



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# Debates of the House of Representatives

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5th Session – 10th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 31 – Number 10

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**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK  
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN  
DEPUTY SPEAKER

**Monday 22nd September, 2014**

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON–MEIGUEL**

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**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
IN THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON JUNE 18, 2010**

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**SESSION 2014—2015**

**VOLUME 31**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Monday, September 22, 2014*

The House met at 10.00 a.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communications from the hon. Prakash Ramadhar, the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine, who is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period September 20th to 28th, 2014. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015) BILL, 2014**

[Seventh Day]

**Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House resolve into Standing Finance Committee to continue its consideration of the Bill and the Estimates.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House resolved itself into Standing Finance Committee.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, before we start, just a few housekeeping announcements. First of all, in keeping with what was agreed when we last met, it is essential that we get through a minimum of 10 Heads of Expenditure per day, failing that we will have to sit late into the evening. I therefore urge Members to work smartly and efficiently if we are able or if we are to get through our work well within the time allotted.

Additionally, as Members are aware, we have invited accounting officers and technocrats. They would be arriving at specific times during the day, so we have to try to stick to the schedule.

With respect to the speaking time, remember that you are limited to five minutes at a time; this is to ensure that no one Member dominates the conversation during this important committee meeting. As we begin our examination of the Bill and the Estimates, each Head of Expenditure, first of all, the Head and sum proposed will be announced by the Chairman, the Minister in question will then be invited to make a brief opening statement.

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I will then propose the question that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule. We shall then examine the Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for each Head of Expenditure. I will call the Sub-Head followed by the Item. I will not call the Sub-Items. I want to repeat, I will not call the Sub-Items. Discussions can ensue on the Item called and clarification sought. I will repeat the procedure for the Development Programme. Once this is concluded, I will then put the question that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule and the procedure will be repeated for each Head of Expenditure.

Hon. Members, the first—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** I would like at some stage, with respect to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy that we pay some attention to the revenue document; the Draft Estimates of Revenue, because I do have a couple of questions there.

**Hon. Member:** I am not hearing.

**Mr. Chairman:** What the Member is saying, that at some stage of the examination of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, he would like to make reference to the document on Revenues which is a document that has been laid in the House and has been referred to this committee.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, we are going to Head 18 in accordance with the list submitted by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Head 18, as you know, is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Now, Head 18, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is \$9,428,577,750. I will now invite the Minister of Finance and the Economy to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes at this time. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not need to make any additional statements. The numbers are there, and we are ready to answer all the questions.

*Head 18.*

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$9,428,577,750 for Head 18, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

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Sub-Head 0—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Before we go into the Sub-Heads, in the Draft Estimates the figure we are looking at for 2015, \$9.695 billion. Could someone explain that differential before we go to the Sub-Heads?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, Chairman, the difference represents the direct charges. Normally, what we do is, everything comes from the Consolidated Fund. A part of it goes to the Appropriation Bill, and then the remainder which represents certain expenses like, for example, pensions which is a direct charge against the Consolidated Fund, those direct charges are not included in the number that is incurred.

**Dr. Rowley:** But they are included as part of the package for the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** That is right.

**Dr. Rowley:** That is what I want to get clear.

**Hon. Howai:** That is right.

**Dr. Rowley:** And I make that point because I will come back to it, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, under General Administration in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, I would like to make an observation and to ask the Ministry of Finance and the Economy whether this Ministry has been impacted by the developments of 2009, where we in fact experienced recessionary conditions and since then we have been in deficit financing.

So, the Minister of Finance and the Economy's budget for the last five years had been a budget with a significant deficit, and against that background I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his accounting officers, whether, in fact, the allocations, whether it be growth or reduction, whether they had been conscientiously influenced by any recognition of the fact that the country is budgeting in a deficit condition.

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**10.15 a.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Well, certainly, the overall revenue numbers are taken into account in determining what can or cannot do—we identify what the deficit is that we are prepared to work with, and within that context we do then determine how best we can meet the overall objective of ensuring that we achieve that deficit number. So to that extent, all of the numbers that we have, not just here but overall for the budget as a whole, do take into account the fact that we are running a deficit and, therefore, we need to keep that under control and the overall level of expenditure has to be in line, in such a position that it allows us to achieve our objective of reducing the deficit in the way that we want to do so.

**Dr. Rowley:** And is it that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is saying that you made a conscious effort to bring about reductions in areas so as to reduce the deficit? If that is so, how come the overall budget is larger than the previous budgets?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. The overall budget, we certainly will make sure that the level of expenditure does not grow to such an extent that the deficit ends up being a deficit that is more than we want it to be. But what we do is we programme the revenue to get us to the point where, given the growth in revenue and given what is expected of expenditure, we do not end up with a deficit that is larger than the number we want to see happen for the year.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, that is not the question that I am asking. I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy whether, in fact—it is not what deficit you want to live with, I am asking whether, in fact, you did take any conscious effort to reduce expenditure in the face of revenues being lower than required, because you are, not having enough revenue to fund the service of the country. You are talking about what deficit you can live with. I am asking: did the Ministry of Finance and the Economy make any effort to reduce expenditure in any areas of significance? And if so, can you point me to those areas where you attempted to reduce expenditure against the background of a fact that we do not have enough revenues for the service of the country for the period?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. Mr. Chairman, as we go through the document, you will see that there are specific areas—goods and services—in specific Ministries



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where the numbers are lower than the numbers that would have prevailed last year.

**Dr. Rowley:** And if that is so, how then does the final product end up being larger if there are reductions within the overall budget? How you end up with a bigger budget if you set out to reduce—and you did, in fact, reduce in some Ministries?

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. Mr. Chairman, what we did is that we—there were some increases in expenditure that will occur because of things like salary increases, for example, that we have to bring to book, and therefore we need to do that. We also did increase the allocation which we made for the PSIP—the Public Sector Investment Programme—this year. And, again, something like that, we see as being investments. We see that as an investment in the long-term development of the country, and therefore, those are things that we will consider as part of the overall programme of expenditure for the year.

**Dr. Rowley:** So what guided the budget discussion was that you had increases in essential areas.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rowley:** So those increases in essential areas offset the reductions that you made, so you ended up with a budget that was bigger than the period.

**Hon. Howai:** That is right, yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** So we can view the increases as essential expenditure.

**Hon. Howai:** As essential expenditure and things that we have already committed to previously.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. So we go Item 1: General Administration.

**Dr. Rowley:** If we are still there, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make one observation there. I observe that with respect to vacant posts, we make an allocation of, in gross, \$9 million, General Administration for what is called critical posts. But there were no allocations made for those in previous years. If

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they were so critical, how come they remained unfilled, and if you did not expend on them last time, why is it that you are now making this \$9 million allocation for these critical posts that remain unfilled for two budgetary periods?

**Hon. Howai:** Could you just refer me to the page, please?

**Dr. Rowley:** Under “General Administration/”, if you peruse “General Administration” and add them all up—

**Hon. Howai:** Oh, if you add them all up.

**Dr. Rowley:**—you will come to a provision of \$9.1 million for vacant posts for which there was no service last year. And I am simply asking that if these posts were so critical, why is it that they remained unfilled and unbudgeted for last time and they are now being budgeted for in this way?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. Some of it, of course, represented some of the important things like, for example, Customs, Mr. Chairman, where we thought we needed to strengthen that particular area and, therefore, we have made a decision to bring on persons in that specific area and increase the head count. So that is something that we have made some provision for this year. But the thing is that, normally, if that is not spent, it normally goes—you know, it just remains unspent during the course of the year, or if we need to increase it, I think you would take from salaries. Is that how you would deal with it?

**Technocrat:** It goes to salaries.

**Hon. Howai:** It goes to salaries during the course of the year. But what we did is, we had identified there were a few areas that we thought that we needed to fill in this year and that is why we put the provision in.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, under 01, Mr. Chairman—under 01, sub 07, we know—and we have been told by the Minister of Finance and the Economy in opening the debate—that we have been increasing our debt load. Could the Minister give us an explanation for the reduction in the debt servicing charges which are down from \$1.8 billion to—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no. Let us deal with General Administration. There is an item that deals with debt as we go along. We “doh” want to jump.

**Dr. Rowley:** My mistake, Mr. Chairman. I am on the wrong page, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on page 64. I thought it was page 65. We are on page 65, right?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, 65.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. So we go now to Item 2: Budget Division. Item 3—*[Interruption]* I am not waiting, eh, I am moving, so follow me very carefully. So we have moved from Item 1, General Administration; we are now going to Item 2: Budget Division. We are going to Item 3: Customs and Excise.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman—

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, I recognize—

**Dr. Rowley:** You are on budget?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, I am on 3.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on 3, Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Imbert:** Let the Leader go first.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on 03. But, Mr. Chairman, I know you want to rustle down, right, but you must bear in mind that this is the first time we are doing this, so there is a certain learning curve we have to go over, and also, we need to pace ourselves so as to get the best out of the exercise. So I would assist you to push things along, but not so fast that we cannot cope with what you put your pace. I know you have long strides, but we will try and keep up.

003, overtime for monthly-paid officers in the Customs division, I notice that in 2013 the provision for overtime was \$27 million; for 2014 it was \$28.5 million. Why is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy budgeting for \$82 million for Customs overtime for 2015, an increase from \$28.5 million to \$82 million? What justifies that?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. It relates to actually an arrears of overtime for the period 2007 to 2014. So the order was recently signed and, therefore, what we have done is made provision for it in this year.

**Dr. Rowley:** Am I to understand that there is an impact in the Customs of \$30 million in overtime?

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**Hon. Howai:** Over—

**Dr. Rowley:** Over whatever period of time?

**Hon. Howai:** Over seven years. It is the arrears that we are paying over the seven years, which had not been paid.

**Dr. Rowley:** So you now have a liability of \$30 million in overtime to the customs officers.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, that we need to settle and, therefore, we have put it in, in here.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Part of the debt we inherited. We inherited that.

**Miss Mc Donald:** All yuh inherited everything—[*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I am not going to be distracted by the inheritance story, because the only thing I inherited is what Joe Rowley left for me in Mason Hall. This is not inheritance; this is administration of the country, and I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy what transpired between these \$28.5 million and \$82 million? You are now telling me it is overtime. The question is: why was that not being paid when it was incurred? Why were those charges not paid at the time when they were being incurred? Because my understanding is, overtime is paid as part of your periodic emolument. If you are a daily-paid worker, you get your overtime computed based on your daily income and it comes to your fortnightly package. If you are a monthly-paid worker; you work overtime, it is computed to come on your monthly-paid allocation and disbursement. What happened in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy in the Customs Division to allow \$30 million of overtime to remain in arrears for so long?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. There was a delay in finalizing the collective agreement and the legal notice was only recently done. So, as a result, actually, the arrears for 2007 and 2008 will be completed this year, and the remainder will have to be picked up next year in 2015.

**Dr. Rowley:** Am I to understand, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister of Finance and the Economy is telling us that this \$30 million is but a part of the overtime paid in Customs? Because if it is related to a collective agreement, the collective agreement would only have changed the status quo by a percentage, and a payment of the existing arrangements would have been made. Am I to understand

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that this \$30 million is only in relation to the marginal increase that followed from the collective agreement? In which case, give us an approximation of the general total of overtime in Customs.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you supply that now, or you want to—

**Hon. Howai:** I do not have the exact number for the overtime by year, but I will ask the Budget Director to get it for me.

**Mr. Chairman:** In the meantime I will go to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am seeing an increase of \$53 million. So where is this figure of \$30 million coming from?

**Dr. Rowley:** Because you move from \$28.5 million to \$82 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** Where did the figure of \$30 million come from?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, the figure \$30 million was quoted by the hon. MP.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but obviously based on something you said. The increase is \$53 million.

**Dr. Rowley:** You are correct, it is \$50 million.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, yeah. That is the figure I have but I thought that was the figure that was mentioned just now.

**Mr. Imbert:** And you are saying that that is an accumulation of—

**Hon. Howai:** Of several years.

**Mr. Imbert:**—overtime owed from 2007 to—

**Hon. Howai:** That is right.

**Mr. Imbert:** And you are saying you cannot give us a breakdown year by year?

**Hon. Howai:** I am saying I can give you but I do not have it here right now, so I will get it. I have asked the Budget Director to get it for me.

**Mr. Imbert:** When will we get it?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, there is an arrangement, I think, Mr. Chairman, to provide this information—if we cannot do it now—within some agreed time frame.

**Mr. Imbert:** What is that?

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**Hon. Howai:** I think there is a standing arrangement in the committee, as I understand it.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could I just ask when we will get it, please?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Whenever “yuh” get it—

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, no, not whenever. Mr. Chairman, when will we get this information?

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Just now. How early would you be in a position to provide the information?

**Hon. Howai:** Before the work of this committee is finished, we will be able to provide it.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, this committee is a very important outcome of the parliamentary modernization and I take objection to the Member for Oropouche East telling Members on this side, “You will get it whenever you get it”. I consider that to be quite out of order.

**Hon. Member:** Arrogant.

**Dr. Rowley:** And if that is the case, Mr. Chairman, we might well not be here. I take objection to that from the Leader of Government Business, to tell us we will get it whenever we get it. And to come back to this issue, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy again—because this matter is being recorded—is the Minister of Finance and the Economy telling the country that in the Customs Division for that period of four years, 2007 to now, that the Customs Division has incurred, as part of their overtime, \$50 million in overtime payments, which is related—and that \$53 million is related only to the increase as per the industrial agreement? Then we would want to know what is the total amount of overtime paid in the Customs Division for that period. And the Minister has kindly promised to give us that figure before the end of the committee proceedings on day five. We could move on, Mr. Chairman.

**10.30 a.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** I just want to clarify the information that I require. The Minister said, this \$53 million increase is built up over a period of years, 2007 to 2013. I would like a breakdown, year by year, what are the arrears of overtime due to the Customs Division, from 2007 to 2013?

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**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, thank you very much. I just want to make myself clear on this matter since it is early in the proceedings and I think the ground rules should be understood by all. There will be occasions as arise now, but I am sure will arise later as we proceed where Ministers and their respective delegations will not be in a position to martial data immediately when the questions are asked.

I just want to repeat for the record that while the Leader of the Opposition in this parliamentary reform process serves notice in terms of the headings, the priority of the headings, there is no requirement for the Leader of the Opposition or any Member to serve notice on their questions. So that, Members will rightly ask questions for which the relevant Ministers and their delegation may or may not have readily available answers.

We will, Mr. Chairman, give an assurance to Members that as soon as the data can be collated—in some cases it may happen quickly, in some cases it may take some time—it would be made available to the Parliament, and the Parliament would make this data available to the Members asking the question. That, Mr. Chairman, obtained before. Not only in this administration, former administrations as well, but I think it is unfair—and I would like to raise this issue very early—and I am hoping that Members would not badger and “hound down” Ministers when they appear here, to get information.

Because, Mr. Chairman, I want to make the point that it is not in the interest of this process for anyone to be “extempoing” answers as we go along. There is only one “extempo” artiste in this hall and he is sitting in Mayaro’s seat. We will not be forced to just “extempo” answers where there are critical questions. So that, we will give an assurance, but it is not every piece of information you can just get in 20 minutes. There are times when we will have to martial the data and provide it to the Parliament, and I think we should work within that spirit. That is all I have to say.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, before we go to and fro, we will be wasting time. The decision has been that before the end of these sittings or meetings of our committee, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has given an undertaking that it will be provided. I do not want us get involved in these crosstalk because we are going to lose time, and when I begin to mash my gas, because I have a deadline of five days to satisfy 50 Heads, and I want Members to understand, we have to work efficiently and smartly. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

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**Mr. Warner:** I withdraw, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Could we then proceed to—I am moving to Item 004, Inland Revenue Division. Item 004.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, before you go to Item 004, I had a couple more questions on Item 003.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, continue.

**Dr. Rowley:** And it had to do with Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance on Page 67, and there is a decrease in the allocation under this head from \$64.1 million to \$58 million. How is it that there is a major reduction under this head, yet a hike in the allocation for overtime payment?

**Mr. Chairman:** Did you refer to page 66 or 67, you said?

**Hon. Member:** Page 66.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 66, right?

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, page 66.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am just asking. I am seeing a mismatch between salaries and overtime, and a simple question, is it that we are catering for overtime as against having the departments properly staffed and functioning within normal time? That is the question I am asking.

**Hon. Howai:** In fact, the overtime numbers relate to persons who were in the positions since 2007, some are no longer in those positions, some would have moved on for various reasons. Nevertheless, the overtime still needs to be paid where they were incurred. In the case of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, those relate in respect of the current positions as they exist now. I do not know if that answers the question properly.

Mr. Chairman, one point. When I made the commitment that we would provide the information, just now, before the committee ends, I am assuming the committee would take five days, and if the committee ends this evening I may not be in a position to—

**Mr. Chairman:** That is understandable and we will arrange that.

**Dr. Rowley:** This exercise is a request for money, and we on this side are making the assumption that there is something underpinning the request. So, for



example with respect to this \$50 million overtime for Customs, as we are told, I am making the assumption that somewhere in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy the work has been done, the knowledge is available, and it is that which caused them to ask the Parliament for \$53 million.

So, all we are saying, share that information with us. We are not asking for magical numbers in 20 minutes or 30 minutes, and the Minister of Finance and the Economy has agreed that within a matter of days, what we anticipate exists in the context of the request for specific sums, that be made to the committee, and that is reasonable. We do not expect magical answers and we do not want fabricated answers. So, we will accept within the context of the exercise that the questions raised would be satisfied if they are not available immediately. Otherwise, I would ask the question, what is the basis for this request from the Parliament, if you do not know what it is?

**Mr. Chairman:** Can we now go on? Are there any other concerns under Item 003? Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Sorry, I just have a question under Inland Revenue Division.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, well, we have not reached there yet.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Inland Revenue Division. Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. Under Inland Revenue Division for vacant posts, salaries, could the Minister state what are these vacant posts, their job description or their range? Because the issue of vacant posts—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Please! Please! Please!

**Mr. Deyalsingh:**—comes up throughout the document. So, just the range and quantity, the number of vacant posts.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** I do not want to just give a rough number, perhaps if I can get the number from—*[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Just hold a second. Members, we cannot have crosstalk. This is a matter going live, so let us not engage in crosstalk and disturb the proceedings. Let us be silent, and those who cannot be silent, you can retire to the Members' lounge. But I would like the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to make his contribution in silence. Continue hon. Minister.

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**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, I do not have the exact number. I do not want to just give a rough number that may be incorrect. So, again, I would undertake to provide this information before the end of the committee stage.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** I would just like to clarify the importance of the information, because the Inland Revenue Division is one of our major revenue streams, tax collection agencies, so I think, if you could provide it at the end of the finance committee, it would be good. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go on to—

**Miss Mc Donald:** I have a question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes, under Inland Revenue Division. It keeps popping over the Heads we have just dealt with. There is, for wages, overtime to monthly-paid officers, that has gone up by \$200,000. For 2014, the revised is \$50,000, but at the same time I am having a little problem in trying to understand, you are paying this amount as overtime, but yet we have, as the Member for St. Joseph said, these vacant positions. What are these vacant posts? I need to see what is the nexus between having to pay this amount, and yet you have vacant posts, why do you not strengthen your monthly-paid officers to avoid that increase in overtime? What is happening in there?

**Mr. Chairman:** I think the Minister said he would provide that information in due course. Let us go on now.

**Miss Mc Donald:** That is different. That was a different question.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, it is related. Let us go on now to Item 005, please. Item 005, Treasury Division. Item 008, Investments Division. Item 009, Central Tenders Board.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you on Item 008?

**Mr. Imbert:** Item 009.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 009, the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** In the context of the Government's stated commitment or alleged commitment to enact the procurement legislation in early 2015—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do not anticipate.

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**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I am being interrupted and disturbed by the Member for Caroni East.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please!

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you ask him to stop? Mr. Chairman, I would like to complete my sentence. The Prime Minister has made a statement that the procurement legislation would be laid in this Parliament and enacted early in this parliamentary cycle. In the context of that stated commitment on the part of the Government to enact procurement legislation, which would involve the repeal of the Central Tenders Board Ordinance, why is the allocation for the Central Tenders Board the same? In fact, it has increased from \$7.1 million to \$7.2 million in the estimates? If you are going to abolish the Central Tenders Board, which is the clear intent of the Procurement Bill, why do you have an allocation for the CTB in this estimate? *[Interruption]* I am not asking you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please!

**Hon. Howai:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, there will be a period of time before we actually can move from the Central Tenders Board to the Procurement Regulator. We have actually employed consultants who have started the work to help transition and to make the transition. It is a very complex transition. It is likely to take more than 12 months in order to get to where we want to be, and in the circumstances and given the arrangements that we expect will have to be put in place, we expect that we will need to carry the Central Tenders Board for at least 12 more months.

**Mr. Imbert:** So, what the Minister is saying now, is that the existing procurement regime is going to continue for at least one more year? That is what you are saying? Because that is what you just said, eh.

**Hon. Howai:** I expect that the actual implementation would take about a year as the—

**Mr. Imbert:** All right, so the new procurement regulations and so on will not come into effect for one year and this is why you have put the same allocation for the CTB?

**Hon. Howai:** That is in terms of our projections, and therefore, we have taken the conservative view, and we have taken the more careful view of ensuring that we have everything in place in the event that it goes for a longer period of time.

**Mr. Imbert:** No problem. I understand, you do not want to enact procurement legislation. You do not want to implement it.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Item 010, Valuation. Item 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal; Item 014, Financial Intelligence Unit. The Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition, then Member for Diego Martin North/East, and then Member.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, with respect to the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the Financial Intelligence Unit, it is my understanding that there are a growing number of instances being discovered of money laundering. In fact, it is general sentiment in this country that one of the biggest threats to the economy and the country, as a whole, is this whole question of money laundering, and our protection from that nefarious activity should come from the surveillance and reporting by staff of the Financial Intelligence Unit. I did not find it very strange that in provisioning for the 2015 estimates, if one looks historically at how that unit has grown—in 2013, for staff, their Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, it was \$520,000; by 2014, the actual revised figure was \$2.028 million. What is the basis on which the Minister of Finance and the Economy is reducing the allocation to the Financial Intelligence Unit to \$1.6 million?

What justifies a reduction which I may interpret as a reduction in staffing when, in fact, the unit should be ramping up its role in treating with money laundering in a growing economy?

**10.45 a.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** One minute, Mr. Chairman, I just want to check with the budget director. One of the things—

**Dr. Rowley:** And while the Minister is talking to his staff, the reduction is not marginal, eh, it is about a 20 per cent reduction on the known expense of 2014, so it must be something significant to have brought about a 20 per cent reduction in provisioning for the Financial Intelligence Unit, unless of course, somebody wants the unit to remain ineffectual.

**Mr. Chairman:** Whilst we are waiting on an answer, I want to go to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, it is related. The Minister told us in this Parliament on Friday that the number of listed businesses that are under the purview of the Financial Intelligence Unit has grown to 1,800. Currently, based on the information in the CFATF report of 2014, the Unit monitors maybe 300 out

of these 1,800. So Minister, if the number of listed businesses is now 1,800 and with the current staff, they could only monitor 300, why have a lower allocation for them in 2015?

**Hon. Howai:** I have just asked, Mr. Chairman, just to get some clarification on the numbers, but I just want to add a further point to just expand on what, perhaps, in a general sense, responds to what the MP for Diego Martin North/East raised and that is that part of what we did in that Bill—and the Member would recall—is that we made certain changes in the operations of the FIU. So, for example, the compliance programmes, what we did is we had that being approved by the senior management of the companies as opposed to coming to the FIU to be approved. The reason why we did that is we said that it was not—having a programme is not as important as ensuring adherence to the requirements of the legislation. You could have a nice programme, it is all well-approved and so on, but there is no real adherence to it. So, we made some changes that do not require the FIU now to actually approve those programmes. Those programmes will be approved by the senior management.

The second change we made was that what we did, we said that we will now enlist the support of institutions such as the SEC and the Central Bank to ensure that there is compliance with the programme. These institutions understand the businesses of these organizations, perhaps, a lot better than the FIU does, certainly the Central Bank understands the operations of the insurance companies and the banks a lot better than the FIU does. And therefore, they, as part of their compliance and their auditing programme, inspections, will ensure that they do, in fact, check on these programmes and audit the processes within the company.

So therefore, we have made changes to the system that will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall programme and what is actually being done. So that does not answer the question of the number of reduction, the number. What it does though is it means that we do not need as many people as would have been required had we remained with the old system. But in respect of the specific question on the numbers, I have just asked the staff just to check for me and as soon as they give the responses, I will provide an answer.

**Mr. Imbert:** And could the Minister state, since the number of listed businesses—I am not talking about banks, financial institutions, insurance companies and all those other entities that are supervised by the Central Bank, et cetera, Securities and Exchange Commission, I am not talking about that. I am talking about listed businesses which are under the direct purview of the FIU. Surely with the exponential increase in the number of listed businesses and the

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inability of the FIU to monitor this very large number, almost 2,000, is there a plan to increase the staff of the FIU, and if there is, why the reduction in the allocation for salaries? That is the kind of answer I would like out of you. If you need time, no problem.

**Dr. Rowley:** Because the Minister is answering, Mr. Chairman, I would like to piggyback a question on that so he can answer together, because what the Minister has just said has me very worried. The Minister has just said that the FIU, which as far as I am aware, when the Parliament created the FIU to do this monitoring of the economy in that way, I am not aware of any aspect of that legislation which makes the FIU an appendage of anybody else.

My understanding of it was that the FIU would have had within it the competence, the total competence, to monitor financial transactions in the country. What the Minister has just said there is very troublesome because he is saying subsequent to the legislation, administratively somebody or bodies have taken the decision that the FIU would rely on the SEC and the Central Bank, and other third parties, to get its responsibility discharged. And against that thought process and that background, I am seeing here a 20 per cent reduction in the staffing by way of the finances for the FIU and that is worrisome. Who took this decision to reduce the FIU's expenditure by 20 per cent?

And now I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy where did this story come from that the FIU must not be able to have within its own borders the full competence to exercise its responsibility and would rely on Central Bank and SEC and Miss Mary Jane and whoever else? This could not be serious, this is very worrisome.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just take a note of that. Member for St Joseph and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Chair, the speed with which you went to the FIU, I missed my opportunity to ask a question under the National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal. Would you entertain that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, well, you missed, the boat gone. Let go.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, my concern that I would have registered would have been similar to the concern raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East with reference to the number of staff available at the FIU, and the fact

that the salary would have been significantly reduced, and I think that the Minister of Finance and the Economy really needs to reconsider that particular item.

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, okay. With respect to FIU, actually the figures—for the figure, the revised estimate of \$2,028,000 on page 70 included the arrears of back pay for certain personnel within the FIU and therefore, that is not a recurrent expenditure. The actual recurrent number is the \$1.5 and the \$1.5 is really the number that was increased to 1\$.6 this year.

**Mr. Imbert:** So is that one more staff member coming up \$100,000. No, it is a serious question.

**Hon. Howai:** No, and I take the question, Mr. Chairman, and I would say that actually on page 80 under Goods and Services, actually there are—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we are coming to that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yeah, we coming—I have a question on that too, “doh worry”. When we reach 80, I will deal with that.

**Hon. Howai:** So what I was going to say is that there are a number of contract employees in the FIU and that number is being increased and that number is not here in this Head, it is in that particular Head that I was referring to.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Let us go to Item 17, Office of the Supervisor of Solvency.

**Dr. Rowley:** Question, Mr. Chairman. We have a provision overall of \$4 million for this new office. How urgent is that office and is the Government in a position now to make full use of that office in terms of the \$4 million allocation? What would be hurt if that office is not operationalized now?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I think it is important that we build the capacity from now. In fact, just as soon as the office was established, we had one particular insolvency that was immediately referred to it that required a certain expenditure of resources, and since then, there has been a second one that has been referred. Now, we do not expect that there would be large numbers of insolvencies occurring as may have happened in the late 80s and so on, but nevertheless, we need to build the capacity of the institution, we need to appoint the person, we need to invest in the training and development of the unit. And very importantly now, we will no longer be going to receivers of companies. We will, in fact, anything that comes up, we expect that a number of them will be referred to the supervisor of insolvency.

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And one of the things too is that you are likely to find that is happening where in order to prevent companies getting to the point where you actually have to liquidate or appoint a liquidator. So I expect that you will continue to have a need for the persons in there and I think we should move to put the office in place.

**Dr. Rowley:** Where would this office be located in terms of reporting and administration? The Ministry of Finance and the Economy?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, the office is in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

**Dr. Rowley:** How will the staff be hired and what sort of process and procedure would be followed to hire staff for this office?

**Hon. Howai:** The office will be in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy but we are going through the Government Human Resources Company in order to hire the person.

**Dr. Rowley:** Will there be advertisements with respect to the vacancies that this department now create?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** The reason why I asked this question, Mr. Chairman, and I raised it for the Minister of Finance and the Economy's information, there are a number of situations where positions are being filled within Ministries without recourse to advertisements. I just put the Minister on notice that that is taking place.

**Hon. Howai:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Chair. I have two questions under the Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency. First question has to do with Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage—

**Mr. Chairman:** That is under Goods and Services so you are on the wrong Head. Next one.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Sorry?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, that is under Goods and Services, we have not reached there yet.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** I will take it there then, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you want us to go to Goods and Services one time?



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**Mr. Deyalsingh:** If you wish.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, let us go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. Under Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, the figure varies between \$14 million to \$15 million. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy state—

**Mr. Chairman:** Which page?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** On page 71, Sir. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy say, this \$14 million to \$15 million, what is the Government's policy on renting versus ownership of properties to put Government offices in? So that is one. Where are these offices that we are renting located? If he could let us know. Under Contract Employment—could I ask the question under Contract Employment at the same time?

**Mr. Chairman:** Let the Minister answer the first question.

**Hon. Howai:** The figure here is the rent that we pay to the Central Bank for our building and the car park.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you following?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is it?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think the Member for Diego Martin North/East wants to raise a question.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, the same 001 but I am on Sub-Head 28, so I do not know if you would like to hit Sub-Head 16 first before, which the Member for St. Joseph asked about. 001, General Administration, I am on 28 at the bottom of page 71 but the Member for St. Joseph had asked about 16 which is on the same item Head, 001. I do not know if you want to deal with that first and then deal with me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you and thank you, Chair. The figure for Contract Employment seems to be increasing by roughly \$4 million, could the Minister state the number of persons being employed by Contract Employment, what are their positions and in fact, do they have signed contracts? That is it.

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**Hon. Howai:** Chairman, I need to get the numbers. Yes, we do have signed contracts but I will need to get the numbers on that.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Miss Hospedales:** Chair, under Sub-Item 16—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I said Member for Diego Martin North/East. I recognized the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Go ahead.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, on 001, 28, bottom of page 71.

**Mr. Chairman:** Or, you are on 28. You are on 16?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, sorry. You go ahead. Sorry, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**11.00 a.m.**

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, under Sub-Item 16, I would like to find out whether or not any new contract positions were created during the period 2010 to present?

**Hon. Howai:** 2010 to present.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no we cannot deal with 2010. You could deal with 2014 to 2015, not with 2010.

**Miss Hospedales:** 2014 to 2015, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, so the Minister could probably give you that.

**Hon. Howai:** I will get that information at the same time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I am on Item 023, Fees. I would like an explanation for that, please? And we are moving up by just over \$1 million, what is that payment for, fees?

**Hon. Howai:** That would be for the annual rating.

**Miss Mc Donald:** So we pay for that?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, we paid for that annual rating, that is a normal thing.

**Miss Mc Donald:** All right, Standard & Poor's? [*Crosstalk*]

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**Mr. Chairman:** All right, no—

**Miss Mc Donald:** Standard & Poor's?

**Mr. Chairman:** Which number are you on?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Chair, the constant drone coming from across the aisle, is disturbing. We are taking this thing seriously—

**Miss Mc Donald:** Exactly.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:**—but Members opposite are in a constant barrage of crosstalk and droning, especially the Members for Couva South and Caroni East. Could you ask them to take this thing seriously, please? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, please, please Members, please! Members, Members, please! I want to appeal to Members again to allow Members to speak in silence and do not disturb the proceedings, please. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I look 001, 28, Sub-Head 28, I go over on the—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Mr. Chairman, could you ask the Member for Caroni East to stop badgering me, please? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Members, please, please! Member for Caroni East, apparently, this is live and let us not—may I appeal to Members to conduct themselves in a dignified way.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no, I am on the floor. I am saying, could we conduct ourselves in a dignified way. These proceedings are going live, judgments are being formed. Let us conduct ourselves properly, and if for some reason Members are not happy with the proceedings, just maintain your calm. Let other Members speak, but do not disturb the proceedings, please. I appeal to Members. Yes, the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yeah, I will try now for the fifth time to ask the question. [*Laughter*] On page 71, under Item 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 28, Other Contracted Services. When I go over to the column with the heading, Explanation, I see that this Item 028, includes a provision of \$150 million for—[*Interruption*] Mr. Chairman, I am being disturbed by all sides—[*Laughter*]—\$150 million for legal counsel and advisory services. Now, what I have observed

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is that the expenditure and/or allocation for this item has almost doubled in the last two years or so, but I am particularly interested in the estimates for 2015. Could the Minister tell us who on earth are you paying \$150 million for legal services? Which lawyer is so lucky to get \$150 million from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy? Could we get details of what this legal counsel is all about? Who are the attorneys? How much are you paying them? Why are you paying them? What is this for, et cetera, et cetera—better and further particulars, \$150 million for lawyers. Could we get a breakdown, please?

**Miss Mc Donald:** And I understand that is in addition to the annual retainer, so we want to know.

**Hon. Howai:** These expenses are being incurred, Mr. Chairman, for the Clico/HCU matters, Sural—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** \$150 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please! Please!

**Hon. Howai:**—and a number of other areas such as this, particularly also, because it also includes the payments to the accountants, for some of the restructuring programmes and so on, that are being put in place.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not a problem, I just want the details please, names, amounts, purpose?

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, well, we need to get that.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, problem, I could give him by the end of the week, that is fine.

**Mr. Chairman:** We could go to Item 002, now?

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair—

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, just in the heat of the last interjections, I wanted to ask one question on the contract officers of my colleague the Minister of Finance and the Economy. These contract posts that are not inconsequential, there are about \$20-odd million over a two-year period or thereabouts. Are these positions advertised and who makes the decision as to who is hired? And who sets the emolument levels for the contract officers?

**Hon. Howai:** [*Hon. Howai confers with his advisors*] I am given the assurance that the positions are all advertised, they are determined by PMCD before we actually proceed, and the salaries would be determined by the CPO.

