

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 16, 2018*



### APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2019) BILL, 2018

[Sixth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

**Madam Chairman:** This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will resume. We are at Head 42, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

*Head 42:* Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, \$2,283,348,980.

**Madam Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good morning to all. As one of the fundamental agencies providing essential services to the citizens and contributing to the overall development of our country, it is my privilege to report to this Standing Finance Committee and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the progress made by the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

Almost two years ago, I was afforded the opportunity to serve in the capacity of Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. It has not been an easy road. However, with the unwavering support and dedication of our Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Permanent Secretaries, all mayors, all chairmen, all aldermen, councillors, public servants and all the citizens, we were able to persevere despite the challenges which we encountered last year. We at the Ministry continue to

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work diligently to ensure all citizens of our beloved country, especially those residing in rural communities, received the goods and services required to live a comfortable and rewarding life.

Local Government remains a catalyst to represent and protect the everyday interest and the needs of all citizens. Each person, whether you reside in an urban or rural area, is directly impacted by local government, be it through garbage collection and sanitation, disaster management, development of recreational facilities, clearing of minor drains or watercourses and the list continues. We at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government understand the importance of being equipped, at all times, and remain dedicated to delivering good governance and service excellence.

We welcome this democratic process which opens the floor for scrutiny and recommendation as we move forward into the new fiscal year. Through this framework and the cooperation of all, the Ministry is happy to report that through head office and the municipal corporations, we have completed over 1,000 projects for this financial year under the *Public Sector Investment Programme*.

Madam Chairman, I thank you very much.

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

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,283,348,980 for Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now

proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 261.

**Mr. Lee:** Can I ask a question on page 260 or an overall statement question?

**Madam Chairman:** Well, the only thing is that any question I would think that you will ask on the overall statement, the details of it will be in here. So that if one has to answer, I would expect one would have to jump in one of these pages here which may not be in accordance with the sequential order.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? So, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. Minister, just with regard to line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, can you indicate to us the number of employees sorry—the establishment in the Ministry together with the vacancies?

**Hon. Hosein:** At head office we have—the total amount of positions are 1,934 permanent staff; daily-paid staff, 1,791.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And the vacancies as well, if possible?

**Hon. Hosein:** Sorry. We have the contract positions which are 346.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay.

**Hon. Hosein:** Head office is 67 and regional corporations are 279.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you tell us the vacancies?

**Hon. Hosein:** The total number of vacant positions is 1,706.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, these figures you are calling, 1,934, 1,791 daily and so

on: does that exclude the regional corporations?

**Hon. Hosein:** Includes the regional corporations.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Include?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, that the 1,791 daily-paid workers, that is over the 14 regional corporations?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** It could not be.

**Hon. Hosein:** Sorry. It is 10,791.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Hon. Hosein:** Thanks for pointing it out.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I felt so. 10,791.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 14. How many Cabinet-Appointed Committees fall under your Ministry?

**Hon. Hosein:** None. None at present.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. So this figure here is representative of committees that you intend to establish or are supposed to be established but have not been done as yet?

**Hon. Hosein:** This is in case we need any technical committee in this fiscal year coming out.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** No, Ma'am, it is okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am on the other page—the other page, page 262. It continues

there.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So what I would say to Members, I realize this is day five and we may all be weathered.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, no, no. It is just—

**Madam Chairman:** So, no. I am going to allow the Member for Tabaquite for us to revert, but I hope that we can all summon the strength to move at the pace we have already established. So Member for Tabaquite, we are at Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Contract Employment, 16. There is a substantial sum of money involved in contract employment. I would like to know what kinds of officers occupy these positions of contract employment and where, whether it is the regional corporation or head office?

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. There are 338 contract positions at head office; 282, sorry, sorry—338 in total: 282 at the corporations, 56 at the head office.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. And at the corporation Minister, what positions do they occupy? What kind of positions these contract people are in?

**Hon. Hosein:** They operate: the Corporate Secretary, Financial Officers, Principal Medical Officer, Engineering and Survey Officer, Disaster Coordinator, Disaster Field Officers, Communication Technician in Disaster Management Unit, Public Health Officers and Litter Wardens.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. The cadre of professional people, for example, your Corporate Secretary, Financial Officer—that is what you called them now?—chief Financial Officer, Principal Medical Director. Those three in particular and the engineering position, are all those vacancies filled at all of the corporations or are there still vacancies?

