

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE THIRD PUBLIC MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM (MEZZANINE FLOOR) (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2016, AT 2.30 P.M.**

**PRESENT**

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Maxie Cuffie	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Miss Allyson Baksh	Member
Miss Melissa Ramkissoon	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Dr. Lackram Bodoie	Member
Miss Keiba Jacobs	Secretary
Miss Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary

**ABSENT**

Miss Nicole Olivierre	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

Mr. Vishnu Dhanpaul	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Vashti Shrikrisen Singh	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. Anika Farmer	Director Legal Services
Ms. Beverley Quamina	Acting Head Economic Research Policy Planning Unit
Ms. Mauricia Pegus	Manager Customer Service Unit

Mrs. Arlene Johnson-Lawrence	Senior Project Manager
Ms. Alisia Quaccoo	Director Monitoring and Evaluation
Ms. Pamela Lachman	Accounting Executive I
Ms. Caroline Babb	Auditor II
Mr. Ronald Roach	Chief Executive Officer SWMCOL
Mr. Kelvin Ramsook	General Manager T&TEC
Mr. Naresh Sukhram	General Manager Finance TTPost
Mr. Alan Poon King	Chief Executive Officer (Ag) WASA
Mr. Rixon Boodoo	Finance Manager CEPEP
Mr. Rondell Donawa	Corporate Secretary CEPEP

**Madam Chairman:** Good afternoon, everyone, and I wish to welcome the officials of the Ministry of Public Utilities, the members of the media and the public to this third public hearing of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of the Parliament.

The mandate of this Committee is to consider and report to the House of Representatives on:

- (a) The budgetary expenditure of government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;
- (b) The budgetary expenditure of government agencies as it occurs and keep Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented and;

- (c) The administration of government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.

The purpose of this third public meeting of the Eleventh Parliament of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee is to examine the 2016 expenditure of the Ministry of Public Utilities under the following Sub-Heads:

Current Transfers and Subsidies;  
Development Programme;  
Consolidated Fund; and  
The Infrastructure Development Fund.

This Committee is desirous of hearing from the Permanent Secretary and other key officials of the Ministry of Public Utilities to discover the challenges being faced and determine possible solutions to these challenges.

The role of the Committee is to assist the Ministry to achieve efficient delivery of service, while ensuring that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval. This meeting is being held in public and is being broadcast live on the Parliament's Channel, Channel 11, radio 105.5 FM and the Parliament's YouTube channel, *ParlView*. Viewers and listeners can send their comments related to today's topic via "email, P-A-R-L—[parl101@parliament.org](mailto:parl101@parliament.org); [facebook.com/ttparliament](https://www.facebook.com/ttparliament), twitter at [ttparliament](https://twitter.com/ttparliament)."

I will now invite the representatives of the Ministry of Public Utilities to introduce themselves. I, therefore call upon the Permanent Secretary to introduce his representatives.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to the Committee. With your authorization, I would like to start to ask my colleagues to introduce themselves starting on my far left.

*[Introductions made]*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. And, therefore, I would now ask the members of the Committee to introduce themselves, and if I may start on my far right.

*[Introductions made]*

**Madam Chairman:** I am Bridgid Annisette-George, and I am the Chairman of this Committee. The Committee is ably assisted by Ms. Sheranne Samuel who is the Assistant Secretary and Ms. Keiba Jacob, who is the Secretary of this Committee. And, therefore, to open the conversation today, I really turn attention to the Permanent Secretary and ask him to make some brief opening statements about the work of the Ministry of Public Utilities.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The main objective of the Ministry of Public Utilities has been and continues to be to ensure that the nation is provided with high-quality affordable and, may I add, reliable public utilities. With the recent realignment of Ministries, however, the Ministry of Public Utilities itself has been reconfigured. During the last fiscal year, there were four entities, four Government entities under the purview of the Ministry of Public Utilities: T&TEC, TSTT, TTPost and the Regulated Industries Commission. Following the realignment of Ministries, WASA has joined the Ministry of Public Utilities followed by CEPEP, SWMCOL, the Solid Waste Management Company and MTS, National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited. So that is where we stand right now, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** So if I could ask you, Mr. PS, in terms of this realignment, and I would think the expansion, in what ways has that affected the operations of the Ministry of Public Utilities?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** It has had a significant impact, meaning that the Ministry is now

much larger, the mandate has been widened. The four additional entities are huge. WASA is back with us and that had an impact on our allocations in our budget for 2016, similarly, CEPEP. I could say the same thing with SWMCOL. It has impacted both on the recurrent side of our budget and it has impacted on the capital expenditure side of our budget. We have had to make adjustments also in how we treat with these entities. We have had to hire sector specialists, water sector specialists, telecommunication specialists, electrical specialists and, similarly, postal specialists to meet this new mandate of the Ministry.

**Madam Chairman:** And in terms of your role as, you know, the accounting officer, I would expect that there has been some delegation of duties. I would really like to know in terms of your day-to-day operations, how do you then, therefore, discharge your accounting function which would be your primary function?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Well, as you are aware, Madam Chair, I am guided by financial regulations. I am guided by the Exchequer and Audit Act; I am guided by the Civil Service Regulations and I am guided by call circulars. One of the major facets of the Ministry of Public Utilities—and just from a personal point of view though, I have been at the Ministry of Public Utilities roughly around five months. What I found was there were divisions within the Ministry of Public Utilities which were designed to assist the entities under the purview of the Ministry significantly.

There was tremendous checks and balances in the accounting framework. I will give you an example. Under the PSIP we have a project management unit to oversee the PSIP. We have a research unit to assist us. We have our legal department. We have our customer service unit to deal with clients, and overall we have an oversight unit to look at the Ministry itself. It is an oversight evaluation unit called Monitoring and Evaluation. So when you bring all these aspects

together, the Ministry has a lot of technical capability and competence to deal with the additional mandate.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. I understand what you are saying about the capabilities of the Ministry, but I still would like a little assistance in terms of the reporting function between the Ministry, you as the ultimate accounting officer and I guess there would be in T&TEC, SWMCOL, TTPost, et cetera. They will all have accounting officers who are really answerable to you and, therefore, in terms of how do you manage that, if you could give us a little insight, please.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, I would just like to point out that given our current economic environment, I have made it clear that it cannot be business as usual with these entities—how we treat with them. It cannot be business as usual. We are implementing a strategy called enhanced monitoring and surveillance of these agencies from a financial aspect—regular monthly reports, review of quarterly reports, quarterly meetings and maybe monthly meetings when necessary with the CEOs and review of the audited financial statements. We have quarterly meetings with our internal audit department and monthly when necessary to review these statements, and the Minister of Public Utilities has started meeting with the chairmen of these entities and these agencies on a monthly basis. So we are going to have, as I pointed out, a strategy of enhanced monitoring of these companies to make sure that the general public gets value for money from these agencies.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much and, therefore, I would like to invite members of our Committee to participate in this discussion. I will turn the spotlight over to member Baksh.

**Miss Baksh:** Pleasant good afternoon to the Ministry of Public Utilities. Through you, Madam Chairman, in your various appendices provided, you have listed a

number of projects, however in most instances the current revised 2016 cost is woefully lacking. Can you please provide an update with the revised cost and also percentage work completed for projects underway?

Of the projects that have not yet started, which of those we plan to progress forward and which do we plan to defer or drop completely? Are there any new projects planned which are not listed and, if so, can we have cite of these projects as well as the status of same as far as approvals are concerned?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, Mr. PS.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, I would turn over the question shortly to the head of our project unit, but I just want to set the scenario of what is going on especially with the PSIP. The PSIP at the Ministry of Public Utilities is a bit different to other Ministries in that within the PSIP there is a consolidated fund component, there is an external financing component and there is a domestic financing component. The external financing component entails loans from the IDB, and that is within the IDF, the Infrastructure Development Fund. So you have the Consolidated Fund on one side and then you have the Infrastructure Development Fund on one side. The entire Infrastructure Development Fund is used up by WASA and within the Infrastructure Development Fund you have this external component and you have this domestic financing component.

The external component is taken up for two loans from the IDB and those two loans totalled US \$296 million. The financing of those two projects within the 2016 PSIP, the total is TT \$410 million. Those two loans are for water rehabilitation projects. They are within Maloney for one loan and Malabar and San Fernando for the other loan. One loan is roughly \$246 million that is for Maloney and San Fernando, and the other loan is for US \$50 million in total.

The other component is the Consolidated Fund component, which entails

money for all the agencies under our purview that essentially used up that funding from the Consolidated Fund of the PSIP, and it includes CEPEP with roughly a million dollars; SWMCOL, \$1.5 million; T&TEC with \$71 million and TTPost with \$15million.

Now, we have also readjusted our PSIP based on the 7 per cent cut in allocation. So you are asking about new projects and you are asking about existing projects, so I would pass you on to our Project Manager who will be able to give you the details of the projects.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** Good afternoon members. Again, Arlene Johnson-Lawrence. With regard to—we could start with the new projects because that would be the easiest one to get off. As you would be aware, the Draft Estimates of Expenditure fiscal 2017 have been completed and will be submitted on Friday. We just wanted to get some little things out of the way with regard to this Committee.

Of those new projects those that have been identified, I would like to indicate that the Ministry of Public Utilities is responsible for essential services. One of the major projects that will be coming on board is the landfill rehabilitation project that is being run by SWMCOL. That is one that has Cabinet approval. Although it is Cabinet who is supposed to approve it, recently a Cabinet Note was done. With regard to T&TEC, the expansion of the generating capacity in Tobago, that also had Cabinet approval I think in 2015.

With respect to what is going on now, we would have provided to the Committee our implementation percentages effective April 30<sup>th</sup>. So if you would like me to read them out, I would not mind.

**Madam Chairman:** I do not think Mrs. Lawrence that would be necessary. I think we do have that information.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** With regard to what we have done to streamline our

operations in light of the economic conditions, those projects we were able to defer to fiscal 2017, 2018 and 2019, we did so. Those were not shovel ready. We did not go forward with them, and they were part of our 7 per cent adjustments. Those that we had the opportunity and all of the preliminary approvals for in place including Cabinet approval, Town and Country approvals, impact assessments, those are the only ones that we are going forward with.

**Madam Chairman:** Might I just ask Mrs. Lawrence, I am looking at those for fiscal 2016. Members if, maybe as we are looking at IDF and Consolidated Fund, maybe we could kind of limit our questions to those areas. Under the IDF, we have seen some projects and I just want to know if these projects have been reassessed or if you have gotten money and the money has been transferred to other areas. So, for instance, like under water and sewerage upgrade of the Charlotteville intake; upgrade of transmission network Tobago, southwest sewerage upgrade phase I.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** With regard to the line item, wastewater network expansion that is one of the projects that is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. With regard to the multiphase wastewater rehabilitation programme, that is also being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. With regard to the Charlotteville intake, works are ongoing and at present we are at 40 per cent implementation. With regard to the upgrade of the transmission network in Tobago, for those persons that are accustomed to Tobago, that is where we are extending the new infrastructure along the Windward Road. I believe we have passed Goodwood and are heading further towards Pembroke and Charlotteville. That is at present 65 per cent implemented.

