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**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Friday 26th September, 2014

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2014

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015) BILL, 2014

[Tenth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mr. Mark]

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is called to order. Today, this morning we will be examining Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General. Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General is \$260,198,105.

Head 23.

I will now invite the hon. Attorney General if he so desires to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes at this time. The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and to Members of staff, my Permanent Secretary and heads of departments. The Ministry of the Attorney General is the law firm of the Government, and the individual clients would be the Ministries and each and every single public officer that serve the State of Trinidad and Tobago. This is the approach I have brought to the Office of the Attorney General in that we look at our legal problems in a solutions oriented manner with a dedicated focus to providing quality professional service to our end user who we see as the client and customer.

We adopt a very aggressive and very formal defence to all claims launched against the State whilst remaining compassionate to the ordinary man on the street who does litigate and sometimes require a certain amount of mercy and justice, beyond and outside the normal legal remit. Of particular significance in the past financial year and in the coming financial year, is the management of international legal disputes and, in particular, international commercial arbitrations in which the Ministry of the Attorney General has taken an abiding interest and role. We have been successful, thus far, Mr. Chairman, in all of the international commercial arbitrations that we have been involved in, starting with

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the offshore patrol vessels, the OPVs, continuing with the World GTL arbitration, the Fluor arbitration, and now pending before an arbitral tribunal in Miami, the Sural arbitration.

These arbitrations, any of them, if the State was unsuccessful, it could have had a direct hit and adverse impact on the Treasury and economy of Trinidad and Tobago to the tune of billions of dollars. We have also been collaborating with, many state-sector companies to deal with the avalanche of litigation that came in the wake of several mega projects that saw claims in excess of \$2.5 billion from the construction sector arising out of unpaid contractual sums that were due and owing.

Outside of that, we have established a very important unit called the Civil Child Abduction Authority, consistent with the Harare Convention on the International Rights of the Child. That Civil Abduction Authority has been extremely busy in the Family Court where we seek to protect the interest and welfare of children who find themselves in the middle of a thug of war that crosses borders, and they sometimes can fall into a crack, we seek their interest in the courts in that regard.

The compliance with the Financial Action Task Force, I am the Chairman of the Cabinet sub-committee and I will be leading the Government delegation to Paris in November to present our final report to that international Financial Action Task Force. We have passed several amendments to the Financial Intelligence Unit to make that Unit more effective to deal with the issue of count-financing of terrorism and terrorists' enterprise on the whole. We have also passed several pieces of legislation to deal with the issue of crime as it relates to fingerprinting and DNA.

So the Ministry of the Attorney General will continue to play a critical role in the justice system and, in particular, in the litigation against the State.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that sum 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 Estimate of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

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Dr. Rowley: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, morning, Members. I have a few small questions with respect to Salaries and Vacant Posts under 01, 001, Sub-Head 001, 08; I am taking Sub-Item 01, and Sub-Item 08 together. It is the same question.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure.

Dr. Rowley: Are the salaries and vacant posts for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution included in your administration?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: So the provisions here for dealing with vacant posts and so on would be dealt with in the context in here?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Indeed. Yeah.

Dr. Rowley: We understand that there are a number of vacant posts to be filled, will this allocation suffice to ensure that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution is properly staffed as per public commitment?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure. Well, the Office of the DPP, Cabinet had passed a Note to increase the staffing for the Office of the DPP by some additional 35 lawyers and consequential administrative support staff. That is a matter, however, for the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, so I cannot speak to the issue of how fast and how quickly, and if and when that will be done, but what I can say is that the minute the JLCS hires someone for the Office of the DPP funds are made available so that person can assume duty. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is given top priority in the administrative and financial arrangements of the Ministry of the Attorney General, because of the obvious critical constitutional role and function it performs. So rest assured that insofar as there are vacancies, once the Judicial and Legal Service Commission over which I have no control appoints someone, funds are made immediately available.

Dr. Rowley: So these vacant posts referred to here are posts on the current establishment?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: They will include some on the current establish and they will include a lot on my own establishment from the Ministry of the Attorney Generl itself. There is a difficulty in terms of attracting persons to come into the State because of the remuneration packages we offer, and that is an open secret in the legal profession. Attorneys, you know, if you compare what the private law firms pay and what one can obtain practising on their own, it really is a labour love and a sacrifice to come and serve the State. I salute all public officers and legal officers who make that sacrifice for the service of our country.

Dr. Rowley: So given that we now have vacant posts on the current establishment, it is possible that even if we increase the establishment by 35 or any similar number of posts, that we could still have a shortage of personnel as a result of our inability of fill those posts for whatever reason?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No, I do not think so. I think if we filled those 35 positions in the context of the legislative framework that the Government policy has been fleshing out, I do not think we will have a problem once there is proper training. There is a tripod of legislation that we have been working—

Dr. Rowley: But you just told me the problem—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No. No. Can I just complete the answer, please?

Dr. Rowley: But before you go off and you answer, I am staying with the question that I asked, you just told me that the difficulty you are having with the current vacant posts is that you cannot attract people to them because of the remuneration level. So if you add more posts how is that going to make it easier to attract people?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I made a general statement of fact and that applies not just, I am sure, to the Ministry of the Attorney General, but to the Engineering Department of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure to the Accounts Department in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. Across the board, not just in Trinidad and Tobago, but the world over, the remuneration package offered in the civil service, in Great Britain, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and elsewhere, it is not as competitive as what one would obtain in the private sector. That is a general statement of fact.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I cannot fill those vacancies because they have to be filled by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. Insofar as you asked about funding, funding is available to fill those vacancies and it is given priority. With respect to whether or not, when those vacancies are filled, there will still be a problem with human resource in the Office of the DPP, I think not because of the legislation we have passed.

In the United States of America, Mr. Chairman, 90 to 95 per cent of criminal cases do not go to trial. Only 5 to 7 per cent of criminal cases actually go before a judge and jury, and that is because they have an effective plea-bargaining system. I am in the process in collaboration with the United States of America Government and its experts, in drafting a plea-bargaining law which I will bring to this Parliament, and once that comes—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, which question is he answering?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No, but I am answering your question, about whether or not it would result in a shortage of manpower.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware that I asked that question.

Mr. Chairman: All right, you want to rephrase?

Dr. Rowley: No, because I was going to move on when I asked, you know, in the context of what vacant posts he had and he said there were going to be 34 more added by the JLSC. I heard that. And then I asked, since there are difficulties with filling what we have now, when we increase the establishment, would that not also be possible that we can have vacancies, and I moved on from there.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, as I understand it, the hon. Attorney General is giving some reflections on the manpower requirement and how that may change over time, given proposed legislation and policy. I am very curious to hear what may be the manpower requirement over time given other policy changes and the Attorney General is on this line. Now, I do not know if you want to trip him now and then we can ask it later.

Dr. Rowley: Well, you can ask you own questions.

Dr. Moonilal: I do not want to be repeating, you know, question lines that that the Opposition Leader may—

Mr. Chairman: All right. Allow our AG to—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: If I may. Look, it is a legitimate question and permit me to answer it. You have asked a very important question, in the public interest—

Dr. Rowley: You answered it as far as I am concerned, you know.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No, I would prefer—

Mr. Chairman: All right, listen, the hon. Leader has said you have answered it, so let us go to the next question.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: All right, if you are happy with the answer, that is fine.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go. Let us go.

Dr. Moonilal: “And doh get upset nah man, we now start.”

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Dr. Rowley: I am fine. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Let us go. Let us go.

Dr. Rowley: I did not ask about plea-bargaining and I did not ask about the DPP office—

Mr. Chairman: Let us go.

Dr. Rowley:—except whether we have vacancies there on this allocation, and I move on, Mr. Chairman. You have the floor.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 002 Law Commission. We go to Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Under General Administration, 02, 16, Contract Employment—

Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on?

Dr. Rowley: I am on page 135.

Mr. Chairman: Page 135 under General Administration.

Dr. Rowley: Again, Mr. Chairman, I would want to ask whether the consideration for contract officers here, whether that includes staff at the DPP's office?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes it does actually, Mr. Chairman. It includes the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and it includes a number of the areas in the Ministry where we have various projects that are ongoing and you have to have contracted officers.

Dr. Rowley: How many of these—well, of course, it will have contract officers at the AG's office, what proportion of these contracted employees catered for in subsection 16 are attorneys-at-law?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: The establishment is 281 at the moment, positions, the contract positions are 156. It has always had a very significant contract portfolio in the Ministry of the Attorney General by reason of the nature of the job itself. The second thing I want to note is that Cabinet, on May 23, 2013, agreed to create for the DPP, 100 permanent positions of legal offices, and 100 permanent positions of civil offices. Now that is part of PMCD's plan that the Minister of Public Administration spoke about, to phase out some of the contract positions and to bring them on the establishment of the JLSC jurisdiction.

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Dr. Rowley: Roughly what proportion of those would be lawyers as against non-lawyers?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I gave you that; it would be about 50 per cent.

Dr. Rowley: Including the proposed expansion as well?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Are you able to say what other skills might be required besides legal skills in the contract?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: You would require administrative support skills; you would require paralegals, legal secretaries and matters of the kind; legal research officers and the like.

Mr. Warner: What is the policy for selecting these contract officers?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Contract officers, normally the positions would be advertised; there would be an interview process and they will be selected.

Mr. Warner: And this has been the policy throughout?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It has not been the policy throughout, no. Prior to my assumption of office, there were no advertisements for several contract positions. People were simply arbitrarily and capriciously handpicked.

Mr. Warner: I am talking about your term.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: You need to be specific. In my term yes, we normally would advertise, and there are instances where you do not advertise depending on the requirements.

Mr. Warner: If I may go on, Mr. Chairman, to 23. How do you do it for short-term employment?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Short-term employment likewise; it would depend on the nature of the job. In some cases you do not advertise because you are given a pool of persons to choose from. My Ministry is a little different. In other cases you would have a specific requirement that you cannot get, so that after you advertise and you get no response, you literally have to head-hunt persons and see if they would come on the establishment.

We do have a shortage of officers, for example, in legislative drafting, not just in Trinidad and Tobago but in the wider Commonwealth region, and we have been asking for assistance to try to fill some of the vacancies. At the highest level, there are several senior legal executive and advisor positions that remain open as I speak, because we have advertised them about three or four times and we cannot seem to attract people to apply for them, or the persons that have applied they were not shortlisted by the Human Resources Department.

The short-term allocation, when I say we are presented with a pool of persons, the Hugh Wooding Law School, for example, we are committed to take on graduates—not graduates from the period of year one to year two—then the six-month students who have completed. Then we have a World of Work Programme that I have initiated, where we take students on during the summer vacation from various schools, to give them their first taste of the world of work. We have had students from St. Francois Girls', Bishops Anstey, Shiva Boys, Lakshmi Girls', across the length and breadth of the country.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has taken a socio-economic perspective with its employment as well. So we assist the law school; we assist the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and we have our summer vacation programme, which is an extremely successful one.

Dr. Rowley: Is there a Cabinet-approved structure or plan for the staffing of the Office of the Attorney General?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes. In fact, PMCD has only just given it the refurbished and revised, if I may use that term, organogram and organizational chart, which is the establishment for the Ministry of the Attorney General. Previously something existed, but the problem is what I met when I came into office was an organizational chart that was not structured in any way and badly in need of rationalization from a human resource perspective.

We have been working with the Ministry of Public Administration and the PMCD Department to bring about some rational plan for the Ministry that is in keeping with Government's policy.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask whether the Ministry could give us a listing, not now, as we have been going along, sometime hopefully in the not too distant future, of all the contract positions which are currently available and filled, under 16 and 22.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Certainly.

Dr. Rowley: Indicating when the hiring took place and what their terms are. I will also like to ask: Who initiates the recruitment in that Ministry?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It would be the human resources department in most cases. In other cases as I indicated, depending on the nature of the job or the function or the task that has to be done, it may very well be that I might select some of the persons. It may very well be they may come as recommendations from members of staff.

Dr. Rowley: Is it possible to identify the persons that you have selected as against who were the public servants selected?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: We can certainly go through the list; I have no difficulty in trying to do that.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, under 23, Fees, I see you have Forensic Investigation, \$58 million; Retention for Local Attorneys, \$27 million, and then you have Retainer for Foreign Attorneys, \$22.8 million.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Mr. Warner: Can I get a breakdown of these attorneys and who received what?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Certainly. Mr. Chairman, as you are aware—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: How do you explain what is No. (viii) for Foreign Witnesses, \$14 million?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: As Attorney General, I have answered every single question that has been put on the Order Paper with respect to legal fees, and the information the hon. Member seeks has already been answered in this Parliament. But to the extent he wishes to have it disclosed again, I have no difficulty in taking the *Hansard* and giving it to him. If he wishes, I can retype it and give it to him. But with respect to a listing of attorneys who have been paid by the Ministry of the Attorney General, I have no difficulty in providing that whatsoever.

Mr. Chairman: Any further question, hon. Member?

Mr. Warner: No, except that this is for fees—no, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I observe this particular Item—if one is to appreciate the service of the department, this Item has grown exponentially since 2010, when the figure under this Head under 23 was in the order of \$30 million thereabouts—[*Interruption*] it was \$39 million, and that was in the context of a

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significant payment—I think it was about \$15 million or thereabouts—for the Uff Enquiry, which we understood to be a one-off thing.

So let us assume that the figure then was about \$40 million, and then, of course, by 2013—in fact, I think 2012, if we take 2012 into account, while 2010 is not listed here in this document, it is in the previous document—we started out with about \$100 million, it ended up \$109 million. Then the budgeted and the actual out-turn is \$103 million under Fees. Then we budgeted \$113 million for 2014, and out of that the Revised Estimates are now indicating that the out-turn could be \$111.6 million for Fees, and then we are budgeting \$130 million for Fees in 2015.

So my question to the Attorney General is whether he would be disposed to providing to this House a breakdown for the payments of that \$111 million of 2014, telling us exactly how that moneys was spent; which individuals or agencies were paid; what they were hired for and what they produced, to account for the total expenditure of \$111 million, and on the same subject, as we look forward to 2015, whether he could give us a breakdown as to the anticipated expenditure profile of the \$130 million going forward?

While he is on that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Attorney General whether—the Sub-Heads under (i) to (iv) are there, I would like a similar breakdown under (iii), (iv), (v), (vii), and (viii); exactly who we paid, what they were paid for, when they were paid and what services they provided for the payments. Under Explanation there are Roman subsets there, and I am just asking for a few of that, the details.

Mr. Chairman: But these are estimates for 2015.

Dr. Rowley: But if you go back to 2014, you would find that these same Sub-Heads have been funded, so it should be easy to give me that information in that form.

Mr. Chairman: Right, I hear you.

Dr. Rowley: While the Attorney General has the floor, I will like to ask him when he is providing this information—Let me put the question differently: whether any of the lawyers being funded under this Heading are acting for him in a personal capacity and, if so, identify those lawyers—the lawyers who are acting for him in his personal capacity, who have been paid under Sub-Head 16 on the State's payroll, whether he is prepared to identify those lawyers, please.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure. Mr. Chairman, if I may, let me deal with the last question first. The answer is obviously, yes. Lawyers who are working for the State are, in fact—it is a matter of public record—they act for me. That precedent was, in fact, set by the Member for Diego Martin West, so I am surprised by the question. The Member for Diego Martin West, when he sued the Integrity Commission was represented by lawyers who at the time were also receiving work from the State. That precedent having been set, I thought that the Member's integrity, being impeccable as it is, would be a good precedent that I could safely follow, without having any problems or concerns expressed. [*Desk thumping*]

If the hon. Member wishes me to remind him of the names of those attorneys who, when the PNM was in power, received lucrative State briefs, who represented him whilst they were in power and continue to represent him whilst they are out of power, I shall be happy to name them and provide the amounts they received as well. But having set that precedent, I have no difficulty in disclosing, as I have disclosed before, those attorneys, and I will also include as an important footnote, the gentle but powerful reminder to your good self, as to the precedent you set.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, just for the record of the *Hansard* and the Parliament, I have never hired a lawyer for the State of Trinidad and Tobago, and I am not here raising any issue about a lawyer acting for the State and acting for my good friend. I am simply asking him to identify the persons who are so described. I have raised no issue with the principle.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I see; you do not have a problem with the principle?

Dr. Rowley: I am simply asking for the information. Again, let me repeat it, because I do not want anybody to go away with the impression—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: That you have a problem with the principle?

Mr. Chairman: Allow him to speak.

Dr. Rowley: I do not want anyone to go away with the impression, having heard what the Attorney General has said, that I have had anything to do with the hiring of State lawyers for the State, who may then come and work for me; never had that position. I am asking about lawyers who are hired by the Attorney General's Office, being paid by the State to the tune of \$111 million, and I simply asked if any of those lawyers are also hired by the Attorney General to prosecute his private lawsuits, please let us know who they are. That is all.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: And, Chairman, I have indicated that the answer to that is yes under the previous regime, yes under this regime and yes in 2015 when we

resume office. The point is this, that principle has always been there, and I want to correct the Member for Diego Martin West, for the record. It is incorrect for a former Minister and Member of Cabinet to say that they have never in their life hired an attorney for the State. Every single Minister in Cabinet comprises the State of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and as Minister of Housing you would have hired, no doubt, attorneys through the Ministry, through HDC and other places. In fact, had proper legal advice been sought, competent legal advice been sought, we would not have the fiasco of Las Alturas and collapsing building today. So that sometimes competent, professional legal advice is necessary. So that every Minister with a Ministry would have hired lawyers, and that is incorrect.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, are we having a debate or are we having a Finance Committee meeting? Because the Attorney General is here trying to generate a debate, and I will be willing to join him if he wishes.

Mr. Chairman: He has an entitlement to five minutes to speak. He can make a statement, he can ask questions. You are also entitled to five minutes. You can make a statement, you can ask questions. Each Member is entitled to his rights.

Mr. Warner: I have two questions. Based on what the AG has said, have previous Attorneys General retained lawyers to assist them from the State?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes, they have; I am glad you have asked the question. In fact, former Senior Counsel, Mr. John Jeremie SC, when he was Attorney General, he did retain counsel to represent him in several libel matters. His firm of Alexander, Jeremie & Co also received several lucrative State briefs while he was serving in the office of Attorney General from the Airports Authority, the HDC and many other state enterprises. So in this case, I am the only Attorney General perhaps in the country's history, not to have sent a single state brief to his former law firm; not one.

Mr. Warner: Okay, congratulations.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. Warner: Second question.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much.

Mr. Warner: Forensic investigation, the amount we spent for that, mammoth amount, what successes have we had so far?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Well, Mr. Chairman, we have before the courts right now claims that exceed \$2 billion against Calder Hart, Mr. Malcom Jones for \$1.2 billion for the failed gas to liquids project in Petrotrin which is now being sold as scrap iron after a loss of \$2.4 billion to Petrotrin on its book. Thirty billion dollars against the former board of eTecK over the failed Bamboo investments deal. A further \$12 million against the former board of the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

And of course, the successful resolution of the PHI pan matter against Professor Copeland and others who took state, public funds of over \$35 million to finance research to develop the PHI pan in which the people of this country had no proprietary interest. That matter moved from a position where they claimed sole intellectual property rights after the matter was filed in court to a situation where the intellectual property rights now vest in the people of this country one-third, the University of the West Indies one-third, and Professor Copeland, one-third. So those are the successful outcomes. But, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Any further questions?

Mr. Warner: No.

Mr. Chairman: I think that that is adequate for the time being. Let us move on to Item 002 Law Commission; Item 003 Equal Opportunity Commission.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Chairman, may I just crave your indulgence before you move on. There is a question—part of the question asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I did not respond to that I just want to make sure that I put on the record. With respect to the query about the fees and—I just want to say this, Mr. Chairman. We must bear in mind that the Office of the DPP falls under the Ministry of the Attorney General. A large percentage of the fees would be also for the Office of the DPP.

The question asked by the Member for Chaguanas West just now about the large fees for auditing, for example, we have spent to date in the last financial year alone, on auditing, we have spent over \$43 million on just auditing with respect to the Clico criminal investigation. So those fees are reflected in the fees that you are looking at. We have also spent for lawyers who were hired to prosecute matters by the office of the DPP, we have also spent significant sums in that regard; as we must. And it is perfectly legitimate and justifiable.

Furthermore, the Privy Council agents, the standing Privy Council agents for the State, Charles Russell and Co, what I have inherited is an accounting system

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that was in such a mess that today I am paying Charles Russell and Co. for matters I did in the Privy Council when the PNM was in power and won for discrimination. And we have just only had to approve in Cabinet the sum of \$5.74 million to pay a backlog and arrears for unpaid legal fees to Charles Russell and Co. dating back to 10 years to when I did cases like the Maha Sabha radio licence and others, Feroza Ramjohn and Ganga-Persad Kisooson and so on. So, we are cleaning up the mess that we inherited, whilst at the same time trying to instil some transparency and integrity in the process.

Mr. Chairman: May I suggest [*Crosstalk*] Attorney General, that you will provide the committee with a breakdown.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I have it here, Mr. Chairman, and they will have it.

Mr. Chairman: One hundred and eleven million for 2014.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Indeed.

Mr. Chairman: A breakdown.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, just for clarity against the exuberance of the Attorney General. It is my expectation that the question that I had put is that the payment would be broken down into all these components indicating who was hired, what they were paid, when they were paid, and what was the matter being dealt with? So, I think that will clarify all who were owed from 10 years ago and 20 years ago, who were hired last week. So this will be very simple.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: And I have that information and I will make it readily available within the shortest possible time.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 002 Law Commission; Item 003 Equal Opportunity Commission; Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration. [*Crosstalk*] I am under 03 now.

Dr. Rowley: Well there are a number of 03s. Which page are you on?

Dr. Moonilal: Which page are you looking at?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: 138.

Dr. Rowley: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. I was wondering too—I crave your indulgence to go back to 02/43.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: On what page?

Dr. Rowley: On page 136.

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Hon. Ramlogan SC: 136, thanks.

Mr. Chairman: So you are still on Goods and Services. Okay.

Dr. Rowley: Security Services.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Oh, yes. Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Security Services. Okay.

Dr. Rowley: What does that represent?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: That represents what it says, security services. I do not know what—it means the security services that are provided for the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Dr. Rowley: Is that contracted security? Is that an in-house security body?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Both.

Dr. Rowley: Could you just cool it. Let me ask the question, and if you understand the question and you have an answer—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I am very cool. You take your time. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, please. Could you control the Attorney General?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. Please. All right. Allow the hon. Member to raise his questions, and then pause and respond.

Dr. Rowley: Thanks.

Mr. Chairman: The floor is yours.

Dr. Rowley: What I am asking is, other than what it represents, is it the security staff at the Ministry or is it contracted security? In other words, who is this money paid to?

Mr. Chairman: The Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes. Well, I answered the first part already by saying, both, because I anticipated the question. We do have in-house security that we provide, and we do have external security, as with all Ministries. As to whom the money is paid, I will let you know now. The first would be, when I assumed office the contract for security for the Ministry was Innovative Security Technology Limited. That contract had expired, and it was on a month-to-month basis for, I think, approximately two years, after which I was advised that I should not have allowed that position to continue, which I inherited. So then we asked for

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the assistance of the Central Tenders Board. The matter was publicly advertised, tenders came in, and I was informed by the Central Tenders Board that Executive Bodyguard Services Limited won the bid process and they were awarded a contract for two years.

Dr. Rowley: An external contract.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Well I have answered that for the fourth time, internal and external. Cool it.

Dr. Rowley: With respect to the figure of \$4.2 million anticipated for 2015, could you give us a breakout as to how much of that would be internal and the external?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No. I believe that—well I can give you that in writing because I will have to check because the contract—

Dr. Rowley: That is all I am asking. I do not expect that you will have everything now.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Okay.