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, the Corporate Secretary, according to the records I have here, there is one vacant position; Financial Officer, there are seven vacant positions; Principal Medical Officer, four vacant positions and Engineering and Survey Officer, there are no vacant positions.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. So I am concerned about the Financial Officers and the Principal Medical Officer, that four of the corporations, at this point intime, do not have Principal Medical Officers—if I am wrong in my assumption tell me—and seven do not have Financial Officers. That is 50 per cent of your corporations do not have Chief Financial Officers. May I ask, what is the difficulty in recruiting Chief Financial Officers and as well Principal Medical Officers?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, you have asked—

**Madam Chairman:** The first thing I want to ask is: Are we under 16? Is this Contract Employment?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** And these are contract employees, yes?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. And this is for head office or are we talking about regional corporations?

**Hon. Hosein:** Regional corporations.

**Madam Chairman:** So, if we are looking at regional corporations—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah, but Ma'am, these people are hired by the head office and paid by the head office.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, but in terms of numbers, in terms of the number of officers, do we have a book that deals with that?

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, I could bring this to a closure, Madam Chairman, by letting

you know and the Member know that today we are having interviews for the Financial Officers taking place today.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is very good.

**Hon. Hosein:** Taking place, right now I should say, and the medical officers they are being short-listed right now also

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, if I may? What we are talking about here is the head office. Our other book on *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* gives details of the various positions that my colleague from Tabaquite is asking about. So I do not know if you will want to give all of the information here or if we will wait until we go to the other book so that if the Member still needs that very specific information, will wait for that, because this line Item does not deal with all the corporations. So, is the Member for Tabaquite going to wait, which is what I would like to suggest?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The Member for Tabaquite has no choice if the Chairman has ruled.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, Member for Fyzabad. Okay.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** That is why you have line Items, so that you could ask the question in relation to a line Item.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, page 263. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** We are under "Other Transfers" as yet Ma'am on page 263?

**Madam Chairman:** We are under "Minor Equipment Purchases". Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 263; Item 001, Regional Bodies. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, but we are under 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies.

Yes, please, Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Why, Mr. Minister, under Item 01 we are not contributing to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, being a member of the Commonwealth?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, at the mid-year review we intend to request for funding for this particular Item 01.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other transfers. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister in line Item 04, Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme. For your 2019 Estimates, you have a decrease from 2018 of \$72 million. Given what transpired in 2018 with levies being placed on the CEPEP Company due to outstanding payments by contractors, in a general statement, is this \$72 million decrease sufficient to meet your outstanding payments owed to contractors previously in the past couple years?

**Hon. Hosein:** You are referring specifically to the health sector?

**Mr. Lee:** To the? Line Item 04, CEPEP.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, we will need to get additional funding.

**Mr. Lee:** So at some point in time in the mid-term review you will come back for more funding?

**Hon. Hosein:** I have been guided here Member, and we will not be needing any additional payments.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, good morning everybody.

**Madam Chairman:** Good morning.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, through you to the Minister, 03, I see no allocation for

TTConnect Service Centres 2019. Does it mean that what had to be done was already done in 2018 or that this programme is no longer being pursued?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, this TTConnect has now been moved to the Ministry of Public Administration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. But I thought that that might have to do with decentralization of services and access and so on for people in the community in the local government context.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** May I? Member, as the Minister of Public Administration said yesterday, the project is now under public administration and it is of a similar nature. It does not mean that because it is no longer under local government that it will not be disseminated throughout the country through the local government bodies.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Will local government have a role though?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Well, insofar as we will need to use the regional corporations, but the administration will be at the Ministry of Public Administration. The payments and so on will come from public administration. As you well know, public administration also deals with TATT and so on. So public administration which also has the IT connect function will be dealing with all of those kinds of connectivity issues. So it has not changed its scope, but it is just that we thought it would be more focused if we sent it to public administration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So it is now a centralized operation through public administration, but defused because it is basically an e-methodology?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Is that correct?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** But it is in the same way that under the Ministry of Rural

Development and Local Government it was centralized in that Ministry, but it was defused throughout the regional corporations. It is just that public administration has the responsibility for e-government and all of those issues, so we felt it was a better fit at the Ministry of Public Administration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Minister, 04, CEPEP programme, you have reduced the budget by 16 per cent. How many workers are going to be affected—CEPEP workers are going to be affected by that reduction of 16 per cent of your budget?

