotions, Publicity and Printing totalling \$3 million?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah, okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Passenger and Cargo Terminals, pages 392 and 393. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 09, Rent, Lease, Vehicles and Equipment. Could you just give a little explanation of what that \$12.2 million is paid for?

Hon. Sinanan: The lease agreement for the equipment has come to an end, so there is an estimate for an increase in 2018.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If it has come to an end they will have a reduction or none. Line Item 09, Minister, I am trying to help you.

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Rent, Lease, Vehicles and Equipment—

Hon. Sinanan: There is an increase of two—

Dr. Gopeesingh:—million, yes.

Hon. Sinanan: Because the existing lease agreements have come to an end. So there are provisions for an increase.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In case if you have to pay more for it? Could you just give us an understanding of what we are paying for?

Hon. Sinanan: Vehicle leases will come to an end in April 2018; lease rentals of photocopiers and other units—[*Crosstalk*] And these are vehicles that work on the runway and so.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What comprise the largest—

Hon. Sinanan: The vehicles that work on the runway.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, all right. So you will give us that. Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, 003, Airport Operations, page 393; 004, Runways, Taxis, Grounds and Carparks, pages 393 to 394. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Are you sure you are getting all the moneys that are supposed to be collected for the use of the car park? Are you aware of extortion taking place at the carpark?

Madam Chairman: Line Item. We are talking revenue here.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, under the general car parks.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but, a line Item, which Item is it? I think the question is current revenue and not expenditure.

Dr. Rambachan: Other Contracted Services.

Madam Chairman: Other Contracted Services. 28?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah. What does that represent? Does that represent the people who work at the car park? Is that a contracted service?

Hon. Sinanan: No, no. Those are the employees of the Airports Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: These is more for maintenance work and so at the airport. This is not the car park or anything like that.

Dr. Rambachan: You have to pay \$40 to get a car park.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Security, page 394.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just want to—003, line Item 37—

Madam Chairman: 003? If it is 004, I will entertain it, but because I may have missed you when I went on to 005. But I am so sorry I will not go back to 003.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Do not worry.

Madam Chairman: Okay. 005, Security, page 395. The Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, to the hon. Minister, line Item 17, Training, an increase of \$190,000 in that particular area. Could the Minister indicate what areas of training would this account for?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chair, let me answer that. If you look at the original estimate for 2017 it was 900. The actual expenditure was 510. So we gave them \$700,000 this year. It is just a block allocation.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 394. 001, General Administration, page 394; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, page 394; 007, Households. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister just under 01, Pension Contribution and 03, Group Health Plan, just elaborate on what accounted for the increases under these Heads of \$1,590,000 and \$500,000?

Hon. Sinanan: For an increase in staff.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Indarsingh: I did not hear him, Madam.

Hon. Member: He said an increase in staff.

Mr. Indarsingh: An increase in staff. How much staff?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: It is not an increase in staff. It is the same figure from 2017 to 2018 if you look at it. It is not an increase in staff. It is just that this is—

Mr. Indarsingh: You told me an increase in staff so I was just seeking clarification.

Hon. Sinanan: It is not an increase in staff. It is the same figure from 2017 to 2018.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Which company is involved in the pension issue in terms of the underwriting and management of the pension for all these employees? Which company is involved?

Hon. Sinanan: The pension plan is, First Citizens Bank is the trustee.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, page 395. Okay, so we go on to 50, Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago at page 406.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, just for my purposes of organizing my—I want to know what time we are taking the tea break?

Hon. Member: It is a valid question. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Do I take it that it is the wish of the Committee that we take tea now?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Madam Chairman: The meeting is now suspended. We will return here at five o'clock.

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

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

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now resumed and we are now at 50, Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, and this is at page 406. Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 406. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under General Administration, there is a question that I will ask as I go down, how many employees are there in the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago—if you have it by General Administration, the salaried people as against wages and COLA, or daily-rated workers?

Hon. Sinanan: All together, it is about 1,500.

Dr. Rambachan: Fifteen hundred workers in the Port. That is between salaried and daily-paid? Contract workers also?

Hon. Sinanan: All together.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, are you complete?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on to 002? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, what is this, 001?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to find out, I know that the hon. Minister gave the number of employees, but just for the increase in salaries, I just wanted to know if there is an intention to employ more staff, and if so, what would the positions be, please? Thanks.

Madam Chairman: An increase in salary?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Line 01, is it—406?

Madam Chairman: Page 406?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Oh, you are looking at 01?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Line Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living.

Hon. Sinanan: This 35 would include the back pay. So that would be the new salaries.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So can we go on to 002, Engineering Division, page 406? 004, Marine Division, page 406; 005, Wharves Division, page 406; 006, Cruise Ship Complex, page 407. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I just wanted to find out what accounts for the increase of \$2.25 million in Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance on the Cruise Ship Complex.

Hon. Sinanan: That would be the back pay and the new salaries.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on? Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 407; 001, General Administration, page 407; 002—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 02—

Madam Chairman: 002, Engineering Division, pages 407 to 408. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, 02, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: So you are at “Wages and COLA”?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: On page 407, we have—I just want to find out on line 29, “Losses on Foreign Currency Conversion”.

Madam Chairman: So we are on page 407, Item 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can the hon. Minister indicate what services would have been rendered, or items that would have been purchased that you would have incurred losses on foreign exchange? And has the hon. Minister taken into consideration going forward of an increase in US—

Hon. Sinanan: This is for foreign purchase for parts. And if you take going forward, what do you mean?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Take into consideration, of course, having to pay the currency exchange, paying more for the US dollar.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, that would have been taken into consideration.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we are now at 002, Engineering Division, pages 407 and 408; 004, Marine Division, page 408; 005, Wharves Division, page 408; 006, Cruise Ship Complex, page 409.

Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration, page 409; 002, Engineering Division, page 409; 005, Wharves Division, page 409; 006, Cruise Ship Complex, page 410; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 410; 007, Households, page 410. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, Sub-Item 03, Gratuities, General Administration, an increase of \$16 million. Could he add some clarity and explain what is that about?

Hon. Sinanan: I think this would have been people who would have been retired and their gratuity, and some back pay of pensions.

Mr. Lee: So these are lump sum items? Could we get a list of those people that this refers to, please?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: 009, Other Transfers, pages 410 to 411. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I think there is something that all of us would like to understand just for clarity, which is the word “depreciation” and how it is—in the way that we understand depreciation. Here it is an expenditure. Can you explain that?

Hon. Sinanan: It is a balancing, really. I spent a lot of time trying to understand it myself yesterday.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, I have always tried.

Hon. Sinanan: It is really balancing a net figure.

Dr. Rambachan: It is not a flow of cash?

Hon. Sinanan: No. It is a book value, really, for a transfer.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Sinanan: I had the same concern yesterday.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Items 32 and 33 under 009: \$340.4 million bond. What was that bond for and how many years is that bond for? And what was it used for?

Hon. Sinanan: This was for financing of loans for cranes and infrastructure, and it was the Summit of the Americas.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, Minister, I am not really hearing you. Sorry.

Hon. Sinanan: Sorry. This would have been for refinancing of loans that would have been taken for the ship-to-shore cranes and other infrastructure work.

Madam Chairman: So, we now go on to 52, Public Transport Service Corporation. This is at page 425; Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 425; 001, General Administration, page 425. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Sub-Item 01, the decrease of \$5 million for salaries and cost of living, can the Minister account for the decrease? Is it that less persons are employed?

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at the 2017 estimate and the 2018 estimate, there is an increase. The 2017, there was a back pay arrears which—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay.

Hon. Sinanan: So there is really an increase and not a decrease.

Madam Chairman: 002, Vehicles and Equipment Maintenance, page 425; 007, Property Development Services, page 425; 008, Transit Express Commuter Services, page 426. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, the Wages and COLA here and Salaries and Cost of Living, this will include all the drivers' costs and everything? This is all your wages and salaries relating to the management and also all your drivers and operators on the buses and what have you?

Hon. Sinanan: This includes the drivers for both the commuter service and the—yes, for all the drivers.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. How many persons are employed in the PTSC?

Hon. Sinanan: Approximately 1,600.

Dr. Rambachan: Do you know how many of those are drivers?

Hon. Sinanan: Approximately 600.

Dr. Rambachan: And how many buses are operational in the fleet? How many buses are there in the fleet and how many are really operational?

Hon. Sinanan: We have about 350 that are operational right now.

Dr. Rambachan: All are operational right now.

Hon. Sinanan: Approximately about 210/215 operational.

Dr. Rambachan: Of the 350?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: So these 600 drivers were hired to drive 350 vehicles—buses—or 210 buses?

Hon. Sinanan: The international ratio is 2.5 drivers per bus. So if you calculate 600, then we are basically short of a couple buses but as you would see going forward that we have plans to increase the fleet.

Dr. Rambachan: I am going to make a point and a question here. We earn from Transit and Express Commuter Services about \$25 million with these 210 buses, or 350 buses, depending on which, right? And we are subsidizing \$304 million. So there is a difference between income and subsidy of approximately \$279 million. How many passengers do we move on these buses annually?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: Approximately nine million passengers.

Mr. Imbert: Excuse me, Madam Chairman. What line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: Salaries and Cost of Living, Wages and COLA. And I am asking how many are drivers and how many buses are operational with the drivers?

Mr. Imbert: With respect to salaries?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: What does buses have to do with salaries?

Dr. Rambachan: Wages and COLA, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: That is Goods and Services.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, however you want to take it, I can go back at it. No problem.

Mr. Imbert: If you have 10 buses and three workers—

Hon. Sinanan: It has to be tight.

Mr. Imbert: So you would not ask anything on vehicles, then?

Dr. Rambachan: I will defer and ask it there.

Madam Chairman: This is under 008.

Mr. Imbert: I know, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: If you look at 426, 002, there are a whole set of Items on vehicles.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but I think the question was in terms of salary and wages.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. I was just wondering how buses come in.

Madam Chairman: Well, I think there was a preliminary question that was asked concerning drivers and buses. So, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I am finished.

Madam Chairman: You are finished? Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 426; 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Minister, Sub-Item 61, Insurance. There is an increase of \$3.3 million. What is that for?

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at 2017, it was 8361, so it actually was a decrease.

Mr. Lee: Correct. In 2017, the revised estimate is \$4.6 million, and now you increase it in 2018 to \$8 million, an increase of \$3.3 million.

Mr. Imbert: It is not an increase over the original provision in 2017.

Hon. Sinanan: It was not an increase over the original. This was just the revised in 2017. So you gone back to the original in 2017. In 2018, you go back to the original in 2018.

Mr. Lee: I know, but I do not know how to—you see—and I want to be respectful, Madam Chair, because I need some clarity. Under the revised estimates, and then you have these increases, what number do we—when you are budgeting for, do we take the original 2017 estimate or the revised estimates of 2017?

Mr. Imbert: You have to look at both of them. You would have an estimate in the beginning and for one reason or another the actual would be either more or less, depending on whether there are arrears or whether bills did not come in at the end of the financial year. There are all sorts of reasons, so you have to look at both of them. And if you look at this particular item you will see this year's provision is less than the original provision for 2017.

Hon. Sinanan: And also, just to add to that, the estimate also includes the new buses that are expected to come on the fleet.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Well, as you add new buses, how many new buses that this insurance might be catering for?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, again, it varies. But it does include the new buses.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: The insurance here relates just to the physical asset, the buses?

Hon. Sinanan: This will include the buildings and everything.

Dr. Rambachan: Do you have in your insurance here any coverage for passengers who might be injured while travelling on your buses?

Hon. Sinanan: Public liability will cover that.

Dr. Rambachan: So let me just ask you the question. So let us say the bus is on the road and it gets into an accident, a passenger travelling on that bus, how does that passenger access that public liability if that passenger is injured?

Hon. Sinanan: Like any insurance company for any vehicles hired, the claim will go to the insurance company and I guess the person could make a claim against the corporation through the brokers of the corporation. All vehicles that are licensed to carry passengers must have that coverage, and that is the difference with the PH drivers and the official taxis. The official taxis, whether it be PTSC, maxi-taxis, do have that coverage.

Dr. Rambachan: Is there a limit of liability in terms of what a passenger can claim, an injured passenger?

Hon. Sinanan: Basically all insurance will have their limits. As to what the limit on this is, I would not have that offhand.

Dr. Rambachan: No, but in the case of the PTSC, do you know what that limit of liability is?

Hon. Sinanan: No, I do not have it offhand, but if you want to find it—but all insurances do have a limit.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, I would like to find out in terms of the ultimate, loss of life, what could be the claim; what could be the limit of the claim.

Mr. Young: If I may assist, Madam Chair, through you—

Dr. Rambachan: I am asking this in the public interest, eh.

Mr. Young: I know, correct. The Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Act, sets out the statutory limits that are the minimum for these types of claims, including death and personal injury. I cannot remember. It was raised a couple years ago. I think it is now at \$2 million, and generally you would find that all insurance policies—third party insurance policies—are deemed via that legislation to carry that as the maximum claim. So I would be surprised if PTSC was any different.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: You have under Sub-Item 16 here, under 02, an allocation of \$5.129 million for Contract Employment. This follows the \$100 million under Salaries and Wages, you have Contract Employment. What kind of contract employment is contemplated, or has been the experienced under this \$5.1 million?

Hon. Sinanan: Basically what you have, the cadre at the management is contracted.

Dr. Rambachan: The cadre of management is contracted?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, all the managers are on contract at the PTSC at this time.

Dr. Rambachan: And what kind of contracts do these managers have, one year, two years, three years?

Hon. Sinanan: Two-year contracts.

Dr. Rambachan: These management personnel, are they subject to performance criteria—performance goals—in terms of performance review?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, they have performance appraisals and I know for a fact that the board there is very strict on that.

Mr. Singh: In the papers this morning it was not so.

Dr. Rambachan: I wanted to go deeper, but it is okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I wanted to wait for the next one.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre? No? All right. So we are going on to 002, Vehicles and Equipment Maintenance, page 426. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister mentioned just now, Madam Chair, that in the insurance issue provision was made for newly acquired vehicles. So vehicles are going to be acquired in the year 2018, but were purchased in 2017. Is that right?

Madam Chairman: What is that line Item? We are on 002? Which one are we on? Are we under 09? Because if we are talking about acquisition of vehicles, I think there is a line Item in the Development Programme under that, so that I do not know, Member—

Dr. Tewarie: All right, I will wait.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, I am just asking, the amount of \$49 million, I notice there are a number of buses always breaking down, and I am just wondering if this would be adequate to keep the buses functional and running effectively and efficiently on the roadways.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: This is what is budgeted, so I expect this is what is required to keep the buses running.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I understand what the Minister is stating but it is one thing to say that you have been given that figure and also having—

Hon. Sinanan: Remember too, we are bringing new buses on line, eh.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Right.

Hon. Sinanan: So that will require less maintenance.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But you are also bringing buses that may be of a different brand and therefore it means that you will have different types of parts—different parts that would not be really cost-effective in the long run.

Hon. Sinanan: Well, that is why one of the policies at the PTSC is to rationalize the fleet and to get it down to close to four models.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Mr. Minister, maintenance of vehicles, \$40 million, 2017, \$49 million projected. Earlier you said that you had 350 buses, possible buses that could be available in the fleet, but of which only 210 are functional. It means that you have 140 buses either under repair or from which you have cannibalized parts to place on other buses, and they are becoming more and more unavailable. That could represent a substantial loss. But yet, if you take \$49 million and you divide it by 350 buses, you get an average, if I am correct, of \$300,000 to maintain one bus per year, and yet you cannot have 140 buses. You are telling me that you have a management and \$49 million in maintenance and 40 per cent of the buses are not available on the roads? One hundred and forty of 350 is 40 per cent. Forty per cent of your buses are down? That cannot be good management.

Hon. Sinanan: I do not know if it might be based on the funding. One of the prerogatives of the PTSC now is to rationalize the fleet. There is definitely a challenge in finding parts for 24 makes and models of buses, and one of the challenges—the funding will be available, but you just cannot source the parts. Somewhere we have to find where we rationalize the fleet and you bring it down to four or five. Because it is not only parts, it is specialized tools as well.

Dr. Rambachan: So, Mr. Minister, do we expect to have another PTSC graveyard like we once had in Wallerfield?

Hon. Sinanan: I hope not.

Dr. Rambachan: Or if it is that you want to rationalize the fleet and you are short of money, have you considered, therefore, offering these buses for sale to private entrepreneurs? Because I see a lot of PTSC buses, very, very old numbers, still on the roads, well maintained by private operators. So something has to be wrong with this management you are paying—this contract management you are paying this money. And I have no apologies for saying that when people do not do their jobs you do not romanticize them. You deal with it, because this is public funds involved.

Hon. Sinanan: I agree with you and that is why the appraisal is in place now.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at 02, Contract Employment. I am seeing \$5.1 million increased by 1.3. If I go down, 002, I see contract employment, another \$800,000. At Port of Spain Transit Centre, contract employment, 1.4—

Madam Chairman: But we are still in 002.

Mr. Charles: I know we are still, but I am trying to make the point that there seems to be a reliance on contract labour as opposed to permanent employment. And when you look at contract labour, Goods and Services compared with Maintenance, I could understand contract labour for maintenance of vehicles, but the ratio is about four or five to one.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask what line Item is this?

Mr. Charles: 002, 16, and I am comparing it with others; just a general statement.

Madam Chairman: So that question is?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Charles: The question is what these contract employment is in respect of, and is there an over-reliance on contract employment in PTSC?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, the percentage of contract workers compared to the permanent employees is very low, so there is not a move to go into contract. The figures do not state that.

Mr. Charles: Well, could you give me the figures, please?

Hon. Sinanan: I would have to forward that information to you. I do not have that here.

Madam Chairman: All right. So can we go on to 005, Port of Spain Transit Centre at page 427? 006, Para-Transit Unit, page 427; 007, Property Development Services, page 427. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Again, Item 16, Contract Employment. So I wanted to make the point that I am seeing it everywhere but you say it is still low, so probably when I get the figures.

5.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Transit/Express Commuter Services, page 428; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 428; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 428; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers, pages 428 and 429.

Mr. Charles: I can go back. 04, Severance Pay to Operational Staff, and I just wanted to know if there is a laying-off for—what is the reason for paying this \$10 million? I know it is a decrease.

Hon. Sinanan: This would have been employees who had retired during the current years.

Mr. Charles: Normal retirement?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, normal retirement.

Dr. Rambachan: We are paying \$51 million a year in these other transfers, most of which has to do with either depreciation or interest and principal payments, and you said earlier that we transport nine million passengers a year; that is, we are transporting just 25,000 passengers on the average per day in our buses at a subsidy of \$304 million a year. I put that squarely to you, Minister, because I do not think we have looked—

Hon. Sinanan: What you are making is a statement.