Dr. Rowley: We have a system here, where if you do not have it now, you can give the undertaking to provide it later on.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: On a matter of clarity to ask the hon. Attorney General—because the matter comes up almost in every examination—since entering office did the Attorney General change, or cause, to be changed, the meaning of Security Services"? And any other heading, did we take to change the meaning of any other heading or sub-heading? I am getting the impression that these things may be new because my colleagues opposite are asking, what is this, what is that?—when many have been in Cabinet for over 10 years. I do not know if it was changed, the meaning.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It has not been changed. It remains the same.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go. Let us go. Let us go to—

Dr. Rowley: I want to go to Sub-Head 60 on page—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: On page 136?

Mr. Chairman: On which page?

Dr. Rowley: On the same 01/02 on page 136 Travelling—Direct Charges.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure.

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Dr. Rowley: I observe that in 2014 we had appropriated \$3.2 million under this Sub-Head, and the Revised Estimates indicate that we spent approximately \$8 million. Could we have an explanation for that please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yeah. Travelling—Direct Charges, this one here. Now, I did ask that question and I am advised that that relates to the travel allowances for the officers—the public and legal officers—and because of the SRC increases in the remuneration package, that is the explanation for the jump in the figure. It is to meet the recommendations of the SRC.

Dr. Rowley: But then, I presume, they still have the same staff going through in 2015 --

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yep.

Dr. Rowley:—that will beg a question as to why we are then budgeting \$5.6 million for 2015—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I think that there may have been some arrears. That is why.

Dr. Rowley: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We are going to—

Dr. Rowley: We move on.

Mr. Chairman:—to Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration; Item 002 Law Commission; Item 003 Equal Opportunity Commission.

Dr. Rowley: Question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Under Item 03/003/16 Contract Employment at the Equal Opportunity Commission, what does that represent in terms of staffing at the commission?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Well I have the CEO of the Equal Opportunity Commission here with me, but I can—

Dr. Rowley: There is an establishment that he could—

Mr. Chairman: Sure. Sure.

Dr. Rowley: And what does this represent against that? Is it that the commission has temporary staff, contract staff or what positions are—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: These represent full contract staff, it is not temporary, and the percentages would be—and it is consistent with what has obtained before.

Dr. Rowley: What portion of the EOC's staff is contract against non-contracted?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sixty per cent is contract, 40 per cent is permanent establishment.

Dr. Rowley: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007 Households; we go to the Development—

Dr. Rowley: Under Households, Mr. Chairman—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: What page?

Dr. Rowley: I am at 139—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Oh 139, sorry.

Dr. Rowley: 04/003—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I am with you.

Dr. Rowley:—contribution to the Secretariat of the Council of Legal Education. I notice that there was no provision recorded here for the prior years, but you are making a provision for \$4.3 million for 2015.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: What is happening here?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I think Cabinet has agreed to provide this annual contribution. Three million was provided in 2013, but was not requested. No allocation as you rightly point out has been made in 2014. Now, I believe that could be, but I want to double-check it. I believe that could be because we are in fact the only Caribbean country that is up to date with our payments for the Council of Legal Education, and we could very well be in credit. But I will have to check that, so I will want to provide that answer in writing. But rest assured, when the payment arises in the mid-year review, you can seek to ask for that funding. But we are the only Caribbean nation that is up to date, and I think in credit. At the last Council of Legal Education meeting, I know I attended, we were certainly in credit. So that could be the explanation for that, but I will check it.

Dr. Rowley: But I am a little confused because I am not looking beyond the payment of the Ministry, I am looking at the allocation of the Ministry of Finance

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and the Economy. And you mentioned Cabinet approved the \$3 million. In what year?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: 2013. Sorry. Yes.

Dr. Rowley: And therefore, what I was asking is whether in fact any payment was made or allocation was made? Because according to these records, no allocation was there, and therefore, there ought to have been no payment. So, we need a clarification there. So according to these records, this payment would be the first payment in a three-year period.

Mr. Chairman: You will provide that in writing?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I am advised that there was no need to utilize the funds in 2013. Yeah. Because we had already paid our dues.

Dr. Rowley: How would you have done that? Where would the money have come from to pay the dues?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Because we were probably in credit as I indicated. We are the only Caribbean country that has been in credit, our account is in credit, when your account is in credit it means that “dem owing you, you not owing them”.

Mr. Chairman: Is it possible that we can provide that in writing?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes. Yes. I want to check it and I will put it in writing—
[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: If the Attorney General tries to assist me, I would appreciate that because these are the records of appropriation of allocation, and if I am hearing that a payment has been made, what I am trying to get at is how it is going to be recorded in the allocation. And if it is not coming from these allocations, there might be a question as to where it came from. Because these are the records—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide that in writing? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Chairman, I will certainly provide that in writing. I have no difficulty.

Dr. Rowley:—being in credit or not being in credit at the university.

Mr. Chairman: He will provide it in writing.

Dr. Rowley: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 09 Development Programme; Item 004

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Social Infrastructure; Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund.

Miss Mc Donald: Nah, nah, nah. No.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. Hon. Member.

Miss Mc Donald: We now get to Development Fund. Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. Sorry. Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Dr. Rowley:—I think if you could allow me—I would not ask any more questions, but at the end there are a couple of questions I may ask to wrap up because if we go line by line, it may take longer, and I know you have been working with time. So, I do not have any more questions, except a couple of general questions.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: This pertains to the IDF? Mr. Chairman, if I may, as a matter of procedural regularity, I do not wish to curtail the Leader of the Opposition, and I would prefer that he not have a catalogue of questions coming at the end. I think it is in the public interest that we do this in a transparent and effective manner. If you have questions, let us go through them under the relevant Heads so I could respond on the record to each question as it relates to a Head.

11.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: But the questions you are referring to, Leader of the Opposition, will all fall under the Development Programme?

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, you may proceed.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us go to Item 004: Social Infrastructure. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. [*Interruption*] All right, could we go on to Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Miss Mc Donald: Under Public Buildings.

Mr. Chairman: Under Public Buildings?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Construction of a new south office.

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

Miss Mc Donald: I am on page 244, am I not?

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Mr. Chairman: Okay, we are on the IDF. Hon. Attorney General, we are under IDF.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes, certainly. What page?

Miss Mc Donald: Page 244.

Hon. Members: 244.

Miss Mc Donald: At 007.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Right, I am with you.

Miss Mc Donald: Construction of a new south office of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Through you, Mr. Chair, I note a figure for \$3.6 million in 2013; \$4 million in 2014; \$2 million in 2015. What is happening there? Is it being constructed or just allocations being made and not being utilized? What is happening?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Chairman, I had proposed to the Cabinet that the Ministry of the Attorney General have a south office because we already have certain offices under the Ministry, such as the DPP and so on in south, and it was felt that we should have a presence in south Trinidad because the other branch of the Supreme Court of Justice is in San Fernando. We had made provision for that but of course before you get to actual turning of sod, you have to do the design and soil testing or else you could have a building that could collapse because of negligence based on the wrong soil testing, the wrong kind of structural work that has to be done. So, before you cast that foundation you have to make sure.

So the moneys that were, in fact allocated were utilized, in part, to do the design and soil testing and that kind of work but we have not embarked on construction. That is, in fact, going to take place, under my tenure perhaps, to start in 2016.

Miss Mc Donald: Let us go to 008: Construction of Central Office Complex for Commissions and Tribunals. I note again this is a new project. What is this about and is \$4 million allocated in 2015 really sufficient to do what you are saying?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yeah. Chair, I have been looking at the rental bill for the Ministry and I think, as a whole, the Government must monitor its rental bill.

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There are several judicial and quasi-judicial bodies that fall under the purview of the Ministry of the Attorney General. They include the Industrial Court, the Tax Appeal Board, the Environmental Commission, the Equal Opportunity Commission and matters of the like. What I found is that each entity, once you put someone in charge and you have a separate entity, it sort of begins to flesh out and mushroom and everyone wants the same thing.

You would have seen the Chairman of the Tax Appeal Board recently, he wants a full law library and everyone wants that and my—as a matter policy was to say look, let us construct one judicial complex to house all these judicial bodies and quasi-judicial bodies that operate outside of the Hall of Justice structure and you can put them there. Each one can be allocated one or two floors, with courtrooms and all the frills but you can have one centralized library and other services that are all conducive and necessary to service a court or a judicatory-type body. That is the proposal.

The funds there are for, again, to avoid any structural defects, to avoid any kind of shifting soil that cannot withstand the weight of a building; to have that kind of basic elementary geotechnical and engineering work done before you dig a post hole, so that the building will actually stand up and not collapse and disintegrate. We have been spending money to do that kind of preparatory work. So that allocation is sufficient for that purpose and we have, in fact, located—

Miss Mc Donald: Could you tell us where the location is?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It is in Couva, next to the hospital.

Miss Mc Donald: The new hospital that is being built?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No, the existing hospital. The State has been the owner of that, a five-acre parcel there, for quite some time. So, my intention is for us to construct, commencing in 2016, a judicial complex to house several of the judicial bodies and quasi-judicial bodies so as to streamline and harmonize the resources that are spent; save the rent that we are paying now and have a more efficient run organization.

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

Mr. Warner: When did you say, 2016?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I intend to turn the sod in 2016, yes.

Mr. Warner: Good luck, good luck.

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Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We will like to thank you for being here with your staff, hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We now deal with Head 42: the Ministry of Local Government.

Head 42.

Hon. Members, we are now dealing with Head 42: Ministry of Local Government, \$2,469,899,125. I now invite the hon. Minister of Local Government, if she is so desirous of making a brief opening statement giving this Committee an overview of your Ministry's priority areas for fiscal 2014/2015. The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, I move the opportunity.

Question proposed: That Head 42 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum that I have mentioned is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 08: Vacant Posts – Salaries and COLA (without incumbents), I am seeing in 2014, \$2 million was allocated. Under Revised Estimates, zero, but in 2015 we are looking at \$1 million. Can the Minister indicate exactly what would have happened there?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Hypolite: Also—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Hypolite: Under Sub-Item 14, can the Minister indicate the various committees that come under Cabinet-appointed committees?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the difference of \$1 million, in terms of Vacant Positions, there is no explanation for this reduction. I know positions were filled but not to the extent of \$1 million, so I guess we were short-changed there.

Mr. Hypolite: Can you indicate therefore, or send for us, a list of those positions that were filled, a breakdown?

Hon. Coudray: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: And then your second question.

Hon. Coudray: Your second question was Sub-Item what?

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 14, to identify the committees.

Hon. Coudray: Do you want to know what are the committees?

Mr. Hypolite: The Cabinet-appointed committees.

Hon. Coudray: Cabinet-appointed committees at the Ministry would have been—we had one committee for the implementation of the Dog Control Bill, 2014 and I think in terms of the modernization of local government, the reform they were asked to propose, there is one committee for the Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill, 2013 and we have anticipated—this is really an estimate of the committees we will require during the year so we do not have approval for all of them yet but just about three.

Mr. Hypolite: So you have approval for one thus far.

Hon. Coudray: Two, thus far.

Mr. Hypolite: And you are hoping to get approval for how many more?

Hon. Coudray: Maybe about three more based on the provisions we have.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: To the hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chair, 08: Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage.

Mr. Chairman: 08.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes. That figure there, you started in 2013 with \$9.4 million but I note for 2015—you even had a revise of \$9.4 million in 2014 and now you are down to \$1 million. What would have caused that decrease by \$8.4 million please?

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the Ministry has given up One Alexandra so that we are no longer required to pay rent on those premises.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Under the same Sub-Item 08, can the Minister indicate how many properties are leased or rented? You would have given up One Alexandra, can you identify how many properties are leased or rented? And has the Ministry sat down and determined whether or not it is feasible to purchase properties to accommodate services coming out of that particular Ministry?

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, there is one more property that has come to my attention that the Ministry is renting. There is a property next door to Kent House that was rented for the decentralization unit in terms of dealing with the modernization and transformation of local government. In terms of the feasibility for rental, vis à vis leasing, or purchasing, the Ministry owns Kent House; its headquarters are at Kent House and we have taken a decision to refurbish Kent House and stay there. Another form—

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 16.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Item 16.

Mr. Hypolite: Contract Employment. How many contract vacancies are expected to be filled within this year ahead seeing that we are looking at some \$23 million? And if the Minister can provide us with a detailed breakdown of those positions. In addition, can the Minister indicate whether or not litter wardens are included in that figure?

Hon. Coudray: The contract positions, yes, they do include litter wardens.

Mr. Chairman: Can you provide the honourable Committee with—

Hon. Coudray: I shall provide that in—sorry. The amount?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, we will like to have a breakdown.

Hon. Coudray: Okay, there are 147 litter wardens hired.

Mr. Hypolite: Are they spread among all the municipalities?

Hon. Coudray: All 14 corporations, yes.

Mr. Hypolite: Can I have a breakdown as to how much in each one?

Hon. Coudray: Yes, sure you can get—the assignment of the—yes, you can—

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 22, could the Minister indicate the number of staff they have on short-term employment and if you can indicate the direct positions that the staff members fill?

Hon. Coudray: Short-term, I can provide that information; I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that there are 44 persons under short-term employment.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 58: Medical Expenses. Can the Minister provide a list of persons who would have sought that medical assistance and possibly include if there would have been any international cost associated with any of the medical assistance provided? Also, Chair, under Sub-Item 62: Promotions, Publicity and Printing, can the Minister indicate what types of promotions and publicity are expected to be conducted over the year ahead and provide a breakdown of the sum to be spent on promotions, publicity and printing?

Hon. Coudray: The Medical Expenses—there was no expenditure during the course of the current fiscal in terms of Medical Expenses. There was no expenditure at the Ministry. In terms of Promotions, Publicity and Printing, you said you wanted a breakdown of—

Mr. Hypolite: How has that money been spent?

Hon. Coudray: That shall be provided. That will be provided, Mr.—

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration. We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers; Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises. I recognize the Members for Laventille West, Laventille East/Morvant and Point Fortin respectively. [*Interruption?* The Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 04: National Commission for Self-Help Limited, can the Minister indicate exactly how many grants would have been distributed over the last year? We are looking at \$76 million? And also whether or not an organizational structure can be provided with respect to—

Mr. Chairman: I am seeing \$10 million. I am not seeing what you are seeing.

Mr. Hypolite: Sorry, \$10 million—\$10.5 million, that is correct, sorry.

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Mr. Chairman: Yes, okay.

Mr. Hypolite:—an organizational structure of that agency?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Local Government, would you be in a position to provide that?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, yes, the Ministry would provide that information in writing.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair, on the same Sub-Item 04, I will like to find out from the Minister, in providing the allocation of \$11 million, whether consideration was given to the staffing needs at the National Commission for Self-Help Limited because I know that there are severe shortages particularly with reference to the field workers, those who have to go out on the field and do assessments and make recommendations with respect to the granting of approval for the grants.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Mr. Chairman, this would have been based on the current approved establishment, this allocation, and I recently took a note to Cabinet that was approved to increase the establishment based on the said reasons so that I suppose that during the midterm review, or some time later, funding will be provided to deal with the increase in the establishment.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant. Are you on the same Item?

Miss Cox: No, I am on the next Item.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well I am going to Diego Martin Central now.

Dr. Browne: Sub-Item 04: National Commission for Self-Help Limited, I would like the Committee to be provided with a breakdown of all grants provided by this Commission for 2014 and 2013 by quantum and constituency for each grant.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Hon. Coudray: Sure, it is noted.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for Laventille West.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, the same point that my colleague from Diego Martin Central raised but just a step further. I am wondering whether that \$500,000 increase to \$11 million, is it sufficient to service the entire Trinidad and even perhaps Tobago inside of there? Just \$11 million in grants, I do not know whether it is \$10,000 or \$15,000 because I know even in my constituency the need is great and there are lots of people outside there who would like to access this and many times you will hear “we do not have sufficient funds”. So, do you think, given a budget of some \$64.6 billion and where the Government is virtually increasing lots—giving a lot of goodies out to citizens—I am wondering whether this grant should not be, you know, take a second look again at this particular grant.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I believe that there is another provision under Development Programme that would address those issues. The IDF, it is under IDF.

Miss Mc Donald: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille West.

Hon. Coudray: And this is recurrent that deals mainly with the staffing and those issues.

Mr. Chairman: So when we come to Infrastructure, you can come back.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 05, I am seeing a loan repayment of \$3 million for a loan comprising \$115 million. Can the Minister give some more information, probably disclose exactly what that loan is about, please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, this loan is to construct the Princes Town Regional Corporation’s administrative building and this is the interest that will accrue during fiscal 2015 that has to be provided.

Mr. Hypolite: This is just the interest alone.

Hon. Coudray: Just the interest, yes.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: As you mentioned, Minister, the construction of the Princes Town Regional Corporation's office, what is happening with the Diego Martin Corporation's head office for which the sod had been turned, I think it was in 1999—oh no, 2000 and—anyway we had a sod turning on a site for the Diego Martin Regional Corporation and the drawings were finished, the artist's rendition was available, there was a function; what is happening with that?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Mr. Chairman, there were several of these administrative buildings that are in the works and Diego Martin is one, Arima, Penal/Debe and I shall provide the Parliament with a status report on those buildings.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so could we go on now to Sub-Head 06? I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant, Member for Chaguanas West, Member for Point Fortin, Member for Laventille West. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you, Mr. Chairman, I note that there is a big reduction in almost all of the allocations to corporations. For example, Port of Spain Corporation, a reduction of \$27 million; San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, \$23.8 million and Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, \$55.9 million. I see here though that under 37, I see an increase of \$91.4 million and it says Regional Corporation Services - General. I would like an explanation of what is Regional Corporation Services - General that caused this increase of \$91.4 million. I would also like to know why we have these large decreases in allocation to the regional corporations because we are all aware that the corporations need money to effectively perform their functions. We have been having problems not having enough work done through the corporation. So, could you explain?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the corporations, they are not decreases in effect. If you would look at the 2014 Estimates, the original provision was \$221 million, for example under—let me look at the main Items—1,658,505 revised to 2,083,563 and this was to pay increased wages and salaries, the back pay. So now that the back pay was paid it would appear as a decrease in the columns. In terms

of the other part of the question, for Regional Corporation Services – General, these allocations are put under the Ministry of Local Government and then applied to corporations as required for services.

Miss Cox: Could I get a breakdown of that, how this money would be spent in the different corporations? Can I get a list?

Hon. Coudray: Well, I do not think we would have the list up front. It is according to need, on a needs basis.

Mr. Hypolite: When you speak about services, what type of services?

Hon. Coudray: Water-trucking, for instance, you have miscellaneous services that the corporations will need and they are assessed by the technical unit and recommendations made in terms of how these funds are to be allocated.

Miss Cox: I will like to see how this was used in the past, 2014—

Hon. Coudray: Sure.

Miss Cox:—2013 and could I get a listing with regard to the corporations? Thanks.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister? Hon. Minister, in response to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, would this book help give our Members a detailed breakdown of each category or each corporation? Or would you want to provide—

Hon. Coudray: This book ought to help, Mr. Chairman. I was saying, if you look at the Decrease column, this is what each corporation got for the arrears of wages.

Miss Cox: I understand that.

Hon. Coudray: So this is all this money was spent on in 2014.

Miss Cox: Yes, I understand but this here under Sub-Item 37.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, sure, well that is a block provision.

Miss Cox: But you understand my question, eh? I need to get the list of where that money, how that money is spent per corporation.

Hon. Coudray: Okay, but for 2014, I am saying under the Decrease column you will find that for 2014.

Miss Cox: Yes, I know. Thanks.

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Mr. Chairman: Member for Laventille East/Morvant, we need to be very clear as to what you want a breakdown on. Is it on 37: Regional—

Miss Cox: The Minister mentioned that this money is spent, 37—I understand. I have the information on the other one.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Madam Minister, I see in 2013, Chaguanas Borough Corporation got \$98.2 million. For 2014 you said the increase was \$112 million but that was for back pay and so on but then in 2015 back to \$98.6 million. I read somewhere that there is an aggressive move to make that into a city. If that is the case, would that money be adequate for Chaguanas Borough Corporation?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon Coudray: Mr. Chairman, should Chaguanas be made a city, then different allocations would be made in keeping with city status and that would be addressed by the Cabinet and brought back to the Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I just wanted to query the \$13 million decrease for Point Fortin Borough Corporation but I think the explanation given has been reasonable.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Chairman, the Minister would have answered my question.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would just like to make reference to Sub-Item 30 with reference to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and to ask, based on the fact that the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation is considered to be one of the biggest regional corporations in terms of geographic spread and population density, I want to know whether or not the \$201 million allocated is sufficient for that particular regional corporation?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

12.15 p.m.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the allocations are based on the approved establishment of each Corporation and what you call the regular establishment, so these funds are provided for that. The Corporations are required to generate

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savings from within their operations if they need to employ more workers, and this is how they operate, generally.

Mr. Chairman: We are going to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectorial and Other Services. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West and the Member for Port of Spain South.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Chair, we are looking Item 053 and 055—

Hon. Member: What page?

Mr. Chairman: Page 127 of the Development Programme.

Mr. Hypolite: 055 and 053.

Hon. Coudray: Page?

Mr. Hypolite: 127.

Hon. Coudray: 055, yes—

Mr. Hypolite: 053. Chair, these two buildings would have been under some kind of upgrade/renovation and some works have been taking place on these two buildings for quite a while and it is also making the occupants, the tenants very uncomfortable. In fact, at the Eastside Plaza there is no proper ventilation, air condition inside there. Can the Minister indicate exactly when these two buildings would be completed, in terms of the renovation and upgrade, as well as give a status report as to how far and what else is needed?

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, these works are ongoing and this is to do—the allocation here is to do another phase. The information requested would be provided to the Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Item 09, page 128, Item 038, Latrine Eradication Programme. This is under the Port of Spain Corporation. I recall the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development had come to this Parliament and boasted about his projects via his Ministry, and that included the Eradication of Latrine Pits in East Port of Spain. But I am looking here and I am seeing nothing for 2013, nothing for 2014 and then \$1 million suddenly appeared for 2015. So tell me what has happened over the last two years, whether it was not done under your Ministry, whether it was done under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and whether \$1 million is sufficient. Have you done an evaluation

and assessment of how many latrine pits you need to eradicate in East Port of Spain, whether that \$1 million is sufficient? Thank you.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, the East Port of Spain Development Company is handling that area of Port of Spain about which you enquired, and the \$1 million was requested by the Port of Spain Corporation to deal with similar facilities at St. James.

Miss Mc Donald: So there are latrine facilities in St. James. So this \$1 million is to eradicate latrine pits in St. James.

Hon. Coudray: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: All right, Minister, are you aware that in the 2015 accounts absolutely nothing, not one cent in allocation was made for the East Port of Spain Development Company because it is under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, not one cent in allocation.

Hon. Coudray: I am not aware, Ma'am.

Miss Mc Donald: But you are aware now.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, I am on page 131, San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. Mr. Chair, the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation is extended all the way up to Maracas—it is a very wide area, very, very wide. It takes up—

Hon. Coudray: What number are you?

Mr. Hypolite: We are looking at N on page 131. We are looking at constituencies such as Laventille East/Morvant and Laventille West; San Juan/Barataria; St. Ann's East, when you look at Item 184, Local Roads and Bridges and we all know, Mr. Chairman, that the regional corporations are responsible for local roads and drains and bridges. But here we have for 2015, just \$6 million being allocated for the electoral district or the San Juan/Laventille Corporation, \$6 million.