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. Hon. Member, it is not actually a decrease. From last fiscal year we got an increase to deal with the arrears. It is an increase.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah, but that was to deal with the arrears.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay, how many employees are now being facilitated with this budget in 2019? How many employees? How many CEPEP workers?

**Hon. Hosein:** Approximately 8,000.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Eight thousand?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** How many contractors are going to be employed in 2019?

**Hon. Hosein:** Approximately 260.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Two hundred and sixty. So the average number of workers per contractor, if you divide that you will get it. About three, two—

**Hon. Hosein:** Three teams.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Three teams? That is 30 workers.

**Hon. Hosein:** Across the board.

**Dr. Rambachan:** This 375 million here, can you clarify for me: Is this amount just the wages for the CEPEP workers or also what you pay the contractors in terms of their management fees?

**Hon. Hosein:** It includes everything.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Includes everything. How much does a contractor get out of this for a worker? What is the overhead that contractors get per worker? Because you pay that separately.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I will have to provide that for you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, the only reason I asked that is that there are a lot of contractors who complain they have not got their management fees, but those are the very contractors who also seem not to have paid some of their NIS and so on, on behalf of the workers. So I want to know exactly what are they getting, because when employees of CEPEP come to my office as a Member of Parliament and say: "Look, I have gone to NIS and my money has not been paid", I want to know whether they got their money. So I think it is very important for the 8,000 CEPEP workers to also know what they get or who pays the NIS or who does not pay the NIS and what have you.

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. I will provide that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But that is an easy thing.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, for your information, hon. Member, the non-compliant contractors were terminated.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes and I agree with that, terminate them. You cannot take people's NIS money and not pay it. But is the NIS paid by the contractors or paid by CEPEP directly?

**Hon. Hosein:** It is paid by CEPEP through the contractor.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So just to clarify. So the CEPEP Company gives that money as part of the management fee to the contractor and the contractor then submits that to the NIS in terms of his employer portion and the employee portion.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Why can you not in order to protect the interest of the employees simply deduct both at the level of CEPEP and submit it to the NIS?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, what you are saying we could work with it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** It is just a suggestion.

**Hon. Hosein:** It is a suggestion and you always have good suggestions for me [*Laughter*] but I want to go along with what I am being guided with by the Chairman, and the General Manager said the onus is on the contractor to pay.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Could you, please?

**Hon. Hosein:** Sure, Member.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you. Member, as you well know—**Dr.**

**Rambachan:** No, I do not well know, otherwise I will not be asking.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Because it was the same thing under your administration. It is part of the contract. It is part of the contractual arrangement between CEPEP Company and—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. If it was the same thing, Ma'am, with due respect—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** And as a matter of fact, under your administration, it was the time that most of the contractors did not pay those contributions. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Do you have a study of that?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Yes. That is why they had to be dismissed.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, if it is the same thing, what is so difficult for you

to tell me here and now what a contractor gets per head of worker?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Because the Minister does not have that information.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You mean to say the General Manager cannot point it to him? Why are you hiding it?

**Madam Chairman:** Members. Members. I understand the passion we have. [*Crosstalk*] Okay. So we all cannot speak at the same time. Hon. Minister, do you have the information that the Member has requested?

**Hon. Hosein:** For the Members, I will provide the information. Just as I did last year, when I came here first, I did not have some answers. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I am not hearing the Minister too well.