Dr. Rambachan: No, I am going to ask the question. I am going to ask the question. Is this kind of analysis, would it lead you to think about a private/public sector partnership for the PTSC?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Mr. Charles: Just so? Why?

Mr. Imbert: Because he say so.

Hon. Sinanan: Corporation Sole.

Dr. Rambachan: He put you in your place.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members. 57, Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. We are moving now to page 438. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 438; 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister and his team from Civil Aviation, Sub-Head 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, an increase of \$22 million for 2018.

Hon. Sinanan: This is for the provision for the new salary agreement.

Mr. Lee: That would be in effect? How many staff this affects, this increase?

Hon. Sinanan: 303.

Mr. Lee: And this negotiation is for what period?

Hon. Sinanan: 2011—2013.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 438; 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, Sub-Head 07, House Rates of \$4.7 million. Is this, I am assuming, property tax?

Hon. Sinanan: It was budgeted for.

Mr. Lee: And what formula was used?

Hon. Sinanan: What was used is a percentage of the value.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 27, Overseas Travel. I see it is an increase of \$500,000 to \$3.3 million, is there a reason?

Hon. Sinanan: The original estimate was 3.5. So what we have here is a decrease at 3.3, a decrease of \$200,000.

Mr. Charles: No, but your revised estimates was 2.8.

Mr. Imbert: Member for Naparima, let me assist. The provision for 2017 original was 3.5. They obviously did not travel to that extent in 2017, but they may have some IATA conferences or other things coming up in 2018 so they have put back the original provisions. They may not use all of it. Okay?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services, an increase of \$6.1 million. Can we get an idea as to what that will involve?

Hon. Sinanan: Equipment upgrades that have to take place in 2018.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 99. I just wanted to find out from the hon. Minister—that is 99—has any employee accessed this service?

Hon. Sinanan: The answer is yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can you state how many persons have? Well, not now.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item No. 17, there is an increase in training of \$6.5 million.

Hon. Sinanan: This is because of training in the upgrade of the equipment and so. The staff has to be trained to manage the equipment.

Dr. Rambachan: What is Item 23, Fees? I need to know what fees are those to ask my question.

Madam Chairman: Item?

Dr. Rambachan: No. 23.

Madam Chairman: Twenty-three.

Hon. Sinanan: These are fees for the subscription for the staff to the professional bodies.

Dr. Rambachan: To the professional bodies?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. Mr. Minister, so taking fees together with medical expenses and employee assistance programmes, I want to ask this question: do you have any mandatory testing for your civil aviation people, especially those who direct traffic and so on for drug use and alcoholism?

Hon. Sinanan: There is a medical programme and all the employees have to go through the medical programme.

Dr. Rambachan: Do they go through mandatory testing for drug use and alcoholism?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: The answer is yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases on page 439? 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 439; 001, Regional Bodies.

Mr. Charles: 04, are we there?

Madam Chairman: No, we are still at 01, 001 Regional Bodies; 004 International Bodies.

Mr. Charles: No, I was at 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, from \$13 million in 2017 revised estimates to \$86 million estimated—

Madam Chairman: So what you are doing there is the overall figure.

Mr. Charles: Oh, it is the overall? Okay. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: So I do not know if you want to raise it?

Mr. Charles: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So we are at 004, International Bodies; 007, Households. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Sub-Item under 007, 03, the Pension Plan to \$72 million, and in 2016 it was \$10 million; in 2017, 7.2. Could you clarify what is happening with the pension plan?

Hon. Sinanan: This is a provision made for the deficit of the plan.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, but—okay. I know it is a deficit, but what is happening? Why the plan went into that tremendous deficit over the years? Was it not being funded properly?

Mr. Imbert: It was not being funded under UNC. We are fixing it now.

Mr. Charles: Is that the official answer?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: So why did it take over two years for you to correct it?

Mr. Imbert: It is all right. It better than five years and three months.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, would the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, or the Corporation Sole, hon. Minister of Finance, say when this deficit started in terms of this pension?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Imbert: We will send you the information. We would send you a full report.

Dr. Rambachan: You see, you made an accusation just now. You should answer it.

Mr. Imbert: What is the next line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: And who is the name of the actuary?

Mr. Imbert: You will get a full report.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We are going to a different book and we are starting at page 118. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; we are at page 1-1-8. Page 118. Okay? So Consolidated Fund, Item 001, Pre-Investment, pages 118 to 120. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, under Item 004, under Highway Improvement Studies, there is a new project for \$2 million, can you identify exactly what facet of the highway services that we are going to be studying to improve exactly what component?

Hon. Sinanan: Could you give me the page that you are on there?

Mr. Paray: Page 118, line Item 004.

Hon. Sinanan: This is for the Wrightson Road improvement.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro, you are all right?

Mr. Paray: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 001, Administrative Services, Development of a National Transportation Plan. Can the hon. Minister indicate when will this plan be developed and available for perusal?

Hon. Sinanan: This committee will be established this year.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a quick question, Chair. Under Coastal Studies 241, page 119, I just wanted to know what part of the country is going to be addressed for that \$2 million. *[Interruption]* No actually, I think this here?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to the Minister, 004. The new project which he had mentioned was Wrightson Road, could he expand a little bit on what that is about?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: It is a studying of the widening of the Wrightson Road, so we could try to get additional lanes on Wrightson Road.

Mr. Lee: Additional lanes?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Mr. Lee: Good.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, we are on 119 as well?

Madam Chairman: Yes, we are.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Good. 241, the Coastal Studies, Drainage and Irrigation as well as Coastal Studies. Hon. Minister, in light of the last crisis that took place in Matelot, is this figure adequate for drainage and irrigation in light of the fact that there are three constituencies that border, that is, Mayaro—

Mr. Imbert: Member, there is no figure.

Hon. Sinanan: This is for studies, you know.

Mr. Imbert: But there is no figure. It is zero.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: We realize that.

Mr. Imbert: You sure?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah. So I mean, it is like, should there not be something? [*Crosstalk*] No, but it is a serious matter. I mean, would there be any consideration for something to be put in place?

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, Drainage and Irrigation. I know nothing has been allocated, but does this mean that the Williamsville problem that arises from the Guaracara River that nothing will be done?

Hon. Sinanan: Those are under a different programme.

Mr. Charles: And those studies will be done?

Hon. Sinanan: That study has been completed and there is design work under way now.

Mr. Charles: So they can expect some relief?

Hon. Sinanan: Based on the availability of funding.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: My question was answered.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town? Okay, so can we go on to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 121 to 124? Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am dealing with, under 003, Item 005, Flood Alleviation and Drainage Programme, an allocation of \$500,000, Project No. 005—funded as follows: IDB loan \$0.5 million.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we are on page 121, 005.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Is this the IDB loan for the drainage of Port of Spain and that, therefore, this loan initially was US \$120 million, and because of the lack of capacity at NIDCO and within the Ministry they were unable to deal with the plans and programmes put forward by WSP and that therefore, Minister I would suggest you take a close look at this thing because it is two areas really.

Mr. Imbert: Member for Chaguanas West, could you indicate what is your question.

Mr. Singh: The question is: Why it is just this small allocation for the flooding that we have in Port of Spain having regard to the initial fact that the loan allocation by IDB which was secured about three years aback was US \$120 million?

Mr. Imbert: The problem has been studied for more than 30 years. You will remember a former Mayor of Port of Spain had his desk removed for non-payment for a study done on the drainage for Port of Spain when neither you nor I were in this House. So that there have been so many studies over the years and so much money spent on studies. This thing has been studied to death. It is time for action now. Not studies, action.

Mr. Singh: That is my point. My point that we had reached the stage of action and—

Mr. Imbert: No, this loan programme was for studies, for consultancy work, for designs. I myself have seen four separate designs for this same project. So we decided that there is no point in continuing to study it and design it and design it and design it for yet another time. Time for action now.

Mr. Singh: Just to complete, Madam Chair, I hope that in the action that the hon. Minister would find the location of the various utility conduits that are located in the streets of Port of Spain because that was the principal hindrance to action.

Mr. Imbert: Those have been mapped many times as you know.

Mr. Charles: Item 01, Major River Clearing Programme, and Infrastructure Rehabilitation Flood Mitigation. Could the Minister tell us what rivers have been targeted for major river clearing, and is the Guaracara River included in that?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through the Drainage Department, rivers throughout all the districts would have been identified, and based—

Mr. Charles: Can you provide a list?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, I can provide you a list, but the process that we used is the different departments. Drainage Department will identify all the critical rivers that need to be cleaned in the different regions and based on that the funding is allocated—

Mr. Charles: Would you be prepared to say whether the Guaracara River is included in it?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the listing in front of me here, but once it is critical I am sure the division would have identified it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just to ask if you can identify, not now, if any of rivers in Sangre Grande, in my area, have been targeted. And also, the coastal protection unit, how it would impact upon areas such as my own, please? Thank you.

Hon. Sinanan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, all the divisions would have submitted their requests for river cleaning, and one thing we ensure is that everybody gets—

Dr. Tewarie: Will you circulate the list?

Hon. Sinanan:—some piece of the pie. In terms of the coastal protection, we do have a programme for costal protection and the north coast is heavily involved in terms of the projects.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to say this Item is for establishment of the unit. So this is for the personnel and the infrastructure and bureaucracy associated with the unit, not with the work that would be done by the unit. That would be in another Head.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I appreciate that very much, Minister of Finance, and particularly in light of the fact that the area that my constituency borders with Sangre Grande, Toco and Mayaro, I mean, there is this concern if an earthquake or if Kick 'em Jenny were to erupt and a scenario were to come, I mean, we need to know what situations are in place to mitigate against any sort of—

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Madam Chairman: He said he would make the list available.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance based on what he just said, I just want to ensure that I understand it. Sub-Item 001, Major River Clearing Programme, which was budgeted in 2017 for \$8 million, I am assuming that only \$1 million was exercised in 2017 and they are now budgeting in 2018, \$9 million. Is he saying that this is just for setting up a unit?

Mr. Imbert: No, Sir. If you would pay attention, I was speaking about coastal protection—

Mr. Lee: No. I am talking about this item.

Mr. Imbert:—001, in response to a question that—you noticed the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla is not going ahead.

Mr. Lee: So, let me ask my question now, Madam Chair, to the Minister of Works and Transport. Can I ask the Minister of Works and Transport a follow-up question to my question? 001, Major River Clearing Programme, 2017 revised estimate of \$1 million. Is it fair to say, Minister, that throughout 2016/2017 only a million dollars was spent on Major River Clearing Programme?

Hon. Sinanan: No. We did a lot of major river cleaning under the 09 and 28, and although we have \$1 million here we have an outstanding of \$4.4 million out of this Vote to be paid for work that was done because this is—

Mr. Lee: So out of your budgeted amount in 2017, \$8 million, you would have done about \$5 million on work.

Hon. Sinanan: From this Vote. However, the reason why we could not use the full \$8 million is because there are a lot of outstanding payments pre-2015 that we were not able to verify that should have been paid from this Vote and we were not able to pay—

Mr. Lee: Does that also apply to 003 also?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, but we did do work under other programmes.

Mr. Lee: Can I get a list of the work that was done throughout 2017, please?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on page 122, under 050 Purchase of 100 New Buses at a cost of \$45 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate—I know that Government had spoken about 32 new buses last year—are those 32 new buses included in this 100 figure, or is this separate and apart thereof?

Hon. Sinanan: It is part of the 100.

Mr. Padarath: It is part of the 100?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. But Minister, if I am not mistaken, the 32 that you are speaking of, that is included in this has already been contracted at a cost of 30-something million for 32, and you are now saying 100 at \$45 million.

Mr. Imbert: That is simply the project description, purchase of 100 buses. So there is an approval to buy 100 over a period of years. You follow?

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I have two questions under the section for bus transport. Can you give me an update? I notice that under line Item for Rio Claro, 039, \$1 million has been put into the project, what can we expect at the end of fiscal 2018 in terms of that project looking at the fact there is only \$1 million that has been put on that project, what can we expect to be done?

Hon. Sinanan: There are some issues with the project which we are trying to sort out. There was a down payment made to the contractor. However, we were not able to proceed in 2017 because of issues with the land and so. A decision will be taken shortly with that project, but it is an open project right now and the issues are trying to be sorted out.

Mr. Paray: And the second question that I have Minister, under Item 072, Retooling of the Mechanical Engineering Garages, I am aware that there has been a cry for some time for a second wrecker for the PTSC service, I am wondering if that has been raised through the PTSC management in terms of acquiring a second wrecker because that puts a real spoke in maintenance component of the buses.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, that has been raised and also what has been raised is mobile garages—meaning, vehicles that can go out to fix buses on the spot rather than having to wreck them to the different garages. So it is something that they are looking at. Unfortunately, we have constraints on financing.

Mr. Paray: So that is not taken up in the 2018 fiscal?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Mr. Paray: Okay.

Dr. Tewarie: The question of the 100 buses, how many buses did we get in 2017 for the \$35 million?

Hon. Sinanan: Thirty-five.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And did we get about 17 in 2017 for the \$17 million?

Hon. Sinanan: In 2017, the order was placed for 35 buses.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Hon. Sinanan: So those should be delivered by March.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So those are not yet delivered?

Hon. Sinanan: No. And then they have an additional 35 that should come in within the next fiscal year, because now that we have the approval it is a combination of the buses.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So, was it one procurement initiative for 100 buses, or different years?

Hon. Sinanan: No, different procurement.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to go back to the Sub-Item under Air Transport 001, Programme of Safety and Security. It was budgeted in 2017 of \$3 million, I am assuming nothing ever happened to that programme, and you now budgeted a further 3.5, could the Minister explain what this programme is about, where it would fall and why was it not important to implement it in 2016/2017 and what is going to happen?

Hon. Sinanan: This was initiated in 2017 although we did not get the releases on it. It was initiated by the internal funding from the Airports Authority and this is for the continuation of the projects. It is for scanners and things along that line, but it has started, within the funding of the Airports Authorities

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 221, page 122. I just wanted to—

Madam Chairman: To the bottom, Roads and Bridges.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah. I have several bridges in my area and roads. I have Bon Air Road and the Guaico Tamana and the Cumuto Main Road, just to name a few, and I just needed to know hon. Minister, not now, but if you can submit a list of the various roads that are in line to be rehabilitated particularly in my constituency. I am particularly asking for Bon Air Road and—

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Sinanan: Those bridges you are concerned about are not from this programme. We have another programme that deals with those bridges. This is basically for outstanding claims that we would have had on another programme.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So if you could identify that other programme, not now, and just submit a list at all, I have many of these roads in my constituency.

Hon. Sinanan: That is under our IDF Programme.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, great. Thanks.

Mr. Padarath: Hon, Minister, through you, Madam Chair, line Item 060, Procurement of One Standby Generator for Use at the PTSC Bus Depot Port of Spain. Under 2017 estimate, it is \$5.2 million, then we see the revised estimate at \$1 million, and now in 2018, 1.4. When I see on line Item 060, Procurement of One Standby Generator, one would have thought that it is a one-off purchase. What is the situation with respect to this? Having moved from 5.2 now to 1.4, has this been procured?

Hon. Sinanan: It was awarded in July 2017 at a cost of \$3.7 million. Sixty per cent has been paid already.

Mr. Padarath: This reflection is outstanding amounts?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, it is expected in 2018.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Padarath: And is there a maintenance contract to this?

Hon. Sinanan: Like any new piece of equipment that is there, there will be the guarantee period and a maintenance contract.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 270, I do not know which Minister to ask, the Minister of Finance or the Works Minister, it talks about the improvement to the Maraval Access Saddle Road from Rapsey Street to Valleton Avenue of \$15 million. I do not know which Minister might want to—

Mr. Imbert: I can answer that. That project was started by the PNM Government in 2010, stopped by the UNC Government and we are going to complete it in 2018.

Mr. Lee: A follow-up question. Does the \$15 million include acquisition of properties?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Lee: So what sort of improvements would that \$15 million do?

Mr. Imbert: It will take the four lanes up to at least Valleton.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mr. Singh: On that same page, Madam Chair. Three questions I have. One dealing with the redefinition—

Madam Chairman: Item 274, page 123.

Mr. Singh: Item 274, page 123, Redefinition of Highway Reserves. I want to know: what does this redefinition entail? It is \$2 million allocated.

Hon. Sinanan: It is for the establishment of a database on the major components of the real estate vested in the Highway Division.

Mr. Singh: Okay. So what you are saying that this with a view to doing the data for the preservation of the highway reserves as highway reserves?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: I want to take the opportunity, Madam Chair, through you, to point out that the highway reserves of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, along the whole of Charlieville, opposite the Ackbar Road, is deteriorated to the extent that it is impacting upon the highway. Hon. Minister, you may be aware of that.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, I am.

Mr. Singh: My second question, Madam Chair, is Item 824 under Road Systems Operations and Services, Removal and Disposal of Wrecks and Derelict Vessels. There is two hundred—under 2017, \$6 million. Was there any work done? Revised Estimate was \$5.1 and in 2018, \$5 million. Was there any work done in 2017? Yeah, under Sea Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, this has started.

Mr. Singh: So that therefore, you have a continuation of that process. And similarly, under Sea Transport, you have under Item 828, the Dredging of Government Shipping Service Basin to accommodate *Super Fast Galicia* for the sum of \$28 million. I know the *Super Fast Galicia* must be a carry over, but is that scheduled to be done in 2018?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Well I wanted to ask a question about that same matter. I do not know if Minister has answered.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, I answered. I said yes.

Dr. Tewarie: So the dredging will in fact take place?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So any boat will need it?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, we are doing dredging and we are also dredging the channel. We must recognize that one of the challenges we have out there is the water coming down from the Caroni River continuously brings silt down to the Waterfront, so the dredging has to take place and it also will include some dredging where the passenger—where the cruise ship terminal is. So it is basically a dredging at the port at Port of Spain.

Dr. Tewarie: So the dredging was necessary regardless of whether the ship was *Galicia* or any other ship?

Hon. Sinanan: Well dredging is something that has to be done on a periodic basis.

Mr. Imbert: This is a provision. The basin and harbour at the Port of Spain port requires continuous dredging. As the Minister has pointed out, it is at the delta of the Caroni River and therefore, from time to time, dredging will always be required. It has nothing to do with that boat that you are talking about and it would not have been dredged in a couple of years, however, the boat that was sent away or left on its own accord did require dredging.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, when you look at line Item 168, it is identified as a new project called Pedestrian Channelling in Urban Areas.

Madam Chairman: Page 123, Item 168.

Mr. Padarath: Could you identify, hon. Minister what this new project, Pedestrian Channelling in Urban Areas.