Mr. Chairman, in Laventille West alone we probably need to add on two more zeros on to that figure to fix some of the roads and drains and retaining walls. Can the Minister indicate whether or not she believes that this \$6 million is adequate to take care of the entire San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, my opinion, you know, if I as a sitting Minister I would say none of the allocations are sufficient, but we must understand the size of the pie and how it is allocated. But I want to add that, under

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the special purpose companies there are allocations to do roads, and some roads are done through the PURE and there are other arrangements to supplement these.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Chairman, am I hearing the Minister saying that PURE will also be responsible for doing local roads and drains and—

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the Member is trying to put words in my mouth, but I am saying that there are other opportunities and avenues where funding is made available to assist with similar items and requests are made by the corporations from time to time through—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Hypolite: Then, can the Minister indicate those special purpose companies that we can turn to for that kind of help and assistance.

Hon. Coudray: Which is the company? *[Minister confers with advisor]* CISL, Community Improvement Service Limited. A list was submitted to that company, National Commission for Self Help.

Mr. Hypolite: What exactly was submitted to that company?

Hon. Coudray: The Corporation will have that list on their record, and perhaps all 14 CEOs are here and the CEO of each corporation is here and they can provide that information.

Mr. Hypolite: Yeah, but for my record—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Coudray: Yes, I can get that and submit to the Parliament so that you will have a list of what was submitted by that Corporation.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central and then the Constituency for Chaguanas West.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. Diego Martin has been very flood prone in the last three to four years. I observed \$7 million—this is on page 130, Line Item 159, \$7 million allocated for 2015 for a drainage and irrigation programme. Can I ask the Ministry to indicate, what quantum was requested by that Corporation for the drainage and irrigation programme?

Secondly, I am unable to find an item under this Corporation for the establishment of play grounds. I am seeing it under—so maybe you could just—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Coudray: Sorry, I am not hearing you.

Dr. Browne: I am unable to find any Sub-Item under this Corporation for the establishment of playgrounds. Such was not requested, maybe you can just explain that. And finally, with respect to the construction of, the implementation of retaining walls, which is always a very high demand in those hilly constituencies, again, can you indicate which Line Item under Development Programme a corporation would draw for such—

Hon. Coudray: For retaining walls?

Dr. Browne: Yes.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, in terms of the—well I cannot explain the allocations provided by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, and let me make that as a very broad statement, because I think Diego Martin requested \$15.8 million under its development programme, and the sum allocated is \$7 million. So that is—

Dr. Browne: Is that for drainage and irrigation you are referring to?

Hon. Coudray: Beg your pardon.

Dr. Browne: You are referring specifically to drainage—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Coudray: Yes, drainage and irrigation programme. That is the one you mentioned, yeah?

Dr. Browne: Yes, okay, the playgrounds.

Hon. Coudray: The playgrounds will be found under 160 Recreational Facilities. The play parks, playgrounds.

Dr. Browne: Well, I am seeing in some corporations Line Item, for example, let me take you, well I do not want to use Point Fortin, let me take you to Point Fortin, there is a line for Development of Recreational Facilities, 117 and there is a line for establishment of playgrounds, 125. So how it is rectified in that manner.

Hon. Coudray: One is establishment and one is development. So like, you have the fairly new Corporations at the time, they got an Item to develop new playgrounds as against establishing, to look for land to establish—that was a different Item, and it remained so I guess.

Dr. Browne: Interesting, and retaining walls?

Hon. Coudray: Retaining walls will be under Local Roads and Bridges Programme.

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

Mr. Warner: Madam Minister, I will ask you two questions in one. Under L., 156/157, Chaguanas Borough Corporation—

Hon. Coudray: Yes.

Mr. Warner: As you are aware Chaguanas Borough Corporation is supposed to have a strength of 54 Municipal Police Officers. They presently have six and they have no uniforms. I see you have here \$500,000 for the police uniforms and equipment. They have five motorcycles and only three people would ride it. How do you plan to correct that situation?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, the issue of uniforms will come under the recurrent expenditure of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation. There is a difficulty on the whole in terms of the recruiting, attracting and retaining Municipal Police Officers.

Mr. Warner: Can I help you?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, out of the 100 positions on the establishment there are 80 vacancies and this is being addressed right now at the Ministry of Local Government.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, under the Siparia Regional Corporation 296 and 301, Drainage and Irrigation Programme, Local Roads and Bridges Programme. I cannot understand that under drainage and irrigation, in 2014 we had \$10 million and in 2015 it has been reduced to \$7 million. And likewise for Local Roads and Bridges Programme, \$10 million in 2014, \$8 million in 2015. When the conditions of our bridges, of our drains and our roads are at the lowest ebb at this point in time, I cannot understand why we have a reduced allocation at this point in time.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, I am in similar position to that Member.

Mr. Jeffrey: Repeat that for me, please

Hon. Coudray: I am in a similar position as you are, Sir, so we are addressing these issues with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chair. In the Siparia Regional Corporation as well, I share the sentiments on that. The reduction, of course, highlights the fact that places like Cedros and Bonasse and Icacos and so on, will not be properly serviced at this time. But I really want to go to the Point Fortin Borough Corporation where there has been an overall increase, but however, under this disaster preparedness there is a small decrease. My concern is not about the quantum but the fact of readiness for disaster preparedness. As you would know this is an industrial town and with the expansion of the highway facility as well, there is expected to be further industry expansion and therefore, I do not think enough attention is being placed on the whole question of disaster preparedness in an energy and industrial town.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the issue of disaster preparedness a disaster manager coordinator was just appointed at the Ministry of Local Government and that office is responsible for the 14 corporations and these issues are being addressed in terms of—

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, through you, what exactly is Local Government Tourism Programme?

Mr. Chairman: What Item, can you give us the Item?

Mr. Hypolite: On page 134, Item 332, as well as 408, because there are some corporations that carry this Item and then the others do not.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, the 14 Corporations have been engaged in their municipal plans, and the development focus for each Corporation is different and certain corporations identified tourism development as part of their request to develop and this is why you will see differences in terms of some of the items.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I go to the Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Members for Point Fortin and Port of Spain South.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair—and this is with regard to community development, I note some substantial increases. 001, Community Improvement Services, \$30 million. 003, Development of Rural Communities—

Hon. Member: What page?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am on page 268—\$30 million. Upgrade of Community Infrastructure in South and Southeast Trinidad, \$30 million. Then I also notice

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some new line items for new projects, including: Construction of Pavilions, Activity Centres, Play Parks, et cetera; Installation of Exercise and Sporting Equipment. With regard to the first three, are there specific projects that are planned under these Heads? That is 001, 003 and 007. And if not specific projects, how does one access these? Is it through the local government, or can the offices of the Members of Parliament apply for these activity centres and play parks, pavilions and also access projects under the development of rural communities?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, in terms of 001, 003, 007, I alluded to that just now. These companies have been established to work with groups of corporations and the corporations make submissions to these entities. In terms of the 009 onwards, the Ministry of Local Government invited all Members of Parliament in Trinidad to send submissions with respect to construction of pavilions, activity centres, play parks. It is a new item and this is the funding requested to service those facilities.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So you already have these planned projects based on requests made? Can we access that? If you have planned projects, can we have a list of those that have been approved?

Hon. Coudray: All MPs were written to, and submissions have been made, not from all of them, but the Ministry is working on a list of these items, based on submissions already made.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And when it is approved, can we please have the list?

Mr. Chairman: Are you going to submit your list?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, what the Minister has said is that some lists have been submitted by MPs and the Ministry is working on approval of these, and I am asking, as soon as that comprehensive list has been prepared—an approved list—we would all like to have a list, and then, of course, we would want to continue to make submissions, as some of us would not remember whether or not these requests were, in fact, made.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: I am looking at 008 item, Implementation of Self-Help Programme, and I have noted \$72 million being set aside, or allocated for 2015. Minister, I would like to get a—

Dr. Moonilal: No.

Miss Mc Donald: What is it?

Dr. Moonilal: 2015?

Hon. Coudray: 2015, \$40 million.

Miss Mc Donald: Sorry, sorry, sorry, 2015, \$40 million. I would like to get a list of all the projects which were completed for 2013 and 2014. I would like to get a listing because it is the first time I am seeing this, so I would like to know whether Port of Spain South is included and whether we are included in that \$40 million allocation for 2015. But I would like to see what 2013 and 2014--I would like to see the list for those two periods, please.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, noted.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am referring to Sub-Item 007. With reference to—

Mr. Chairman: And the Member for Chaguanas West is after.

Miss Hospedales: With reference to the upgrade of community infrastructure in south and south-east Trinidad, I would like to indicate, based on my observation, that \$205 million-plus was allocated in 2013; \$90 million in the Revised Estimate and this year, \$30 million? Why specific focus on these areas when all areas in Trinidad need attention?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government?

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the Member is looking at 007 and this particular company is assigned to do work in south and south-east Trinidad. You have CISL that is designated different areas, as well as the Rural Development Company, and this is one I mentioned earlier. These companies were set up to do work within the various communities.

Miss Hospedales: No, but is that accurate?—because I know CISL does work in all—even on the East-West corridor as well.

Hon. Coudray: Some of the areas may overlap, in terms of corporations.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, then the Member for Chaguanas West; and the Member for La Brea is after.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have looked through the Goods and Services allocation and then the Consolidated Fund Development Programme allocation,

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and now the Infrastructure Development Fund allocation. I cannot see any allocation for the acquisition of aerial spraying equipment to deal with insect vector control in corporations, to deal with the Chikungunya virus and Dengue virus. Is it that the Local Government Ministry is no longer seeking or providing an allocation to corporations to buy aerial sprayers to deal with this mosquito infestation that pervades all of Trinidad?

Hon. Coudray: Aerials?

Mr. Imbert: Aerial spraying. In the past, corporations had aerial foggers that were mounted on trucks and they will go around communities and spray to deal with the *Aedes Egypti* mosquito. I have not seen this in a while and I was wondering whether the Ministry of Local Government---because looking through this whole Development Programme, I cannot see an allocation for the acquisition of aerial foggers and spraying equipment to deal with this mosquito infestation. As a Member of Parliament, Mr. Chairman, I get calls all the time, asking me to get in touch with various corporations to do spraying, because the population is of the view that this is a local government responsibility. So could the Minister indicate whether there is an allocation? And if not, why not?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the corporations make their requests for—it is not aerial. Aerial, to me, is the airplanes.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, it is the mounted—the truck-mounted aerial—

Hon. Coudray: The mounted is dyna-foggers that are being used and—

Mr. Imbert: It is in the air—

Hon. Coudray: It is from a vehicle, they mount equipment.

Mr. Imbert: It is mounted aerial spray.

Hon. Coudray: But these allocations are made under Minor Equipment Purchase, or under their public health vote.

Mr. Imbert: Have you allocated any funds to any of the corporations for the acquisition of fogging machines to deal with this mosquito infestation in Trinidad?

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, let me repeat myself. Individual corporations make their requests based on their needs, under Minor Equipment.

Mr. Imbert: So there are funds there for that?

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Hon. Coudray: Had they so requested, the allocations would be made to some extent.

Mr. Imbert: All right. But you are not giving me a straight answer, Minister. You are saying, “Had they so requested”. Did anybody request and receive?

Hon. Coudray: The 14 CEOs are here.

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: This is a serious thing. “People getting bite from mosquito every day, yuh know.”

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I know. But the Minister has answered to the best of her ability.

Mr. Imbert: No. Did they request and did they receive?

Dr. Moonilal: In Minor Equipment vote they will ask.

Hon. Coudray: I will not have the detail of each.

Mr. Imbert: Could you research that?

Hon. Coudray: Yes, we can request—

Mr. Imbert: And let us know. Thank you very much.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, are we under 005?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We are under Infrastructure Development Fund.

Mr. Warner: Yes, but page 269, 005.

Hon. Coudray: Where are we? I am lost.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can ask that.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under 005, Minister—

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, 00---

Mr. Chairman: 005 on page 269.

Mr. Warner: 056, Customizing and Outfitting of the New Administration Complex, Chaguanas Borough Corporation. You had \$9 million you say you spent in 2014, nothing for 2015, so am I to assume that the building is fully functional and it is paid for?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Yes. From the information, yes, it has been customized and outfitted from—

Mr. Warner: And fully functional.

Hon. Coudray: I am not in a position. We can find out whether it is fully functional, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we recognize the hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, 012, Upgrade of Community Sporting Infrastructure. Again, I had raised a question in the Parliament—Question for Oral Answers—and the Minister of Sport then had said that Lot 10 Village and Dalley Village, the communities were too small for them to develop the sporting facilities. I am very excited by this \$9 million that is being allocated, and I am wondering if small communities like Lot 10 and Dalley Village will factor in, in that \$9 million, in the first instance. And secondly, in Aripere, there is allocation for a recreation ground and what I have been told is that they are waiting for some letter from the regional corporation for the land to be transferred to the regional corporation. Again, I want to find out if in that \$9 million, if it is factored inside there.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, if it is a ground to be developed, the \$9 million will not take care—this is upgrade, so this will not be for establishing any new ground. The \$9 million is to be spread among the 14 corporations, so the maths can be done in terms of what is available. And of course, the technical people do their evaluations, then a decision is made as to which grounds would be done.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Chairman, on page 269, Item 052, Construction of Administrative Buildings for Regional Corporations? Chair, if I am correct, I heard the Minister indicate that there are three regional corporation administrative buildings that would be erected over—well, some kind of work will commence.

Hon. Coudray: That are proposed, yes.

Mr. Hypolite: All right. But I am not seeing any allocation for construction of administrative buildings. Can the Minister indicate exactly what is happening or where that money will be coming from?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the money will come from a bond issue, and you would notice that the \$3.1 million referred to before, was for payment of the interest on the loan for the PTRC building.

Mr. Hypolite: That is Princes Town.

Hon. Coudray: Princes Town, yes.

Mr. Hypolite: But you also made mention of three other—specifically Arima.

Miss Coudray: Yes. Bond issues will fund them. They are not being funded through this medium.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I wish to thank you, hon. Minister of Local Government and your team for being here with us.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, thank you, Chairman, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the PS, technical staff, CEOs and key staff of the 14 corporations who have been here since 8.30 this morning.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We now go to Head 71, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources?

12.45 p.m.

Head 71.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are dealing with Head 71, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, \$2,772,378,700. I will now invite the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement giving this Standing Finance Committee an overview of your priority areas for the period 2014/2015. I now invite the hon. Minister to do so.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Members of the Standing Finance Committee. There is no substance more critical to life than water. Water is not only a vital pre-requisite of all life, in fact, the ancient Chinese call it the blood of the earth. And whilst Government is a continuum, we must take note of the fact that we inherited a virtual water bankruptcy in 2010 precipitated by weather conditions but also by certain inaction on the part of the powers that be.

Today, Mr. Chairman, we are in a better place and we are well on our way to achieve the right to access water for all and therefore meeting our millennium

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goal. From the right to water, we move now to the right to sanitation. So we have to establish the sustainability of our water supply to ensure the security of that water supply and we now move to the right to sanitation and you will see as we proceed, Mr. Chairman, that there is significant investment in that area.

Whilst we do so and we deal with that environmental nightmare that is in the waste water sector, we are paying attention to the environmental degradation that is taking place in this country and we are also dealing with the predatory culture in which we have to protect our flora and fauna our biodiversity in this country. So it is in that kind of context that I now engage the Standing Finance Committee.

Question proposed: That Head 71 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that said sum 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*. I go to Sub-head 01, Personal Expenditure; item 01 General Administration. I go to Item 02, Environmental Policy and Planning Division: Item 03, Green Fund Executing Unit; Item 04, Forestry 005.

Miss Hospedales: Chair, under item 401.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Could the Minister indicate the number of staff members on the establishment?

Mr. Chairman: Could you indicate what item you are on?

Miss Hospedales: 03, 001, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member is seeking to know what is the staff size of your establishment.

Hon. Singh: Under the General Administration, we have 597 positions. On the Forestry Division—no, we will provide you with that establishment.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: 05, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We are now on to item 05 Drainage, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. This is a very important division to the people of Diego Martin. I am looking at a decrease in your wages and COLA bill

by a sum of \$17 million for 2015 and that worries me. I would like an explanation. I have received reports that the Drainage Division is severely under-resourced and it is depleted of maintenance teams at this time. I would like you to verify if this is correct and contribute to the decreased wage bill and if so, what is being done about it in terms of those maintenance teams and bringing them up to strength. I would also request a complete breakdown of staffing in the Drainage Division inclusive of establishment and contract position.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I share the point of view with the Member for Diego Martin Central that the \$17 million was, in fact, it represents arrears of backpay paid to employees as a result of the collective agreement.

The second issue with respect to the depletion of staff, in the transition from the drainage department from the Ministry of Works, you had a situation where several of the employees remained within the Ministry of Works because the Ministry of Works was the Ministry at that time and you did not have that level of complement coming across to drainage.

In addition to that, under the loan—the flood alleviation loan for Port of Spain under the IDB, there is the institutional change that will take place where you move the drainage department from a department of Government into Water Management and Flood Alleviation Authority. And that also makes it unenviable for members of staff to move from the public service at this point in time so that we have a problem with respect to getting persons accredited to the drainage department.

With respect to the maintenance gangs, I can provide you with the information for that.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, just a clarification—thank the Minister for his information so far—I just want to be clear in terms of some of the drainage staff not moving over when the Division moved to your Ministry. How are they being paid because from what I am seeing here the allocation has moved? So how are they being retained in the Ministry? Can you give us some insight on that issue?

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are, in fact, several persons who currently work in the drainage department. They are, in fact, under the establishment of the Ministry of Works. So that they are paid—those positions, I am advised, were not transferred, so they are paid in the current position they hold but they function in the drainage department.

Dr. Browne: Why were not those positions transferred, Minister?

Mr. Chairman: Why they were not transferred?

Dr. Browne: Yes.

Hon. Singh: I think that is a matter for the department of public administration.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us deal with Item 006, Meteorological Services, I go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Sub-item 16, could the Minister—

Mr. Chairman: Sub-item 16, page 402, hon. Minister.

Miss Hospedales: There has been an observation of a gradual increase of the allocation for contract employment, could the Minister indicate the number of persons on contract and whether or not there are vacancies?

Hon. Singh: Okay, the number of contract positions in the—this is General Administration, right?

Miss Hospedales: Yes.

Hon. Singh: Yeah, Goods and Services, General Administration. We are on the same line. Right? There is a total of 218 contract positions in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources; 117 have been filled and there are vacancies for 101.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go on to Item 002, Environmental—I will come to you, Member for Diego Martin Central. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss McDonald: Minister, item 53, page 402.

Hon. Singh: Refunds to WASA. Yes, I know that the hon. Member will recall that under the water improvement—the designation of an area as a water improvement area under the Water Works and Conservation Act allows the Water and Sewerage Authority to increase rates in that particular area. So this water improvement rate is a water improvement rate increase confined to Point Lisas Industrial Estate as a result of the Water Works and Conservation Act.

What happens, when these moneys are paid, it is paid into the Consolidated Fund and then the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provides a kind of a pass through for the money back to the Water and Sewerage Authority?

Miss McDonald: So this is confined only to Point Lisas?

Hon. Singh: It is confined to Point Lisas which is currently designated as a water improvement area.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West and then the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Rowley: With respect to this particular matter, I am drawing to the Minister's attention that there is a very serious query with respect to Auditor General's Report on this matter where three of those payments, WASA failed to provide supporting documentation. I am just drawing that to your attention and the figures involved were quite substantial and, in fact, this is a very breach of the requirements vis-à-vis the Auditor General's functioning and WASA.

Hon. Singh: I thank the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West for his concern. I am advised by my Permanent Secretary that this documentation was provided, in fact, albeit late.

Dr. Rowley: So it has been provided?

Hon. Singh: It has been provided.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: That was my same concern. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us go on Item 002, Environmental Policy and Planning Division; Item 003, Green Fund Executing Unit—

Dr. Browne: Chairman, just under—sorry—Environmental Policy and Planning Division, line 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, I just want to know, does this include stakeholder sessions with citizens in various districts? The reason I am asking that is because we continue getting feedback about the colour of water and the taste of water, especially the brown one—nothing is wrong with brown in and of itself, but brown water, people continue complaining about that. I am wondering if there is funding for stakeholder sessions with citizens to get that kind of feedback.

Hon. Singh: Yeah, well first, let me answer the question and indicate that, yes, it provides for that, but this is confined—this particular Head is confined to the Environmental Policy and Planning Division and that therefore, there are consultations with respect to policy formulation. Operative issues as to that will fall under the purview of either the IRC or the Water and Sewerage Authority.

But I am familiar also with those kinds of concerns and what we are doing in several instances, it is because of the flushing of the lines is required and therefore, we indicate to WASA that this is the complaint and they see about it.

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But I want to indicate that we have a brand new laboratory at WASA so that therefore the issue is not only on quantity provided but also in quality.

Mr. Chairman: We deal with Item 004 Forestry, 005 Drainage. I recognize the hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Rent/Lease Office Accommodation, 08, I am advised that the reforestation programme office was closed yesterday. Is that correct?

Hon. Singh: Well, just to answer this particular Head before I get to that point, this particular Head of 08 under Drainage—

Mr. Warner: Forestry.

1.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: We are dealing with page 404.

Hon. Singh: Okay, all right. I am ahead of myself.

Mr. Chairman: And we are dealing with Forestry, Item 004.

Hon. Singh: 004, okay and you are dealing with?

Mr. Chairman: Rent 08.

Hon. Singh: Okay, good, I got it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. Member for Chaguanas West, the National Reafforestation Programme was started by the previous administration. It had a 10-year cycle and that 10-year cycle comes to an end this month. However, it is the intention of this administration to continue that, but the 10-year cycle is coming to an end and, therefore, there will be renewal of that.

Mr. Warner: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, I will pass for now.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so we go to Item 006: Meteorological Services.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, sorry, I did not realize you passed Drainage already.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Item 005.

Dr. Browne: Line Item 28: Other Contracted Services, again, especially given the Minister's earlier response to my question on the Drainage Division. I

am seeing a decrease of \$69 million for 2015, with respect to Other Contracted Services and I am again very concerned, especially if their staff is somewhat depleted and the provision of service through these other contracted services appears to be going down. Can the Minister explain that? And I have a follow-up question.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I am certain that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East would be very familiar with this Head 28, because this is where the various regions utilize the private sector and equipment from the private sector to clean, and so on. So that is what it is, Head 28 and Head 09, they normally utilize.

Dr. Browne: And why has it gone down by \$69 million?

Mr. Imbert: Why the huge reduction?

Hon. Singh: The normal practice, I am told, is that in the midterm review they raise the amount when they have exhausted and which generally they do, that sum of money. The midterm review, as happened previously in the previous year. That is what transpired.

Dr. Browne: I hear you but if you look at the estimate for 2014, Minister, and you look at the estimate for 2015, it has actually gone down so I am not sure if your rationale, in terms of the midterm review, holds any water, so to speak.

Hon. Singh: Well that has been the practice.

Dr. Browne: What is provided for these important contracted services? But further—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: You are expecting to get more funding? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Singh: What is that?

Mr. Imbert: You are expecting, during the fiscal year, to get additional funds in this Head?

Hon. Singh: Yes, that has been the practice and it transpired, certainly, last year.

Dr. Browne: All right. Minister, further to that issue, under “Other Contracted Services”, I am wondering what degree of monitoring of these services occurs from within the head office of the Ministry. I ask that because I have observed and reported a practice of slash and burn clearing of drainage

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areas, where these contractors would actually light fires in the river or watercourse and which appears to make it easier for them to clean it. It does not happen in all cases but I have seen it myself. I see that as very dangerous to the environment. Has that been monitored and is the Ministry in a position to sanction or take action?