**Madam Chairman:** And Member for Couva South, all of us do not have the fulsome baritone voice that you have, but while I understand your ability to fill the Chamber, I hope you would just speak when you are recognized. Please. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Madam Chairman, I assure you that I will provide the information. And I was saying, when I came here first last year I did not have all the answers and I promised to provide the information, and I did provide it, so I would do the same this time for all Members.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So the information will be provided by the Minister. Member for Tabaquite, do you have any further questions on this item?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No Ma'am.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** May I just interject here and say that I take umbrage to the Member for Tabaquite saying that we are trying to hide information, because it is totally incorrect. [*Crosstalk*] It is incorrect especially given the fact that every—

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Ma'am, I think I am—

**Madam Chairman:** We both cannot speak at the same time.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you, Ma'am—especially given the fact that everything that has been asked, we have indicated if we do not have the information at hand, we will provide it. And, in keeping with that, the Ministry of Finance has already provided information, the Ministry of National Security has already provided information. We are not hiding anything, and I take umbrage to that on behalf of this side of the House. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, back to my order. Member for Couva South, you are now recognized.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I, myself, take umbrage to the fact that the Minister of Planning and Development made certain insinuations that contractors were dismissed on the fact that they did not pay NIS. Could the Minister provide this meeting with a list of those contractors to back the information that she just presented to this House meeting. In addition to that, Mr. Minister, could you indicate how many employees were there in the programme at the end of the last fiscal year and how many will be employed as a result of the present allocation in 2019? And further to that, could you provide us with a breakdown of the number of contractors that will carry out this particular programme in the 39 constituencies in Trinidad? Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, I will allow the question as regards 2019, the number of workers, I believe you want?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** In 2019, and the number of contractors by constituency in 2019. Hon. Minister, are you in a position to provide that information?

**10.30 a.m.**

**Hon. Hosein:** Two hundred and sixty contractors and 125 workers.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** One hundred and twenty-five workers under the purview of CEPEP or under the purview of the contractors?

**Hon. Hosein:** Two hundred and sixty contractors by 30 workers.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** By 30 workers?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes. Sorry.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And you would be minded to provide a breakdown in terms of the 39 constituencies, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Sure.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Because I could recollect you clearly stating that you engage Members of Parliament as it relates to the award of contract and contractors in the 39 constituencies of Trinidad. I am still awaiting my engagement whether it is verbally or in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** The questions were asked, Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just a follow-up to the innocent workers who might have been—NIS payments who would not have been paid on behalf of by delinquent contractors and about the workers themselves. What is the policy of the CEPEP in rectifying those innocent employees whose NIS was not paid by those contractors?

**Hon. Hosein:** The information has been passed on to the NIB.

**Mr. Lee:** So the CEPEP would rectify that on behalf of their workers?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** My question was asked.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Page 264, Rural Development Company of T'dad & T'go (R.D.C.), Minister, 1.8 million was allocated for 2018 and there is now a decrease, could you clarify for me, is this company functional? What is the status of this particular company because in 2017 there was Actual expenditure in that particular company?

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay.

**Mr. Lee:** Did it close down?

**Hon. Hosein:** No. The company is operating—it is actually 1.5 and not 1.8 as listed, and this assists to meet with operational expenses. They should no longer require any ad hoc funding from Central Government as the allocation given for the idea of projects has been substantially increased and the management fees generated should be able to sustain their operational expenses.

**Madam Chairman:** Is this under IDF? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** I just want to ask, what is the purpose of this particular company, RDC? What is the function of it? What do they do?

**Madam Chairman:** You would want to do it under IDF because we do not really have a line Item here.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay, I am guided by Arouca/Maloney.

**Madam Chairman:** And I allowed the question because you wanted to know what happened between 2018 and now. If you could hold those questions for under IDF for me please. Member for Fyzabad, you have a question? Sub-Head

06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 264, and we are really going on to a new book for the details. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*; 23, Port of Spain City Corporation, Sub-Head 01, we are at page 228, Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Page?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 228. Member for Tabaquite, do you have a question here?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 228. Item 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed, page 228. Item 004, Transport and Cleansing, page 229. Item 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees. Item 006, Stores, Works and Repairs. Item 007, Cemeteries and Crematorium. Item 008, Woodbrook Estate, page 230. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services at page 230; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 231. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item number 12, I see you have \$350,000 there for materials and supplies, Public Health and Disposal, when you look at the substantial amount of wages paid in public health and disposal as against the amount of material that is possibly available for them to work, is there a discrepancy there? Are we getting the work done?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, you could just repeat.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, for example, what is Public Health and Disposal? What does this division do?