**Dr. Rowley:** Now, Mr. Chairman, I am just putting the Minister on notice, that throughout this document virtually every Ministry has an ample provision for contract officers, and there are very few people who read the papers more than I do. I wake up in the morning and I read every newspaper from cover to cover, and I am not familiar with any constant request which is by way of advertisement for vacant positions in this country, but I am seeing the Minister of Finance and the Economy and other Ministries asking the Parliament for tens or if not hundreds of millions of dollars for contract officers, and I am being told on record now that they are all advertised, and that they are determined by the PMCD, and that the positions are being—the emoluments are determined by the CPO. I want to ask the Minister whether he can confirm that or whether it is a statement of expectation.

**Hon. Howai:** No this is—I have been advised that that is exactly what happens. Some of the positions actually are not—where you have contract positions, they are not new contract hires, they are actually people who are on contract for something like three years and, therefore, not all of them would be positions that are being advertised in any single year.

**Dr. Rowley:** I understand that, but I mean, there is a substantial amount each year. And also while I am on the subject, what is the normal term of one of these contracts? Is it one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, six years 10 years? What is the normal acceptable term for contracts within these provisions?

**Hon. Howai:** They would vary, depending on the position, but by and large, the contracts that I have seen have been in general for three years.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is the Minister aware of any contract being put out there by Ministries for five years, and six years and 10 years?

**Mr. Chairman:** In his Ministry?

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, he is the Minister of Finance and the Economy, he is funding the whole Government.

**Mr. Chairman:** In his Ministry?

**Dr. Rowley:** In your Ministry that we are examining now, for any period beyond three years.

**Hon. Howai:** [*Hon. Howai confers with his advisors*] I have not seen any, and the PS is confirming he is not aware of that.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for St. Joseph, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under heading 28, Other Contracted Services, extreme right margin, (ii), other costs for fitness centre,

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\$253,000. Could the Minister say where this fitness centre is located? Who is the contracted party? And who attends this fitness centre?

(v), \$7 million for Other Contracted Services, could the hon. Minister say what are these Other Contracted Services for \$7 million? [*Constant crosstalk*]

And (vii), \$263,000 for Monitoring of Radio and TV Stations, could the hon. Minister tell us one, the purpose that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is monitoring TV and radio stations? Two, to whom is this \$263,000 to be paid, all the entities receiving this \$263,000? Thank you.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, (iv) that speaks to consultants to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, who are these consultants? What consultancy service do they provide? And how much is each paid?

**Mr. Chairman:** Did you get that one, fees for consultants?

**Hon. Howai:** Fees for consultants, which number is that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Which number again are you referring to?

**Miss Hospedales:** Sir, (iv).

**Mr. Chairman:** Fees, names, purpose.

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, with respect of the \$253,000, the fitness centre is actually the fitness centre downstairs in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy building. I must say it is extremely well used. Whenever I pass there either morning, lunch or evening, people from the building are actually using it. So it is actually in use.

**Miss Mc Donald:** What am I doing in that? [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Howai:** The monitoring of the radio stations—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** No, no, sorry, who is the contracted party to maintain it?

**Hon. Howai:** [*Hon. Howai confers with his advisors*] In the Ministry of Finance and the Economy there is a gym committee that maintains it, and they hire the trainers and so on. Okay? And the Other Contracted Services—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Mr. Chairman, could you ask colleagues opposite again? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, Members, please. Each Member who is anxious, your turn is coming. So let us just—please. I know Members are anxious to come

where the Minister of Finance and the Economy is located, your turn is coming very soon, continue.

**Hon. Howai:** [*Hon. Howai confers with his advisors*] With respect to the \$7 million, a substantial part of that represents about close to—\$5 million of it represents the consulting services for the implementation, the development—[*Constant crosstalk*—]for the gaming and the gambling legislation, as well as the regulations, as well as the procedures, as well as for putting all the other arrangements in place that will be required over the next 12 months, assuming that that legislation comes into play.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So, is that a recurring expenditure or should it come under the development fund?

**Hon. Howai:** No, no, no this will not be a recurrent expenditure in respect of this particular exercise. It will only be a—

**Hon. Member:** A one-off?

**Hon. Howai:** Once it is completed it is done, it will—there may be some additional services required subsequently, which in subsequent years, but it would not be anywhere near the numbers that you are looking at here.

With respect to the monitoring of radio and TV stations, what this is, is the dissemination of the news bulletins. What is done here is that the news bulletins are disseminated to the senior members within the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, the Minister of Finance and the Economy as well as all of the personnel within the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. I understand this a process that had been going on—certainly when I got to the Ministry it was there, and it was a process that had been in place previously. The company that deals with this, is a company called Willow Works. So I am told that is the company that deals with that particular area.

With respect to the consultants to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, that relates to the various consultants which are used by the Ministry of—by the strategic management office to deal with a number of projects that are being handled there, such as, for example, the Pension Plan System and a number of other similar types of projects.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Minister, you used the words “dissemination of information”, under Sub-Head 07, but Sub-Head 07 says, “monitoring”, dissemination means sending out information, but monitoring means looking and listening to news broadcasts. Are you disseminating information or are you monitoring what is happening in other words?

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**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, what they do is they go through the various newscasts and then they summarize it and then they disseminate it. So that is what the process is.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we have to move on. We are still under Item—we are going to Item 002, Budget Division. We go to Item 003, Customs and Excise.

**Dr. Rowley:** Under 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, where in the last three years this Ministry has spent or have or is anticipating to spend \$12 million. What is the justification for this level of expenditure on Promotions, Publicity and Printing? And could the Minister indicate how much of this covers political broadcasts or persons making political statements with respect to the Government's performance: Your Government is Working for You?

**11.15 a.m.**

**Hon. Howai:** I do not know how to answer the last part, but basically the expenses here would relate to printing of the budget documents, the expenses incurred by the communications unit, the printing of the newsletters, the printing of various pieces of information that come out from the Ministry from time to time. So it does include and it would include various ads that we will have to put out from time to time.

**Dr. Rowley:** But the Minister would be aware that a similar Head exists in virtually every Ministry and is well provisioned.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, but this is ours in terms of what we would spend our expenditure on.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, we will look at the others as we go along.

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister tell us, under "Security Services", which are the firms that you use?

**Hon. Howai:** I am told only MTS.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So we go on now to Item 02: Budget Division; Item 03: Customs and Excise.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, under 03.



**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Jeffrey, Member for La Brea, rather.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** I will pass to Dr. Rowley first.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, under Sub-Head 13: Maintenance of Vehicles—

**Mr. Chairman:** Which page are you on?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on 73, under 003, Sub-Head 13: Maintenance of Vehicles. Historically, we are seeing a substantial amount of money allocated for maintenance and, in 2015, we are seeing a significant reduction in that allocation. Could the Minister explain that, please? Is it that there will be no need for that maintenance or there is something happening which would result in the maintenance budget being so significantly reduced?

**Hon. Howai:** No, it is an actual increase, Member. It is from 2.4 to 3.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you on Customs and Excise Division, Item 003?

**Dr. Rowley:** Sorry, the question I meant to ask on that line is: Why are we spending \$3 million to maintain vehicles in one division of the Ministry, Customs and Excise Division?

**Hon. Howai:** It is the number of vehicles they have.

**Dr. Rowley:** The 71 vehicles?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Do we own all those vehicles or do we lease vehicles? Has the Minister considered whether it would be cheaper to lease vehicles than to own vehicles and run this maintenance charge? It is established that if you have to have a fleet of vehicles to be used in that way, it is better to lease them in a competitive environment than to own them and be stuck with all that goes with ownership. Has the Ministry of Finance and the Economy considered that?

**Hon. Howai:** We have done a cost benefit on it? He says he has not done any recently. We could undertake to do that.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is that something the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would want to consider because, in terms of outlay, you would get the use of the vehicles, your outlay is smaller and if you are leasing vehicles for a two-year period, or even a three-year period, you always have new vehicles available to you and then you would not have the problems of vehicles going offline for a long-term maintenance.

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**Hon. Howai:** We will check that out.

**Mr. Chairman:** Chaguanas West after.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can I get some light on 28.5? This technical assistance US Customs and Border Protection. You pay the US money for protection?

**Hon. Howai:** 28.5: Yeah, we do have a contract with the US Customs who come in and provide us with training as well as technical assistance advice and so on and we do pay for that service.

**Mr. Warner:** \$4 million and \$5 million a month?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, to receive that service.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 04. We are going to Item 04. Which one you want to go on, Member for La Brea?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** No. 23, page 73, Fees.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am seeking some clarification on the time for any Member to be asking questions. Is it five minutes by any individual, for the entire heading?

**Mr. Chairman:** No. If you look at the Standing Orders, it says five minutes per intervention. So, a Member can come back five minutes after and raise a question. It is the Chairman who has to regulate and manage this event; but members can come in beyond their normal five minutes and make their intervention.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On different areas of the—

**Mr. Chairman:** It could be the same area. It could be different areas, but the management of the process is in the hands of the Chairman.

I think we need to move on. It is now 11.20 a.m. and we are still on Item 02, Sub-Head 02, and we have not even gone past Item 03, which is Customs and Excise. So I am recognizing the Leader of the Opposition and then Mr. Jeffrey and then we are moving on.

**Dr. Rowley:** In an examination of these documents, I notice that telephone charges in departments appear to be on the high side. For example, in this division, Customs, we are budgeting \$4 million for telephone charges. I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy if there are any controls in place to

ensure that there is not abuse of these charges which seem to be across Ministries. I just raise it—I flag it as an area which may need some attention.

I move on to Other Contracted Services on 28. We have in that charge, a provision of \$25 million for Other Contracted Services, the main being operational cost of the Container Examination Station. Question. Who gets this money? What is the arrangement in place for the payment of this money for examination of containers and what procedures are used with respect to ensuring that we get value for money here?

One other question: I see maintenance of X-ray scanners, half a million dollars. Could the Ministry of Finance and the Economy tell me if this is the new scanner we just bought and whether, in fact, those new scanners came with warranties for a particular period? If that is so, this major expense on the port, if it came with a warranty, why are we budgeting half a million dollars for its maintenance?

**Hon. Howai:** The figure includes the rent which we pay to both the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and Point Lisas for the use of the spaces. We also have some overheads that go with it in terms of consumables that would be required. Now, these are sophisticated and they do include some things I suppose are radioactive, you can say, so there are certain types of protective gear and equipment and so on that need to be purchased to go along with it.

We actually will be getting four new ones this year, which will be four portable ones, which we are getting from the United States, which we expect should come in within the next two to three months and that will increase the cost initially and then there is a management fee. I am told also there is a port service company that we pay a management fee to. The four scanners coming in will be four mobile scanners.

**Dr. Rowley:** But they are coming in, are they new items?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, they will be new.

**Dr. Rowley:** Will they come with a warranty?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, they will come with a warranty.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 23, Fees. Under 2014, we have a paltry \$36,000; but 2015, we are seeing \$650,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which page?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 23, page 73.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, right.

**Hon. Howai:** That is the new Orifice software that we have put in and the licence fees for that new piece of software that we just put in to help manage the affairs, the operations of the customs and, therefore, it is a new piece of software that we need to pay for.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 04, Inland Revenue Division. Item 05. Item 04, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Leader of the Opposition, Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will defer to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, under Item 04, I want again, very quickly, to draw to the Minister of Finance and the Economy's attention the provision made for telephones and I want to understand what is the thought process here, where the actual expenditure for 2014 was \$4 million as against the budgeted \$5.5 million. Yet someone sees it fit to provision a 50 per cent increase on the actual expenses for telephones in that division alone. So we are budgeting \$6 million for telephones in the Inland Revenue Division and I am wondering whether this is not an area where there is need for tightening—and it is throughout the provisioning for telephones.

Then I go on, without detracting anything from the Minister there, under Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment, if I go back to 2013, I will ask the Minister of Finance and Economy: what is being repaired in the Inland Revenue Division, under Sub-item 15, where we budgeted \$7.8 million in 2013? We spent \$15 million in 2014, and we are budgeting \$13 million in 2015. What is being repaired at this cost?

**Mr. Chairman:** You want to take those questions and I go on the Member for Diego Martin North/East or do you want to answer it.

**Hon. Howai:** I take the point on the phones we will look at. With respect to repairs and maintenance of equipment, I am told that perhaps some of those expenses actually went to No. 23, Fees. Let me see. No, no, no. The question he is asking is that it went up from \$7 million to \$15 million. One minute, Mr. Chairman. I would need to get back to you with the responses to that.

**Dr. Rowley:** The main question is: what is it being spent on? What are we maintaining in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to warrant that expense?

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**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, I am not seeing any explanation for the increase in Fees 004, 23, from \$100,000 to \$4 million. What is that for?

**Mr. Chairman:** That is under which sub-item, Member?

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 75, 02. 004; Inland Revenue Division, Fees, the estimates for 2014 revised, \$100,000 spent, for 2015, \$4 million, an increase from \$100,000 to \$4 million in this fiscal, for something called Fees, with no explanation. Could I get an explanation, please?

**Hon. Howai:** That particular number is really for support licences which were formerly catered for under Head 15, so it is part of a transfer coming over, but it is basically in respect of fees for support licences.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you tell which Head 15 you are talking about?

**Hon. Howai:** If you look at 15, Repairs and Maintenance, Equipment—

**Mr. Imbert:** Which page?

**Hon. Howai:** Page 74. They are saying that that number is coming from that number into this particular Head here.

**Mr. Imbert:** But I only see a reduction there of \$1.2 million and I see an increase of \$4 million, so what is going on? That is not a complete explanation. Let us just get a breakdown of this formula, please.

**Hon. Howai:** Let me check with Inland Revenue on it.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we are going on to Item 005, Treasury Division.

**Dr. Rowley:** Before we go on, I draw to the Minister's attention again that provision for Promotion, Publicity and Printing which is a recurring decimal throughout this Budget, well-funded. I just draw it to the attention of the Minister and I am taking the Minister at his word that none of this money is being used to fund the political campaign of the Government with respect to what we are seeing on the cable channels, on the billboards and, Minister, we will come back to that at another time.

**11.30 a.m.**

**Hon. Howai:** No, no. This would not be that. I give you that assurance. This is really for Inland Revenue expenditures, so it will be all the—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rowley:** It occurs throughout the budget.

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, all right. But, for this instance.

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**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Item 005, Treasury Division; Item 008, Investments Division.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, you ran a little—carry on, I would not disturb you on this, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 008 Investments; item 009—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, item 008, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 008, yes, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** I will give way to the Member for Diego Martin West and then I would ask my question.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, before we go on to investments, given the number of initiatives that the Government hinted at and that the country expects, we expect that we would be doubling or redoubling our efforts in the investments sphere. I do want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy: is it that we have exhausted our ability to be creative and expansive in investments? I would have expected to have seen an allocation for investment indicating that more activities to come with respect to our thrust in investments in general, but I see what we have here is fairly miniscule and standard like “one man and his dog”. Could the Minister explain why the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is not being called upon to fund an Investments Division that has more meat?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** I think in terms of the investments, if you are talking diversification and the other things that would be in the Ministry of Trade. Now, there are some other areas where, perhaps, it may come in the specific Ministry. In this case, this here really relates to the State Enterprises Division and the monitoring that takes place of the state enterprises. So investment division is not really making investments, this is where they are monitoring what is happening in the state enterprises.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Investments Division, I take it from the line “Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies”, there was a decrease of \$1.2 million. Which Cabinet-appointed bodies may have come to an end during this period to account for this decrease in allocation?

**Mr. Chairman:** I would need to get back to you on that. I do not have it off the top of my head. We will get that additional information.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. I do not know if I am invisible at times [*Laughter*] but I almost seem to be forgotten. Mr. Chairman, I notice that there has been a significant increase in “Other Contracted Services” from \$279,600 in 2014 to \$4 million in this current fiscal. Mr. Chairman, I would like to find out if the Minister of Finance and the Economy could provide us with a detailed breakdown of those services that are contracted.

**Hon. Howai:** I can provide that. It is mainly the CariCRIS expenses relating to the credit ratings for the four state enterprises that we have identified: VMCOTT, National Helicopters, National Flour Mills and Plipdeco.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 009 Central Tenders Board; Item 010, Valuation Division; Item 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, hold on. On the National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Browne:** Might I ask: where they are now located?

**Hon. Howai:** In the Ministry of Finance and the Economy building.

**Dr. Browne:** I am seeing some changes with respect to the office accommodation, storage, janitorial, security, et cetera. When did that move occur?

**Hon. Howai:** We moved them into the Ministry of Finance and the Economy building, and I think it is the second floor. That would have occurred about four months ago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 014, Financial Intelligence Unit.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could we get some information on this contract employment the FIU intends to undertake in fiscal 2015? In addition, I see fees of \$1.7 million, could we get some information on that too please? What is all this about? Details? Purpose?

**Hon. Howai:** The contract employees, most of the staff are really contract, and that is the point I was making just now about the increase or the difference in the numbers. There was a question about the \$2 million figure a short while ago which was 1.6 really the next year, and it looked as if it was a decline which the

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Member for Diego Martin West had asked, but that is related just to a few. The bulk of the staff really are here, which is in the contract employment and we intend to increase that as we continue the process of strengthening our enforcement.

As far as the fees go, the fees relate, again, to the legal support services that would be required we expect, and we are projecting, for the FIU to assist in enforcing the changes which we are making to the legislation.

**Mr. Imbert:** All I am seeing here is an increase of \$644,000. That is not very many people, unless they are working for the minimum wage.

**Hon. Howai:** Well, they probably would be phased in over a period of time. It would not be for 12 months.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. Could I just get some understanding of how many contract employees you have and what positions are there?

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, we need to get that.

**Mr. Imbert:** And also, your provision for legal expenses really, what do you mean? Do you expect challenges to come out or is this for advisory, legal advice.

**Hon. Howai:** It is mainly advisory-type services, but there could be challenges.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, then. So, you will give me the breakdown on “16”.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Item 017, Office of the Supervisor of Solvency. Yes, Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you Chairman. This seems to be a new item because we only have figures for 2015 as stated here. Under “Travelling and Subsistence” for this new entity, \$103,000. Is there any stated policy as to what this \$103,000 will be spent on? That is one. If you go down to line item No. 62 “Promotions Publicity and Printing”, again, a recurring decimal, \$287,500. Could the Minister state the name of the agency being contracted to provide these services?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** We have not contracted anyone for that. It is just a provision which we have made. With respect to travelling and subsistence, yes we do have the ministerial guidelines as far as the incurring of travelling and subsistence expenses are concerned. Again, these are all rough, but estimates based on the fact that this is a new office that just started a few months ago.



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**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Rowley:** We will move on from there down to o03 Customs.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are going to Item 002, Budget Division; Item 003, Customs and Excise Division.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, this seems to be the year of the minor equipment because minor equipment—if I could jump ahead a lil bit—in all these sub-heads seems to have been very well treated, but everything is relative. It appears as though in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, they handle so much money that \$23 million is a minor thing. So in the Customs and Excise Division, under Sub-Head 04—that is 003, 04—there is a provision for \$30 million for minor equipment, but if one looks backward as to where this came from, in 2013 that provision was \$1.1 million; in 2014 it was \$7 million. What is the justification for us jumping from \$7 million to \$30 million? While we are at it, Mr. Chairman, if I crave your indulgence for an explanation, if we look ahead, for similar minor equipment purchases down to 008, because they seem to have been very well treated.

There is a specific description upfront in the budgetary documents as to what is classified as “minor equipment”, and I see a real generous hand of the Minister and our colleague, and I hope that he is that generous to the Office of the Opposition when we get there.

**Hon. Howai:** We are moving Customs into the new building, and we are bringing them from the front spaces and putting them into this new accommodation which we expect that we should do by next month—by the end of next month. A lot of the equipment relates to putting new security arrangements in place—all the camera systems, some of the new computers and some of the new other related equipment, safes and so on that we will be bringing into the new building. They will be treated as Other Minor Equipment, given there is no other heading to put it under, but it relates to that move and to the fact that we have to equip this new building.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go on to Item 004, Inland Revenue Division; Item 005, Treasury Division; Item 008, Investments Division; Item 009, Central Tenders Board; Item 010, Valuation Division; Item 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal; Item 14, Financial Intelligence Unit; Item 17, Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Which one are you going back to?

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**Dr. Rowley:** I am going to 04 001, under sub 13 Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to ask a question of the Minister. In 2014, we made a payment to the OECS of \$258 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are we going now?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am under “Current Transfers and Subsidies”.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, but are you dealing with Item 001?

**Dr. Rowley:** 001, Sub 13.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Okay. Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am just asking, Mr. Chairman, of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, what was that payment for and what were the terms and conditions associated?

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, this related to the support that we gave to the Eastern Caribbean States for managing the Clico fallout, and for meeting some of the expenses that had to be incurred as well as the cost that had to be met by these Governments in relation to that. It is not a payment that has to be repaid, so there were no terms and conditions associated with it. It was simply support that was given to the OECS in order to meet—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rowley:** So, it was a grant then.

**Hon. Howai:** It would be a grant.

**Dr. Rowley:** How was that determined? How was the quantum determined? Did we pick up the whole charge or what was the overall liability and what was picked up by the various territories in those boards as Clico operated?

**Mr. Chairman:** It was not the entire amount, but I do not have the exact figure for how much each state would have picked up on their own, so I could undertake to get that information, but it would not have been the entire amount. It has not yet been paid. Provision has been made for it, and we are still in discussion with respect to disbursements which could happen before the end of this year.

**Dr. Rowley:** The Minister may recall that the Government at one time had taken the position that those who had come upon hard times with respect to Clico, it was their own fault and it was their own greed as they chased after high interest at Clico, and if the market collapsed that is what the risk is all about, and for two years the Government spoke by way of ministerial statements about the absence

of a liability by the State—the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago—with respect to investors in Clico. As a matter of fact, this had a sequel in the court. How does that mesh with the Government taking up a liability outside of Trinidad and Tobago for Clico's business arrangement that went bad? What was the thought process behind that?

**11.45 a.m.**

**Hon. Howai:** I think what happened in the end is that the Government did take up the liability and we did make good the liability for most of the investors in Clico, I mean by way of honouring the EFPAs which has cost us quite a considerable sum. So, notwithstanding the initial position, the Government's eventual policy position is that they will make good this particular liability and, similarly, in the same vein, of course, the Caricom countries are important export destinations to some of our manufacturers, and we thought that it was important given the failure of regulation here, as well as in the OECS states. Well, certainly, what happened here, to provide whatever assistance we could in the circumstances, to deal with that particular liability, and that is how it arose.

**Dr. Rowley:** But having assumed that the liability is on that basis, were there any assets associated with Clico's operations in those territories in which we had an interest? And were any of those assets disposed of in any way, with or without our consent, agreement or negotiations?

**Hon. Howai:** Thank you. Well, first of all let me say it is both Clico and BAICO, so it would have dealt with both issues. In the case of BAICO there were very little assets left to honour or to provide any kind of support and, therefore, you know, not much would have come from that particular source, but with respect to the others, as far as was possible, there were attempts made to realize on some of those assets, but very few of those assets would have been domiciled in those islands so that the net effect of what they could have realized would have been very, very marginal.

**Dr. Rowley:** What I am getting at is—I have no problem with what we have done, I understand the justification that you have given, but what I want to know, on behalf of the taxpayers here, is that we did not pick up the kitty while somebody quietly walked off with whatever assets might have been there. So I want to know that Trinidad and Tobago as we intervene, to keep our market whole, or as whole as we could make it, that we also had a look-in to the proper disposal of any assets which could have contributed to the treatment with respect to the liabilities overall, and I want to know whether we were involved in any discussions about disposals.

**Hon. Howai:** The overall position is that they would not recoup fully, and therefore we did not ask for any additional assets to be assigned to Trinidad and Tobago as a result, but what we did ask is that where there has been in the past some constraints on Trinidad and Tobago banks owning or acquiring banks in the OECS, and we asked two things in respect of this; one, that as a condition of the disbursement, they put appropriate arrangements in place to strengthen their regulatory environment to ensure that this does not happen again in the future, which they are in the process of doing now; and the second thing we did was that we indicated to them that we would like the restriction on banks from Trinidad and Tobago investing in the OECS be removed, and that also was agreed to and we have received correspondence from them in writing, as far as that is concerned.

**Dr. Rowley:** Are you aware of any asset disposal of any Clico business or a related business outside of Trinidad and Tobago? And are you satisfied that that disposal has been done to your satisfaction?

**Hon. Howai:** There are assets outside but most of them are encumbered to the Trinidad companies, for example, in Saint Lucia there is a large tourism development but again that is encumbered to CIB here in Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, there are no assets which will fall to any of the islands as far as that is concerned. There are, however, with respect to BAICO, the liquidators of BAICO have been attempting to recover as far as possible as they can from the assets that exist, but, again, there is insufficient to allow even their share of the loss to be fully met by the Governments of the region.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Chair. Under Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies to Regional Bodies, I am not seeing it here. Could the Minister advise me where are our loan commitments to the Caribbean Court of Justice to which we do not have access? Where are our loan commitments to be found in these reports? Because we do pay.

**Hon. Howai:** I think it was funded by way of an initial US \$100 million bond.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So it is not—

**Hon. Howai:** I do not think it is an annual thing, and the interest from that—  
[*Interruption*] Yeah, the Trust Fund, you are quite right.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we go on—yes, Member for Point Fortin?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Sub-Head 07, Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre, there is a more than 50 per cent expenditure for 2014 over and above the budgeted figure, could you give the reason and the details?

**Hon. Howai:** Increased fees to the IMF for CARTAC. IMF apparently increased the fees for all members of CARTAC.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Why it is the fees were increased by—

**Hon. Howai:** Well, it should happen in the subsequent year.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** But it should have happened in the subsequent year, it is not there.

**Hon. Howai:** I mean I am told it is arrears, but I am just trying to find out how much arrears.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Arrears? Sorry?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, I am told that the 2014 figure represented some arrears but I just need to find out how much. I am just trying to get a sense of how much.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We are going to item 2, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 3, United Nations Organizations; Item 4, International Bodies—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** International Bodies—sorry, I defer to the Member for Diego Martin West.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition.

**Dr. Rowley:** I see a payment of \$727 million made only in 2014, and a provision of \$39 million for 2015—

**Mr. Chairman:** That is International Bodies, right?

**Dr. Rowley:** What is that about?

**Hon. Howai:** This was for the Andean Bank, the country's shareholding in the Andean Development Bank.

**Dr. Rowley:** So that \$727 million was US \$100 million?

**Hon. Howai:** A little over US \$100 million, yeah.

**Dr. Rowley:** So we are now in a position that we are borrowing from the Andean Bank?

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**Hon. Howai:** We have not borrowed but we are in a position to borrow if we wished.

**Dr. Rowley:** We are in a position?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** How soon can we be in a borrowing position?

**Hon. Howai:** I think once you make the additional 37. I think there is an additional payment to make this year and once we do that we should be in a position, if we wished, to borrow.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Point Fortin?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you, it was covered by the Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we go to Item 005—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, that same item—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yeah, I was going to ask a question which is made even more confusing now by the answer from the Minister. So we have spent \$1 billion to join, or will spend \$1 billion to join the Andean Bank? Is that so?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, that will be our shareholding in the—

**Mr. Imbert:** TT \$1 billion?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** And how are we going to recover that \$1 billion?

**Hon. Howai:** From what I understand it would come from—well, certainly, the lower rates of interest that would apply to borrowings from the Andean Development Bank would ensure that over time you would get a lower rate of interest, in a sense.

**Mr. Imbert:** I heard your predecessor say this but, I mean, has anybody done a value analysis? A cost benefit analysis? Are we really going to save \$1 billion in fees and interest?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, I will check the records on what was done.

**Mr. Imbert:** Are they lower than the IDB?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, I will check the records on what was done.

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**Mr. Imbert:** No, not just that, could you tell me what the interest rates for this bank are? What the IDB rates are? And which loans we would take from them as opposed to the IDB? Because they are in the Americas. What are we spending this \$1 billion for?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, CAF I am told is for infrastructure borrowing alone as opposed to IDB, but I will get the information and we will provide it subsequently.

**Mr. Imbert:** I would like to see how we are going to recover that \$1 billion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Item 005, Non-profit Institutions; Item 007, Households—

**Dr. Browne:** Hold, Chairman—

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Chairman:** You are dealing with—

**Dr. Rowley:** On Non-profit Institutions?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Non-profit Institutions.

**Dr. Rowley:** I will defer to that person.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you are.

**Dr. Rowley:** No, I am on Households. Someone made mention on—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, anybody? Anybody?

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman, grant of loans and expenses in connection with cultural events to cultural and social bodies; could the Minister just explain what role the Ministry of Finance and the Economy had in this particular line and which events, cultural and social bodies benefited?

**Hon. Howai:** This would have been paid on behalf of the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, so it is not something that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would do, but it is a contribution to an international organization on behalf of the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism.

**Dr. Browne:** Do you know which organization benefited from this largesse?

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, I would have to get that for you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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**Mr. Chairman:** You want to deal with Households or you want to deal with Non-profit?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on Households.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Item 007, Households, the Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, 007, 06, Food Price Support Programme; what exactly is that? I would like an explanation, Mr. Chairman, of what—*[Interruption]* I just want to root it in the numbers: 2013, \$.224 billion; 2014 \$.242 billion, and—*[Interruption]* Mr. Chairman, tell my friend from Mayaro—Lopinot/Bon Air.

**Mr. Peters:** No, no, please. Mr. Chairman, correct that—

**Dr. Rowley:** I apologize, it is the man behind you. I did not see the hat, but I thank him for his help but he is misleading me. I am correct, .224 billion in 2013—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Please. Please. Please. Please. Please.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, could you talk to the white hat man?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Douglas:** Mr. Chairman, why does he want to craft a statement as billions as opposed to millions? *[Crosstalk]* Yeah, but why? Why? I am just asking him why he wants to make—

**Miss Mc Donald:** Because he chooses to do that. What is wrong with you? He chooses to do that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, Member for Lopinot/Bon Air, the Member for Diego Martin West is on the floor, please.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, since my colleague from Lopinot/Bon Air is having difficulty with the numeracy, let me—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Douglas:** Mr. Speaker, I am very clear on what I am saying.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, but it is not your turn to speak, and if you have to speak you have to speak through the Chair. I did not give you permission to speak—



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**Mr. Douglas:** I apologize.

**Mr. Chairman:**—so you cannot be interrupting the proceedings. Continue, hon. Member.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am grateful for not having to have his permission to speak, and since he is having difficulty I will go back to what he can understand: 2013, \$224 million, that is \$.224 billion; 2014, \$242 million, that is \$.242 billion, and a provision is being made for \$264 million, \$.264 billion, for Food Price Support Programme. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy what is the policy that underpins this expenditure, how is it determined, who gets this money, and what effect is this money having on the intended cohort of the population that is meant to it?

**Hon. Howai:** This, Mr. Chairman, relates to the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, and the policy position generally is well articulated there and, of course, will also be addressed by the Ministry of the People and Social Development when they address this particular area.

**Dr. Rowley:** Hold on, I cannot hear you and I am not understanding what you are saying.

**Hon. Howai:** Let me start over, Mr. Chairman. This represents the conditional Cash Transfer Programme—

**Dr. Rowley:** Cash transfer from where to where?

**Hon. Howai:** Perhaps what might be popularly referred to as the Food Card Programme, right. So this is the programme which is really run from the Ministry of the People and Social Development, but what we do—

**Dr. Rowley:** And why is it the Ministry of Finance and the Economy here?

**Hon. Howai:** This is an arrangement which had been in place for several years and we simply continued it—*[Interruption]* We simply allow—the process has continued as it has in the past where the funds are disbursed to the bank account and then the bank then issues the cards which are then used for the payments.

This really relates to that particular programme, and it is here simply because we transfer the funds to the bank.

**12.00 noon**

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, this is very curious. Every single Ministry gets its money from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy; it is the source well. If an

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expenditure is to be disbursed to the end user, it is normal to record that through the Ministry which is handling that.

This food card programme is an operation of the Ministry of the People and Social Development, and it is my view that this is a way of hiding the growth of the expense in the Ministry of the People and Social Development, because the food cards is a well-known business of the Ministry of the People and Social Development. So why is the Minister of Finance and the Economy telling us now that a quarter billion dollars of the Ministry of the People and Social Development for budgetary purposes is located in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, as though it is a Ministry of Finance and the Economy operation, when, in fact, it is the premier well-known operation of the Ministry of the People and Social Development?

Mr. Chairman, I have been around long enough to know that this is an attempt not to have us understand exactly how the Ministry of the People and Social Development has grown in handling moneys allocated to that Ministry. To tell us now it was there before does not explain why it is now in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. Why is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy having this on its books?

**Hon. Howai:** It is not now in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Mr. Chairman. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please allow the Minister to speak.

**Hon. Howai:** It has been there since the inception of the food card programme, of the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme. It has been there from inception.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I am hearing you.

**Hon. Howai:** We took it as a procedure—I took it as a procedure that had existed from before, and that I would simply maintain the arrangements, simply because it had been something that had been existing for several years and was an accepted arrangement for dealing with this particular disbursement.

**Dr. Rowley:** Does the Minister agree that this is more properly located in the Ministry that is carrying out this operation?

**Hon. Howai:** My own judgment on it is I have no difficulty if it were to be placed in the Ministry of the People and Social Development. When I did ask the

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question, I was told that because it involves transfer of moneys to the bank that it is normally dealt with from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. So I accepted the explanation.

**Dr. Rowley:** Are there other arrangements of transfer of moneys to the bank where that transfer is recorded in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy in this way?

**Hon. Howai:** The pensions are in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

**Dr. Rowley:** So there is no other situation where the Ministry of Finance and the Economy transfers cash as one Ministry?

**Hon. Howai:** No, we do not do any other—as far as I am advised. But this is an arrangement that existed.

**Dr. Rowley:** But you understand my concern?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** By you locating it here in this way, if we examine during the year what is happening with the Ministry of the People and Social Development, we can lose sight of this quarter billion dollars as a ministerial operation?

**Mr. Chairman:** Understood.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go to Item 009, Other Transfers—Item 11, other transfers.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I see a very astonishing figure here on page 88 under 009/28, FCB Indemnity Calls, \$164 million, an increase of \$114 million, with no explanation.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence and the indulgence of my colleagues to ask you to hold the question of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, while I place a question with respect to 007/15, which is the Children's Life Fund.

The Ministry of Finance and the Economy is provisioning \$30 million for this fund. I would like to ask the Minister two questions: One, that \$30 million that is coming from the Consolidated Fund has nothing to do with anything else that goes into that fund, so the taxpayers are making an input of \$30 million? How is the quantum determined and, secondly, what are the arrangements for accessing

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that fund? With respect to recent exposés of abuse in that fund, what is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy doing to recover any moneys lost from that fund?