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, there is a systemic problem and it goes beyond the existing staff, in terms of capacity and numbers. Within the drainage department there are monitoring mechanisms but systemically and institutionally it is hard to determine whether or not in fact the monitoring takes place, because unless you go on the ground, as you and I toured certain areas and we saw for ourselves that we were told that work was done, the work appeared on the books as being done but we saw for ourselves. So there are systemic issues and institutional issues associated with a government department and that is why we are very, very aggressive about bringing change in that area and institutional change required to exactly provide the value for money, provide a greater deal of monitoring and supervision and it is being driven by the IDB loan.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would like to go to Sub-Item 09: Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment and I would like the Minister to indicate the number of vehicles that are leased or rented and the same for the equipment as well, the duration of time of the rental or lease of each, and if he can provide a breakdown of the cost of renting the vehicles and equipment.

Hon. Singh: The Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment, that is under Meteorological Services?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Miss Hospedales: Drainage, 005

Hon. Singh: It does not have that.

Mr. Chairman: On page 405? Are you on page 405, hon. Member?

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Mr. Chair, 005: Sub-Item 09.

Miss Ramdial: Yes, we found it.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, okay.

Hon. Singh: This significant sum is really the rental of heavy equipment: 09: Vehicles and Equipment is the rental of heavy equipment to do work as they proceed. The Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, that is 08, we

have the lease/rental of a new building in El Socorro South for the headquarters of drainage. It has a capacity of 160 persons.

Mr. Hypolite: On that same Sub-Head, Mr. Chairman. To the Minister, would it not be more feasible to purchase those heavy equipment, seeing that the Ministry is a crucial Ministry that looks after desilting of drains and all those different things?

Hon. Singh: I think that there is need for a critical mass of equipment to mobilize and I think that they are in possession of about five or six backhoes, but the significant equipment is located with the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and they are deployed accordingly. But we have a problem and I would share it with you. The problem is the maintenance of that equipment. You would find that in the public sector, maintenance is not something that you get easily done, because the moneys are allocated elsewhere and, therefore, you would have equipment breaking down for simple reasons. Therefore, what has happened over the years is that they have found it much more efficient to engage the private sector.

Mr. Hypolite: But is there not a mechanical division within, either the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure or the ministry of drainage that can fix those?

Hon. Singh: There is a mechanical division in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and they have certain equipment and it is shared with the drainage department as need be, it is not a great deal.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Item 006: Meteorological Services. We go to Sub-Head 03.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Sir. Under 02: 17 Training, can you tell me how much money was spent to train WASA employees in equipment maintenance and how many new vehicles were bought by WASA?

Hon. Singh: Are we under Drainage?

Mr. Warner: Under 17: Goods and Services: Drainage.

Mr. Chairman: You are dealing with drainage right?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Hon. Singh: Well, I am a bit lost, but the point is that this is training under the Head of Training. I can provide that information for you.

Mr. Warner: Good, that is what I want.

Hon. Singh: I can provide that information. But what I do know, the number of vehicles WASA has is minimal in relation to how much they rent, but we would provide the number of vehicles that are owned by WASA and purchased by WASA.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Environmental Policy and Planning; Item 003: Green Fund, Executing Unit; Item 004: Forestry; Item 005: Drainage; Item 006: Meteorological Services.

We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003: United Nations Organizations; Item 007: Households; Item 008: Subsidies; Item 009: Other Transfers. I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 06: Could the Minister indicate to us exactly what the Tourism Development Facilities are?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize you after and hon. Minister. *[Crosstalk]* No, I am seeing you through my eyes.

Hon. Singh: At what page, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 411, Sub-Item 06.

Hon. Singh: The Tourism Development Facilities, these are four historical sites maintained by the Forestry Department: Fort George, Lopinot, River Estate and Fort Picton.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go to the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would just—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: You are still there, okay.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Sir. I would like to find out why is the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources maintaining these sites when there are other Ministries responsible for the development of tourism sites.

Hon. Singh: These sites fall within forested areas and they fall within the jurisdiction of the Forestry Department and, therefore, that is an inheritance and it does not preclude the Ministry of Tourism having access or having any kind of a tour guide system associated with these sites.

Miss Mc Donald: Let us go back up Minister under 008: Subsidies; 01: Forestry Incentive Programme. Is this figure there, that \$500,000 estimate for 2015, linked to the reforestation programme?

Hon. Singh: No. You would find that in both the reforestation programme and the forestry department, they all plant seedlings. For example, cumulatively they planted since 2010, 1.6 million trees in Trinidad. So that this Forest Incentive Programme is for farmers who have cocoa and coffee estates and they plant forest cover to protect their crops.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, I am hearing that the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources maintains the Fort Picton site, can the Minister submit, you do not need to say it now, to me exactly what that team of persons does, when last they went up there, when they go up there exactly what they do, and for how long? Because as far as I am aware, I have never seen or heard of any.

Hon. Singh: Well I am happy the hon. Member asked that question because it really reflects a question I asked myself. There are four persons employed looking after that site and I can provide a report as to what they do. I am told that they clean up the site, they make sure grass does not grow and so on. But I am familiar with the Fort Picton site because that is where the WASA tanks are.

Mr. Hypolite: And we need them now because the cable cars are coming.

Hon. Singh: Let us not interfere with the water taxi.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 010: Other Transfers Abroad. We go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004: Statutory Boards. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, this is quite a large transfer and ought to attract our attention, especially I am particularly pleased to be directing this question to my former parliamentary colleague who was a Minister, who I distinctly recall one particular year, I am not sure which year it was when he reported that WASA had turned a profit, albeit a small one. I am not sure if his memory would be jogged to that. But that being so, Mr. Chairman, only for historical perspective, what is the basis for this \$2 billion transfer in 2013? Because in 2013, the records here show that WASA got basically a cheque, I presume, for \$2.052 billion. In 2014, we appropriated \$1.8 billion and the revised estimates show—I am under 06: 51.

1.15 p.m.

The revised estimates show that WASA will more than likely—the revised estimates are the same as the original estimates. So we are committed to spending \$1.8 billion there, and we are appropriating another \$1.7 billion for 2015. Could the Minister tell us two things, one, how does that money get transferred to WASA, and what is it used for?

Hon. Singh: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the Member for recalling that in 1999, there was a “kinda” neutral position that the revenue equalled the expenditure. There was a marginal increase in revenue, and we declared a profit as politicians will do in a situation like that, [*Laughter*] but there was a nominal increase at that time in 1999—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, my colleague is still a man of great humour, right? [*Laughter*]

Hon. Singh:—because revenue was greater than expenditure. This allocation and this transfer is the normal transfer to the Water and Sewerage Authority within the last 10 years, and it deals with the subventions for recurrent expenditure. WASA does the application and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provides it, provided that there is the appropriate justification, and the justification is done at the point of the planning of the budget, but it is done in various tranches throughout the year.

Dr. Rowley: Now, this supports—well, we are under recurrent, so maybe I should—I wonder if this is the correct time to ask this question because we are dealing with recurrent, and we will come to the development programme, but since this is a transfer, where WASA gets a cheque and then proceeds to spend that as it sees fit within the organization, I suspect that a substantial amount of this money is paid towards contracting, and that is why I would like to ask the Minister to provide us with a list of all the contracts that WASA has entertained, funded, got involved in, over a million dollars, with respect to this period of 2014, so we can have an idea as to how this money is—or the breakout of this money, because we do hear from time to time, and we know that there is a certain amount of laxity, and liberties taken with respect to the award of contracts, and we will like to have an—just have an overview as to how this money enters contracts. Because the Ministry of Finance and the Economy passes money on to WASA, and then the accounting officer in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would lose sight of it, it becomes a WASA issue. We want also to ask for some sort of a summary and policy position, with respect to contracting of small, medium and

large contractors at WASA, so as to determine how this large transfer is exposed.

And while I am at it, Mr. Chairman, I also understand that WASA's financial statements have not been submitted since 2009. So we are transferring these large sums of money from the Treasury to an agency, but the oversight and the reporting is lagging behind. I do not know whether they are at the Auditor General, whether it has been done, whether it has not been done, but with respect to complete compliance, my understanding is that the last time WASA submitted financial statements were for 2009. We need to get some position on that as to where the statements are in terms of preparation, location and how the agency intends to proceed, to make this unacceptable situation acceptable, because we do not want to find out in 10 years' time that something has gone tremendously wrong while we are waiting for the statements. And maybe you might want to tell us, what is the difficulty that WASA is experiencing, why these financial statements are not where they are supposed to be at this time.

Hon. Singh: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am advised by the acting CEO, WASA, Mr. York, that the 2010 audited financial statements are completed, and that the 2011, 2012 and 2013 financial statements, audited financial statements will be completed by February 2015. I will wait and get advice as to what kind of challenges they face in that area.

The list of all contracts over a million dollars. I will undertake to provide that. With respect to the policy, what I do know from my own experience is that, there is a process, the process you go before the—there is—you go, well, at the stage of the Tenders Committee and then you go before the board, and then decisions are taken. There are prequalifications, there is a whole prequalification process, but we will provide the policy together with the listing.

Dr. Rowley: Well, the list that I would like to ask, Mr. Chairman, the list should include: the contract name, date, contractor, sum and purpose.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, WASA is getting \$1.7 million for 2015 which is a decrease of \$75 million. My constituents have asked me to raise the issue of road resurfacing being done by WASA. I am hoping that aspect of the Authority will not further deteriorate with this decrease in transfer. As you know, Minister, I am sure you get the complaints as well, that is one of the weakest areas, and people continue to complain, despite how much taxpayers dollars go into the Authority,

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about delays and very poor quality of resurfacing after WASA digs up the roads. So I am just wondering what aspect of this transfer is focused on road resurfacing and what steps you might be taking in this area to improve this service. As I speak I am thinking about Jasper Avenue, which just a few days ago was very poorly patched and resurfaced.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, road restoration remains a challenge at the Water and Sewerage Authority, and notwithstanding significant investment in that area, it has to do with the practice in the initial laying of the pipelines. However, in some instances, there is temporary restoration because the lines have to be pressure checked in order for the permanent restoration to be done, and I know that the Director of Operations at WASA has indicated to the—and engaged in activity for training and otherwise, to deal with this whole issue of road restoration and appropriate road restoration, especially in the areas in which there is high traffic. Jasper Avenue, I am familiar with it. I was also sent a picture which I forwarded to the CEO of the Water and Sewerage Authority.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Chaguanas West.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under the same item, Sub-Item 51, I just want to ask the Minister whether there are any plans with reference to a greater level of collaboration between WASA and the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. I am asking this particularly in the context that between 2012 to 2013 part of the Priority Bus Route in the east of Trinidad, a significant portion of it was paved, and immediately after it was paved, it was dug up for a pipeline laying programme. So you know, that is wastage really in terms of the resources.

Hon. Singh: There is a coordinating committee which includes the Director of Highways, and senior personnel at the Water and Sewerage Authority. However, it is ultimately easier to pave, than to engage in the execution of major pipeline replacement. And the Hollis pipeline which runs along the Priority Bus Route, well, which ran along the train line, and then the Priority Bus Route took over, that 80-year-old pipeline has been replaced, and you would see that the road restoration on the priority, is very good in relation to what transpired before.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Minister, on the very same point, I cannot—I mean, I used to be a Minister of Works and Infrastructure at one time, and there was collaboration. I cannot understand why it is Coosal will pave the Eastern Main Road last week Monday and WASA dig it up on Tuesday.

Hon. Singh: All right. Now, it is not a sinister or deliberate plot on the part of WASA to do so. What happens is when you put heavy equipment on the area, the infrastructure that is not new infrastructure, it creates the conditions for significant leakages to take place, and then in order to cure those leakages, the Water and Sewerage Authority has to go and dig up the road.

Now, it will be nice if we have a utility corridor but, unfortunately, as we see throughout the roads and the pipelines, especially over a period of time have to co-exist, and we have to find the formula. That is why there is collaboration, but until there is significant change out, as we have engaged in, the Hollis, the Navet, the Caroni Dualling pipeline, until that is done, you will have the heavy equipment further damaging the porous infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we go to Development Programme, Item 01, Pre-Investments; the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Sir. Development Programme. Oh, yes, Minister, under 17, Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation, that is at page 197.

Hon. Singh: Just give me chance to get my bearings. You are ahead of me, whilst I was dealing with that. Okay. I am here.

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah, 197, right under Head 17 there, 001, Development of a Carbon Dioxide Emission Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago, and I note in 2013 there was an actual figure of \$2.5 million, but nothing for 2014 and then no allocation for 2015. Are you saying that you have, in fact, developed this strategy to eradicate carbon dioxide emissions? Why no allocation has been made for this item?

Hon. Singh: Okay. I think that, you know, I mean, that it would be inappropriate for me to say that we have, in fact, fashioned a strategy. However, this programme for the elaboration of a strategy for the reduction of carbon emissions in Trinidad and Tobago was a UNDP-funded project. The total funds for the project was US \$579 million plus. It includes the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and—

Miss Mc Donald: \$575 million?

Hon. Singh: Yeah, 579, no thousand, thousand, thousand dollars, US dollars. The UNDP contributed US \$100,000, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, US \$479,000. This project, the—and I will give you the elements of the project that the—there is a draft carbon emission reduction strategy report, detailing the strategic framework, sectoral diagnosis, objectives and strategy, evaluation,

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monitoring and financing options. So there is a report which gives you basic options, and that is due next month, October 2014.

There is going to be subsequent to that, a stakeholder consultation to obtain feedback on the draft action plans and policy framework, and the final report, incorporating the results of the key findings to consolidate the recommendations, for the three sectors in December 2014, and the execution of seven capacity building/training sessions in 2014, the development of an implementation framework for carbon reduction emission strategy by sector. There are three sectors, they are: transportation, industry and power generation. So that the implementation framework will be in January 2015 to August 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we go to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, then the Member for Port of Spain South, then we go to the Member for Arouca/Maloney, the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for La Brea.

1.30 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman: 003, 037, National Forest Inventory. This is a very small allocation, but it is continuous. Where? Page 199, 037. What is the scope of this project and when is it due to come to an end? Are we expecting a report or is there an ongoing reporting arrangement? What is the story with this?

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. The National Forest Inventory of Trinidad and Tobago is a field verification of new forest cover. There is a new forest cover map, the purpose of which provides for data entry and analysis and so on—the field data collection for verification of new forest cover map. This is what it entails, this National Forest Inventory of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Rowley: What I am getting at: I am seeing that the sum is a small sum, but it is recurring every year. Is it that we are counting the trees on foot or are we using proper technology and looking down from an aircraft or something, which means that you can finish this kind of assignment in a year or in six months? Why is this ongoing with such small sums being allocated every year? How is it being done?

Hon. Singh: It is being done by, first, an aerial map and then there is the verification process of the species on the ground.

Dr. Rowley: So this is the verification of a larger project.

Hon. Singh: This is the verification of the species on the ground.

Dr. Rowley: But we would have done the aerial—

Hon. Singh: The aerial map, and we have an appreciation of the forest cover on an aerial map, but now we are doing species-by-species inventory analysis.

Dr. Rowley: 039, the Caroni Swamp Management Project, I presume this is the Thematic Centre in Caroni. Well, I was there about three weeks ago, and I am surprised to see here that we are claiming that we spent \$1.2 million on the place. Because while it is very commendable, the museum, the structure and the surroundings left a lot to be desired. All of the piers were collapsed and appeared to be abandoned. The site seemed not to have proper maintenance and so on. So what did we spend this \$1.2 million on? And I am now seeing a \$500,000 allocation for 2015. Is there a work programme to restore that place to some level of activity?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the Caroni Swamp Project—and, in fact, I am quite familiar with it because I have had several consultations on that location in dealing with the saw millers, the furniture manufacturers, the Hunters Association. The roof is leaking; there are significant infrastructure issues; so this money is to repair the roof and continue the construction of a boat house at the Caroni Swamp Centre. I can undertake to provide us with what moneys were spent in the last fiscal year and how it was spent.

Dr. Rowley: What this is telling me—we had a budget of \$500,000 and we spent \$1.2 million, so something ought to have been going on. We spent \$1.2 million. Actually, we spent more than the budgeted amount. Is it that—

Hon. Singh: I know what you are trying to find out. Where was this money spent? Did we get value for money?

Dr. Rowley: I am asking: is there a project ongoing there because the money is flowing? The money has moved from \$500,000 to \$1.2 million.

Hon. Singh: There is an ongoing project to build a jetty for the boats.

Dr. Rowley: Well, that is not included in this money because nothing has gone on on the jetty and, therefore, I am saying—because I am seeing the movement of the allocation from \$500,000 to \$1.2 million—I am holding the point that it tells me that there ought to be a project under way.

Hon. Singh: There is work taking place with respect to repairing and construction of a new jetty. There is ongoing work.

Dr. Rowley: All I will say to you, Mr. Minister: look into it.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: 019, Minister, Community-based Forestry and Agro-Forestry. I know that you are allocating \$200,000 for 2015, but you had spent similar amounts in both 2013 and 2014. Now this is community based. Could you tell me what allocation would be made for Port of Spain South and, whilst you are at it, I want to see a list of where these projects have been allotted, for both 2013 and 2014.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I may guide you by indicating first, that the community-based forestry and agro-forestry project is for seedling production and to conduct training and workshop seminars for community groups and private landowners. It is also for the publishing of forestry bulletins and the provision of support services. I am certain that if you make a request that the Forestry Department will engage the constituents of Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: You might be surprised that we have spaces—when you say Port of Spain, it is not talking about just East Port of Spain, you know. I also have west—Woodbrook, St. James. Do not worry, you have open spaces there too, green spaces.

Hon. Singh: You will be facilitated.

Mr. Chairman: We are going to the Member for Diego Martin Central, then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for La Brea and then the Member for Chaguanas West.

Dr. Browne: Sub-Item 013, Re-afforestation of Denuded Northern Range Hillside. I guess that is “hillsides”. I am only seeing \$750,000, which is a nominal increase from last “year’s provision,” and I am a little bit concerned.

Mr. Chairman: What item are you on, Sir?

Dr. Browne: 013, Re-afforestation of Denuded Northern Range Hillsides. So I am expressing concern about the quantum of the allocation, but further to that, Minister, I am interested in hearing from you on the philosophy of this reafforestation. I do not want to get nostalgic but, in growing up, I remember the Northern Range. We used to be able to go in there as children and find get mamee sipote, tonka bean, balata and so on.

To what extent does your reforestation programme integrate strategic fruit-bearing trees that might have a soil retention potential at their roots. I am interested in hearing from you. I am not saying to become a ministry of production but, at the same time, there could be ways—*[Interruption]* yes, exactly, to cover certain basics.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central is pushing an open door. The practice has been over the last two decades to deal with hard trees, the timber species, rather than fruit that can feed the wildlife. I share your point of view in that area and there will be a change in the approach especially by the reforestation programme. They are much more flexible and very, very proactive. Therefore, you will be able to access the laylay, the mamee sipote, the pommerac, the jamoon, the tonka bean and so on.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to refer to Sub-Item 015, Improvement of Forest Fire Protection Capability and I am asking the Minister whether or not the \$1 million that is allocated here is to support the Forestry Division in their fire prevention programme and if he can indicate to us the number of forest fires that were recorded for the period 2013, and also indicate whether or not additional staff have been hired at the Forestry Division to support the Fire Prevention Programme? If yes, indicate the number of persons that have been employed—additional staff that is—and to also indicate whether there is a comprehensive communication strategy, particularly during the dry season to reduce the number of forest fires that occur.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister

Hon. Singh: First, I will deal with the last question. Thank you, hon. Member, for the interest in this area. The forest fires that take place on an annual basis during the dry season: in March of every calendar year, the Forestry Department launches a fire prevention programme and the normal routine is for the Chief Fire Officer to participate in that process. Therefore, there exists a communication component associated with that.

What we instituted was a hotline for fires linked to the National Operations Centre this year, with a view to the utilization of the helicopters and the bambi buckets of the National Operations Centre under the Air Guard and

under the protective services to support the gangs that deal with fire tracing and fighting the fires. So that there is that communication component. Much more is required to be done. In our discussions with the fire service, the fire service only go and extinguish fires where they have access with their vehicular equipment and, therefore, forest fires do not fall really within their purview.

We have had discussions with them. because we were making significant investments in the forest-significant investments in the protection of the watersheds, which generate and filter our water supply. Therefore, we have to view forest fires as an act of treason in a sense because it impacts negatively on the environment or water supply. So there will be further investment through the Fire Service Department in getting appropriate equipment. They may have to, whether it is aircraft or helicopter, but certainly we cannot continue the same old way of doing things and expecting.

I will give you an appreciation of the number of fires we have had since 2008. In 2008, 226 fires, hectares burnt 1,534; 2009, 133 fires, 544 hectares burnt; 2010, 754 fires, 12,477 hectares burnt. So you can recall, in 2010, we had a very harsh dry season, so you see the correlation.

In 2011, 42 fires, 101 hectares burnt; 2012, 58 fires, 205 hectares burnt; 2013, 533 fires, 2,786 hectares burnt; 2014, 313 fires, 2,374 hectares burnt. So over the period 2008—2014, over 20,000 hectares burnt as a result of fires.

The fires at Fondes Amandes in this dry season were set by somebody gathering leaves and trying to burn them. So significant education is really required to build awareness and there has to be the other part of enforcement. As you educate, you have to enforce. People have to feel the brunt also. We have to increase the fines.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for La Brea and the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. 009, Forestry Regeneration, South West Conservancy. In 2014, \$300,000 was spent. Question: how many persons were employed in that regeneration in the south-west in 2014 and what was the recruiting process?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Singh: I just want to indicate that the forestry regeneration in the south-west conservancy, there was the tending and supplying of 40 hectares for the 2014 coops. The site preparation for 40 hectares for the 2015 coops and it entails

planting seedlings for the 40 hectares of 2015 coops and for the purchasing of chemicals, tools and fuel. I do not know the mix for the employment in short term for this, but I can provide that.

Mr. Jeffrey: The second question, Mr. Chairman, 021, Wetlands Management Project: Our mangrove swamps are under threat. We lost the mangrove swamp next to the stadium to MovieTowne and PriceSmart and right now in La Brea, the Rousillac Swamp is under threat with some proposed industrial development. I would like to know what role this Wetlands Management Project has in this scheme of things as far as protecting our wetlands.

1.45 p.m.

Hon. Singh: The articulated policy position with respect to mangroves is no net loss, so that therefore if there is any development that impacts upon the mangroves, then you have to have rehabilitation if necessary and replanting. So no net loss is the articulated policy position and implementation.

Mr. Jeffrey: In the case of the area outside the stadium there, when last did regeneration take place?

Hon. Singh: The Jean Pierre Stadium?

Mr. Jeffrey: Outside there, yeah. Price Smart and MovieTowne area there.

Hon. Singh: I do not have the information but I can access that information and be guided appropriately. I am not familiar with it.

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

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, my question was answered, number 015.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so we go to Item 04, Social Infrastructure; Item 05 Multi-sectoral—

Miss Mc Donald: I just want to go back on the same page. I am at page 200 under Drainage and Irrigation, 011.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can proceed.

Miss Mc Donald: Okay, I will give way to the—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I just have a little concern here because I, under 001, Drainage and Irrigation Major River Clearing Programme/Flood Mitigation Programme, Flood Alleviation and Drainage Programme, I see where in 2014 which is the financial year that is ending now in a couple of weeks or in a week or two, we had allocated \$45 million for an area of

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public expenditure which seems to have an insatiable appetite. I was not aware that we had so effectually dealt with this flood mitigation and drainage clearing that we only spent approximately 50 per cent of what was allocated, because we had an approval for \$45 million and the revised estimate is now saying that we only spent \$20 million. How could this be? Because this is one area—in my own constituency, I have constituents who are dreading the clouds getting dark because the watercourses around them on the hillside are such that they have been experiencing floods for the last five years, virtually on an annual basis.