Madam Chairman: What page? Page 123, Item 168.

Mr. Padarath: We are looking at page 123. Could you identify what this new project Pedestrian Channelling in Urban Areas is about and what urban areas are you looking at?

Hon. Sinanan: What page?

Mr. Padarath: 168 is the line Item, 123 is the page number under the Development Programme.

Hon. Sinanan: There are certain areas where people cross the street at various points. The idea is to bring them to one point where we can manage the flow across the street. So this is a new project that we are introducing where people would not be just crossing the streets at different places, we will channel them to one. Just like how it is done in the more developed countries where you walk to the end of street and you cross there. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have a culture where we cross anywhere.

Mr. Padarath: But Minister, this is \$1 million that has been identified as a new project. Is this for a study? Is it for infrastructure? Is it for personnel?

Hon. Sinanan: It is for infrastructure and we have two areas identified which is South Quay and Independence Square.

Mr. Padarath: So it is like a pilot project?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 155. Could you identify hon. Minister which are the highways what you are interested in putting up these new jersey-type barriers? Is it on the East-West corridor from Port of Spain to the East or is it on to the South?

Hon. Sinanan: The Churchill Roosevelt Highway.

Dr. Gopeesingh: From where to where?

Hon. Sinanan: The Churchill Roosevelt Highway between Golden Grove Road and O'Meara Road.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, good. It is needed.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on? Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 125 and 126. Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under VMCOTT, 001 and 002, we had an earlier discourse about VMCOTT and the feasibility or the financial viability of VMCOTT. Now we are seeing we have an allocation of development work of \$1.5 million in total. Could we get some clarity maybe from corporation soul? Why are we putting more money into VMCOTT when we still do not—

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Imbert: Because we cannot wave a magic wand and just—VMCOTT go “poof” like that. There must be a transition to the new paradigm.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 227. We are in another book. Same book? Same book. Thank you. Okay. So Item 001 Pre-Investment, page 227; Item 003 Economic Infrastructure, pages 228 to 231. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, I notice that there is about—under Coastal Protection, line Item 001, 012, 017, there is about \$20 million that is going to be invested in that South Cocos Bay area. In fiscal 2018, are we going to see some actual physical work being done in that area in terms of that coastal rehabilitation?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, there are contracts that have been awarded just at the end of the last financial year.

Mr. Paray: Okay. So we should see some action starting?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Paray: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 231 and 232; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 232.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$2,343,542,325 for Head 43, the Ministry of Works and Transport stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 43 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the Minister of Works and Transport, the Permanent Secretary and other technocrats. You all are discharged.

Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities \$2,971,514,742

Madam Chairman: And Members, can go to page 253 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Members, page 253. I will now invite the Minister of Public Utilities to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Hon. Minister.

Hon. Le Hunte: Thank you, Madam Chairman. It is an honour for me to address the Standing Finance Committee of Parliament this evening. Let me first express my gratitude to the Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley, for reposing his confidence in my ability to lead the Ministry of Public Utilities and to serve the country at this level.

The Ministry of Public Utilities is charged with the very critical responsibility of providing strategic leadership and governance to the public utilities sector while facilitating the delivery of affordable quality utilities service to the people of this country. The Ministry has a team of 327 public officers who, through their engagement with key stakeholders, ensure the delivery of our core business which is effected through the stewardship of nine implementing agencies and divisions namely:

- the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission;
- the Telecommunication Service of Trinidad and Tobago, (TSTT);
- the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA);
- the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company;
- the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation;
- the Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited;
- the Regulated Industries Commission;
- the Meteorological Services Division;
- the Electrical Inspectorate Division.

Madam Chairman, as at September the 30th, 2017, the Ministry of Public Utilities had expended approximately \$444.2 million or 84.4 per cent of its allocation under the 2017 Public Sector Investment Programme. This reflects commendably on the Ministry's capacity to successfully implement its programmes and projects and to deliver positive outcomes for our citizens. Madam Chairman, over the next year, the Ministry will focus on further accelerating the implementation of Government policies and programmes in priority areas such as: water resource management, improved transmission and distribution of water. Our particular focus would be on the reduction of non-revenue water, expansion of the national power grid and waste and wastewater management.

Madam Chairman, the Minister of Finance spoke at length about the paradigm shift that we need to effect as a country. The Ministry of Public Utilities is intent on playing its part in creating the economy and society of the 2030 that we all desire. Improving efficiency in the use of resources, reducing and recycling waste and moving towards more sustainable options are paramount. Almost immediately, we will be pioneering a conservation and efficiency drive across the public sector as it relates to the use of electricity and water, and the generation and disposal of recyclable waste. Our intent is not only to reduce cost and waste but more importantly, to build a culture of sustainability in the use of resources.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

In fiscal 2018, the draft estimates proposed an allocation of \$3.544 billion; \$2,813,314,742 for recurrent expenditure and \$713,649,000 for the Development Programme. We intend to deliver on our suite of programmes and initiatives that are geared towards ensuring that our public utilities infrastructure is modern and resilient. We, at the Ministry of Public Utilities, are committed to doing more with less. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,971,514,742 for Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 253, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 253. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to take the opportunity to welcome the hon. Minister at his maiden appearance before this House and I know that he is no maiden but we wish to welcome him and we are cognizant of the fact that it is his maiden appearance and that therefore, we will act accordingly.

Madam Chair, the allocation for salaries and allowances is \$23.4 million, an increase of \$1.4 million. I would like to find out how many members of staff this salary is to pay in the Ministry of Public Utilities. In other words, what is the number of persons employed?

Hon. Le Hunte: Okay. The Ministry, at present, has 104 positions on its permanent establishment of which 95 positions are presently filled. We have nine positions that are basically vacant at this point in time.

Mr. Singh: Could you inform the Committee what are the nine vacancies?

Hon. Le Hunte: Sure. We have one is the Director of Economic Research and Policy Planning, we have two Economist IIs, one Compliant Officer, four Clerks, Stenographers and one Clerk Typist.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Meteorological Services, pages 253 to 254. Member for Chaguanas West.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the complement of the employees of Met Services and is there a full establishment of Met Officers or employees at the Met Services?

Hon. Le Hunte: Again, the complement of staff at the Met Services, we have 50 positions on the permanent establishment of which 43 are filled and we have seven vacancies. Two Meteorological Officers—seven vacancies.

Mr. Singh: All meteorological?

Hon. Le Hunte: Yes.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate, page 254. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: A similar question, Madam Chair. The complement of staff and the vacancies.

Hon. Le Hunte: Again, we have 48 positions on the permanent establishment of which 41 positions are filled. In this category, we have six Electrical Inspectors and one Cleaner.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, General Administration, page 255. Member for Chaguanas West. We go on the Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 2—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I had one on Sub-Item 16.

Madam Chairman: You are on Item 007, General Administration or you at Goods and Services?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, 001, General Administration.

Madam Chairman: All right, so just let me call it. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 255 to 256. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 16, could the hon. Minister indicate the complement of Contract Employment within the Ministry to come up to the value of \$13.1 million? The amount of bodies that you may have under Contract Employment.

Hon. Le Hunte: Okay, Contract Employment for the year of September, the end, we actually have a decrease from 118 to 88, hence the reason for the change. But as at the end of September, we have 88 contract employees.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Were these three-year contracts?

Hon. Le Hunte: Were they three-year contracts? Not sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Yuh not too sure about.” Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I pass.

Madam Chairman: Pass? Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 53, 02, Refunds to WASA Re: Water Improvement Rate and I see \$51 million approximately decrease, and one would have thought that given the challenges we face with water distribution—if, in fact, this vote relates to that—that it should be increased rather than decreased as it is. So, it is a question of no money or is it a question of there is no need to increase the rate at this time?

Hon. Le Hunte: The reason, basically one, this vote really deals with moneys from the industrial customers at Point Lisas and it is a flow through. Mittal actually left as one of the industrial customers there so the amount of industrial customers is a little less. That is why the reduction for this particular—but it is a flow through.

Mr. Charles: Okay. I wonder if I could ask a related question. Your accounts receivables with Government Ministries, is it up to par at this stage or is it in deficit and if so, by what percentage?

Hon. Le Hunte: I will have to give you that figure, that exact figure, but the answer, we have sum of receivables from Government Ministries. The exact amount, I will have to provide.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 42, hon. Minister, can you account for the decrease in the Street Lighting of \$38 million?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, that is for the increase or the decrease?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Decrease. Can you account for the decrease?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, we would be initiating—what we have realized, I mean this is actually the cost that we pay for street lighting throughout the system and there is a lot of—not only in street lighting, this also covers the parks also. And one of the things that we have found is that we are going to be putting in a system to help manage the lights that are always left on in the parks all the time and it is burning a lot. So we are going to try to—we will be instituting a

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

programme at T&TEC so that we could automatically take out those lights because people have been wasting the electricity and plus, we would be putting in a number of more energy conservation-type activities. So hopefully, we would be working towards getting that cost down as much as possible.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: A follow-up question. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Those areas identified for reducing the lighting, have you identified those areas and where are those areas?

Hon. Le Hunte: Have we identified the areas? I said it. The reduction is going to be a combination of different activities: conservation activities. But what you are asking is the actual areas of the parks that we will be looking at reducing?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, Sir.

Hon. Le Hunte: No, we have not identified it but there is a general problem that a lot of the people have been complaining about the lights that are just left on and there have been, in some cases, vandalism of the process and the lights have been put on or where they are supposed to come off, they will continue to remain on. So we have to create a process of trying to reduce that bill. So this is all an attempt within this particular line Item of a number of activities to reduce the cost of electricity that we pay for recurrent expenditure via electricity, via parks, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to return to the Water Improvement Rate, could the hon. Minister provide a breakdown of that reduction by \$50.7 million?

Hon. Le Hunte: I will then have to supply you with that information. The actual breakdown? Okay.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I want to return to line Item 42, Street Lighting. Many of the constituents seem to indicate that there is a corollary, a relationship, between the lack of street lighting and the inducement to crime and criminality. Do you have a running commentary in terms of the number of street lights—when we pass on the highway, we see a number of them that are not repaired. Do you have an idea as to how many thousands or hundreds of thousands that have not been lit for the last month, out of service and what do you plan to do within which period of time?

Hon. Le Hunte: No, I do not have that number of the amount of street lights that are not operational at this point in time. I would probably try to get that number to you.

Mr. Karim: Okay. I am certain that you will be aware that it is a critical problem. Can you give us some measure of comfort as to what you intend to do to alleviate or to respond to this situation?

6.30 p.m.

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, we do respond. Where we find that there are street lights that are not working, we do work through the agency and try to get them working as quickly as possible. So, it is, we have—I mean, the figure that was presented to me is that we have 15,000 lights that are presently not working out of a total of 205,000 lights. So there are 15,000 out of 205,000 and we will be working towards rectifying that during the year.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question has been answered.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under the same line Item, street lighting at 42, two questions. First, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister there appears to be a breakdown of responsiveness when it comes to the hotline that is associated with street lighting. I can tell you from my own experience, I have had my street light out for over a year, after about 10 complaints and still nothing. But this is something that is across the board, where we have found over the past year in particular, probably because there have been so many Ministers of Public Utilities, but really there has been a breakdown of responsiveness with respect to the hotlines, in terms of communicating with the public and also accepting these complaints. What is your method, in terms of moving forward, in terms of becoming more responsive through the street lighting programme to the public?—one.

And the second one was that you spoke about alternative energy conservation streams. Now, it is fine and well to make those sort of pronouncements without giving any specifics. At this point, we are looking for specifics. What are some of these alternatives?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, if I could start with the second question on some of the alternatives that we have been putting in place, we have been putting in place the LED lighting facilities and we have been changing the—we have been moving. In the case of the street lighting, we have been using some of the solar lighting in some areas and we have been, as I said, we have been changing the types of bulbs that we have been using on the street lighting to be more energy-conservation-type bulbs.

With regard to the breakdown, it is something I would definitely have to look into. We do try to respond as quickly as possible, and I, since I have assumed office a month ago, I have been responding to most of the queries, as they relate to street lighting activities and I have not seen a big backlog that is outstanding, but if there is, I will look into it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Two questions. The first question is the recreation—I know that you are indicating that you are going to be reducing the lights, and so forth, in the recreation parks. And for clubs and for athletes and for various sporting activities that take place at these recreation grounds, what systems would be put in place for an extension of the lighting system? That is one.

And two, I understand that some persons are—some recreation grounds are experiencing problems in terms of payment. As far as I am aware, the Ministry of Public Utilities has taken up the responsibility, has accepted responsibility of the payment of these grounds. Is this still continuing, or has it been discontinued?

Hon. Le Hunte: In case of the latter, yes we do make the payments for these grounds. We foot the bill for these grounds, and hence we are trying as much possible to manage the optimal use of these grounds. And hence the reason why we are trying as much as possible to ensure when the grounds are not in use that the lights are not going to be kept on burning unnecessary electricity. And really that is the second question.

And the first question, sorry again?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What systems would be put in place for clubs or athletes who would have to use the grounds for extended periods? How can they ask for the lights to be extended? Do they write to the Ministry? Who do they liaise with?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, again, you know there will be—the system that would be put in place would be one that would be, one we would be able to have sight of the particular recreation grounds, and in addition there are timers on these particular recreation grounds too that if it is that it has to go for an extended period of time, you could actually go in there and make the requirements through the timer. So we could adjust the timing system if it is required.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Met Services, pages 256 and 257. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 16, Contract Employment. Could the Minister indicate: What are the types of contract employment you have at the Met Services, and how many persons have been employed over the last year in the allocation? Because there is an increase by \$326,000.

In addition, there is an allocation under 22 for Short-Term Employment and that too has \$1.1 million allocation. Could you indicate: What is that short-term employment for?

Hon. Le Hunte: Under Item 16, you said Contract Employment. And the other one dealt with?

Mr. Singh: Short-Term Employment, under 22.

Hon. Le Hunte: Short-Term Employment. So should I take both one time, together? One at a time? Okay. Contract 16. Under Contract Employment for fiscal year September, there was a decrease from 12 to seven. Five positions were not recommended for retention by the Public Management Consulting Division. So that is really the reasons for the reduction in the contract employment.

Mr. Singh: I wanted to know what positions, what type of work that these contract employees do.

Hon. Le Hunte: The actual positions that are actually there in the Contract Employment, I will have to get back to you and let you know the actual positions that are being filled.

Mr. Singh: Okay. And your short term?

Hon. Le Hunte: And in the case of the short-term contracts, there are currently 33 persons on short-term contracts in the Ministry.

Mr. Singh: In the Met Services?

Hon. Le Hunte: In Met Services there are 18 on contract.

Mr. Singh: Through you, Madam Chair, what are those positions?

Hon. Le Hunte: Again, the actual breakdown of the positions I will provide you with.

Mr. Singh: The point I want to make, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister is that, look, the Met Services is a very small complement of staff. You have both contract and short-term employment. It really requires a level of rationalization.

Madam Chairman: That is a question or a statement?

Mr. Singh: No, no, that is a statement. That is a statement of assistance.

Madam Chairman: Minister, would you want to respond?

Hon. Le Hunte: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Electrical Inspectorate, pages 257 and 258. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair, just Item 16. First, hon. Minister, would you be able to indicate to us, with respect to contract employment, whether you are adequately served in terms of the ratio of electrical inspectors to households, and if so, if you can give an idea as to the deficit and what you might want to do to correct that deficit?

Hon. Le Hunte: Again, with regard to Contract Employment, on Item 16, presently there are 14 persons employed on contract in that particular division. What has happened in that particular division, there has been a reduction in the amount of Contract Employment there because there have been an increase in the number of the filling of the vacancies in the permanent employment, and as we fill the vacancies in the permanent employment category, we have been reducing the number of contract employees.

At this point in time, we feel that as we fill, our emphasis is to try to put the vacancies, to fill the permanent vacancies and there so rely less on the Contract Employment. And as we do that, we think yes, we have enough people in the employ.

Mr. Karim: Just to get it right, you are saying that you are convinced or you are satisfied that you have sufficient electrical inspectors to satisfy the needs of customers?

Hon. Le Hunte: Based on—yes.

Mr. Karim: That might not necessarily be the view of the household, but anyway. Item number 17, there seems to be a consistent decline in the amount allocated to training. In fact, it seems as though, although security is very important, but the security here seems to be consistently increasing while the opportunity for training in capacity building and improving the quality of the service seems to be reducing. Is there a reason why we are seeing this decline?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, I mean under that budget of training, I mean, I think there has been a dramatic decline overall in all areas. In the area of training, we do have, based on the needs analysis done, there is a training for one electrical

inspector in fire investigations of high voltage. So there is a particular training that we have identified in the training gaps of the inspectors that we need to provide for and that is what we are catering for under this particular item of training.

Mr. Karim: The reason why I am raising it is because you may have improvements to building codes, and so on, and new developments and technological developments. So I was really looking at that aspect of it, in terms of how do you respond to the information age and the knowledge base of the employees, in terms of the capacity of themselves. It might be something you want to consider.

Hon. Le Hunte: It is something that I will consider, but as the need arises I am sure we would be able to look at it going forward.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under contract employment, could you indicate what is the revenue that the State earns from the Electrical Inspectorate?

Hon. Le Hunte: I will get that information back to you.

Mr. Singh: There is a reason for that, because at one point in time there was a model that was being talked about with a view to privatizing the Electrical Inspectorate in order to be more effective and more responsive, and being a fresh Minister I thought you might want to take a look at that.

Hon. Le Hunte: Sure, I take that on board.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Can we move on? Item 007, General Administration, page 258. Sub-head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 259. Item 001: General Administration, page 259; Item 002, Meteorological Services, page 259; Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate, page 259; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 260; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 260; Item 003, United Nations Organization, page 260; Item 004, International Bodies, page 260; Item 007, Households, page 260.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, under the Utilities Assistance Programme, there is an increase of—what is this, \$4 million?

Hon. Le Hunte: Four thousand.

Mr. Singh: Thought so, \$4,000. Madam Chair, I would like to find out from the Minister, is this really a reflection of the fact that this Utilities Assistance Programme is for the pensioners and for the impoverished in the society? Is this what the increased allocation amounts to and the projections of the Ministry? What was the demand of the Ministry of the Ministry of Finance—request of the Ministry to the Ministry of Finance on this issue?

Hon. Le Hunte: At this point in time, the actual request is not in front of me. But the programme is one that we think is well utilized and it is well patronized and is one that we feel that the particular allocation will allow us to continue to satisfy the needs or some of the needs of the people as they request.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-Item 08, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Could you give a little explanation on this issue of the rebate on electricity bills, almost similar to the rebate on WASA bills? And the increase, is it you are giving more subsidies? Could you explain that rebate to us, rebate on electricity bill?