With regard to southwest sewerage upgrade phase I that is the improvement to the southwest Tobago wastewater treatment plant, I believe that the tender evaluation process has been completed, and the letters of award are ready to be

disbursed. Funding in this fiscal year is at \$20 million. We have not made any cuts with regard to those projects in this fiscal, even withstanding the 7 per cent adjustments that we have had to do. And, at present, that is of course 30 per cent implemented in this fiscal year. It is a three-year project. It will come to an end in 2018. The overall cost of the project is \$108 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you, I want to commend you on the 65 per cent figure you quoted, but could you please account for the delay in resurfacing? I live in the Windward area and it does pose a problem for those who commute on a daily basis.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** With regard to the delays, we have noted. Of course, we would like to indicate that WASA did return to us only in fiscal 2016. We have had some meetings as a Ministry with the Tobago House of Assembly and Assemblyman Melville with respect to coordinating the efforts to have those roads resurfaced. The Tobago offices of WASA are working diligently with the House of Assembly to ensure that these issues are rectified as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, if I may, I would like to ask the acting CEO of WASA to also respond.

**Mr. Poon King:** Good afternoon. With respect to road restoration in general, that project in Tobago we are doing is a pipe-laying project. Normally what is done, sections of the pipeline are installed and then we need to do temporary road restoration after which pressure testing of the line is done to make sure that the line can in fact stand up in the long run. Once the testing is done and the pipe has been certified, then we do final restoration. As Mrs. Lawrence had indicated, in Tobago, in particular, we are working with the Tobago House of Assembly towards having an arrangement for final restoration of the roadway. So on that particular project,

temporary restoration, in the short term and we will do the final in collaboration with the THA.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, what is usually the timeframe for the pressure testing, please?

**Mr. Poon King:** Normally the pressure testing is done in sections of pipeline one to one and a half kilometres. So that normally would probably be 46 weeks maximum after which we should be in a position to do some re-sheeting of the road.

**Madam Chairman:** I just want to go back, Mr. PS, and you will determine who should answer this. In terms of the answers I got from Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence, specifically with the Charlotteville intake, the transmission network in Tobago, the southwest sewerage upgrade which she has given us the percentage of progress, but when I look at the revision, your revised provision after the 7 per cent cut and the amount spent or given to the agency to date, I am seeing zero. Are these projects funded externally?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would pass you back to the Project Manager.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** Madam Chair, with respect to the Charlotteville intake, one of the reasons that we were able to adjust the allocation on what we would be spending on that is that there were funds available from previous fiscal releases to continue the works.

**Madam Chairman:** Would that, Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence, apply also to the transmission network and the southwest sewerage upgrade phase I in Tobago?

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** With regard to the transmission network in Tobago, yes that is true. With regard to the southwest sewerage upgrade, those allocations for this fiscal are \$20 million, and we would not be making any adjustments to those

allocations. We had considered it, but when we realize—in particular, what we try to do is we look at which projects are actually shovel ready, and when you release the funds they could actually implement, so that that was one of those projects that we decided to go forward with instead of delaying.

**3.00p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** In fiscal 2016, I am not seeing any expenditure in these tables that we were given. Even the projection to June 2016, still no expenditure spent or given. So that I think I am still not too clear with respect to how these works are going on under these three projects in particular.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** With the first two projects as I said, that is Charlotteville and the transmission upgrade, they have previously released funds.

**Madam Chairman:** But what has been spent to date? Because you have a column showing spent or given to the agency.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** No, my remark is simply to mean that they have not had to utilize any of fiscal 2016 funding in order to continue the works. So that when we look at the table we are looking at expenditure specific to the 2016 funding, not funding from previous releases. As you would appreciate, WASA would have come to us with these funds from a different Ministry. So we are calling them to book and calling them to account for the expenditure of these funds.

**Madam Chairman:** So do I take it then that you would not be in a position to answer now, one, how much funding is available from a previous fiscal for these projects and how much has been spent in fiscal 2016 on these projects?

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** What I can ensure is that we would remit that

information to the Committee by Friday.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. While I have your ear, if that applies to all the other projects under the Infrastructure Development Fund, the design and installation of the main along Caroni South Trunk Road, Beetham Highway main replacement, et cetera, if you can therefore give us the relevant information as pertains to each of those projects please.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** Yes.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, again through you, I will also again like to ask the Acting CEO of WASA to respond.

**Mr. Poon King:** With respect to the projects that have been started, the projects generally entail two components. We have the planning component which will include designs and so on, and then construction. So the projects would be in various stages of that process.

With respect to the specific projects at Charlotteville and so on, works in Charlotteville we are ready, we have done designs and ready to physically start work, and ready to go out with a contract there. So the projects that you referred to are at various stages in that process. As Mrs. Lawrence had indicated there would have been funding from prior years, where we have gotten approval for projects, funding was allocated. For whatever issues the projects were not started in those fiscal years, so that is the issue that she referred to. The change in Ministry as well, that transition, we are working with the current line Ministry to have that sorted out going forward.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. Maybe PS you could assist me. Is that normal?

What I am understanding is this might have been moneys given in 2014, 2015, who knows, because I am not too sure I got an answer when, and I understand we will get that. But could one just carry over from one year into another year under these projects?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** It depends on the stage of the project, where the project has reached.

**Madam Chairman:** But give me an idea of stage, because one is 30 per cent, one is 40 per cent, one is 65 per cent, and that is just these that Mrs. Lawrence gave. How you mean dependent on the stage? Then what I want to know is how is monitoring done by you—and when I mean you, the PS, in whatever Ministry—if this is the practice?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** This all transpired with the change in line Ministry, and the fact that these projects were not completed in their entirety. But what happens is that when these entities or these agencies provide their quarterly reports or what we describe as their monthly status reports, they provide within that monthly status report the level of financing that they used up, the level of financing that they need, the stage at which the project has reached, and we take it from there to see if it is necessary for additional financing, if they have used up previous years financing and if more money is necessary in the new fiscal year.

**Madam Chairman:** Let me ask it this way: Is it then with this new enhanced monitoring system—I cannot remember the exact words—if a practice that has been developed will sort of be—I do not want to use the word “curbed”, but maybe monitored in a different way? Because it would seem to me that an entity is very

likely to be getting more money than it needs or could it have used in a particular fiscal year.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** It is very possible, Madam Chair. The enhanced monitoring would take into consideration the fact that most of these agencies, their projects are—the implementation rates vary between 40 and probably 60 per cent in any one fiscal year. Usually some of them would go up to 80 per cent. That has to stop. Obviously if the financing is available we must be able to finish the projects on time and within budget. And that is what I am talking about, about enhanced monitoring. We cannot have projects going from one fiscal year constantly from another fiscal year, and especially where we are dealing with loan financing under the IDF or with the IDB.

**Madam Chairman:** One last question. Do I take it then that in terms of WASA, T&TEC, SWMCOL, CEPEP, you would have got a quarterly report up to March, yes?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Mark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Under the development programme, dealing with the economic infrastructure, fuel and energy, I am dealing with electricity. National Street Lighting Programme, I see \$6 million being allocated in 2016. Under lighting of parks and recreation grounds, \$5million and the illumination of public spaces, some \$1 million. Could you advise this Committee what percentage of the allocations under these headings have been utilized thus far—one.

Could you give us an appreciation of the areas that have benefited, and if you cannot do it now you can probably submit it through the Chair in writing, but you can give us a summary. Where has the National Street Lighting Programme been executed thus far, as well as the lighting of parks and recreational grounds, and illumination of public spaces? I do not know if you could help us and bring us up to speed with that.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Through you again, Madam Chair, I would like to ask the General Manager of T&TEC to respond.

**Mr. Ramsook:** Good afternoon, Chairman. On the issue of the national street lighting, that project started in 2006. In that project, the commission installed 160,000 street lights throughout the length and breadth of this country. From north, east, south, all areas benefited from the street lights. In addition we completed 15,000 upgrades, changing the 70 watt luminaires to 150 watt luminaires. Again, that was done throughout the length and breadth of this country.

Similarly, we completed 350 recreation grounds, and those are fully outfitted with a proper what you call NEMA lighting. If you were to ask me over the last couple of years we would have done from O'Meara, Toco, Sangre Grande, Port of Spain, Diego Martin, Diamond Vale, central, Couva going right down. As I said we completed 350 recreation grounds. That would have accounted for both the recreation grounds and as well as the street lighting. As we speak, Madam Chair, work is in progress with both aspects continuing to be in progress, with both aspects of that part of our function at T&TEC.

**Mr. Mark:** Mr. Ramsook, what I asked specifically is that I have seen an

allocation of \$6 million for 2016, allocated towards the National Street Lighting Programme. I have also seen an allocation of \$5 million for lighting of parks and recreational grounds for 2016, and also \$1 million for illumination of public spaces. I have asked specifically, could you indicate to this Committee, out of these amounts that have been allocated for 2016, how much moneys have been used up thus far?

Secondly, could you provide us with some details as to the areas of the country that would have benefitted from the utilization of your allocation thus far in the respective areas that I have identified for 2016?

**Mr. Ramsook:** For 2016? Just to make it clear, in 2016 we did not apply for the allocation. Chairman, how we look at our allocations, and we account clearly to the line Ministry, at the end of a fiscal period we identify what remaining balances we have in our accounts. So the Ministry is clearly written and we identify those balances on the account at the end of a fiscal period. Things like street lighting as well as recreation grounds will not remain in any one particular year. We have schedules that apply for a particular year, but we would probably have—and at times we have remaining funding for these particular items. We would identify to the Ministry what are the final balances, and then of course we would have had an ongoing schedule again for 2016. So at this point we did not need to apply for any moneys for 2016, based on our balances from fiscal period 2015.

In terms of the areas, in 2016 we would have done grounds in Mayaro. We would have activated these grounds in Mayaro. We would have activated grounds in O'Meara. We have would have activated grounds in Marabella, for 2016. That is

recreation grounds. In terms of street lighting, again street lighting would have been throughout the length and breadth of this country. Street lighting continues throughout the entire country.

**Mr. Mark:** Madam Chair, through you, could we get it in writing?

**Madam Chairman:** In terms of what was accomplished thus far?

**Mr. Mark:** Thus far in 2016.

**Madam Chairman:** And the source of the moneys.

**Mr. Mark:** Yes.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to ask a question to the Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, but before I get there I just want to take up Mr. Ramsook on a few questions with regard to the street lighting programme and the recreation grounds programme.

I know of several recreation grounds in my constituency La Horquetta/Talparo, where projects were started and after a month or two months the lights were cut. I am curious to find out, one, how did T&TEC or the Ministry decide on which grounds would be lit and the process for the ongoing maintenance and the use of the lights? That is one. The same thing for recreation grounds and street lighting.

I also know of areas—in fact, it is strange that you should mention it because this morning I got a call from an area and they were enquiring after a request for street lighting that was made in 2013. When I checked, T&TEC or the Ministry had lost the application, so nothing has been done since then. So that is for Mr. Ramsook. Should I let him answer before I go on?

**Madam Chairman:** I think you should, please member. PS, you would like to intervene? Just one minute, please.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Just to respond to Sen. Mark and Minister Cuffie. From the physical infrastructure side, Sen. Mark, the allocation was \$6 million. That is from the physical infrastructure side, but the National Street Lighting Programme and the electrification programme including the parks and recreation grounds are funded through recurrent expenditure of the Ministry of Public Utilities. The budget this year is \$75 million, and that is essentially woefully short to what the actual cost is. The actual cost should be around \$120 million. The Ministry has had to vire funds to compensate for that difference between the \$120 million and the \$75 million.