**Hon. Howai:** This is an allocation made based on the request from the Ministry of Health, depending on the number of requests that they have for assistance for children in the fund. Based on those requests, as well as the funding that is available, the Ministry of Health would give an estimate of what they think would be required and we make an allocation, as we make other allocations for the Ministry of Health. We make the allocation here through the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, which is then transferred to the Ministry of Health to meet those payments.

**Dr. Rowley:** Who manages this fund? Who has direct control over this cash?

**Hon. Howai:** It is done by way of an authority. It is done by way of an authority.

**Dr. Rowley:** What is the name of the authority?

**Hon. Howai:** The Children's Life Fund Authority.

**Dr. Rowley:** Who appoints that authority?

**Hon. Howai:** It is appointed by Cabinet.

**Dr. Rowley:** By Cabinet?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is the Minister satisfied that this money is properly supervised?

**Hon. Howai:** From the information that we have, we have no reason to believe that it is not properly supervised. *[Interruption]* From the information we have there is nothing to suggest that it is not properly supervised, in terms of the monitoring process by the Ministry of Health to ensure that each one of the children who require this help is provided with the funding that is required.

**Dr. Rowley:** So that means that you have disregarded any information in the public domain about moneys being paid to parents with sick children, who claim that they have not received such moneys and so on and so on, and transfers of US dollars for sick children, when those transfers have not actually been effected in the names of persons who ought to have received them? You have disregarded that?

**Hon. Howai:** The information we have from the Ministry of Health did not substantiate some of those allegations.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is it that someone conducted an investigation into that particular matter?

**Hon. Howai:** I cannot answer that, but I think the Minister of Health might be in a better position to answer that.

**Dr. Rowley:** The Minister of Health is here, could you ask the Minister of Health whether, in fact, an investigation was done into that kind of operation in the fund?

**Dr. Khan:** Could you repeat the question please?

**Dr. Rowley:** Is the Minister aware that there has been put in the public domain allegations that moneys were paid to persons under the guise of supporting sick children and their parents to travel abroad, and those moneys were extracted from this fund, and the parents were saying publicly that they received no such money? I am asking whether an investigation was done to determine the veracity of that, because the Minister of Finance and the Economy is saying that he is satisfied that the fund is properly managed, based on your say so.

**Dr. Khan:** The fund is properly managed. Allegations are what they are—allegations, and I think you understand that. We have had some information of certain allegations. The board of the Children's Life Fund is looking at these allegations, but so far they have not come up with anything substantial.

**Dr. Rowley:** But has an investigation been done or is one to be done?

**Dr. Khan:** It is being done as we speak.

**Dr. Rowley:** So we do not know then? It is being done?

**Dr. Khan:** It is being done, but the information that is coming out, partial information, does not substantiate the allegations.

**Dr. Browne:** Thank you, Chairman. I am very interested in the last discourse that has occurred. I just want clarity from the Minister of Finance and the Economy as to who overall is responsible, as well as the Minister of Health, with respect to reports that a staff member of the Children's Life Fund was dismissed based on allegations of fraud. I am hearing a narrative that suggests that we are heading in a direction where there is nothing to substantiate allegations that were made. Information that has come to me indicates that a staff member was recently dismissed under the rubric of fraud. I just want clarity, either from the Minister of

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Finance and the Economy or the Minister of Health, whether that is so or not, because that in itself should trigger further alarm and further scrutiny by a body such as this one.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, do you have any questions to ask?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, Mr. Chair. I will like to find out the number of beneficiaries of the programme; the amount of money that was paid or that was disbursed to each recipient and whether or not there is an extensive waiting list and the process time for approval.

**Mr. Chairman:** Maybe I could defer to the Minister of Health, because I do not have that information.

**Dr. Khan:** Mr. Chairman, number one, I will have to get that information for you. Would you like to know how much was the contribution of those who did the contributions also, and the value of the contributions from the people who contributed?

**Miss Hospedales:** As much information as we can get will be appreciated.

**Dr. Khan:** Definitely, you will get that.

The other thing too, the part of it—the investigation is ongoing. A staff member was sent home, however, her contract came to an end, and so far the investigations are ongoing. So I do not want to say much more about that. But as far as has happened so far, nothing substantial has been said.

**Mr. Chairman:** We want to move on, so I will ask you to come with one more and we go to Other Transfers. Continue, please.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, I know we want to move on, but we are getting some very important information here. I would like to ask the Minister of Health: who is conducting these investigations at this time? What is the body that is conducting the investigation and who is heading that investigation?

**Dr. Khan:** There is a body called the Children Life Fund and it has a board of directors. The board of directors are the ones conducting the investigations.  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** Are you under Other Transfers?

**Mr. Chairman:** I am now going to Other Transfers.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman, I have a follow-up question on the matter.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right; you are going to be the final question on that matter, then we go on to Other Transfers; continue, please; final question on Life Fund.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, I may have missed something.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I am suggesting that you will be the final speaker on the Life Fund. After that we go to Item 009, Other Transfers.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Mr Chairman, I did not ask a question yet on Life Fund. I only have one question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, you will ask a question as well.

**Dr. Browne:** Thank you, Chairman. The Minister of Health is indicating that the board of the authority itself is conducting an investigation into an allegation against the operations of the very Life Fund itself. As a Member of this committee, frankly I do not find that satisfactory. That is number one.

Secondly, I want to ask the Minister why this matter and the allegations that have resulted in that staff member being discontinued or not continuing, have not been referred to the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago, the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Fraud Squad? Why has it remained within the Ministry of Health, given the nature of these allegations?

**Dr. Khan:** The Member for Diego Martin Central must understand procedure. If there are allegations against a staff member, it has to go to the board of directors. It does not go directly to the police or the DPP, et cetera. In normal circumstances, it goes to a board of directors, those who are responsible for the running of the authority. [*Interruption*]

You could shake your head as much as you want. If they find something that is untoward, it will then go to the Ministry of Health, the Permanent Secretary, et cetera, and then after that if it is substantial it will go to the police, et cetera. That is the procedure. You do not go directly from a member where there is an allegation. Maybe that is the way you all do things, but we do not do it like that.

**Dr. Browne:** Is it a subcommittee of the board or is the entire board the investigating panel? Who is heading this investigation specifically?

**Dr. Khan:** The person who is heading who is the Chairman of the board right now, is the Chief Medical Officer.

**Dr. Browne:** When was this investigation initiated?

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**12.15 p. m.**

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to find out from the Minister, what is the sum involved? What is the sum of money involved here?

**Mr. Chairman:** What is the sum of money involved, hon. Minister?

**Dr. Khan:** I really cannot give you an answer on that. I will have to get you an answer. [*Crosstalk*] No, not that much.

**Dr. Rowley:** About \$10 million?

**Dr. Khan:** No. No, it is not as much as you—oh, I am sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We go on to Other Transfers. I think I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I had asked this question a long time ago, you know. 009/28 on page 88, indemnity calls for FCB have gone from \$49 million to \$164 million. Could I get an explanation, please? There is none in the document.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. The indemnity calls arise from the acquisition of CMMB, where there were a number of assets which were probably not realizable or not fully realizable, one could say, and in fact they were bad loans, bad investments which had been made. At the time of the transfer of the asset to First Citizens Bank, it was agreed that where some of these—the losses crystallized on some to these particular assets, that the Government would made good and they did provide an indemnity to the bank to allow the transfer to take place. So the numbers that are reflected here, reflect the amount which has actually gone bad, and which therefore, the Government is required to meet in accordance with the original terms of the agreement which was signed at the time when the asset was acquired, when the bank acquired CMMB. So this reflects those particular assets.

**Mr. Imbert:** But, Mr. Chairman, in 2014 the estimate was \$198 million and the revised estimate for \$49 million. So what happened in 2014?

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, the actual figure, we deferred the amount which should have been paid, that \$164 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** You carried it over?

**Hon. Howai:** We paid it—we told them we would prefer that this particular liability be settled next fiscal year—



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**Mr. Imbert:** So, you do not want it on your books.

**Hon. Howai:**—and we just picked up the \$49 million this year.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, just a minute. I am sorry, all apologies.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have a whole set of questions on 009. So are we going in sequence, like 22, 28, 30, 32, 34 or we just going from MP to MP?

**Mr. Chairman:** No. Well, I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** I am on 35. So, he can go ahead if it is before 35. I am on 35.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. No. No, problem. You go ahead. I am after that. I am after that. You go ahead.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead. Member for Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I recognized that there is a singular expenditure attached to the National Waste Water Revolving Fund which seems to be confined to 2014, and is discontinued thereafter. When was this fund set up? For what reason? And just give me the details on that fund? The basis for it.

**Hon. Howai:** This is the waste water fund. Cabinet had agreed in 2012 that this revolving fund be established within WASA for depositing the grant resources for the financing of the refurbishment of the pumps and the required connections, as well as other possible waste water projects under this particular arrangement. The fund was established, and there was an initial contribution and no further contributions are required. So, I am told it is just a one-off contribution.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** So there is an existing fund still?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes. There is an existing fund.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** But under the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, but no further contributions would have been made for 2015. Is it necessary to remain as a line item? Does it remain?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, we will leave it until it—because we normally would bring forward years. So once the year is no longer applicable, it will fall off.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West.

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**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister tell me how soon the mechanism shall be put in place for the constituency development fund to be disbursed?

**Hon. Howai:** That is for the Office of the Attorney General now. I know that a draft for the legislation has been prepared, but I could not give the exact date as to when it would actually be ready.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I would crave your indulgence to back up a bit from 35 to 32. I see, with respect to the G-pan patent, where every year we are making a payment, it was \$1.5 million in 2013, \$4.6 million in 2014 and they are making a provision of \$4.7 million—what is this? Is it that every year we have to pay to have a patent on the G-pan, and who is this payment being made to, and what are the benefits of this continuous payment?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. This is being done in different countries throughout the world. [*Confers with Advisor*] Does it have to be renewed? No, but the patent itself has to be—

**Dr. Rowley:** So the G-pan is costing us more than—the G-pan is a continuous charge on the Treasury of approximately \$5 million a year?

**Hon. Howai:** This would be to maintain the patents on an annual basis.

**Dr. Rowley:** How do we expect to recover that? Because, Mr. Chairman, my understanding is, a patent does not last forever, it has a period of time and after that period of time other people can use the technology. If we pay this money, \$5 million a year for how many years, what is the arrangement in place for us to recover this money before the patent expires? Is it that the candle is costing more than the funeral here?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. I need to get that, the details of that, because I am not very familiar with the details, but I will say that the payment should come from—well I suppose you know theoretically where it is coming from. I do not need to go into that—

**Dr. Rowley:** The taxpayer.

**Hon. Howai:** No. No. I am saying, the repayment. The inflow.

**Dr. Rowley:** Oh, the return.

**Hon. Howai:** But, let me get the additional information on this. I am told that it is in respect of legal fees and other costs related to filing this in different

jurisdictions where it has not already been filed, and also for the maintenance of the patents. In terms of the actual repayment or pay back, I would need to get that information.

**Dr. Rowley:** But as we embark upon this, has anybody appreciated quantifying what is involved? Because if we are making these kinds of payments annually, this almost \$5 million each year, and if it involves legal fees and ongoing payments, has anybody determined what would be our final outlay on this adventure, and what we will be likely to get before the patent runs out?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. The information would be in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, but let me just get it and provide it.

**Dr. Rowley:** And one final question on it. Since we have gotten this patent, has any user come forward to buy a franchise from this patent? Have we gotten any income from the patent?

**Hon. Howai:** No. No.

**Dr. Rowley:** We move on, Mr. Chairman. To Sub-Head 34, which is the B-A-I-C-O, BAICO payment of \$32.3 million. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy whether that one-off payment that we are seeing there has to do with the Government's purchase of BAICO's assets?

**Hon. Howai:** It has to do with—what had happened is that the liquidator in the Bahamas had received judgment, and they could come here to enforce the judgment in the Trinidad and Tobago jurisdiction, and if they sought to do that they could have because there was a guarantee from CL Financial to BAICO. It meant therefore, that they could have enforced the judgment against CL Financial. And if they did that, it would have then created a number of difficulties—

**Dr. Rowley:** Against CL Financial—the whole conglomerate?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. The whole conglomerate. Because the CL Financial, remember, who holds the shares in the subsidiary companies, and therefore, they would have gotten—they would have been able to intervene in the process by which the Government was restructuring and managing the ownership and the flow of dividends from the subsidiary companies to CL Financial to allow them to repay debts which were owed to the local banking system. In the circumstances there was a negotiated agreement where this payment would be made in order to stave off the liquidators of BAICO. And they agreed to do that, to hold their hands on the basis of the payment that was made, and as a result, we were able to keep things relatively stable in the course of that.

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**Dr. Rowley:** In all of that, was an evaluation done of BAICO's assets?

**Mr. Chairman:** BAICO has no assets. This is really—because of the guarantee from CL—intended to protect the CL Financial assets, not really the BAICO assets.

**Dr. Rowley:** So when we make the payment at the BAICO end, we knew that we were paying for nothing, but it was really a debt to protect something else.

**Hon. Howai:** To protect CL Financial's assets. That is what we were doing.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, let us move on.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:**—seriously, was this the best way to deal with this?

**Hon. Howai:** It was the only way.

**Dr. Rowley:** The only way?

**Hon. Howai:** The only way.

**Dr. Rowley:** There is never an only way.

**Hon. Howai:** Well, you could not have done anything, in which case they would come here and enforced judgment in the local courts. We preferred not to—

**Dr. Rowley:** How much was the judgment?

**Hon. Howai:** The judgment would have been in the region of about \$80 million, part of it we paid, and part of it was met by CL, but not of the full amount. The amount met would have been about \$50 million.

**Dr. Rowley:** So there is still more money that we are exposed to if —

**Hon. Howai:** There is an exposure, but there is an agreement for them to hold their hands.

**Dr. Rowley:** A gentleman's agreement.

**Hon. Howai:** No. No. No, a written agreement. We would not have a gentleman's agreement.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We have to move on, Member for Diego Martin West. I go back to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

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**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I am looking at 011 under “Treasury Division” on this same page, and I am seeing that the entire Infrastructure Development Fund is under that.

**Hon. Howai:** “Uh-hmm.”

**Mr. Imbert:** Infrastructure Development Fund takes up 78 pages in this document, are we now going to do all 78 pages, so we could look into that \$4.3 billion expenditure? How are we doing this, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** We do it by head.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. But this is a head here. This is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy Head, and it has the Infrastructure Development Fund.

**Mr. Chairman:** You see, the idea for it is it is allocated in different Heads, as you are well aware. So, we will just deal with what is allocated. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy administers the IDF, not so?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, it is not allocated anywhere else here, you know. The only place the IDF is allocated is here. It is not allocated in each Ministry.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. This is the total allocation. Now, there are two different things.

**Mr. Imbert:** Take it anywhere else.

**Hon. Howai:** One is how it is spent, and the amount that is spent is on different Heads, and then this is just an allocation from which the expenditure was taken. So, this is just the heading—

**Mr. Imbert:** This is not taken from any other Head. It is taken from here. You have an allocation of \$4,316,650,000 in your allocation.

**Hon. Howai:** No. That is right. What I am saying, therefore, is that we have made an allocation to the IDF.

**Mr. Chairman:** The expenditure, from what I understand, is under different Heads.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. Yes, and therefore, we will seek explanations under the relevant Heads.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. Yes. You need to read your book.

**Mr. Imbert:**—estimates of the development programme.

**Mr. Chairman:** Strictly speaking, you are correct. I mean, nobody is arguing with what you are saying, but the expenditure is dealt with under various, and we will seek explanations under those various Heads.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I will take your word for it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. That is how we will want to approach it.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, if it is a little different from what you have told me, we will go back to it.

**Mr. Chairman:** We shall revisit.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, under Treasury Division, Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Browne:** Yes, I have a few questions on this line item, particularly as I see the expenditure and allocation are matched and have not changed in the recent past, \$650 million. And I ranked this against the Government's claims of increased uptake at the tertiary education level. There were many claims along those lines. So, I am wondering how we can be having more students at the tertiary level, while maintaining this same \$650 million under GATE. And at the same time, I know there has been talk about improving efficiency in managing or administering the GATE Programme, but even with all of those variables or those claims, I find it a bit atypical that we would have identical allocation and expenditure right up to—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. I think we understand you. You want to respond to that question?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. Mr. Chairman, this is just the transfer which is made from here to the different Heads to allow for the disbursements to take place. The real sort of explanation and expenditure takes place under Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training

**12.30 p.m.**

In terms of the specific issue of—while there has been an expansion of the programme in terms of the number of programmes and the number of people

participating, there has been a tightening of a number of procedures within GATE itself to ensure that we eliminate some of the duplication, some of the waste and so on, and we have been able to even with the lower allocation—not lower, with the same allocation—meet the expenditures which have been incurred, and my understanding is that we are fairly up-to-date. We are up-to-date—right?—with the payments due to the different institutions.

**Dr. Browne:** To be clear on what the Minister of Finance and the Economy is saying, is it that the estimation is so perfect from the line Ministry, that every cent that has been identified for GATE has been expended? [*Interruption*] Well, I want to hear him say it.

**Hon. Howai:** Has it all been spent? I do not know—

**Mr. Chairman:** You want to repeat your question? I do not think he understood exactly what you asked.

**Dr. Browne:** Maybe he was not listening at the time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, well could you repeat it.

**Dr. Browne:** Minister I am asking, are you asking us to believe or cognate that every single cent that has been allocated to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, to expend on this GATE Programme, has been expended and the accounting is so accurate that that is the way in which it is reflected here with respect to allocation, revised estimate and no change; no increase, no decrease within the last two years.

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, this is just the allocation.

**Dr. Browne:** To the cent?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, I am just trying to determine how best to explain it. This is not the expense. This is the transfer. So, the fund itself has about \$681 million, of which in the last year about \$587 million was spent. So, it is not what was disbursed. So, what we are transferring here is not the exact—they are not going to spend \$650 million for the year. What we are doing is increasing the fund again, and during the course of the year they may spend 625, they may spend 600, they may spend more than \$650, they may spend 675, because there are some funds still available in the fund itself. But this is really the allocation that we make on an annual basis on the basis of what we determine the actual spend is likely to be, and we just make sure that they have enough in there.

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And even if there is a slight amount transfer that is more than they require, that simply stays in the fund and goes into next year's expenditure and cost for the fund, which will meet next year's expenses.

**Dr. Browne:** Okay. Who manages this fund within that Ministry? Is there a specific entity that manages the fund and can you say whether the fund has been growing or decreasing?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, the fund will have a small—right now I expect the fund would have about \$50 million odd in it, approximate, and that is really managed by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, so that we top it up and then we monitor the disbursements that take place.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Chairman, I am on the same Sub-Item, Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund: could the Minister kindly explain how this allocation relates to the moneys allocated under the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training for tertiary level institutions? I see allocations have been made to COSTAATT and UWI and other tertiary level institutions, and I would like to know how this relates to that funding. How it reconciles with that funding?

**Hon. Howai:** Oh-ho, what you are asking is whether students who attend COSTAATT would get funding from here?

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Yes, because I see moneys allocated. When I looked at the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, I see moneys allocated for COSTAATT and UWI and various areas, and I see here we have GATE. I am just wondering—it might not be—if there is any duplication, or how it relates? What is the relationship?

**Hon. Howai:** No, what happens here is that, the allocation to COSTAATT and so on would be to assist in defraying the overall cost of the operations of the different institutions, UWI and so on. This here would be used to meet the cost of the students who would qualify for those participating in them.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, I think I recognize the Member for Point Fortin as the last one and then we are moving on.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** This is Item No. 019?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes,

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** May I ask through you, Chairman, what is your policy towards the allocation of funds to the Caricom Petroleum Fund? Is it a



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straightforward allocation? Is it tied to energy intake or so? What is the basis for the distribution? What is the quantum of the fund as it stands now?

**Hon. Howai:** Oh yes, Caricom Petroleum Fund, yes, it is just a straightforward allocation that we do on an annual basis.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** So, it is not tied to any intake or so? What is the basis for distribution? What is the quantum of funds in that fund as it is?

**Hon. Howai:** I know there is a consultative process with the Caricom Secretariat as far as that is concerned. The actual balance to the fund right now is \$188.9 million. So, we are simply topping it up on the basis of what we expect may be some of the issues that may come up during the course of the year. But, I think the arrangements would have been previously agreed and we continue to follow whatever those arrangements were.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin Central, you are on this same point, on GATE?

**Dr. Browne:** No, this is line 20, Accident Victims Compensation Fund.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, and Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** I just want to join with the question from the last speaker and ask about the Caricom Petroleum Fund. I do not know how this is disbursed, but I know that seven Caricom countries owe the Government \$66 million as of last year. They have not paid a cent according to the Auditor General's report. Do you still give them from that fund? What do we do?

**Hon. Howai:** The fund, we would disburse the fund on the basis of the arrangements that are in place and as agreed with the Caricom Secretariat. So, I think that arrangement for doing it through the Caricom Secretariat had been agreed and has been something that has been in place for some time, and that arrangement—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Warner:** All I am asking, some people owe you as far as 2009.

**Hon. Howai:** If they owe you, whether you still give them, right?

**Mr. Warner:** That is what I am asking, 2009, '10, '11, '12.

**Hon. Howai:** No, what he is saying, they may owe us for other things and we do not net it off. No, we do not net off any payments and so on, that is due to them. We treat the two as two separate streams, but if there is assistance that is required for a specific arrangement that is approved by the Secretariat we would make that payment and we will continue to follow up on the collection separately.

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**Mr. Warner:** Okay. Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, the Member for Diego Martin Central raised the question about Accident Victims Compensation Fund.

**Hon. Howai:** What is the question? I did not hear the question.

**Dr. Browne:** Can you give us a bit of detail on this Accident Victims Compensation Fund, how is it accessed? What is its purpose? How is it managed? And has it been evaluated as of this point?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, we have done an evaluation and a note is being prepared now to go to Cabinet with respect to how we should treat with the fund going forward. We are looking to establish a particular kind of legislative arrangement that would assist with that, but that has not been done just yet. It is in process, so this is almost like a suspense account for the time being.

**Dr. Browne:** Can you say what is the purpose? Give a little detail for a citizen listening.

**Hon. Howai:** This is to compensate victims of persons who were injured by uninsured drivers.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we go on to Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have been trying to attract your attention on 009 for more than five minutes.

**Mr. Chairman:** 00—

**Mr. Imbert:** The same one, 009. I have been trying to attract your attention for more than five minutes now. I have questions on 019, 020, 013, 017, all the Items Members have been asking about. May I ask my questions please? I got my hand up.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, but you are going to ask the same questions?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, no, different questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, could you put all together so we can deal with those.

**Mr. Imbert:** Three of them are similar, one is different.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** So, I will deal with the three similar ones first.

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**Mr. Chairman:** All right.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am seeing here on Item 020, Item 019, Item 017, that the amount in the revised estimates and the amount in the 2015 estimates is the same down to the last dollar. How is that possible? The actual estimated revised 2014 and estimate for 2015, is the same figure down to the last dollar, no variation at all. How is that possible?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, in each of these we determine how much we are transferring, and we make the judgment on the basis of our own fiscal position as well as the requirements of the fund. In the case of GATE there was no need for us to increase because the actual expenditure during the course of this year would have been less.

**Mr. Imbert:** So that fund has a surplus then? Is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Howai:** It has some funds in it, yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** And the other funds may have surpluses as well, is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Howai:** Caricom has surplus of about—I would not say surplus, they have a balance of \$189 million, and we simply would to be transferring—

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, that answers that. So you are just transferring funds?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, you just transfer to top up the balance as existed there.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, that answers that. With respect to 009/13, I see zero.

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, that is determined after we do the computations during the course of the year. So, we would not determine it up front and, as I understand it, that is the traditional approach to dealing with that particular account.

**Mr. Imbert:** But, is it not done on a quarterly basis?

**Hon. Howai:** We transfer on a quarterly basis.

**Mr. Imbert:** So, you are saying the first three quarters no transfers?

**Hon. Howai:** No. In this year? In the next year?

**Mr. Imbert:** This fiscal, you have zero.

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, this year we have not transferred, some of the payments actually—because they compute it at the end of each quarter and what they are seeking—so, up to the end of the last quarter, the petroleum revenues did not exceed the budget.

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**Mr. Imbert:** So, for the first quarter, second quarter, third quarter—

**Hon. Howai:** Cumulatively to the third quarter.

**Mr. Imbert:**—2014, the actual revenues did not exceed the petroleum revenues collected, were less than the estimates? Are you saying that?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** But the royalties have gone up by 43 per cent?

**Hon. Howai:** But, the actual collections were less than budgeted.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but, I saw royalties going up by 43 per cent?

**Hon. Howai:** No, I am not saying it did not go up, I am just saying the total budget versus the total collections, if you compare it, collections were less than budget.

**Mr. Imbert:** But, Minister of Finance and the Economy, I am talking about your actual revised estimate for royalties. It has gone up by 43 per cent. That is what you actually planned to collect, royalties I am talking about, so how could royalties—

**Hon. Howai:** You are talking about in current year, 2014?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. How could royalties have gone up by 43 per cent over your estimates, so how could royalties on petroleum go up by 43 per cent, but the overall revenue collected is not in excess of the estimates, how is that possible? That is the question I am posing to you. So, taxes gone down?

**Hon. Howai:** What has happened is that, we have received late payment from one particular company.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is that Petrotrin?

**Hon. Howai:** State-owned company.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is it Petrotrin?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, Petrotrin.

**Mr. Imbert:** Why have you allowed Petrotrin not to pay its taxes?

**Hon. Howai:** So, the payment has come in late, but we expect to be able to sort that out—

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you Minister, you are answering all my questions. Could you answer my last one?

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**Hon. Howai:** Yes, okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** Why have you allowed Petrotrin not to pay its taxes for 2012?

**Hon. Howai:** No, they have been paying. They have been paying late.

**Mr. Imbert:** Why you allow them to pay late?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, allow him to answer.

**Hon. Howai:** I am expecting that they should meet the commitment before the end of this month, so I think we should be able to bring it in balance before September 30, and that is good.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, I think that we have exhausted that one, let us go on, please. The next one is Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. We have the Leader of the Opposition, Member for Chaguanas West and then Member for Laventille West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions and I would like to go in sequence, so I will take them one by one. I would like to go to 011, sub 40, Sugar Manufacturing Company, where we are still paying approximately \$5 million to \$6 million a year on what I thought was a company that we had closed down. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy explain this expenditure of \$5 million to \$6 million a year for the Sugar Manufacturing Company which I thought had demised? Is that company operating?

**Hon. Howai:** It is in the process of being liquidated, but the cost is really the debt repayments which are being still paid on the basis of the term of the facilities that existed at the time.

**Dr. Rowley:** But, interestingly, you said that company is still operating and it is being liquidated.

**Hon. Howai:** When I say it is still operating, it is not producing sugar. Is it?

**Dr. Rowley:** Does it have staff?

**Hon. Howai:** No, it does not have staff. Basically, it has some debts that need to be liquidated over time and that is—

**Dr. Rowley:** What happened to the assets of that company?

**Hon. Howai:** The assets would have been disposed of sometime ago.  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please! Please, Members!

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**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I want to ignore the sounds over so.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, just ignore it and just focus on me.

**Dr. Rowley:** It is difficult to ignore that sound.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**12.45 p.m.**

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy if he is not clear, to tell us later on in the week's proceedings, what has happened to the assets of the Sugar Manufacturing Company, because I do not think you are correct when you say the assets have been disposed of, because that will invite further questions. So, could you just take the question and reply later on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any other questions on that particular matter? [*Crosstalk*] No, no, I am dealing with the Sub-Item 40. Any other questions on that?

**Dr. Rowley:** Could we conclude, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, because I want to conclude.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am asking the Minister, rather than give us an answer which I am getting the impression that he is unsure of, whether he can delay the answer to a little later on and tell us by the end of the sessions what has happened to the assets of the Sugar Manufacturing Company. And I go, Mr. Chairman, with your permission—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I just wanted to know if any other Member has any questions on this matter. If not, the Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I go to Sub-Head 50, sub, sub 50, East Port of Spain Development Company. I seem to recall, Mr. Chairman, that the Government by way of ministerial statements and prime ministerial commitments made public here that this company was a vehicle for bringing about identified growth pole development in East Port of Spain. That being so, in 2015 we have made no provision to fund this company.

This company had been receiving in 2013, \$9 million; 2014, \$4.6 million and for 2015, the company which the Government says will be the vehicle of movement in East Port of Spain, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has budgeted absolutely, big fat zero. Is it that the Government intends to close this

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company down, and if not, how is the Government's stated provisions to be funded, if the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has made no provision whatsoever for that company?

**Hon. Howai:** I have asked my staff to just check the numbers for me and we will respond as soon as I get it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, any—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** We move on, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** No further questions on this one? We move on.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, again, my understanding was that the Government had shut down Alutrint, but I saw where in 2013 there was no provision for Alutrint. I presume there was no expenditure on Alutrint, and the public is of the view that Alutrint has been closed down. In 2014 a payment appears of \$4.6 million under Alutrint as Equity Investment, and, of course, we do not see a payment in 2015. What does that \$4.6 million represent in terms of equity in a company that is supposed to have been closed down?

**Hon. Howai:** I will need to get back to the Leader of the Opposition on that.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I move on to Sub-Head 57, Caribbean Airlines. Mr. Chairman, I looked at these numbers against the background of the public treatment of Caribbean Airlines called on the Treasury in the not-too-distant past. And at the time, the Minister of Finance and the Economy spoke at length on this problem, and he spoke in the context of a \$200 million support system. We were under the impression that the support to Caribbean Airlines was in the order of \$200 million and questions were raised about where that money was going, whether it was CAL Trinidad, Air Jamaica, so on and so on. This document shows that in 2013—Mr. Chairman, that mumbling down there is disturbing me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mumbling?

**Dr. Rowley:** Down at that end of the hall.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, well I was not picking it up. No, I do not think they are mumbling, maybe they are talking, but I will ask them to be silent, okay. Members, I think you need to start revising your—your turn is coming next, so just start revising, please. [*Crosstalk*] Please, please, Members, let us have some order here. If Members are hungry let me know. I can retire you. Please! Let us have some order. Continue, hon. Member.

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**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, could you talk to the Member for Mayaro please, he is disturbing me and disturbing my trend of thought.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, Member for Mayaro could you maintain silence, please. Continue.

**Dr. Rowley:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. In 2013, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provided \$477 million in support to Caribbean Airlines. The following year, in 2014, we budgeted \$400 million for support, I presume, based on what happened in previous year.

However, when you look at the Revised Estimates for 2014, we see recorded, \$252 million, and therefore we are led to believe that the support for Caribbean Airlines which was budgeted at \$400 million, the out-turn was really \$252 million. One can draw that conclusion very reasonably. And, of course, in provisioning for 2015, we see a provision of \$718 million. When we put that together, Mr. Chairman, between 2013 and 2015 we are talking here about \$1.8 billion support for Caribbean Airlines.

However, I want to crave your indulgence, Mr. Chairman. When I looked at the Revised Estimates for 2014 at 252, and I am led to believe that that was an improvement on the previous year, I will ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy, if that is so, and there is improvement, what then is the basis for making a provision of \$.7 billion, which is \$700 million for Caribbean Airlines?

And, Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence to just change very slightly from how we have been going to treat with the \$252 million, because when I turn the page, and I am just going ahead of you for the purpose of the argument that I am making, when I turn the page to Sub-Head 78, Caribbean Airlines, Equity Injection, I see in the year 2014, when I was led to believe that the out-turn was better with that airline, and the support from the Treasury was only \$252 million I see an equity injection of \$318 million in that year, which means that the Treasury provided over \$500 million to Caribbean Airlines which the Ministry of Finance and the Economy broke into two parts, put one part under the out-turn of the budget and the other part as an equity injection. And as a taxpayer in this country, I did not know that I owned any additional shares in the Caribbean Airlines as a result of this equity injection which is now news to me.

When did that equity injection take place and why it was not announced to the public? And what provision does the Minister of Finance and the Economy have



to treat with this \$2.118 billion which Caribbean Airlines had been having from the Treasury and will have until 2015, as support for the operations of the Caribbean Airlines.

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, we have put in place a restructuring plan for Caribbean Airlines which will see us gradually reduce these numbers but it will take another three years. I do expect that we will get to a position where in a sense we could bring the airline to some level of sustainability for another three years. Prior to us actually intervening, of course, Caribbean Airlines had a fuel subsidy which amounted to, in the region of about US \$50 million, slightly less than US \$50 million.

In addition, the Tobago subsidy which we have to put out on an annual basis is about US \$26 million. Now, what happens with that, of course, the tickets to Tobago are priced at a price that is lower than the actual cost of going, so therefore the cost of that is about US \$25 million. There was also a loss which was incurred on the Venezuela route, and this resulted from the devaluation of the Venezuelan bolivar, and it also was impacted by the fact that from Venezuela you cannot get funds out of Venezuela at this point in time. So there are moneys to be paid for that particular Venezuelan route which have been tied up and which has further tightened the cash flows of Caribbean Airlines. That figure is approximately US \$45 million, I am advised.

But on an ongoing basis between the subsidy for the Tobago route and the fuel subsidy, the total is about US \$78 million or close to, about, a little over TT \$400 million. So that a big part of it is trying to deal with two issues which are, in a sense endemic within the airline itself, which is that fuel subsidy and the cost of the Tobago route.

In addition, there have been some losses which have been incurred which deal with the integration of Jamaica and some of the restructuring that took place, and there are a number of other related costs which have come up and which we have had to deal with. Recognizing that and recognizing the fact that we would not be in a position to bring the airline to immediate profitability, we expect that over the next three years we will be able to bring it down to a position that is manageable and the management of the company has indicated to me that they expect that the company should be in a break-even position within three years.

So, I expect that we will have to, in answer to the question from the Leader of the Opposition, it would not just be 2015, but we will have to put some funding in, in 2016 as well as 2017 to a lesser extent on a declining basis in order to deal with the problem that we have with Caribbean Airlines at the moment.

**Dr. Rowley:** I thank the Minister, Mr. Chairman, for the extensive discourse. But I want to ask the Minister whether he can provide for us, before we complete the examination of the budget documents, a proper breakdown of this \$718 million. I presume that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has that information by segment and we would like to see all of it. Because you see, throwing in the Tobago cost, Tobago is an essential service, and throwing Tobago in with the general operations and losses of the company could confuse the situation, because I may ask the Minister, since we are talking about the loss on the Tobago route, is he prepared to tell us the loss on the London route? Because I am pretty sure that is not profitable.