Hon. Le Hunte: So the increase in the amount for the payment of the—the actual increase in the amount that you are speaking about was really, the increase in the amount was for the payment of arrears for the period February to September 2017, in the sum of \$33 million. Furthermore, the rebate amount for September 2017 is outstanding. The projected figure for fiscal 2018 is around \$49 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that is—could you just explain the rebate process just briefly?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, as it is now the present rebate is that you get 25 per cent if the bill is \$300 or less, and the amount of people that are being affected is about 209,000.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If the bill is less than?

Hon. Le Hunte: You get 25 per cent off if your bill is \$300 or less.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, let me assist the Member for Caroni East. This was a budget measure—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, but—

Mr. Imbert:—announced last year.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Gopeesingh: So what, I cannot ask a question on it for clarity?

Mr. Imbert: It was clarified in last year's budget.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, you were never clear.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, do you have a question?

Mr. Lee: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: Okay. We are now on to 009, Other Transfers, page 261. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Sub-Items 16 and 17, the bond facility repayment. Is it fair to say, Minister, that nothing was paid on these two bond facilities in 2017?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, it is fair to say nothing was paid on them because they were not issued in 2017. Right now, if there are 20, they will be issued. There is a bridging loan that would be converted into a bond and, therefore, they will be paid in 2016 and 2017. And as you see, the bridging loan component will fall away.

Mr. Lee: So, why did we estimate something in 2017, budgeted that amount?

Hon. Le Hunte: Beg pardon?

Mr. Lee: Why did we budget \$67 million and \$50 million respectively in those two line items 16 and 17 in 2017?

Hon. Le Hunte: Now, there is no estimate. Well because at the time, I mean this particular bond is a bond that was expected to be done. It has been slightly delayed and is going to be, the existing loan is going to be converted into a bond. All documentations have been signed up, and so forth, and will be converted into a bond within a relatively short space of time and the repayment of the bond will actually start this year, in October. It should be completed very soon, by the end of the month.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Item 2 for the Water Resource Management Unit, there is an allocation of \$650,000, an increase of 550. Could the hon. Minister indicate as to what stage the process is at, in the context of the emergence of this new water resource management unit?

Hon. Le Hunte: What item? What number, please?

Mr. Singh: Item 02, under 009.

Madam Chairman: Page 261, 009, Other Transfers, 02 and 03.

Hon. Le Hunte: All right. At this point in time we are looking at now the establishment of a national water resource information system, the enhancement of the water resource hydrological monitoring network and development of the flood monitoring system. So, the water resource management unit, those are the Items that are earmarked to be completed in 2018.

Mr. Singh: Okay, just to assist. This is not what this is about. Madam Chair, this is a bifurcation of the water resources agency into a water resource management unit and it is a whole entity that your manifesto talks about. So, perhaps, you can take a look at that.

But my second question now, Madam Chair, the Waste Recycling Management Authority, there is an allocation of \$2 million for that. That is something new. Could you explain what is happening with respect to that?

Hon. Le Hunte: We are looking at moving. There is a move towards moving SWMCOL into having to undertake the role and function of a waste recycling management authority. So SWMCOL, in addition to its present role, will take up a recycling management authority role. And therefore, this particular money is therefore looking at putting the hiring of staff, in the first instance, and the doing of the necessary, some of the necessary fixing of the necessary buildings, and so forth to facilitate that change. But we feel that there is a need to have a recycling management authority and we feel that SWMCOL is the best place to place that particular authority in, or the responsibility for that authority in.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, could I just add? Cabinet took a decision to treat with the operationalization of the waste recycling matters, prior to my colleague's joining the Bench. That has now morphed into exactly as he said. I am just giving you a little bit of background detail. We intend to do some retrofitting of SWMCOL to be the operational and functional element on that background and it would be treated with, in a combination of legislation and operational measures.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. And the hon. Member for San Fernando West, together with the hon. Minister, would know there was a draft legislation already in place.

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell me what line Item you are on, please?

Mr. Singh: I am on line Item 04 under 09.

Mr. Imbert: And what is the point?

Mr. Singh: Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation. Madam Chair.

Mr. Imbert: What is the problem?

Mr. Singh: I see that there is a significant reduction to TTPost, could the hon. Minister give—a \$33 million—

Mr. Imbert: If you look at the original estimate for 2017, it was \$75 million. So we have simply put this identical amount for this year. If the need arises, this Head will be supplemented. If the need does not arise, this Head will be reduced.

Mr. Singh: So in other words, it is an allocation subject to the need arising?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, as I said, if it needs to be supplemented it will be. If it needs to be reduced it will be, as you know, having held this portfolio.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, Item 14, re: Cove Power Station, there is a decrease in the allocation by \$1.1 million.

Mr. Imbert: That is just a one repayment. It is principal and interest payments. That is the actual amount.

Mr. Singh: Okay, but fine. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 261. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, just a short question, Madam Chair. I see that there is no allocation for MTS. I just want to know, was it moved to another Ministry or is there some other explanation?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Le Hunte: No, it was not moved. Sorry, Minister of Finance.

Madam Chairman: The Minister could answer.

Hon. Le Hunte: Well the payment under 004, at that point in time, MTS is a company that basically sees about—they pay their bills. The amount that was paid, there were the arrears that the Ministry actually took up in paying the arrears of the MTS, their collective bargaining payment, and that payment was actually paid.

Dr. Tewarie: So you just do not owe them anything?

Hon. Le Hunte: So it is no longer needed.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister. Is the Minister aware that there are still some negotiations that are still outstanding at MTS?

Mr. Imbert: Could I just come in here? I was just telling the Minister, because he is new, that we have to deal with collective agreement for the janitorial staff at MTS, which will be dealt with in 2018. Okay? Just to make sure, because these workers at MTS they really work hard and I did not want any of them to feel that we were not attending to their needs.

Madam Chairman: Okay. We now go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. That is the other book and we are going to page 261. So we are now going to page 213, 51, Water and Sewerage Authority.

Hon. Members, we now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly*. Page 213, 51, Water and Sewerage Authority, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 213; Sub-head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 213 and 214. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, under Item 06: Remuneration to Board Members, I see that there has been an increase from \$495,000 to \$627,000. Although that was the amount in 2016, is there a reversion to that again, reversion to the same amount?

Madam Chairman: Member you have gone back to 01, Personnel Expenditure?

Mr. Singh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I think we are on 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration.

Mr. Singh: Okay, well I will pass.

Madam Chairman: That is where we have reached. All right? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 43, Security Services. An increase of \$12 million is budgeted for \$70 million, is this \$70 million that is budgeted for this year, Minister? Does it include arrears owing to security firms?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Le Hunte: I will need to get back to you to know what percentage of that money represents payment of arrears.

Mr. Lee: Follow-up question. Could the Minister, also in writing, give a list of security firms—moneys owed to them still outstanding, please?

Hon. Le Hunte: Okay, I know we have 13 firms that we have contractual services. I would give you the list of those that we have outstanding moneys to. Yes.

Madam Chairman: Members for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chairman, under Item 28, Other Contracted Services, there is an increase in 2018. Well, no increase really, but there is an allocation of \$90 million. Could the Minister indicate: What are those Other Contracted Services?

Hon. Le Hunte: I will get back to you with the actual breakdown of what are those services. But basically, they are services that WASA deems that they need to do outside of their present staffing that they could handle within the existing staffing.

Mr. Singh: Through you, Madam Chair. Minister, please take a look at the contracted services for the chemicals to treat the water because it is my understanding that you have a real problem in accessing those services and material.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I was just about to ask the question on what are the supplies that would account for the increase of \$77 million under line Item 12, the same one that MP for Chaguanas West was asking about—line Item 12, Materials and Supplies, increase of \$77 million. What are the general supplies and hence, what is the reason for the increase of \$77 million?

7.00 p.m.

Hon. Le Hunte: In that particular area, there are a number of different areas that basically make up that increase of 77. One, the Seven Seas plant is producing a slightly increased amount of water and that particular about 4,546 cubic metres per day in additional water, that results in an increase of about \$15.8 million of that 77. Then the adoption of almost—there are about 43 HDC waste water treatment plants that are now being brought on stream. That requires some additional amount. There is an increase in the water production cost and the materials that are required, as a result of that increase in production. That accounts for about \$14.3 million. And

then the additional chemicals to treat the silt water as a consequence of the heavy rains that have been happening, and other chemicals, that is about \$7.5 million, et cetera, et cetera. I think that should that care of the majority of that increase.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. As you are on that, Madam Chair, may I be permitted? The next line Item 16, Contract Employment. That is the first time in 2018 that you have brought that on for \$37 million. Could you indicate the rationale for a new budgetary allocation of \$37 million for Contract Employment not being in done in 2017 nor in 2016?

Hon. Le Hunte: If you go all the way back to 001, under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, you would see that there is a reduction in there from 670 down to 609 under that allocation, which is a \$60 million reduction. In 2017, that 670 included things like previously included contracts and short-term contracts and also short-term employment were covered under that 670. So it is now being reduced, pulled out of there, so you would also see an increase in short-term employment. So that contract employee is just breaking it out.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. I wonder whether you would be kind enough to give an indication of how many—what is the staff on full time and how many are on contract?

Hon. Le Hunte: All right. We presently at WASA have a complement of about 5,151 employees. We have 1,988 daily paid, 3,163 monthly paid and 155 employees on short-term contracts.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair, Item 69, Road Reinstatement WASA. Mr. Minister, I think you know that WASA has a history of noting when roads are repaired and digging them up and leaving them not in the state in which they met them. So the question is, one, given the pervasiveness of that kind of activity, could you just explain the \$2 million decrease? Secondly, will you work with WASA to work with the Ministry of Works and Transport to coordinate their work so that there will be less of that problem that we have spoken about? And will you work with WASA to tell them please to when reinstate the road, do it as they met it rather than an inferior replica of what they should do?

Hon. Le Hunte: Could I just answer that by saying all of the above? So that is why we are reducing.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished, Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: But the explanation for the decrease, given the pervasiveness—

Hon. Le Hunte: Because we will be working more closely with—the whole idea is to work more closely with the Ministry of Works and Transport in this particular area, whereby and they themselves—and we have that agreement so they themselves will be taking up that fixing of the roads because of that collaboration, so hence our idea of having a smaller allocation.

Mr. Charles: And if you can do that you will earn the trust that the Prime Minister has reposed in you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Madam Chair, just to follow up on that point before I get to my question. Hon. Minister, a lot of the roads sometimes deteriorate very quickly because of leaks, you know, that remain there for quite some time and it causes the erosion and ultimately the collapse so if you could—probably if you dealt with that then maybe we could avoid that road rehabilitation in so many cases that is so costly.

But going to line 68, Water Trucking. I see that you have \$10 million estimated and I am asking: One, what steps has the Ministry taken to ensure that residents who do not have a regular supply of water that they can receive an adequate supply—truck-borne water, that is—an adequate supply on a timely basis? Two, without paying any cost—because sometimes the water trucks do come and want to charge for this—what steps are being taken to ensure that this \$10 million is adequately put in place to supply persons throughout the island that do not have a regular supply?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, one of the things we would be doing, and it will be launched very soon, we are increasing our communication problem. We recognize that there have been some glitches in our communications to WASA, which has been resolved and therefore we expect that we will be able to get feedback from customers and on those requests a lot more efficiently, within the next month, now that that situation is resolved.

Secondly, as you see we did increase the amount slightly, all right? Third, we are, on the other question that you, the last part of your question was how could we ensure, with regard to the charging—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: A number of persons—

Hon. Le Hunte: As you know, a lot of the delivery of this water—we would like people if they are being charged for that water, when it is being delivered, that is something that we are actually closely monitoring, because you are not really supposed—these institutions are not supposed to be selling water, because they are

paid by us to deliver water. And therefore, where there are areas or incidents where people are being charged, we will be coming out with some communication whereby we would like to find that out so we could take the necessary action.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You said there was a glitch in the communications in your earlier statement. What really is the glitch?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well there are, as a matter of fact, I mean, we know that the system—the system, the communication system into WASA over the last month has been malfunctioning and therefore a number of times to get in to make a request has not been as effective as it is supposed to be. We will be launching a new communication system within the next month which is part of our outreach programme which will allow people, and we will be using new technology creating an app et cetera, et cetera, that will actually allow people to make that request on their phones and allow you to leave messages and get into WASA a lot better to facilitate the better—the more efficient operations.

Madam Chairman: We will go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 214. 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 214; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers, pages 214 to 215. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you Madam Chair, the Item under 09, 02 Settlement of Claims. What are these claims for, hon. Minister? Are these workers' claims, are these damage to property claims against the Water and Sewerage Authority? What are these claims?

Hon. Le Hunte: I will get back to you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, from Sub-Item, 06 to 59, there are a number of line Items there for Interest Payment and Principal Payment and perhaps you may need to get the assistance of the hon. Minister of Finance. Could you tell this committee what are the principals? What is the amount of loan in each one of these line Items? What has been the principal payment? How much interest has been paid? How much is owed still and what is the interest rate? I am asking that last question on interest rate because during the budget debate one of my colleagues indicated that whether the Government was contemplating at any time for its benefit a rearrangement of—or a re-discussion on the interest rate of all these loans.

7.10 p.m.

So in summary, could you give us a detailed analysis of the principals, the amount that was borrowed, how much was paid, how much is owed and over what period of time it is expected for completion of the payment and at what rate?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Imbert: Are you referring to 52 to 59?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am referring to page 214.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I am aware of that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 06 to 59, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: But 52 to 59 is already finished.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry, I am not getting you.

Mr. Imbert: Items 52 to 59 no longer exist.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure. But there is an Item there in 2016 for information—

Mr. Imbert: Come on, we are in 2018.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give us an idea of the—

Mr. Imbert: That is already finished. That was finished under your time. Secondly, if you look at 20, 21, it tells you what it is: Interest, principal. I mean, it is all there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, Minister, but interest for how long? How long the payments are supposed to be? It is the same thing. Remember I asked you about the rapid rail last year and the same thing is coming up again.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member asked me for the interest and the principal. It is all there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And how long it is to be paid, Minister? What is the total amount of payment?

Mr. Imbert: I think you better reduce your question to writing, and I will respond in writing because there is no point in telling you the interest when it is already there. It is already in the public domain. It says interest on Desalcott loan facility; principal on \$271.4 million bond; interest on working capital funding loans; interest on Desalcott loan. Therefore, the interest on the principal is already stated.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I can read. So, therefore, it seems as though you do not understand my question.

Mr. Imbert: I do not.

Dr. Gopeesingh: My question is, could you indicate or request what was the amount of the loan, how much was paid, what period of time—

Mr. Imbert: For example, Member, Item 28 says—

Madam Chairman: One minute, please.

Mr. Imbert: The principal of \$271.4 million bond, therefore, the amount is \$271.4 million.

Madam Chairman: That is the principal.

Mr. Imbert: That is the amount. \$271.4 million is the amount. 23, principal on \$500 million bond. So the amount of the loan is \$500 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, how much of that was paid and what is the interest rate and when it will be completed? A simple question. Why you are so reluctant to give the information?

Mr. Imbert: We will answer that in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, thank you.

Madam Chairman: All right. So can we go on now to 55, Regulated Industries Commission. We are at page 233, Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure; 001, General Administration, and we are in a different book. We are in the *Draft Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies*. Page 233, 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; page 233, 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the decrease in goods and services—General Administration. In light of the fact that there is a decrease of \$10,539,000, can you advise what is the status of the request by the Water and Sewage Authority and the Trinidad and Tobago Electrical Commission to increase rates paid by citizens?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I cannot see the relevance of that question to the line Item. So I would ask the Member to clarify.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If there is a decrease, Madam Chair, I would think that you would be looking for additional funds from some other source, so I am asking.

Madam Chairman: So, do you want to ask the Minister the reason for the decrease?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Sure. Minister, can you account for the decrease, one and two, is there any way the Minister is going to be looking for additional funding to assist to take place where there is a deficit, please?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Madam Chairman: One minute. Let us first hear the reasons for the decrease, because your second question may not arise. There is a breakdown, because you have given the total figure. I do not know Member, if you want to ask under each Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I will await the Minister's response on the account for the decrease.

Madam Chairman: But then he is going to go through each Item, so that is where I was trying to save us some time. Maybe if you can direct him to the particular items because that is the total figure, but you do have the breakdown there. Do you understand, Member?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can the Minister indicate how many positions that are in line 16, Contract Employment? I see there is a decrease and, therefore, I would like to find out from the Minister what accounts for this decrease, please?

Hon. Le Hunt: Okay. Well, basically, contract employment is again similar to another—the allocation for contract employment was previously under Salaries. So if you look under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, you would see that there was no allocation in 2017 and there was a \$5.7 million allocation there now in 2018. So a part of that is just really where—it is an allocation that was all under that particular contract employment that is no longer covered under that particular allocation.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, yes?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Madam Chair, there was statement made here during the Standing Finance Committee between hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine and MP Tewarie and I just wanted to get some clarification on it in regard—yeah. During the budget—

Madam Chairman: The debate?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, during the debate.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, can we deal with a line Item please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Well, it is related.

Madam Chairman: Yes, let me hear the question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And it is to find out—they indicated that there was going to be an increase—they made an increase to RIC. So I just wanted to know because—**Mr. Imbert:** Which line Item is this please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Under the RIC here, details of expenditure, I wanted to find out, does the commission have plans to increase any utility rates for fiscal 2018?

Mr. Imbert: That is not a line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But it is related, Madam, because a statement was made.

Madam Chairman: But, Member, wait. We know the statement was made. In fact that is what you are saying, that there was a plan to increase the rates. Okay? So that in terms of what we have before us are really estimates of expenditure. So I will allow it if you want to tie that to something that is here but not to explore that discussion.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would the estimate take into account the increase?

Mr. Imbert: What increase? Madam Chairman, I cannot see any line Item that deals with that, but there is no increase. There is a review.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Could the Minister indicate what those other contracted services by the RIC are?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Public Utilities.

Hon. Le Hunt: I will have to get back to you.

Mr. Singh: I have to begin to understand your nuances. Anyway, it must be from the banking sector.

Under Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, I see that there is an allocation of \$380,000. Minister, do you think this is sufficient having regard to the fact that there is a request for a review before and there is a process by the independent body called the RIC to engage in and in order to bring about—and I know you are beginning to read what I said—that people to the process, you have to have advertisements and you have to bring in people, and whether that is a sufficient allocation having regard to the nature and function of the RIC?