Just to let the Chair know that the process is where, for instance, like Minister Cuffie, the recreation grounds—who is responsible for the recreation ground or park would make a request to T&TEC. T&TEC would assess that request and send it to the Ministry of Public Utilities. We would do site visits accordingly, and the Minister of Public Utilities would approve or not approve whether that site should be lit or not.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Who pays the Bill as it continues?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** The Ministry of Public Utilities.

**Mr. Cuffie:** So then why would it be cut if the Ministry is paying the bill?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** That is something we have to investigate, Minister.

**Mr. Cuffie:** I will give you separately the names of the recreation grounds. I just wanted to go back, Madam Chair, to households.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, what I would really like is if maybe we just stick now—because that is where we started—with the IDF and the development programme. I am sure we all have questions on households, but I just think for the flow let us see if we get those two categories out of the way, and then certainly we will entertain you when we come to current transfers and subsidies. Do you have a further question?

**Mr. Cuffie:** It is a general question for the Director of Monitoring and Evaluation. It does not only refer to households. I am trying to get an idea of how these projects are monitored and whether the monitoring is reported, and how does it inform the ability to proceed with future projects. I was going to reference the Utility Bill Assistance Programme, the Solar Panel Assistance Programme, but it also applies to any of the number of programmes that I see listed here, including street lighting and including recreation grounds.

**Ms. Quaccoo:** Good afternoon everyone. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit follows a framework that came from the Ministry of Planning. What we do is get reports at the end of the month from all our agencies, divisions and units, and we do our own evaluation reports and recommend a way forward on each of the projects.

We do have an impact assessment study that is on our books for monitoring of our programmes, but we have not gotten any funding for it in this fiscal. We hope to get funding for it in the next fiscal. So that would assist us in knowing basically how the programmes are running and we will be able to provide information on a way forward with some of projects.

**Mr. Cuffie:** I just want to be clear. So if you have not gotten funding for the evaluation, do you know whether the programmes are running well? I expect that when you make your application for PSIP allocations or funding for the incoming year, you would be doing so based on how the programme has worked over the last year. But is that the case?

**Ms. Quaccoo:** Normally at the beginning of the year we get objectives from each of the agencies, and what we do is monitor those objectives to see whether they are actually moving forward with, let us say for example, the UAP programme, if they are giving the beneficiaries whatever they indicated in their targets. What we do is indicate in those areas where they are falling short. That is the extent of the monitoring at this point in time.

We would like to move a little further where that is concerned, but as I said we need a little funding in order to move forward with those. I do not know if I answered your question in its entirety.

**Madam Chairman:** May I invite member Bodoë. I will take you after, member Ramkissoon.

**Mr. Bodoë:** If I may through you, Madam Chair, two questions. One regarding T&TEC and the other with WASA. Just a follow-up on the lighting of the play parks and the playgrounds. In my constituency I am happy because many of the grounds are lit. But what I am concerned about PS in view of the fact that you are looking at saving costs. I have noticed on many occasions that you drive past at hours when the grounds are no longer occupied, and the lights are on. So I am concerned in terms of the cost and whether there will be a mechanism in place to

control these lights.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. In fact, T&TEC has installed timers at these grounds. But just to let you know that spending \$120 million a year on this programme and, again, within our current economic environment, is quite an ask. Obviously we cannot keep the programme going in its current format. I have seen a lot of grounds well lit at hours that the grounds are empty, so it is something that has to be reviewed. The whole programme has to be reviewed within the context of saving money.

**Mr. Bodoë:** The point I am making is that perhaps some sort of alliance or engagement of the local bodies that might be utilizing these grounds, some sort of arrangement could be made to save money.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Member, we will be looking at all the options available to us.

**Mr. Bodoë:** Thank you. If I may, Madam Chair, just to WASA, under development as well. One of the issues I have is in terms of the constituency. Throughout the country where you have the frequent water leakages that are fixed, and then you would find that just a few hundred yards away there is another leak, and I am told that this is because of the age of the water mains and so on. Does WASA have any strategy to address this in a holistic and perhaps more permanent basis?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** I will like to ask the acting CEO of WASA to respond.

**Mr. Poon King:** With respect to high leakage mains, there will be two strategies. Yes, we would like to change out all the high leakage mains, but given the cost involved the other option is to possibly control the pressures on the lines to reduce

the frequency of breaks on the main. So we have started some work in that regard. Reducing the pressures also would help us with demand management as a whole, where we will be able to reduce the demand for water.

Even with those measures, some of the pipelines as you indicated are very old and in need of replacement. So we have been replacing the high leakage pipelines. This has been an ongoing programme, but certainly given the extent of our network and the age, it is an ongoing process that needs to be continued. So it would be a combination of pipeline replacement and pressure management.

**Mr. Bodoë:** If I may, is there like a schedule that could be provided to the Committee in terms of the scheduling of these works throughout the country?

**Mr. Poon King:** We could identify where we have done and where we intend to do, that can be provided.

**Mr. Bodoë:** That would be welcomed.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** It is a follow-up to member Cuffie's question. In relation to the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, I noticed this was listed as a response for tracking the outcomes of projects. Considering you all are not functioning right now, per se, how are projects now tracked as the PS indicated in his opening remarks the concern for value for money? I commend your efforts in tracking reports. But I am trying to understand how you ensure your projects have value for money, because what I am hearing thus far is that we are having project creep, where you may have cost overruns and it would lead into much complications, as I was hearing the responses from WASA in terms of their strategies for the maintenance works. I want to ask how are we doing this in terms of value for money if we do not have a

Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

**Ms. Quaccoo:** We do conduct a lot of site visits in our Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, and we do a combined effort in the site visit. So we go out with WASA, T&TEC, TTPost, whichever projects we have, and we actually look at what the agency say that they are doing in terms of where they reach in their project implementation. We do indicate to them where they are lapsing or there is something that they are not doing on time. This is done with the agencies, and what we do is put our site visit reports to the Permanent Secretary and then we make recommendations to move forward.

**Miss Ramkisson:** How frequently are these site visit reports prepared, and if the recommendations are shared with the PS, who is responsible for ensuring that these recommendations are carried out?

**Ms. Quaccoo:** As soon as the site visits are conducted, the site visit reports are prepared within the week and those recommendations move forward to the PS. We have CEOs meeting, we do have a very close relationship with the agencies. We do communicate with them very frequently and that information is also shared with them.

**Mr. Rambharat:** PS through you to the General Manager of T&TEC. We had an issue with power this morning emanating from TGU. I am looking at 591, which is the development programme project for additional transmission infrastructure to move power from TGU to the national grid. My questions are: In terms of project planning, how prepared was T&TEC for the decision to take Port of Spain offline? That is the first question.

The second question deals with the specifics of this infrastructure project, to move power from the TGU to the national grid.

The third question is to ask you: what projects can you point me to would deal with the risks of over reliance on TGU to bring power to the national grid now that Port of Spain is offline?

**Mr. Ramsook:** This morning, Chairman, members, at ten o'clock we had an issue where supply at the TGU plant was affected. Just to answer the first question, we are well prepared and all our systems are well in place to deal with where we had the shutdown of the 'B' Power Station at the end of 2015. In fact, as of the issue this morning, Port of Spain was least affected. The outage in Port of Spain lasted 20 minutes.

The issue though, and it is just for information really, the TGU plant is an excellent plant. It is generating 720 megawatts, it is a brand new plant. What is happening now is that as we depend more on TGU and as we take more capacity from TGU—and the reason is quite simple, taking more capacity from TGU is going to save the country significantly on gas, because we use a lot less gas in operating the TGU plant. The TGU plant itself, 270 megawatts—if you were to use a pie chart of that 720, is free gas, in the sense that that section of the plant, 270 megawatts of the plant does not need natural gas to run. It runs from the backend steam, the heat generated to provide steam to operate the TGU plant.

**3.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Ramsook:** The savings when fully operational to the country is about \$150 million and, of course, there will be significant savings in the gas to allow the gas to be used otherwise, other than through T&TEC. So, as I said, in terms of the

generation aspect of these stations being closed down T&TEC is well prepared and all the systems were in place, and as I said, the Port of Spain area really went out for about 20 minutes. The problem though, and Chairman what is happening is that because we are now depending on TGU more now and we have been ramping up capacity from TGU, because at this point in time the full capacity that TGU can provide is 720 megawatts. We could take up to 600 megawatts, and I will explain what is happening to get the remaining amount. So, we could take up to 600 megawatts from TGU.

So, as we ramp up capacity we would have little teething issues that would really take place that still has to be ironed out. Eventually, as the plant is brand new through the bathtub curb arrangement you will have a period where you are going to have some degree where you have to look and see where the issues that are occurring on the plant. So, we want to apologize this morning to the nation because we certainly do not like when customers lose supply, and we just ask that they bear with us. Because, as we take more capacity, and as I say, the TGU is an excellent plant, it is going to save the country significantly. It is a brand new plant, new technology, and as we do that you may have the one or two issues that would have to be dealt with. This morning's issue, which is still being investigated, is related to the air supply to the infeed to the gas line at TGU. All this is preliminary. At TGU, of course, that is to be investigated. However, they have dealt with it and supply has since been restored to the entire country.

In terms of TGU, I said we are taking 600 megawatts. We are well on our way to take the full capacity from TGU. All the mechanisms have been put in place. We have ordered the final transformer that has to go at our Ghandi Village Substation. The substation is fully completed, and in addition to that we have one line to complete again which is what we call a Union/Ghandi Village line. So, that

line we are dealing with that particular part of the project, but the transformer has been already ordered and will be delivered by year end to the Ghandi Village substation. Once that transformer is installed, it will allow us to take the full 720 megawatts capacity from TGU, and once we complete the two lines in 2017 we will be much more reliable in terms of that capacity from the TGU plant.

In terms of the risk, well, as I said—basically, Chairman, it is a plant, whilst it is located in La Brea, the infrastructure to bring it into Port of Spain via the grid, that infrastructure has been well developed through PSIP, and we have put a number of things in place except for the last two lines that has to be constructed. That would be the last segment of the job itself to get the full capacity from TGU unto the grid.

**Mr. Rambharat:** Just specifically of the risk of over-reliance, how do we manage the risk of over-reliance? That is one. Just as a follow-up, having lost power from TGU this morning, you had to take power from independent generators? Is that an additional cost or does T&TEC has a take-or-pay arrangement with independent generators also?

**Mr. Ramsook:** First of all in terms of the risk, Minister as I said, the commission really wants to take the full capacity from TGU because of the significant savings to T&TEC in terms of gas. I firmly believe once all the issues have been ironed out that we continue to take that capacity, the plant itself is a brand new plant, I feel that the risk itself would be reduced in time given the issues that we have had this year and some of it last year, and certainly we would be in a better position in terms of the reliability of supply from TGU.