**Hon. Hosein:** This is like—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Bait?

**Hon. Hosein:** In the public health department.

**Dr. Rambachan:** This is where rat bait, and so on, is put—baiting and all of that?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, it includes everything.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is this spraying of—

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah. Public health, yes, generally.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. And I am saying that it seems to me, on the basis of your allocation of \$350,000 on a \$12 million wages and salaries, we have a lot of people involved, and I am saying, is this why you have so much money in salaries and wages and little material for them to do the job? So you have rat-infested communities, all kinds of things, and you are paying a lot of wages. The question is, how do you come up with a budget of \$350,000 for the Port of Spain City Corporation and all over Charlotte Street rat running still, in the drains and so on, and you have all these, \$12 million in wages? And apart from that, in Item number 22, you go back and you have \$1.6 million more in Short-term Employment. What are all these people doing, are they working, or are they working two hours and going home because they have no materials?

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, they are not supposed to work 2 hours and go home. They are not supposed to do that, and that is a discussion that I intend to take up at a next level. Well, the corporations, you know, generate their own revenue too; some, they generate their own revenue.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry?

**Hon. Hosein:** I said, some of the corporations generate their own revenue to purchase materials and supplies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But even if they generate their own revenue, Minister, it would be reflected here in the amount that they are buying in this budgeted Item.

**Hon. Hosein:** No, it would not be here. This is what central government is providing. Also, Member, if funding is required at different corporations, I could approve virements, and so on, if needed.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Incidentally of the \$229 million that the corporation has recorded as income 223,972,000 is provided by the Government, so the only revenue they get is \$5.4 million. But we cannot look at income so that to suggest that they are getting income to use is not necessarily true. Whatever is reflected in these figures is what is budgeted for this particular purpose, unless there is a virement. [*Crosstalk*] No, Member for Diego Martin North/East, Minister of Planning and Development, I am very concerned about the health in this country because people have died in this country from “rat disease”, leptospirosis. I am very concerned about it. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Abattoirs?

**Madam Chairman:** Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I was looking for the Item. Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings, Mr. Minister, how many abattoirs do you have in Port of Spain?

**Madam Chairman:** Line Item 21.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 21.

[*Cell phone rings*]

**Madam Chairman:** The Member with the disturbing device, could you just go out and put it on silent and return. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** What is the question, sorry?

**Dr. Rambachan:** How many abattoirs do you have in the Port of Spain City Corporation?

**Hon. Hosein:** One.

**Dr. Rambachan:** One abattoir?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And where is that located?

**Hon. Hosein:** Next to the market.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Next to the market. That is it.

**Madam Chairman:** That is it?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Are we going over to the next page, Ma'am, 234, 004?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, once we are in—are we finished with Markets and Abattoirs?

**Mr. Charles:** Just Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance - Equipment in the abattoirs, it is 10,000, what equipment do they have there in the abattoirs? And is 10,000 adequate? Do they have freezers, and what not?

**Hon. Hosein:** That is like chopping saws for the—

**Mr. Charles:** Only that? There are no freezing equipment there?

**Hon. Hosein:** Freezers, and so on.

**Mr. Charles:** And the 10,000 in your view is adequate?

**Hon. Hosein:** It is adequate.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Transport and Cleansing on page 232. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Mr. Minister, the sum of 23,577,900, under Other Contracted Services, Item 28, is that for the disposal of garbage by contractors, by contractor vehicles?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, it will include that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** It includes that. If it includes that, what is the amount that garbage contractors earn on an annual basis from clearing of garbage on the streets?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I will really have to get back to you with that one.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The garbage contractors that are included here, are they supplemented by your own vehicles, because I see here, under Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, do you also have garbage collection equipment at the corporation?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah, we have in-house garbage collection vehicles. We have some—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Compactors.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And these compactors work on a daily basis?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Every day?

**Hon. Hosein:** Every day.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So they supplement the contracted services?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** My question was asked, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaguite, you have any further questions?

Item 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees. Item 006, Stores, Works and Repairs.

Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Maintenance of Vehicles.