Hon. Le Hunt: Yes, I think that is sufficient but if it requires relooking in the mid-year review, I am sure that we would be able to accommodate.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 234, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 234; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers, page 234.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, page 98. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 591, Additional Transmission Infrastructure to Move Power from TGU to National Grid. You had a budget allocation of \$3 million in 2017. The first question: Was anything done in that infrastructure during 2016 to 2017? And the second part, in 2018 you have allocated \$9 million, where is this infrastructure being done to bring the power on to the national grid?

Mr. Imbert: Excuse, Madam Chair. You said in 2016?

Mr. Lee: 2016/2017.

Mr. Imbert: That is not the last fiscal year. That is the one before.

Mr. Lee: 2015/2016 would have been your first. Correct?

Mr. Imbert: Yeah.

Mr. Lee: I am saying 2016/2017 you had budgeted \$3 million.

Mr. Imbert: Well, it is zero.

Mr. Lee: No, well the revised. Now, I am asking, was anything spent during 2017?

Mr. Imbert: How is that possible if it is zero?

Mr. Lee: So, nothing was spent.

Mr. Imbert: Well, that is what zero means.

Mr. Lee: So, I am asking you. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: One minute please, Members. So the question, Pointe-a-Pierre, is why nothing was spent?

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I think he has revised his question. Why nothing was spent?

Mr. Lee: The first part.

Mr. Imbert: How I would know that?

Mr. Lee: Well, I was asking. Not you Minister, I was asking the Minister of Public Utilities. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members.

Mr. Lee: Is anything wrong with that?

Madam Chairman: Members. Members. Hon. Members, can we proceed please? Minister of Public Utilities.

Hon. Le Hunt: Okay, so let me just give you an update on that particular project. In fiscal 2017, the initial phase of this project was completed to allow the commissioning to take through 720 megawatts of power into the national grid. T&TEC will utilize previously years' balances along with the 2018 fiscal allocation for the construction of the second line from Union Estate to Brechin Castle. This will comprise phase two of the project at a cost of \$57 million. So the answer is that yes work was completed. The money that was spent was previously allocated—balances that we used from this particular project and the work completed was phase one. Phase two of the project will be completed in this year.

Mr. Lee: So the work was done during 2017?

Hon. Le Hunt: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Second question, line Item 597, Expansion of Generating Capacity in Tobago. You have estimated \$94 million on this plant. I am assuming this is in Cove?

Hon. Le Hunt: Yes.

Mr. Lee: What projects are coming on stream that would initiate this expansion in 2018?

Hon. Le Hunt: I think when we look at the grid in Tobago, I think we feel that there is a general need for an expansion of the power and the reserve power that you have in Tobago and, therefore, this is a project, this is one to meet all the ensuing demands and also for security of service of power distribution on the island of Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 583. Can the hon. Minister indicate how far has the preparedness capabilities the development of it, how far has it reached in terms of the status of the plan?

Hon. Le Hunt: What? Do you want to just—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 583, Development of Disaster Preparedness Capabilities in T&TEC.

Hon. Le Hunt: Madam Chairman, we have been moving fairly rapidly. We have over in fiscal 2017, we have purchased 10 trailers, 10 mounted trailers with generators that have the capacity to be moving and to be able to be mobile generators that we are going to deploy throughout the country. That was done and we intend to continue to expand. In 2018, we will continue in that particular disaster preparedness.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 586, I see the Lighting of Parks and Recreation Grounds—we had spoken about it earlier—but I saw \$2 million estimated. Is it that you have \$2 million throughout Trinidad and Tobago that you will be able—how do you plan to disburse this funding? What is the criteria? What is the process? What is the methodology?

Hon. Le Hunt: What particular—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 586.

Hon. Le Hunt: 586. There is a bulk allocation. Again, the funding for this was done on previously allocated funds to T&TEC. In fiscal 2017, we did 13 recreation grounds and parks at a cost of about \$11 million and we intend to do another 12 parks.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Could the hon. Minister—I mean, just for expediency—probably send what parks you have in plan, the 12 parks at another time, not now. And also, if you could identify 593, if the electrification programme is discontinued. I am not seeing anything through it. So I am just asking.

Hon. Le Hunt: So would you like to get an indication of the parks that were done last year?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, no. You said there are 12 parks to be done.

Hon. Le Hunt: Well, no, based on the estimate that we are looking at, we feel that we should be in a position. We have not identified these parks.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So, therefore, we can as MPs submit—

Hon. Le Hunt: We have budgeted based on what we know as to the cost of doing a park, how much we think we might be able to get achieved in 2018.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, no problem.

Mr. Singh: Item 596, Replacement of Aging Transmission Infrastructure. An allocation of \$2 million in 2018. Could the Minister indicate what areas of replacement and also since the PowerGen is replacing the whole infrastructure at the Colville Street area, could the Minister indicate who is bearing the cost of that?

Hon. Le Hunt: Well, the latter question, who would be bearing the cost of the replacing of the—

Mr. Imbert: This is the old electricity station at Colville Street? Well, the UNC made an agreement that Government has to pay for it. Unfortunately, you committed us to that.

Mr. Singh: I just want to respond to that. The agreement was signed in 1994 for the generation assets.

Mr. Imbert: That is not my information. It is the UNC that did it.

Mr. Singh: At the time of the sale of generation assets, the cost of any kind of environmental clean-up would be borne by the Government. So it is not UNC.

Mr. Imbert: It is a 2014 agreement by the UNC with respect to the Port of Spain station. [*Desk thumping*] I have seen it myself.

Mr. Singh: No. Could the hon. Minister bring both the 1994 agreement and the 2014 agreement?

Mr. Imbert: No problem.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Chaguanas East. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, this might be—hon. Minister, Item No. 595.

Madam Chairman: Page 98, Item 595.

Mr. Karim: Page 98, Item 595. This might be a rhetorical question, but I just want to ask it for the records. Has T&TEC abandoned the renewable energy initiatives?

Hon. Le Hunt: No.

Mr. Karim: No. The other question is, Item 583, Development of Disaster Preparedness Capabilities in T&TEC. Given the experiences recently, do you think that this allocation is adequate?

Hon. Le Hunt: Yes, yes.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, one of the previous Acting Ministers of Public Utilities, did make a commitment for the solar lighting programme in the Manzanilla Road area, and that we would have seen some progress on it this year. I noticed under Item 581 there is no allocation under the Street Lighting Programme. Will we still be seeing—is that still something that your Ministry has on the calendar for fiscal 2018? That is the first

question. The second question, coming back again to the Manzanilla Road area, there has been some infrastructure put in place to move the high voltage lines that are currently sitting inside the Nariva Swamp onto the sides of the Main Road for obvious reasons that has not been energized as yet. Is that something that is planned for 2018 to get that up and running?

Hon. Le Hunt: The answer to your latter question is yes, and the allocation, as I said, we will be continuing the Street Lighting Programme, but the allocation again would come from previous years' balances and internal funds generated from T&TEC. So it is not that the fact that there is not an allocation there means that the programme will not be continuing next year.

Mr. Paray: But, specifically, for the solar lighting project that was referred to, is that something we will see in 2018 fiscal?

Hon. Le Hunt: We do intend to continue to expand solar lighting facilities.

Mr. Paray: This is specifically on the Manzanilla Road area.

Hon. Le Hunt: The answer is yes.

Mr. Paray: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, can we go on? Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 102 and 103. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 103 and 104.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 045, Establishment of a Water Resource Agency. You will notice that in 2017 an allocation of \$8 million only \$1.1 million was spent and now in 2018 an allocation of \$1 million, a very drastic revision from what was estimated in 2017. Can you indicate, at this point, what is the status of the Water Resource Agency? With this type of allocation, what sort of projections do you have in terms of its actual fruition, in terms of utilizing the Water Resource Agency in a new form and dispensation?

Hon. Le Hunt: The creation of a Water Resource Agency which really, as you are aware, that particular work is presently being conducted under WASA and the idea would be to create an agency that will deal with the management of the water resources as a separate body. The project is presently in its execution phrase. In fiscal 2017, the National Integrated Water Policy was updated. The deliverables for 2018 will include the approved integrated water resource policy. We will be looking at the report of the consultant; we will be revising the legislation and we will be bringing the necessary legislation to put into effect that particular authority.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the explanation you have just provided us with being an ongoing operationalizing process, much in the national community would take what you have just said as this project being likened to a URP project where it is over an extensive period of time without specific benchmark and without specific timelines. If you really want to bring this into effect to integrate it into the system, what timeline are you looking at with respect to legislation to bring effect, but also in terms of the timeline for the actual organization itself to be ready to effect the legislation? So one limb is the legislation and also the second limb is the actualizing and putting into effect, therefore, there must be some sort of symmetry between the Office of the Attorney General and your good self as the operationalizing arm, but there must be some level of timeline. As I said, this could be seen as a URP project.

Madam Chairman: Member, one minute. What is the question?

Mr. Padarath: The question is what is the timeline?

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you very much.

Mr. Padarath: But both, probably the AG could help you since you have raised the issue of legislation.

Hon. Le Hunt: This particular agency is one that we think is very important, and it is one that we would be—I think it is on our legislative agenda for this particular year and, therefore, we are working simultaneously in getting the legislation in place and also doing the necessary level of consultation that is required to be able to also put it effective.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, with all due respect, therefore that is contradictory, because if you are allocating \$1 million and you will not be able to effect the operationalizing limb of the Water Resource Agency when in effect you are saying the legislation is coming sometime this year, you really have a huge disparity in terms of actualizing the legislation by your own figures here. So, therefore, how do you justify your comments?

Hon. Le Hunt: I mean, what I did mention and just for clarification, we are looking—I have outlined what are the plans for 2018 as it regards the agency.

Mr. Imbert: I would just like to get involved here. These are estimates, this is an allocation. If additional funding is required, it will be provided. If you look at previous estimates of expenditure—look at the last 30 years and you will see, in many cases, there is an allocation of \$1 million, \$2 million for large projects. The Ministry has the ability to request a virement or a transfer or a supplementary appropriation which they will receive if it is required.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair to the hon. Minister, Items 047, Development of an Integrated Water Security Programme for Tobago. The last allocation was in 2017 and no money was expended, no money spent. So I take it that we have an integrated water security plan for Tobago. Item 049, Development of a Water Supply Drought Management Plan; allocated \$500,000 in 2017, nothing in 2018. So I take it that too has been completed. Item 051, Development of a Water Supply Management Plan; that too, no allocation in 2018 and Item 55, Adopt and Implement Integrated Water Resources Management; an allocation of \$263,000 in 2017 and none in 2018. Minister, could you indicate whether or not these one, two, three, four items with the allocations have they been completed?

Hon. Le Hunt: These projects are on the way and these projects will be completed in 2018 utilizing in-house resources from WASA.

Mr. Singh: I am a bit puzzled. With the allocation, whether you are utilizing outside the resources or in-house resources.

Hon. Le Hunt: Well, with the resources, remember these particular projects, as I said, the projects are on the way to be completed in fiscal 2018 utilizing resources, management and funding internal to WASA.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Hon. Le Hunt: And we are using the core. When I say “internal to WASA”, the core engineering techniques and so forth internal. I remember last year you brought up these particular projects and you felt that they could have been done in-house.

Mr. Singh: So you are now taking my advice?

Hon. Le Hunt: So, basically, I think they are being done in-house and we are doing them in-house to manage our own resources.

Mr. Singh: Very well.

7.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 218, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 218 to 219. Same book. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 220.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 39 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I wish to thank the Minister, his Permanent Secretary and the technocrats from the various agencies, and you all are now discharged.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board, \$3,489,865.

Madam Chairman: We now move on to Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board, \$3,489,865. Members, we are in the book, *Draft Estimate, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year, 2018*, page 55. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this entity is covered by its name. It is the Public Service Appeal Board and it handles appeals from decisions of the Public Service Commission.

Question proposed: That Head 12 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$3,489,865 for Head 12, the Public Service Appeal Board, is comprised of moneys proposed for the expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 55, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 55; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 55 and 56; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 56; Item 001, General Administration, page 56.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 12 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank you very much, the representatives of the Public Service Appeal Board.

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, 2,330,671,110.

Mr. Chairman: Members, we now go to Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. We would be going to page 268, *Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. I would like to welcome the Minister this evening, making your debut. I would like to also welcome the technocrats, Permanent Secretary and her senior staff to the Parliament Chamber this evening, and we would be going straight into Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, \$2,330,671,110. I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is a crucial part of our governing system and in moving us forward to a more successful future. We are happy to report to this Standing Finance Committee and all the people of the republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Since being employed at the Ministry almost one year now I have, to date, acquired a better understanding of the Ministry as a system. Indeed, we have had our fair share of challenges in areas such as filling vacancies and public service delivery. However, we at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government continue to work diligently to best serve the people of our beloved nation. We are pleased to be part of this democratic process which will allow us this opportunity for scrutiny and recommendation as we move forward into the new fiscal year.

As I reflect on our success stories over the last months, I continue to be encouraged by the hard work and dedication of our Permanent Secretaries, mayors, chairmen, councillors, public servants, and every citizen who remain committed to the future growth and development of our country. In particular, I would like to pay special recognition to all the previous Ministers of Local Government who have gone before for their contribution which has set the foundation for good governance, transparency and quality performance on which we continue to build.

Local Government affects all persons, whether you reside in urban or rural communities. From roads, bridges, landslips, we at the Ministry remain people-centred, focused and results oriented. It is our duty to listen to the concerns of the burgesses and equip local government bodies and administration to carry out the necessary functions, engage between local government practitioners and the people is a key facet in achieving the goal of the Ministry, which is to improve deliverables by making them easily accessible to rural communities without alternating the overview of these communities itself.

We welcome this opportunity and will continue to serve the public and deliver relief to the people in consultation and engagement of all. I thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,330,671,110 for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft*

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, and, as previously said, we are on page 269, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance you are going to be spending \$69 million in Salaries and Cost of Living, I ask the following question based on the performance of the Ministry, but particularly with respect to the IDF and the Consolidated Fund. The overall spending on IDF was 61 per cent but your Ministry only spent 40 per cent, and the overall spending on the Consolidated was 70 per cent but your Ministry spent 76 per cent, are you satisfied that you are getting the value for money that you want from the \$69 million, since the new mantra seems to be, value for money?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, I would like to say that we intend to work together with all the mayors and chairmen, members of council, and the administration to ensure that productivity comes about in this year, because I am now getting a feel of the Ministry. I have been there almost one year now and I intend to work—

Hon. Member: You are still feeling?

Hon. Hosein: No, I got the feel of it.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, in that regard, have you monitored the hours that people are working in your Ministry, and that people are working two hours, coming to work at seven, leaving at nine? In other instances, under the agreements they are supposed to work six hours, for example Health, but they are working three hours, how can you get productivity if you cannot get people to adhere to their agreement to do a work that they are supposed to do for the hours that they are being paid? I think it is endemic.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, yes, and I totally agree with you. I being a former councillor and also a mayor, I have encountered—I saw this first hand, and at the Ministry and being in this position, I intend to work to ensure that we cut out this wastage because we want productivity. Money is very short right now, and people come to work seven o'clock, nine o'clock they are home, and the public knows it, everybody knows it. This cannot continue, and I intend to work,

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

as I said, with all the mayors and chairmen, and the CEOs, who is the administrative arm. As a matter of fact, I set up a meeting for the second week in November to meet all these practitioners concerning productivity.

Dr. Rambachan: The salaries, of course, are paid to your senior public servants and monthly paid staff who are supposed to be the engine of change in your Ministry. Are you satisfied that this cadre of people have the capacity to take forward the reform that you are talking about, given that two years have elapsed and virtually nothing has happened, even to make simple changes that will create efficiency in local government?

Hon. Hosein: Thank you again, Member for Tabaquite. The local government reform was—I think every Minister passed through the Ministry of Local Government wanted local government reform to be centralized, and this Government promised local government reform before the year 2019. Right now they are at the stage of the legislative at the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, and I think we will work together, the administrative staff, and they have to get serious. It cannot be business as usual, and I intend to carry this mandate. I intend to do it, and with the advice from people like you, I am sure I will get it done. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Rambachan: “He buying he way out ah trouble, yuh know.” [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, question again on the same topic or we want to move on? Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 269 again; Item 001, General Administration, pages 269 to 270; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, pages 271.

Dr. Rambachan: Wait, wait, you are jumping.

Mr. Chairman: No, I am not jumping, I am looking up to see who is acknowledging.

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, no—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so where are we, we are at Sub-Head, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, page 269, 270.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 16, Contract Employment, what does this contract employment refer to, especially since we see it has gone up—the revised estimates were \$7 million more in 2017, and that \$26 million has now been retained for 2018? What is this Contract Employment about?

Hon. Hosein: Thank you again, Member for Tabaquite—

Mr. Chairman: Minister, excuse, you can kindly go straight to the point, you do not need to extend the courtesies as identifying the Member, you can go straight to it. You know, in the interest of time and so on, you could just go straight to the—you know, but it is up to you also.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Member, at head office we have 56 contract positions, and at head office we also have 176 permanent positions. At the corporations we have 282 contract positions, and in corporations again, we have 898 permanent positions. So contract positions total would be 338 and permanent is 1,074.

Dr. Rambachan: So the 338 refers to the \$26 million?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Move on.

Mr. Chairman: Moving ahead, Sub-Head 30, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 271; Item 001, General Administration, page 271; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 271; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 271. Members, you all are with me here? Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 271; Item 007, Households, page 272. Item 009—

Dr. Rambachan: Wait, my hand up, you know.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Households—

Mr. Chairman: Page 271.

Dr. Rambachan: 272.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 04, Other Transfers, Sub-Item 04; 009, 04, Community Based Environment Protection and Enhancement Programme, CEPEP. I noticed that CEPEP spent \$425 million in 2017 but CEPEP has been reduced by \$75 million, is that a reflection that you are going to cut down the number of contractors now in CEPEP?

Mr. Chairman: The Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: CEPEP is under review by the Ministry of Finance.

Dr. Rambachan: Do we expect then that after the review it could be cut more?

Hon. Member: Or increased?

Mr. Imbert: It is under review.

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

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Could the Minister state when the trucking of the truckers programme will come back on stream, given that all their contracts have come to an end and no one is picking up the waste at this point in time?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item, Member?

Mr. Lee: Item 04.

Mr. Chairman: Item 04, under CEPEP, right, okay. Page 272.

Dr. Rambachan: That is the small trucks who pick up the grass.

Mr. Imbert: The entire CEPEP is under review by the Ministry of Finance. When the review is completed we can deal with those matters.

Dr. Rambachan: So, Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that in the meantime they are cutting the grass and it will remain right there and the whole environment will be desecrated with cut grass, and all kinds of things, and baggage, and bags of garbage to pick up and nobody will pick it up because the Minister is under review?

Mr. Imbert: No, we are not saying that.

Dr. Rambachan: The Minister is reviewing the programme.