Having said that, we are locked into several PPAs. So, what we have done, we have PPAs with TGU, 720 megawatts; we have 208, but one PPA with PowerGen; and we have another PPA with PowerGen for 624 megawatts; and we

have the Trinity Power Plant, 225 megawatts. So, we are locked with these PPAs. And when you add up all the PPAs we really have more PPA capacity than we actually need. But, because of the arrangement we have to pay for it. Of course you must have capacity. In terms of how generation works you must have installed capacity as load comes on the system. There will be some period where you will have a gap between having generation and load building on the system. So, what we do is we look at the best way we dispatch our machines. So, we are looking at the most economical way to dispatch our machines. But, just to answer that part of the question, when we had the failure of the TGU plant we would have asked the other IPPs to bring on their machines. The issue though Minister is that when you take the total availability of the other IPPs you still were short by 100 megawatts, and as a result we had to curtail supply in the eastern zone until we would have gotten the additional capacity back from TGU.

**Madam Chairman:** Member Cuffie.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could we look at the multisectoral and other services, environmental protection and rehabilitation, and the status of the rehabilitation of the Guanapo Landfill. I know there was a fire there and the—two things I wanted to ask: one, what is the status of the project? And, we keep hearing plans to do away with landfill projects and so far I do not think we have been successful in moving away from them, could you give us an update?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chairman, before I turn it over to the acting CEO of SWMCOL, just to tell the Committee that \$1 million was the allocation for SWMCOL for the rehabilitation of the Guanapo Landfill. The issue becomes, what is right for national development? We have these landfills at Beetham, we have the landfill at Guanapo and we have the landfill at Forres Park. When a fire takes place or a fire is ignited at Beetham it impacts Port of Spain, and we see what transpires

every time there is a fire at the Beetham. Similarly Forres Park and Guanapo, and the impact on productivity, the impact on health, et cetera. I have been told by SWMCOL that they will be requesting in the next fiscal year a minimum of \$29 million to rehabilitate these landfills, and we are expecting to get that \$29 million on behalf of SWMCOL so we can make an impact on these landfills. But, just to explain the projects properly, through you, Madam Chair, I will pass it over to Mr. Roach who is the acting CEO of SWMCOL.

**Mr. Roach:** Good afternoon all, Chair. The issue at Guanapo, we have a situation where we have leachate running into the Guanapo River which feeds into the Caroni River, and that is one that needs to be dressed urgently. We did apply for PSIP funding to the tune of \$24 million in this current fiscal year. However, what was allocated to us was just \$1 million. The \$24 million was based on actual cost that we would have gotten for the installation of a treatment plant to deal with that leachate. And any landfill system requires a leachate treatment system. Leachate is the natural product when rainwater seeps through the waste and dissolves the toxic and soluble components of the waste and you have leachate. So, any landfill that you have you need to have a leachate treatment system. Unfortunately in any of our landfills we have treatment systems. So, Guanapo being the most critical, we asked for funding for that and, as I said, we got \$1 million.

We were then left with the challenge, how could we use that \$1 million? And what we had to do was redevelop tenders to at least implement a pilot project. Because \$1 million, we cannot build one twenty-fourth of a plant. You either build a plant or not. So, we had to redesign the tenders. Those tenders are now out and they are closing this Friday, and then we will evaluate those tenders and at least, just in an effort to start some sort of rehabilitation, hopefully implement a \$1 million pilot project. But, that does not solve the problem. And we are hoping that

pilot project will then show us and tell us what can be adequately done for the other sites as well. Even with the closure of that site there are closure costs that will have to be borne. It is not a question of one day, you know, just shutting the gates of any landfill because of the amount of waste and the period over which waste was deposited in these landfills. So, for the next 50 years, at least, even though we shut the gates, there will continue to be leachate, there will continue to be methane gas that is produced from the decomposition of the waste, and due to those things we need to have plans to deal with those things to prevent the pollution of the environment and other hazards.

**Mr. Cuffie:** I just want to be clear, are you saying that the problem at Guanapo continues, or is not contained because of the \$1 million?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, it definitely continues. I mean, we buy some time during the dry season, and this dry season was a particularly harsh one, so a lot of leachate would have evaporated and so. But, come rainy season, when rain starts to fall and so, it will build back up and it will start overflowing. So, the problem still exists, yes, in its entirety.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and through you. I saw on the development programme and if we look at the economic infrastructure, major water sources, and I am looking here at major water sources, design and construction of a new clear well at El Socorro Water Works, construction of Avocat Wells, et cetera, and so on, and I am seeing allocations, but, again, I am not seeing any figures for expenditure. If I can have an explanation, what is the status upgrade on these projects?

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** Through you, Madam Chair, with respect to the Avocat Well and some others where there is no expenditure, I think you would have understood previously that in some cases some of these projects have gone from

year to year. Just because they are listed in fiscal 2016 does not reflect the length of time for the project. Some of these projects, like Avocat, like Clear Wells, have been over a three-year period. And, of course, our projects are in different phases, we have the design and construction, what you would find is that in the Ministry of Public Utilities, they have implemented a policy of just-in-time releases. We will not apply for releases unless the project is shovel-ready. If it is still into the design stage, even if there is an allocation, we will not release funds to the entity to hold on to.

So, what you would find is that in the case of Avocat, we are going forward, but the works that are being done at Avocat are not expenditure related works, they are design works at this point in time. The same thing with Clear Well. At present we are ready to go forward with Carlsen Field. We will be doing some work at—I want to get this, clear, because I do not want to give you poor information. But, we will be going forward with Carlsen Field. The works at Caura are being redesigned so that we will not be facilitating any releases out of Caura, and that allocation there is a request for a virement to place it with the Guanapo Service Reservoir, we are going forward with that. It is kind of difficult to explain. I know that the expectation is that we tie expenditure to implementation, and spending money is considered, well, the project is moving forward. But, in good project management and good project planning, the bulk of your work is done in the planning phase, so you do not have scope creep, that you do not have slippages. So, that in those areas where the phases are designed, there is no expenditure, and we are committed as a Ministry to holding on to or not requesting releases from the Ministry of Finance unless the projects are ready for construction. So I just want to—

**Dr. Bodoë:** Could I then, through you, Madam Chairman, as a follow-up question, ask that the Committee be provided with a status, with these projects listed here?

**Mr. Mark:** Madam Chairman, again, I would like to ask the Permanent Secretary, under the Development Programme Economic Infrastructure, there is this Electrification Programme with an allocation of \$10 million for 2016, could you give us a status report on that programme? Then there is also the Residential Electrification Assistance Programme, could you also give us a status report on that to date for 2016? And could you give us an appreciation of how it is executed? How people are able to access this Residential Electrification Assistance Programme? And Mr. Permanent Secretary I want to ask also, has there been any occurrences of fraud within the Ministry or entities associated with your Ministry for fiscal 2016 thus far? And what is the role of your Ministry in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud in projects under your Ministry as well as entities associated with your Ministry?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, if I may answer Sen. Mark's first question. The Residential Electrification Assistance Programme, it is five years we are into record. The programme provides first-time wiring and rewiring services to low income homeowners throughout Trinidad and Tobago, whose homes have never been wired, or where the existing electrical wiring is old and faulty and may pose a severe fire risk. The objectives are:

- To accelerate access to adequate supply of electricity in a safe and reliable manner and assist the homeowners in the wiring and rewiring of homes.
- Reduce the quantum of residential fires due to faulty electrical wiring.
- Improve the quality of life of beneficiaries and stimulate employment and equality of opportunity.

The cost of each project inclusive of material and labour shall not exceed \$20,000. Fiscal year 2016 as at March, the allocation was \$4 million; total expenditure \$2.3

million, and we are targeting 200 projects. That is the first part of the question. The total number of projects approved, 145 so far, as at March 31, at a cost of \$2,247,034.80. Project details, 54 projects completed; 42 projects in progress; 51 projects approved, not yet contracted. Total beneficiaries, 54. Percentage of completion, roughly 30 per cent.

The second part of the question on fraudulent activities: I would like to take it from the PSIP point of view as far as the project is concern. One aspect of the PSIP, as I mentioned earlier, that there is an external funding component. And part of the external funding component is obviously with the IDB, as I pointed out. And the IDB has an Oversight and Evaluation Committee that is essentially independent of the management of the IDB. They report directly to the president and to the board of directors of the IDB. They have visited us earlier this year and they visited the projects funded by the IDB. They are, as I mentioned, an oversight committee of the IDB itself, looking into fraudulent activities and looking into activities that are counter to the objectives of the project, and we received a report from them—it is an internal report—and there was no mention with these two projects, the ones at Maloney and the one at Malabar and San Fernando of any particular fraudulent activity. And that is from the IDB itself.

But, as far as the Ministry is concern, how do we investigate fraud? Well, we have our Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, which, again, operates within a similar type of environment as the oversight committee of the IDB. It is an oversight of the Ministry itself, and this is headed by Ms. Quaccoo. If there are instances of fraud—since I have been at the Ministry we have not encountered any instances of fraud. But, I have been advised that in cases where there are instances of fraud, they are reported to the police authorities and the Fraud Squad.

**Mr. Mark:** Madam Chairman, your internal audit unit, would you say that it

functions quite efficiently and effectively, and the capabilities are there, and could you give us a little insight into the composition of that internal audit committee, and when last has that internal audit committee reported to your good self?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chairman, through you, again. I was pleasantly surprised at what I found at the Ministry of Public Utilities as far as internal audit is concerned. The internal audit department is quite well staffed. We have eight members of staff of the internal audit department. It is quite significant given the Ministry. However, the issue with the internal audit department at the Ministry would be the qualifications of the internal auditors. My plan is to enhance the qualifications of the internal auditors through the certified internal audit qualification, and to send them for training. That is one of the major issues. The last report would have been December 31, 2015, and we are reviewing the recommendations of that report with really and truly a view to implementing the recommendations, and that is where we are at this moment in time.

**Madam Chairman:** Member Baksh.

*[Miss Baksh shakes head]*

**Madam Chairman:** If you have no question, I just want to ask two questions to you, Mr. PS, that you could help me. In terms of the National Street Lighting Programme, you said that the bulk of it is really funded under recurrent?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Not the bulk, the entire thing.

**Madam Chairman:** No, I know there is a deficiency.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** No, but the entire thing is funded under the—

**Madam Chairman:** So, this National Street Lighting Programme that we have under development programme, it should not be there then?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** No. That is the physical infrastructure part of it.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. I just want to ask, in terms of, if it is physical

infrastructure, there should be a scope, a project life, a cost? I do not get the impression that that is how it is being operated, is that so?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** The issue with that, as the General Manager of T&TEC pointed out, is that they would have applied for an allocation of \$6 million in this year's budget, and they have never used it because they were using money that they had previously to do the physical infrastructure, and that is where we are.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. I just want to ask, what is the HIV and Healthy Life Style Programme?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Sorry, in 2014 Cabinet agreed to the implementation of an HIV/Health Awareness Programme in several Ministries. It was supposed to be throughout the Government at the time. The Ministry of Public Utilities implemented that programme within the Ministry and we have a unit called HIV and Health Awareness Unit, and this is part of the funding for that unit.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I am just curious to say, exactly what is the function of this unit? Can more details be provided?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** We could provide the actual objectives of the unit to the Committee.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Then the other question I wanted to find out PS, in terms of the Security Infrastructure Upgrade under Postal Services: 013, which has an allocation of \$2 million—of course, I guess it was so important, the 7 per cent reduction was not applied to it. But, I want to know what really is that programme? I have seen that there is no expenditure to the quarter, March 2016, and none projected to June 2016, so maybe you could share a bit on this programme with us, please?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And, again, through you, I would like

to ask the representative from TTPost to respond.