And the whole of Diego Martin—east, central, west—and elsewhere in the country, I thought we would have very quickly used up whatever money was allocated and that we always would have the need for more. How could we not have spent the full allocation of the small amount of \$45 million for this specific Heading, and then we are now appropriating \$58 million for 2015? What assurances do we have that the same thing would not happen again?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you with us?

Hon. Singh: Yeah. I am with you. Mr. Chairman, I am not up to date as to why the moneys were not spent, and I certainly will be able to provide that for the—

Dr. Rowley: But would you agree that this is a serious shortcoming?

Hon. Singh: I am seeing the figure, yeah, it slipped me to ask the Director of Drainage as to why, but, certainly, I know that significant work was done on the Diego Martin River. I know that work was done on the Maraval River, but I cannot fathom as to why the allocation has not been spent.

Dr. Rowley: Well the fact that they are determining that the revised estimates are going to fall so way below the allocation tells me or allows me to draw the conclusion that the work had not been completed to the full extent of the allocation. To me that is a very serious shortcoming because I have, on many occasions, sought from the various agencies, assistance with respect to drainage problems and the answer is always, “We do not have the money. We would love to do it. We know it. We have been there. We have seen it. We do not have the money.” And now I am seeing here \$25 million that somebody did not spend.

Hon. Singh: Yeah. I think, that I like you, have sometimes met with that same answer, but I am advised that this is not the recurrent, it is the recurrent that they utilize to do the work that we request. This is the Development Programme.

Dr. Rowley: Well, this is even easier to spend. This is project oriented. That brings me to the point: I would like, Minister, since we are now talking about

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appropriating \$58 million for 2015, could the Ministry give us a work programme for this \$58, identifying the projects to be undertaken? And while you are doing that, remember Diego Martin West has first call. We were last in the queue and so, therefore, in 2015 we should be first.

Hon. Singh: But you know, Mr. Chairman, I paid particular attention to Diego Martin West. That is why he has a measure of comfort in the potable water sector. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Rowley: So we want to work on all problems at once; it is not either/or, it is not water or drainage.

Hon. Singh: I take your point and we will provide that work—

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, like Diego Martin West, I would like to find out in that major river clearing programme, I do not know if you have the answer there, but whether the East Dry River is included in the list, please. If not, why not?

Hon. Singh: Okay. Well, I am not in a position to indicate that but, certainly, we have a programme for the St. Ann's catchment and, certainly, when we provide the work programme we would incorporate. Look what the sentiments—I have been working closely with the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and we work closely in that area. The Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Diego Martin Central will tell you that once matters are brought to our attention we deal with it in a manner which is appropriate for the Member of Parliament. So you fall in that category, together with the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for St. Joseph, then La Brea.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, on the same line Item on Major River Clearing, I recently did a tour of the constituency of St. Joseph with the Minister of State, Member of Parliament for Couva North to address flooding issues throughout the constituency, from St. Joseph proper, down to Farm Road, down to Mount Lambert, and down to Aranguez. The Minister herself was shocked to see trees, mature trees growing in the San Juan River, which has not been cleared for about three or four years now. We are talking about full-blown blooming trees with branches, the only thing missing is wide life, and she was shocked to see it.

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But my other question is, hon. Minister, you would remember when I was first elected Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, I came to you on this same flooding issue and asking for relief by the use of WASA's equipment—let us say your big vacuum cleaner, for want of a better term, and I was told I had to pay for it, either out of my own pocket or get the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation or the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation to pay for it. Can you guide me as to what is the protocol for using a piece of equipment, bought and paid for by the taxpayers to be used to bring flood relief from St. Joseph, Abercrombie Street, Farm Road, Mount Lambert, some parts of Champ Fleur and major parts of Aranguez, because since we have had that tour I do not think anything has been done, so I look forward to some—

Hon. Singh: My colleague, the Minister of State in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, since she undertook the tour with the hon. Member for St. Joseph, she will respond.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Chair. To the Member for St. Joseph, first of all, let me say it was a very good tour and I only toured because that seat is coming back to us next year. In addition to that, however—

Mr. Deyalsingh: That is the only reason—

Miss Ramdial: Give me a chance to answer. Give me a chance to answer. Give me a chance to answer, please. [*Crosstalk*] Chair, I need a chance to answer. It is a little bit of humour, come on.

Mr. Chairman: “Listen, that is picong, you have to be thick skin, doh worry with that.” Continue. Continue. “That is picong, doh worry with that.”

Miss Ramdial: Mr. Chair, with respect to the question asked by the Member for St. Joseph, we did tour, we looked at all of the problems, especially the San Juan River. We toured with drainage officials and we have agreed for this new fiscal year to allocate funding to clear the river, and it will be cleared, I want to assure you that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What about the policy for the use of equipment which I was told I would have to pay for or the corporations would have to pay for?

Hon. Singh: I want to indicate to the hon. Member for St. Joseph, that there is a cost associated with utilization of any machinery. The Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources does not have machinery like vacuum masters that they can deploy without a cost being incurred and that, therefore, whenever

the vacuum masters are utilized by the drainage department WASA bills the drainage department. So somebody has to pay for the work being done. The local area drainage falls within the ambit of the regional corporation with responsibility for that particular region. Therefore, any attempt to engage in that requires the approval of the local area authority, which is the regional corporation.

So, in the first instance, your proper protocol, which I advised you to adopt, is to go to the regional corporation, indicate that this is what you want done, and for the local area drainage—For the rivers, for the large watercourses, that is what the Drainage Department in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure will take care of. You will notice that we have a very collaborative approach. We are working with the Port of Spain City Corporation in clearing the underground drains throughout South Quay into the Cove area, and we have engaged, and, together with the Mayor, who is working very collaboratively with us, we are dealing with the flooding in South Quay from that end, in addition to the larger issue under the IDB loan, major infrastructure—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Minister, I conducted a tour already with members of the corporation, members of drainage, members of highways on those same issues. We had a coordinated approach to it, but to date, because of inter-agency communications and processes we have not been able to get the kind of relief. Now, the fact of paying for the use of equipment, prevention is better than cure. We are going to quibble over who should pay for a piece of equipment, but then when the floods come we are all prepared to go into total emergency mode to undo millions of dollars of damage, and then use more equipment on an emergency basis which could have been prevented by some simple preventative measures.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I think I understand that matter. You all have cleared that up, as far as I am concerned. Listen, we have five final contributors before I put this question to the House. The Members for La Brea, Arouca/Maloney, Fyzabad, Diego Martin Central, Laventille West, in that order—and the Members for Point Fortin and Port of Spain South, in that order. So, I recognize La Brea now.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. When we are talking about poor drainage and serious flooding, La Brea constituency is the whipping child. The Santa Flora/Erin River, the Brea River, Vance River, the Salazar Trace River, the Paria River in Aripero and the Coffee Canal in La Brea: can you tell us, Mr. Minister, whatever in that \$30 million that is budgeted for 2015, whether due attention will be given to those rivers I indicated to you.

2.00 p.m.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I have listened to the hon. Member for La Brea and he too will know that we take a very collaborative approach to getting things done, in particular, for elected Members of Parliament and that, therefore, given the funding we have, anticipating further funding in the midterm review we will prioritize and certainly he would receive an equitable share of the drainage pie.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, under the same Sub-Item, I can say that since 2010 I have appealed to every Minister of the Government with responsibility for clearing of rivers, and last year I would have sent correspondence to the current Minister before us for the clearing of the Arouca River, south of Bacaday Junction that borders on the Nicholas Gardens community as well as the Bon Air Gardens community. Minister, I am not sure if you have visited; a forest is actually growing in that river.

Hon. Singh: If the hon. Member were to invite me, I certainly, as I have done with her colleagues, would visit the forest with her. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is instructive that I pay compliments to the Ministry for the significant reduction in flooding throughout the island. I wanted to remind the hon. Minister of the work that is taking place at the Rio Negro River which empties into the Godineau River, which empties into the Mosquito Creek, and there is some outstanding work. I trust that in this year the constituencies of Fyzabad, La Brea and Oropouche East and West will benefit from the completion of that work.

Hon. Singh: I think that the hon. Member has also made his request and certainly it will be put into the pot.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, I do not want us to get distracted from the very important intervention by the Member for Diego Martin West in requesting that schedule for 2015 of proposed work. I would just want to add, for the \$9 million and the \$8 million spent on these projects for 2014, I would also like to see a detailed listing of all watercourses, drains and rivers on which this expenditure was focussed for 2014, the fiscal year past—all of those drains and watercourses. Of course in my area, but nationally as well.

Hon. Singh: You want a listing of all the national watercourses on which work was done.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, the Minister made mention of a protocol with respect to going to the regional corporations to get that kind of assistance for the maintenance of drains, and stuff like that, but the corporations would normally

have an allocation of about \$6 million to see about their entire corporation, whereby when you look at page 2 Item 11, we are seeing where some \$25 million would not have been utilized. I am wondering whether or not the Minister would want to reconsider probably a change in his policy approach, and probably request from various Members of Parliament a list of 10 drains or so, so as to assist in utilizing that \$25 million and also assisting the corporations.

The second question: with respect to decommissioned water tanks in the constituency of Laventille West—and I want to pay attention to one specific tank up in the Mapp Lands area that harbours criminal activities, I would like to know—

Dr. Moonilal: “In de tank?”

Mr. Hypolite:—whether or not, through you, Minister, if you can get WASA to look at either removing that tank and probably creating a nice recreation area for the residents up there, because the tank is not working.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the new institutional mechanism we envisage, all watercourses, whether it is a minor drain or a large watercourse, will fall under the ambit of the Water Management and Flood Alleviation Authority. So it will not be this kind of fictional, impractical division that takes place between minor drains and large watercourses. All water and all drainage will be under one entity, and it will be part of management.

But in the interim, and as we are implementing the Constituency Fund, which will allow for a prioritization of the demands of the Members of Parliament, certainly we can incorporate your demand by utilizing the vac-masters for the areas that you would want clean, and if we have the necessary payment through the Constituency Fund.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chairman, I take it that I can go to Sub-Head 09, Sanitary Services.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are closing off after you.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Sanitary Services, Minister. I saw no notation at all for the introduction of sewer lines to replace the aged sewer infrastructure in the Techier Village, Point Fortin area.

Hon. Singh: The Techier Village—you will recall, Member, that I answered a question—and the Techier Village in a pick from my memory is a peculiar problem, in that, it was built so many years ago and people have built over the sewer lines, so we, in fact, will be running new sewer lines in order to

accommodate the people in Techier Village to remove that environmental hazard, and it will be done in this new fiscal year.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I just saw no provision for it; this is my concern.

Hon. Singh: It is not a large sum of money, and we intend to undertake that.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Mr. Minister, 005 under the same heading, Construction Supervision Services for the Supply and Installation of Water and Sewer Lines in downtown Port of Spain. I notice a paltry \$2 million allocation for it. Could you tell me if this project is undergoing?

Hon. Singh: I will undertake to provide you with the factual thing, but my recollection is that this project, that is only a nominal sum but it is a significant amount of money to the tune of \$70 to \$80—

Miss Mc Donald: So what are you doing; you are doing an allocation each year?

Hon. Singh: No, this is for the design phase for it to be completed. We have to keep in mind that we are trying to do both at the same time also. The Port of Spain area will be the subject of significant infrastructure improvement in drainage, and what we are seeking to do is that whilst people within Port of Spain will be discommoded as a result of that investment taking place under the IADB loan, we will try to do the sewer lines in the particular areas, so there will be one inconvenience suffered by the burgesses and by the people frequenting Port of Spain.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 71 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think it is a good time for us to take a 30-minute suspension. But before I do so, let me on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee extend our thanks to the hon. Minister and the staff and his team for being here.

Hon. Singh: I too would like to say thanks for the opportunity of coming before the Finance Committee, and I would also like to thank my staff, together with my colleague, for the hard work they have put in, in order for us to make a proper presentation before the Finance Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am suggesting that we take—[*Crosstalk and interruption*]

Hon. Members, this sitting of the Standing Finance Committee is suspended until 2.45 p.m.

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

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will be resumed.

Head 61.

We have with us Head 61, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. Head 61, is \$2,143,321,000 billion. I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement, giving us an overview of his priority areas for the fiscal period 2014/2015.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and colleagues.

I would just like to welcome the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Sarah Briggs who has joined us. The HDC Managing Director and Chairman of UDeCOTT, Miss Jearlean John; Miss Shelly Sultanti-Maharaj, the head of the Property Division and we have from our agencies the CEO of CEPEP, Mr. Carl Jagdeo; Mr. Kamal Sant, CEO of the EMBDC and Mr. Kurt Ramlal, the CEO of UDeCOTT are with us. We also have several other members of our Ministry and senior officials to the back of me. I want to welcome all of them and thank them for coming. We are prepared to respond to questions.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum that I have just mentioned 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 the Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, through you, I am looking at 08 on page 302. I am looking at Rent, Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage. My question to the Minister: Can the Minister indicate how many properties are presently being leased or rented by the Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a follow-up question?

Mr. Hypolite: Yes: Whether or not the Minister would have considered purchasing property instead of renting same.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: To indicate that at present we have 260 rentals for government offices, and there are cases where the Cabinet has approved that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development explore the possibility to purchase certain private sector offices, but those are really few.

Mr. Hypolite: In what area may I ask?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I can get a list, but we are exploring in a couple places. But I want to say that might just be one or two.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. Hypolite: Item 16, Contract Employment. Can the Minister indicate how many contract positions exist and how many contract vacancies also exist?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Are you asking for the entire Ministry?

Mr. Hypolite: The Ministry.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We have 148 contract positions, of which 42 are vacant.

Mr. Hypolite: Forty-two?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Hypolite: What about Short-Term Employment? How Many? We are looking at item 22.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Item 22?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Short-term Employment.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We can get that figure for you.

Mr. Hypolite: All right. Item 23 with respect to Fees, can the Minister give a breakdown of the Fees? What those Fees were expected to be paid for?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

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Mr. Chairman: Could you make that available in writing?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I can just indicate to the Member. Item 23, Fees, these are generally IT contractual obligations and licences. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, the Ministry has started paying fees, certain IT fees, from the Ministry's recurrent vote instead of the DP vote.

Mr. Hypolite: Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, can the Minister give a breakdown of the sum to be spent on Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: You are focusing on 62, \$1.2 Million?

Mr. Hypolite: I suppose—on 62, \$1.2 million.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I want to indicate that this is, of course, the projection for 2015. So we will not have a detailed account of what we will be doing but this is generally meant for doing a range of publications in the newspapers and so on concerning the work of the Ministry and the divisions of the Ministry and so on including the Grants Unit and other units of the ministry. Also, for several national holidays and so on we do newspaper ads, et cetera. So that this sum would be used for that but if you want for 2014, which, as you noticed, had the exact figure, we can probably give you an account of what it was used for in 2014. Okay?

Mr. Hypolite: While that is so, Item 66—can you also give a breakdown of some of the conferences and seminars that took place and what you intend to participate in?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Item 66. It was the same figure last year.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Chaguanas West. Okay? All right, we go to Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. I recognize the hon. Member for St. Ann's East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I look at Item 43 and I see expenses for security for this year is \$7.5 million, a reduction of \$1.5 million. Is there any particular reason for that reduction?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We can provide that for you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage, could the Minister indicate exactly where they are renting office space and storage and if he can provide for us the actual rental fee for each of these locations?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes. The rental would include the rent/lease accommodation and storage. Item 08 is what you are on, is it?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yeah. This would include reimbursement to UDeCOTT for construction and outfitting the state building at 15 St. Clair Avenue. That is \$11.4 million annually. Wells Fargo Bank, New York—outfitting cost for Hyatt \$93.3 million annually. Wells Fargo Bank, New York, US \$375 million loan for construction of the International Waterfront Centre, \$265 million annually. Wells Fargo Bank, New York, loan for the Ministry of Education tower US \$88 million, there is an annual payment of \$81.8 million; and a rental of CIC building for Property Management Division of \$1.2 million annually

Dr. Gopeesingh: That same line item where you spoke about Wells Fargo Bank paying for the Waterfront project, is it—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: \$265 million annually.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For how long and when would be the completion date for that?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I am getting the data. It is the Wells Fargo Bank of New York. It was a loan arrangement of—well US \$375 million. How much TT\$ is that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is about TT \$2.6 billion.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: TT \$2.6 billion loan for the construction of the International Waterfront Centre. You are getting data on that now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And when you add interest to that, Minister, what is it coming up to?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: In February 2007 the loan was taken for \$2.6 billion. It is over 15 years, from 2007. We are paying \$265 million annually.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: So you are saying that you are paying approximately \$4.5 billion in interest in total for the Waterfront project from 2007 to the end? Is in TT \$4.5 billion?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: You may be correct, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is astonishing

Mr. Chairman: Or if you wish, the hon. Minister could supply and circulate—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is over \$4 billion to be repaid on the Waterfront project.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I believe you might have lost me a little bit. I do not know what page you are on.

Mr. Chairman: I am on Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. I have passed General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. I have not reached there.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. *[Interruption]* What? Page 303. Then we go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

Miss Hospedales: Chair, I have a question under 005.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, under what, Minor Equipment Purchases?

Miss Hospedales: No. Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services, under Goods and Services.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. All Right, I have to go back.

Miss Hospedales: I would like to get information on Sub-Item 61. Could the Minister indicate exactly what the insurance item is used to pay, what type of insurance?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: They are paying for the insurance on the government buildings including the Campus Plaza.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize the Member for Laventille West and the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page, please?

Mr. Hypolite: 307.

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 307, Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We are moving fast and I appreciate it. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I just refer you to 305? I just want to ask a question on—no, sorry, 307. When you are finished, I would like to ask a question on 307.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: I have a question on 01 and one on 05. The question on 01, Chair, is in 2014 the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation would have received \$335.5 million and in 2015 we are looking at \$400 million. Can the Minister indicate exactly what are the reasons for that increase? Where would that money be going?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The increase of \$38 million, this is for recurrent operations under the headings of Salary and Wages, including Goods and Services but at the HDC as well there was an increase in salaries pursuant to a collective agreement that has been entered into and a portion of that will be included there, in the increase.

Mr. Hypolite: And under 05, my understanding is that some 2,500 persons would have been dismissed from the reforestation programme. Will the CEPEP,

environmental protection company—seeing that they will have an increase of \$58 million—pick up those 2,500 workers who would have been dismissed from the reforestation programme yesterday?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Firstly, I want to indicate that the reforestation programme, I am not aware that 2,500 persons have been dismissed or that anyone has been dismissed. The Minister who came before me, preceded me, would have been the Minister ideally placed to address that matter had you raised it, but this increase is really to ensure the expansion of some of the CEPEP operations to bring on new contractors in specific areas, including marine clean-up, including new works that we are embarking on with the support of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of—and the Judiciary.

Mr. Hypolite: Can you state how many contractors presently, how many—say, about the core of the programme, how many marine, how many air?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure. We have a total of 256 contractors at this time. We have five marine contractors and 102 garbage disposal contractors.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under Sub-Item 05, I would like the Minister to provide us with information regarding the total number of CEPEP teams and if he can provide the names of the contractors, where they are assigned, by constituency.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: You want to get a list of the CEPEP contractors by constituency and what else?

Miss Hospedales: The total number of teams, the names of the contractors, where they are assigned and if you can give us that information by constituency. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, through you, can I ask the Minister, under 009, Other Transfers; Sub-Item 01, Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation, would he be kind enough to give us a status of the Real Spring Estate Development in Valsayn?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Real Spring Development, I can just say quickly, Chairman, because there is a lot of information on that—as on several estates.

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That was originally an estate, a housing site under UDeCOTT. It was started under UDeCOTT on or around 2006. It was funded by a loan arrangement with the Home Mortgage Bank for \$170 million, I believe. The project has had some problems, it is one of our troubled sites with UDeCOTT over claims and counterclaims between the UDeCOTT and the main contractor there. It has been suspended due to that type of problem. The UDeCOTT, I believe, had borrowed the money from the Home Mortgage Bank, Mr. Calder Hart. He had borrowed money from that organization for that project but they had some problems with the contractor and we have been trying to have negotiations with the contractor to sort it out.

We are now at the point where we are asking the HDC to assist with that project, to bring some type of resolution, by negotiations, so that we can complete the project at Real Spring but it was originally a UDeCOTT project.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you are saying, in 2007, \$130-plus million was spent and seven years later we have not been able to get anything for it?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, and here is some more information on it but I do not know if I want to take all the time now but it is one of the troubled sites that—

Miss Mc Donald: You could talk to him; he is your Cabinet colleague; “all yuh” could talk to each other.

Mr. Chairman: No, No. You are telling the Chairman to move on?

Miss Mc Donald: Too cantankerous.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. Listen, Member for Port of Spain South, May I put—I would like both the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West and Member for Port of Spain South, you all have this love relationship. *[Interruption]* It appears. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I go back to—*[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Chairman: Could we have one meeting? Order! Order! Order! I want to hear the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner:—05 Other Transfers. I would like to get also that same list, but I want to get those “CEPEPERS” or contractors who were terminated in 2013, 2014 and where?—especially the Corridor.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Especially the—?

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Mr. Warner: The Corridor.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The East-West Corridor.

Mr. Warner: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, well we can also make the list available. The list will be for Members—

Mr. Warner: Fine. No problem.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—but also the Member for Chaguanas West is asking the additional information—

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—of where CEPEP contractors have been terminated, and I imagine the reason for that—

Mr. Warner: Yeah. Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Who is next? The next person is the Member for Fyzabad, and then the Member for Laventille West, and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East after. Yes, Member for Fyzabad, you are on the floor.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you. Now?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. You are on the floor.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman, to the hon. Minister—the announcement by the Minister of Finance and the Economy of \$850,000 for first-time homeowners at 2 per cent which, of course, makes it the cheapest loan. At page 307, under the increase of \$38 million for Goods and Services, could the Minister of Housing and Urban Development give an undertaking to make house plans available, approved house plans, so that first-time homeowners wishing to borrow this money can access those house plans?

Secondly, the Minister also indicated loans of up to \$1.2 million at, I think, 5 per cent. That will be very useful; it will speed up the process of first-time homeowners accessing it under this increase—[*Crosstalk*] that can be made available.

Mr. Imbert: What line item is this?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Thank you. I take the recommendations, Member. [*Crosstalk*] He means, if I can accept the recommendation; that was the question.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to the Member for Laventille West, and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, going back to 009/01, okay, [*Crosstalk*] and based—on the same page 37—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Please. Please.

Mr. Hypolite:—can the Minister indicate how many new housing development sites you would have started over the year 2014? Also, what is the true housing stock throughout the country?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We have the information available, Chairman, from the Housing Development Corporation. You are interested in the new—how many new sites, and a breakdown of the housing stock, I believe? So, we can indicate that our new sites include sites in Union Hall, San Fernando, Princes Town, on the East-West Corridor, Trestrail, Eden Gardens in Couva, and these are some of the new sites. But the closing out of the new sites that have started before is also a significant part of our operations now, including sites in Diego Martin—

Mr. Hypolite: Is it possible if you can give a comprehensive detail later on?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, we can just give a listing to you of the information that you ask for.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Let us go. The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, page 307, 009/01, is any of this \$400 million intended for expenditure, in any form or fashion, on the Las Alturas project?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: So, the Ministry of Housing and the Urban Development nor the HDC does not enter into, engage anybody, consultants, attorneys, geotechnical experts?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is under IDF. It also come under the—

Mr. Imbert: It would come up—Okay.