**Madam Chairman:** Just help me with that line Item.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 13. Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You have \$400,000 that you are applying in 2019 for the maintenance of vehicles, can we get an understanding of how many vehicles in the Port of Spain City Corporation are right now not serviceable or are not on the roads of the total fleet of vehicles in the corporation?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, about two weeks ago I requested from all the corporations in Trinidad, a list of the nonfunctional vehicles, and I got it and we intend to work on it, liaise with the Ministry of Finance, and so on, to get the appropriate—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Would you wish to share what percentage of vehicles in the corporations are nonfunctional?

**Madam Chairman:** At least in Port of Spain?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Or at least in Port of Spain?

**Hon. Hosein:** It varies. Some backhoes are down and for minor parts, and minor things, you know. I have the list and I could provide it to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, I asked that question, because as you are aware, regional corporations are the first point of call for disaster and if all this equipment is not working and there are disasters, then we are in deep trouble when at least up to, in some corporations as you know, over 50 per cent of the vehicles are not functional.

**Hon. Hosein:** Right. It is very important, and, as I said, I have been working on

it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am glad you asked for the list.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah I did. I wrote every corporation and I got the listing, and I have it before us—we are in discussion with the Permanent Secretary right now.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:** I saw the need for it, especially when the flooding, and so on, took place throughout the country.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Cemeteries and Crematoriums. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I know it is a morbid area but—Minister, line Item 21, the crematorium at Long Circular Road seems to be having some major infrastructural problems. I see you have only about 100,000 for repairs, could you make some comment, because, I mean, sometimes you have three or four cremations at that site on a daily basis but infrastructure is weak. There is leakage. The rooms are not adequate now. What can you do to improve the situation there with 100,000? It is something you have to look at.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, we definitely need some extra funding for this. So what we could do, we could vire funds or at the mid-term we ask for more funding.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I want to ask your consideration for your deep introspection in that area because it affects a wide community, not only the Port of Spain area, Diego Martin, Petit Valley, Maraval, everywhere. So I think people would be happier if their loved ones are taken care of in a holistic and a very revered manner so that surroundings will be good for their day inside there. So look into it and see.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will definitely have discussions with the council in Port of Spain for the improvement of the services at the crematorium.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And on that, what other cemeteries do you look after in the Port of Spain Corporation?

**Madam Chairman:** What Item are we under, Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings, or we have moved on to another Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, the cemetery is not a building, so I was looking to see what—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** So I have just asked, what Item we are under?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, I would probably say under Item 12, Materials and Supplies, and so on, what do you do about improvement of the cemeteries and which ones are there?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Lapeyrouse, and what else? What are the other cemeteries that the materials and supplies will go to for improvement? And how many cemeteries do you look after in the Port of Spain City Corporation? I am living there for forty-something years in the Port of Spain area but I do not know how many cemeteries we have.

**Madam Chairman:** Member?

**Hon. Hosein:** I will have to provide the list for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Nobody in the back there could help you?

**Hon. Hosein:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Mr. Minister, I am on Item 12, and there is a related with Item, 21, with \$5.9 million in wages and for cemeteries, and \$140,000 Estimate for Materials and Supplies, why is it that so many of the cemeteries with all that labour still has all this overgrown grass all the time and they cannot be kept

clean? Mr. Minister, with the permission of the Chairman, when I was Mayor of the Chaguanas I renamed all my cemeteries, Gardens of Memories, and instead of cutting them every four months I bought wackers and placed the people to cut every week and the cemeteries became like lawns. Why is it that that cannot be done in all the cemeteries in this country? [*Desk thumping*] The vision of “Gardens of Memories”, that is your ancestors, plant them up with flower plants like we did in Chaguanas. But today you drive in Laventille and the grass is all high, that is not how you treat your departed ones. I am sorry to intervene in this way but to make my point. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, as I said, this also falls under the DP, and I will provide—okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 008, Woodbrook Estate. Item 009, Corporation Properties. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, we are on to page 234. Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Public Health. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 01, hon. Minister, Vehicles, that would, I am sure, incorporate a number of the vehicles, what vehicles are you looking at there in terms of no money allocation for it?

**Madam Chairman:** Well, Member, I think that question in itself answers itself.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, can I ask, why is there no allocation for vehicles?

**Madam Chairman:** Well, I mean, Member, there is no provision for vehicles.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, well, there is need for vehicles in Port of Spain, the public health vehicles, and why is there no allocation?