So, if we are talking about the essential service support for Tobago communication, then we will want to know all the details of the other routes. But more importantly, what was the thinking behind taking equity in 2014 to the tune of \$352 million? What was this equity story about and are we to expect that of this \$718 million for 2015, that a decision like that could repeat itself again where we can see that money or half of it being treated as equity in the airline which is requiring this level of support on an ongoing basis?

And my final question is, what is the basis on which the Minister is accepting from the board that we will be in a position to break even in three years' time when the trend so far has been, 2013, \$400 million; 2014, \$550 million; 2015, \$700 million? What is the basis on which we can say that it is going to break-even sometime, especially against the background that the Minister, when he appointed the last board, told us that that board was mandated to do a report and a business plan which he will have within weeks, and make available to us in the Parliament and whoever else in the public domain? Because there would be a business plan to come into the place that he has just mentioned. We have heard nothing about that since the weeks have passed. It is now months, almost a year. Has that plan been done?

**1.00 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West. You could take notes so that when you are responding, you could respond.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I am referring to under 011, No. 23, the ADB.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we do not want to go there. Let us deal with that particular matter involving the Member for—there are other questions. I will come back to you, Member for Chaguanas West.

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**Dr. Rowley:** I had a number of questions for the Minister. Could we get those answers first before he puts his?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, well, I want to ask a question on 57—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, he has some questions dealing—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, could you just clarify? You are allowing the Leader of the Opposition to go through his list, but if another Member has a question on a particular Sub-Item, you will allow the other Members to talk on that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Before you go on to the other one?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Right. And to other Members as well?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have some questions on 57—same one, Caribbean Airlines.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, yes, of course.

**Mr. Imbert:** I can ask them now?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Right. From what I am hearing the Minister say, Caribbean Airlines has told you that they will lose about \$320 million in 2015 outside of the fuel subsidy and the Tobago route. Could you just confirm that my understanding is correct?

**Hon. Howai:** It would be approximately that number.

**Mr. Imbert:** Somewhere in the vicinity.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** If you put aside the fuel subsidy and you put aside the subsidy on the Tobago route, Caribbean Airlines will lose approximately \$300 million—\$320 million.

**Hon. Howai:** No, it would be—just now.

**Mr. Imbert:** Take your time.

**Hon. Howai:** They are projecting this at about \$30 million. So it would be closer to about \$200 million.

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**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, but from what you told us, the losses on the Tobago route, added to the fuel subsidy, is \$400 million. I am seeing a figure here of \$718 million.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. What happened is that there are some payments which would have gone through this year, which we will probably put into the next fiscal, the \$718 million, rather than allowing it this year. So there is a question of timing of cash flow payments.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. So the losses for 2014 might be higher then, than what you are showing here.

**Hon. Howai:** In 2014, we may pick up some of it going into—yeah, into 2015.

**Mr. Imbert:** From what you are saying, at least \$100 million.

**Hon. Howai:** But some of it would have, again, come forward from the prior year too.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is okay. But from what you are saying, you are carrying forward some losses in the vicinity of \$100 million from 2014 to 2015.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** And you expect, on operations, to lose another \$200-odd million, putting aside fuel subsidy and Tobago. Am I correct?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, in that region, yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could I get a breakdown of where they are losing this \$200 million, what routes, what items?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is it staff? Is it a particular route, like the London route? How are they projecting these losses of \$200 million? Could I get a breakdown, please?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, we can arrange that. Yes, we would arrange to get that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Secondly, is it the plan of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to provide additional airlift on the Tobago route in 2015, over and above what you had intended to do in 2014?

**Hon. Howai:** If it does come it would come from the re-allocation of the jets as opposed to acquisition of new aircraft.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. In the past, at peak times in the vacation period in the summer and at Christmas time, these are all the times that Trinidadians go to Tobago—for New Years and Great Race and so on. There are certain well-known times that Trinidadians swarm to Tobago. In the past, the Ministry of Transport or the Ministry of Works and Transport, whichever Ministry had the responsibility for the air-bridge, would provide additional airlift by chartering a plane and so on. I have observed this has not happened in 2014. Is it that you will have a repeat of this in 2015 where you will not be putting additional equipment onto the route?

**Hon. Howai:** I cannot answer that now but, certainly, we have no plans immediately to put additional—

**Mr. Imbert:** So in your allocation you have not planned to charter additional aircraft to deal with peak times on the Tobago route in 2015.

**Hon. Howai:** No, because we may be able to re-allocate one of the jets. So rather than using an ATR or getting another ATR, we could use a jet.

**Mr. Imbert:** I just want an answer to that question. So you have no plans to charter additional turbo-prop aircraft on the air-bridge in 2015 to deal with peak demand.

**Hon. Howai:** At this stage, I cannot—there is no such—

**Mr. Imbert:** So you are going to punish Tobago in 2015 as well.

**Hon. Howai:** I would not say we will punish Tobago. We will find an alternative arrangement to deal with the issue.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right, no problem.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister is trying to answer my—at least part of my question. I would like to hear the answer, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, well, before he gets there, I think, Member for St. Joseph, you are on the same—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** The same Caribbean Airlines.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, continue.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. Minister, the increase of \$.4 billion under the “Transfers”, just like the Member for Diego Martin West when he looked at the equity injection later on, there is also a \$7 million debt servicing provision for Caribbean Airlines later on. How does the \$1 billion debt incurred by Caribbean Airlines over the period 2013/2014—how has that \$1 billion loss been accounted

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for in these different headings? Is it under debt servicing? Is that \$7 million to be paid to help finance some of that \$1 billion loss that the previous board would have incurred? How are you treating with that \$1 billion loss?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, the funding that is coming in here is intended to deal with those losses and to deal with the equity issues that arise as a result of the losses that had been incurred. So this money here is to deal with the brought-forward losses that arose from the acquisition of the additional jets and so on, and the operations, including the integration of the Jamaican operations and so on.

The \$7 million was some additional funding that was provided to assist Caribbean Airlines in meeting one of their loan repayments which we thought it was important for us to show in a separate line, so it is clear, and it is clearly identified and delineated and reported so that there is no question of us having, in a sense, doing something that is not actually properly reported.

With respect to—if I may come back to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Howai:** We can share some of the information from the plan with the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has asked if we can—we can share that, right? [*Hon. Howai to technocrat:* We will have the information based on the latest available review.] So we can provide some of that information as you had requested.

With respect to the funding, you raised a point which I think is important for me to make, in that there may be the need for us to break some of this funding out between some kind of an equity injection, apart from the transfers to CAL, but that is really a reporting issue. I would want to show it—“show it” is not probably the right term. I would probably want to have it classified that way, and the reason for that is that the brought-forward losses could significantly reduce the capital of the company and the equity of the company and I would probably want to ensure that without increasing the allocation that is given to them, that we manage the allocation in such a way that it deals with the issue of a potential capital deficit, if it could potentially arise. Because I would want to ensure that they maintain an acceptable debt to equity ratio. So I may want to reclassify this.

So you did raise the question, look, here it is, you are not expecting to see this show up again as equity or some other figure in the equity column during the course of next year, and I just want to make the point that from a financing point

of view, without changing the total, it may make sense for us to change the allocation a bit and I may need to discuss with the PS how exactly we treat with that so that we do not do anything that is outside of the bounds of what Parliament would have approved.

**Mr. Chairman:** Before the Member for Diego Martin West—I would like to ask Members how long would we want to continue before we take lunch, because I want to let you know, I must complete the Ministry of Finance and the Economy before we take lunch, and I want to serve notice now that we are heading towards 10.00 tonight, the rate that we are going—or even midnight. So let us get ourselves prepared for a very long period because, as Chairman, I am committed to completing a minimum of 10 Heads every evening before we leave here. The Leader of the Opposition has said 4.00/4.30. That is an impossible dream, from what I am seeing—impossible. So if Members can guide me as to how long again they will take with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy before we break for lunch, I would be very grateful. Leader of the Opposition, could you tell me how soon you believe we will—

**Dr. Rowley:** I say 10 minutes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. All right. Member for Chaguanas, you have a couple questions?

**Dr. Rowley:** Before you go on—

**Mr. Warner:** Mr. Minister, the Agricultural Development Bank's last published audited statement was in 2011; 2012, 2013, no audited statement published. On what basis you gave them \$75 million?

**Hon. Howai:** The \$75 million is really—and we have seen the accounts up to 2013, I should say. It has not been published but I have seen it. The \$75 million, really, is to facilitate the 2 per cent loan which we do for the farmers, and it is intended to provide additional funding for them to make up the losses that they incur because their cost of funds will be 5 per cent, 6 per cent, but they are lending at 2 per cent and the Government has asked that they do that in order to facilitate the agricultural sector. So what we have decided to do is to give them a further equity injection in order for them to meet this—

**Mr. Warner:** Then how come this concern was not shared last year? Because last year they got no money at all.

**Hon. Howai:** No. And that is why they have an erosion of equity this year and that is something that we need to fix, otherwise, pretty soon you will have a

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company that will have some difficulties because of the fact that they are lending money at a lower rate than they are paying for it.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Any other matters under Transfers to State Enterprises?

**Dr. Rowley:** Sixty-eight, Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Imbert:** I defer. I defer. I defer.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I just wanted to go to 66 and 67, but I can do it after.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think, hon. Leader, you want to deal with 66, 67 as well?

**Dr. Rowley:** No, no.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Well, let us deal with you quickly.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Very quickly, I notice that there is a transfer that is being made with regard to Petrotrin, but it was not done in 2013. What is this new transfer about? And, further, why is there a transfer to Trintoc in line 67? I thought Trintoc was a defunct company. Why are we now transferring moneys to them?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. There are some costs which we—we are winding up the company now.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Trintoc, now winding up?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. It has been hanging on for a little while and I have asked that they bring this to a conclusion. There are some legal costs and some other incidental costs that would be incurred to just bring it to a close. Trinidad and Tobago Petroleum is Trintopec—so both companies, it is just an allocation to facilitate the winding up of the companies.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay, fine. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney and the Member for St. Ann's East.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Mr. Chairman, I was just looking at Item No. 75. I see there is a reduction of \$25 million for the Tourism Development Company. Can the Minister state what is taking place in 2014 that will not be taking place in 2015 that caused that reduction of \$25 million?



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**Hon. Howai:** I will have to come back to you on that. I do not have the answer right away.

**Mr. Chairman:** He will have to come back. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my focus is on Sub-Item No. 70, Alutrint operating expenses. In 2013 and 2014 there was no transfer. I would like to know exactly what accounts for the \$1.2 million transfer in 2015 for operating expenses.

**Hon. Howai:** Okay. I am told that those expenses are related, again, to winding up this particular company and paying the additional legal expenses and so on that had not been settled, as well as other expenses.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sixty-eight, Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the provisions for the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre seem to be quite substantial. Question to the Minister: Are we operating an International Financial Centre, and if so, who is operating it?

**1.15 p.m.**

What are these payments for: \$23 million in 2013, \$30 million in 2014 and a provision of \$31 million in 2015? Who is managing this money, who is getting this money and what is it for?

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, this is for the—well, as I said, in the International Financial Centre. The centre has been involved in and had played a very important role in bringing some of the back office processing and putting the arrangements in place for both Royal and Scotia Bank setting up their back office centres here. They are in the process of developing a new initiative which is to make Trinidad and Tobago a centre for dispute resolution as far as financial services are concerned. And they are also looking at developing the capital markets further.

There is a board and a general manager with staff and so on and right now, they are not earning any money independently even though they do set up—get some of these initiatives going, the revenue does not accrue to them, and therefore, they would need these allocations in order to ensure that the operations of the company continue and that the initiatives that they have in place, they can continue to develop on those and to carry those initiatives forward.

**Dr. Rowley:** How much staff does this centre have?

**Hon. Howai:** I could not answer that, I would need to get some more details.

**Dr. Rowley:** Could I ask you to assist us by telling us how this money is spent, this \$30 million? Give us a breakdown, please, of how it is spent, whether it is staff, travel, office arrangements and so on? Could we just see the breakdown, please?

**Hon. Howai:** Sure.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** Chairman, I had that—he has asked the same question but I have other questions under this Head.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, thank you. I notice 59, Equity Injection to EXIMBANK of \$60 million when previously there was none. What is going on?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, what we have asked the EXIMBANK to do is to help our exporters—to finance exporters who are exporting outside of the region at a lower cost, and we have also established a fairly low benchmark of about 2 per cent. The purpose of this is really to help our exporters break into international markets or markets outside of the Caricom region. So, to the extent that you are able to export outside of the region, we will help you with funding the cost of doing that.

**Dr. Rowley:** Understood.

**Mr. Imbert:** I notice that the Trinidad and Tobago Hotel Facilitation Company Limited seems to have died an unnatural death with a zero allocation. Item 77.

**Hon. Howai:** I was told that the company is dissolved. There is another arrangement which is being put in place to deal with—we have now the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Development Company.

**Miss McDonald:** Mr. Chairman, I just have one question.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could I get some details of that? Could we find out what was this company doing and who will be taking over its responsibilities and how? And now for my final—so I assume you will provide us with those details—**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** My final question now: what has happened Atrius?

**Hon. Howai:** Atrius, the company—we are no longer pursuing the company taking over the assets and liabilities of Clico. We expect that we will be disposing

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of the portfolio by way of a portfolio sale and therefore, there is no need for us to budget further on this item.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you are winding up Clico?

**Hon. Howai:** The intention, yes, would be to sell the portfolios and it depends on whether we get the price that we are looking for. If not, then it will have to continue to operate under section 44.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. But my point is, you have here 2014 estimate for Atrius, \$46 million; 2014, again, this strange accounting method where down to the last dollar, your revised estimate and your estimate is the same, \$15 million spent in 2013; \$0 in 2015. What is going to happen to the staff, the buildings, the income? What is going on?

**Hon. Howai:** No, no, there is no staff.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you send—you are retrenching everybody?

**Hon. Howai:** No, no, nothing was transferred. We had simply capitalized the company—which moneys the company will now return to us but no assets and people and so on were transferred.

**Mr. Imbert:** So the \$15 million in 2013, the \$46 million in 2014, it is just sitting there somewhere?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, that was given to them as their allocation for capital and we will now take it back in this year.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you have decided to abandon Atrius. Could you say why?

**Hon. Howai:** Because at the end of day, we would have to invest something like one and a half billion more to purchase the assets of Clico and to capitalize the company under the new insurance regime.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. So you are going to sell Clico—no problem, I understand. So you are going to sell Colonial Life, what methodology are you going to use?

**Hon. Howai:** We are currently in the process of getting the valuations done and we are also currently in the process of hiring an investment bank to provide us with advice and guidance on how we should proceed once the valuation comes in.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you have decided to sell it but you do not know what method you are going to use to sell it yet.

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**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, we have decided that it makes sense to explore the possibility of the sale. The thing is that if we do not get the prices that we are looking for, as I said, the option always remains with us to continue to operate the company under section 44.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think the Member for Port of Spain South, last area and then we move on.

**Miss Mc Donald:** East Port of Spain, I know the Minister answered and he said that no allocation has been made for East Port of Spain. I want to know why.

**Hon. Howai:** No, I have to give you the answers to that. I asked to—

**Miss Mc Donald:** Because I want to know why and what is happening with this entity.

**Mr. Chairman:** He said he will provide it.

**Hon. Howai:** I will provide that answer.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are going on to Item 013, Loans to State Enterprises; Item 014, Loans to Other Governments.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Mr. Chairman, to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, with regard to the \$97 million to the Government of St. Lucia, are there proper loan arrangements in place and are these being adhered to or is this a grant? And on the same note, the loan to the Government of Grenada, are those loans arrangements being met?

**Hon. Howai:** We did give a moratorium initially so no payments were due in the first—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** A moratorium to which?

**Hon. Howai:** To both.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** To both? A moratorium of how long?

**Hon. Howai:** Three years. So no payments are due just yet but I think in the case of St. Lucia, I think it is 15 years, 6 per cent and similarly for Grenada. But Grenada's rate was lower at the time because of where interest rates were at the time when their facility was granted.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Just a little supplemental to that. When requests are being made by the islands, are you looking at all the various avenues that are available, I mean the petroleum fund, et cetera, as well, or before we just stick

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something in under one allocation and then it stays there and whereas we have a fund with 180 something million dollars in it, that is on the side, are we looking at everything when these arrangements are made?

**Hon. Howai:** We did look at the \$188 million. We were concerned in terms of the extent to which the loans to these islands would have depleted the fund, and therefore not made funding available in the event there was an emergency that needed to be met. And therefore, we thought it was a better arrangement to leave the fund where it was and to put these under different arrangements. In any event, whether it would have met the agreements under the Caricom Petroleum Fund arranged with the Caricom Secretariat, we were not quite ensure, so we decided, okay, we will treat with it on a separate basis.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, Item 004, Statutory Bodies.

**Mr. Warner:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Sorry, Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** My apologies, Sir. I was asking about the loans.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, the Auditor General's Report of the fiscal year 2012/2013, under 613, mentioned a number of loans that amounting to \$1.7 billion. In those loans, they showed Grenada having paid only \$5 million up to 2011. Has any money been paid since? Also, that audit has loans to Dominica, two to Antigua/Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and so on, but I do not see it here. How come? Have they paid up?

**Hon. Howai:** No, well, we would not have budgeted any further advances to them in these accounts. So what you will see here would be any further advances that were taking place.

**Mr. Warner:** So you have not given them anymore?

**Hon. Howai:**—and we did not do any and we do not propose to do any here in this year.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, Item 004, Statutory Bodies. Head 07: Debt Servicing, Item 001,

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Interest - Local Loans. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 18, the estimate for 2015, \$197 million, an increase of \$174 million. Could you please explain, Minister of Finance and the Economy, this massive increase?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, there are some arrears which we agree that we should now liquidate. I think we have not paid for about five years from 2009 and we thought that we should bring those up to date and meet those commitments which is on the basis of the pro-note that had been signed prior to that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Arrears? Of what?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, arrears of interest.

**Mr. Imbert:** You have not been paying FCB?

**Hon. Howai:** No, we have not been paying the interest. The interest has been in arrears.

**Mr. Imbert:** So FCB has not been paid for four years?

**Hon. Howai:** Five years.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 009, Interest on Overdraft.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, no, no, I am still on 07.

**Mr. Chairman:** Or, you are still on the same one.

**Mr. Imbert:** I think I am just getting explanations here. On item 23, Caribbean Airlines, \$11 million. Is that to be added to Caribbean Airlines' losses?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, it would because this is some assistance we provided them for some debt repayment which is what I had referred to earlier when I was speaking.

**Mr. Imbert:** So Caribbean Airlines is really getting \$730 million for this fiscal?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, this year.

**Mr. Imbert:** And this came from where? This was debt incurred—

**Mr. Chairman:** Previously, yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:**—in 2014?

**Hon. Howai:** No.

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**Mr. Imbert:** Before that?

**Hon. Howai:** Prior to that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Yes, on the same Sub-Item 23, the interest payments increase of \$7 million, could the Minister quantify the debt that the 2015 estimate is \$11,300,000? And also, does Caribbean Airlines have any audited accounts that we can look at?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, they have audited accounts up to 2011 and—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** 2011?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, it was quite in arrears and we were bringing it up-to-date over the past year and I expect 2012 and 2013 to be finished within the next few—certainly before the end of this calendar year, I expect to bring it totally up-to-date. It has taken some time to bring it up-to-date. The total value of the debt this is paying is US \$64.2 million. This is TT dollars here but TT equivalent of—but the debt is US.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** US \$62.4 million?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, US.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 009: Interest on Overdraft; Item 011: Principal Repayment - Local Loans. Hon. Members, we are going on to Draft Estimates.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, Mr. Chairman, I have my hand up on 011.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will make noise next time. Sub-Item 18, could we get an explanation for this increase of \$69 million: Restructuring of First Citizens?

**Hon. Howai:** This is the principal piece of the interest that we spoke of just now.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. So we really have to add the 197 to the 92—\$208 million was not paid to FCB?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go now to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme, Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. That is on page 56.

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Hon. Members, you did give some undertakings to provide this committee. We have it recorded on *Hansard*, we will make it available to you in writing so that you will know systematically those areas that you have committed to supply to the Standing Finance Committee before the end of the proceedings; that is the five days. Right?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Otherwise you will be held accountable. Okay? Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$9,428,577,750 for Head 18: the Ministry of Finance and the Economy stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 18 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**1.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Now, Members may I suggest that having regard to, you know, we are experimenting, as the hon. Member for Diego Martin West said, we are going through new territory and, therefore, we would have some slippages and we want all Members to bear with us. We are taking us together on this new journey, so we must bear with each other. It is a new experience that we are going through. Please exercise patience and care and do not become too overly impatient, I appeal to all Members.

In those circumstances, because we may be here until midnight, I want to propose that we take a 45-minute break for lunch and, therefore, the proceedings of this Standing Finance Committee is suspended until quarter past two, 2.15 p.m.

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

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

**Mr. Chairman:** The Standing Finance Committee will resume.

*Head 13:*

Office of the Prime Minister, \$638,708,600. I will now invite the hon. Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes if he desires to do so at this time.

**Hon. McLeod:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I need only say that the Prime Minister made quite fundamental statements in her contribution to the



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budget debate, and I look forward to our being guided by those statements as we examine the matters under the particular Head that is before us now. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$638,708,600 for Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001: General Administration.

**Dr. Browne:** If there are no other contributions. Chairman, I just have an enquiry on Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance decreasing over the period, inclusive of the 2015 estimate, but the NIS contributions remaining the same. How can we account for that?

I also want to ask about this Cabinet-appointed committee, which committee are we referring to, with respect to this remuneration?

I also want to ask about the vacant posts that are indicated here. The sum of \$6 million was projected in 2014 and \$3 million for 2015, and not a cent has been expended thus far. What is the explanation for this?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** The accounting officer, Mr. Reynold Cooper, will assist with these questions. He is more familiar than all of us, I am sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Would you like the Permanent Secretary to speak?

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Prime Minister will relay the information.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. All right. Okay.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Insofar as the increased salaries and cost of living allowance bill is concerned, Members would be aware, Chair, that the Salaries Review Commission had made certain adjustments and these numbers are carried in 2014 estimates.

**Dr. Browne:** No, but it does not—I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, but just to help speed the process, that does not respond—I appreciate the response—to my question though. Salaries have decreased by \$2 million, salaries and COLA, but the NIS contributions remain the same. I just wanted to know if the Acting Prime Minister can explain that observation, in addition to the other questions.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Salaries in 2013, you are looking at \$14 million.

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**Dr. Browne:** Acting Prime Minister, if look at the right-hand column, that indicates the net increase or decrease in brackets.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes.

**Dr. Browne:** And there is \$1,970,600 in brackets, which means there is a decrease.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I am advised, Chair, that, well, of course, we accept that NIS would not have changed. But this number, \$16,650,000 includes retroactive payment, which would have been earned earlier. So in 2015, we would have gone back to a number that is without such retroactivity.

**Mr. Chairman:** What about remuneration?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** That committee is—that is the Clico and HCU commissioners. They would have been remunerated in the sums indicated here.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Chair, just for clarification.

**Mr. Chairman:** Wait, wait, before you go on to clarification, I think the Member for Diego Martin Central is still on the floor.

**Dr. Browne:** No, but he is on this point with the committee.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** I am on the same point.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, you we are dealing with Item—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Item 01: Cabinet-appointed committee.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, which sub-item again?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Well, 01, the third line. There is no corresponding number to it.

**Clerk:** Which page?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Remuneration to Members—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** That is on what page?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** On page 51, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 51? We are not on page 51, we are on page 52. We are dealing with personnel administration.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay, same thing under Cabinet-appointed committee.

**Mr. Chairman:** Number, number?

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**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Sorry, 14. The Acting Prime Minister just said this was to pay commissioners into the HCU and Clico—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I wish to correct that.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I wish to correct that. It would have been the National Awards Committee and Sport and Culture Fund Board.

**2.25 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** Yes, the Vacant Posts.

**Mr. Chairman:** Vacant Posts.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Vacant Posts, 08—*[The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor]* Could you repeat your question, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, could you repeat?

**Dr. Browne:** No, I am looking in the summary of expenditure on this issue, and there was \$6 million estimated for 2014, under OPM, none was expended, and there is \$3 million estimated for this year, am I seeing correctly? And I was seeking an explanation from the Prime Minister.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** *[The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor]* I take offence to that. I take very serious offence to that, and I wish that you will have some respect.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chair, am I missing something?

**Miss Cox:** Clearly.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, please. I am not sure where we are at, because I am a little bit lost. Could you just guide me back to where we are, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are at Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Rowley:** And what are we pursuing?

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA.

*[The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor]*

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**Hon. Mc Leod:** I am advised that we did not use the sum of \$1,300,000 there, all right, [*The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor*] \$5 million, and for 2015, we are providing a sum of \$3 million, yes, but we did not use that which was estimated, \$5 million in 2014. We have not used it.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chair, what would trigger providing for \$3 million for 2015 if, you know, you had no usage for the \$5 million in 2014? What will inform that figure, please?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** [*The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor*] I am advised, Sir, that if the service commission were to hire persons in those vacant posts, we have provided for such hiring.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Diego Martin West, Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for La Brea. Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I will have my first comment at Sub-Head 16. So if there are other contributions, I will wait.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, I have several questions coming under this particular Sub-Head. With reference to Contract Employment, there has been an observation of a gradual increase in the allocation. I would like to know how many contract positions exist? Exactly whether or not all vacancies are filled, and whether new positions were created during the period 2014—2015? Under Fees, that is—

**Mr. Chairman:** One at a time. Let us take one at a time.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Contract positions, No. 148, new positions, Communications Unit, how many positions are in there, 15?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, he did not respond to how many, sorry, yes, the new positions. Sorry, Mr. Chair. I just want to go on to, Fees. If they can provide us with a breakdown of the fees that are actually expected to be paid under the allocation. We see here \$10 million has been allocated, Mr. Chairman. Even though there is a decrease of \$4 million, we would like to find out about the decrease—find out about the breakdown with reference to the fees that have to be paid.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** We will return with such information.

**Dr. Rowley:** As I said, I would like to come in at No. 16, Contract Employment, Sub-Head 16, Contract Employment. I have observed that we are making a provision of \$13 million for Contract Employment in this Ministry, which is larger than the allocation for the establishment, because if we look at 001/01, under General Administration, we see that the provision for the establishment of the Prime Minister's Office is \$12.68 million, but we see a provision of \$13 million for contract officers, and there has been a consistent growth in contract employment in this Ministry from \$9 million in 2013 to \$10 million in 2014 and we are making a provision of \$13 million for 2015.

I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister what is the cause of this growth of contract employment in the Prime Minister's Office, where it has now superseded the establishment? And what is the procedure used to select persons for these positions, and who determines their emoluments be paid, the level of emoluments and so on? Who determines that? Who establishes what these people will be paid? And also we will like to get a complete list of all the persons hired in the Prime Minister's Office with respect to these contract positions and their terms of engagement? And, Mr. Chairman, I would like us to conclude the Sub-Head of 16 as we did this morning—we finish one item before we go on to the other one, otherwise we get confused. So I await my answers on 16 before I proceed.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes, the CPO sets the terms and conditions of employment. Right? Any listing of the persons contracted would come later, Chair. We are going to provide that information.

**Dr. Rowley:** Can we expect that before we finish the examination of the budget on day five? Thank you. What about the procedure for—before I do that, is the Acting Prime Minister telling us that all the persons employed by the Prime Minister's Office and who are being paid there now, that their terms have been set by the CPO? That is what I heard.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Well—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** He said the terms are set by the CPO. I am asking, is that a definitive statement?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Well, contract positions will carry terms and conditions which are determined by the CPO, and accepted by the particular Minister.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is there any person in the Prime Minister's Office who is now being paid by the Prime Minister's Office, whose terms have not been set by the CPO?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I could not answer that at this point.

**Dr. Rowley:** Would you undertake to check that for us, please?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you. And with respect to how persons are selected, could you give us an idea as to how these persons are selected to fill these contract positions?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** We would normally advertise and we would examine such applicants as fit the bill that we are seeking to fill.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to proceed to Sub-Head 19, Official Entertainment, and to be able to do that, Mr. Chairman, I happen to know that the approximate expenditure on official entertainment at the Prime Minister's Office in the not too distant past was in the order of \$5 million, \$5—\$5½ million. In fact, in 2010 that figure was \$5½ million. I see a substantial provision being made now for official entertainment. It has grown from \$5 million to \$7.6 million in 2013, \$9 million in 2014, and we are making another provision for \$9 million. This is, Mr. Chairman, almost a 100 per cent increase, I would say approximately 4—you know, it is a significant increase, almost a doubling of the cost in a time when we are supposed to be in some modicum of austerity.

And as I asked the Ministry of Finance and the Economy this morning, is there any inclination of an intention anywhere in the Government to curb expenditure or is it just general increases across the board? Because official entertainment has grown in the Prime Minister's Office from \$5½ million to \$9 million levelling out on a repeat of that. So I would like to hear from the Prime Minister what exactly is driving this high entertainment cost at the Prime Minister's Office?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I am sure that we can investigate this and bring the details, but I am also very certain that we have been celebrating all of our national festivals and important occasions contrary to what would have pertained before 2010.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, so we will get a breakdown of the expenditure for 2014 and the proposals for 2015 to justify the request for \$9 million.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** And we move on to 22, Short Term Employment. So we have a provision for Contract Employment of \$13 million, but over and above that, under Sub-Head 22, we have another provision of \$4 million for short-term employment. What exactly does short-term employment mean in this situation? And who is to be hired under that short term employment requiring that \$4 million? And how do you proceed to obtain those persons to be placed in those positions?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** There is a note here which says, short term or evolving employment in specific government departments and agencies, where each employee's term does not exceed six months.

**Dr. Rowley:** I know that, but the question I am asking—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Mc Leod:**—and before contracts are approved, some persons are taken on short term before contracts are approved.

**Dr. Rowley:** What I am asking is specific to the Prime Minister's Office, who are these people that you are hiring on short term where you require \$4 million to hire them? What do they do? Who are these people?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Mr. Cooper. *[Laughter]* *[The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor]*

**Dr. Rowley:** And while I am on that, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the contracted officers from the \$13 million, how many for those persons are working for the *Voice* newspaper, part-time or full-time?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I do not know that any one of us could answer that question.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, maybe you should, because—I am just—we are on the record here, Mr. Chairman, I am asking, is there anybody in the Prime Minister's Office, who is on the State's payroll, who has any involvement in the production of the *Voice* newspaper.

**2.40 p.m.**

**Mr. Mc Leod:** As far as I am aware, no.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think the Member for Diego Martin Central wanted to raise a point and then Member for—

**Miss Mc Donald:** Port of Spain South.

**Mr. Chairman:** You wanted to raise a point? Yes. You can now speak and then Member for Port of Spain South.

**Dr. Browne:** Just a clarification. It is a sub-item that is coming up time and time again. I just want to know what house rates are. Maybe you can just clarify. You are seeing it under Finance as well.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is 07. You just identify the—

**Mr. McLeod:** House rates. There is a note that says:

All House Rates due on Government properties and payable to City and Borough Corporations.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, these things are all detailed in the front, so if you go front of the document, you will see what these things mean, rather than—there are many other matters that we can deal with that are more pressing than matters that are already published in the document.

**Dr. Browne:** I appreciate the explanation. Thank you.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes. Item 23, Fees; that \$10 million. There is no explanation for it. Could the hon. Acting Prime Minister give me an explanation as to that \$10 million? Exactly what is it about?

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, while the Acting Prime Minister is considering that answer, I would like to join that question with respect to the root of this expenditure and I observed that in 2013, the Prime Minister's Office expended \$30 million in fees; then a further \$14 million in 2014, and now a provision is being made of \$10 million. If we go to page xiii, under the explanation for what fees are—are you with me?—xiii, at the front of the document, Item 23, fees, and my understanding as here fees are:

“Sequestering of Jurors, Prison Chaplain, Jury Fees, slaughtering fees, funeral expenses for unclaimed bodies, examination fees, audit fees, legal fees, brokerage fees, licences and anti-virus agreements.”

Now, those are the categories of activities or similar kinds of things that cover fees. I would like the Acting Prime Minister to tell us: what did the Prime Minister's Office spend \$30 million on in 2013 coming forward and a further \$24 million later, including a \$10 million for 2015? What exactly did you pay for here?

**Mr. McLeod:** I am advised that they involve legal fees for the commissions of enquiry into Clico, HCU and the 1990 coup attempt.

**Dr. Rowley:** Again, is the Acting Prime Minister aware that we have been told, from another department in the Government, that those fees that were



payable were from that department, namely the Attorney General's Office, where significant increases, which we will come to later on. We have appropriated over \$100 million to the Attorney General's Office to cover fees. There are two categories of fees in that Ministry and we were led to believe that those, as mentioned by the Acting Prime Minister a moment ago, came in for commissions of enquiries and legal arrangements, and were being paid for under those allocations.

When we challenged the AG's Office with respect to the growth in the expenditure, we were told that the main driving component was commissions of enquiry. Are we now hearing that there were two sources of payment to lawyers for the commissions of enquiry, whichever they were and, namely, the Clico enquiry? Then, I will ask: why are fees being paid for the Clico enquiry out of the Prime Minister's Office and not the AG's Office? I would like to ask that of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, but we are talking to the Prime Minister's Office now.

**Mr. McLeod:** Commissions of enquiry, Chair, would normally come under the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Dr. Rowley:** In which case, I will then ask another question: why, then, were we being told that the increase in the Office of the Attorney General—but we will come to that later on.

But, of course, we would like to ask two things: a list of what we spent in 2014; who got those moneys? What were they paid for? What we received for those payments? And what we anticipate to be expended in 2015 and on what?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 31, Expenses of Prime Minister's establishment. Can we get a breakdown?

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Just hold on. We are coming back to that. We have not reached that one yet.

**Dr. Rowley:** We have some issues on Item 27, Official Overseas Travel. Mr. Chairman, again I want to draw to the attention of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, by way of the Prime Minister's Office. Now, we are operating a budget that has a multibillion dollar deficit and we are not seeing any attempt to curb expenses which ought to and can be curbed.

Mr. Chairman, I make this against the background where overseas travel in 2008 was \$2.2 million; 2010, \$3.5 million; 2013, \$2.4 million, in the Prime

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Minister's Office—and this is just the Prime Minister's Office overseas travel, eh—2013, \$2.4 million; 2014, \$5.8 million. They budgeted \$6.5 million, but could not manage to get the planes in time, so the spending was \$5.8 million. So the Ministry of Finance and the Economy budgeted \$6 million in 2015.