Mr. Chairman: We recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. Member for Port of Spain South, you had a question?

Miss Mc Donald: No. No. No. Somebody else has a question.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for St. Ann's East and then the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Miss Hospedales: Okay. Mr. Chair, thank you. Again, focussing on Sub-Item 01, could the Minister indicate exactly how many of the houses that were constructed are actually reserved for rental housing accommodation—particularly since the rental housing stock basically has been fully utilized?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: As a general rule, 40 per cent of the housing stock is usually reserved for rental.

Mr. Chairman: We recognize the hon. Member for St. Ann's East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, could you give me a listing please of the number of unoccupied houses in the Sam Boucaud area in Santa Cruz?—because I have noticed in my walkabouts a lot of houses unoccupied. If I could get that listing, please? [*Crosstalk*] They are not occupied and people—

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes. In that area we have had some problems. I will give you a written response to this, but to indicate that, the housing units they were apparently distributed to persons, and then they would have had some problem with the HDC before, and the persons either had not moved in or their keys were taken back from them. So that there are some problems associated with that, but I would prefer to put that in writing, to explain that to you in writing.

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

Dr. Browne: Thank you. With respect to CEPEP; CEPEP is now involved with infrastructural works such as box drains and so on, and the award of civil works contracts, I would like details from the Ministry with respect to the procedure for the award of such civil works contracts under the CEPEP.

Secondly, this sum of \$594 million estimated for 2015, does that include the purchase of vehicles by that company? If so, I would like details on the sale of existing vehicles by CEPEP during the fiscal 2014, including details—which I was told was done without any open tender or procedure. I would like details on each

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vehicle sold, the dates sold, who purchased and the procedure used to execute said sale.

And finally, how is remuneration determined for the management, staff of CEPEP especially—yes—with respect to management? I was told that some received two increases since being retained and others have received no increases. What is the policy with respect to how remuneration is determined, and who makes that determination?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: First, I am informed that the CEPEP did auction publicly 14 vehicles—was done through a public auction. The figure here includes purchase of vehicles. Just for your information, I have in my hand a newspaper ad of Saturday, January 04, 2014. It is the *Guardian* newspaper, Saturday, January 04, 2014 and there is an ad here: the CEPEP Company Limited intends to auction vehicles and so on, and you are to attend some place and indicate your information, name, address and contact number and so on. So this was placed in the newspaper as an ad for the auctioning of the public—

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I maintain the request for that schedule, the details of all vehicles sold during the fiscal year 2014.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yeah. You will get the details of all the vehicles sold, but this is just telling you—we can give you a copy of this as well, the public ad that went out pursuant to that.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We are at—

Dr. Browne: Another question—[*Crosstalk*] the management policy, I think it is.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I think the Member is asking for the policy as it relates to salary and salary of the management and so on. We will provide you with that in writing. I would prefer to provide that in writing.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 9, Other Transfers; Item 11, Transfers to State Enterprises. We go to Sub-Head 06. The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Sub-Head 02, Other Transfers to State Enterprises. Is that where we are?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

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Mr. Warner: EMBD—I see they get—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Transfers to State—308

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Warner: Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited. In 2013 they got \$32.7 million; 2014 they got \$30.5 million; 2015 they are budgeted here for \$30.6 million. When last was there an audit of EMBD?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: An audit was undertaken by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy about two years ago, by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Could I just indicate while I have the mike, that the Member for Diego Martin Central also raised an issue concerning CEPEP's involvement in some civil works, and this is done at the request of community organizations or regional corporations, particularly in the aftermath of any disaster that is threatening the environment. CEPEP can undertake minor and small-scale civil works, more for flood relief, and they have been doing that. So that it is done on the request of community organizations, regional corporations.

Dr. Browne: But that was not the specific question. It was, what was the procedure used to execute those works—to execute the contracts? Could you provide that as well in writing?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well I can tell you because I do not know how useful writing up will—in those areas, for example, when we receive a request, the contractors of the area, the CEPEP contractors who may have that particular skill, we also do a—we include them as well, the several contractors, and we invite them to do estimates and proposals. And based upon a technical evaluation and their capacity, CEPEP contractors may also do that, if they have the capacity to do it.

Dr. Browne: Who does that evaluation?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The CEPEP management will undertake that. There is an evaluation team who does that.

Mr. Chairman: I am coming back to the Member for Caroni East. I think the hon. Member did not finish.

Mr. Warner: Two more questions.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Warner: First, I want to know whether I can get a copy of the last audit of the EMBD? And secondly too, what oversight policy does the Ministry have over that particular state enterprise?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What I can indicate is that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has concluded their audit. At the EMBDC they operate within a very strict management structure. There is an approved structure. The board's, committees have all been filled, tenders committee, evaluation committee and so on, and there is a process that they undertake. For any particular issue they can produce reports. There is also oversight at the Ministry through the Permanent Secretary and other officers with the responsibility for overseeing all state enterprises including the EMBDC. This is not unlike what happens in other Ministries. Apart from that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is, of course, a supervising agent because every time the EMBDC has to get a draw down on moneys, for anything, they have to satisfy requirements of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, plus they have to satisfy the requirements of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. So there are actually two oversight agencies, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy when they bring in their bills to ensure that everything is done properly, you know, all the processes have been followed, both technical evaluations, certification.

The EMBDC also uses external consultants to certify works because a major area of earth works and infrastructure work is proper independent certification of work, and quantity surveying and so on. Independent groups do that, it goes to the company for their evaluation, it goes to a subcommittee of the board, then it is approved by the board, and then the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy will check through to ensure that all is above board.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, through you, can I ask a question on 011, Transfers to State Enterprises? And it goes from Sub-Item 01 to Sub-Item 15; 13 of the Sub-

Items are related to UDeCOTT. I see a lot of funding for expenses, fees and loans having to be paid by UDeCOTT. Would the Minister be kind enough to give an indication of what outstanding debts are with UDeCOTT for loans that UDeCOTT have obtained? What are the outstanding debts, at the moment, that UDeCOTT may have incurred over a period of time?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well there are several issues. You would recall we spoke earlier about the \$2.6 billion arrangement with the bank in New York for the Port of Spain International Waterfront building. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We also have, Member, a \$320 million facility— [*Crosstalk*] for the roll out of projects in the PSIP; this was taken in 2009. We have another facility—it is carried by the Ministry of Sport, I think that came out before, but it is also part of UDeCOTT's operations—\$497 million on the Brian Lara.

3.20 p.m.

We also have for the education tower, \$563 million. That was issued in September 2008 for the education tower. We are continuing to pay that, of course. And some other arrangements we have with the Home Mortgage Bank, I indicated earlier for the Real Spring facility, it was taken out in 2007, and another facility—we have two facilities with the Home Mortgage Bank, one for \$170 million and \$40 million. I will be happy to make available, Chairman, the full listing of UDeCOTT loans portfolio as soon as—so that the Minister may—

Dr. Gopeesingh: To summarize, you give a lot of figures, just bear with me half a minute. If you just summarize, what I am getting, you probably have close to about \$5 billion in loans prior to 2010 that are outstanding now?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, it could well add up to \$5 billion in loans—I have the exact figure—outstanding loans will be \$8.8 billion.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And how much of that is prior to 2010?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: One point three is current and the prior loans pre-2010 projects of UDeCOTT, the outstanding money on loans is \$8.8 billion incurred.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Wow, \$8.8 billion before 2010.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, and after 2010, 1.3.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just a follow-up to the very same question. The Member for Caroni East asked of the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development, about the debts incurred by UDeCOTT. I am now asking if the Minister can tell us the assets now owned by the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago on account of the work done by UDeCOTT?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, well, that will be an exhaustive list, we can get that to you. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] We have to get the value of it, I cannot—Mr. Chairman, I do not want to guess the value of assets.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But, Chairman, could he please provide us with a list? If he does not want to speak to the exhaustive list, could you please provide us with a list in writing? Thank you.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, please, I do not want to mislead the finance committee by guessing on values of property. It is not my intention to do that.

Mr. Chairman: I understand, I understand, so you will reply. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, the same Item, okay, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, having—[*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South, I seek your cooperation.

Miss Mc Donald: I want to cooperate with you but they are wicked.

Mr. Chairman: No, well, if you continue, I will have to bring you here.

Miss Mc Donald: Where?

Mr. Chairman: Right, here.

Miss Mc Donald: No, no, no.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, the hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, this duo behind, one in front and one behind. Mr. Minister, could you tell me whether UDeCOTT is financed through these loans or you have other sources of financing for UDeCOTT?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: UDeCOTT is financed through the Government and through payments by clients for project management.

Mr. Imbert: I have been looking through the estimates and apart from, on this page, I see payment of expenses and fees for High Court judgments, and then a payment to Hill International re: Consultancy Services.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on?

Mr. Imbert: Same 308, 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Apart from 13, everything else seems to be an interest or principal payment on a bond or a loan. I am not seeing any other transfers to UDeCOTT in these estimates. So what I am trying to find out from you, does UDeCOTT conduct its business based on funds raised in these loans here, yes or no?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The UDeCOTT is a project manager. It funds itself through project management fees collected from clients.

Mr. Imbert: All right, let us go to number 15, the Fit-Out, Government Campus Fit-Out. Surely, that is being financed from this loan of \$496 million, not so?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The 2015 provision of \$166.2 million is to meet loan instalment to Republic Bank Limited due on November 01, 2014 and May 01, 2015.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, I understand that you have allocations to deal with the repayment of principal and interest on loans, bonds, et cetera, I understand that. But where are the proceeds of these loans and bonds, are they in an account somewhere? Does UDeCOTT have access to them, because I am seeing number 15, Government Campus Plaza Fit-Out, \$496 million, surely you have not spent all of that already. Where is the money held?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Ministry of Finance and the Economy pays direct to the financing agencies.

Mr. Imbert: All right, so these, it is quite possible in a lot of these loans there are still funds that you can drawdown on.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: There may be, yes.

Mr. Imbert: May be? Let us deal specifically with 15. How much of that \$496 million have you spent so far?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We will get the exact figure for you.

Mr. Imbert: You do not know.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Minister of Finance and the Economy may have—

Hon. Howai: I do not have the exact figure, but it is not fully drawn. It is not fully drawn.

Mr. Imbert: How could it be? It just start. And coming to that now, Mr. Chairman, I am seeing this, let us say, \$500 million to fit-out the campus which according to statements made by the Minister had just began recently. Could the Minister explain why you took so long to start this exercise?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: To start what?

Mr. Imbert: You left those buildings there for four years without commencing fit-out?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, I have more details on the financing facilities, but just to get to his question quickly, as the Member would recall, upon entering office we met several very serious constraints to the Government and to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy, we have been working with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy since 2010. They had, I believe, \$25 billion to deal with the Clico/HCU matter, then contractors were owed another \$10 billion or so. Then they had a few billion dollars on what—*[Interruption and crosstalk]*

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I do not need any assistance from the people on that side. I just want to hear the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: I too.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The former Government was owing on the fuel subsidy about \$5 billion, owing contractors \$10 billion, had a debt of \$25 billion outstanding that the People's Partnership Government had to deal with.

When we were concluding, dealing with some of those big ticket items, we then embarked upon a process and it takes a process to seek financing for such a huge massive outfitting programme. That was done by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. It took some time, but we have concluded that and work has started and in some cases continued throughout the Government campus. I made a statement in Parliament recently on the outfitting schedule and I can repeat that or get the statement available to the Member.

Mr. Imbert: So what you are saying effectively, Minister, is that you had other things to do, there were other liabilities, other obligations—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: There were economic priorities due to the severe constraints and challenges we faced from competing priorities upon entering office.

Mr. Imbert: Fine, and therefore, the \$500 million UWI Campus in South Trinidad; the \$1.5 billion Couva children's hospital; the \$500 million conversion

of Chancery Lane from an administrative building to hospital, all of those things were of greater priority because you had the same problem, where you had all these bills to pay but you managed somehow to do those billion-dollar projects, but you had to defer this one. This was of lower priority, obviously.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, I would just respond to the Member, he knows the answer but I think he wants me to remind him. Those are government to government arrangements. It is a separate type of financing than financing through borrowing this way. The Member knew that they took a loan for \$497 million for construction, there is another half-billion dollars for outfitting. Whereas—I like his recital of all the projects we are dealing with, the South Campus; the Aquatic Centre; the Children Hospital; the San Fernando—those were through government to government arrangements with several governments, whereas managing or borrowing at this level—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: No, problem, I understand. You have answered the question.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—and for the central Ministry of Finance and the Economy. It is not a question of priority, it is a question of various financial arrangements, which he is aware of.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I am going to Sub-Head 006, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies Item 04, Statutory Bodies. I am going to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, and under Development Programme I go to Item 04, Social Infrastructure. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for Diego Martin Central. Page 152, Development Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I had asked a question earlier with respect to expenditure on the engagement of consultants, soil experts, forensic experts, whatever you want to call them, with respect to the Las Alturas project by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development or the HDC. And I was told previously that it was not in the line item that I was looking at which was the transfers of money to the HDC, and I was told I will find it in Development Programme or the IDF.

So having looked at the Development Programme and the IDF, I am seeing funding allocated for housing, estates, but it is all comingled. So could the Minister just confirm that it is the Government's intention to engage attorneys, engineering consultants, and other experts, geotechnical experts with respect to the investigation of what occurred at the Las Alturas Project, and if he can confirm that, I assume that is going to happen somewhere inside of this

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Development Programme they are spending the money? Because that is what they said.

Could the Minister also indicate when the Housing Development Corporation first got wind that there was a problem at the Las Alturas project? Could the Minister also confirm whether the Las Alturas project is a design and construct or a design and build contract as it is commonly known, where China Jiangzu has responsibility for both design and construction? And if that is all so—and you have money here to deal with that project—could the Minister say how close the HDC or the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is to the four-year limitation period and or limitation laws with respect to taking action against the contractor or the consultants associated with the Las Alturas project?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, to confirm, it is a design and construct project. The Chinese company and geotechnical consultants, Geotech and Associates, have been involved. I can indicate, Mr. Chairman, that we have looked at the limitation period and we are—I understand we are very close to the end of that period, and the Housing Development Corporation is now in these hours considering litigation on the advice of both independent counsel and, of course, the Office of the Attorney General. It is being considered in this hour so that we are at the doorstep of the clock.

Mr. Chairman, I would want to refrain from adding more information on this matter. This matter is also the subject of a Commission of Enquiry and I would prefer to leave it there.

Mr. Imbert: No problem. You have confirmed you are close to the limitation period and you are actively looking at litigation. I hope you are also looking at arbitration because there may be an arbitration clause in that contract which would prohibit litigation.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, you are correct.

Mr. Imbert: You are engaging consultants, experts to advise you on exactly when the limitation period will run out and you are actively considering your options with respect to litigation and or arbitration with respect to enforcing your rights as employer against the contractor.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I can confirm, Mr. Chairman, I know where he is running up and going—

Mr. Imbert: Just say yes or no. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I could confirm that we have enlisted the technical and legal advice of a leading law firm in the United Kingdom to advise on this matter, and in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General and an independent legal consultant in the United Kingdom, we are now preparing, and as I say, we may be within hours of litigating.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. [*Crosstalk*] Please, the Member for Caroni—let us focus. Please, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I want to hear the Member for Port of Spain South.

3.35 p.m.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, I have two questions.

Mr. Chairman: What page?

Miss Mc Donald: Page 153, under 08, Housing and Settlements.

Mr. Chairman: 08?

Miss Mc Donald: 080, my first question is there. What is the Picton Housing Development? I note there was a \$4.6 million in 2013, then a revised estimate of \$11.8 million and then nothing, no allocation in 2015. What is that Picton Housing Development? What does it refer to?

Mr. Chairman: And do you have a second question?

Miss Mc Donald: And whilst they ponder on what is the Picton Housing Development, I want to find out—because I have been searching these figures here, and the plans here, and under Housing Estates, Sir, I am not seeing any development—I am not talking about refurbishment and remedial work, I am talking about development in the East Port of Spain area. The Minister is well aware that I am talking about the whole South Quay area where land has been obtained by the former administration for the second phase of the redevelopment, and I have been speaking ad nauseam in this Parliament—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I think you have made your point. Two questions to you, hon. Minister?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, I am informed that the Picton Housing Development project is a project that involves some civil works and we have, Mr. Chairman, the redevelopment and regeneration of the Port of Spain East area. Pursuant to the decision of the Board of Directors in 2014, approval was granted for the provision of urban planning services for Port of Spain East. It has started.

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The concept is to engage in planning for the area and to create a neighbourhood unit of approximately 250 to 300 housing units, which will accommodate a full range of facilities and would support and create a high quality living environment for city residents.

Each area would include a mix of housing, proper parking, landscaping, retail, civic, education and other social facilities consistent with quality living. It is to develop 3.5 acres in this particular neighbourhood. These blocks which will be interconnected both through the existing street pattern, as well as through a series of pedestrian pathways and lanes which allow both the resident and the visitor to a retail, dining, recreational and other experience while in the city—this is also on the agenda. I think my colleague opposite is aware.

Additionally, it is intended to create an open area adjacent to the St. Ann's River on the site adjacent to the Mosque and Riverside Park and community service area, which will give access to the proposed Riverside Parkway to be created along Piccadilly Street.

A pilot project is also envisaged. It is contained in the original proposal. In general terms, with reference to Port of Spain East, an initial pilot project area was chosen for the purpose of developing plans, for the purpose of planning, for the implementation of this area, originally called Riverside Place. This has been revised to include that area south of the site to include three blocks south of the developing area to Independence Square, namely called Cathedral Place.

The general area has been defined as follows: It is now expanded to include the following in the initial structure plan. That area we are talking about in East Port of Spain is bounded by Park Street to the north, Independence Square to the south, Charlotte Street to the West, the St. Ann's River to the east. It will also include a parcel of land between the eastern end of Independence Square and the Flyover between Old St. Joseph Road and South Quay, as well as Besson Street/St. Paul Street area, where the Riverside Plaza is now; a total of nine city blocks.

The project area will be bounded by Prince Street to the north, Independence Square to the south, George Street to the west and the St. Ann's River. These are some of the plans, Mr. Chairman. It also includes the development of a business development hub to be located within the old Workers' Bank Limited at the corner of Duncan Street and Independence Square. That is currently owned by HDC and is vacant. It is intended that the establishment of a hub for business development at this building will provide appropriate services to facilitate the

redevelopment of Port of Spain East.

The services will facilitate, among other things, the showcasing of the proposed development of the central business district, to include the wider Port of Spain area; the set-up of a human capital element and a social plan; training programmes and necessary skills for which the demand will arise as a result of this construction, joint venture and private/public partnership arrangements. It is proposed that a design brief will be developed for the renovation and retrofitting of this building for the purposes to allow construction to commence within the next six months.

Mr. Chairman, I will end by saying that the design is to create a sustainable high-quality environment within Port of Spain East which can fully contribute to the fundamental life of the capital city while at the same time providing the highest quality of life to its residents, city users and the national community.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chair—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chair, could I just add, it is under SILWC—the Picton Housing Development site. It includes box drain rehabilitation, sewer works, infrastructure projects and other areas. That is the Picton Housing Development site.

Miss Mc Donald: Nothing has been allocated for 2015.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Member, nothing has been done?

Miss Mc Donald: No, no, I am not saying, “nothing has been done”. I am saying no allocation has been made for 2015.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Have you been there?

Miss Mc Donald: What is that?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Have you been there?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: This is part of my constituency. Do you go there?

Miss Mc Donald: Picton Housing Development?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Picton Housing Development is a housing development in the constituency of Oropouche East.

Miss Mc Donald: Well, I do have a Picton development in East Port of Spain.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well then, we will try to help your Picton as well.

Miss Mc Donald: I do have one.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: But this is my Picton. [*Laughter*]

Miss Mc Donald: Well, I was thinking this is my Picton.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: No, is not your Picton, is my Picton.

Miss Mc Donald: I do have Picton. I do.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I will try to help your Picton, but this is my Picton.
[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Yes, yes.

Miss Mc Donald: No, no, no. I have another question and a—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes. Go ahead.

Miss Mc Donald:—serious question to the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Ask your question.

Miss Mc Donald: And he “didn” even aware that it was his Picton. He was trying to answer my Picton. [*Laughter*] Anyway, Minister, I heard all that you said there about your plans for East Port of Spain, the area I am talking about, but could you point me in this Development Programme here, where I can see an allocation for that programme that you have just elucidated on?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister?

Miss Mc Donald: Where is the allocation?

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, “like yuh doh want meh tuh talk, yuh know.”

Mr. Chairman: No, I am saying allow him to speak. You asked a question.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Member, I am advised that the IDF subvention to the Housing Development Corporation can also be used for that project, and that is where they intend to use the funds from.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Miss Mc Donald: There is none? There is no allocation!

Mr. Warner: Under 08—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Chaguanas West.

Hon. Member: “Shush.”

Miss Mc Donald: “Doh shoo me!”

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Miss Mc Donald: “You farse!”

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but why are you behaving like this?

Miss Mc Donald: “No, but is him, and he left his seat tuh come here tuh torment me!”

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but why are you allowing him to torment you? [*Laughter*? Is there something special?

Miss Mc Donald: With him?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know. Let me recognize the Member for Chaguanas West. Please, Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under 086, Road Rehabilitation Works in Fence-line Communities, one question with three parts. Is this a project under the EMBD? And if yes, how are contracts awarded? And the third part is: once the projects have been awarded, how are they certified?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, these are the fence-line projects under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And not the EMBD or not the HDC. It is the Sugar Welfare Labour Committee.

Mr. Warner: Sugar Welfare.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: This is done in the communities that are under the legal authority of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee. As you know, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee has a jurisdiction over about 20 communities of the former sugar plantation, and we do fence-line work in those

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communities as well. They are selected through a tendering process with the Sugar Labour Welfare Committee and awarded by that committee with the supervision of their own internal auditing department and supervision of the Ministry of Housing.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

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

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I am under Apartment Complexes in Port of Spain and Surrounding Areas, Remedial Works, and to acknowledge that some upliftment has been done on apartment complexes, such as in Waterhole, Cocorite and Powder Magazine. But the Minister would be aware that there has been no provision for fire safety infrastructure yet again, and I am wondering if this is on the cards at the Ministry, and where would such funds be drawn from. I am very concerned about fire safety infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister?

Dr. Browne: And the second question—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Could I answer the first? Because you are asking some big questions, you know.

Dr. Browne: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Powder Magazine, just to inform you, is in Port of Spain West. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: There are three phases of work involved in Powder Magazine? There are contracts to the value of about \$25 million in Powder Magazine, Phase One, Phase Two, and on the Western Main Road, Harding Place, Cocorite. So that it is about \$25 million in work to be done in Powder Magazine, Western Main Road, Harding Place, Cocorite.

Dr. Browne: Fire safety.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: But to focus on your fire—issue with fire—the HDC—

Dr. Browne: Not my issue, the people's issue.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The issue you have raised on behalf of the good people. The HDC has embarked upon an aggressive multi-faceted approach to life safety within its tenanted communities. It includes HDC fire prevention and life safety

awareness programmes, installation of fire prevention, fire protection and life safety equipment, public health and safety awareness campaigns, the HDC and T&TEC joint electrical inspections, assessment of design and retrofitting of fire staircases in HDC multi-storey communities.