Mr. Imbert: We are not saying that.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, to be very frank, then who is going to pick it up when the trucks, they have expired? Who is going to pick it up?

Mr. Imbert: Arrangements will be made.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, can I ask the Minister who is in charge and not you, with due respect, what arrangements has the Minister made to pick up those garbage and bags and waste?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, specifically to what was asked.

Hon. Hosein: We have in-house CEPEP vehicles, like dump trucks who take up the cuttings, and so on. In the meantime, where these contractors have not been—and we have also the corporations assisting, but we really need these truckers as soon as possible.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, how many trucks does CEPEP have in-house?

Hon. Hosein: Mr. Chairman, I will provide the answer. I do not have it offhand, but I see them working along the East-West Corridor, the big dump trucks. They have a few, but I will get the full amount for you as soon as possible.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, are you sure these are not the contracted trucks which have a CEPEP sticker on it, and it is not really a CEPEP asset? Because I do not know, I cannot recall, maybe the Permanent Secretary can recall whether CEPEP owns any trucks.

Hon. Hosein: I am now being told, Member, that it is a contractor truck with the CEPEP sticker on it.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. And those are the very trucks whose contracts have not been renewed, and, therefore, this is why people are complaining that the garbage that CEPEP has cut is remaining there. So can you give an assurance as to how quick this review will be completed so that people will not have the stench of garbage that is picked up left in their communities?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I assure you that I will get it to you.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Thank you. Hon. Minister, the same line Item 04, I understand the decrease, I understand that it is under review, what I need to understand is with this decrease the contractors who are currently working, will they be paid on time?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, so far all contractors up to the 29th of September, all contractors were paid on time.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I beg to differ, hon. Minister, there are contractors that I am aware of—[*Interruption*—No, I am not, and I do not have any. There are contractors who have not received payment. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Members. Members—

Hon. Imbert: Chairman, let me assist here.

Mr. Chairman: Members. One second, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Allow me to assist.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, right, the Minister answered, even though you may not be in agreement with the Minister, he has answered the question.

Hon. Hosein: I stand to be corrected, eh.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Minister, are you aware there are contractors who have not been paid for the last three months?

Hon. Hosein: For the last three months, no, I am not aware of the last three months.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would you like me to provide you the information, Sir?

Hon. Hosein: For the last three months.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Sure, will do.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: For the benefit of the Member, towards the end of the financial year we did a transfer of funds to allow the Ministry to settle its obligations within the Community Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme to pay outstanding debts.

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

Mr. Charles: At 06, only when we get there.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, 06, so, Member for Naparima, I will entertain you.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, how are these allocations arrived at? Are they arrived at on historical expenditures and you add on to it, or on the submissions by the representative local bodies? And the reason why I asked is that the Princes Town Regional Corporation—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Mr. Charles: It is line Item 36. The Princes Town Regional Corporation has only been allocated \$87 million.

Mr. Chairman: Member, one second. No, we have not reached there as yet, right, I am now corrected by my Procedural Clerk. We are at Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

Mr. Charles: Yeah, well, that is where I am.

Mr. Chairman: Which is page—

Mr. Charles: Page 272, Item 36. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. Item 23, Port of Spain City Corporation, Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 242 of the *Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. That is the book we are now going to. And the details on page 272 of our recurrent expenditure, right, are also included in this book that we are now go to, which the *Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*.

Mr. Charles: But I was asking a general question related to all, and I was saying, how do they arrive at these expenditures, given that Princes Town Regional Corporation serves 120,000 persons? We have the topographies, have issues with landslips, et cetera. We have probably the second largest geographic area, and I am seeing only \$87 million. So the general question is, is there any consideration given to the geography, the population, the topography, et cetera, and the problems of the corporations in determining—

Mr. Chairman: In determining the estimates that are allocated? You are clear with us, Minister?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Charles: And you could give it later if you wish, I have no problem with that, I just want to understand it.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you, hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Member, before you answer, I know you are new to this process, there is the provision whereby you can provide it at a later date. I am sure your PS will be able to, you know, clarify accordingly. So, proceed.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Member for Naparima, the trend was whatever they spent in 2018 they got the same thing in 2018, but what you are saying, I would get the answer for you for that.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I would like to raise under Item 06, two matters, one involves the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, which is 32, and I know that the allocation is the same as last year, but I would just like to draw to the attention of the Minister that there is a difference between allocation and releases, and we had a situation in Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo where everything was set to bring water to 26 families. It had been approved, everything was set, Ministries agreed,

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

corporation agreed, but because we did not get the allocation—although the tenders were sent out and contractors bid, and everything—it means that those 26 families will not get the water that they were entitled to. And I want to draw that to your attention because I think this is something—I mean, it is a human concern really.

Hon. Imbert: What line Item is this?

Mr. Chairman: We are on Item 32, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation we are dealing with, Sir.

Hon. Imbert: But he is not talking about a line Item.

Dr. Tewarie: And the other matter I would raise is under Chaguanas Borough, simply to say that although the amount allocated was about the same, you know, I think Chaguanas has peculiar challenges given the nature of that city and the broad area that it covers, and it is something that, you know, requires a little more attention, I think, in terms of allocation.

8.10 p.m.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I am pleased to say that I have a very, very good relationship with all corporations across the board, and this was not brought to my attention before. I am thanking you for the information and I will ensure that we will bring a solution to this problem, especially the water problem.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, I am grateful for that.

Dr. Rambachan: I want to build on the question of my colleague, the Member for Caroni Central. The population of Port of Spain is under 50,000 now and granted that—

Mr. Imbert: The line Item.

Mr. Chairman: Member, remember we need to identify the line Item. You are making your comment and then you come to your questions.

Dr. Tewarie: Line Items 23 and 27.

Mr. Chairman: Line Items 23 and 27.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, did you not say you were in this book?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but it is in reference to the both books, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: “So I ha’ to look in two books?” I cannot do that. I can only look in one.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Hinds: The Member for Tabaquite submitted that the population of Port of Spain is under 50,000. Could he just indicate for the benefit of Members where he got that statistic?

Dr. Rambachan: There has been an exodus of people from Port of Spain. [*Crosstalk*] I am talking about living in Port of Spain, residents.

Hon. Member: Where is the statistic?

Mr. Chairman: Members!

Mr. Hinds: Where did you get that official statistic? [*Crosstalk*] How can we proceed on that false premise?

Mr. Chairman: Members!

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to suggest, I know you are chairing the meeting, but if you go line Item by line Item we will be fine. If you have a general discussion and a debate it would deteriorate.

Dr. Rambachan: You want to accept 120,000—and the population of Chaguanas is 120,000. Let us take that assumption.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, address the Chair. Let us get your comment, line Item, and come to your question.

Dr. Rambachan: Let us take his assumption that the population of Port of Spain is 120,000, and let us take the assumption that the population of Chaguanas is also—[*Crosstalk*]—yeah I know, 2011 population statistics.

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Rambachan: The question is: Why is there such a disparity in terms of the allocation to Chaguanas which is one-third—sorry, Port of Spain is \$235 million and Chaguanas is \$83 million? But the movement of population to Chaguanas, the number of housing developments in the Chaguanas borough, the increase in business activity in Chaguanas and so on, does not justify—do you believe that it justifies such a small allocation for Chaguanas?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, let me just deal with this general question. Firstly, if you go back into your period you would see these allocations were similar. But if you go to the line Item, which is what you should be looking at, on page 242 of this book, you would see that out of the \$235 million for Port of Spain, \$160 million is for Personnel Expenditure. So are you suggesting that we reduce that and retrench the workers of the Port of Spain City Corporation?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Dr. Rambachan: I am not suggesting that at all. What I am saying very categorically and very strong is that there is unfair treatment of Chaguanas, which has grown in stature and grown in importance, in terms of what you are giving to Chaguanas to continue to pursue its development.

Mr. Imbert: But it is the same amount for Personnel Expenditure that was given by your administration and—

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister of Finance—

Mr. Imbert:—Mr. Chairman, I am explaining because it seems you have forgotten, that there are Items here. You have public health, you have abattoirs, you have transport and cleaning. These are all line Items which are allocated with an amount similar to what you allocated when you were the Minister. So what is your issue?

Hon. Members: Certainly, because things have changed.

Mr. Imbert: Or things have changed since you all gone in Opposition?
[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Members!

Mr. Imbert: Because you in Opposition we give Port of Spain less?

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, the question is, are you ignoring the characteristics of the borough of Chaguanas and what it requires in order to do that? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: This is a line Item that deals with Personnel Expenditure, workers. It is payment for salaries and wages. Are you saying we should retrench the workers in the Port of Spain Corporation to satisfy you? That is what you are saying? You do not like the people in Port of Spain?

Dr. Rambachan: You are trying to put words in my mouth and I will not allow you to put words in my mouth.

Mr. Imbert: That is the only answer to your question.

Dr. Rambachan: You want to put words in my mouth. I will not allow you to put words in my mouth. But what is very clear is that you have taken a very biased approach to the allocation of moneys to the borough of Chaguanas.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I have heard the various comments. As the Chairman of this session of the committee, if it is that you all would like me to be a little more firm in the deliberations, I will probably have to take that course. It is

now 8.14, we are now dealing with the fourth Item. We still have four more to go and it is now 8.14. So Members, I would like you all in the process that has gone in the earlier part of the day, make your comment, identify your question and we will move on, and we are going according to the line Item as identified. Member for Tabaquite and others. Right?

So we are at 23, Port of Spain City Corporation: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 242; 001, General Administration. We are going to be specific as we go on now; 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 242; 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed, page 242 also; *[Interruption]* 004—Minister of Finance, no question as yet, Sir—004, Transport and Cleansing, page 243; 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees, page 243; 006, Stores, Works and Repairs, page 243; 007, Cemeteries and Crematoriums, 243; 008, Woodbrook Estate, 244.

We now go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, and we are on page 244; 001, General Administration, page 244; 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 245; 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Sheds, page 245; 004, Transport and Cleansing, page 246; 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees, page 246; 006, Stores, Works and Repairs, page 246 to 247; 007, Cemeteries and Crematoriums, page 247; 008, Woodbrook Estate, page 247; 009, Corporation Properties, page 248.

Moving on. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 248 of the same book; 001, General Administration, page 248.

Mr. Singh: Chairman, may I be of some assistance? I take your approach. Might I suggest that you deal with the General Head under each corporation? For example, let us take the Chaguanas. It has, Government Subvention, other Income, Rent, Fees, Service Charges of Licence, Interest, Miscellaneous, and ask if anybody has any questions and we proceed in that direction, instead of page by page. *[Crosstalk]* Listen to me, I am trying to be helpful. Do not interfere with me. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members. I take your point, Member for Chaguanas West, but I am guided by the Procedural Clerk. What we will do is we will identify the various Sub-Heads and the titles and then we call the regional corporations. Then I will ask if there are any questions and you identify a line Item and we move on. Okay, Members? So we are clear. Okay, Mr. Minister? Nice.

So we are now at 24, San Fernando City Corporation. Any questions? Do I have to say “going once”? 25: Arima Borough Corporation; 26, Point Fortin Borough Corporation; 27, Chaguanas Borough Corporation. I recognize the

Member for Chaguanas West. Sub-Head 01, Expenditure, Personnel Expenditure, page 298.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the whole question of Personnel Expenditure, daily-rated overtime, daily-rated workers. The 2018 estimate is \$599,000. I want to know, in the management of these employees, whether or not they ought to increase the cadre instead of having significant levels of overtime?

Mr. Imbert: While the Minister is preparing his response, look at the quantum. If you look at the quantum of wages, it is \$41.5 million, whereas the quantum of overtime is \$600,000, so that even if you eliminated overtime to zero, you will not be able to get workers as permanent workers or regular workers as the case may be, so it is not a large amount.

Mr. Singh: I take your point.

Mr. Chairman: Goods and Services, page 299. Subhead 03: Minor Equipment Purchases.

Mr. Singh: I was keeping with the whole question of Goods and Services, janitorial services under item 37. Mr. Chairman, I get complaints when I go to the Chaguanas market of the lack of hygienic conditions existing there. In fact, one fisherman complained to me that they went there a Monday morning and you had a very foul stench emerging, and also worms and all kinds of decaying matter, notwithstanding the fact that it ought to have been cleaned. So, Minister, perhaps you might want to look into that. Page 299.

Mr. Imbert: Item 37.

Mr. Singh: Janitorial Services, 37. “Ah trying to help yuh”.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head—Minister, you want to add anything.

Hon. Hosein: No, no, I intend to follow it up.

Mr. Chairman: Subhead 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. We now go on to 28, Diego Martin Regional Corporation. Sub-Head, 02 Goods and Services, page 307.

Mr. Lee: Sub-Item 23, Fees. In 2016 you had \$42,000 spent; 2017, you have an estimated budget of \$1 million; 2018 a budget of \$800,000. Could the Minister describe: what are these fees about for the Diego Martin Corporation?

Hon. Hosein: We are not too sure. Some say the legal fees, but we could provide the answer for you; the technocrats in the back will.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies. We now go on to San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, No. 29. Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, No. 30. No. 31, Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. Cumuto/Manzanilla, Member, page and line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 332, line Item under Goods and Services, 03. Can the Minister indicate: what are these uniforms for? Who are they for? That is, 03, Sir, Goods and Services.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 03, page 332.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I am advised that some were used for municipal police and some for litter wardens.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Line Item 08, you have an increase. Can the hon. Minister indicate what accounts for the increase in rent or lease of office accommodation and storage?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, this will be catering for the Sangre Grande Office, the corporation, being removed from the present location.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: They are being relocated?

Hon. Hosein: Being relocated.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item No. 23, Fees. What are these fees? You have an increase of \$25,000 to \$100,000?

Hon. Hosein: Legal fees.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 46, Natural Disasters, same page 332. You have \$100,000 allocated, and I am asking in light of the fact that we are dealing with two constituencies, is this adequate given that we have two constituencies and we are on the coastline? Particularly when you look at the clean-up cost for Matelot, is this in fact adequate at all?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, we realize, I myself am aware of the fact that Sangre Grande is in that disaster zone, and when the need arises we will ensure that funds will be added to that through a virement.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 333, hon. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 68, Water Trucking. I see there is a decrease of \$834,000. Given the fact that some areas do not have an adequate water supply and, I mean, this has been taking place for quite some time, has the Minister considered at all that the areas that are affected, this will be inadequate, and in addition to the fact that if we have to have the desalination plant being shut down for a week, can this decrease adequately supply the two constituencies?

Mr. Chairman: So why the decrease, Mr. Minister? Line Item 68.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Water Trucking.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, historically we have used the Ministry vote, which is Vote 37, to supplement this item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So it is in line 37?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 99, the Employee Assistance Programme. How many persons have utilized this programme, hon. Minister?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I will have to get the information from the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Coming down to 003, same page, 04, Electricity. I notice there was an increase for the market and the abattoir. Could the Minister indicate if this increase was to settle outstanding bills, because I know that the market was without electricity for some time due to non-payment of bills?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So we are back?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Very good. Line Item under 004, 22, Short-Term Employment, I see there is a decrease of \$62,300. Can the Minister account for this decrease?

Hon. Hosein: We are trying to fill the public service positions so there will be less need for these short-term contracts.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So therefore, we are looking at reducing the staffing, the short-term? We are reducing it?

Hon. Hosein: No, we are filling the permanent positions.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, good. How many positions are you looking at filling in the permanent positions?

Hon. Hosein: We are looking at all the vacancies.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Not now, but if you can supply me with the positions that are filled and those that are required, the number. Line Item No. 28, Other Contracted Services. Who are these other contracted services, before I can ask for the account in the decrease? Same page, 333?

Hon. Hosein: These are really small contracts that take place within the corporation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Small contracts like?

Mr. Chairman: Small contractors.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would it impact? With these contractors being decreased, the allocation being decreased, would it impact in terms of services being rendered to the constituency and neglect in any way?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, would it affect the operations?

Hon. Hosein: No, no. We will vire moneys and so on for that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Finally on page 334, 006, Maintenance of State—

Mr. Chairman: Member, are you okay?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is okay, go ahead.

Mr. Chairman: Sure?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: We now move on to 32, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation; 33, Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation; 34, Siparia Regional Corporation. Members, you all are with me?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: 35, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation and 36, Princes Town Regional Corporation.

Mr. Charles: Just one question, page 68, 04, that is the question of rent, and I think the Minister has been in discussion with the—

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Could you give us what the latest is with respect to—I think there are some challenges with the present site.

Hon. Hosein: Yes, hon. Member, there are a lot of challenges there, because I visited that corporation up to about a month ago. They had a volunteer exercise up there, and the conditions are—I know there were plans to build an admin complex there a couple years ago. The plan is still in train, and I advised them to look for a place up there, and they are in search of it right now. The Chairman—I am in consultation with the Chairman at all times.

Mr. Charles: Very good.

Mr. Chairman: No. 38, Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 108; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 108 to 109.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Just to ask the Minister under line Item 001 and 003, if he could identify any roads and bridges that would be facilitated in the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Hon. Hosein: That is in Toco/Sangre Grande.

Mr. Chairman: No, Cumuto/Manzanilla. Do you have the specifics here, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Hosein: I have everything.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You do not have to give it to me now because of time, but if you can identify to me in my area the restoration of local roads, bridges, the landslides and the local drains that would have restorative work done to them.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, and I will give it to you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, and Toco/Sangre Grande.

Hon. Hosein: I will circulate it to everybody. Thank you for the advice.

Mr. Chairman: So all Members will be supplied with the information. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 109 to 116.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair, page 109, Sub-Item 038, Development of West Park, a new project, \$5 million. Could the Minister state where in Trinidad and Tobago this development is and what it is about?

Mr. Imbert: Opposite Westmoorings. It is a park.

Mr. Lee: Opposite West Mall, where the WASA pumping station is?

Mr. Imbert: It is a park, a green space for the people of Diego Martin who have no park to call their own.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Could the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, 028, the implementation of the Dog Control Act. I see \$3 million there. Could the Minister state: what is the status of this implementation of the Dog Control Act?

Hon. Hosein: Thank you, hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. In keeping with the requirements of the Act we propose to construct a facility in San Fernando, that will cater for San Fernando and the environs, which will be Penal, Debe, Princes Town, and Siparia. [*Laughter*] I was just advised all the south dogs. I was advised. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Moving on, Mr. Minister. Member for Tabaquite, you okay?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, 024.

Mr. Chairman: Page?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 109. I notice there is no estimate for the disaster management capacity. Can the Minister indicate why?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I will like to let you know that money was allocated to the 14 corporation, they got an increase of \$4 million. None was allocated to the head office, but we have a new position which is a disaster management coordinator who will coordinate the 14 corporations. So the money will be spent where it is necessary in the corporations.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. I will like to revert to 028, the implementation of the Dog Control Act. Hon. Minister, I just need to know, what is the actual start date for this project, and what are the expected achievements from this project?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, we are looking at within this fiscal year. I cannot give you a time, but I assure you it will be within this year because we have the money for it, and we are having consultation with the main stakeholders right now.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Who are those stakeholders?