**Madam Chairman:** Well, Member, if you are saying that there is need, it must be

based on something.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I saw it but it has a dash so that means there is no allocation, so I am asking him, why is there no allocation?

**Madam Chairman:** And I am sure you will get an opportunity to ask that question at another time.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, we will ask.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, what we are looking at is things that have—Items that have an allocation, at least for this process. Okay?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. All right.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Item 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Chair, I am a little confused, is this not to look at allocations and why not there are no allocations, and so therefore one could get a sense of the priority or none prioritization of these Items, cost Items?

**Madam Chairman:** No, I think for the last five days what we have said we will look at line Items that have an allocation.

**Mr. Charles:** Only have cost Items, only have allocations?

**Madam Chairman:** And this is the myth of this Committee. But just to clear up further, I have allowed questions where there is no funding in 2019, but there was in 2018, and people have asked is it that the project is finished. Okay?

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. I see.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Sheds. Item 004, Transport and Cleansing. Item 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees. Item 006, Stores, Works and Repairs. Item 007, Cemeteries and Crematoriums, page 235. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers. We go on to 24, San Fernando

City Corporation, which is at page 246. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 246; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003, Institutions; Item 004, Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005, Transport. We are at page 247 now, Item 006, Local Health Authority. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 247; Item 001, General Administration, page 247 and 248. Member for Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 248, line Item 23, Fees, I am seeing an allocation for 460,000 for the 2019 Estimate, an increase by 191,000, Minister, can you clarify a bit with respect to what fees warrant an increase by 191,000?

**11.00 a.m.**

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I will have to provide the information for you.

**Ms. Ramdial:** No problem, thank you. Minister, line Item 46, Natural Disasters. I am seeing an allocation for 207,000 for 2019, an increase by 76,000. I am just curious with respect to what exactly accounts for the increase by 76,000 for natural disasters?

**Hon. Hosein:** With natural disasters, all the corporations respond to fallen trees and clearing watercourses and so on. We have natural disasters everywhere. I think this is what it is for.

**Ms. Ramdial:** So it is for the cost of dealing with responding? I just want to be clear.

**Hon. Hosein:** To facilitate.

**Ms. Ramdial:** To facilitate, okay great, thanks.

**Mr. Charles:** A follow-up to a question from my colleague from Couva North. This is Item 46, Natural Disasters. If the Actual in 2017 was 223, why two years

after, the estimate will be less, 207, given the fact that with climate change and what not we expect more natural disasters? It should at least be consistent or more, or most likely more.

**Hon. Hosein:** If additional funds are needed we will look at it and provide.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** If I may just interject here, Ma'am. You will recall that 2017 Actual reflects what was actually spent, so it means it would have been the year. Remember when we put an estimate here, we are anticipating that this is what we will spend for the year, but at the mid-year we could always supplement it. So the Actual here in 2017, reflects a year of spending, and as the Minister said if it needs to be supplemented it will. But in an effort to get as close as possible, given the financial circumstances and so, in an effort to get as close as possible, you will see that the Estimates reflect—is more than what was requested, but it can be supplemented.

**Mr. Charles:** —is 76,000 more. But it seems to me—yes, I understand that you can supplement and what not, but there must be some logic to the figure allocated in 2019. If everything is—the assumption is that we could at the mid-year review alter, it makes a nonsense out of the budget.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** No, it does not. It also reflects the amount of money that the Minister of Finance has to deal with at a particular point in time. So remember there are other corporations, so we had to give what was available at the time.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A very important line Item, line Item 93, Operations of Electoral District Offices for Councillors of Municipal Corporations. Now, I am seeing a decrease by 83,000 for fiscal 2019, with an allocation for 650,000. Minister, in light of what has been happening to some of our councillors—I have a sitting councillor, Councillor Seepersad, who did not

receive any allocations for rental for his offices, and I am seeing a decrease here for the San Fernando City Corporation. Is this a trend or a pattern that we are going to see with the other regional corporations? *[Interruption]* No, I am just making reference, but I am asking about the decrease here for San Fernando also.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** “Dey put all de furniture and ting on de road.” That is the legacy of your Government for Local Government. *[Crosstalk]*

**Ms. Ramdial:** “Yeh boy, de man doh have ah office.” *[Crosstalk]*

**Madam Chairman:** Members, could you all stop all the crosstalk please, and assist the Minister to get our attention.

**Hon. Hosein:** San Fernando Corporation, they got an increase from 2017. They got an increase.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay, but less than the 2018 Revised Estimate?