So even though \$6.5 million was budgeted in 2014 and they could not manage to get more than \$5.8 spent in a period of required austerity, they are budgeting \$6 million for overseas travel in the Prime Minister's Office. I think this represents an attitude where nobody is paying attention to the fact, at the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, that we are spending more than we are earning and there are areas that require curbing and these kinds of expenses can be curbed without damaging the people's interest. So I am asking the Prime Minister's Office whether the Office of the Prime Minister is prepared to curb this expenditure in this budget.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, I just want to be very clear, from you, that this process we are engaged in is a process of posing questions based on the Estimates before us, or is it a process where Members are allowed to make observations, inferences and political statements? If the latter holds, Members on this side of the House are quite prepared to enter into this conversation. I was of the impression, and those of us on this side, that this process is used to ask pointed questions on the Estimates and subheadings before us. If Members are going to make political commentary, the Government is prepared to participate in that as well.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I specifically asked the Acting Prime Minister whether his Ministry is prepared to curb this expense against the background of what I demonstrated is the growth of the expenditure over a period of time and all my references are from the documents in front of me, the budget documents.

So, with all due respect to my colleagues, I have not strayed from the budget documents. The budgetary process, as I understand it, is a request for more money and the Office of the Prime Minister is asking for \$6 million for overseas travel for that office, and I am asking the Acting Prime Minister whether, in the context of what it has been before, and where it has gone, we cannot restrain that expenditure a bit in 2015.

**Mr. McLeod:** Chair, I wish to assure this honourable House that this Government is committed to running the business of Government as cost effectively as possible.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We are going on to sub—No, I think that the Member for La Brea has a point that he would like to raise.

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**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 31, Expenses of Prime Minister's Establishment, \$24 million in 2010. Can we get a breakdown of that figure?

**Mr. Chairman:** Twenty when?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** \$24 million in—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** 2015.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** No, 2013; no 2014.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** The 2014 estimate and 2015—

**Mr. Jeffrey:** 2015, yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, it is 2014 you are asking. What are you asking?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** For a breakdown of the \$24 million for the estimate in 2015.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Acting Prime Minister, a breakdown of the estimates for 2015, for the establishment—2014/2015, “nuh”.

**Mr. McLeod:** We have taken note of the question and we will investigate it and provide as much information as we can.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Before we move on from 31, the documents in front of us indicate that the Expenses of Acting Prime Minister's Establishment are levelling out at \$24 million a year. Could the Acting Prime Minister tell us exactly what is covered by that \$24 million under Household and if any of that expenditure relates to the Prime Minister's activities outside of the Prime Minister's household at St. Ann's?

Are we going to get—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, well, I am waiting on the acting Prime Minister.

**Mr. McLeod:** The number that we have there does not include anything outside of the Prime Minister's household.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, you have asked that we give you a breakdown.

**Dr. Rowley:** The question I was asking is whether any of this expenditure relates to the Prime Minister's occupancy of anything outside of St. Ann's.

**Mr. Chairman:** And he said no. That is what the acting Prime Minister said. No.

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**Dr. Rowley:** It is listed—I have to be very clear what question I ask and what answer I get. We are talking about the Prime Minister’s establishment and he said it does not involve anything outside the Prime Minister’s household. I am asking: household geographically, outside of St. Ann’s. I did not get an answer to that.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** It does not involve anything outside of the Prime Minister’s establishment, which I understand to be the household at St. Ann’s.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, under 65, Expenses of Cabinet appointed Bodies, sub 65, specific sub-head 65, I was a little surprised a moment ago when I raised the issue of fees and the Government, in attempting to explain the allocation for fees in the Prime Minister’s Office, told us that fees under sub-sub 23 is for payment of the Clico commission of enquiry when in fact we have a specific sub-head of 65, specific to commissions of enquiry. Are we double counting or were we misled under 23? Could the Government review this now and tell us whether that answer to 23 was a correct answer?

**Mr. Mc Leod:** I am advised, Chair, that this number deals with staff.

**Dr. Rowley:** Which number?

**Mr. Mc Leod:** 65, and 23 is fees essentially for counsel and so on.

**2.55 p.m.**

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I think I understand the English language very clearly. Under Sub-head 65 it says “Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies”, and if you go to the explanation section you will see “65(iii)” and it says. “Expenses of Commissions of Enquiry” \$5 million.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** What are we being told now about staff in this matter? It is either that money is expended in the context of payment to a commission of enquiry. That is how I understand that. But we were told earlier on, under 23, that the \$10 million had to do with payment for the Clico enquiry. I do not know, maybe I should ask: did the Prime Minister’s Office take on staff in the context of the Clico enquiry? Because if the answer is no, then what we are being told here cannot be correct.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** If we read further Chair, you will see that expenses of cabinet appointed bodies involve all expenses other than remuneration of committees, secretariats and other such bodies appointed by Cabinet for specific purposes.

**Dr. Rowley:** So what does that mean? The question remains unanswered, because we are being told that two heads, 23 and 65—one with \$10 million; one with \$100 million—and they both relate to payments for commissions of enquiry. Could someone clarify that? Could the Acting Prime Minister clarify that for us because that to me, Mr. Chairman, requires clarification?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** But even so Chair, at 23, we have what?—\$10 million?—and the explanation at 65 talks to \$5 million for commissions of enquiry.

**Dr. Rowley:** So we have 10 on one hand and five on the other hand, and what I am asking is: why is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy providing two sets of moneys in the same Sub-head for same purpose?—if we are to believe what they are telling us.

Mr. Chairman, it is my view and I would like to hold it out to the Government that there might have been an error with respect to the answer of 23. It cannot be, in the budgeting process, that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy will make \$10 million available in line 23 and then make \$5 million available in line 65 for the same purpose. I would rather think that there was an error in the answer under 23.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** And Chair, if you check on line 09, you will see Remuneration to Chairman and Members of Commissions of Enquiry under Personnel Expenditure. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rowley:** I draw your attention to page 52 under 01—09, so this just further complicates the issue. That means that there are three places in the Prime Minister's Office with money for commissions of enquiry. So no wonder we have this money submitted for enquiries now. [*Laughter*]

**Miss Mc Donald:** Mr. Chairman, could I ask a question? Under the new Standing Orders, can you request that the PS answer a question if the PS is required?

**Mr. Chairman:** If the Minister allows him.

**Miss Mc Donald:** If the Minister allows him.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, could I just ask a question on this?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

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**Mr. Imbert:** I gather from what is being said that under personnel 09, you pay the commissioners; under Goods and Services, whichever one it was, the one with the \$10 million, that is 23, you pay the lawyers; and under 65 you pay for the building with the staff—the palantypists, the secretary—so you have the expenses for these things built up in three different places. Is that what is going on, Mr. Acting Prime Minister? Commissioners one way, lawyers the next way and secretarial and support staff the third way? “Da is wah going on?”

**Mr. McLeod:** In dealing with what is before us.

**Mr. Imbert:** The answer is yes. I am not hearing you, Mr. Acting Prime Minister. The PS is saying yes, but I am not hearing you. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Could we proceed? I think that you have clarified the issue.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am taking “yes” from the Permanent Secretary then. No problem. I would take the yes from the Permanent Secretary.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, any further clarification on—?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am still on 65, Sub-head 65, which contains under (i) the explanations that \$93 million of that \$100 million is for the National Security Council. Again, Mr. Chairman, I have to express my concern about the growth of the public expenditure in this way, because in 2010 that National Security Council was really using up \$55 million.

In 2014, we budgeted \$116 million for the National Security Council—from \$55 million to \$116 million. We now revised the 2014 estimates and we revised it downwards to \$80 million. What then is the justification for budgeting \$100 million or \$90 million in 2015? Are we guided by the actual numbers of 2014? What is happening in the National Security Council, which is an administrative body as far as I am aware—what is happening to cause the budget to have grown in that way in this period of difficulty?

**Mr. Chairman:** Acting Prime Minister.

**Hon. McLeod:** Chair, the National Security Council is not as slight as is being made out. It is a most important security council, and we would have included administrative expenses. Yeah? We would have certain intelligence issues and so on. It involves the acquisition of important equipment and specialist training of persons and so on. Chair, I do not know, and I stand to be corrected. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Listen, listen, please.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I stand to be corrected. I do not know that national security issues are issues that should be so glibly discussed and so on, only perhaps to score political points. I am not going to be drawn into that at all.

**Mr. Chairman:** I would say operational matters ought not to be discussed here. Operational matters—that is not our business. There is a national security committee and even when you are coming to these matters, the committee could decide if they want to hear these things in camera. We are not here dealing with operational matters. So I think that must be made abundantly clear. But I think what the Member for Diego Martin West is asking, he is asking, for instance—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, may I?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am not aware that I made any request here for any operational details. I am not aware that the National Security Council is anything other than an administrative body. And in 2010, whatever the National Security Council's terms of reference were in 2010, it is my view, it remains the same now—the National Security Council—which is a coordinating body of our operational arms chaired by the Prime Minister. Whatever they were doing in 2010 it costs this country \$55 million. That is a fact.

Then, whatever they did or intended to do, I never asked for any details about it. So to make reference to glib statements, I understand the jibe to mean something else besides other than my colleague's interpretation. They intended to do something or things in 2014, and they budgeted \$116 million. They have now revised that budget downwards to \$80 million. I am saying I would be guided by that going forward, and it is now \$90 million for 2015. What I expected was an explanation as to what is driving this growth rather than talking about scoring political points, because we are here examining a budget and if it is not to be examined here, then do not put it here and do not bring it here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Acting Prime Minister.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** I have taken note of what the hon. Member has suggested, Chair.

**Dr. Rowley:** And having taken note, Mr. Chairman, without exposing the State's national security apparatus and endangering the State: would the Office of the Prime Minister explain to us this growth in the National Security Council which as far as we are concerned is an administrative coordinating body? Is it an

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increase in staff; increase in equipment; payment to foreign agencies? That is not going to breach national security. It would simply tell us where the growth is taking place. Is that too much for the Parliament to ask?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Chair, we have had to deal with the prisons grabbers and jammers; baggage screening equipment; we have to deal with the defence force strategic services agencies. Right now there is a campaign dealing with criminal gangs and so on, and these matters, I am advised, are essentially responsible for the kind of numbers that you see us putting forward.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We cannot spend all day on one matter.

**Mr. Imbert:** I only have a few things in the Prime Minister's whole head to ask, and this was one of them. Are you saying that the Prime Minister's Office through the National Security Council is handling some law enforcement issues? Is that what you are saying, or some expenses that would naturally be attributed to law enforcement?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** The Minister of National Security would assist with that.

**Hon. Griffith:** Mr. Chairman, the National Security Council is, indeed, and quite rightly so, it is an administrative body, but they are also used as a conduit towards the acquisition of very technical and highly sophisticated equipment for the Ministry of National Security, and I would give you a simple example.

The veering system, in May 2010, four days before the election, the veering system was actually approved by the National Security Council at a cost of \$100 million. So the National Security Council is, indeed, used as a conduit towards the acquisition of specific national security assets. What we can do, Acting Prime Minister, is that you can get a comprehensive breakdown of the administrative cost and the operational cost and the operational cost may well include things such as the jammers and grabbers and intelligence aspects, but we cannot—for obvious national security reasons—divulge the specifics of the equipment. I do not know if that would suffice.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, that is all we were asking. That is what we were asking for. We are not asking for details of national security elements. We are not that irresponsible. This exercise is not for that. So if you will provide us with that, we will be very grateful.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. So we are going on to minor equipment.



**3.10 p.m.**

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman, I have a question on this Sub-Head.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which Sub-Head is that?

**Dr. Browne:** Goods and Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which Item? Which Sub-Item?

**Dr. Browne:** The question is with respect to Security Services, 43, and the Acting Prime Minister indicated earlier in response to a question that none of the expenditure here, or the allocations here, reflects costs associated with any location apart from St. Ann's or the physical Office of the Prime Minister. I just want to be clear that with respect to this increase in expenditure on security services for the OPM that none of that is associated with any location in south Trinidad or elsewhere. *[Interruption]* Well, I am asking now. Can you just be clear with the committee on that, please?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** My response is no.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, let us go on to Sub—

**Mr. Hypolite:** Mr. Chairman, I just have one and that deals with Sub-Head 37, Janitorial Services, whereby in 2013 we are looking at \$281,000, in 2014, \$200,000, but in 2015 we are looking at \$1.2 million, an increase of \$1 million. Can the Prime Minister indicate exactly what would cause that \$1 million increase in janitorial services? And, also, if he can indicate which janitorial company is being used for that?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yeah, Chair, I am advised that that contract came to an end at \$200,000 and they were on a month to month, under line 28, Other Contracted Services. So a new contract is budgeted for at \$1,282,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, let us go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration; 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are you? You are where?

**Mr. Imbert:** 04.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. So we are dealing with Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

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**Mr. Imbert:** I see a new item, Religious Organizations, \$50 million; could we get an explanation for that, please?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** That is representing the payment of grants to religious organizations.

**Mr. Imbert:** So was it somewhere else before because there was no allocation for it before?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Well, I understand that it used to come under the Minister of Ecclesiastical Services.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, they had no such Ministry. They had no Ministry of Ecclesiastical—anything. No, Sir, that is not possible.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** This is a new item?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, it is a brand new item—brand new. What is it for? And since you cannot tell us now, could you give us a breakdown of how this estimate of \$50 million was built up so we could see, you know, how you arrived at \$50 million. Ten million for the Maha Sabha?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, is the Prime Minister giving me an undertaking?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, he is taking note of it and then he will respond, so we are going to St. Joseph.

**Mr. Imbert:** Right, okay.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So, Chair, we will get a breakdown of the \$50 million. My follow-up question is, based on what the Acting Prime Minister said, that these are grants, does any other office of any other Ministry, in addition to this \$50 million grant, give religious bodies any further grants?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I could not answer that because that is not in the body of information that I have.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Acting Prime Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, I would like to know if this was advertised.

**Mr. Chairman:** What?

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**Miss Cox:** Concerning the grants to religious bodies, how is it distributed and was there some advertisement?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** No, this is an estimate for a new item for 2015.

**Miss Cox:** No, it is not.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yeah.

**Miss Cox:** How will it be disbursed?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I suspect that when religious bodies make requests and so on, they would be provided with—

**Miss Cox:** I understand that grants—there are some churches that have been receiving grants, so where was this coming from if this is a new item?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** This is the first time that we are budgeting for this issue, right. I am aware that a number of religious bodies, you know, for their particular festivity and so on, have been in receipt of contributions from the Government. Now, this is an attempt to formalize that whole thing going forward.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you Acting Prime Minister for that explanation. Based on your explanation what is the policy position now? What policy position have you adopted so that when a religious body comes for part of this grant they are told how to apply, what are the criteria? So when you are giving us a list of the breakdown, could you also tell us the policy decision driving this new initiative?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes, certainly.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we are going to Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize Diego Martin Central, Arouca/Maloney, Chaguanas West, Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** No, but on the previous one I had asked a question, you would recognize.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which one you had asked for?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Under Current Transfers, we were on Religious Organizations and I just wanted a clarification so that the amounts that were given to constituencies, when asked, to religious bodies of \$5,000 per church and at Christmas, and then at Divali and so on, under what Head were those done? For 2014?

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not think that would be followed you know.

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**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** For 2014? Sir, it is a valid—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, but that is not under OPM, that is not before us.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** It is under OPM that I have gotten those funds.

**Mr. Chairman:** You got it from OPM?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** That is what I am saying—yes, for 2014 and 2013.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you sure that is under OPM?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I am telling you, I have picked it up myself under OPM.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I am not crying but I am just asking you, both for 2013 and 2014, under what Head have these sums been extracted?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please. Could you take note of that particular and respond.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Certainly.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Diego Martin Central, Arouca/Maloney and Chaguanas West. [*Crosstalk*] The Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** Yes, Chairman, with respect to the Divine Echoes Orchestra, 08, there was no expenditure—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, please, Members.

**Dr. Browne:** There was no expenditure in 2014 after that group was disbanded previously and I am seeing an estimate of \$60,000 for 2015, I would like some detail on that, an explanation.

Secondly, with respect to the National Association of Administrative Professionals, there was a projection of \$1 million in 2014 which was not expended and I am seeing it back here again as a request for \$1 million. With respect to that NGO, I am informed that there is an NGO unit within the Government service, so why is the Office of the Prime Minister seeking this allocation of \$1 million for 2015?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** With regard to the \$60,000, it is an ex gratia payment to a former member of the band, Divine Echoes, and this is now being budgeted for. Yeah? And with regard to the National Association of Administrative Professionals, this is a commitment, I think—yes, a grant towards the building of their headquarters.

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**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Before you go on, I recognize Arouca/Maloney and then Chaguanas West.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I would like to give way to the Opposition Leader, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, well I will go to Chaguanas West, please.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could you give me some elaboration on how the figure was arrived at for the National Operations Center, \$355 million? How was it arrived at?

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are we?

**Mr. Warner:** Page 57, 009, line Item 10.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, under Other Transfers? Yes, the Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Griffith:** Sorry, Chairman, what was the question again?

**Mr. Warner:** I was asking, can you advise me how the figure of \$355 million was arrived at.

**Hon. Griffith:** Chairman, the National Operations Center is a communicational backbone, so the system for the National Operations Center involves a heavy IT system. It involves looking at technical ability and the capacity where real-time video footage, information, intelligence gathering, would all be fed into one specific area. A team was actually appointed to look at the requirements for Trinidad and Tobago for such a centre and it varied. In the United States, for example, their system for a National Operations Center dealt specifically with operations.

**Dr. Rowley:** It is a continent.

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, and that is incorrect, Trinidad and Tobago did not require that because that was based on operations. That is why, if you call, initially, it was a National Security Operations Center, and based on the understanding we have seen from international best practice and similar to the United Kingdom where they have the Cabinet officers briefing room, the National Operations Center is a system that is used for joint collaboration and communication between the different arms of the law enforcement agencies, hence the reason why it was placed under the National Security Council, which happens to be under the Office of the Prime Minister.

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So the cost for a system like this—it is really, as I said, it is a communicational backbone where it would involve a lot of technical aspects, IT. So it is not just a system of security cameras and televisions, it involves collaboration and information being fed and it will include cameras from the law enforcement officers being fed immediately, the cameras from the coast guard vessels, the radar, the UAVs; everything being fed to one agency, into one system, and the cost for this will vary between—we have seen different costs, vary between \$500 million to \$700 million, to \$800 million, so hence the reason for this. This will actually be over a two-year period but this year will be the initial costs to actually get the whole system up and running, and then after there it will improve further probably in 2015/2016.

**Mr. Warner:** Is this center housed in its own building?

**Hon. Griffith:** It is situated at the Knowsley Building.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. We are moving on.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, before we move on I just want to make a comment to the Acting Prime Minister who spoke about this ex gratia payment for the member of the band. I seem to recall that Divine Echoes was a band, a group of persons, how did the Prime Minister determine that one member of the band deserves an ex gratia payment? And was there any consideration for the rest of the band? Why is this member getting an ex gratia payment? What are the circumstances?

**Hon. McLeod:** I am advised, Sir, that the other members, because of the conditions of their employment, they received gratuity. This particular one, again, because of the conditions of his employment did not get gratuity so an ex gratia payment was advanced there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we are now going on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. The Member for Diego Martin North/East. Infrastructure Development Fund, you can raise that here.

**Mr. Imbert:** I can raise it now?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, of course.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, on page 238, 13, 06, F., Public Buildings, I see that no funds have been allocated for the restoration of Stollmeyer's Castle or Whitehall, and grass is growing out of Whitehall as we speak, so why is there no money for the restoration of Whitehall and Stollmeyer's Castle when there is a big sign up outside Whitehall saying, "Restoration Work in Progress"?

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**3.25 p.m.**

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I am advised we have nothing in that regard.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you are not refurbishing Whitehall and Stollmeyer's Castle in 2015? You are leaving the grass to grow out of the window?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** No I think that that will come under another Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** I see the Minister of Social Integration and National Diversity waving his hands, so I got the impression that it is now under your Ministry. So when it comes to his Ministry you will be able to respond. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go on to Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is the Acting Prime Minister saying that it should be dealt with elsewhere or should have been dealt with somewhere in the Estimates? Is that what he is saying?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$638,708,600 for Head 13, the Office of the Prime Minister, now stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 13 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** May I say that all the undertakings that the Acting Prime Minister and his accounting officer have given, have been duly noted. You will be communicated and you are expected to supply those responses before the end of the five-day period when we are supposed to end our exercise.

Thank you very much.

We now proceed to Head 48 Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications. [*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Are you able to conduct your affairs without your accounting officers?

**Hon. Bharath:** They are being brought downstairs apparently from the holding bay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I find they are taking very long to reach here. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*] Accounting officer and all the technical officers, there are chairs

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here. Who needs to sit can sit here, and the rest can sit in the back. There are chairs in the back.

*Head 48.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 48 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Head 48, Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, \$306,629,900. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes. Hon. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement? You can do so now.

**Hon. Bharath:** Thank you for the opportunity, Chairman. Everything that we have to account for as far as the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications is concerned, will be done in the budget debate to be held in the Upper House next week, as a result I have no further statement—any statements. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no; please, please.

No, I think you misunderstood me. You are entitled, as a Minister, if you want to give this Standing Finance Committee an overview of your priority areas as a Ministry. You are afforded the opportunity to do so within a five-minute time frame. If you choose not to, we will go immediately into the next step.

**Hon. Bharath:** Thank you, Chairman, and I am respectfully declining that opportunity.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, thank you very much.

Hon. Members, the sum of \$306,629,900 for Head 48, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Weights and Measures—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Thomas:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Which one are you under?

**Mrs. Thomas:** Item 01, Personnel Expenditure.



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**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Personnel Expenditure.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, under the explanation for Item 001, it says:

“Includes provision for vacant posts with incumbents.”

An increase of \$702,700. Mr. Chairman, I just want to know under what Heads currently are these incumbents paid. And then Item 08; Vacant Posts—Salaries and COLA without incumbents. There was an allocation of \$300,000 in 2014, and it was removed and is now allocated to 2015. If the Minister could identify when these positions will be filled, and if I can get a listing of the positions to be filled.

**Hon. Bharath:** If I may answer the second question first, Chairman. With regard to the Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA, \$300,000 without incumbents. Essentially, we have several posts that have not been filled simply because we have been awaiting, in many instances, review from the CPO with regard to these particular posts. That is the reason why in 2014 you would have seen that there was no actual expenditure in this area, but they have been brought forward again.

Many of these posts are technical posts that, in many instances, will require to be filled over a period of time, but we are awaiting Service Commission to be able to do that.

With regard to the first question you asked, which was provision for vacant posts with incumbents, I want to just refer to my—[*Interruption*] Member, just clarification, would you mind repeating the initial question, please?

**Mrs. Thomas:** What I am asking is, I see an increase of \$702,700 and the note says “Includes provision for vacant posts with incumbents”. These incumbents, under what Head are they being paid right now?

**Hon. Bharath:** Clearly they are acting, as you would appreciate, and they are being paid out of this Head.

**Mrs. Thomas:** So the increase represents what? [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** I think you all would come back to that one because we cannot waste time on matters like these.

Member for St. Ann’s East, they will respond to you later on.

Let us go on to Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate; Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division; Item 004, Research and Planning; Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit; Item 006, Communications.

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**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Chairman, I note that the actual Communications Division had been integrated, I think—or it was announced to be integrated into the Ministry sometime in 2013, but I noticed that there has been no expenditure under 2013/2014. Could you let me know, has this unit been set up? I want to know whether GISL is, at this time, still operating and whether it is actually doing the functions of this communications unit as well in the meantime. When was GISL established and assumed the functions of this division? Did you get me?

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes, I did. Essentially, the Communications Ministry was subsumed in the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications for budgetary purposes in the new financial year 2015. Prior to that, the expenditure for the communications unit was actually paid out of the Ministry of Public Administration, Head 70, and they shared certain functions with the Ministry of Public Administration.

So for budgetary purposes, the answer is it is now a part of the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications from 2015 onwards, with regard to expenditure and revenue.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** May I just ask then: Is the same GISL staff being retained?

**Hon. Bharath:** So that is your second question?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.

**Hon. Bharath:** As you may know, under the previous regime, GISL and CNMG were set up, essentially bypassing the Information Services Division in the Ministry of Information at the time. That unit has remained; their work has been refocused and redirected. GISL's mandate is slightly different, although I have to admit that there is some duplication that we are looking at right now.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** My concern is for the duplication of work by GISL and the communications unit.

**Hon. Bharath:** It is not as much as it would have been maybe two years ago. What we are doing clearly is dealing with public servants in the Information Division.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, just for clarity, could the Minister indicate the actual location of the communications unit, please?

**Hon. Bharath:** The actual physical location? The fifth floor of Nicholas Towers.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are going on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001 General Administration—yes.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 16. In Sub-Item 16 under contract employment, we saw that there has been a significant increase in the allocation for contract employment. More specifically, \$12 million has been allocated for this fiscal. Mr. Chair, we would like to know if the Minister could give us a breakdown in terms of the number of contract positions and if he can tell us the projected number of positions to be filled.

**3.40 p.m.**

**Hon. Bharath:** Okay. In the Ministry of Communications there are 68 positions that are not filled currently out of—*[Minister confers with advisor]* how many in total? *[Crosstalk]* Where is the total? Yeah. Yeah. Out of a total number of positions at the Ministry of Communications of 143, there are 68 unfilled positions. And the reason that they have not been filled is because they require a certain level of technical ability, technical producers, and technical directors and so on, and so those positions have not been filled. However, there are also some positions in the Ministry of Trade, for example, that require a special degree of speciality, the “single electronic window”, for example, is a good one, whereby we have had to go out and get contract workers. But I cannot tell you off the top of my head which are the contract positions, but we can provide you with a listing of those positions in due course.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We go to item Weights and Measures Inspectorate—*[Crosstalk]* Yes. Yes. All right.

**Dr. Rowley:** Before we move on from Sub 16—

**Mr. Chairman:** Right.

**Dr. Rowley:**—these significant expenditure on contract employment which would have moved from \$8 million in 2013 to \$10 million in 2014, and is now to move to \$12 million in 2015, how are these people hired? What procedure is used to fill these positions? And what have we been getting for the expenditure, for example of 2014? What has been the output of this department?

**Hon. Bharath:** Thank you, hon. Leader of the Opposition. The procedure and process is no different to what it has always been. We have essentially maintained the existing procedures which is a Cabinet Note, followed by an advertisement, a full advertisement of the job with the required qualifications, experience and expertise that would be necessary to do that job. An interview is then held, a

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marking system of course, is in place, and we would have referees or interviewers, cross Ministry, Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry itself, GISL sometimes, but would represent wide stakeholders, and then they do a marking which subsequently will provide the person who is best suited for those jobs.

**Dr. Rowley:** Does this apply to all the contract officers or just some contract officers?

**Hon. Bharath:** Let me confirm, but I believe it should be all. Yes. I am told it is all.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Chair—

**Mr. Chairman:** Just now.

**Dr. Rowley:** That being so, so you are telling this Parliament that no person has been hired in the communications department who was not the subject of a public advertisement?

**Hon. Bharath:** Not to my knowledge.

**Dr. Rowley:** But if that does come to your knowledge, what would be your reaction?

**Hon. Bharath:** To enquire as to why the process was bypassed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** No. I do not want to say anything.

**Mr. Chairman:** Who wanted to ask? [*Crosstalk*] Oh, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

**Hon. Bharath:** Mr. Chairman, just to clarify something. You may know that there is a practice whereby the Permanent Secretary has the authority to hire on short-term employment for a period of three months, and there may be a few of those in, I suspect, all Ministries across Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** Exactly what Ministries?

**Hon. Bharath:** I suspect that that is a practice that would have been started many years ago and would have continued.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is the Permanent Secretary here with you now?

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes. Could you find out from the Permanent Secretary whether that has been occurring?

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**Hon. Bharath:** [*Minister confers with advisor*] Do we have any short term? Okay. Yes. I am told that we do have a few contract—sorry—short-term contract employees.

**Dr. Rowley:** How many persons and specifically what are they doing there?

**Hon. Bharath:** Okay. We can get that information for you. He does not have it at hand.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, before you run off. Before you run off. We would like, before the completion of the exercise, that we get a listing of all the persons in the communications department—this is to this Sub-Head—

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:**—who are on the payroll as contract officers, short term or longer term contract officers, their terms of reference, the date relating to their hiring.

**Hon. Bharath:** Sure.

**Dr. Rowley:**—and what exactly—

**Mr. Chairman:** We are dealing with General Administration. Communications is Item 006, if you look on your listing here. So let us not confuse—

**Dr. Rowley:** Contract employment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. But I am saying, in terms of what you are making reference to, we have not reached that as yet.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, help me, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which page are you on?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on 006 Sub-Head sub 02/16, on page 259. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** We are dealing with General Administration. I think you should hold your fire on that for later.

**Dr. Rowley:** It is not fire.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well hold your point. [*Laughter*] I want to recognize the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Chair, short-term contracts apart, could the Minister state what is the average length of these contracts?

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**Hon. Bharath:** Two years.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Two years.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Could we proceed to Item 002, Weights and Measures.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, madam.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Item 44/27 Official Overseas Travel—

**Mr. Chairman:** Official Overseas Travel.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:**—there has been an exponential increase for 2015, more than a hundred per cent.

**Mr. Chairman:** Overseas Travel.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Could you detail what these visits are about? It is an increase of more than a hundred per cent.

**Hon. Bharath:** I am just trying to get the—[*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Moonilal:** What number is it?

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes. You wanted to get and—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes. There has been an exponential increase—

**Hon. Bharath:** As you would appreciate, what has happened is that, I have had the opportunity, and the Ministry would have had the opportunity on many occasions to talk about our diversification programme. Part of that diversification programme is to allow our exporters to get new markets, to increase their economies of scale. As a result, during the course of the last two years, the Government has signed several bilateral trade agreements with countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Dominican Republic, and that essentially would be to continue that work, for officers of the Ministry to continue to travel to do that work.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, that does not answer the question. In 2014, the expenditure was about \$2 million.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is budgeted at \$5 million for 2015.

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**Hon. Bharath:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are not continuing anything. You are more than doubling your overseas travel.

**Hon. Bharath:** We are continuing that and intensifying the work that we have been doing.

**Mr. Imbert:** Does this include the Minister's travel?

**Hon. Bharath:** Does this include the Minister's travel? Of course, it does. Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are going to be travelling as well?

**Hon. Bharath:** Well, the Ministry you find, if I am mandated by the Ministry to attend mandatory, I will, of course. [*Crosstalk*]. If it is necessary and required.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are not serious.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You want to go?

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, okay. Let us move on. Item 002, Weights and Measures.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are you? On Weights and Measures?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** No, but I am not finished with Goods and Services. You are moving very quickly. And I am on 66.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. Would you please provide—I do not believe that you will be able to give to us now—a detailed breakdown of conferences, seminars and functions, and what is the purpose of these, each of these, and the cost as well for each of these, and what are the expected benefits from these conferences?

**Hon. Bharath:** I do not have the breakdown with me, but clearly the purpose of it would be to promote Trinidad and Tobago companies and its products, that would be the primary purpose for this, and it would include in many instances, the worked of investTT and exporTT on foreign markets.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Could I have a breakdown, please.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes, of course.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate. Item 003 Consumer Affairs Division. Where are you, Member for Chaguanas West?

**Mr. Warner:** Item 003.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 003. Yes. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you tell me how 03/66, differs from 02/66, I mean, in terms of the label? I know the amount is different, but I see you have the same—

**Hon. Bharath:** Essentially, Member, it is a separate division—we have compartmentalized it to highlight the varying sectors of the Ministry that would be utilizing hosting of conferences. So for example here, it is a division called Weights and Measures Inspectorate, and that is their—sorry—Consumer Affairs Division, and that is their allocation for hosting of conferences. Similarly, the one previously would have related to Communications which would have been the one the previous Member was speaking about which was the \$4.2 million. And you will see that fair trading would have a similar breakdown of its expenditure and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We are going to Item 004, Research and Planning. Item 005, Consumer Affairs Outreach and Protection Unit. Item 006 Communications. Member of Parliament, Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was trying to draw you along, caught up in—02/006 of Sub-Head 16, Contract Employment \$3.9 million. There was no provision under this head—

**Mr. Chairman:** Which page?

**Hon. Bharath:** Where are we?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on 02/16.

**Mr. Chairman:** Good. Thanks. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Sub-Head 006, sub 16.

**Hon. Bharath:** Right.

**Dr. Rowley:** Yes. I was saying that, prior to this allocation for 2015, we did not have a provision for contract employment. What explains this \$3.9 million for 2015?

**Hon. Bharath:** Well remember, hon. Member, that the Ministry of Communications was brought across to the Ministry of Trade, Investment and



Development for budgetary purpose in 2015, so that would have fallen under another head, Head 70 previously.

**Dr. Rowley:** And what is that figure?

**Hon. Bharath:** Previously?

**Dr. Rowley:** Has it been increased? Has it remained the same?

**Hon. Bharath:** I will see if I can dig it for you.

**Dr. Rowley:** Whilst you are looking, I have the floor with your permission?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Permit me, Mr. Chairman, to jump ahead, since I have the floor—

**Mr. Chairman:** Right.

**Dr. Rowley:**—to make things flow a bit faster. I have another comment on Sub-Head 62, Promotions, Publicity, and Printing. And I want to ask the Minister, whether this \$6.1 million, that is provision for 2015, a similar question, how does it relate to what was there before in the previous year? And secondly, I want to ask, who controls this budget for the promotion? Who decides what is promoted, and who get these contracts and how are these contracts issued?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Communications.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am at 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes. Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are with Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

**Hon. Bharath:** Okay. The answer to your previous question with regard to contract employment, the figure previously was \$4 million, \$3,972,000; and was brought forward.

**Dr. Rowley:** Hold one second. So approximately \$4 million.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes. And it is now \$3.9 million. So it has not been increased.

**Dr. Rowley:** Yeah. But there are bodies in these positions, right?

**Hon. Bharath:** These are provisions.

**Dr. Rowley:** There are bodies in these positions?

**Hon. Bharath:** In some of them, yes.

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**Dr. Rowley:** Well I was asking earlier on, before I jumped ahead of the Chair—

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:**—I was asking for a breakdown of the positions that are available—

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:**—these contract officers, their terms of engagement—

**Hon. Bharath:** Sure.

**Dr. Rowley:**—when they were engaged, and—

**Hon. Bharath:** And we can provide it.

**Dr. Rowley:**—yes. Of course, we would also want to know who set the terms for these people, both this group and the short-term?

**Hon. Bharath:** Sure.

**Dr. Rowley:** So we could move to 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. And I am asking, who controls this budget, and who makes the decision as to where the promotion money goes and the publicity money, and how are contracts awarded in this Sub-Head?