On each of these headings I can give you some details but you would be happy to know that the fire prevention and life safety awareness programme, as of August 2014, has been completed in all of the corporation's tenanted multi-storey communities: St. Francois Valley Road, Charford Court and Harpe Place, Bart Street, Jackson Street, Duke Street, Piccadilly, Duncan Street, Independence Square, George Street, Trou Macaque, Ramdial Mahabir, Las Alturas as well, Almond Court, Leon and Dorata Streets, Paradise Heights, Clifton Towers, John John, Piccadilly Street, Marcano Quarry, Harding Place, Powder Magazine, Phases One and Two, Maloney Gardens, Oropune—two projects in Oropune—Sunrise Drive and Breezy Heights, Mountain View, East Grove Fidelis Heights, La Goya and Peas Tree.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The installation of fire prevention, fire protection systems, the Housing Development Corporation has embarked on an initiative to implement fire protection systems to its multi-storey estates; full compliance with the international fire and life safety codes and the requirement of the Fire Service in Trinidad and Tobago. This has been an initiative designed to begin implementation of fire protection systems.

Dr. Browne: Chairman—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The first phase consists of the installation of fire prevention and protection systems, such as standpipe, fire hose reels in buildings of three or more storeys, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers within each apartment. Construction work on this programme started in May and is ongoing.

The second phase involves the assessment and life safety upgrades to all HDC multi-storey buildings to ensure compliance with applicable building codes and the T&T fire department regulations. Design proposals for this work have been received and are currently being undertaken.

Mr. Chairman, I could really go on, but I trust my friend heard enough. I can circulate a full brief on the---the important matter here as well, Sir, as you will recall, a lot of these buildings are very old buildings with suspect electrical systems over time, and we have embarked with the cooperation of Minister

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Nizam Baksh and T&TEC, we have embarked upon a joint inspection procedure where we partner with T&TEC in executing joint inspections. We carry out this with the cooperation of Health, Safety and Environment Department and the engineering department, Health and Safety of T&TEC. This has brought an immediate outcome, in that we are now very clear and very stringent on the use of proper equipment and first-class electrical installation systems.

Dr. Browne: Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: A follow-up?

Dr. Browne: Yes. Well, my last question, and it was a question posed to the hon. Minister of Sport, and at that time there was an indication that this Minister would be able to respond. It has to do with, well, plans for infrastructure works on the HDC property that falls between Victoria Keys and Powder Magazine, Phase Two, which has been, I would say, idle for some years now, and the question is with regard to plans by the HDC or any other state entity that the Minister would be aware of, for that particular property, and I think it was due for a swimming pool at some point. What is the current status of that property and what plans—

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: He wants to know the current status and then after the Member for Chaguanas East.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What I can indicate, Mr. Chairman, is that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is now in discussions with the new Minister of Sport and the private interest in this matter to bring an early resolution. As you know, it is not the property owned by HDC. So that myself and Minister Rupert Griffith, we are in discussions with the private interest in this matter to resolve it.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Chaguanas East and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Cadiz: Chairman, I would just like to ask the Minister, the issue of the fire protection on the HDC housing, is it then that the housing developments were never designed with these systems or is it that they were designed but it was never installed?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, I want to say yes. A lot of the housing stock we have inherited, housing stock from between 20 to, in some cases 40 years and in some cases, as in that place in Laventille, Trou Macaque and nearby, there were apartments there. We had to relocate persons because it is simply not feasible to

install new electrical systems in some of these buildings and so on. Many of the buildings have never been outfitted properly with electrical infrastructure.

I might add, Member for Chaguanas East, that even in new housing sites that were started in 2007—in Wellington for example—we have found that inferior materials have been used in the electrical system and now we are working with T&TEC to do a review and we may have to do over electrical systems for a housing site that was constructed in 2007. One house already burnt down, another house caught fire and then we moved in to take some type of precaution. But the problem is that you cannot just go overnight and change electrical systems in 200 housing units.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then last question before I go on, the Member for Chaguanas West.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have three specific items that I would like to highlight. One is 073 with respect to Refurbishment to Basketball Courts in Residential Communities in Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to find out exactly why there is no allocation under this particular item.

Mr. Chairman: That is one.

Miss Hospedales: That is one. The second thing is Item 075, Rehabilitation and Maintenance at HDC Rental Apartments and Housing Units. I would like to find out whether or not—

Mr. Chairman: That is 075.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, I have not asked my question as yet.

Mr. Chairman: No, I am advising the Minister that you are concerned about 075, sub-item.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I am helping you.

Miss Hospedales: I would like to find out from the Minister whether or not a structural assessment has been done on the 21 high-rise buildings in Maloney and if the answer to that question is no, when exactly will it be done.

The third specific issue I have is where under all of these items can I find the need for paving of car parks in HDC developments? The Maloney Housing Development is in dire need of having the car parks paved. I sent a request to the

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Minister/Managing Director numerous times and I really need to know exactly when these car parks would be paved.

Mr. Chairman: All right, those points will be responded to by the hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: All right. Thank you very much. Your car park will be paved by November so let us begin there. Under 075, you will get your car park. So 075 will take care of that. But I want to remind you, the matter of the basketball courts upgrading and so on, you will recall that under the Hoop of Life Programme inspired by the Member for Chaguanas West a lot of work was done in the development of basketball courts throughout the country. [*Crosstalk*] It was a good project. I got a shirt out of it I think. But “they cyah fit meh no more, yuh see”. But the Hoop of Life had captured a lot of the renovation of basketball courts in HDC sites and so on.

But, Member for Arouca/Maloney, we had a suspicion you would ask these questions so I have a note to read for you. The Maloney Gardens Development, one of the corporation’s oldest traditional tenanted housing development, is comprised of 21 four storey buildings housing 1,344 units. This development has been housing all these residents in excess of 30 years. Over the past four years, the HDC thought it prudent to assess the condition of these buildings and their related infrastructure and have found some major deterioration of the infrastructure, particularly with stair case, roof, railing, external floor slabs, external painting, road and car parks.

The total cost of the refurbishment programme to this development over the last three years was \$24,988,629.15. This includes scope of work for 42 staircases, railings, roofs, car park, painting. So that we have completed work in your constituency in 2012, 2013, 2014 to the tune of \$25 million for Arouca/Maloney. [*Crosstalk*] You did not know that.

This project was one of the first in the HDC aggressive programme of rehabilitation to bring our facilities up to world class standard. This programme is meant to enhance the quality of HDC’s rental housing stock and by extension the quality of life. Projects such as these have affected the building space and the rehabilitating of HDC’s image within our communities. Projects of this nature do not only provide much needed infrastructure but also provides employment opportunity and restores a general sense of caring and pride in these communities. [*Crosstalk*] I am responding.

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The staircases—[*Crosstalk*] “Well, yuh want meh go down—I have the breakdown on the staircase but yuh doh wah me breakdown the staircases”. I have rails that they have done, I have the roof work that has been done in those areas, the painting that has been done, the exact buildings and so on that were done. But the long and short, it is about \$25 million we have expended in two years in the Arouca/Maloney area. You can thank me later. I just wanted to remind—but they asked other questions.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: No, but I did not finish my—

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I will just want to say in passing because I really do not want to dwell on it too much unless a colleague would want to ask me further detail, but we have also been doing work in Dundonald Street, St. Francios Valley, in Port of Spain Central, Port of Spain East, Morvant and, of course, in San Fernando, Orchid Gardens, Pleasantville—which incidentally is in the constituency of San Fernando East.

If I am asked, I will give the figures and so on that we have expended in these areas but—[*Crosstalk*] Somebody may want to ask me, for example, how much money we have spent in Port of Spain, Morvant, San Fernando. You had asked how much money, okay, let me give you the figures for it.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: I am under H. Mr. Chairman, under H—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you go ahead.

Mr. Warner: Please, gentlemen, please.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I want to hear the hon. Member for Chaguanas West, please.

Mr. Warner: Under H, 002.

Mr. Chairman: Page 154.

Mr. Warner: Yes, you got \$4.8 million in 2013, you get \$10 million in 2014, you are getting \$40 million 2015. I would want to know what this is about and how is this different from F, 358. Also, 005, what is that? 005 Home Improvement and New Housing Subsidies Programme.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What is 005?

Mr. Warner: I am asking you what is that? I am asking you three questions: 002, 005 and to explain the difference between 002 and 358.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, 358 is no longer existing in our Ministry. That is why we do not have anything for it. That is now under the Ministry of Land and Marine Affairs.

Mr. Warner: Okay, so they will deal with it.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Squatter regularization, the 005 you are asking about—that is the subvention that we put together with the IDB. It is a contribution we make with the IDB towards a subsidy programme for home improvement.

Mr. Warner: How is that done?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: This is the Government contribution.

Mr. Warner: How is that done? How do people access that fund?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: There are regular ads in the newspaper—I will get an ad for you just now—where we advertise, people apply. We have a lot of people applying for grants, for house but also to help yourself, a matching subsidy, I think of \$50,000; matching subsidy. If you are building a house and you have \$50,000, we match with a subsidy of \$50,000.

Mr. Warner: News to me, boy.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: These things have been in the newspapers. We distributed grants already—but it also includes grants. The thing is that this is our counterpart funding for the IDB support.

Mr. Warner: And 002, \$40 million.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Item 002, yeah, it is a part of a squatter regularization programme also part of the IDB programme. As you know, a couple of years ago—well, when you were elsewhere—we did sign a loan agreement with the IDB over squatter regularization and part of it is the provision for loans.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, two final questions before I conclude on this part. I recognize the member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to know concerning the painting of buildings in Laventille East/Morvant and other areas, is this money coming from, 075, this \$10 million? Is it from this vote? Yes, it is?

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Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is 075 Rehabilitation and Maintenance.

Miss Cox: 075, okay.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Some funding is coming from the—the HDC also executes this programme and remember the HDC raises money from rentals and so on. So they also fund a significant amount of this upgrade programme.

Miss Cox: Okay, well I know there is some upgrading going on, I would like to get a list of the contractors please who are—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: A list of the contractors for upgrade?

Miss Cox: Upgrade and painting of the buildings.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Where? Which part?

Miss Cox: All, Trinidad.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The whole country.

Miss Cox: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, no problem. The whole country.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Infrastructure Development Fund. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$2,143,321,000 for Head 61 Ministry of Housing and Urban Development stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: May I on behalf of the team, the Standing Finance Committee, thank you, hon. Minister and your team for being here.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, may I also be permitted to use the opportunity to thank the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Sarah Briggs and the many members of this delegation coming out today from the various institutions and agencies of the Ministry who have come here and done a lot of preparatory work as is evident to prepare us for this committee. I want to thank them for their commitment and their work and to thank you for your chairmanship.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. We now go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head 65.

4.05 p.m.

Head 65.

Hon. Members, we are into Head 65: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, \$414,428,660. I do not know if the hon. Minister, having made an earlier statement, whether he would like to share with us the priority areas of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or whether you would like us to move immediately to other matters.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, it is the second half of my double-header. This time I am acting on behalf of the very distinguished Member for Tunapuna, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Winston Chanderban Dookeran and all I would like to do is introduce—we have our Permanent Secretary with us and other high-level officials of the Ministry. I would not want to delay Members any further, unless they would like me to make an opening statement. So that we can take some questions.

Question proposed: That Head 65 should stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that same sum that I have just mentioned 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. Hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chair. To the hon. Minister, my major concern with the Ministry would be its personnel considerations. As I do believe, and I have seen here, there are a number of vacant positions both at head office and at the overseas missions and I am concerned as this is a service Ministry that this is impacting the performance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also it is affecting the ability to do the work that it is meant to do.

So I go to 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance and also Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA but head office and I enquire whether or not there are significant levels of professional vacancies, how long these have been existing and what are you doing to fill these?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on, page 334 is it?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 335, 01 and 08 at the same time.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I am instructed that we have a total number of staff within the Ministry of 619 and the number of staff at headquarters total 354. The total overseas missions, total 265. But you were

concerned with the vacant positions?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: In head office first.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: In head office first. We do not have it now. I would get that for you.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, could you get that for me?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Then my concern extends to the overseas missions, particularly at the head of the overseas missions. There are a number of missions abroad that are without heads of missions, Ambassadors and High Commissioners as well. What are you doing to ensure that these Ministries are properly manned?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: You mean the missions?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, and that is with regard to overseas missions. And, further, I want to say that I note there is a decrease in the figure by \$2 million for salaries and cost of living allowances as well and I am concerned that you are showing a decrease, yet there is known to be a number of vacancies and also you are projecting this period to put on three new missions. So, I find it hard to believe that you have a deficiency yet you are saying you are establishing three new missions in this year.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The brief response of course, as the Member would be aware, is that in the absence of an Ambassador or High Commissioner at any particular mission, the mission is headed by the senior Foreign Service Officer at this time. The Government, of course, is mindful of this and would be taking steps urgently to ensure that those positions are filled in the quickest possible time.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But you have some missions where there are Foreign Service Officers II, at level II and III, manning the missions and that, to my mind, is inadequate. What are you doing about that? Are you sending senior persons out?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, the short answer is yes that senior persons are heading out to ensure that senior people are in charge of these missions in the absence of a substantive High Commissioner.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Could you pass that list of those persons on to me as well?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Item 002: Overseas Mission, which is what you were dealing with. So we go to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Contract employment, there is a substantial figure of—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: What page?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 336. There is a substantial figure of \$9.3 million under Contract Employment and I take it that those are for International Relations Officers. Yes? What I want to find out is whether or not a system has been put in place for these persons to be transferred to the Foreign Service Officers positions to ensure that these persons who are hard to find with a specialty in international relations that they in fact remain in the Ministry. I understand that there is high turnover and the Ministry is suffering from this. What are we doing to ensure that, number one, professional allowances are paid in the meantime, and number two, that they are in fact transferred to the more meaningful positions where there is a future ahead for those persons who have an interest in international relations?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well, I am told that the figure is not only for those international relations officers but others as well. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working with the Ministry of Public Administration to ensure that a proper policy framework is in place, to ensure that we have the right expertise in those positions and can not only recruit but retain those services.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair, I crave your indulgence. There are a number of issues that I wish to raise, with regard to several Heads and I will cite the Heads. It speaks to the last Auditor General's Report but they relate as well to several Heads here and I will raise the Heads and I can do so briefly.

Under Contract Employment, the payment vouchers were not provided for 40 vouchers. That is for Head 16 and the related expenditure to those 40 vouchers.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, just on a point of clarification now. The Member is asking a question on contract employment before us—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

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Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—but is alleging to quote from documents that are not before us and what I would like is if the Member can ask a pointed question on the contract employment, without referencing a document that is not before us so we cannot see it or follow it. It probably is better if you have the question, which you have. Just say the Heading is this, is this the case and we can respond. I prefer if you do not quote extensively from a document that is not before us properly.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But it is the Auditor General's Report.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: But we are not here with the Auditor General's Report for its examination.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, but—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, fine. Let me try to help you, as you do not have the document. With regard to Head—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: But the document is not before us. It is not on the table

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is fine.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We are helping you by telling you how you could ask the question.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All right, there is precedent in this room for what I am doing.

With regard to Head 16: Contract Employment, there are a number of vouchers which were not produced, 40 in number, for related expenditure of \$6.1 million. Can you account for that, because documents were not provided?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, you see Chairman, the problem we would have here, if we continue this line, there is a problem that will emerge, the Member is attempting to quote from an Auditor General's Report but in that may also have responses from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Now, without the report before us, for our consideration, we cannot give the response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which would be in that document. So that, if, on another occasion, you can use the document when we all have it before us and we can give—because I am instructed that there are substantial responses to those issues in the document itself, but in the absence of examining the document we would go nowhere. So I would ask if the Member could get on to something that you are not quoting from somewhere else where committee Members are not in a position to look at the document and the national community and the Standing Finance Committee

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cannot read offhand and look at the substantial response from the Ministry in question. I do not know if you follow me, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I understand the point that you are making but may I ask, through you, whether the Permanent Secretary is aware of that report and whether action has been taken? You see, once action has been taken, once the Member is aware that action has been take on the matter then she would probably just deal with the line Item.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, on the first issue and again there is a danger of this approach because I will now tell the Member for Point Fortin that vouchers were presented there and documents were presented and provided to the Auditor General's Department. So you say they were not presented, I am telling you they were presented. Vouchers and other outstanding documents were provided but there is a danger of this approach because I just do not want to have an empty hearing with "he say, she say".

Mr. Chairman: Okay, all right. Well, hon. Member, if you could deal with the line Items and then let us go on. Okay?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. So is that the answer you are prepared to give me with regard to the contract employment and the \$6.1 million for which vouchers were not presented?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Your information is incomplete. That is my answer.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But that is not how I have it.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well, that is not how I have it.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Can we move on? I think we should move on.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I think so too.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: With regard to line Item 66: Hosting of Conferences Seminars and Other Functions, perhaps I can be provided with a written list. Yes?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Of course. A written list of what?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Conferences, seminars that you intend to hold to the extent of \$7 million for the year 2015, line 66.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, you want a list of what we intend to do in the next year.

Mr. Chairman: In terms of conferences and so on.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: In terms of \$7.1 million.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Are you continuing hon. Member?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, and with regard to *to*—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Just for the noting, in 16, colleagues would see under 2013, actual \$16 million. I am shocked that the Member did not ask to explain the \$16 million but want the explanation for \$7 million. Just for the record of Parliament, the \$16 million incurred in 2013 includes meetings of the Consular for Foreign and Community Relations, the Caricom Heads of Government—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I did not ask for this. I do not need this.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Caricom Heads of Government Meeting, the State Visit of the President of China.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I did not ask for this. I did not ask for this.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The official visit of the Vice-President of the United States of America.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I did not ask for this.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Continue, please, hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And I would go to Overseas Missions now, Contract Employment, as well. I would assume that this is for locally-recruited persons.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Page 337, I believe you are on.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 337, that IS right, number 16: Contract Employment, \$9 million.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, you are correct.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And I am asking whether or not this is for the locally-recruited members of staff that are overseas?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Also IROs.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And also IROs. Well I wish to raise a question here as to a number of persons whose contracts were terminated and I understand that a matter was brought before the Industrial Court in Trinidad and Tobago. Has that matter been concluded? Yes? And what are the results of the matter?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The matter is currently before the court.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Still before the court? Thank you. Chair, you have the floor.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We are moving speedily.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we are going. We are going to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Overseas Missions. We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Mr. Cadiz: Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Where are you?

Mr. Cadiz: On the same 04.

Mr. Chairman: 04? Right, I am dealing with Item 001: Regional Bodies. Are you under Regional Bodies?

Mr. Cadiz: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Mr. Cadiz: Chair, I understand the Caricom, I understand the ACS. What exactly is 03?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Just tell me where you are.

Mr. Cadiz: Page 338, under 04,001: Regional Bodies.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Or 03: Grenada.

Mr. Cadiz: I understand Caricom, I understand the ACS. What is 03, which is that Grenada Consular and Trade Office?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: One minute. Chairman, in response to the Member for Chaguanas East, in 2003, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago made available office space in Port of Spain for the establishment of the Grenadian Trade and Consular Office in Port of Spain. The decision was made by the Government, in recognition of economic ties and other commonalities and acknowledging the need to deepen the process of integration between Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago. It was signed for a period of five years in the first instance and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in having the office in Port of Spain—there is an office on New Street, Port of Spain.

Mr. Cadiz: So is it still functional?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Functional now. It is a Trade and Consular Office in Port of Spain of the Government of Grenada where the cost of that office is being carried by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the cost of electricity,

water and other utilities that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is carrying.

4.20 p.m.

This was established by Cabinet Minute 1843 of August 29, 2002, where the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago then gave support to the establishment in Port of Spain of a consular office of Grenada and undertook to pay the bills. So that explanations it.

Mr. Cadiz: So we are working with Grenada then?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Cadiz: And supporting Grenada?

Mr. Chairman: Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers—yes?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chair. I just want to find out whether or not the Ministry has met the requirements of CSME, in fact, well, then fulfilled all of its mandates? And whether there are any outstanding matters, and that is apart from the Fair Trading Commission, which I know after five years, your Government is now appearing to have a kick-start.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Caricom Single Market and Economy, I think you are on 02, page 340?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And problem is what, the estimates?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No. I am just asking whether or not you have met all the requirements of the CSME, and that is, fulfil all of its mandates apart from that which I know is already outstanding, the Fair Trading Commission—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I really do not need the inference and observations. The question is if we have met the requirements.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, I just—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively pursuing—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I said apart for the Fair Trading Commission, which you are now starting.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively pursuing this matter to meet all outstanding obligations.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad; Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Boards. We are on the estimate of the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of 4—yes?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Chair, Item 34, Refurbishment—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on, Madam?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 168, a simple question, are you sure this is—034, an expenditure of \$12.2 million in 2014, with another million to be spent in 2015. It is equivalent of more than US \$2 million. Are you sure this is refurbishment?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Just for me please, are you on 168?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry, 3-4, last item.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: 034, Refurbishment of Residence in Geneva, is it?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All I am asking because it seems quite a tall figure \$13 million, but it is for refurbishment not purchase. So I was wondering—I want a clarification on that.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I am instructed, Chairman, the refurbishment of the residence in Geneva is a revised estimate of \$12.2 million. Refurbishment works are being finalized at this time. As the works have commenced it was noted that the issues were deeper than anticipated. Work is required in the following areas: heating system, plumbing system, electrical system, the roof, ventilation system, asbestos remediation, windows and doors. The works include light demolition and clearance of the interior and heavy demolition. The projected expenditure for 2014 took—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It would be better to buy.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—into account the rate of exchange.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, and final question, on 48, 50 and 52. The establishment of new Consulates Panama, Colombia and Saudi Arabia. I want to find out whether or not feasibility studies have been done or some kind of due

diligence as to whether or not these offices will serve the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago, and having in mind as well, whether or not we have gotten maximum gain from the offices over the last four years in Washington, Nigeria, London, Ottawa, Jamaica, India and here we are moving on to establish three more offices.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, in terms of establishing a new consulate in Panama, \$1 million provided. The establishment of the consulate in Panama is strategically and geopolitically important for this country, and it is in keeping with our foreign policy initiative to enhance and expand commercial and economic trade activities in Latin America. The following bilateral agreement have already been signed: agreements of enhancing economic cooperation, visa waiver agreement, the agreement for cooperation in the area of energy and energy affairs.

Chairman, the expansion of the Panama Canal will also provide new business and investment opportunities. On May 14, 2012—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Could you send it in writing?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—a memorandum of understanding was signed between Petrotrin and Melones Oil Terminal limited, a private Panamanian firm, in order to explore bunkering opportunities in the Panama Canal. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs plans to lease an appropriate building for the consulate, and equip and outfit same, as well as assign staff.

In Colombia, Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago and Colombia have had strong bilateral relations in the areas of trade, security and energy and by Cabinet Note in July 2012 agreed to the establishment of a Consulate General in Colombia, noting that Colombia could provide a viable market for Trinidad and Tobago, and is significantly larger than any of the Caricom member states combined. The Ministry plans to lease appropriate building and so on.

Finally, Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to strengthen bilateral contacts with Saudi Arabia through the establishment of a presence in that country. To that end, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is preparing at this moment a Note to take to Cabinet, concerning the establishment of a Mission in Saudi Arabia. As you know, Chairman, a significant population of Trinidad and Tobago is of Islamic origin, and each year we work very closely with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia concerning visa requirements and travel for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We have been working through the Caracas Mission of Saudi Arabia at this time. So

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quite clearly apart from cultural and religious ties, there is also significant business and commercial interests in that region, and Saudi Arabia we believe is an ideal place to look at now.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Do you think you have the staffing for this? Do you have a staffing problem?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And I like to remind the Member for Point Fortin, she just raised it, but as she said staffing, we have now established The Diplomatic Academy, and the Academy would be training persons. We are working with the Ministry of Public Administration concerning recruitment and retention of adequate expertise staff. So I am convinced we will.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Members, the question is that sum of \$414,428,660 for Heads 65, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, and the members of staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for your support and assistance.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, may I also take the opportunity to thank very sincerely and deeply, Permanent Secretary, Miss Frances Seignoret and her staff who had worked diligently over the past few weeks preparing various briefs and documents for the Standing Finance Committee. This is not my daytime job. I work with them off and on and I would like to thank them for their cooperation and coming to the Parliament, and spending a considerable amount of time with us today, not necessarily in the meeting in the Hall, but in being in attendance and their contribution. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

Head 01.