**Mr. Sukhram:** Good day, Madam Chair. The security upgrade programme is really to install CCTV cameras within all the TTPost offices throughout Trinidad and Tobago. To date we have only done the tender documents and we are waiting on the bids and everything to be finalized before we proceed with this project.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, I think I understand the general theme that Ms. Johnson-Lawrence outlined. So, that explains it. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sorry, just with regard to TTPost, is there an ongoing project where you have staff out in the communities seeking information with regard to postal addresses and so on? The reason I ask that is because—I would not say accosted, but approached by two TTPost workers who said that some project was ongoing. And if that is the case, has any public awareness been created? Especially in the potential of that kind of thing to be used for—

**Mr. Sukhram:** Yes, we have started the postal code, addressing the S42 system two years ago. We have completed the public awareness. We are now on the addressing system and next year we will start the implementation and management of the project. The funds allocated for this year have already been expended and we have asked for additional funds to have the project ongoing for the next two years.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you. You would have mentioned a number of social programmes that consider the household, and the electrification, and all of that, but the problem is, most of the times people are not aware. So, could you describe your public sensitization and awareness strategy for me, please?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chairman, again, through you, I would like to ask Ms.

Pegus who is responsible for these programmes at the Ministry to respond.

**Ms. Pegus:** Good afternoon. It is quite unfortunate that there are still persons throughout Trinidad who are unaware of these programmes. However, the Ministry has over the years, and we continue to do so, where we have advertised these programmes on the television, we have placed advertisements in the newspapers, we do attend public outreach seminars, both those that have been led by our Ministry and in conjunction with Ministries such as Social Development, Community Development, and other bodies.

So, we have been making attempts, and we continue in terms of our own internal public education campaign, which we are working on currently where we have gone out to different regional corporations, we have met with constituency offices in years passed, and we intend to continue to do so in 2016, and we train the staff on how to complete the application forms. We have actually provided brochures, posters and so forth. So, it is a continuous process. We have noted the challenges in terms of persons realizing that there are these programmes available. But, it is something that we are working on without fail.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** How soon in terms of the work with the constituency offices to inform the staff and train them so it would be able to reach a wider population? Because the problem is real, people are not accessing the services and we have people who need them. So, how do you actually capture those people who are in definite need of the service and the support?

**Ms. Pegus:** We do have planned to go to each constituency off, conduct a training session with the staff and have an actual out-of-office working day at that constituency office.

**4.00p.m.**

As a matter of fact, we are not only targeting the constituency office but we

are also trying to reach some of the smaller areas where we intend to liaise with the councillors themselves in more remote communities. Because we have noted that sometimes it may not be at the constituency offices that you have these vulnerable persons, but in more underdeveloped areas. So we are using this combined approach in terms of reaching this population and we intend to start this, hopefully, by the end of May. We already have our letters prepared to the Members of Parliament and we have our applications ready in bulk.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Madam Chair, I am happy to hear about the applications being ready. I just want to ask some questions on the actual figures. Now, it says here that for the Utility Bill Assistance Programme there are 13,137 beneficiaries to date, but for the water tank assistance facility there have only been 50 applicants approved. I represent a rural constituency where the water situation is actually quite acute. And I am trying to make sense of the 13,137 approvals or beneficiaries for the Utility Bill Programme as opposed to 50 for the Water Tank Assistance Programme and the water situation I think is more critical and then the Solar Panel Assistance, I have not seen any figures. So how do we allocate the \$6 million, I think is allocated, how do we decide what goes where and—

**Ms. Pegus:** Well, Madam Chairman, as you may know, the bill assistance component of the programme has been in operation for quite a number of years and that would be the reason why many of the beneficiaries fall under that component. The Water Tank Assistance and the Solar Panel Assistance was only started in 2013. There are some challenges in terms of the procurement process for the actual delivery of the water tank to our customers and that is something that we are currently addressing in the Ministry.

As it pertains to the Solar Panel Assistance, again, due to the criteria of the programme, what you normally realize is that persons who apply many times do

not meet the criteria and we have noted too that some of the persons who should be applying have not applied despite the distribution of the forms across the constituency offices and councillors. So those are the challenges that we are also trying to address through our public education campaign.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Well, maybe I was mistaken because—I thought since we are dealing with a 2016 budget that the figures were for 2016. So this 13,137 is since the start of the programme?

**Ms. Pegus:** These persons would be persons who have benefited in 2016 but they are roll-over beneficiaries. This means that, for example, up to March 2016 we would have added 212 new beneficiaries under the bill assistance component. The 50 new persons that you have noted for the water tank would be 50 persons for 2016 who would have been approved. It means that cumulatively we would have approved over 300 persons for the Water Tank Assistance. So the figures would be if you are looking at either this year only or the cumulative figure.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, I just want to ask something. In terms of the bill assistance, once you are on the programme you continue?

**Ms. Pegus:** Yes, you would.

**Madam Chairman:** What checks and balances exist to ensure that the people who are there are still supposed to be there? And I ask the question loosely.

**Ms. Pegus:** The Ministry works very closely with our agencies, both T&TEC and WASA are our partners in implementing this programme. We do have a system where once someone dies T&TEC/WASA would indicate to the Ministry and we would indicate that the person should be removed from the list. Both WASA and T&TEC have very robust systems where they actually have persons who go out from time to time to check many of their households. They also have systems, where, once they notice that there is no activity, certain activity, on a customer

account they will do their checks.

The Ministry on the other hand has indicated that once the beneficiaries are no longer alive they should be removed from the programme and we do have persons who come in indicating that their elderly parent has died and they would wish for the account to be removed from the programme.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. But have there been instances where because of what your cycle is for monitoring, you have not captured, and if there are instances, are there systems for recovery?

**Ms. Pegus:** Well, we do not imagine that it would go beyond one cycle—

**Madam Chairman:** What is a cycle?

**Ms. Pegus:** A cycle for WASA would be a quarter, which would be three months, and for T&TEC it would be two months, because you are billed every—

**Madam Chairman:** So their system of checking is a cycle?

**Ms. Pegus:** Normally it would be a cycle. Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** I need to hear from T&TEC—it means that T&TEC has people who go every quarter to these premises and check?

**Ms. Pegus:** No, it is not that they go every quarter to the premises but they do checks in terms of the person who is on the accounts and whenever this is indicated on their end they would pass this information to the Ministry and we would remove the person.

**Madam Chairman:** So that you cannot say therefore that it is tied to a cycle?

**Ms. Pegus:** No, the removal would be tied to a cycle not the check itself.

**Madam Chairman:** And therefore, that is what I am asking. Are there instances of people who no longer exist, who would have died, and by the time you have checked it meant that somebody else has got the benefit who did not qualify, and if there are such instances, what steps are taken for recovery?

**Ms. Pegus:** This may happen based on how the programme is operated. Currently, we do not have a way to recover that period where the person would have received the benefit.

**Madam Chairman:** That is really a system to put a stop to it.

**Ms. Pegus:** Yes.

**Mr. Cuffie:** I just wanted to ask one question. I am reading in the newspaper today about the abuse with the Food Card Programme, and this facility is really social assistance. Is there any correlation with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, with the names that they have on their list as opposed to the people you have on your list?

**Ms. Pegus:** One of the beneficiary groups for our programmes would be persons in receipt of social assistance from that Ministry. So we look at the senior citizens, pensioners, persons in receipt of the disability grant, the Public Assistance Grant and the TT Food Card. So these are some of our target beneficiaries and we do liaise with that Ministry in terms of identifying the persons who should be on the programme.

**Mr. Rambharat:** Through you, Chair. I just want to get back to SWMCOL and this issue of the leachate at the Guanapo Landfill. Now, if I heard you clearly, and I think I did, this has impact for the Caroni River you said? Now, as the Minister with responsibilities for agriculture, that troubles me. So between SWMCOL and WASA, I just wanted to know how is this impacting Caroni River? Where does this landfill fit into the catchment area for water that is treated by WASA? And is there any testing being done on this leachate in terms of the impact on the river? Because all along the Caroni River there are farmers who are granted extraction permits by WASA and the rice farmers depend heavily, especially in the dry season, on this water supply from the Caroni River.

It seems to me, you know, really troublesome that we could have something as significant as the obvious risk of leachate in any landfill anywhere in the world, and I am not very clear how real the risk is—whether it is already there entering the watercourse, what is the role of WASA and how we plan to deal with it in this fiscal year? I heard you use the expression “pilot project” but I am not sure that this is a project that lends itself to having a pilot phase. It is either you do it or you do not.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Chairman, that is exactly the point I was making, Minister, earlier when I spoke about these landfills and the rehabilitation of these landfills should be our national priority. And again, I would pass it on to SWMCOL and to WASA to explain the impact of this leachate on the river courses.

**Mr. Roach:** Through you Chair, certainly it is something we are very concerned about and that is why we were quite flabbergasted that we would have gotten \$1 million out of a request for \$24 million as I said. You know, we just cannot do anything much with that and that is why we resorted to, at the very least, a pilot project.

In terms of testing, UWI just conducted quite an extensive set of tests of both ground water and surface water in that basin and their results are published and so we had seminars with the community groups in and around the area. So in terms of the threat, the threat is quite real. However, it is very much localized because in terms of the leachate production and so it is relatively small compared to the flows of the Guanapo and the Caroni rivers and so.

So, once it goes downstream it dissipates and dilutes quite rapidly. However, UWI did point out that the Guanapo area is a squatting—there are squatting communities there and a lot of people use the water for cooking and washing and the children would bathe in the river and so. So UWI advised that the river no

longer be used for, certainly, for cooking purposes and drinking purposes. However, bathing was still allowed in the river.

So those results are published and as I said there were a number of outreach sessions that we had with the, along with UWI and ourselves, to at least educate the communities around of the dangers. So that is where we are at right now and we are very much hopeful that we will have the allocation in fiscal year 2017 to completely and, once and for all, deal with that problem.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the CEO of SWMCOL. Approximately two years ago you would have launched a recycling initiative. Could you please tell me what is the current status and the cost?

**Mr. Roach:** Through you, Chair, there were a number of recycling initiatives, either ourselves or in conjunction with other agencies. So I believe the one that you are referring to is the one that was called the Beverage Containers Cleanup Project which was a joint project between SWMCOL, EMA, IMA and CEPEP and that was funded by the Green Fund. So that project is essentially at an end. EMA has launched a new phase of recycling called the iCARE Project and that is the current project that is ongoing now and that is an EMA programme. It is not a SWMCOL programme.

In terms of the cost I can only give the cost for SWMCOL. It was an overall cost of \$27million. Out of that, the PET Processing Plant was built at one of SWMCOL's facilities. That plant is currently operating.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would it be feasible for SWMCOL to engage in any major recycling project? And if yes, what would be some of the social benefits and economic benefits, please?

**Mr. Roach:** Recycling. It is certainly something that the country and I mean, yes, through SWMCOL, but it is not just SWMCOL, it is a nationwide programme that

has to be established and it has to be established through legislation. So we are working with our Ministry to put certain things in place. One of those things is the passing of the Beverage Containers Act; that is something that has been brought to Parliament on several occasions.