**Hon. Bharath:** Well clearly at the end of the day, it would be the Permanent Secretary who would be responsible for making ultimate decisions as far as the Ministry is concerned. Proposals would be determined based on the strategic plan of the Ministry which would determine what types of Promotions, Publicity and Printing the Ministry engages itself in. What would normally happen, as has been in the case, it would then go out for tender, and those tenders would come in and they would be assessed.

**3.55 p.m.**

**Dr. Rowley:** There is a programme that is force feeding the country at the moment called, “Your Government working for you”, is any of that programme funded from this head or any similar head in your Ministry?

**Hon. Bharath:** Which particular programme are you speaking of?

**Dr. Rowley:** The one where, wherever you turn your face there is somebody telling you the Government is working for you, whether on cable, or on the

billboard, or on the newspaper, or wherever, “Your Government is working for you”, there is a programme.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes, it is called, “Voices”.

**Dr. Rowley:** Voices?

**Hon. Bharath:** Voices.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is that a state-funded programme?

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes, it is.

**Dr. Rowley:** Where is that funded from?

**Hon. Bharath:** The Ministry of Communications.

**Dr. Rowley:** And the accounting officer there is the Permanent Secretary, I presume?

**Hon. Bharath:** Quite correct.

**Dr. Rowley:** Are you telling us that the Permanent Secretary is in charge of a programme of political force feeding?

**Hon. Bharath:** Well, we do not believe it is political force feeding. This is telling the population what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is doing for them. That is the Ministry's mandate to inform the population of the goods and services provided by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of who the Government is.

**Dr. Rowley:** So, I presume that, had taxpayers' millions not been spent on telling the people who go to the hospital, who was doing it, and telling the farmer who paid his flood cheque and similar things, had we not as taxpayers paid money to tell them that it was their Government doing it, they might have assumed it was the Government of Grenada.

**Hon. Bharath:** No, the fact is, every organization engages in advertising its goods and services.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I object to the Member for Chaguanas East referring to me as stupid in this House. *[Interruption]* Excuse me? Mr. Chairman, I am not laughing. I object to the Member for Chaguanas East in his last few days in this House referring to my intervention as stupid.

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not know if these are his last few days.

**Dr. Rowley:** I know that.

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**Mr. Chairman:** You may know that, I do not know that, but—[*Interruption*] I need no help. [*Laughter*] Member for Chaguanas East, if you did make that remark, I ask you to withdraw it.

**Mr. Cadiz:** Withdrawn.

**Mr. Chairman:** Good. Let us continue, please. And no further comment, Member. You should direct all your comments to me now.

**Dr. Rowley:** You want me to tell you what I was going to tell him?

**Mr. Chairman:** Do not say anything except—go to your book and “leh we deal with your things there.” Nothing else. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, definitely.

**Dr. Rowley:** I appreciate your—

**Mr. Chairman:** We have to cool the temperature here.

**Dr. Rowley:** I appreciate your expert guidance.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go.

**Dr. Rowley:** Let me get back to my friend, the Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications. So, we were talking about Promotions, Publicity and Printing and I was getting clear from you that that Voices Programme is directed by the Permanent Secretary in your Ministry.

**Hon. Bharath:** It is directed out of the strategic plan of the Ministry, the accounting officer clearly would be responsible for that.

**Dr. Rowley:** But the question I did ask is who is responsible for the budget, and I am told it is the Permanent Secretary.

**Hon. Bharath:** The Permanent Secretary is responsible for the budget in every Ministry I assume.

**Dr. Rowley:** Yes, I understand. We can move on.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, so we are going on now to Item 007, Freedom of Information.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 28, I would like the Minister to provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be provided under this particular

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Item, Other Contracted Services and, if he could indicate to us the list of service providers and the selection process?

**Mr. Chairman:** Did you hear that, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Bharath:** I did, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you respond to that?

**Hon. Bharath:** Not at this point in time. Chairman, I came prepared to answer questions relating to large amounts of money. I would assume those would have been the more important ones. This relates to an expenditure of \$300,000, am I correct?

**Miss Hospedales:** No.

**Hon. Bharath:** I will give you my assurance—

**Miss Hospedales:** On page 263, I am referring to, Sub-Item 28.

**Mr. Chairman:** \$1.265 million. That is under Other Contracted Services, not so?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, \$1,265,000.

**Hon. Bharath:** I thought we had moved on to Freedom of Information, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** No.

**Hon. Bharath:** We are still on Communications, are we?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we are moving on after that particular intervention to Freedom of Information.

**Hon. Bharath:** But we are happy to provide you with the information, Member.

**Miss Hospedales:** Sure, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, Item 007, Freedom of Information Unit, any clarification? Member for La Brea, are you under Item 007?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 007.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Rent/Lease, 08, \$4 million. I find that seems to be quite a tidy sum. I would like to find out whether or not the Ministry has explored the

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possibility of acquiring their own premises as opposed to be paying this \$4 million annually?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister.

**Hon. Bharath:** I am aware, Chairman, that the rental of Government premises falls under the portfolio and purview of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and I know that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development currently, and the Minister, of course, sitting next to me would be better placed to answer this question, but I know that they have engaged on an entire plan of rationalizing the buildings that Government rents. Because we are very aware that a lot of those buildings belong to people who may sometimes utilize those funds to fight against the Government of the day, regardless of who that might be. *[Interruption]* So, we want to ensure, Mr. Chairman—all joke aside—that the taxpayers of this country get value for money and so, therefore, I know that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is engaged in a rationalization exercise.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are going on to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, Item 006, Communications, Item 007, Freedom of Information. We go on now to Sub-Head—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I had my hand up. Are we allowed to raise discrepancies which were detailed in the report of the Auditor General here?

**Mr. Chairman:** No.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** We are not?

**Mr. Chairman:** No. Only if it is related to a particular item. You just cannot deal with the Auditor General's discrepancy, you know?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** No, not carte blanche, but in particular related to an item under General Administration. For instance 02: Office Equipment, and in the Auditor General's report there was a reported theft of computers and so on, so I wish to ask about that. Is this the place for it?

**Mr. Chairman:** I cannot speak for the Minister, but you raise your question and he will indicate whether he can answer.

**Dr. Rowley:** Chairman, procedure, again, because we are establishing groundwork here. I think the answer to that question has to be clarified. If we are budgeting and departments are asking for moneys to go forward, it has to be that

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how the moneys are spent become part of the discourse, and who reports on how the moneys have been spent for the Auditor General. So, if a Member of this House can cross-correlate statements or facts from the Auditor General's office about expenditure in a Ministry, it cannot be excluded from a request.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, but I am not saying no, but it has to be specific, and just remember, hon. Member—

**Dr. Rowley:** We are dealing with the Auditor General's report.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, we are dealing with all those documents that have been referred by the Minister of Finance and the Economy to the Standing Finance Committee. The Auditor General's Report is not one of those documents. However, I am saying to my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin, that if she has a question that is specific to the Auditor General's Report that could be related to what we are dealing with, she is entitled to raise that issue.

**Dr. Rowley:** And that is what I am saying, Mr. Chairman, we need to clarify that and let that be the ground rule—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I have clarified it.

**Dr. Rowley:**—and let there be no confusion over that. We are not debating the Auditor General's report.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are not doing that.

**Dr. Rowley:** Insofar as there is information, whether in the public domain or in those reports that have a bearing, a relevance to the numbers that we are dealing with, it should be allowed.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr Chairman, I also wanted to be very clear that the Members of the committee can ask their pointed questions on every single line item before us in the estimates, whether they touch on concern or not, the Auditor General's report, but I am very curious as to referencing that report and then having some type of debate on the report which is not before us. But every single item you want to touch may be in an estimate, in a line, that you are free to ask questions on.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I was just asking, there was a report of theft of computers—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Which item?

**Mr. Chairman:** Which item is that, please?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I am dealing with 02—I can put it under there—Minor Equipment Purchases, so I am asking why it had not been reported to the Comptroller of Accounts? Whether these items are now being replaced? Who is responsible for monitoring the inventory? And whether these items are now labelled, as required, with the Government mark, so that there is no reoccurrence of these thefts of large computer items?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Bharath:** Thank you, Chairman. There were some reported incidents of some laptops, I think, that were stolen from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment. Due to an oversight it was not reported to the Comptroller of Accounts and to the Auditor General, but was reported to the police. We have since corrected that, and in future in the unfortunate circumstances that there may be a theft, it will now be reported based on the procedure we have in place, to the Comptroller of Accounts, the Auditor General and the police, and the corporate services division of the Ministry has now taken direct responsibility with regard to monitoring and logging all assets of the Ministry.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Monitoring and logging.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we are dealing with Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001: Regional Bodies. We are dealing with Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003: United Nations Organizations; Item 004: International Bodies; Item 007: Households; Item 008: Subsidies; Item 009: Other Transfers.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Under Other Transfers, Member for Diego Martin West.

**Hon. Member:** Member for Diego Martin West?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Diego Martin West first, you will go after. Yes, hon. Member.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I am at sub 19. The Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation with a provision of \$3.7 million, what exactly is that for, personnel equipment, what is it?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Your following-up is on page 268.



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**Hon. Bharath:** I am informed, hon. Member, that relates to staffing levels, it relates to training, it relates to equipment that the single electronic window unit would require.

**Dr. Rowley:** Where is this unit located?

**Hon. Bharath:** In the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment, on level 09.

**Dr. Rowley:** How have these positions been filled?

**Hon. Bharath:** In the same way that I mentioned before. They are advertised with the required expertise and qualifications.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is the window fully staffed now?

**Hon. Bharath:** No. Is it fully staffed? [*Interruption*] Oh, apparently we are. It is completely staffed.

**Dr. Rowley:** On sub 20, Mr. Chairman—while I have your permission to have the floor—the Solar Energy Initiative came to us with great fanfare at earlier times and we did provide eleven point something million dollars, but I see there is no further—maybe thankfully—provision. What has happened with the provisions we made before and why is there no reference to them in the 2015 estimates?

**Hon. Bharath:** Okay, the studies have been completed, hon. Leader of the Opposition, we are currently in the process of engaging potential suppliers who would be in a position to actually get this business model up and running. There is a note before Cabinet and a presentation to be made to F&GP very shortly.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, our financial assistance to exportTT from 2013—

**Mr. Chairman:** What head?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Oh, sorry. 009 sub 01.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** From 2013 to 2015, exportTT would have drawn down approximately \$46 million. If you had to rate their performance, rate their success, how would you rate exportTT as far as fulfilling its mandate in drawing down \$46 million?

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**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr Chairman, the Member is asking the Minister to give an assessment of some rating performance and so on. Is that a specific question on the estimate?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** All right, sorry. On the Estimates then, hon. Minister, there is in the public domain that a Mr. Lewis was paid \$23,375 bonus to which he is not entitled, has that come from the financial assistance under this heading?

**Hon. Bharath:** Well, first of all let me say that Mr. Lewis was entitled to the bonus of up to two months' salary based on his contract with exportTT, so it is not true to say that he was not entitled.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay.

**Hon. Bharath:** I do want to answer the previous question with regard to—if I could just shed some light on their performance. Very recently, a benchmarking study at the request of exportTT was conducted by the ITC, the International Trade Centre, which is an organization—it is a joint agency between the World Trade Centre and the United Nations, and that benchmarking exercise was conducted purely so that exportTT could determine where they sat as a facilitating agency and, of course, they scored 44.2, which meant that they were operating at a satisfactory level.

**4.10 p.m.**

I want to say that, although they are operating at a satisfactory level, they also obtained the highest score for a facilitating agency in this part of the world. So they are not doing too badly, but at least they understood where—they used the benchmarking exercise to understand where they could actually increase their services to the population.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, but you open another can of worms. Are you saying that a rating of below 50 per cent is satisfactory?

**Hon. Bharath:** According to the ITC, yes.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** According to the ITC, okay, great. The sum of \$120,000 paid to one—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** I think you are going over five minutes. You only have one chance. You cannot be going on, but I will allow you to conclude—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** And then the Member for Chaguanas West, then I am going to the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then my friend.

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**Mr. Deyalsingh:** The sum of \$120,000 paid to groom Mr. Lewis, paid to Karen Ferreira, can you explain that, and could you also explain whether Mr. Lewis has refunded to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago moneys which he used to charge his hotel bill when in fact he was paid an allowance?

**Hon. Bharath:** Again, the second question first. Mr. Lewis used his credit card to pay for hotel bills. In fact, he had not received his allowance. His allowance did not come through. He paid for it by credit card and he subsequently reimbursed the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** He has not finished answering the question on the Government.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Bharath:** The contract for \$120,000 was paid to the lady that you mentioned. It is in keeping with what many organizations do with regard to training employees, further education and so on, and it was felt that Mr. Lewis could benefit from that training.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Would Mr. Lewis be returning any moneys now that he is no longer there and we have not gotten the benefit—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Bharath:** What do you mean he is no longer there?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Is he still employed there?

**Hon. Bharath:** Of course.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay, great, thank you.

**Mr. Warner:** Mr. Chairman, I have two questions. Very briefly, very quickly. In 2014 and again 2015, I think there is no allocation for e Teck. What does that have to say about your plan for business development? Why there is no location for it?

**Hon. Bharath:** What line item is that, I am sorry?

**Mr. Warner:** I am talking about 009/15.

**Hon. Bharath:** Oh, you will find that the allocations for e Teck would be in the Development Programme.

**Mr. Warner:** Okay.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we will come to that. So you may hold your point for the Development Programme—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Warner:** Next question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, continue.

**Mr. Warner:** Next question is under 18, what are you paying the Chamber of Commerce \$500,000 for? You are paying \$250,000 in 2013 and 2014 you are paying \$500,000.

**Hon. Bharath:** Hon. Member, it was a budget measure that the Minister of Finance and the Economy in 2014 had announced for both the TTMA and the Chamber of Commerce, to further encourage them to embark on expanding business opportunities in foreign markets. It is basically support, technical support.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I am referring to Sub-Item 03, Betting Levy Board. Mr. Chair, over \$21 million has been allocated for 2015, and I would like to ask the Minister why is there need for such a transfer considering the fact that the Betting Levy Board Act indicates that this particular board has to pay half of its money collected to the Consolidated Fund as well as the remaining half with respect to the operating expenses of their racing authority?

What oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure that the stipulating measures in the Act actually followed, and could you give us an update in terms of the status of the audited financial statements for this particular board?

**Hon. Bharath:** Thank you, Chairman. Essentially, the Betting Levy Board operates on the basis that it is supposed to give to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago 50 per cent of its take. However, for very many years now what has happened is that because the Betting Levy Board has not been collecting the taxes that they ought to be—the quantity that they have been collecting—they essentially hand the Government a cheque for 50 per cent and then Government hands them back the 50 per cent to keep them alive, essentially. And that is what that represents, the fact that the Government actually owes them money because they are due to come up with a strategic plan for the entire racing industry for which they are responsible, and we have actually withheld funds from them over the last two years and that is what that actually represents.

With regard to monitoring the take from the Betting Levy Board, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has announced in this last budget, and certainly 2014

as well, that the gaming industry in its entirety is being looked at with regard to putting in place some sort of gaming authority that would monitor the horse racing industry as well as gambling and casino industries.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we have to move on, okay? I will just entertain one more question on that one, and I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Yes, Chair, Item 023. In 2013, there is a figure of \$5.9 million and in 2015 it jumped to \$11 million. Can the Minister indicate what would be the reason for that?

**Hon. Bharath:** I certainly can, hon. Member. One of the areas for diversification of the economy is the creative industries sector which includes film, fashion and music. And over the last two years in particular, we have—against much resistance, I must say—we have put together a creative TT Board which encapsulates that entire segment.

Prior to that, what would have happened for many, many years is that the Government kept giving handouts to the sector, and those in the sector obviously received it with great pleasure, and of course, they were in a state of inertia and status quo whereby they did not want the creative industry sector to become commercialized.

I am of the belief and the Ministry is of the belief and this Government is of the belief that the only way we can actually ensure that we have success in those sectors—which is film, fashion and music—is to commercialize it so that at some point in time although Government will initially put in the seed money and create the enabling environment, that at some point in time those industries will become commercially viable and attractive to the private sector so that you have private sector investment. And that is the reason why we put this much money into it.

Many of our artistes who perform on the world stage—people like Machel Mantano, and we have some fantastic designers who are, like Meiling and others who are out there, on the international stage—they have succeeded despite Governments, they have succeeded through their own sweat and blood. And so, therefore, the Government is putting the resources behind, encouraging, particularly young people, to encourage them in these areas.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, Members we have to move on. Everybody has one more. But we have to move on. We have seven more entities after this one and we do not want to be here 12 o'clock in the night because those members of the Hansard staff, it is very difficult for them to be concentrating that long. And we

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have to complete 10. So I am asking Members to be very succinct in their contribution, be very pointed in their comments, and we cannot go over and over and over.

So, I would just—this is the last time we are going to allow so many interventions. It is not that there will not be, I will allow everyone to speak, but I ask Members to be very tight in their contribution. Member for Port of Spain South, Member for Point Fortin.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes, on page 269 under 011, I am looking at 01 and 03.

**Clerk:** We have not reached—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are you?

**Miss Mc Donald:** On page 269.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are still on Other Transfers, you know? We are on Item 009.

**Miss Mc Donald:** “Ohh”, all right.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Very briefly, Item 16, the Fair Trading Commission. I mean, this has been—it has not been implemented I think for five years, what is the reason for this?

**Hon. Bharath:** Mr. Chairman, in fact it is more than five years. It was from the previous administration—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Speak to your five.

**Hon. Bharath:** I am just saying, *[Laughter]* from the previous administration. In fact, we have now taken it and we have now proclaimed several parts of the Act. Indeed we have appointed the Commissioners and very recently in the last two or three weeks they have advertised the post for CEO and other management position within the organization to be able to get the fair trade commission up and running.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we go to Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, Item 011, Transfer to State Enterprises. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I have a request, Mr. Chairman, for both 01 as well as 03—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Bharath:** You mean 02 and 03.

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**Miss Mc Donald:**—02 and 03. I will like to get a list of all the management personnel, their remuneration, the terms of engagement—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Pictures.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes, their pictures too if necessary and the list of all officers on the payroll of those two entities.

**Hon. Bharath:** All officers? You mean all employees?

**Miss Mc Donald:** All employees of those two entities, CNMG and GISL.

**Hon. Bharath:** Sure.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, at a Public Accounts Committee meeting about three years ago, the new management on board of CNMG said they were going to break even and make a profit. I am seeing a loss of \$12 million. Could the Minister explain what is going on? Are you projecting another loss for CNMG in this year of \$11,750,000? And if so, when do you expect this company to break even, if ever?

**Hon. Bharath:** Well first of all, the fact that there is a transfer of \$11,750,000 does not necessarily mean that there is a loss in the organization of \$11,750,000.

**Mr. Imbert:** Come on, what is this money for then? If it is not that, what is it for?

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, allow him to answer, he is answering.

**Mr. Imbert:** He is rambling.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you cannot say rambling. The answer may not satisfy your concerns, but he is answering.

**Hon. Bharath:** It does not necessarily mean it is a lost. At the end of the day these—I do not know the complete breakdown, but we can get the breakdown for you, but these are to fund many of the projects that CNMG is involved in at this point in time.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but if they are funding projects, it is a commercial company, it is supposed to make money.

**Hon. Bharath:** It is supposed to make money, you are quite right.

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**Mr. Imbert:** What is this money for?

**Hon. Bharath:** You are quite right, it is an organization that should at least break even if it does not make money. We have been struggling with a lot of debts that we have inherited, and we will continue—[*Crosstalk*] we will continue, based on CNMG's strategic plan—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** I am asking about Sub-Head 011, 02 an allocation of \$11.75 million. What is that for?

**Hon. Bharath:** It is for funding CNMG. I can give you a listing if you wish at some point in time—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** So you have come here with no information. Okay, no problem, 011, 03 what is that \$18 million for?

**Hon. Bharath:** It is, again, for funding GISL.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you have no information to give us?

**Hon. Bharath:** Not at this point in time.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could I get a breakdown?

**Hon. Bharath:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Is best yuh din come.”

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you cannot say so. Be a little more respectful please. Please, no, no, not because you cannot get—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, I know—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** He is not giving us information.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Bharath:** The Standing Orders allow for the Ministry to be able to provide the information.

**Mr. Imbert:** I could read here, you do not have to come.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, let us go on. We go on to Sub-Head 06, we are going into the Development Programme now. Development Programme, Item 3, Economic Infrastructure.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I hope I get a better answer this time. Page 271, Head 48—[*Interruption*]



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**Hon. Bharath:** Page 271?

**Mr. Chairman:** Development Programme—

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 271, Head 48.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 271, Head 48—

**Mr. Imbert:**—03, Q. 276.

**Mr. Chairman:**—03 of the Development Programme.

**Mr. Imbert:** Can the Minister explain why, in the time when we are supposed to be diversifying the economy, expanding the economy, that you have reduced the allocation for development work and industrial estates by \$44 million.

**Hon. Bharath:** The reason is, Chairman, that the Ministry is accessing a loan facility through the Chinese Government, through the EXIMBANK of China for the development of these parks.

**4.25 p.m.**

**Mr. Imbert:** What? So where is that in the Estimates?

**Hon. Bharath:** It is—in 2014 there was a significant amount of development work that was to be engaged in. Those works did not take place, clearly, and so therefore we had to revise the estimates down in terms of the works that we are going to be conducting during the course of this year.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not correct. The original 2014 estimate was \$1 million; the revised was \$99 million. It went up, and now it is going back down to \$55 million. Are you reading the same thing as me? How could you say these things? Ninety-nine is more than one, not less.

**Hon. Bharath:** The \$99 million was an allocation at midterm, essentially to pay 15 per cent of the amount that is required against the EXIMBANK loan for the development of these parks.

**Mr. Imbert:** What? So we got nothing for this \$99 million? There is no physical work that occurred because of that—

**Hon. Bharath:** The funding has not been disbursed.

**Mr. Imbert:** So no physical work took place with that \$99 million.

**Hon. Bharath:** The preliminary designs have been done.

**Mr. Imbert:** \$100 million?

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**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund, under Development Programme. Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** I am back on the Consolidated Fund.

**Mr. Imbert:** What a disaster.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are back where?

**Dr. Browne:** I am on the Consolidated Fund, the DP.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, yes, yes. Continue.

**Dr. Browne:** Page 137 for the—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Member for Diego Martin Central, you are getting agitated.

**Dr. Browne:** What is going on across there?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no.

**Dr. Browne:** Page 137 under DP, 011, Support to—well, there is a typo. Support to Enable Competitive Business in Trinidad and Tobago. I see an estimate of \$5 million for this budget, downward from the previous year. What is that allocation for?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Minister?

**Hon. Bharath:** That is a fund from the European Union that allows us to create an enabling environment to allow business to take place more freely and reduce the amount of bureaucracy that would have taken place previously.

**Dr. Browne:** Is there a contribution to that fund from the EU, and what quantum is contributed for 20—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister?

**Hon. Bharath:** It goes directly from the European Union to the Consolidated Fund as budget support.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. I recognize the Member for Point Fortin and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, and that would be the last contribution before we close off.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** On the particular point—

**Hon. Member:** Mr. Chairman, my hand—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I know, I saw your hand.

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**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** On the particular point of 011, is it that we request these funds of the European Union, or they have given us the reduced amount? I ask that in view of the fact that in terms of business sophistication, we are so low in terms of the competitive index. So I am wondering whether it is those are funds directed to us or whether you have requested a reduced amount.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister.

**Hon. Bharath:** I have been informed that these funds have been allocated on the basis of tranches. Every year the tranche is different. So this is this year's tranche.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** So it is given to you.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, please.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the Minister, there is a \$1 million allocation for the support of the agri-business industry. Could you tell me what is the justification?

**Mr. Chairman:** What Sub-Item is that?

**Miss Hospedales:** It is Sub-Item 002. Could you let us know the justification for providing that kind of support, seeing that there is the Ministry of Food Production?

**Hon. Bharath:** One of the areas for diversification is agro-processing and, in fact, exportTT, a company we were talking about earlier on, is charged with a significant part of that responsibility of developing agro processing, particularly on the export markets. In fact, very recently, exportTT, together with the Ministry, hosted 14 companies out of Trinidad and Tobago at the Food Fair in New York, out of which many of those businesses got new markets in faraway places, like Poland, Russia, Australia and so on. Carib is now supplying products as a result of that, into Southeast Asia. Therefore, this is what the \$1 million is for, to be able to support the agro-processing part of the diversification process.

**Hon. Bharath:** Okay. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$306,629,900 for Head—

**Miss Hospedales:** There were other areas—

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**Mr. Chairman:** No, I am moving on. I have a deadline. [*Crosstalk*] No, no, no, no, no. [*Crosstalk*] No, no, no, no. I said that we have a deadline to meet. I am taking charge. Okay.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 48 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee, seeing that you are coming from the Senate, we would like to thank you and your staff. Thank you very much.

We now go to the Ministry of Tourism. Minister of Tourism, please come forward. [*Short pause and crosstalk*]

*Head 35:*

Okay, hon. Members, we go to Head 35, Ministry of Tourism, \$224,579,207. I would now invite the hon. Minister of Tourism, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes. Hon. Minister, you can make a statement at this time, giving a kind of priority outline of your Ministry.

**Hon. Hadeed:** Thank you very much. I am prepared to take questions from the Members opposite.

*Question proposed:* That Head 35 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$224,579,207 for Head 35, the Ministry of Tourism, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following: Sub-heads and Items, to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*—Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes, Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I am looking at 08, Vacant Posts. I would like an explanation for why that figure jumped from \$200,000 to \$1 million—\$800,000 increase.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Tourism, please.

**Hon. Hadeed:** Well, simply because we need to fill a number of posts during the course of the year, that figure was put in. So we have \$800,000 additional

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from last year in the event that we have to create the employment to raise the levels of efficiency. And we are trying to fill the positions on a permanent basis.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking at Sub-Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

**Mr. Chairman:** What page are you on?

**Miss Hospedales:** Okay, Mr. Chair, I will wait for that one.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. You are moving very fast.

We go to Item 002: Lifeguard Services. I look at the Member for La Brea. You would like to raise a matter?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Yes. Sub-Item 29, Overtime: daily-rated workers. Is there a policy with respect to overtime for Daily-Rated Workers? For the simple reason that we see that in 2013 it was \$3.4 million and it rose to \$5.8 million in 2014 in the Revised Estimates. I would like to find out who determines who will work overtime, the duration and, for example, for what time frame? Is there not a real need to increase the daily-rated workers complement so as to cut cost? Those are two questions I am asking you.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister.

**Hon. Hadeed:** Yes. As you know, we use the daily-rated agreement to manage all the workers, and you are quite right, we need to fill quite a bit more positions, hence the reason there is the need for overtime, especially when it comes to public holidays and weekends.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we go to Sub-Head 02.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for St. Ann's East.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Under the same salaries and cost of living for lifeguards, under the explanation they said: "Includes provision for vacant posts", but yet the allocation has decreased from 2013. Could the Minister identify the reason for the decrease and the number of vacancies?

**Hon. Hadeed:** Could you tell me what Item you are talking about?

**Mr. Chairman:** What Item are you referring to?

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**Mrs. Thomas:** Lifeguard, 002/01. For the explanation, it said there is inclusion for vacant posts, but yet the allocation was reduced from the actual 2013—

**Mr. Chairman:** Where did you see a decrease?

**Hon. Hadeed:** That is 2013 to 2015.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Right.

**Hon. Hadeed:** There is a decrease of—

**Mrs. Thomas:** To \$700,000 where you maintain the same—

**Hon. Hadeed:** No, well, we maintained the same—

**Mrs. Thomas:** Yes, so if there are vacant positions.

**Hon. Hadeed:** Again, in this case, we were not able to fill positions. “Yuh know?”

**Mrs. Thomas:** I “doh” understand.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Let us go on to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Members for La Brea, Arouca/Maloney and Port of Spain South. The Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Promotions, Publicity and Printing from \$66.6 million in 2013, and on the Revised Estimates for 2014, \$77 million. Can we get a detailed breakdown of that \$77 million, including for example, the firms that were contracted; the amount that was paid to each? Those are two important sub-questions I would like to get answers for.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Hadeed:** I am sorry I cannot give you detailed breakdown but I will be in a position to let you have that at a very early opportunity, before the committee—

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, my focus is slightly different. I want to find out from the Minister what has accounted for the \$5 million decrease in the allocation for the same item, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. The reason I am asking that, if you look at our neighbours in Jamaica, they invest a lot of money,

especially when it comes to publicity and promotion of their island, and I am wondering, what is the rationale behind the decrease when, you know—I would have liked to see an increase in this particular area.

**Mr. Chairman:** Your point is taken. Minister, respond to that, please.

**Hon. Hadeed:** As you know, all the Ministries try to get as much as possible from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and, unfortunately, all of us cannot get everything that we want. So in this case, we did not get the required allocation that we requested, so that is where we are.

**4.40 p.m.**

**Miss McDonald:** Yes, Sir. Item 19, Official Entertainment, could you tell me what accounts for a 50 per cent increase there?

**Dr. Moonilal:** One hundred thousand dollars.

**Miss McDonald:** I could ask. You just said, “You could ask whatever you want”.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The budget is \$65 billion, you know.

**Hon. Hadeed:** Honestly, that \$100,000 entertainment one, I would hope that it is not used and that we can use it somewhere else.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration Item 002, Lifeguard Services. I go to Item 04, Current Transfers —[*Interruption*] Which one is that? 04, right. Just let me read, 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies. The first item, Regional Bodies. Is that the one you want to do? Okay, Member for Port of Spain North, St. Ann’s West.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Hon. Minister, I see that there is quite a sizeable increase to regional bodies of \$4.4 million but when I look further down, I am seeing—

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you identify the page and the Item?

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Yes, page 228, Item 04, Sub-Item 001.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, Sub-Item, 001. Yes, go ahead.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Hon. Minister, I am seeing an increase of \$4.4-odd million and I am looking down to see—[*Crosstalk*] Is it not that what I am seeing, 4.437? Yes, and I am looking down, hon. Minister, to see what regional bodies we are

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talking about. I am seeing Caribbean Tourism Organization but I am not seeing anything else. Could you please elucidate or identify the regional bodies to which these moneys, which is \$49 million, would have been allocated?

**Hon. Hadeed:** The only regional body we subscribe money to is the Caribbean Tourism Organization. They had an increase of 440—that area had an increase of \$447,000. We do get quite a lot of research material from that organization to assist us in planning.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** I am seeing it, Sir, sorry, this is for all.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we go to Item 007, Households.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say something, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** On Households?

**Miss Cox:** No, I had my hand up a long time before you reached this one.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, but which one do you want to speak on?

**Miss Cox:** Lifeguard Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you want us to go back?

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, my hand was up. Am I to make a noise or something to actually be recognised?

**Hon. Hadeed:** Actually, I recognized her hand up, Mr. Chairman.

**Miss Cox:** It was up a long time ago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Miss Cox:** I just want to ask about the Security Services. What accounts for this increase of \$1.2 million, Item 43?

**Hon. Hadeed:** Well, the increase is for new facilities at Quinam and Los Iros. That is what the increase is for.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, so we go to Item 007, Households; we go item 009, Other Transfers; we go to Item 011—or, Member for Chaguanas West, which item?

**Mr. Warner:** Other Transfers, Item 01. I read where NAPA had to undergo some serious repairs. Is that sum in this amount here?

**Hon. Hadeed:** NAPA you are talking about?



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**Mr. Warner:** To repair NAPA. We saw where NAPA was falling to pieces.

**Hon. Hadeed:** We have \$3 million for the area that I am responsible for, Sir, that is the hotel.

**Mr. Warner:** So not NAPA itself?

**Hon. Hadeed:** It is for the hotel and restaurant.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Minister, could you tell us whether the hotel is operating?

**Hon. Hadeed:** It is operating. We are now presently doing a little more upgrade on it and we intend to put it out for an RFP and have an operator pretty soon.

**Miss Mc Donald:** So you have guests and whatnot? You do not have guests as yet?

**Hon. Hadeed:** No, not yet. Well, we normally—

**Miss Mc Donald:** Legal guests?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, yes, legal guests, we have no legal guests right now. [*Laughter*] Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. I recognize the Member for St. Ann's East.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Mr. Chairman, Item 11, the Zoological Society, could the Minister explain the increase of \$5.5 million?

**Hon. Hadeed:** The zoo has a number of new facilities and these are the operational costs for it. I am pleased to say that the increase in patrons have gone up substantively over the last year. It is now over 300,000 patrons visiting.

**Mr. Chairman:** We will deal with Sub-Head 09: Development Programme; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Dr. Browne:** Three questions on three items. First, is the Cruise Tourism Initiative, 021, I see an allocation of \$1 million, what is this Cruise Tourism Initiative? It seems to have been cut by 50 per cent. Can the Minister give some information on it? That is question number one.

**Hon. Hadeed:** Well, as we all know that in Trinidad and Tobago, we are trying to establish and get to be the home port for the Southern Caribbean Cruise Initiative which you all know is comprising of five islands for destinations, and we will be going to many conferences to try and encourage more visitors by the cruise ship lines. Basically, we do hope to be able to attract many more visitors to Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Browne:** Why has it been cut by 50 per cent, Minister? Just this specific question: why has it been cut by 50 per cent, given what you have just said?

**Hon. Hadeed:** Again, we requested more money and for the same reason, many other Ministries are bidding to have money so we can only do what we can with what we have but we will make sure it is spent properly.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize—

**Dr. Browne:** No, I said I have two others. On Item 023, Restoration and Re-design of Maracas Beach Facility. Is it that there is no allocation for 2015?

**Hon. Hadeed:** It is in the idea.

**Mr. Chairman:** So we will deal with that under Development Programme. Okay?

**Dr. Browne:** Okay. And then 027, Tourism Baseline Survey, what is the executing agency for this survey and what was the procurement method?

**Hon. Hadeed:** I am told that we have not yet engaged one. However, an RFP would be going out for that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Was it the Member for Arouca/Maloney? Okay.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 019, Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade, I would like to find out from the Minister what has accounted for such a significant decrease in the allocation? Previously, it was estimated that an allocation of \$14 million was made and it is actually now \$2 million for this fiscal. So could you tell us exactly—

**Hon. Hadeed:** The majority of this money is really for the upgrade of community sites. Basically, we have identified a number of these sites that we have allocated and budgeted for and this is the money that we wanted for it.

**Miss Hospedales:** Is the sum allocated sufficient?

**Hon. Hadeed:** And I also would like to advise that the TDC would be implementing some of this.

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**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, I was not finished.