The next Head is Head 01, Office of the President.

We invited someone who is the accounting officer from the President's Office, we are yet to see that person, but we have work to do. We are proceeding. We have asked the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to just assist us in this exercise. I understand the sensitivity of these offices.

Question proposed: That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.

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Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$34,272,200 for Head 01, the Office of the President is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Tobago Services, Sub-Head—the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, under Goods and Services, 001, Sub-Item 99, there is only \$1,000 allocated under the Employee Assistance Programme. I would like to ask the Minister whether that is adequate.

Hon. Howai: What had happened was that the same amount had been allocated in 2014 and it had not been used. In fact, it was felt there was no need to increase it. Consequently, if there is need to do so, I suppose they will make some kind of appropriate transfer or virement within the different Heads during the course of the year.

Mr. Chairman: Do you follow that Member? Okay.

We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001. General Administration.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$34,272,200 for Head 01, the Office of the President stand part of the Schedule

Question put and agreed to.

Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 08.

Mr. Chairman: We now go to Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Hon. Members, the next Head of expenditure for consideration is the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has kindly agreed to assist our Committee in consideration of this Head, which as you know is an independent body. He will assist in obtaining clarification from the accounting officer, in relation to expenditure proposed by the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and he will answer those questions that directly relate to his portfolio as Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Question proposed: That Head 08 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum that I have just mentioned 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, Election Expenses; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 01, General Administration; Item 02, Election Expenses. I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Mr. Chair, under Goods and Services, General Administration—

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin/North East as well. Sorry, Sir.

Miss Hospedales:—Item Sub-Item 16, with reference to Contract Employment, I am not sure if the question I am asking really falls under that area, but there have always been concerns expressed by officials of the EBC with reference to insufficient staff to conduct verification exercises. I would like to find out whether or not any allowance has been made under Contract Employment to hire additional staff who will conduct these verification exercises.

Hon. Howai: This increase is precisely for that, the field investigation officers, as well as various officers to assist in checking the status of the electorate and so on.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, could the Minister tell me whether the increases in allocation under Personnel Expenditure, are sufficient for the conduct of the next general election which we assume will come in fiscal 2015?

4.35 p.m.

Could the Minister also tell us, under 02, Goods and Services, whether—because I am not certain that what was just said is correct; the last time a national house-to-house survey was done was about 12 or 13 years ago—in preparation for this next general election, the EBC has been given funds to do a national house-to-house survey of all one million electors?

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

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the staffing, we have made, for the election, allowances for that as well as for the possibility of run-offs. In discussions with the Elections and Boundaries Commission, the amounts that have been allocated appear, based on their evaluations, to be appropriate.

Mr. Imbert: Minister, I am talking about a national house-to-house survey.

Hon. Howai: No, no, no, I was—

Mr. Chairman: He was dealing with one and he is coming—

Hon. Howai: There were three questions you asked.

Mr. Chairman: Continue, please.

Hon. Howai: Let me come to that issue. With respect to a national house-to-house, the EBC did not ask for that to be included this year. What they did ask is that the allowance be made for selected field investigations to be carried out based on their determination of where they would like to have these verifications take place and we have made allowances for the ones that were requested.

Mr. Imbert: Have you given them everything they have asked for?

Hon. Howai: I think it is more or less what they asked for. I mean, there may have been—

Mr. Imbert: It is close.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, it is fairly close to what they asked for.

Mr. Imbert: All right.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to:

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases

Item 001: General Administration

Sub-Head 09: Development Programme

Item 005: Multi-Sectorial and Other Services

Infrastructure Development Fund

Question put and agreed to.

Head 8 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 12.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Head 12, Public Service Appeal Board. Hon. Members, we also invited someone from the Public Service Appeal Board. They are yet to arrive. We cannot wait any longer. We are moving.

Question proposed: That Head 12 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Head 12, Public Service Appeal Board, \$4,197,086. Hon. Members, that sum is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure

Item 001: General Administration

Sub- Head 02: Goods and Services

Item 001: General Administration

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases

Item 001: General Administration

Question put and agreed to.

Head 12 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 05.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the next Head of expenditure up for your consideration is the Parliament. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has kindly agreed to assist the committee in its consideration of this Head, which is an independent arm of the State. He will assist in obtaining clarification from the accounting officer in relation to expenditure proposed by the Parliament and will answer those questions that directly relate to his portfolio as the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Question proposed: That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$144,063,200 comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items are to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

Sub- Head 01: Personnel Expenditure

Item 001: General Administration

Item 002: Office of the Ombudsman

We go to:

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services

Item 001: General Administration

I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the House Committee has been looking at the Operations of Constituency Offices, which is 02/64. These allowances for staff and so on have not been increased for, I would say, about 10 years. I have scrutinized these estimates and I am satisfied that Sub-Item 64 is short by about \$12 million. It is my understanding that each constituency will require about \$900,000 for staff, NIS, COLA, rental of offices and all the other expenses associated with the operation of a constituency office.

My understanding is that the Parliament requires \$39 million for operation of constituency offices and then we have some constituency offices in hot spots where security—some of the Members of Parliament are under threat from the criminal elements. My understanding is that the Parliament has agreed to provide security, armed security and so on, at these offices. So I am told this Sub-Item requires \$42 million. Only \$28 million has been allocated and, if the Parliament is to properly cater for Members of Parliament and their constituency offices and their staff, they will have to take money from other areas, such as medical expenses and things like that, which I would think would be a tragedy.

So I would like the Minister of Finance and the Economy to give this Parliament an undertaking that any supplementary funds required for Sub-Item 64 be provided at the mid-year review so that the Parliament does not have to scratch and scramble and bleed other essential services to facilitate Sub-Item 64.

Mr. Chairman: You are talking about Item—

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about 02/001.

Mr. Chairman: The Sub-Item?

Mr. Imbert: The Sub—Mr. Chairman, what I do not want to happen, since I know the Parliament will need to spend about \$40-odd million to properly provide for constituency offices in fiscal 2015, is that the Parliament goes scrambling around, taking money from medical expenses, other contracted services and other essential—I do not want this to happen. I do not want the Parliament under pressure, so I would like the Minister to give an undertaking that he will provide supplementary funds under Sub-Item 64, if required.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, the increases which have been approved by Cabinet actually came in a bit later than the time in which we prepared this and, therefore, we have no difficulty, recognizing the fact that the Member is correct, there will have to be an increase. We can do so in the mid-year review.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Members for Laventille East/Morvant and St. Joseph.

Miss Cox: Thank you. Mr. Chair, I have two questions.

Mr. Chairman: Two questions?

Miss Cox: One is a spill-off from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I am one of those constituencies that requested security and I am still awaiting that security. I know that it was promised some time ago and the office was called and said they were coming and that is about some months ago and no security ever turned up. So I would like to know if it is a financial problem.

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

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, no, it is not really a financial problem. We think we have sufficient allocation here, plus what we do in the mid-year. What has happened is that the Parliament asked the police to do a survey and to confirm what are indeed the hot spots, so that when we make the decision it is on the basis of something that has been properly evaluated. So I do not have the date for the completion of that, but we will communicate that as soon as we have it.

Miss Cox: The police has to do a survey to find out if that is a hot spot?

Hon. Howai: The police are doing the survey now, as I understand it.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, they are doing the survey, based on what the police—

Miss Cox: You know, by the time you wait for that to happen, something could happen in the office. We had an incident at my office already. I do not think we still have to wait on the police.

Hon. Howai: We will ask that the matter be accelerated and expedited and we will seek to have this in the shortest possible time. The point is well taken.

Miss Cox: All right. I have another question concerning promotions, publicity and so on. I feel that there should be a greater increase—I see there is an increase of \$500,000—Mr. Chair, given the talk about recall of Members of Parliament and so on. I made the point before—I would need the Minister of Finance and the Economy to hear me, when he is—

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Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Miss Cox: Ready?

Hon. Minister: Yeah, uh-huh.

Miss Cox: Okay, good. There is a lot of talk about recall and so on, Minister, of Members of Parliament and so on—and I am dealing with the Sub-Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. I think that in this area there should be an increase in funding because I believe that the Parliament also has a responsibility to educate the public on the work of the Members of Parliament.

For me, I always talk about the fact that I know a lot of constituents are really not aware. They have in their minds what they think the role of the Member of Parliament should be, which may not be. So they will judge you based on what they think and not really what is right and what is the real situation. So, I feel that the Parliament should undertake to increase that information to the public about the role of Members of Parliament.

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

Hon. Howai: Chairman, we have no difficulty in considering an increase, but we would need to see it in the context of a programme of work that we intend to use the funds for and what the estimates are of that. Certainly, again, I presume, if such a matter came up and was completed and submitted by the mid-year review, we would be in a position to consider it at that time.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East. You wanted to raise a point? Hon. Member for St. Joseph?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Under the same heading, Goods and Services, especially as it relates to constituency offices: Minister, in a constituency like St. Joseph, which is very big, I have three offices: one in St. Joseph; one in Mount Lambert and one in Aranguez.

Now, the words “constituency office” in my case, is a misnomer because two of those offices are actually houses—buildings—and I get the same allowance to maintain “buildings” as opposed to somebody who just has an office, like an anteroom, an office, a pantry. I have expenses in two of these offices, which are actually homes converted into constituency offices, where out of the \$5,800 allowance we get per month to cover things like telephone and electricity, I now have to dip into my pocket to maintain these offices, especially when these “houses” need minor repairs.

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For example, in my St. Joseph office, the gate fell into the road. I phoned the Parliament. “Well, get a quote.” But, Minister, the gate is in the road. I had to call my welder on the same day—it was an emergency—to weld the gate; spend my money. Very often when you have plumbing issues, I cannot wait on the Parliament to send a plumber. I have yards to clean, trees to trim, bush to cut because these are houses with yards and \$5,800 a month just does not cut it and I have to spend my own money to get these things done. It is just not right.

4.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: All right, well, the Minister will address that. Let us go to Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: I just want to agree with the Member for St. Joseph, because according to where you are renting or so, you have a lot of other expenses. Like, you know, now people have to pay their WASA bill also which was not, I do not think that that was counted when the Parliament was doing the allowance. So some landlords you have to pay the WASA bill, okay. And even where you are located, like in my constituency it is very difficult, so even if you want to move, it is very difficult to even get the space that you need for a constituency office. But my question is 58, Medical Expenses, I see there is an increase for medical expenses and does that cover the long-awaited medical that the parliamentarians so desparatly need, Members of Parliament.

Hon. Howai: Well, in terms of the first question, it is just a policy issue which was mentioned by the MP for St. Joseph and I think we will have to make a policy decision on that. It is not really a line item to say, right.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Howai: With respect to the \$500,000 going to \$5.5 million, yes, we anticipate that the Government would have made a decision to approve the medical plan for parliamentarians so we made an allowance to pay the fees, as a result of that.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Minister, if I get you right, it means that those parliamentarians who had acted upon the circular we had last year and went and do the medical, will we be getting a reimbursement?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, I cannot answer that. I do not think that it would be retroactive, but I am not sure. I would need to find out.

Mr. Jeffrey: What? But we got—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hold on! Hold on! I am coming back.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for La Brea. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: “You have to be kiddin me”. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Jeffrey: We got a circular, right, that told us—

Miss Cox: Just take it to the lawyers.

Mr. Jeffrey: We got a circular to the effect, all right, and we went and used the circular, acted upon the circular and we went and do the medical, so I cannot understand why we cannot get the reimbursement.

Hon. Howai: Okay. Okay. I would need to get clarification on that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We will need clarification and we will get back to Members okay.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I cannot believe this contempt for parliamentarians.

Mr. Chairman: No. No. No. Do not get too worried and so on, we will look at it.

Hon. Howai: We will deal with it. Okay.

Mr. Deyalsingh: But we acted in good faith on a circular, we submitted our claims and now I am hearing it is not retroactive to the date of the circular.

Mr. Chairman: We will get back to you. Let us go on.

Mr. Deyalsingh: This is contempt of parliamentarians

Mr. Chairman: No, it is not contempt, we will get back to you. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 02, Office of the Ombudsman; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 02, Commonwealth Bodies, Item 04, International Bodies. We go to the estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructural Development Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy and the team. We now go to Head 02, The Auditor General. Hon.

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Members, we are at Head 02, Auditor General, \$41,324,300.

Head 02.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum that I have mentioned 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 01, General Administration, Item 002, Tobago Services. I recognize the hon. Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: I saw an increase under Contract Employment, 02, for Tobago Services of \$110,800. Is the Tobago unit adequately staffed at the moment? That is my first question.

Hon. Howai: It is a challenge that we face in Tobago. We are trying to get contract staff to fill the positions and what we try to do is to move some people from Trinidad from time to time to assist with the audits in Tobago, but it is a challenge that we face.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Member.

Dr. Baker: In that regard, is that the reason we have not gotten the last five audited statements on the THA—seven, sorry. Seven.

Hon. Howai: It is two parts, part is that we did receive the information late, but also a big challenge remains, a challenge of getting people to do the audits in Tobago and that has kept back the Auditor General.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Tobago West, you understand?

Dr. Baker: Yes, but I still have two subsequent questions.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, proceed.

Dr. Baker: With each audit there is supposed to be a management letter sent to the THA, can I get the undertaking from the Auditor General to have copies for the last five years of those management letters sent to the THA and the responses to date for the last five years?

Hon. Howai: Well, it can only be done when the audit is completed.

Mr. Chairman: That can only be done when the audit is completed. Next question.

Dr. Baker: The last question from me, when are we likely to receive any of those reports, or can we get the undertaking that we may get one or two before the end of this calendar year?

Hon. Member: What line Item again?

Dr. Baker: In relation to the staff complement that they have—

Mr. Chairman: The staff complement, he is dealing with Tobago Services.

Dr. Baker:—do they have enough manpower to give me at least one or two audit reports?

Hon. Howai: The Auditor General has indicated that she would give it her best effort, but given her constraint she cannot say that she can commit to getting it done by the end of this year.

Dr. Baker: Because I received a management letter from my Ministry, which is only a year and a half old, or two years old—the THA has been there for quite a long time, I think it is a very interesting picture that I can get my own but not for the THA.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, so we recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Tobago East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, with respect to 001, could the Minister tell me what is the total establishment, approved establishment in terms of public service positions and contract officers for the Auditor General's Department, and when you tell me that, how many vacancies you have in terms of public service positions and contract positions.

Hon. Howai: We have 299 posts which are established positions and these would be permanent positions, and we have 199 persons on staff, so we have 100 vacancies.

Mr. Imbert: A hundred vacancies in terms of establishment positions, what about contract positions?

Hon. Howai: We only have two contract positions right now.

Mr. Imbert: All right. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy explain, since there are 100 vacancies in the Auditor General's Department as you

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have just confirmed, why have you not allocated them with the necessary funds to fill those vacancies?

Hon. Howai: The Auditor General confirms that she has the funds.

Mr. Imbert: Come on, I am seeing \$800,000 here for vacant posts, be serious. Minister of Finance and the Economy, I am talking to you. Do not bring the public servant into this. Do not try and shift the blame on them. I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the Minister, why have you not provided for 100 positions?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, he is answering you.

Mr. Imbert: That should be about \$15 million not \$800,000. “Doh try and throw the blame on dem.”

Hon. Howai: The Auditor General is an independent position and we are guided by the requests and the responses and so on that they have given us and my understanding from the responses is that they think they have been adequately supplied with funding to ensure that they could achieve what they need to achieve.

Mr. Imbert: With a 100 vacancies? You are trying to tell this Parliament that, Minister? You are not providing money to them?

Hon. Howai: No, we are not.

Mr. Chairman: The Auditor General has advised the Minister—

Mr. Imbert: How come? This is a serious thing.

Hon. Howai: We take it very seriously.

Mr. Imbert: There are 100 vacancies—

Mr. Chairman: Let us go to the hon. Member for Tobago East.

Hon. Howai: Chairman, if I could also add—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Howai:—just to make sure because there is also a very significant increase in contract employment—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you want to just outline that for us?

Hon. Howai: Yeah. In Head 16, we have also increased contract employment quite significantly, and the reason we have done that is again to bring additional contract people on to fill the vacancies.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Tobago East.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, may I ask through you, how soon can we expect to have some kind of redress, address to the vacancies problem in Tobago so that we can expect an Auditor General's Report for 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, as early as possible? I feel as if that there must be some kind of legal requirement here that the assembly is audited and I do not think a staffing problem should be something that we should use as an excuse for this not to happen. I think it is too long. So how can we address the staffing problem? And my second question, if I may add to that question, is: why is it that the Auditor General's Department in Tobago is so separate from the one in Trinidad, that the Trinidad auditors cannot be used to do the Tobago audit? Although you have less than you need to have, but it is untenable for us to digest.

Hon. Howai: First of all, the Auditor General has indicated that she expects to bring on staff, 5 Public Audit Examiner I, who will be assigned to Tobago to help to deal with this particular backlog, so they expect that the process should be speeded up once that is in place. So I think they should start to see some progress being made, but she was a little hesitant to commit to the date that they had indicated.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, would the Auditor General, through you, be able to state—I am looking at page 8, 002, Tobago Services, and there is a line item, Contract Employment, \$110,000, an increase, can I ask whether that increase comes from the unspent balance that Tobago House of Assembly has on a yearly basis? And if so, what happens to the unspent balance at the end of the year, if the Auditor General has ever looked into that at any time?

Hon. Howai: No. The funds that are here will not come from the unspent balances which are held to the account of the Tobago House of Assembly. As we had indicated, that is usually capital expenditure. I think the last part was capital expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: Just one question, under 02, Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services; does the Auditor General's Department have the capacity to outsource the auditing function under this vote?

5.05 p.m.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, the Auditor General may contract out audits. With respect to the THA, the Auditor General indicates that she has an opinion which says that because the THA is a public account body that such an audit cannot be contracted out.

Dr. Baker: Chair, one last question from me. I find it hard to believe that after the expenditure of over \$20 billion allocated by this Parliament, that the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago can think this function is not one that is of such significant importance that we cannot assign auditors to treat with the matter or at least outsource that function—TT \$20 billion.

Mr. Imbert: What line item is this? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just going a little further to the answer given by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, that the Auditor General has indicated that based on the opinion of probably a legal counsel, one person, whether the question of the Tobago House of Assembly spending \$20 billion can go on just that one opinion. Have they sought to get another opinion to see whether that second opinion corroborates with the first, because lawyers differ in their thinking?

Hon. Howai: Chairman, the Auditor General has indicated that she is prepared to take another look at this particular matter.

Mr. Chairman: The Auditor General is prepared to take another look at the matter.

Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 01, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 01, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 04, International Bodies. *Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 005, Multisectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 2 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I wish to thank the Auditor General and her staff and her team and, of course, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy for helping us this afternoon. Thank you very much, Auditor General and your team.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have come to the end of the various Heads so we are now going to consider the Schedule.

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Question put and agreed to.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, before moving the adjournment, I just want to take one minute to record the historic week we have had at the Parliament; first to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his staff on the passage of the Appropriation Bill. [*Desk thumping*]

This has been an historic week in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and I wanted to congratulate all Members of the Parliament, both on the Government and Opposition Benches, for their participation in this historic Finance Committee, where the work of the Government and all the independent institutions have been exposed to a very laborious process of transparency, accountability and scrutiny, unparalleled in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The Government stands committed to this process. It has been inspired by our governance approach, led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Member of Parliament for Siparia, who also extends her appreciation to all Members of the Parliament on this sitting.

Mr. Speaker, may I also take the opportunity to congratulate you on the wonderful job you have done as Chairman of the Finance Committee in this historic sitting. May I also congratulate and thank all the hard-working members of staff of the Parliament, [*Desk thumping*] the Clerk of the House, the members of the *Hansard* team, the security, the kitchen personnel, the support services, the orderlies, everyone at the Parliament who has contributed for this entire week. It was a test match this week, and I want to congratulate all members of staff of the Parliament for their support and commitment beyond the call of duty. [*Desk thumping*]

I am informed that during the course of this week, 400 high-level public officers attended the Parliament to present themselves for accountability and transparency—400. [*Desk thumping*] I want to also thank all those Members who came for every different Ministry and participated, and the very long hours of

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work and diligence put in by all public officers who supported the various Ministers during this process.

It is a process that has been a learning experience for all of us. If it was at the beginning that some people were anxious about it and suspicious about it, it has proven to be extremely successful. The closet was opened and there were no skeletons, there were only good and clean linens. [*Desk thumping*] So we are extremely grateful.

We are aware, Members of the Government, that serious commitment and assurances have been given to the House and to the Finance Committee, and Members of the Government in particular, since it relates to them, are committed to ensuring that the commitments and assurances made will be delivered in a timely manner, notwithstanding in some cases the comprehensive responses that are required.

On this very historic day and during this historic period in the evolution of our parliamentary democracy, I want to congratulate all parties for the wonderful job we have done in this country.

Mr. Speaker, with those very few words, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question, I too would like to take the opportunity to extend my gratitude to you Members at the conclusion of the budget debate held in this honourable House for this Fifth Session of the Tenth Parliament.

This debate which commenced on Monday, September 08, 2014, was indeed laborious, but necessary to the budget process. As you all know, our revised Standing Orders have given us the opportunity to strengthen the budget approval process via the first ever publicly broadcast scrutiny of the budget estimates in the Standing Finance Committee, of which it is my pleasure to report, has been a resounding success. [*Desk thumping*]

I noted that the Opposition was thoroughly prepared to pose distinct questions to Ministers on the Estimates of Expenditure, and equally so, Ministers came prepared to clearly answer those questions which made for decisive committee deliberations. In turn, the people of Trinidad and Tobago were given better insight into this year's proposed budget.

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As Speaker of this honourable House, I can sincerely say that despite the rigours of the debate, you have endeavoured to observe protocol and procedure and have shown regard for the authority of the Chair. Therefore, I thank you, hon. Members, for your display of discipline, decorum and patience in the performance of your oversight duty as parliamentarians. As a result, you have, indeed, upheld this House's core principles of transparency and accountability.

Also, I am certain that I speak on behalf of all the hon. Members of this House, as I take the opportunity to extend utmost gratitude to the staff of the Parliament, who have given their unwavering support to us throughout the debate. Particularly, I would like to mention the reporters and editors of the Hansard Unit, the Food and Beverage management and team, the Broadcasting Unit, the Marshal's Office, the Parliamentary Police Unit and the Secretariat, whose labour continues to be invaluable to both Houses of Parliament.

Finally, I would like to note the critical support provided to this debate by all the technocrats of the Government Ministries and departments brought before the committee and, in particular, the staff of the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and the staff of the Government Printery. [*Desk thumping*]

I once again extend thanks to you for your dedication in service, and extend a very warm invitation to you to join me in the Members dining room for the usual post-budget debate gathering.

Hon. Members, I want to ask Members, both the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Whip, to provide us with the names of your Members to populate the 12 committees that we have established in our Standing Orders. So at the next sitting of the House, I would be able to have the pleasure of announcing the Members of those 12 committees, so we can begin the work of the people in the Parliament. So I ask Members of the Opposition to convey to the Chief Whip the need to submit the names of their Members, and the Leader of the House to submit the names of the Government Members so we can begin the people's work.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.21 p.m.