In the first instance, way back in 1996, it was brought through SWMCOL and with the formation of the EMA thereafter, the EMA was the institution that pushed that Bill, but it was never passed and that is one of the main systems to encourage recycling. Without systems like that, to expect the individual to recycle and to have recycling as an economic activity, that just does not happen, especially now a lot of the recycling commodities are linked to the price of oil and because the price of oil is where it is at now, a lot of the recycling commodities have just fallen through and that is what happens when you try to undertake recycling simply from an economic or financial perspective.

The thing about it is that there must be a national policy on recycling and legislation, and a number of pieces of legislation, but the Beverage Containers Act is just one of them, but penalties for not conforming and incentives for persons to conform and so. One of the areas that SWMCOL has advocated is that we should have a user tipping fee for the use of the landfill sites and in doing that it also encourages recycling. And when you look at the rest of the world, especially in the US, in Europe and in Asia now, that is what pushes recycling because in a lot of cases recycling itself is not of a financial benefit, but when you look at the cost of landfilling or the cost of disposing of your waste compared to the cost of recycling, recycling is usually the least-cost option in Trinidad. And the system we have here, where the cost to dispose of waste is—there is no cost so that there is no incentive for anybody, institutions or individuals, to recycle and that is the situation that needs to be addressed for recycling to become a national activity.

Having said that and despite all of that, we have established a number of recycling initiatives. We have one currently with the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. It is a pilot project and based on that a number of other corporations have, in fact, expressed interest and including some MPs as well—MP Cuffie, for instance—and so we are using that opportunity to launch other projects in conjunction with regional corporations so that we can create more awareness and have more lobby for what needs to be done on a national basis.

**Mr. Mark:** Madam Chair, I would like to ask this question to the PS and through the PS, to WASA. And then I would want to raise a matter of the postal service on the DP. Mr. PS, I think the records of Parliament would show that the last audited financial statement by WASA would have been submitted I think in 2010, if I am not mistaken. You did indicate at the beginning that you are committed to quality, affordability and reliability of public utilities. But you would agree with me that the imperative of accountability is very critical. From our estimated assessment and account, WASA would have utilized between 2011 and 2015 close to TT \$10 billion. And we are yet to have the privilege of audited financial statements for that particular period. Would you want to share with this Committee what could be the reasons for the lack or the delay in submitting those financial audited statements for the period 2011 to 2015?

And as it relates to the postal services, under Economic Infrastructure, there is an item, Postal Sector and S42 Addressing System. I am wondering if that item deals with the upgrading of the postal addresses of residents in the Republic of T&T and with the zip code arrangement that we have been talking about and hearing about for so many years. Where are we with that in 2016 and when are we going to have our addresses upgraded to reflect more than the reality?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Sen. Mark, I agree with you fully. I

find it totally unacceptable that a statutory authority important as WASA would be receiving billions of dollars in state funds, and would not be presenting audited financial statements from 2011 to 2015. There is a new board in place and that board has been mandated to get these audited financial statements up to date before the end of this fiscal year. As far as the technicalities of the postal question on the S42 Addressing System I would like, through you, Madam Chair, to turn it over to the postal representative.

**Mr. Sukhram:** Madam Chair, the S42 Addressing System, public awareness and postal code is exactly what you just mentioned. We have already completed the public awareness. We are now on the addressing S42 project with the postal codes and I would say within a year to two we will have all the postal codes for every single resident in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Mark:** Through you, Madam Chair, why so long, because we have been hearing about this project for some time now and I would have thought that the postal services would have been able to put that into effect before the end of 2016. Why do we have to wait two years from now to have that system fully operational? Madam Chair, through you.

**Mr. Sukhram:** Just to add some more details to that. We have completed six areas, actually: Point Fortin, Tobago, Chaguanas, Siparia, Penal and Arima. We have requested additional funding to continue in other areas like Sangre Grande, Tunapuna, Diego Martin, Princes Town, San Fernando. The project is a long ongoing project as it requires detailed analysis of every single community and we anticipate that within, based on what I have here, within the next year we should have it implemented.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow up on Sen. Mark. Now, I have an interest in this project and I recognize that it has not been going on for two

years. It was started in 2008 or 2009, something like that, and we are in 2016 and I saw the advertisement advising additional communities that they will be coming onto the project. But it has taken a very long time to implement. Could you explain the rationale behind the areas chosen? To me it seems kind of arbitrary why you start in some areas and one is not sure what the schedule is. So, could you enlighten us?

**Mr. Sukhram:** I am not sure as to why we have chosen those areas in preference to others. I am not sure as to the reason as to why we have chosen those areas in preference to others.

**Mr. Cuffie:** No, but also, why has it taken so long? I think it started in 2009, it was the first time I heard about it and it is creeping along and I am not sure the schedule or how it is going. Actually I thought the project had been abandoned after a while.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, Mrs. Johnson Lawrence would like to provide some further clarification.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** Thank you very much. We would take it threefold. With respect of the funding of the PSIP for this project, the funding is for the public awareness only. And one of the reasons that it would have taken so long is the initial stages of the project was to provide for GIS mapping of every house, every street and every community in Trinidad and Tobago. The roll-out of the project itself takes a long time because they actually have to do street to street, house by house, auditing along with the regional corporations that are responsible for street names and houses, et cetera, and numbering of houses. So I am going to leave it there. Ms. Beverley Quamina will speak to policy and Ms. Anika Farmer will speak to the legislative aspects.

**Ms. Quamina:** Thank you, Chair. Currently we are creating a policy for the S42 Addressing System. It is almost in the final stages and we will collaborate with TTPost to finalize the policy.

**Ms. Farmer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to giving life to the S42 system, TTPost as you know is a creature of statute. So the Act itself has to be amended to give TTPost the power to, one, implement the S42 system and we also have to give TTPost the power to rename streets, because right about now that is strictly with the municipal corporations. So it is on the Ministry's legislative agenda. We have finished our initial Ministry report which has been shared with TTPost and we are now working on the legislative brief to be approved by Cabinet and then we go to the Legislative Review Committee.

**Madam Chairman:** So Ms. Farmer, the amendments are not yet drafted?

**Ms. Farmer:** No, they are not yet drafted.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. I will take member Webster-Roy and then member Cuffie.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To you, to the General Manager of TTPost. You said that Tobago was completed?

**Mr. Sukhram:** Not the entire part of it.

**Madam Chairman:** Representative from TTPost, then could you give us some clarification, because I am certain we may have misunderstood when you called the five areas—Point Fortin, Tobago—I think there were five areas that you had called and we got the impression that those were completed.

**Mr. Sukhram:** Okay. I will have to get back to you on that and provide that in writing, because I just have Tobago here, per cent partially completed.

**Madam Chairman:** Therefore, in writing, the details with respect to the areas which you started, which were those five areas and the percentage of completion

and a timeline when those would be completed.

**Mr. Sukhram:** Okay, I will have it ready by Friday afternoon.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please. Member Cuffie.

**Mr. Cuffie:** If I can go back to Ms. Quamina. So we do not have a policy for implementing it and we do not have the legal framework, but we are halfway through the process.

**Madam Chairman:** Ms. Quamina or Ms. Lawrence or Mr. PS. Mr. PS the answer is with you.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** What I can say, Madam Chair, is that the Minister is right. It is an after-the-fact issue, but we are well under way with the policy and hopefully we will get the legislation in place shortly.

**4.30 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. Mr. PS, maybe I might be jumping the gun but I realized that there have been lots of steps to maybe streamline things and I just have one question and I just want to ask the Committee, could we take it that after this, we finish with DP and IDF and we can go on to transfers. Okay, great, thank you.

Mr. PS, I just want to—and I am sure that you are very familiar with this, I have looked at the Call Circulars, 2017, 2016, 2015 and I am sure those that preceded talks for the criteria for exclusion of projects, programmes for the PSIP and the annual and legacy long-outstanding projects and recurrent activities. I just want to ask computerization of head office, computerization of electrical inspectorate, 005 06; 005 038. Would these fit into the criteria for exclusion of projects and programmes for PSIP?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Very much so. In fact, it is our intention to transfer these programmes to recurrent.

**Madam Chairman:** And all others like it.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** And all others.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. So therefore I will—Miss Ramkissoon, you have a question under transfers? Okay. So I am now going to invite the Committee to let us examine Transfers and Subsidies and therefore, I call upon Miss Ramkissoon.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. From the Committee's submission under section A Other Transfers, the Water Resource Management Unit which has a monthly subvention of approximately \$20 million was given to advance the process of effective integrated water resource management to implement recommendations for the Water Resource Management Strategic study and to implement Government's policy.

I am not sure if the PS and his team can just share with the Committee, maybe in writing, what that really is, what that \$20 million is allocated to in those areas. But right now, what I want to know is the Water Resource Management Strategic Study, is this a yearly study that is done or is it one study that had been done and you are still trying to get the recommendations implemented?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** On the first part, we will provide the answer in writing and the second part, yes, it is a one off strategic plan as far as I am aware, but I do not know if the CEO of WASA will have more information on that.

**Mr. Poon King:** My information will be similar.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** Can you just share when was your last strategic study done?

**Mr. Poon King:** Of the Water Resources Agency, on an on-going basis, their role has been reviewed, I would say, since the 1990s coming forward. My recollection will be sometime around 2001 but I would have to get the exact date and then the documentation could be submitted.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In the submission, can you please

just share what recommendation from 2001 that is being paid for right now, please? Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** PS, you will send that in writing?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** Okay, great.

**Madam Chairman:** And you know we are giving you a short timeline, Friday? Yes.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** Okay and one more question in terms of transfers as were based on monthly subventions. The first one is the Community-based Environmental Protection Enhancement Company Limited, which is CEPEP, these monthly subventions, how many workers have benefited from this particular programme thus far or for the monthly submission of 2016, that is?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, for the entire programme, the budget is \$609 million and last year, it was \$596 million; previous year, it was \$534 million. So roughly over \$1.5 billion have been spent on CEPEP within the last three years. And what I would like to do is we have representatives from CEPEP here and they would be able to go into more details about the impact on how many people are on the actual employment.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** Before you ask them to answer, from your submission though, I am not sure if it is correct but I am seeing it is for this particular programme under Transfers, I am seeing \$40 billion. Am I seeing correctly?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** \$40 billion?

**Miss Ramkissoon:** On page—unknown, 01, under 009, I am seeing \$40 billion for breakdown of Transfers.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** No, it is \$609,200, 000.

**Madam Chairman:** It was in the initial submission?

**Miss Ramkissoon:** The \$40 billion was Other—

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** That has to be a typographical error because the total budget is \$609 million.

**Madam Chairman:** So yes, the member for CEPEP can answer. Just let me ask one question—but that was the original budget, was it subject to the 7 per cent? Yes, okay, then thank you. Member for CEPEP.

**Mr. Donawa:** Through the Chair, in answer to member Ramkissoon's question with regards to how many employees would have benefited from the programme and the total amount is 11,580 workers who would have benefited from the CEPEP programme and this is as current as April 2016.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** That is the \$6 million that was allocated for other things?