Hon. Hosein: The San Fernando Corporation, the other corporations, TSPCA.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The last part of the question, what are the expected achievements from this project?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, expected outcome, the achievements you would like to achieve as a result.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: From this project. Perhaps you could put it in writing?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. AG, you would like to come in here?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes please. The objective is to operationalize the law which the last Government left without putting it into effect.

Mr. Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, pages 223 to 224. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Singh: Page 112 dealing with the Chaguanas borough. Item 145: Development of Recreational Facilities, \$1 million. I would like to find out through the Minister, I know he may not have that available, what are the areas to be developed in terms of recreational facilities. Construction of markets and abattoirs, Item 148, \$3.6 million. What is the scope of works and what particular area this work is going to be done? Item 406, Environmental Project—

Mr. Chairman: One second, Member for Chaguanas West. Mr. Minister, we have two questions on the table so far, you are with us?

Mr. Singh: Yeah. I tell him provide it subsequently.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Go ahead, Member for Chaguanas West.

8.40 p.m.

Mr. Singh: Item 406, Environmental Project an allocation of \$800,000 in 2018 and what is this Environmental Project and the scope of works associated with that? And the establishment of a tourism park in 408 of an allocation of \$200,000, what is this and the scope of works associated and where it will be located?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I will provide this for you in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, under the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, I took note of the fact that Item 370, Local Government Tourism Programme there was no allocation, and something as critical tourism for us up in Mayaro there. Any particular reason why it would not considered as an Item for funding in this fiscal year?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member for Mayaro, we do not have the answer right now, but I will put it in writing for you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, page 114.

Mr. Lee: Under the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation, line Item 261, Minister, Development of Recreational Facilities for \$1 million, could you provide a list of what those, you know, facilities where they are at a later date in writing?

Hon. Hosein: Yes. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I will provide it in writing. Sure. Sure.

Mr. Chairman: We are moving on Infrastructure Development Fund pages 223 to 234, Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 234 to 235, Item—Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: 003, I would simply like to get from the Minister a list of the projects that are indicated in terms of the Development of Rural Communities [*Crosstalk*] in writing.

Hon. Hosein: In writing?

Dr. Rambachan: That is right, in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Yes. Member for Tabaquite, we have it and I will get it to you.

Mr. Chairman: We will provide in writing.

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 234 to 235.

Dr. Rambachan: 234 to 235.

Mr. Chairman: We are in—

Dr. Rambachan: Hold on, hold on.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Chairman:—Development Programme, eh.

Dr. Rambachan: No. No. No. 224 to 225.

Mr. Chairman: 225—

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman:—006, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services or “yuh” want the one before?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah. For 005, Sub-Head F Public Buildings 060 there.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Okay. Page 225.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. I would like to know which complex is going to be constructed or are there several complexes because I see construction of administrative complexes. Is it one or are there several?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, two.

Dr. Rambachan: And can you indicate which two complexes, please?

Hon. Hosein: The Penal/Debe Regional Corporation and the Diego Martin Regional Corporation.

Dr. Rambachan: So you are bringing my plans into effect.

Hon. Hosein: Your plans, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Another Tabaquite initiative.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members. Member for Tabaquite, any more questions?

Dr. Rambachan: No.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 235. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, do you have a question?

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$2,330,671,110 for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, thank you for coming. Thank you to the Permanent Secretary and other senior technocrats. Do have a good evening. Thank you on your debut. Well done. Okay. Mr. Minister, thanks for coming.

Members, we now proceed to the *Draft Estimates*, details of *Estimates Recurrent Expenditure*, and we are going to page 406, Head 78, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

So, Members, 406 *Recurrent Expenditure*, page 406, Head 78, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. I would like to welcome the Minister of Social Development and Family Services, welcome, Madam Minister. Welcome to the Permanent Secretary and the senior executives of the Ministry, welcome to our Standing Finance Committee.

Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, \$4,729,245,300.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In fiscal 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is committed to leading the social sector through a number of transformative initiatives. The Ministry will chart a course towards a more cost-effective, customer-driven, evidence-based and targeted social service delivery system to reduce poverty and equip and empower the vulnerable. In the main, the focus of the Ministry will be on the implementation of an integrated service delivery system and the national social mitigation plan.

Implementation of the new service delivery model will lead to increased capacity and value for money, simplified access, holistic and customized support, faster response times, greater collaboration among agencies and enhanced user experience. Implementation of the social mitigation plan will involve the restructuring of the Ministry's systems, processes and social programming to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and will extend to the sector.

Additionally, relevant legislative and policy frameworks would be revisited for gap identification and will be amended or designed as necessary to complement the restructuring exercise. The social mitigation plan is also expected to introduce transformative strategies into existing social interventions and to inculcate positive values, attitudes and behaviours among programme beneficiaries and the wider population.

Of particular importance will be the proposed improvements in the Ministry's food support service through the implementation and monitoring of the developmental conditional component known as STEP UP which is Social

Transformation and Empowering Programme uplifting people. An integral component in the thrust to achieve sustainable poverty reduction and strong functional families.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward with anticipation to the implementation of these and other key initiatives intended to change the landscape of the social sector and bring about exponential improvements in the quality of life of our most vulnerable citizens. I thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 78 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,729,245,300 for Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies* and of the *Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 406. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I have you first.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I will go to the next one when you are ready for 006.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Hon. Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, how many Cabinet-appointed committees are there and what do they deal with?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 17 Cabinet-appointed committees. However, at present only one of those committees functions and that is the inter-ministerial social policy council. That committee is responsible for coordinating all of the policies within the public service.

The other committees there are supposed to be 14 regional social human development councils, those are councils that were supposed to work within communities and would have been comprised of public sector, civil society and the Government, but they were never established. Those committees were never established, and we also have the inter-ministerial research council. So those are the committees that are non-functional.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town, again.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, in light of the explanation you just have given with the respect to the inter-ministerial committees, Cabinet-appointed committees, can you indicate what has prevented you from ensuring that these other 14, 15 committees are non-functional, in terms of operationalizing them, what has prevented you from operationalizing them?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The 14 regional councils were intended to be part of the poverty reduction strategy under the last administration and it was never established. The new administration having come in and looking at the whole issue of poverty and the absence of a poverty reduction strategy, did not think it made a lot of sense to introduce those councils until we would have identified exactly what strategies we were going to be using and the direction in which we were heading.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Again, thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to hon. Minister. Madam Minister, in light of you being in the position as Minister for the past two years what sort of timeline are you looking forward to then, seeing two years have passed with respect to these ministerial committees not having been established to assist in the area of poverty reduction and poverty alleviation. Is it in the forthcoming few months, the next financial year that you foresee that these committees will become operationalized in the sense that you are now probably getting things in train with respect to your own ideas and policies with respect to poverty reduction and poverty alleviation?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, we have not sat idly by and done nothing in terms of poverty reduction, we have been working in that area. At the end of it, it may be determined that we would go with these councils or it may be determined that we will go with something different, but we are working on the whole issue of poverty reduction.

Mr. Padarath: Just to follow up, Madam Minister, again, timeline, two years have passed, what sort of timeline are you looking now in terms of implementation?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We are expecting to complete it within this fiscal. We are working very closely with the UNDP on the poverty reduction strategy and we also very much engaged in the whole structuring exercise within the Ministry.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. So you are looking forward to 2018 being your implementation year?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that you had indicated that the poverty reduction plan is going to take effect in 2018, and two years ago we were looking at whatever infrastructure and so forth and whatever policies, would you say that things have drastically changed between then and now, and that there may be some fine-tuning that you may need to do to the plan?—the poverty reduction plan.

Mr. Imbert: May I just ask, which line Item is this?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: That would be the Remuneration to Members.

Mr. Imbert: No. Which line Item could you tell me, please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am continuing the line that Minister in line 14—

Mr. Imbert: Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Which Cabinet-appointed committee are you referring to?

Mr. Padarath: It has not been established.

Mr. Imbert: No. Which one are you referring to?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: There were 17 according to Minister, there were 17 committees.

Mr. Imbert: “Uh hmm.” And which one are you referring to?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The only one that was established.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, in all fairness, in all fairness you have to “ketch” up where the Member is talking about. So just hold on for a little while. Just hold on for a little while. Go ahead, Member for Toco/Manzanilla.

Mr. Imbert: Now, Mr. Chairman, with great respect I was listening and I could not see the connection between the line of questioning and 14. Perhaps the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla—

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

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

Mr. Chairman: She is following up on the Member for Princes Town.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, I was just asking whether there would be some disparity between what decisions had been recognized and taken two years ago and implementation now, would there be a disparity and how would you—

Mr. Imbert: This is the 2018 budget. What is two years ago have to do with the 2018 budget, Mr. Chairman?—please.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, as I said when the Minister answered, the Minister gave an answer based on her stewardship for the last two years in terms of the comment.

Mr. Imbert: She was too generous.

Mr. Chairman: Member, could you come to the question, please. Mr. Minister, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I asked—

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, please. Go ahead, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would the plan be adequate at this time, hon. Minister?

Mr. Chairman: So the plan, Mr. Minister, for the Cabinet-Appointed Committees, what is the status going forward?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Mr. Chairman, we have not made a decision in terms of whether we are going to go with the regional councils or if we are going to have a different type of committee.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. So we know where it is. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003, Social Welfare page 406 to 407. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, go ahead.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Could the hon. Minister indicate, is this unit, the Social Welfare Unit adequately staffed in regard to the salaries here? I am seeing an increase of \$100,000. So is it an increase in staff; is it an increase in salaries and, of course, is the unit adequately staffed?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The unit is adequately staffed, it is not ideally staffed in that there a number of vacant positions, but it is adequately staffed, and the increase that you are seeing there has to do with—we have placed a number of person in there to treat with the food support programme. So this is intended to also assist with that. Oh, no. Sorry. This is increments, those persons would be under short term. So this is to treat increments.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: On line Item 08, Vacant Posts, can the hon. Minister indicate how many positions are vacant in 08, line 08?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 89 vacancies, but there are only 18 vacant posts without bodies, without incumbents.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Eighteen.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Eighteen, one eight.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. And just going back to 01, how many temporary or contract workers do you have?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This Item does not deal with contract employees.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. But this position that you indicated would have the staff coming across from the food card, not so?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. Hon. Member, I corrected myself and indicated that this does not treat with that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Child Development Centre. No. Sorry. Item 004, Gender Affairs Division, page 407; Item 005, Child Development Centre, page 407. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Chair, hon. Minister, under this line Item Child Development Centre you have salaries and allowances, could you tell me how many centres are in this development?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This is one development centre.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: One. And where is it located?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Couva.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how many staff would be positioned there?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 19 permanent employees employed there.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Nineteen. And those are positions as well?—19 positions.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Nineteen positions.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So they are all filled?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. We have some vacancies, but I will have to confirm if there are six positions without incumbents.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. So you will confirm. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, National Family Services, page 408, Sub-Head 02.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 01, 006. Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: 006, National Family Services?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah. Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Comment, question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Where is this NFS located, hon. Minister, and how many members of staff you have there?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We have the National Family Services at different locations. The head unit is at Frederick Street currently, I believe we also have a unit in Couva.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how many of members of staff?

Mr. Chairman: Members of staff?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Mr. Chairman, what happens normally, the family services unit would operate out of units either within the regional offices or close by, so it means we probably have about 11 of those units?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You have 11 of those units, you are saying. Right? Are we going down to 02? Can I go to Goods and Services?

Mr. Chairman: Right. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 408, Item 001, General Administration pages 408 to 409. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, you have \$26,286 million for rent or office accommodation. In light of the fact that you just stated that you have these offices that are aligned with regional bodies and so forth, can you account for this amount in rent?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, I am not too sure that I understand your question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You indicated in National Family Services you indicated that there were two, there was Frederick Street and there was another one, but you said that there are 11, but they were at regional—which means that you do not have to pay for their rent. No?—am I being accurate in that statement?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We may not have to pay separately for the rent under National Family Services, but we would definitely pay for it under General Administration. The Ministry currently rents or leases 22 properties.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For National Family Services?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: For the Ministry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town, line Item?

Mr. Padarath: I am looking at line Item 16 and line Item 22. Through you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Madam Minister, on the last occasion on the last Standing Finance Committee last year you had indicated that the Ministry was looking at Contract Employment, as well as Short-Term Employment in terms of reduction and having more persons on the establishment as opposed to short term and contract employment. But when you look at Contract Employment, it remains within the same figures of last year and the year before, whereas with Short-Term Employment there is a decrease by \$6.3 million. What accounts for the decrease by the \$6.3 million in the Short-Term Employment, but when you look at Contract Employment it remains within the same average as previous years?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, what I believe what I would have indicated is that we would have been seeking to fill the vacant contract positions, and by filling the vacant contract positions we expected a decrease in the short-term positions. We have advertised 345 positions, we have only been able to fill 64 thus far, but we continue to seek to fill the contract positions.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Padarath: Again, through you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to the hon. Minister. Minister, what would have accounted for only 64 positions being filled and not across the board?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There is a process involved in the filling of vacancies.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. These contract positions?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We have to have—yes. We have to advertise externally/internally, we have to shortlist, we have to interview and then we have to make decisions, and has been done. Given the sheer numbers and given the numbers of persons within the HR unit within the Ministry, it has taken sometime.

Mr. Padarath: So this is an internal process—

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mr. Padarath:—with the Ministry?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: No external agency or so is being utilized whether it is Government or private—

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No.

Mr. Padarath:—with respect to the recruitment?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. The recruitment and selection is being done by Ministry. What we do, we co-opt persons from other Ministries externally to sit on the interviewing panels.

Mr. Padarath: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: This 08, Madam Minister, the building that was rented where NSDP was in—

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: ANSA McAl?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—ANSA McAl, was the rent deducted for there or do you still pay rent for that building?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. We no longer pay rent for there.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Because I did not see—

Mr. Imbert: Did we not deal with that Item already?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—a decrease that is why.

Mr. Chairman: No. She is on a different—

Mr. Imbert: Are you sure?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I did not observe a decrease. I was just asking.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: You would notice that the allocation is more or less the same. So while we would have had a reduction by not paying rent at ANSA McAl, we now have Frederick Street on board and we are also looking at getting some other properties to house other departments.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

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

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Line 05, Telephones. I am seeing there is an increase, Madam Minister, of half a million dollars. Can you kindly let me know or tell the public what is the policy of the use of phones by the Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The policy basically is that the telephones are to be used for the Ministry's business.

Mr. Imbert: Less phones, less phone calls.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Continuing on page 409.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 409.

Mr. Chairman: Could you take off your mike please, Mr. Minister. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 409 now, eh? Line Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Can the hon. Minister indicate who these Other Contracted Services are?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This has to do with like pest control, the roto bins and upkeep of the premises.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And I noticed that for security, is this private security?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 43.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. We utilize MTS and we also utilize private security.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For line Item 58, Medical Expenses, does this medical expense include services that clients would receive like when you receive persons off the streets or you bring persons for National Family Services who may have some trauma? Does it include any of that—the costing that would be incurred?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, hon. Member. This relates to terms and conditions of the PSs, DPSs and the Minister.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay. But is there any medical expenses that would be incurred for that service that you offer?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: You would not find it under line Item here.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And line 99, how many persons have accessed this programme? I saw there was an increase and I was just wondering if many persons have accessed it.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: That is the Employee Assistance Programme?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, I am advised that it is approximately 15 persons who would utilize in any year.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Minister, let us look at line Item 37, Janitorial Services. You have a huge increase of almost \$1.4 million in this area. Can you give us an idea of why such a large increase in the area of janitorial services?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: MTS increased their fees and we also provided an allocation for the National Enrichment Centre and Frederick Street.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, line 43, sorry, line 34, University Graduate Recruitment Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have already spoken about that. I said, and that is across the board, that that has not be implemented because of funding constraints. We will implement it across the board if funding allows in 2018.

Mr. Chairman: Point taken. Member for Princes Town.

9.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, just to go back to the issue on Item 37, just for a point of clarification. Is MTS your sole service provider?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, it is not.

Mr. Padarath: So therefore, when you indicated that this increase would have been due to increased rates partly being contributed by increased rates by MTS, it may be that there are other service providers that you can look at to reduce this cost rather than MTS. Have those options been explored?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. We already have a contract with MTS—

Mr. Padarath: An existing contract?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, and it was in addition to the increased rates. We also would have additional properties to be serviced. So those were the two main factors for the increase.

Mr. Padarath: And the existing contracts that you have, do you have an idea of when the expiry will be or whether or not it could be renegotiated? Because, if you look at the market, I am sure there are other companies with cheaper rates that can reduce this cost significantly because you have an increase of \$1.4 million for janitorial services when that could be used in several other areas, in a critical Ministry like the Ministry of Social Development?

Hon. Member: Yes, almost 1.4.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, through you, there was a recent collective agreement signed with MTS—the union representing MTS—which has resulted in increased salaries and wages. And MTS is really at the lower end of the spectrum in terms of its charges, and it is a state enterprise. So the practice is, where possible, you know, to use state enterprises.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Chairman: Item 002, Division of Ageing, pages 409 to 410. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 410.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 16, Contract Employment. Can the hon. Minister indicate what accounts for the increase by \$620,000?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Mr. Chairman, during 2017 we employed, I believe it was 15 or 16 inspectors, so there would be a resultant increase in our bill. Okay?

Mr. Imbert: Not only that, just let me come in here.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: If you look at the actual original estimate for that Item in 2017, it was \$900,000, and it is the same estimate of \$900,000. This often happens with estimates; you would put a figure but for one reason or another people may not be employed during the year, because the recruitment process might be delayed and so on. So the allocation is exactly the same as it was originally in 2017.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Agreed. However, I know that there was—they were severely short-staffed, so is it that the Minister is indicating that the vacancies have been filled?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Not all of them. We now have 18 of the 25 positions filled, so there are just seven vacancies to be filled now.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003, Social Welfare, pages 410 and 411; Item 004. Member for Princes Town you are at 003; Social Welfare?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Social Welfare.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, proceed.

Mr. Padarath: Item 17, Training. An allocation of \$135,000, could the hon. Minister give us an idea of what type of training this would entail under the area of social welfare?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We would provide that in detail. But I can indicate that the focus this year is going to be on the continuation of our customer care training.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. Customer care.