**Mr. Chairman:** Or okay, hold a second, please.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 026, Development of Beach Master Plan, I would like to find out from the Minister if this is the estimated final cost of the plan, and if it is not, exactly how much would that plan cost?

**Hon. Hadeed:** They have to determine a strategy on how we are going to build out the beaches, the common standards for health, safety, security and possibly the sequencing of the work.

**Miss Hospedales:** Okay. Is that the estimated cost, the actual plan or is there going to be an additional cost to it and if so, could you provide us with a detailed—

**Hon. Hadeed:** We believe that the figure that we have is sufficient for us do what we need to do with this.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** My apologies, Sir, you have not reached that section as yet.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, well, we are now going to Item 05, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services and Infrastructure Development Fund.

**Mr. Warner:** I am asking, Sir, on that section under 45, what is the Toco Lighthouse project? I was there a week ago and I saw it falling into the sea.

**Hon. Hadeed:** No, no, I beg to differ.

**Mr. Warner:** What is it?

**Hon. Hadeed:** It is not falling into the sea, I beg to differ. We are actually working within the area, and we are getting private sector participation to work with us in the development of the Toco Lighthouse area. In the last four months, we painted the lighthouse and we put up the Keshorn Walcott signs and whatever it is we had to do. We are working to ensure that that area is kept pristine because we are working with private sector companies to assist us.

**Mr. Warner:** Do you have security for the area?

**Hon. Hadeed:** Yes, we do.

**Mr. Warner:** Okay, all right.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, all right. Yes, I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

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**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, I just want to look at Sub-Item 011 and I would like to ask the Minister if he could indicate to us how many hotels and guest houses will benefit from the incentive upgrade of hotel and guest room stock of Trinidad; a \$3 million allocation was made.

**Hon. Hadeed:** We can let you know that there are 7,500 rooms but we do not have the figures at hand of how many people would apply for the upgrades at the present time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay? All right. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of 220—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Chair, Sub-Head 06: General Public Services under tourism.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is the Infrastructure Development Fund?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, continue.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Under 002, Strengthening of the Masquerade Industry which is a new item of \$3 million, could the hon. Minister tell what exactly is the masquerade industry; how are they to benefit from this \$3 million injection and which is the implementation agency responsibility?

**Hon. Hadeed:** This has just been transferred to the Ministry as a new Sub-Head and this basically is an area where we send our representatives out to the world Carnival forums, and from there, we encourage them and we encourage our bands to partner with those countries, and in so doing, we would be able to link internationally to encourage a lot of visitors to our shore. Recently, the first trip was to Switzerland and France, and I am told that the reception was extremely good and we do expect to get an influx of tourists from both those countries for our coming Carnival.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Hon. Members, the sum of \$224,579,207 for Head 35: the Ministry of Tourism stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 35 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, we know you are from the other place, on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee, we would like to thank you for being here with us and to also thank your staff for being here with us.

**Hon. Hadeed:** And I thank everybody for all the questions posed to me and I am assuring this country that the Ministry of Tourism is in good hands at this time. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much.

**4.55 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** So the next Head is the Integrity Commission, Head 37. The Minister of Finance and the Economy is here and we will deal with that.

**Mr. Imbert:** May I ask a housekeeping question?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Are we breaking for tea at all?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, as soon as we are finished with the Integrity Commission and the Environmental Commission. We have to deal with two of them because the Minister of Finance and the Economy will be speaking. He is the Minister who will be taking responsibility for those two and after that we will take a 15-minute break.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Fifteen?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. We have to complete our work, otherwise we continue and we ask Members to stream out and get whatever they want to drink and come back. The Chairman will be in charge here and I am not hungry. I will be around. [*Desk thumping*] Okay?

*Head 37: Integrity Commission, \$25,610,100.*

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

I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, would you like to say a few words?

**Hon. Howai:** No, I am just ready to go.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, fine. Hon. Members, the sum of \$25,610,100 for Head 37 the Integrity Commission, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure:

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure

Item 001: General Administration

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Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services

Item 001: General Administration

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases

Item: 001 General Administration.

I recognize the Member for Arouca Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, based on the information we have here Sub-Item 23: Fees, there has been a \$3,800,000 allocation and I would like to know, in 2014 there was a \$3,600,000 allocation, was all this money spent? And for 2015—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, which page are you on?

**Miss Hospedales:** Page 232, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 232? And you are dealing with Goods and Services?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** We have gone past you, you know.

**Miss Hospedales:** Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am now dealing with Minor Equipment Purchases but I will facilitate you.

**Miss Hospedales:** Okay, thank you Sir. You are going too fast, really.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I have gone past you.

**Miss Hospedales:** And we are getting tired, you know.

**Mr. Chairman:** But pose your question and then we will go to the Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Hospedales:** Okay, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 23, under Fees, in 2014 there was a \$4,800,000 allocation, which was then revised to \$3,600,000. I want to know whether or not all that money was spent and if they can provide a breakdown of the \$3,800,000 received for 2015.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is an estimate, you know, Member for Arouca/Maloney, for 2015. It is an estimate.

**Miss Hospedales:** Well a breakdown of the money allocated for 2014.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

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**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chair, well not all of the funding was actually spent in 2014. Actually some of the work is ongoing. This is mainly legal expenses which have been incurred by the Commission. Some of that legal work will continue. Some of it involves engaging overseas attorneys and, therefore, this number reflects the estimate of what we think will be incurred during 2015. But out of 2014, I do not have the exact number but I think there is still about a million that is unspent.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much. Let me go to the Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Certainly. Mr. Chairman, I am looking at this \$3.8 million and my question to the Minister is: I looked at the fees for the AG under the same Sub-Item 23. The legal fees for the AG is \$130 million, to the Prime Minister's Office it is \$10 million, and to the Integrity Commission it is \$3.8 million. I am asking the question: is this Commission properly financed or resourced to undertake their numerous investigations? I just heard legal fees, I just heard retainer for overseas briefs, et cetera. So I am asking, given the fact that the Attorney General has a \$130 million—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, you have said that already. We heard that.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Office of the Prime Minister has \$10 million, what is happening with this?

**Mr. Chairman:** We heard that. Let us go. Could you answer that question?

**Hon. Howai:** The short answer is yes, they are adequately resourced.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. All right. Member for Port of Spain South, then Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** I am looking at—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. She has another question.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes, one more question. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy, of the total allocation of some \$25 million to the Integrity Commission, what was their initial request from the Integrity Commission and they ended up getting whatever.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, whilst he is going to respond to you—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Howai:** I need to check it.

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**Mr. Chairman:**—I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Yes, Chair. Sub-Items 37 and 43. Under Sub-Item 37 we are seeing, in 2014, \$30,000 for Janitorial Services and in 2015, \$300,000 and likewise also in Sub-Item 43, Security Services, \$6,100 in 2014 jumping to \$450,000 in 2015. Can you give a reasoning behind that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Because this is rubbish.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no.

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, yeah. This is actually—the Commission is moving to new premises, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am very well aware of that.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, and in the old premises it was picked up as part of the rental cost, and so on—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Howai:**—in terms of disposal. Now they will have to pay for it themselves.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right.

**Hon. Howai:** This is in respect of that, yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we move on to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration, then we go to 09: Development Programme; Item 003: Economic Infrastructure; Item 05: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 37 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, we would like you to remain because we are going straight to the Environmental Commission. As he is here let him deal with the Environmental Commission one time.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you going to be stopping at No. 10 on the list chosen by the Opposition?



**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. If we have time and we can go beyond that, fine, but we are certainly going to complete 10 at a minimum.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am just asking, Mr. Chairman, because I have my people on hold and I am just trying to make sure that we are clear where we are going.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, yours is a big one. I would like to suggest that we keep you for tomorrow.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you can tell your people to proceed to leave.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, whilst we are waiting on the members of the Environmental Commission, may I just indicate to hon. Members.

*Head 38:*

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

The Environmental Commission, \$15,044,300, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Does the Minister know how many people are employed at this Commission?

**Mr. Chairman:** Could the Minister indicate how many persons are employed at the Environmental Commission?

**Hon. Howai:** Approximately 30 persons.

**Mr. Imbert:** But they are not paid under this Head though?

**Hon. Howai:** No.

**Mr. Imbert:** So how many people are paid under this Head?

**Hon. Howai:** Chair, we are just trying to pull the figures.

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**Mr. Imbert:** Before we go, on the same Sub-Item 23, 24 and 25: Salaries, Allowances and Remuneration all showing significant decreases. What is the reason for that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Salaries and Allowances showing significant decreases.

**Mr. Imbert:** Sub-Items 24 and 25 are showing significant decreases, 30 per cent, 50 per cent, that kind of thing. What is causing that?

**Hon. Howai:** Again, payment of arrears in 2014, in the Revised Estimates.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is that okay?

**Mr. Imbert:** Well if he say so.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we go to 02 Goods and Services.

**Mr. Imbert:** So Mr. Chairman—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Members for—we are under goods and services now—Diego Martin North/East, Point Fortin and who is down there? St. Ann's East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am seeing—let me start at eight and come backwards—001/08. The rental cost is going from \$1 million to \$2 million. Could the Minister explain that?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, they are in the process of relocating, so they would be going to a new building, yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** And is that why you have an increased allocation for Electricity?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, but that would not explain an increased allocation for Travelling.

**Hon. Howai:** For Travelling and Subsistence.

**Mr. Imbert:** They ARE moving to Point Fortin or what?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Point Fortin.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, I am just asking, moving to Point Fortin, that is why that is for travelling.

**Mr. Chairman:** Or, I see.

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**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, for persons who are paid under the SRC allocations, those expenses are picked up there and, therefore, the amount allocated to them had been increased.

**Mr. Imbert:** Not by so much, not with the last SRC report. This is 100 per cent increase. There are more people being paid under this Head now, than had been paid previously because they now have two registrars and a couple of other people who are being included.

**Mr. Imbert:** New people are coming on but not reflected under salaries and wages?

**Hon. Howai:** No, it is being—apparently the expense picked up here is in respect of, would it be a reclassification or is it absolutely new? [Hon. Howai confers with his Advisor] You have someone who is on suspension, so one is new, one is extra and one is on suspension.

**5.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I have a general question, but perhaps I will ask it at the end. I just have a general question on this whole allocation, should I ask it now or at the end?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, hold your fire. Let us deal with the Member for Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you. There are several concerns which I have under Goods and Services, but I could probably just raise a few with you now. Under Fees, Item 23, what particularly are these fees? Under Other Contracted Services, what are those services that you contracted out? They seem to be increasing as well. Under 58, what Medical Expenses and to whom? And for whom are these expenses being met? Also—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Howai:** Medical expenses. What did you say? Which one was the last one you mentioned, sorry?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Medical expenses, for whom are these being paid? I note an increase as well, yes. And I also—there is more than 150 per cent increase in Promotions, Publicity and Printing. Could we have some details on that? It is more than 150 per cent increase, and also some details again, another increase of 150 per cent under 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. Could we have the details? [*Crosstalk*]

[*Hon. Howai confers with his advisor*]

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**Hon. Howai:** Okay. Fees, the issue with Fees is that there are two things, one is that there was an increase in the—what they call the LexisNexis search engine which they use for their legal research. So that increase which is in pounds is included there, as well as some legal fees.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** \$360,000 per annum.

**Hon. Howai:** No, and plus legal fees that they had included in there in respect of a specific matter they have ongoing at the moment. Right. So that is what they included in here which accounted for the increase. With respect to Other Contracted Services—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** You see, I would have been concerned about using other legal resources, because to my mind you have your own in-house legal resources. This is, in fact, like a tribunal. It is like a court as far as I am concerned.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** No, no, it is a court.

**Hon. Howai:** Because it involves service commissions, they are telling me they would prefer to not use internal, they are using external persons to deal with it.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I see. I see.

**Hon. Howai:** It is an internal—it is an HR matter.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** It is an HR matter, and this is why, okay. And with regard to the Contracted Services, what services do you contract out?

*[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]*

**Hon. Howai:** Well, they had put in an allocation to help with the moving and so on. Some of the contracted services that they need help with; all of the relocation costs and so on. So they simply put it inside of there. *[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]*

**Mr. Chairman:** All right.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** He is still responding

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, I am just dealing with the medical expenses which deals with the SRC expenses, right, relating to the—*[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]* Okay, there is an increase from four to six members for whom they are picking up the medical contributions.

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**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** I only asked this question because it is quite unusual to see medical expenses for professional staff listed separately.

**Hon. Howai:** This would be the insurance. [*Hon. Howai confers with his advisor*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** But long story short, could we just get a list and detail of all the Promotions, Publicity and Printing, seeing that it is such a large increase of \$500,000. Could we get a list of the printing, promotions—[*Interruption*] and also a list of the conferences and seminars, because this also has increased by 150 per cent, conferences, seminars and functions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mrs. Thomas:** I think you had recognized me just now, under Goods and Services?

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I recognize you.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, Item 16, Contract Employment, if the Minister and they could just provide us with a list of the positions, because [*Crosstalk*] I understand they have just a complement of 30 staff members. So what are the positions planned for this contractual amount budgeted for 2015?

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, Contract Employment?

**Mrs. Thomas:** Yes, No. 16.

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, we will get that for you.

**Mrs. Thomas:** And then Item 43, under Security Services, I see an increase of \$289,000. If you could provide—who are the vendors right now, and you know, why is there an increase planned for the security services?

**Hon. Howai:** It is part of the cost in the new building, but I just want to get a clarification. [*Hon. Howai confers with his advisor*] What is happening is they are moving from premises where they have two floors, they are moving into four floors, they want to have security on the different floors—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you just tell us where that is, please?

**Hon. Howai:**—and the additional cost they will actually tender out. Sorry?

**Mr. Imbert:** Where is the new building?

**Hon. Howai:** [*Hon. Howai confers with his advisor*] Chaguanas. They have identified a place in Chaguanas.

**Mr. Imbert:** And will you give us the name of the owner?

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We go on to—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Howai:** They have not finalized the—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I have a general question.

**Hon. Howai:**—landlord as yet. I do not know if we want to necessarily give that landlord until they have—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** The general question will come after. Okay, Sub-Head 03, we have to move on.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right briefly and swiftly.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** My question on Goods and Services, Maintenance of Vehicles. I would like to find out how many vehicles are owned by the Environmental Commission, because I see that under Minor Equipment they have a figure of \$400,000 for vehicles, but if you look at the Maintenance of Vehicles, in 2013, the maintenance was \$41,927, then it went up to \$67,000 and went up to \$75,000. We need to know how many vehicles then are—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we have your point. How many vehicles are owned by the EMA?

**Hon. Howai:** Three vehicles are owned by the company right now, by the organization, right now.

**Mr. Chairman:** Three vehicles are owned by the EMA right now, Environmental Commission rather, okay.

We go on to Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. We go now to Development Programme, Item 09, Sub-Head 05 Multi Sectoral and Other Services. Yes, Member for Point Fortin?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** May I just ask one question about the institutional strengthening of the Environmental Commission, this seems to be a new project. What is projected here? What are we looking at? What is this about?

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**Hon. Howai:** Member, 117?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Of the Development Programme.

**Hon. Howai:** And the specific one you are asking on is?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** 002.

**Hon. Howai:** 002, the Institutional Strengthening. Is this with the European Union, the 400?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah. What is the project about?

*[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]*

**Hon. Howai:** This is funding from the EU for an outreach programme that they are doing to inform the public in general about what they are doing, and what kind of services are available from them.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** So who will have oversight over that, is it strictly ministerial?

**Hon. Howai:** It will be, well, partially through the EU also, right, who will be monitoring it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I will take the overall question from the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, all these many millions of dollars that are allocated to this commission, how many matters did they determine in 2014?

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Can you all supply that?

**Hon. Howai:** We can supply that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is it more than zero?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, that is why they need to do research.

**Mr. Imbert:** More than one?

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, okay, they will supply that in writing. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$15,044,300 for Head 38, the Environmental Commission stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 38 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

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**Mr. Chairman:** We want to do the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, it is a small one, that should not—no, if they are not here, we are not responsible. The Minister of Finance and Economy will take charge of that?

**Hon. Howai:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are they on their way?

**Mr. McLeod:** Yes, I am told that they are on their way.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, well, we will give them a little contrition here. We will take 15 minutes. [*Crosstalk*] Okay, now it is 5.20 p.m., we come back at 5.45 p.m.

So the Committee's proceedings are suspended until 5.45 p.m. When we come back, we will deal with the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, we deal with the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Science and Technology, those four and that will make us 10, and we will leave after, okay? Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I would like to call the Standing Finance Committee meeting to order. We are dealing with Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, \$4,926,100.

*Head 11.*

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,926,100 for Head 11, for the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*:

01: Personnel Expenditure

001: General Administration

02: Goods and Services

001: General Administration

**Miss Mc Donald:** I just want to find out about Contract Employment, Sir, Item 16.



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**Mr. Chairman:** Item 16, the whole question of contract employment. Yes, hon. Prime Minister.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** There are currently three contract employees in the recognition and certification processes: a Business Operations Assistant, a Pension and Leave Officer, and an Examiner Specialist.

**Miss Mc Donald:** All right. Go to Item 28, Consulting and Other Contracting Services. That figure jumped from \$30,000 to \$100,000. Any—

**Mr. Chairman:** You want some clarification on that?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes, thank you.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** It is to provide for the upgrade of the IT services of the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board essentially, and this is really a small amount.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Under Contract Employment, when you said there were three persons on contract, am I to under that \$200,000 in the 2015 estimates is to pay these three persons? Just to clarify, please.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** These are short-term. Okay, this \$200,000 is to provide for short-term contract employment, but we are looking at longer term involvement for persons as we bring the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board up to scratch. Right now, it is receiving our attention with the view to doing some legislative changes, so that the board can be more effectively engaged in the recognition and certification of trade unions and so on. The process is being overhauled as we speak.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Prime Minister, in response to the Member for Port of Spain South's question, under 16—correct me if I am wrong—you said in your answer the contract employment was to employ three persons. My question is: is this \$200,000, on the same line, Item 16, to pay three contract workers, which was your answer to the Member for Port of Spain South?

**Mr. Mc Leod:** There are three contract employees currently involved in the process and they are short-term contract employees, but we are moving towards beefing up the recognition board sufficiently so that it can better discharge its responsibility.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So, my interpretation of your answer is that these three short-term contract employees, between those three persons, receive \$200,000 for 2015.

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**Mr. Mc Leod:** No. They do not receive that.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So that is the clarification I am seeking.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** I am advised that we are looking for additional new blood and right now the three contract persons whom we have are in receipt of sums significantly lower than what you see mentioned here. So this is really to provide for those whom we are going to be recruiting on a short-term basis until we regularize the situation.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So the original answer to the Member for Port of Spain South, when she asked about line Item 16, Contract Employment, does not really mean three workers? I just want to be crystal clear.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** No. It did not.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, We go to Item Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment; Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$4,926,100 for Head 11, the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much members of the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board. We now proceed to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

*Head 72.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 72 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,778,459,841 for Head 72, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*:

01: Personnel Expenditure

001: General Administration

002: Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry

003: Technical/Vocational Education

004: Teachers' Colleges  
 005: National Examinations Council  
 02: Goods and Services  
 001: General Administration  
 002: Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry  
 005: National Examinations Council  
 006: Spanish Secretariat

**6.00 p.m.**

I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Item 006?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. I am under Item 006, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Spanish Secretariat.

**Miss Hospedales:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001 General Administration; Item 006 Spanish Secretariat; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001 Regional Bodies; Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies; Item 004 International Bodies; Item 006 Education Institutions. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I am just referring to Sub-Item 38 and 39. Could the Minister indicate: what are the proposed locations for construction of the Chaguanas Technology Centre and the NESC Drilling School? The proposed commencement date, whether or not there has been request for tenders and what is the proposed end date for the construction?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

**Hon. Karim:** Mr. Chairman, let me thank you very much for the opportunity. We have with us the Permanent Secretary and our technical staff in the event that they need supporting information.

With respect to the question for the Chaguanas Technology Centre, that is the NESC Technology Centre at Woodford Lodge in Chaguanas, the former Caroni (1975) Limited Transport and Field Engineering Department. That centre has been completed and it is open.

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With respect to the NESC Drilling School, that facility is located at the Usine Ste. Madeline Transport and Field Engineering Department of the former Caroni (1975) Limited. That facility is operational and has 100 students currently on board.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go to Item 007, Households.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Item 15. Could the Minister state what is the policy with respect to—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Karim:** Which one is that?

**Miss Mc Donald:**—this particular programme.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which one is that? Do you want to identify it?

**Miss. Mc Donald:** Item 15.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you say it loud so that the *Hansard* could record you.

**Miss Mc Donald:** 15.

**Mr. Chairman:** And what is the Item?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Bursaries/Financial Assistance.

**Hon. Karim:** The financial assistance programme.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes. You are not hearing me? It is very unusual people do not hear me. Let me repeat it. No. 1,5 Bursaries/Financial Assistance—Tertiary.

**Mr. Chairman:** And you would like to have clarification on that?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes. I just want to ask the Minister about the policy because I have not been hearing much about this programme, so I would like to know how do you access the programme and your policy with respect to this.

**Hon. Karim:** Okay. Well, the policy is very much similar to what you would have developed and, in fact, has been improved in some cases. Let me just say that FASP was assigned to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training in September 2013, so it is about one year old, and so far we have been able to disburse approximately 88 of these grants. But over the period of 2010/2011 to 2013/2014 a total of 247 were disbursed at a total cost of \$9.3 million.

**Miss Mc Donald:** A further question.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Same point. A question was asked in this Parliament with respect to information. I think the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's/West asked that question, it was never answered. So I would like to ask you, in this setting, whether you would provide this honourable House—provide me, with the listing of the 247 names, the cost of studies and the amount allocated to each person. There are 247 persons. I thank you.

**Hon. Karim:** Certainly. And if it is, Mr. Chairman, it is within the current period that we are looking at—if it is 2013/2014 or if it is that you would like it before that, we will be very happy, Mr. Chairman.

**Miss Mc Donald:** From 2010 we said, coming up.

**Hon. Karim:** And if you want it before that, we can give you before that.

**Miss Mc Donald:** No, I want it from 2010. There is a particular reason. *[Interruption]* Member for Oropouche East, I did not ask you any question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, please. Oh yes. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain/North St. Ann's West, then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Cox:** On that same point.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are on that same point?

**Miss Cox:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you on that same point?

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to look at Sub-Item 02 under the same Item 007, Households.

**Mr. Chairman:** No. We will deal with the Member for Laventille East/Morvant first and then we will move on.

**Miss Cox:** Just the same point. I just wanted to find out if this information concerning Bursaries/Financial Assistance was advertised.

**Hon. Karim:** They always advertise, and we can also supply you, Mr. Chairman, if the Member is so minded, to give you a copy of the advertisement and the period of time when it was allowed to be responded to.

**Miss Cox:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member—Member for St. Joseph, is it the same point?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** No, sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** What item are you on? What sub-item are you on?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** I was trying to catch your eye before you left Educational Institutions. I just had a simple question under Educational Institutions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, go ahead.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, Sub-Head 006, Educational Institutions; Sub-Item 30, UWI Funds for Research Projects. In 2013, there was an allocation of \$6.3 million and there are no subsequent allocations. Could you enlighten us as to the status of that type of funding?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister.

**Hon. Karim:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What has been happening is that the University of the West Indies, prior to that and about eight years before that, had been receiving that allocation on an annual basis, and what we thought was something better to do through the National Commission for Higher Education that coordinates the entire tertiary sector, is to spread the gains, as it were, to other institutions so that they too can bid for their projects to be researched.

As such, a Cabinet decision, the amount allocated previously to the University of the West Indies was now assigned through the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training to the National Commission for Higher Education, and will be made available continuously to the University of the West Indies and all other tertiary level institutions.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So they will be the funding agency?

**Hon. Karim:** The National Commission for Higher Education.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** And that falls under?

**Hon. Karim:** The Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, I am looking at Sub-Item 12 and I would like the Minister to indicate what has accounted for a \$33 million-plus increase to Servol's Human Development and Skills Training Programme. Previously, they received \$21 million and this year the allocation is a little over \$54 million.

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**Hon. Karim:** Well, it appears as though there would have been the request for an increase in capital expenditure as well. One of the things that we are looking at, in fact, was how do we honour the work of Father Gerry Pantin, and we held discussions with Servol and they did indicate that they would like us to construct in his name a technology centre.

**Mr. Chairman:** I apologize to the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/ St. Ann's West.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** I am looking at Sub-Item 02 Training Programme for Displaced Workers, and I see there is an increase of \$2.8 million. I would like the Minister to say who are these—not to name them—displaced workers. What state enterprise or agencies have they been displaced from? What sort of training will they be offered and where will this training be held?

**Hon. Karim:** Well, the retraining programme is now under the remit of the Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme Limited, and this programme has been utilized for those persons who may have been retrenched and in some other way as well, involuntarily separated or voluntarily separated from their previous companies.

In most cases, what we have seen is that they are really enhancing their skilled areas and, in some cases, in the vocational sector. We can provide you with a list of the courses if you so mind, and we will also provide you with a list of the persons.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** It might be helpful for my constituents.

**Hon. Karim:** Sure.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the hon. Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Minister, piggybacking on the last question which I asked, under 007, Sub-Item 13, National Commission for Higher Education, where you said that funding now comes from. I see the figure for 2014 Revised Estimates would have been \$830 million. Is that correct, or thousand?

**Hon. Karim:** Thousand.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Right, \$830,000. The 2015 estimates is \$1.5 million, but UWI would have gotten \$6.3 million. How does this fund now operate where it is clearly not sufficient to even fund what UWI was getting in 2013?

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**Hon. Karim:** I think we have to differentiate the research fund which is defined by the Higher Education Research agenda as opposed to really populating the establishment and financing the establishment.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So Sub-Item 13 is to fund exactly what then?

**Hon. Karim:** To populate and to staff the National Commission for Education.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So could you guide me as to where in this document I would actually find the funding?

**Hon. Karim:** On page 420, 006.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** 420?

**Hon. Karim:** Yes, page 420, 36, the Higher Education Research Fund. You will see that is listed there and the reference that you made just now in terms of the NCHE, on page 421, Item no. 13, that is really for the establishment of the vacancies.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** But then it still begs the question. UWI alone was getting \$6.3 million but now here it is just 2015 Estimates, \$2.5 million.

**Hon. Karim:** No. What I am saying is that that figure that you are quoting now is for the establishment; for staffing the commission. What I indicated before was that they were receiving that \$6.5 million annually, but it is now going to be held and disbursed through the National Commission for Higher Education. So there is a different functional responsibility.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. Did I hear the Minister say that under Item 12, the \$33 million is for construction?

**Hon. Karim:** No. I am saying it may have been partly due to that for capital expenditure as well, because they had in fact asked for an additional sum of money, and one of the discussions that we are having is, how can we recognize the contribution? So that is one instance.

**Mr. Hypolite:** So, what exactly would have been the cause for that \$33 million increase?

**Hon. Karim:** I think, as a matter of fact, what we are doing is partly that would be in terms of expenditure for increasing the capacity for delivering



programmes through Servol, and which will include their vocational centres and also their high-tech centres.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I am looking at 16 and 17. I note that these are new Sub-Items: Point Lisas Industrial Apprenticeship and the St. Augustine Education City. Minister, could you explain to me, for my own edification, because I would like my constituents, especially East Port of Spain to be part of this programme, first time I am seeing it. Could you tell me how do you access these programmes? What do they have to offer?

**Hon. Karim:** Okay. The Point Lisas Industrial Apprenticeship Programme was approved by Cabinet on September 12, 2013. What is it? It was really in response to the shortage of skilled technicians on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and the apprentice programme really has four six-month rotations of each of the major industries.

It is being managed by a consortium which comprises of the NESC as well as IPS Nitrogen and what used to be Farmland Misschem, the Point Lisas Nitrogen Limited. Effectively, what is being done is that we expose them to the vocational skills, the theory, and they are also on the rotations on the plant; and they also do the National Life Skills curriculum. In order to access this programme it was, in fact, advertised publicly in the newspapers, and we invited applicants and we have applicants from all over the country. Although it is called the Point Lisas Industrial PLIP Apprentice Programme, but it is accessed by all citizens from anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Miss Mc Donald:** How often do you take in these students?

**Hon. Karim:** Every year we propose to take in a batch of about 40 students.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Could you tell me about the St. Augustine Education City?

**Hon. Karim:** The St. Augustine Education City was an initiative really to increase and to expand the kind of services within a geographic spread of Macoya in the east to the Arthur Lok Jack in the west to the Caroni River in the south to the foothills of the Northern Range. What you will find happening is that this was really a policy position, because you had within those confines, that geographical area, the major education institutions and the universities as well.

**6.15 p.m.**

So it was to improve, just like you will have in the United States of America and foreign countries, where you have education cities that really improve the

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quality of delivery and services, and improvement of the economic life of the geographical area. It is not a programme as such, it is really an improvement of the quality of services and the enrichment in that geographical area.

**Miss Mc Donald:** So who are these people? So they are like locked down in a particular area?

**Hon. Karim:** No. Let me answer who are these people. First of all, it is managed by a board, the education city, a committee, and what it does really it meets with the training providers in this area, and you would recognize that we have the highest concentration of persons in the tertiary sector within this geographical area, and it is really in a sense as well to create business opportunities. How do we work with the regional corporation in the area? How do we work with the training providers to provide security? To provide opportunities for housing and other services, and I think what we have done as well, in terms of the transportation to and from classes, we also started what is called a “Hop-A-Bus” service with the PTSC. So it is really providing mobility and improvement to the quality of the services—

**Miss Mc Donald:** I thank you.

**Hon. Karim:**—but it is not only to deny anybody else these services.

**Miss Mc Donald:** No, Sir, I was not going in that direction, I just wanted information so I could get—

**Hon. Karim:** Sure. You are welcome, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Members for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, Laventille West, and then we go on, we move on. So, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Sub-Item 15, Bursaries/Financial Assistance-Tertiary, only \$10 million has been—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we have already passed that. That was already dealt with. Yes, and a list will be provided.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Okay. All right.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Item 004, On-the-Job Training. Can the Minister indicate approximately how many trainees would have passed through the programme for the past year, and if he can give an idea as to where they would have been placed, whether it is the private sector, public sector, something brief along that line?

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**Hon. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Chair?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Chair, my question was not what she asked.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, go ahead, pose your question. Just take a note first.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** No, after he is through.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. Okay.

**Hon. Karim:** Thank you very much, Member for Laventille West. Currently we have 4,513 On-the-Job Training Programme as of August 31, 2014. We can in fact go up to a total of 8,000. We do have them at various levels, as you would recognize: level I is really those graduates who are CSEC and they get a stipend of \$2,500; level II, the A level or the CAPE graduate, they get a stipend of \$3,600; at the degree level, \$6,250 and the postgraduate, \$7,200—I am just giving you some supporting information. We are projected to place about 3,487 persons, and we do in fact have the figures in the public sector and in the private sector for each of the levels that I have so indicated.

You would recognize as well that more of them will be taken up in the public sector as opposed to the private sector. What we have done is we have a shared payment just like we would have had, you know, during the previous administration, and in this case we also lightened the burden of the private sector where they are only paying 40 per cent of the contribution cost.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Would you be willing to send a copy of—

**Hon. Karim:** Oh, certainly.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, go ahead, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** My question is with respect to Sub-Item 15: could the Minister reconcile for me, the funding under Bursaries and Financial Assistance—Tertiary? And if you will permit me, Chair, just to refer because it relates to Sub-Item 13 in Educational Institutions, Subsidies to Mt. Hope Students, how does that reconcile with GATE funding? Because it is the students, subsidies to students and financial assistance, tertiary. How does it reconcile with the GATE funding?

**Hon. Karim:** Mr. Chairman, I am sure that you are very familiar with the process and from your past experience. Even though you may be accessing the GATE Programme, the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses, you can also still apply for the HELP, the H-E-L-P, the Higher Education Loan Programme, as well as you can apply for the Financial Assistance Studies Programme. In some cases what we have seen is that even though people may be accessing the GATE Programme and we facilitated with their tuition, they may live in very remote areas from their place of study and, therefore, transportation cost in some cases, or housing cost in some cases, and in other cases, books and other ancillary services.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** So you have continued those policies?

**Hon. Karim:** We have improved on it.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we go on to Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises; Sub-Head—

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** Transfers to State Enterprises—why has the transfer to COSTAATT been decreased by \$1.5 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** We have not reached there as yet.

**Dr. Browne:** Oh, sorry, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are going to Sub-Head 06; Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Boards—that is the one, right? Yes, you can now pose your question.

**Dr. Browne:** Do I need to repeat the question?

**Mr. Chairman:** Did you understand the question?

**Hon. Karim:** I think he was asking why do we have the \$1.4 million decrease.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Karim:** I can find out that, but in some cases what we also have is that we have increased expenditure for COSTAATT as a whole. But in answer to your specific question, we can get some details on that for you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So he will supply that to you before the end of the five-day period. Let us go to the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09; Development

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Programme; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure, Development Fund.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 72 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, you fly through the Development Programme.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, because I did go through all the Items—

**Mr. Imbert:** On the Development Programme?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, and nobody raised anything. So I am sorry that you were not alert, and you are a man always alert.

**Mr. Imbert:** It appears so. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** I am sorry, but you can always have discussions with the hon. Minister behind the Chair, but I have to proceed. I have a deadline to meet. I now proceed to the Ministry of Justice, but before doing so, may I say, on behalf of the [*Desk thumping*] Standing Finance Committee, we extend our thanks to you—

**Hon. Karim:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:**—the hon. Minister for being here with your staff. Thank you very much. The Ministry of Justice.

**Hon. Member:** Mr. Chair, you are moving too fast.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I am moving very fast. Please pay attention. [*Crosstalk*] Thank you very much. We are going to resume at this time with the Ministry of Justice, Head 58, in the sum of \$767,489,600. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Justice, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes, as it relates to the priority areas of your Ministry. If you wish to take the time, you are so invited to do so at this time.

**Hon. George:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and may I, for the moment, decline that invitation and we can proceed.

**Mr. Chairman:** No problem.

*Head 58.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 58 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$767,489,600 for Head 58, the Ministry of Justice, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 003, Forensic Science Centre; Item 004, Prison Service—I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, I am seeing here under Sub-Item 03, Overtime; I would just like to know what caused this jump in an increase in overtime of \$17 million?

**Hon. George:** Mr. Chairman, this increase arose as a result of the fact that, despite many of our efforts, there could not be a virement last year to pay the overtime owed to the prison officers, so it has been accounted for here by this increase in \$17 million so that we could pay the sums due and outstanding for last year to prison officers.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are proceeding, you are going to the Prison Services, right?