**Mr. Donawa:** No, \$609 million that was allocated for the CEPEP Programme itself.

**Miss Ramkissoon:** Which is inclusive of workers, training—

**Mr. Donawa:** Which is inclusive of workers, management fees, training, and also head office and administrative cost.

**Madam Chairman:** Member Cuffie. Just one minute, please, Member Cuffie, yes Mr. PS, I did not see you, sorry.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes, a quick clarification, Madam Chair, just to let Sen. Ramkissoon know that it is \$609 million for all operational expenses, \$1 million for PSIP.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to ask the same question as Sen. Ramkissoon but in a different way. Now, your submission says that the subventions are given to facilitate the development of the company's human capital and CEPEP workers with major emphasis on management and business skills, financial literacy, landscaping, operation of new equipment, anti-littering

and information technology.

I want to get an idea of how through your monitoring and evaluation of—I take it this is CEPEP's mandate. Right. How do you ensure that you are developing the company's human capital and facilitating workers with management and business skills, financial literacy? I mean, those are things that are not normally associated with CEPEP workers so I would like to believe that there is some kind of goal, some process that would lead to this outcome. So maybe you can give me an idea of what that is.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, I would just like to read something into the record on behalf of CEPEP. The company has recently approved a new strategic plan, the direction of which intends to return the programme to its original mandate. That is to serve as an incubator for small business to create small and micro entrepreneurs, while at the same time strengthening the degree of community involvement. The company will be focused on building risk-taking entrepreneurs and providing the training and development to build sustainable entrepreneurial ventures on the one hand and better skilled and employable citizens on the other. It is not expected that this shift will require additional state funding rather the funding should largely be covered by improved efficiency derived from tighter management controls arriving from improved governance. So this, the new board of CEPEP has recently approved a new strategic plan for the company.

**Mr. Cuffie:** So am I to take it that what is stated here is based on the old strategic plan or—?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Well, this is the update of whatever you have there, Minister Cuffie.

**Madam Chairman:** Member Baksh.

**Miss Baksh:** I just have a follow-up question to member Cuffie's question as it

relates to the human development strategy planning. What services or service providers have been contracted to provide consultancy aim to support this thrust?

**Mr. Boodoo:** Good afternoon, Committee. The body that was contracted by the CEPEP Company Limited to assist with this would be the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business.

**Miss Baksh:** Okay. Can you tell me what has worked well and what did not and are there any lessons learnt at all?

**Mr. Donawa:** Through the Chair, the graduate school is basically conducting their consultancy service to change the strategic direction or to assist in changing the strategic direction of the CEPEP Company Limited.

In turn, they are working together with the board of directors to ensure that the mandate or to enhance the mandate which is given to the CEPEP Company Limited so it is an on-going process. I am unable to provide that answer with what did not work or what we hope to achieve, however, it is work in progress and their model is being reviewed to ensure that every worker in the community benefits from the programme including the communities that we tend to target.

**Mr. Rambharat:** Through you, Chair, to you PS. I am very clear in my mind that Government's objective for CEPEP is that it would play a significant role in the revitalization of agriculture. This Committee has a responsibility to ensure, to monitor on-going expenditure. The allocation—this here to CEPEP is significant. With all due respect to the CEPEP representatives here, the allocation is not matched by the representation of CEPEP today. Having said that, what is being done to ensure that CEPEP, in this fiscal year, delivers on Government's mandate to ensure that CEPEP gets involved in agriculture?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Minister Rambharat, as you are aware, we met with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and there were supposed to be follow-up

meetings on this whole issue of CEPEP assisting with the agricultural sector, but I am not familiar with what transpired since we last went to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries about two months ago, but maybe the representatives from CEPEP could assist us.

**Mr. Donawa:** Through the Chair, we are unable to provide the member with that answer because we, the representatives, were not privy to that meeting so we are unable to provide that answer at this point in time.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes, just a quick update, Madam Chair. I am told that we sent our proposals to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and we are awaiting feedback.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Member Mark.

**Mr. Mark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to ask the PS whether I did not hear properly or my memory is failing, but I did hear you say very early that there was another company that falls under your jurisdiction but I searched the documents that we have before us and there was no submission dealing with Transfers and Subsidies under the Development Programme and Infrastructure Development, and you mentioned the national Maintenance Security and Training Company. So I was wondering why we did not have before us a submission looking at Transfers and Subsidies, Development Programme as well as the IDF, the Infrastructure Development aspect of that particular organization's operations. I am not too sure whether, Chair, if that—

**Madam Chairman:** That is okay and not to cut you but I think the question has been asked and therefore, I just want to ask the PS in answering the question that member Mark has ask, if you could deal with RIC and TSTT because you also mentioned those. So it is not just a question of IDF consolidated fund, DP and Current Transfers and Subsidies, but also in terms of your relationship as

accounting officer and discharging that responsibility under the Exchequer and Audit Act as relates to these three agencies. Thank you.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** It is a good observation, Sen. Mark. MTS is self-funded and they receive no Government subventions. They fund their capital programme on their own and their recurrent expenditure on their own. Similarly, RIC is based on their Cess and Cess is calculated on a formula of their basic expenditure adding in a component of percentage change in their retail price index and their extraordinary expenditure to a formula minus their surplus and they arrive at a Cess. And TSTT is also self-funded, both on their capital programme and their recurrent expenditure.

**Mr. Mark:** May I? Madam Chair, through you to the PS, under Transfers and Subsidies, I go back to T&TEC, I see where you have repayment of loan to the NGC, a certain amount is given, \$316 million; under T&TEC repayment of loan to COVE Power Station, \$54 million, then you did not have a payment for the short-term bridging loan involving TGU, I think. Could you give us an appreciation of what is the overall debt profile of T&TEC? And as you are on that point, Madam Chair, through you, could you tell us what the debt profile of WASA is?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Just to let you know, Madam Chair, through you, all recurrent expenditure to T&TEC is for debt servicing. T&TEC receives no recurrent financing from the Ministry for operational expenditure, it is all debt financing. T&TEC's debt stands at approximately around \$8 billion.

The large ones would be: \$2.5 billion for Government advances; \$2.4 billion for natural gas, unpaid NGC bills; and \$1.6 billion for the short-term—a bridging financing facility that was negotiated for T&TEC to repay TGU. As you would recall, TGU was financed through Treasury deposits and for TGU to repay the Government for the Treasury deposits, T&TEC had to take a loan to repay TGU

that amount of money. And so that loan was taken, paid to TGU, came back to Government as a dividend and now T&TEC has to pay the debt servicing. So it is roughly around \$8 billion and those would be the three large components.

**Mr. Mark:** What about WASA? Do you have a debt profile on WASA at this time?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** We have some—but I do not know, Sen. Mark, if the CEO would know better than I would but I have some numbers but I would let the CEO also take it.

**Mr. Poon King:** No, I will have to check to get the most up to date and provide it in writing. I do not have the figures offhand at this time.

**Mr. Mark:** I just want to ask the PS, the NGC reported that its profits fell dramatically in 2015 and you also mentioned a short while ago that T&TEC owes NGC \$2.5 billion.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** 2.4.

**Mr. Mark:** 2.4. Is there some agreement between T&TEC and NGC to have this amount of money repaid over a period of time or is that just a subsidy being posed as a loan to T&TEC by NGC? Or PS, is there an agreement, a memorandum of understanding, some kind of arrangement for T&TEC to repay NGC the \$2.4 billion over a period of time?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, through you again, to T&TEC's credit, they have been approaching the Ministry of Public Utilities for the last few years to get this money through recurrent expenditure for debt financing. They have not been receiving—obviously the Ministry could not afford it at the time but again, I will pass you over to the General Manager of T&TEC who will be able to explain what the plan for servicing this debt is.

**Mr. Ramsook:** All right. Good afternoon again, Chair. So we have two situations

with NGC. Prior to 2009, we would have accumulated a debt to NGC of US \$319.7 million. We were able to approach the Government through the line Ministry and we were able to get an arrangement to which the Government has funded in the repayment of this amount over a seven-year period at 3 per cent interest. That money is allocated every year, 327, 316, \$320 million is allocated every year to that repayment of the loan and the balance on that amount at this point in time is US \$114 million.

At this point though, T&TEC continues to have difficulties in meeting our recurrent expenditure and the average bill, Chairman, to NGC per year is \$1 billion; that is the cost. The average bill is about TT \$80 million per month to NGC and per year is roughly close to \$1 billion which means that the amount we have—whenever we can pay. It is one of the only entities really at this point in time that we are unable to provide our full payment to for gas provided. And that is why earlier I even spoke about TGU and the possibility of even reducing the consumption of gas, right, which will even help us at T&TEC.

So at this point in time, because of not being able to pay NGC all the time, we have accumulated a debt of \$2.4 billion. We did signal that to the line Ministry as the PS rightly said and we are trying to get a similar arrangement as we would have gotten in 2009 which was, of course, approved in 2011. So certainly, we are going to be trying to see if we could get an arrangement to clear that debt. That is the only one that we have in terms of owing, in terms of outstanding balances to any entity that provides service to T&TEC.

**Mr. Mark:** One final question. Mr. PS, given the state of T&TEC at this time, do you anticipate seeing that you have an association with the RIC, we have been reading in the newspapers that we may have to—T&TEC, that is, may have to approach the RIC in the short or medium term to adjust its rates because given its

state of affairs and the amount of moneys that they are owing to entities like the NGC. Is this a definitive arrangement or is that just rumour we have been reading and hearing about in the newspapers?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, the last rate adjustment at T&TEC was phased in over the period 2006—2009 and just through you, I would like to ask our Director of Legal Services to explain our relationship with the RIC.

**Ms. Farmer:** Madam Chair, through you, the RIC is an independent regulator. The Act speaks to the framework within which determinations must take place, so every five years, the RIC is supposed to conduct a determination for all service providers under its purview. The Act also provides for the service provider if the need arises to make an application to the RIC to have its rates reviewed.

At this point in time even though there is that basic framework, the process through which it has to be done has not been finalized. So this, too, is on the legislative agenda for the Ministry for the fiscal period this year and we are in discussions with the RIC now about the proposals to firm or to revise the framework so that they can properly implement that function that they have under the Act.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Member Cuffie and then member Webster-Roy and then member Baksh.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Mr. Ramsook, I just was not clear on the figures. Is it that as T&TEC is paying off the debt, the debt continues to rise? Explain it.

**Mr. Ramsook:** No. Hon. Minister, no, it is two issues. One, a debt that we inherited prior to 2010 so which has been dealt with, as I said, through payments from the Ministry and the other one is a debt that we have now incurred again. So the TT \$2.1 billion would have been incurred over the last, let us say three years.

**Mr. Cuffie:** No, what I am trying to get is, you continue to use gas from the NGC,

if you are paying now fully for the gas that you use or you have an on-going debt that will continue.

**Mr. Ramsook:** Right, so we have an on-going debt that is continuing. And just to answer you, so we do try our best to make some payments. At this point in time, it is \$2.4 billion and whenever we can, we do try to make payments to NGC. As I said, the bill to NGC is \$80 million per month.

**Madam Chairman:** Member Webster-Roy.

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Chair, through you, I am looking at Other Transfers and there is a line Item 02 Water Resource Management Unit with an allocation of \$650,000 with a projected expenditure of \$400,000 to June 2016. What is the Water Resource Management Unit and how do you ensure value for money with that unit?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, if I may?