Mr. Chairman: You okay? Let me know. You okay?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, yes, I am fine.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004: Gender Affairs Division, page 411.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: We do not have any Gender Affairs.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005: Child Development Centre, page 412. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line 17: Training. How many staff members have been trained for this position—for this child development centre? Is it an ongoing training programme for your staff, or is this—

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Training is ongoing throughout the Ministry, but if you are asking in terms of the actual programmes, we would have to provide that subsequently.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Where are the child development centres located?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Couva.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, National Family Services, 412; Item 007, Disability Affairs Unit, page 413; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 413; Item 001, General Administration, page 413; Item 002, Division of Ageing, page 413; Item 005, Child Development Centre, page 414. Item 006, National Family Services, page 414; Item 007, Disability Affairs Unit, page 414; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 414. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Madam Minister, line Item 31: Contributions to Non-Profit Institutions. We note with support your increase from \$8 million to \$13 million, and on it you have listed a number of organizations. Are there any criteria that the Ministry uses for allocation of the funding, and are there other applicants for allocation for help, and how is that determined by the Ministry? I think it would be good for general national input.

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The criteria utilized include the service that is being provided, the number of persons that are likely to be serviced. We also, when we provide the subvention we provide to a maximum of 60 per cent of the

operating cost. These organizations must also be registered, they must also be able to provide their banking information, and depending on how long they have been in existence, we would expect to see their audited financial statements.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you finding that there are new applicants to your Ministry over a period of time?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, we have had a number of new applicants.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, you are entertaining the new applicants?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, we go through the process.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Can the hon. Minister identify in line Item 02, what other social programmes accounted for the increase? You do want have to give it to me now, you could probably provide it in writing.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: If you look at the figures, there has not really been an increase per se. This item has to do with the programmes put on by our units within the Ministry. For example, on the Brian Lara Promenade you may see for disability week we run a programme on the promenade. It is also used to build awareness and to educate the public in terms of, for example, ageing, disability, that type of thing. So, that is what these programmes are about.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is more like an outreach? Because I would think that if you are dealing with education it would come under material and promotional material—promotion and publication. So, this is more outreach?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This is a different type of outreach. This is a different type of outreach.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, you would agree that there has been growing public concern with respect to some of these organizations in terms of quality assurance, in term of the law as well. Can you indicate what mechanisms exist in the Ministry to deal with some of these growing public concerns with respect to the administration of these homes in compatibility with the law, but also with respect to how the subventions are spent and so on?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are a number of inspectors attached to the Division of Ageing, and—

Mr. Padarath: Ageing? We are dealing with Children's Homes and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Non-profit Institutions?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, page 414.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Okay, Children's Homes are not under us, so which ones specifically are you looking at? The Senior Citizens' Homes or the Senior Citizens' Centres?

Mr. Padarath: Both. Both.

Mr. Chairman: So 28 and 29, line Items, Madam Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. Okay. Every year before we do a renewal of the subvention a detailed review and assessment is done of each organization. That review entails visits to the physical facility. We interview the persons there. For example, if you go to one of the activity centres we would interview the persons who utilize the services there. We interview the staff, we look at their financial statements, we look at their accounts. So an in-depth assessment is done on the organization before we make a determination as to continue with the subvention.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, Educational Institutions, page 416. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Minister, with respect to Item 006, 01, Adult Education Programme. Further to a request I had made before, can you indicate whether consideration is given to a facility in or a programme in the Enterprise district?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, that is an issue that would have been raised with the Adult Education Programme, and I was given the assurance that in the next cycle they would look at it.

Mr. Karim: The next cycle should be like when, if you could advise.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: I am not sure at present, but I will give you that information subsequently.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Well, we look forward to it, and if it is possible for us to get a listing of all these centres, so that if there are any in close proximity, and we might be able to refer other persons as well.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 41 centres that we utilize, and yes they are spread throughout Trinidad and Tobago, so there is a centre in that area.

Mr. Karim: Okay. So we look forward to the programme in Enterprise. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, under line Item 02, under Households. The Senior Citizens Grant, could you indicate to us how many persons access the Senior Citizens Grant? And in relation to that, how many persons who access the Senior Citizens Grant are also beneficiaries of food cards?

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

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Well, currently there are 93,677 persons who receive the senior citizen pension. In terms of how many of them are also in receipt of the food support, I am not able to give you that information at present, but we could provide it subsequently.

Mr. Padarath: Please, if you could furnish that, that would be helpful.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla or Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, I would give way to Christine.

Mr. Chairman: You would give way to the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Thank you, Chair. Concerning line Item 02, I notice there is not much of an increase, and as far as I am aware we were told during the budget that there was an increase, senior citizens received an increase from within there—from \$3,000. So, you are saying that there was no increase?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: That increase came last fiscal, so that would have been in place during fiscal 2017.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, a number of persons have indicated they have not received it. Are you aware that a number of persons have not received the increase?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, the increase was not an across-the-board increase—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:—so there are some persons who would have benefited. And all persons who were deemed to be eligible for the increase have been paid the increase as far as the Ministry is aware.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is there any recourse for those who would be eligible and have not received it?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There is always recourse. Persons would need to write the Ministry and indicate that they believe they have not been paid the correct amount and we will investigate it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Following my colleague's request, from Princes Town, could you indicate, Minister, the number of people receiving social assistance under line Item 03, and then line Item 08? So, 03 and 08, and also 04. If you have the answer now, it would be appreciated.

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 25,728 persons in receipt of the Social Assistance or Public Assistance Grant as we call it, and 23,625 persons in receipt of the Disability Grant. In terms of the urgent temporary assistance, that relates really to 12 of the grants that we provide at the Ministry, so it is not fixed. Those grants are not fixed. So, it is not like in this case where you would have persons in receipt every month.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. My last question on this line Item. Payments to Registrars of Births and Deaths. I note that there has always been a small amount of 11,000 et cetera. Are you comfortable, Madam Minister, with the registration of such an important aspect in terms of how we chart the course for the country in terms of determination of where we are going? Well, in other words, do you feel that you get the necessary information which is required to help us manage the population issue? And how many centres are there for registration of births and deaths? I find that is very low, 11,000.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, this line Item here was intended to assist persons who could not have afforded to pay for the birth or death certificates. And last year we were informed by the hon. Minister Stuart Young that the Registrar General's Office have taken over that, and they see after that.

Because we at the Ministry have noted that we really have not been receiving claims for this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, it is the Ministry of the Registrar General's Office that is looking after this line Item?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: They have really taken over that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thank you for the clarification.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Minister, through you, Deputy Chair, line Item 08, Disability Grant. Madam Minister, can you indicate how many persons currently access the disability grant? One, and there has been a decrease by \$24,602,000—

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Padarath: What was that, sorry?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister just provided—that question was just asked by your colleague. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The question I asked hon. Minister is not how many persons, but rather, why was there such a significant decrease to the disability grant?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, the Ministry would have requested a sum that would have been consistent with what was paid in 2017. The Ministry of Finance would have granted an allocation of \$500 million. But the Minister has given a commitment that once we need additional funds it will be provided.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay. I just wanted to make sure you did not cut anyone.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: On that issue Madam Minister, of disability, your Ministry helps to quantify or qualify the type of disability, and could you just give a little explanation whether different percentages of disability receive different percentages of funding?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. Hon. Member, the disability grant is a fixed amount, I believe, of \$1,800. The percentage disability is really utilized in determining whether the grant should be provided or not.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And how much disability you look for to determine that?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you can provide the information now?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, it would seem—I am advised there is not a fixed percentage, but the percentage is utilized by the boards when they are making their determination.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh, the boards determine that?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, it is a bit arbitrary, but perhaps it is something that you probably need to focus a bit of attention on as the Minister for policy planning and so on. Because, I remember having to sign some things for a number of patients over a period of time, and it is rather confusing to determine what percentage of disability you accrue to a particular disability, and then what would qualify them for it. So, I just throw out that so that you perhaps can direct a little attention to that in the course of your discussions with your technocrats.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: At this point in time we rely on the doctors, because the doctors make a recommendation in terms of what the percentage disability is. But then the board would look at that and make a determination, looking also at other factors, but I take your point.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is why I indicated. Sometimes it is very difficult to—you want to help the patient, but then what qualifies for a disability sometimes might not be necessary.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Member. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, the last study that was done with respect to children who are affected with disabilities, my own constituency Princes Town was identified as the largest area with respect to the total amount of children affected by cerebral palsy. Is it the view of the Government or yourself, as the policy director in your Ministry, to have a review with respect to these disability grants? Because when you have children affected by it, there are now new areas of study and training, and other avenues that are available to them through physiotherapy, through other mediums in terms of

educational training and so on, that can really assist children who are disabled, especially those who are afflicted with cerebral palsy, is there any review being considered by the Ministry with respect to these cases when it comes to children in light of disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism and others?

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, are you asking that in terms of the grant that is provided or just generally?

Mr. Padarath: Well, both, Madam. In terms of policy and also whether or not it could be a consideration or recommendation coming from your good self as the Minister, in terms of directing policy with respect to the disability grant in relation to specific needs for children afflicted with varying disabilities.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The Ministry is currently looking at all of the grants we provide, and we are looking at them in terms of the information that would have come to us from the stakeholders in the area and also our experience. So, we are looking at the grants, but a decision has not been made as yet in terms of whether we are going to have something in addition to the special child grant that we have at present.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town, again.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Minister, again, with respect to some of these child development centres in relation, again, to the disability grant, is it the consideration of your Government to have some of these child development centres equipped with persons who are specifically trained in some of these areas of physiotherapy and education, and so on, that will be able to assist children in particular through these centres, who are afflicted with some of these disabilities? Because, I can tell you, in my own constituency recently we have had to raise funds to send a child for surgery just to be able to use their limbs, and when you send them for training through a physiotherapist and so on, you actually are seeing the results. But there are only like two specialists in Trinidad and Tobago that actually offer these services, and the prices in terms of the cost are astronomical. Is it something that the Ministry can consider with respect to these child development centres?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman—sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Who is going? Minister of Planning and Development.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman, if I may, some of these issues that are being raised by the Member for Princes Town would be better raised under the Development Programme. And I would like to ask whether the Minister could be allowed to answer some of these questions under the Development Programme, because there are some projects under the welfare services, under the Consolidated Fund, that the Member could probably ask these questions under that programme. Because, what we are dealing with now is the recurrent expenditure, and they would not fall under recurrent.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, point taken, Madam Minister. Right. So, next Item, Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, where are you?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just one—007, just one question on Item 11. Can the Minister indicate: what is this Target Conditional Cash Transfer Programme-Development Component for Recipients?

Mr. Chairman: Page 417 line Item 11, under 007, Households, Target Conditional Cash Transfer Programme.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This is the developmental aspect of the Food Support Programme, and it has been rebranded to Step-Up. It was Rise-Up under the previous administration. This is the developmental component where we have case management persons working with the families to either provide them—send them in the direction of enhancing their education, enhancing their skills so that they can bring themselves out of that dependency status.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, so it is Step-Up as opposed to Rise-Up.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Right, it is a change of name. Okay, Item 009, Other Transfers, page 417. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Line Item 01, hon. Minister, is this programme fully under the Ministry?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I see there is just a slight decrease, but I do not know if the hon. Minister is aware that this programme is oversubscribed, and if there is any intention of enhancing it and improving it and enlarging the need for more staff to come on board?

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The programme is under review, because currently the policy provides for a maximum of 600 caregivers and we are at the maximum, but we recognize that the demand is great, so it is being reviewed.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, thanks.

Mr. Chairman: Members, Item 009, Other Transfers, page 417; Sub-Head 006, Current Transfer to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 418. Do we have questions on page 418?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

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

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 15, through the Chair, Madam Minister. May I humbly suggest that this nomenclature for these children be looked at urgently and changed from “retarded children” to “specially challenged children”? It is something that we need to do, so I want to make the recommendation. And just one question as well—well, of course, Lady Hochoy Home has been doing a great job. Line Item 41, Association for the Hearing Impaired, is there any consideration for helping children with middle-ear deafness who need cochlear implants, surgical implants—would that be entertained in this vote here, and if not, is this a new line Item you can put? Because, from the research we did at the Ministry of Education, and Minister will tell you, about 7 per cent of students have either visual or auditory difficulties.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, in terms of your first question, the Ministry has raised the issue of the use of the word “retarded”, but this is the organization’s name, and they will make a decision as to whether they change it. But we have raised it with them. And secondly, in terms of the Association for the Hearing Impaired, the Ministry is not really able to indicate to the organization what they should be pursuing. They provide their proposals and their request, and we assess it and we provide the subvention. But we are not involved in the operations of the organization.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure. But I am sure there are a number of children who need it, but unfortunately the expense is quite expensive, but they end up without having the surgical procedure to help them. So, it is something that your Ministry can look after. And, Minister, why is it that we cannot make legislation to change this name from “retarded”?

Mr. Chairman: Member, we would take that as a suggestion. Minister, take note it, but we can move on. Are there any questions based on the statutory boards at this time? Any questions with regard to the statutory boards? So, as a result we

are going to move on now to development programmes. Development Programme, the Consolidated Fund, page 182, of the Development Programme, page 182, and we will go to Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 182 to 183. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 044 on page 182, Establishment of Social Displacement Centres. Are these centres related to the street dwellers?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, it is.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Where are these centres going to be located?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The proposal is to establish one at the corner of Piccadilly and South Quay, and we also looking at retrofitting a building at the corner of Duncan Street and Independence Square.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how soon you are looking at accomplishing such?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: In terms of the building on Independence Square, we hope to have that done within this financial year. In terms of the other building we are looking at a two- to three-year time frame for completion.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Will the Ministry no longer require the services of St. Vincent De Paul in terms of their facility, or is it going to be working in tandem?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, this is the Development Programme, that question is more relevant to recurrent expenditure. This has nothing to do with that. There is no relationship.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Of course there is a relationship.

Mr. Imbert: It is a building.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I would not be able to entertain it, Madam. We now go to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, Item 096, Development Centre for Persons with Challenges, \$4 million. Could the Minister state whether it is one centre, or what is it?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This is the national—sorry, the Enrichment Centre at Carlsen Field.

9.40 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 096, the same, Development Centre for Persons with Challenges. Is this facility functional, Madam Minister?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, it has not been operationalized. The myriad of problems we have encountered with that Centre has delayed its operationalization. During last fiscal we had to get the UWI Engineering Institute on board to do a structural assessment of the building. They did that. We have since submitted their report to the Ministry of Works and Transport, because the Ministry of Works and Transport—approval is needed before we can get approvals from the regional corporation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But we have Janitorial Services here, right?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Well, the building is there so we have to make sure that it is properly maintained.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. 114.

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

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, again, this is the Development Programme, not Recurrent Expenditure.

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

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Minister, line Item 130, Refurbishment of Hernandez Place. Could you describe where this place is and what is involved?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hernandez Place is in Arima. It provides accommodation for the elderly/socially displaced persons in society.

Mr. Chairman: Cumuto/Manzanilla, last question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Item 112, the Street Dwellers Rehabilitation and Re-Integration Project. Is this work in tandem with line Item 044?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This relates to the Centre for the Socially Displaced Persons at Riverside Plaza.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, so now I can ask my question. So, are we going to continue with this programme, Madam Minister? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We are going to continue with the—

Mr. Imbert:—It is obvious.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, it is not obvious.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, yes?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: It is obvious.

Mr. Lee: One more question.

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

Mr. Lee: Line Item 131, Community Therapeutic Services for Persons with Disabilities. Could the Minister expand a bit on what that is about?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This—the intention is to forge an alliance with the Ministry of Health and have therapeutic services and assessments provided for children, in particular, and other persons with disabilities within the communities. So we are going to be exploring—having this done through the health centres and the regional hospitals.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Which line Item was this, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, no, one second.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 126?

Mr. Chairman: No, Member. Do you have a—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, yes. I want to know if—because I have a question on it.

Mr. Chairman: Which one you would like.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 126.

Mr. Chairman: Which one?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 126. Because I did not see any allocation that is why.

Mr. Imbert: There is no allocation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Right.

Mr. Imbert: So what is your point?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, this is why I was asking.

Mr. Chairman: Why there is no allocation?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Why there is no allocation?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We are no longer pursuing that. We are now pursuing utilizing the community therapeutic services.

Mrs. Robinson Regis: Mr. Chairman, if I could just indicate, that what the Government has had to do is move to prioritizing projects. So where we have no allocation at all it is that there may have been an overlap and consequently there is one project or one development programme that will cover some of the things that may have been here before and so there is no allocation for it. But in many instances there was overlapping and the Government now has to move to prioritizing projects.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But, hon. Minister, there is no overlapping with the Centre for Persons with Disabilities because there was supposed to have Carlsen Field.

Mrs. Robinson Regis: The Minister was were very clear and explained—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And Carlsen Field is not operational.

Mrs. Robinson Regis: But the Minister explained—

Mr. Chairman: Members, Members, Members. Thanks for that input, Madam Minister. Thank you, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 78 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister, I thank you.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Madam PS and all the technocrats, thanks for coming. Do reach home safely. Thank you.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Mr. Chairman: Head 01, President and we are now on *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, page 1.

Head 01: President, \$15,939,050.

Mr. Chairman: I will now ask the Minister of Finance to make an opening statement.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I think we are all aware that the President is the Head of State.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Thanks for coming technocrats, senior advisors at the President's Office.

Question proposed: That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$15,939,050 for Head 01, President is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 1; Item 001, General Administration, page 1 and page 2; Item 002, Tobago Services, page 3; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment purchases, page 3; Item 001, General Administration, page 3.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks for coming anyhow.

[MRS. ANNISSETTE-GEORGE *in the Chair*]

Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission, \$81,248,100.

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

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. Madam Chairman, the Election and Boundaries Commission establishes boundaries and conducts elections.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$81,248,100 for Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft*

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.*

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 43; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, General Expenses; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 44; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item, 12, Materials and Supplies. Can the hon. Minister indicate what the rationale for this increase in the allocations is?

Mr. Imbert: There will be a field verification exercise in 2018.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Election Expenses, page 45; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 46; Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Members, we will now proceed to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme.* Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 13; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 194; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 08 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you representatives from Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Head 07: Statutory Authorities' Service Commission, \$8,901,550.

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

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. The Statutory Authorities' Service Commission in similar fashion to the Public Services Commission, is responsible for promotions, discipline and other matters of a personnel nature within a number of statutory authorities, most notably, the regional corporations and other entities such as the National Lotteries Control Board and so on.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$8,901,550 for Head 07, Statutory Authorities' Service Commission is comprised of moneys proposed to expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.*

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Monday, October 16, 2017

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 39; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 39 and 40; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 40.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 07 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the representatives and the Commission for coming.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Tuesday, the 17th day of October, 2017, at 10.00 a.m. and we start with the Ministry of National Security. Okay, so have a good evening everyone. Reach home safely.

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