**Miss Cox:** No, before.

**Mr. Chairman:** Oh, all right, so you are still on Prison Service?

**Miss Cox:** Yes, I am.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, yes.

**Miss Cox:** Item 08, concerning Vacant Posts; I know that there have been some rumblings about filling of vacancies. I see here an increase in \$15 million, could you tell me what accounts for that?

**Hon. George:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Yes, in respect of the vacant posts there are currently about 500 vacant posts in the prison service, and this is as a result of the retirement from the prison service of persons who take the opportunity to retire before time and so on, as well as those who retire at 50 and 55. So because of the unpredictability of these retirements you find yourself in a position where you have a lot of vacant posts. Then there are vacant posts also in the hierarchy, the top echelons, these too exist and have to be filled.

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**Miss Cox:** Question: I just want to know how long have these posts been vacant? Could we get that information, please?

**Hon. George:** Well, I suppose the information would be on file, but we do not have it here but—

**Miss Cox:** Could we get it before the end of the—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. You could provide us with a—

**Hon. George:** Yes, you could get it.

**Mr. Chairman:** How long these vacant posts have been vacant?

**Hon. George:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, let us proceed. We go to Sub-Head 02; Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 036, Extraordinary Expenditure, \$30,594,000—2013, and of course we had \$28 million and so on. My concern is that for Extraordinary Expenditure, \$30 million looks like plenty money.

**Hon. George:** This money is money that is for the Witness Protection Programme, and that is a costly programme.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Thirty million dollars?

**Hon. George:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. All right, let us go. We go to Item 003, Forensic Science Centre. The hon. Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Item 061, Insurance, insurance for what exactly?

**Hon. George:** I have been informing the public and the Parliament from time to time that the Forensic Science Centre is equipping itself with state-of-the-art equipment, and we want to insure those items of equipment because they are very costly and we do not want to follow the normal process or procedure of Government where we do not insure things. I think it is important that we insure these items of equipment and this is what—

**Mr. Hypolite:** Who is the carrier of that insurance policy?

**Hon. George:** The money is set aside for it here if you see it for the first time so there is no carrier as yet; the money is set aside for it in the coming year.

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**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We go into Item 04, Prison Service; Item 05—Okay. Item 04, Prison Service. Members for Laventille East/Morvant and Laventille West and Member for Diego Martin North/East. Okay, I recognize you as well. So, Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**6.30 p.m.**

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chair, I have a few questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, you go ahead.

**Miss Cox:** 16, Contract Employment. I want to know what constitutes this Contract Employment, an increase of \$54,470.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you take those questions down because the hon. Member has a few questions.

**Miss Cox:** Concerning Contract Employment under 16—training. I also would like to know if adequate training is taking place, because I know that there has been some problems with succession planning in the various services. So I am asking about that concerning the prisons service.

Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, 21. Why I ask this question is because, Minister, I know in the past in the prison service a lot of repairs and so on would take place. The prisoners would do those repairs. I understand this is not taking place as much as before, but contracts are being awarded. Many contracts are being awarded for jobs that prisoners could have done. I would like to know what is happening here concerning contracts in the prison service. Why now everything to be done contracts are being awarded, while prisoners could have done those contracts?

Also Food at Institutions, there is an increase of \$1.2 million. Could you tell me what has caused this increase? Security Services, I see there is an amount of \$19 million. Could I get an explanation on that, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** Those are the questions?

**Miss Cox:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister will respond, then we go to the Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have a question on one of the Heads that she raised.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, well, the Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.



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**Mr. Hypolite:** She actually asked the question that I was going to ask.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you are not going again?

**Hon. George:** So go ahead?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no I have a question on 004/21 that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant asked about, Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings.

**Mr. Chairman:** You can pose your question and the Minister will take it down and respond.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could the Minister tell me which buildings are these?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on 21, Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings. He would like to know which buildings are these. I recognize some hand going up. The Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Mr. Imbert:** After he answers that question, on that same line item when he says which buildings these are, could he say how this \$5.5 million is allocated to those buildings.

**Mr. Chairman:** So the buildings and how the moneys are allocated.

**Miss Cox:** And also why.

**Hon. George:** So we are asking why the increase in Contract Employment.

The response is that from time to time the Commissioner of Prisons would encounter works that would require him to use a contractor rather than in-house, and so we have to use the contractors as against using the prisoners. But let me say categorically that the use of the prisoners to do works in the prison buildings for maintenance and so on, and even for construction of new buildings is ongoing. I have the Deputy Commissioner here and he could testify to that because they have been assuring me that that is what is going, and I have seen it for myself on my visits there.

**Miss Cox:** My question really has to deal with the fact that, yes, I know that some of that is taking place, but not as much as before, because there is work being contracted out that prisoners can do that, because the women's prison was built by prisoners.

**Hon. George:** That is what I am saying, I am aware that there is a new administration building there that was built by prisoners, but there are still certain works that we have to contract.

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**Miss Cox:** I agree with you.

**Hon. George:** I hope that that explains that particular—

**Miss Cox:** It does not.

**Hon. George:** It does not? You just said you knew, so that is why I am saying—

**Miss Cox:** No, I know work is taking place. I know that prisoners are doing some, but I am talking about now there is a difference. A lot of work that could be done by prisoners is being contracted out. Much more contracts are being given out. That is my point.

**Hon. George:** Noted, although I dispute it.

In respect of the Food at Institutions, let me answer that one. I think that we have to take as much care of the prisoners as we can, and the increase in the cost of food is provided for to ensure that we can properly feed the prisoners. You have to take care of them; they are in our care. We have to take care of them.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let the Minister respond and we will take it from there.

**Hon. George:** In respect of training—training for prisons officers is an ongoing exercise, and I assure that that is an exercise that we view with considerable seriousness and we are proceeding there. That is the reason you will see an increase in the provision for training of prisons officers.

**Miss Cox:** You did not answer one thing about training, which is succession planning. He did not answer the question, Mr. Chairman.

**Hon. George:** The matter of succession planning? The training and the succession planning are part and parcel of the same thing.

**Miss Cox:** That is why I wanted to know if it is part of it.

**Hon. George:** Yes. I think those are the ones that—

**Mr. Chairman:** The Security Services I think somebody mentioned.

**Hon. George:** This covers the prisoner transport. The transport of prisoners from the prisons to the various courts, that is what that is for—Security Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think the Member for Diego Martin North/East—buildings.

**Hon. George:** Repairs and maintenance of buildings—of course, many of the buildings at the prisons are old buildings and there is an ongoing maintenance programme that we are pursuing, hence we have made provision.

**Mr. Imbert:** What buildings are these? Could you list them for me?

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**Hon. George:** I suppose we could list them and get them to the Minister?

**Mr. Imbert:** You do not know what prisons you have? You have the women's prison; the men's prison; Golden Grove; Maximum Security; Carrera.

**Hon. George:** We have all of them, yes, and works go on at all of them. We will list them and get the information to you, no problem.

**Mr. Imbert:** Right. So it is virtually all the prisons?

**Hon. George:** Yes, you have to maintain.

**Mr. Imbert:** So this \$5 million is for all the prisons?

**Hon. George:** Yes, the current prison buildings—well, we have other provisions made—

**Mr. Imbert:** My difficulty is, these buildings, as you quite rightly have just said, are very old; \$5 million might do piece of a roof on one of the buildings. That is why I want to know what is the breakdown of this allocation of this \$5 million? This is woefully inadequate.

**Hon. George:** Well, for maintenance work we will try to make do with what we have.

**Mr. Imbert:** \$5 million?

**Hon. George:** We will try to make do with what we have.

**Mr. Imbert:** It should be about \$500 million. So could I get a breakdown, please?

**Hon. George:** We will make do with what we have. No problem.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is that a "yes" or "no"?

**Hon. George:** Well we will give it to you as far as we can.

**Mr. Imbert:** As far as you can? You must know how you came up with this figure. Could you break it down prison by prison for me, please?

**Hon. George:** This is the figure that was allocated.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, but based on a request.

**Hon. George:** Yes, so we will give you—

**Mr. Imbert:** So what, a \$10,000 for this prison, \$50,000 for that one? That is what I want to know.

**Hon. George:** We will get that to you, Sir.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman, Item 23, Fees. I just want to try to distinguish if the Minister could distinguish these fees here from the fees in the public domain, with respect to the Attorney General's responsibility. How are the two allocations distinguished? And then, why are we asking for \$200,000 when the most we have spent is \$40,000 under this particular line item?

**Hon. George:** Well, the Commissioner has indicated that they use consultants from time to time and they would pay them fees. That is my information.

**Dr. Browne:** These are not legal fees?

**Hon. George:** No.

**Dr. Browne:** But why \$200,000 when the most we have spent is \$40,000?

**Hon. George:** That is a good question; I do not have the answer to that question for you, but we will seek to provide that information regarding the difference.

**Mr. Chairman:** So we could go on to Item 0005 Prison Service (Tobago). We go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment; Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, Item 003, Forensic Science Centre; Item 004, Prison Service. *[Interruption]* Which one?

**Mrs. Thomas:** St. Ann's East. *[Laughter]* Mr. Chairman, I am tired.

**Mr. Chairman:** We know you are from St. Ann's East, do not worry. Which Item would you like us to focus on?

**Mrs. Thomas:** Mr. Chairman, 004, Prison Service Item 04, Other Minor Equipment. I just wanted the Minister to explain what accounts for the revised figure of \$12 million and a reduction then of \$9 million, when the first figure for was 2014 was \$3.7 million.

**Hon. George:** You recall that there was an urgent requirement for the Government to purchase security equipment for the protection of the prisons officers, particularly vests, and this came as a result of the report of the committee earlier this year, but we did not have that money in our budget and we had to get the virement. So the virement accounts for the increase in what you are seeing here, from the \$3 million to the \$12 million.

**Miss Cox:** Yes, Mr. Chair, under Other Minor Equipment, I wanted to know where is money allocated for cell phone jammers?

**Hon. George:** The purchase of cell phone jammers and grabbers has been accounted for already. We have awarded a contract and we have that money set aside for that purchase, so that is not in this.

**Miss Cox:** Where is that funding coming from?

**Hon. George:** That funding is coming from the Office of the Prime Minister via the National Security Council's decision.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, let us go on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers. [*Interruption*] Oh yes, 04, Transfers and Subsidies, Other Transfers.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I just want to put a question to the Minister. The Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, what has happened to that?

**Hon. George:** It is transferred to the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

**Miss Mc Donald:** You all did not put a note there. I note there is nothing, but I could have been guided.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well you are now guided.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Chair, please. Under Head 009, Other Transfers Sub-Head 03, Penal Reform and Transformation Secretariat. On all these Sub-Heads, Police Complaints Authority, Criminal Injuries—have they, in fact, been transferred to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the rationale behind it, please.

**Hon. George:** Yes, they have been transferred, but I cannot give you the rationale.

**Mr. Chairman:** They have been transferred by legislation.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** If the Ministry of Justice is responsible for the penal system, then it seems to be counterintuitive to move penal reform to another Ministry. It should reside with the Ministry of Justice.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, listen, these matters have been settled by law. We cannot engage in speculation as to whether it should have been there; that has been settled by law. Some other question, please. Anybody else?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Chairman.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, I am not seeing penal reform being transferred to Legal Affairs, from what I see here—Police Complaints, Criminal Injuries and Police Complaints Authority—

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**Hon. George:** The Police Complaints Authority and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board have been transferred. The Penal Reform and Transformation Secretariat is still with us, and their programme involves really a drug rehabilitation programme that we are doing in the prisons.

**Miss Cox:** I want to ask: What is the present status of the parole system that is supposed to be implemented? I believe it is supposed to be under this programme.

**Hon. George:** Yes, the parole legislation is currently with the Ministry, but we are going to be sending it to the LRC in the next couple of weeks, two weeks max. So for that legislation, our Ministry has done its work and it is going to be sent to the Legislative Review Committee for them to consider it.

**6.45 p.m.**

**Miss Cox:** Minister, are you aware that it is five years now that that legislation has been lingering?

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Let us go on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Item 4, Social Infrastructure. Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** This time. [*Laughter*] Let us go to page 146, please, Development Programme.

**Hon. Member:** One what?

**Mr. Imbert:** 146.

**Mr. Chairman:** 146 of the Development Programme.

**Mr. Imbert:** Head 58, Development Programme, page 146, please.

**Hon. George:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** I noticed that under 005/06, Establishing of an Electronic Monitoring Programme \$7 million was allocated for 2014, none was spent. Why is that?

**Hon. George:** The Electronic Monitoring Programme, we have had some difficulty procuring the electronic monitoring manager, and of course, according to the legislation, we have to start with the electronic monitoring manager before we begin to recruit all the other persons who will staff that particular agency. And let me explain that we had advertised for those persons, for the two positions for the electronic monitoring manager in 2012, and those advertisements—there were 13 applications received, and none were found to be suitable. All right. So what

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we have done now is to ask the British High Commission, through their criminal justice advisor, to seek to help us to recruit an individual who will be able to fill that position for us.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay. [*Crosstalk*] Hold on, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** No. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is all right. I wanted to go through 5 and then go back to 4. So how do you want to do this? You want to let other people speak or—you tell me. Because 004 also deals with the same “Development Programme”. All right. So just let me just get rid of 005, and then go to 004. I noticed again on this 005 that there was an allocation of \$5 million for an Offender Management Programme”, expenditure 0. Why is that? Just like ankle bracelets. No money spent. Offender Management Programme, no money spent. Why is that?

**Hon. George:** This is offender?

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 146.

**Hon. George:** Establishment of Offender Management Programme.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. Expenditure naught, zero, nothing.

**Hon. George:** Yeah. Well, we were unable to expend funding under this item because we are still in the process of policy development really, you know, with respect to offender management. Because remember this is in here. We are dealing with the introduction of the NOMS which is the National Offender Management Service, and we have not been able to put that into place as yet.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. Going to the previous page 4, could you tell me why you have allocated no money for the upgrading of the Carrera Convict Prison? I think that must be the oldest prison that we have.

**Hon. George:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** So why you have no money to upgrade it? Does it not require upgrading?

**Hon. George:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Go ahead.

**Hon. George:** Mr. Chairman,—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, continue.

**Hon. George:**—to answer his question regarding no provision being made for works at the Carrera Prison, the intention is to move the prisoners who are currently housed in Carrera into the Maximum Security Prison. To do so, we have to do two things. We have to do the electronic upgrade to the Maximum Security Prison to bring it back up to its former pristine status because it was allowed to decline, so that all of the electronics deteriorated. That work is ongoing and it is to be finished in October/November of this year.

Side by side with that is the building, the construction of a security fence around the MSP. Once we have done those two things we will be able to bring the prisoners out of Carrera and into the Maximum Security Prison because the prison now, currently it is housing maybe a thousand prisoners when it was built to accommodate about 1,700 to 1,800 prisoners. We will be able to maximize its use once that electronic upgrade is done. And the reason for putting the fence now is because in Carrera the prisoners are accustomed to a certain ambience in their environment, and we want to ensure that when they come to the MSP that they have a similar ambience, and also to create an environment for prison industry to take place in a secured environment.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I will defer to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. Member for Laventille East/Morvant, hon. Member.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will come back much later.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to be clear. Is the Minister saying that Carrera Prison will be closed down?

**Hon. George:** We will remove—the intention is to remove all the prisoners who are currently housed there to the MSP.

**Miss Cox:** What is the reason for that?

**Hon. George:** Because there are a lot of problems having to do with transportation in particular between—there are a lot of other issues, and we feel that putting them up at MSP will give us the ability to use them more intensively in the prison industry and so on, and it will be better for them.

**Miss Cox:** But what are their plans for Carrera?

**Hon. George:** We have—I guess the national security people will consider utilizing the facility there, and that will have to take place in discussion with the



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heritage people at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure because there are heritage issues in respect of that site that must be taken into consideration.

**Miss Cox:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

**Miss Cox:** I have more questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** One more.

**Miss Cox:** I have more questions. I see here the money allocated for the Construction of Quarters for Senior Officers, also Construction of Nursery at Women's Prison, also three areas that have been repeated for the past three years, upgrading Construction of Senior Officers Mess, Construction of Quarters for Senior Officers, Construction of Nursery at Women's Prison, and I also think that the CCTV. I have seen it being repeated in the Estimates. What is happening with that? Why is work not taking place or has it been progressing?

**Hon. George:** Well, my information is that the work is progressing albeit slowly because they are using prisoners to do this work.

**Miss Cox:** All this work that I—including the provision of CCTV cameras?

**Hon. George:** No. No. No. With respect to the construction of the nursery at the Women's Prison—

**Miss Cox:** Yes. Has that started? Has the work started on that?

**Hon. George:** No.

**Miss Cox:** Because as far I know, the answer is no.

**Hon. George:** The nursery?

**Miss Cox:** No, the nursery has not started. Because this is the fifth year or the fourth year I am seeing it here in the Estimates, the women's—the nursery. I just wanted to know the reason why this has not progressed because it is needed.

**Hon. George:** Well my PS is saying to me that work has started.

**Miss Cox:** Well, the Commissioner of Prisons is saying no? So, I do not know. What is the real answer?

**Hon. George:** Well my PS is saying that the work has started. I trust my PS. The foundation is in the ground, my PS is indicating.

**Miss Cox:** But is work taking place?

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**Hon. George:** We will continue the work in the coming year.

**Miss Cox:** All right. I hope so.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Chair. Chair, can I ask a question on page 147 under Public Buildings?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Hon. George:** Under—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Public Buildings. Hon. Minister, on page 147, sub 004. On the sum of \$3.4 million in 2013 for the Construction of four Purpose-built Supreme Court of Judicature Buildings. How many buildings were actually built in 2013 with the \$3.4 million?

**Hon. George:** Well no work was done in terms of the actual construction—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Right.

**Hon. George:**—because we had engaged UDeCOTT to undertake this work for us, and a lot of the funding here has gone to pay UDeCOTT for the procurement of design consultants and so on. In fact, we have gotten those designs now for one of those buildings, that is the Malabar—sorry—we got the—[*Minister confers with advisor*] it is NIPDEC not UDeCOTT eh. It is Nipdec—all right—for those buildings, and we will be pursuing those in the coming year.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Sorry. Is it UDeCOTT or NIPDEC?

**Hon. George:** NIPDEC.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Nipdec. Right. Okay. So this \$3.4 million was basically for designs?

**Hon. George:** Yes.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Have the designs been accepted for use in Trinidad and Tobago—this \$3.4 million? Are they suitable for the Trinidad criminal justice system?

**Hon. George:** I am sorry. The designs were completed already under a foreign consultant. This here is really for preconstruction activity that is being undertaken by—

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**Mr. Deyalsingh:** That is the \$3.4 million?

**Hon. George:** No.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Hon. George:** The 15.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay. What I am asking, you said you had designs done.

**Hon. George:** Yes.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** My question is, are those designs suitable for our local criminal justice system, and that we can move ahead with it? [*Crosstalk*] No. No.

**Hon. George:** You are asking me an opinion.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay. If you cannot answer; sorry then. The 2014 Revised Estimate of \$8.454 million, seeing that you have the designs, how many centres were actually constructed or are going to be constructed or foundations have been laid for?

**Hon. George:** Well, we have not started actual construction work yet, but we—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So nothing has been constructed. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, please.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Correct?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please. Please.

**Hon. George:** I have said, no construction work has started—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Right.

**Hon. George:**—but preconstruction work has started.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Right. Good.

**Hon. George:** Yes.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Therefore, if it is that the Government is going ahead with the project, why is there no figure for 2015 estimates?

**Hon. George:** If you go to the other book, you will find it in the IDF.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** All right. Thank you. So, no centres have been done to date.

**Hon. George:** Pre-construction work has commenced. [*Crosstalk*]

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**Dr. Moonilal:** This is the part before construction.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Okay. I just wanted to—

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member of Diego Martin North/East, and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, and then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, and then we are going to close off.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will ask all my questions now—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. Ask all your questions.

**Mr. Imbert:**—one time.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member of for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** On page 145, 09 Development Programme. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please. Please, Members. Let us not engage in crosstalk, please. Member for St. Joseph and Tabaquite, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 145, 09 Development Programme, 029; Construction of a Prison in Hope Tobago. Has that vanished?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Justice.

**Hon. George:** That too is provided for in the IDF. That too is an initial sum—there is an initial sum provided for that in the IDF.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. Let us go to the same item the Member for St. Joseph was asking about. I see on page 147, 004 Construction of four—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Chairman, there is a—

**Mr. Chairman:** Please. Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:**—there is a drone over there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. Please.

**Mr. Imbert:** 147, 004 Construction of four Purpose-built Supreme Court of Judicature Buildings. Then when you go to the IDF, page 274 under Public Buildings, you see Construction of six Purpose-built Supreme Court of Judicature Buildings. How did it move from four to six, and what methodology is being used, what procurement methodology is being used to implement this project? Similarly, Mr. Chairman, I see the forensic laboratory pathology, nothing in the estimates under the Consolidated Fund, but just \$2 million under the IDF, is that \$2 million adequate to construct a new laboratory? Those are all my questions.

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**Hon. George:** Yeah. Well—

**Mr. Imbert:** My first question was, why did you go from four to six?

**Hon. George:** We have approval for six, but we are pursuing four. That is the only reason.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. No. No.

**Hon. George:** No. No. No. Hold on. Because we do not have enough money. You have to prioritize, and therefore—

**Mr. Imbert:** No. No. Minister, bear with me, please.

**Hon. George:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** On page 147, under the Consolidated Fund, in 2014 you had construction of four buildings. On page 274, under F “Public Buildings”, you have six. So last year you had four, now you have six. Why have you moved from four last year to six this year? That is my question.

**7.00 p.m.**

**Hon. George:** Well, we have approval for six and that is why the six is there.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, okay, let me ask you the question a different way.

**Hon. George:** I hear you, you know. I am saying we have approval for six, that is why the six are there.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me ask you the question a different way. You had four last year, where were they? You have six this year, where are they?

**Hon. George:** The construction of one of the buildings is what we are pursuing.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay.

**Hon. George:** Now, we are trying to do the Malabar first and we will follow with the others.

**Mr. Imbert:** So in 2015—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. George:** Because we feel we can do, we are trying to do what we can.

**Mr. Imbert:** Fine. So in 2015, it is just one you are doing?

**Hon. George:** Well, we are hoping that we will get to the other. We want to start with the Malabar.

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**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, but could you tell us in due course where these six buildings are, please, where do you plan to put them?

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you make available in writing.

**Hon. George:** We will make that information available.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I recognize the Member for—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but he has not answered my other questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, all right.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is \$2 million adequate for the forensic lab?

**Mr. Chairman:** Is \$2 million adequate?

**Mr. Imbert:** Is it enough money for that?

**Hon. George:** Well, we will start the process with the \$2 million and see how far it takes us.

**Mr. Imbert:** And you did not answer my question on the procurement methodology for the judicial building. What method are you using, through a “CTB”, through an enterprise, how you are doing that?

**Hon. George:** We will do it through a state enterprise, namely NIPDEC.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are going through NIPDEC?

**Hon. George:** We will go through NIPDEC.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, and then the question on the Tobago prison, what happened?

**Hon. George:** Whether the \$2 million is sufficient?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, it disappeared. The prison at Hope just gone.

**Hon. George:** Well, the prison at Hope is in the IDF.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, could you point me to the line item, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** He said it is in the IDF. I recognize the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Back to line Item, sub, sub 004. The Minister stated that he is in pre-construction. It is on *Hansard* where this Minister said that all four original sites were no longer available to the Government, the one in Siparia, the one in Carlsen Field, the one in Sangre Grande and the one in Arouca. That is on the *Hansard*.

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**Dr. Moonilal:** Do you have the reference to the *Hansard*?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Is it now that the Minister has found four alternate sites so that pre-construction can begin? And where are those four alternate sites?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just for the record, could we just get the *Hansard* reference that you have in front of you?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** I can find it, but I do not have it here.

**Dr. Moonilal:** “Ohh”, you do not have it in front of you.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** He was answering a question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, sure.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So, do you have four sites?

**Hon. George:** We have four sites. There was one that we had in Siparia—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Right.

**Hon. George:**—that was assigned to another use, and we are looking for a site there. That is the only issue.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So has any pre-construction started there?

**Hon. George:** No.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Great. Carlsen Field, do you have the other site, seeing that your first site was no longer available.

**Hon. George:** We do have the site in Carlsen Field.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Has any pre-construction started there?

**Hon. George:** No. I said earlier on that the pre-construction work we are doing at this time has to do with Malabar.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Malabar only, and Sangre Grande, nothing?

**Hon. George:** Well, we have identified the land and so on, and that is as far we have got.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So the only one is Malabar? Thank you. I just want it on the record.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then we will move on.

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**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I think the Minister is confusing us a bit. One minute he is saying four sites, next minute we are reading in the IDF that it is six courts that are actually going to be constructed. I—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** What is the question, let us get a question, please.

**Miss Hospedales:** I would like to know if the Minister has identified six specific sites, and if he could let us know exactly where they are, please?

**Hon. George:** I will provide that information for you. I did say I will provide that information for you.

**Mr. Chairman:** He said he will provide that in writing. So let me recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Hospedales:** And there is one other thing. Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Laventille East/Morvant, please.

**Miss Cox:** I think I heard her say there is one more.

**Mr. Chairman:** You have another question.

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes. Mr. Chair, under Administrative Services, there is a \$500,000 allocation for training. I would like to ask the Minister if this is adequate?

**Mr. Chairman:** What page are you on?

**Miss Hospedales:** Page 146, Item 008, Training. Only \$500,000 has been allocated.

**Hon. George:** I did answer that earlier on to say that training of prison personnel is an ongoing exercise, and that is what that funding is about.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Cox:** I just have two questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Two questions? Yes.

**Miss Cox:** I want to go back to the Hope prison to find out if there is an expected date because it is urgent. The prison in Tobago is falling into the sea. Is the Minister not aware of that?

**Mr. Chairman:** And what is the next one.

**Miss Cox:** I would like to know how soon this work will start. The next question is, what provision has been made for Remand Yard, in Port of Spain and Golden Grove?



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**Hon. George:** In respect of the Hope facility in Tobago, I think earlier this year the Tobago House of Assembly did assign or allocate a piece of land for the construction of this particular facility and that—we will start by addressing the pre-construction works in respect of the construction of this facility, because now we have the land. I could not give you a time frame as to when we are going to start putting concrete and steel into the ground, but that will eventually take place.

The other issue having to do with the Remand Yard both at Port of Spain and at Golden Grove, you will recall that coming out of the Deosaran Committee Report there were certain recommendations having to do with the purchase of beds, the improvement to the toilet and electrical facilities and so on, all of these things are ongoing.

In fact, the refurbishment works of the public toilet, so to speak, and these are toilets that are separated from the toilets in the cells, those public area toilets have been completed. The beds are currently being installed. So all of these works are going on as we speak. The plumbing works are also taking place to improve the facilities there so that the prisoners can be more comfortable in the environment. All of these works are ongoing. Recognize though, that because you are doing these works with prisoners around and you have to shift them from location to location to accommodate these works, it is proceeding not as quickly as we would like, but they are ongoing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, let us go on to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure Development Fund.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 58 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, we would like to thank you for being here with us with your staff. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] We now go on to Ministry of Science and Technology.

Okay, hon. Members, we shall resume. We are now dealing with Head 73, Ministry of Science and Technology.

*Head 73.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 73 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$681,055,100 for Head 73, the Ministry of Science and Technology is comprised of moneys proposed for

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

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02; Goods and Services, Item 001.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Arouca/Maloney thereafter.

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 425, Item 28, Other Contracted Services.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** At least I thought I would get the opportunity to say something.

**Mr. Chairman:** “Ohh”, all right, I thought that seeing that the trend has started where everyone declined—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Mc Donald:** We thought that you would have fallen in line.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** And if you talk I might just make a long statement for five minutes.

**Mr. Chairman:** I wish to apologize to the hon. Minister because each Minister is entitled to say a few opening remarks no more than five minutes. Hon. Minister of Science and Technology, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Just to thank you, Chairman, and welcome my PS, Miss Seerattan and her entire team from the Ministry of Science and Technology. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, the floor is yours, and then we go from there.

**Mr. Imbert:** True to form. Page 425, Item 28, Other Contracted Services, \$265 million. What is this for?

**Mr. Chairman:** Other Contracted Services, \$265 million. Any further questions?

**Mr. Imbert:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could we take a few so he can take notes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Similarly, on page 426, same Sub-Item 28, \$49 million. What is that for? Similarly on page 428, under 01—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no, I think, I thought you had questions under Goods and Services and General Administration.

**Mr. Imbert:** I just have two questions under Goods and Services which I have indicated on page 425 and page 426.

**Mr. Chairman:** But under General Administration, I think the first question hon. Minister is that \$265 million under Other Contracted Services. The hon. Member would like to know what that is about.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. What it is about, is to facilitate payment for iGovTT; that is, the iGovTT 2, six months extension. GovNet 3, that is a new system that we are putting in place, in a price high availability portal. That is a portal to drive the public service and provide the necessary access and interaction we need throughout the entire public service. Also the Foundation Services Infrastructure and the PeopleSoft Pension for the Ministry of Public Administration and others. That is what that money is for.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Simply, to put a number of systems in place and to pay for GovNet 2 which is a new system we are operating in.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you, before the end of this exercise, give us some further details, the names of all those things and the purpose of them and what procurement methodology you are using to spend this \$265 million?

**Hon. Griffith:** Certainly, we will make that available to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are going on to Item 002, National Information and Communication Technology Centre, Secretariat.

**Mr. Imbert:** I had a question on 28, what is that \$49 million for under Other Contracted Services?

**Mr. Chairman:** You got that question, honourable—

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes. As you know, Cabinet agreed to have 42 ICT access centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The first phase is building of six, three have been completed and the other three are well on the way. And we intend to build out 18 of those centres before the end of this fiscal year. That is what the money is for.

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**Mr. Imbert:** So could I get the location of those 18, the approximate cost of each one and the facilities that will be in each one of them.

**Hon. Griffith:** We will be able to give you the 18 plus the six in the phase that is already going—

**Mr. Imbert:** Sure.

**Hon. Griffith:**—so you will receive 24.

**Mr. Imbert:** Right, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we go to Sub-Item 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, National Information and Communication Technology Centres, Secretariat; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

**7.15 p.m.**

Then we go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. We now deal with the Development Programme.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes?

**Mr. Imbert:** I had “meh” hand up.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which one are you on?

**Mr. Imbert:** 011, and I had raised that before, on page 428: Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, okay, State Enterprises. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** At 01, I see this phenomenal sum of \$190 million for National ICT. What is that? And what State Enterprise are you referring to here?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister?

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Yeah. This \$190,000 for 2015—

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**Mr. Chairman:** It is \$90 million. Is \$90 million you said?

**Mr. Imbert:** \$190 million.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** \$190 million for 2015, an increase of \$90 million. This is for iGovTT. iGovTT is the company that facilitates the ICT for the entire Government services and also some quasi-state services, and this money here, \$190 million, is to facilitate the expenditure for 2015.

**Mr. Imbert:** Do you have a breakdown of that?

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** We do have a breakdown.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, fine. So you will give it to us before the end of the exercise?

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Before the end of this five-year—five-day period.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thought you were going to say five-year period. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** It could be five years.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies, then we will deal with the Development Programme—Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$681,055,100 for Head 73, the Ministry of Science and Technology, stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 73 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, hon. Minister of Science and Technology and your people.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to my team. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, let us deal with some matters as we prepare for tomorrow.

**Hon. Member:** That is it for the day?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. We have completed 10.

**Hon. Member:** Well done. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, again, to try to facilitate Ministers who are travelling and rather than have people acting for them and coming before our Standing Committee, they have requested—I have spoken with the Chief Whip, even though we have the order as provided by the Leader of the Opposition, we wanted to be a little flexible to accommodate them, and we have gotten agreement. So the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development is leaving the country tomorrow and he wants to be here very early tomorrow, so he will be the number one person coming here. Then we go to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure as the number two Ministry. Then we go to the Ministry of National Security.

The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs is travelling tomorrow evening. He would like us to entertain him very early, so we have put him at number four. So he will come at number four. Then we are dealing with the Ministry of Health at number five. So the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs is number four; the Ministry of Health is number five. We are asking the Ministry of Education—hon. Minister of Education—to take the place of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, which would be number 24, and that would be on Thursday. You will be on Thursday.

**Hon. Member:** Who is that?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Ministry of Education. So that the Ministry of Health is number five, then the Ministry of Food Production is number six; the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources is number seven; the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development is number eight; Pensions and Gratuities, number nine; Personnel Department, number 10.

Now, we are asking the following to stand by: Service Commission and the Statutory Authorities Service Commission. So we may be able to complete 12 tomorrow.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chair, I just want to ask—

**Mr. Chairman:** And also the Tax Appeal Board and the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. We have asked them to stand by so when we complete those 10, we would be able to deal with the four and finish 14 tomorrow—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Cox:** I have one question.

**Mr. Chairman:**—before Dr. Moonilal speaks. You want to say something?

**Miss Cox:** Yes. Seeing that we are doing National Security tomorrow, could we not have put Police one time, after? Because remember police is now separate.

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**Mr. Chairman:** We will have to call the Leader of the Opposition on that one.

**Miss Cox:** All right.

**Mr. Chairman:** We would not want to do that without him.

The hon. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, just to indicate, as colleagues are aware, Wednesday is a public holiday—

**Hon. Member:** What is that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Republic Day.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Republic Day. But if the Members are so minded, we can consider coming out on Wednesday—

**Hon. Members:** Noooo!

**Miss Mc Donald:** “We not so minded.” [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Chairman, on Thursday morning is our regular Cabinet meeting, of course—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—so that we will be very happy if Members can assist us to ensure that tomorrow we do as much as we can because on Thursday we will be abbreviated somewhat, because of that Cabinet meeting.

**Miss Mc Donald:** We will come for 1.00 o’clock on Thursday.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just keep that in mind so that you can push on tomorrow and push on, on Thursday.

**Mr. Imbert:** Sir, I think Cabinet should be on Wednesday. [*Laughter*] That would free up the whole of Thursday. And they were planning to work anyway.

**Mr. Chairman:** So Members, I have advised Members that besides going with 10 Ministries, there are four small areas: Equal Opportunity, the Service Commission we mentioned; the Tax Appeal Board and the other one is the Statutory Authorities Service Commission. We want to complete those four along with the other 10 tomorrow.

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So we convene at 10.00 a.m. as we have all agreed—sharp. So this meeting is adjourned until 10.00 a.m. We do not have to go until 12.00 to complete the 14. By 8.00 we should be over. Okay? So this meeting is now adjourned until 10.00 a.m.

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