**Madam Chairman:** Is it the Water Resource Management Unit or the—

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Which one?

**Mrs. Webster-Roy:** No, it says 02 Water Resources Management Project Expenditure.

**Mrs. Johnson-Lawrence:** Madam Chair, through you, the Water Resource Management Unit was set up some 15 years ago in order, at the time, it was Government's policy to remove water resource or water supply from water transmission and distribution. At that point in time, this account was set up to provide a subvention for the actioning of this policy. We are now in the process of actioning this policy. I think that you would note under the PSIP where there were several projects related to a drug supply management plan, an integrated water resource management plan for Tobago. We were able to remove those in our 7 per cent adjustment because these funds are held at WASA in care of the Water

Resources Agency, which at this point in time is a unit of WASA and we are able to use these funds to action those new programmes. Thank you.

**5.00p.m.**

**Miss Baksh:** Madam Chair, through you, recent press reports claim that WASA owes its contactors around \$250 million, subject of course to contracts, verification of works and invoices, et cetera. Given the oversight role of the Ministry of Public Utilities via monthly reports and regular meetings with the CEO of WASA, were you all aware of this liability? How did WASA manage to rack up such a sizeable debt? And what steps have been taken to avoid recurrence?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Excuse me, Sen. Baksh, did you say \$250 million owed to contractors?

**Miss Baksh:** Yes.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** The number is familiar to the Ministry. As I pointed out earlier, there is a new board in place. The new board is putting measures in place also to deal with its contractors, but there is a certain amount of verification of the figures that need to be concluded. You may have seen several other instances like security and these issues coming up, and contracting for security; these numbers have to be verified before any conclusions are made on how they should be paid, or service to—this debt to the contractors, but again, if the CEO of WASA has any more details on that.

**Mr. Poon King:** With respect to the ongoing debt, the situation that we have encountered now is for works and services that would have been provided in the recent past, and as the works are verified as being true and—well, the documentation as being true and correct of the works that have been done—we have been making payments against the documentation to the various contractors. So the figure that is quoted there, that is what we have at this time, and we are

working towards having that dealt with, with the respective contractors.

**Miss Baksh:** Thank you. Under both the Consolidated Fund and Infrastructure Development Fund, it is stated inter alia that the implementation of projects has a strategic objective of, quote:

Ensuring that communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago are provided with adequate, reliable and affordable utility services, which is modern, customer oriented and technology enabled to provide effective, cost efficient, quality service to all citizens.

These are very noble goals indeed, which any Government should strive to provide for its citizens. I am sure that as a responsible Ministry, you would have conducted your surveys to determine where you are with respect to achieving the aforementioned objectives.

My question to you is that for each of the utilities, water, electricity, postal, et cetera, can you please provide us with the empirical data, that you would have collected under each category, which is—adequate, reliable, affordable, modern, customer oriented, technology driven, effective, cost efficient, quality service, et cetera?

**Madam Chairman:** PS, could I ask that you submit that in writing by Friday, please?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes, I will have to submit that in writing, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Rambharat:** Thank you very much, Chair, through you, this is directed to WASA. It is a four-part question, which I imagine you may want to answer parts now, and parts later. The first question is, was WASA involved in any way in the enforcement of the moratorium on hunting that expired September 30, 2015? Was WASA involved in any way in the enforcement of the moratorium on hunting that

expired on September 30, 2015?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** I am not familiar with the point, but again, the CEO of WASA is here.

**Mr. Poon King:** I am aware that WASA did have some involvement. I will have to provide the response in writing, when I get—

**Mr. Rambharat:** Which takes me to the second part of the question. How did WASA become involved in the enforcement of the moratorium on hunting that expired on September 30, 2015?

**Mr. Poon King:** PS, I can respond. Okay, with respect to that as well, that information will be provided in writing.

**Mr. Rambharat:** Okay. Which brings me to the third part of the question. What is the cost, to WASA, of its involvement in the enforcement of the moratorium on hunting that expired on September 30, 2015?

**Mr. Poon King:** Again, it will be provided in writing, when I provide the information.

**Mr. Rambharat:** Then the fourth part of the question, in examining contractors' claim for work done in the enforcement of this moratorium on the ban on hunting that expired on September 30, 2015, how did WASA separate the cost of the contractor's personnel from the cost of WASA's employees used in the enforcement of this moratorium?

**Mr. Poon King:** Again, I will have to provide that information in writing.

**Mr. Rambharat:** Thank you.

**Mr. Mark:** Madam Chair, like my colleague, I have a four-part question to the Permanent Secretary, but through you, to WASA. Mr. Permanent Secretary, earlier this year, it was reported that some 67 fraudulent cheques, valued at \$416,395.50, were purported to be issued by WASA. In light of this, what steps has the Ministry

taken to recover these cheques? Two, what measures have been put in place to prevent this from reoccurring or occurring in the future? Has the Ministry implemented more stringent controls to monitor the issuing of cheques to employees?

We understand there has been a police investigation, could you give us a status report on this matter, and has anyone been penalized thus far?

And, Mr. PS, what steps have been taken to improve the effectiveness of the Ministry's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud, as I alluded to earlier?

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Madam Chair, we were very familiar with this issue, and we know for a fact that WASA—the board and management—has been putting measures in place to respond to these charges, but again, if I may invite the CEO of WASA.

**Mr. Poon King:** The matter with the fraudulent cheques was the subject of a police investigation. I am aware that at least one person was arrested. I will have to get the status of the actual investigation.

With respect to the cheques themselves, WASA is now crossing cheques, requiring people to—that the cheques have to be deposited in a bank account, which requires certain requirements to be put in place by the persons cashing the cheques.

With respect to the recovery of the money, we have been in touch with the bank that did cash the cheques, towards recovering the funds. As to the status of that, I will have to get the final status as to where we are with that.

**Madam Chairman:** PS, just to follow up on that. Under the regulations, I guess the financial regulations govern WASA, too, under the Exchequer and Audit Act?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes? And you will be more familiar, is there not some system or ledger, where one enters where cheques are missing and that sort of thing?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** So, if I understand, if that measure is put in place, one should discover missing cheques, missing unsigned cheques, before they are cashed?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** So that in terms again, of—there was a blanket question asked of you in terms of fraud and putting mechanisms in place. Then, how is that dealt with generally in your responsibility as the accounting officer?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Well, the term “Accounting Officer” is something I take very, very, very seriously. As far as an incident like this is concerned, it is a lot of concern—seriously concerning to me. How we go about it? We could only depend on the reports we receive from these entities, or these agencies. We have to depend on their quarterly reports. We have to depend on their audited financial statements. We have to depend on their monthly revenue expenditure statements, and that is what we have to use. As far as when we detect something like this, as I mentioned earlier, the only recourse we really have is to report it to the fraud squad.

**Madam Chairman:** But I guess, what I am really asking, is there not any mechanism that one could put in place to ensure that these agencies are complying with the Financial Regulations? Because it would appear to me that if they were keeping all the necessary ledgers and so on, and making the relevant entries and so on and, therefore, you know, when we ask the question and people tell us, “Oh, their obligations or their duties are in accordance with the Exchequer and Audit Act”, and so on,

it is a conclusion, but really what we would like to hear is, what is being done day to day to support that conclusion, you see?

And, therefore, it appears that a lot of things are post facto, and I understand the importance of post facto, but having found them, apart from having found these breaches, apart from reporting it to the police, therefore, what happens going forward to ensure that the regulations are not just complied with in principle, or in a nice conclusion, but the actual nuts and bolts are put in place to support that conclusion?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** Well, as I mentioned earlier, and I spoke about enhanced monitoring of these agencies, and the fact that it cannot be business as usual. Something somewhere went wrong within the system for the 66 fraudulent cheques, and obviously WASA would have to review how they handle their financial issues. But moving ahead, that is why I can take it now, that we are going to looking closely at how these agencies use state funds. Because as I mentioned, “Accounting Officer” is a designation in which you are accountable for state funds, and state funds should be used for what they are intended to be used for, and as approved by the Parliament. So it is incumbent on me, as the Accounting Officer, to get this right at WASA, and that is part of the job that I will be doing as we proceed in the new fiscal year, this fiscal year and the new fiscal year and continuing.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. One more question that you, I guess, in the barrage of questions, you did not recall, and that was with respect to the agencies like TSTT and MTS and RIC. You explained the issue, why we do not see DP, Recurrent Transfers and so on. But in terms of your accountability as accounting officer, how is that role discharged with these agencies?

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** It is exactly the same as if they were receiving state funds, because they are state enterprises. MTS is wholly owned. TSTT is majority owned as you know, and RIC is an entity within the Ministry of Public Utilities, and we

treat them the same way, as if they were receiving state funds. They have the same methodology in their reporting.

**Mr. Mark:** Thank you. Madam Chair, again, to the distinguished Permanent Secretary. Given the fact that your functions and your mandate have been significantly expanded, with the realignment of your Ministry and the amount of new agencies that have come under your portfolio, the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee is interested in helping you, and through you, those entities that fall under your purview. So we would like to ask you to submit—you may not be able to do it comprehensively at this time, but I am sure in the next few days, given the Chairman's mandate, you would be able to submit to this Committee your recommendations for improving the efficiency, the effectiveness and the economy as it relates to trying to get the best out of those entities, value for money, systems of more robust accountability and transparency.

Would you be minded to submit to this Committee and to the Chairman of this Committee, recommendations for improving the operations of those entities, including the oversight responsibility of the Ministry of Public Utilities, as you have defined earlier in your presentation? Would you be prepared to do so? And how soon you would be able to submit those recommendations for improving the overall efficiency, both of the Ministry of Public Utilities, and those entities that are here with you, and those that not here with you—RIC, the MTS and—what is the final one, Madam Chair?

**Madam Chairman:** TSTT.

**Mr. Mark:** TSTT.

**Mr. Dhanpaul:** We will provide the details, Madam Chair. We may need a bit more time beyond Friday, probably about two to three weeks, if that is okay with,

Sen. Mark?—but we will provide the details.

**Madam Chairman:** PS, we would like to give a shorter time, certainly not Friday, but if you could really give us the following Friday. There are one or two smaller questions we would like to ask, but we realize it is after five o'clock, and, therefore, at this stage we would really like to bring the conversation to an end.

We really want to thank you and all the representatives of your Ministry. Now, I would not call the names because I could see the frontline, I cannot see the backline, but it has really been a very interesting and enlightening discussion. We want to thank you all for your time, your commitment.

PS, we want to thank you for your forthrightness in answering all the questions. We want to thank all the various representatives, T&TEC, SWMCOL, CEPEP, TTPost, WASA, for coming and engaging in this discussion, and we wish you well.

PS, we will send some further questions by the end of the week, and hopefully, we will get those answers by the end of next week. Thank you very much.

Again, we would like to thank the listening public, both on the Parliament Channel and on the radio station. We would like to thank the members of the media who are here, and all the other citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who would have sent their comments through either email, Facebook or Twitter. We wish you all a safe journey home, and we now bring this part of the meeting to an end. The meeting is now suspended.

Thank you very much.

**5.20p.m.:** *Meeting adjourned.*