**Hon. Hosein:** This is adequate—

**Ms. Ramdial:** It is adequate for every office for payment, right?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Chair, Item 99. In 2017, only \$450 were spent. In the Estimates for 2018, 10,000 was allocated, nothing spent. But yet in 2019, we see an allocation for 8,000. I know it is small, but you spoke about the straightened circumstances, and I wanted to know if there is some pressure, something that will be put on employees that would require—because it must be based on some anticipation of increased use.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** It does not mean that nothing was spent, because the final figures for 2018 are not in as yet.

**Mr. Charles:** I understand that, but at the mid-year review nothing was spent,

because it would have been reflected in the Revised Estimates. Move on, let us move on, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Item 002.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so I will call the Item. Item 002, City and Departments of Maintenance, page 248.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, line 28, Other Contracted Services. We are seeing in 2019 Estimates, \$500,000, and an increase of \$300,000. Can you give an account of what are these “Other Contracted Services”?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I will have to get this for you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Institutions.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 28, Other Contracted Services; 2019 Estimate of 644,000, an increase by 143,000. Minister, can you tell me exactly what is “Other Contracted Services”?

**Hon. Hosein:** Box drains and so on, 248.

**Ms. Ramdial:** So, for materials for construction of box drains, yes?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:** You are welcome.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries, page 249.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, line 43, Security Services. I am seeing an increase from the 2019 Estimates, 800,000 to a 330,000 increase. Can you tell us how many parks, playgrounds and cemeteries will account for this increase in security?

**Mr. Imbert:** Member, if you look at the 2017 Actual, 1.4 million. If you look at

the original estimate for 2018, 1 million. So the 2019 Estimate is 800,000, technically, it is not really an increase.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** But how many parks, playgrounds and cemeteries? You can always give it to us after.

**Madam Chairman:** Number of parks and playgrounds.

**Hon. Hosein:** Remember I had some interest in San Fernando, so I will have an average. It is about 25.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 28, Minister, again, Other Contracted Services, 400,000 estimated for 2019, a 200,000 increase from the 2018 Revised Estimate. Can I get an account with respect to that? Type of contracted services, sorry.

**Mr. Imbert:** Again, Member, if you look at the 2017 Actual—

**Ms. Ramdial:** Minister, I am not disputing the figures. I am asking for types of contracted services.

**Mr. Imbert:** May I be allowed to speak? I just want to correct the record.

**Ms. Ramdial:** But you are not listening to what I am saying.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. Members are constantly saying it is an increase. I need to correct the record on every single occasion. In the same way you reminded me about vehicles in the Tobago House of Assembly. Every time you say it is an increase, I need to correct you. The Actual for 2017, was 887,000, the original estimate for 2018 was 600 and the Estimate for 2019 is 400. It is technically not an increase.

**Ms. Ramdial:** So, why is it under the Increase column in our budget estimates?

**Mr. Imbert:** I will now say this for yet another time that when you close the accounts for 2018, you would get the 2018 Actuals which would then appear in the

book for 2020. So in 2020, you will see what the 2018 Actual was.

**Ms. Ramdial:** But we are—

**Mr. Imbert:** I am not finished, Member. Member, I am not finished.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Sorry, Madam Chair, let him finish.

**Mr. Imbert:** What you are seeing here is a revised estimate because these books are printed about two weeks before the end of the fiscal yet. A lot of payments come in, in the month of September, which would not find their way into the revised estimates. They find their way into the actual in the following year. If go you back 10 years and look at the progression of actual and revised, you would see they are always different.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Madam Chair, just for clarification. I am reading it as I am seeing it here in the book. It is the Estimates for fiscal 2019, and under the Increase column, they gave you the specific numbers or the amounts by which there is an increase, as compared to the Revised Estimates of 2018 and of course, in comparison to the 2017 Actual. I cannot predict what the actual figures for 2018 or 2019 are going to be, so I am reading it as I see it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And therefore, we are not in a position to compare it.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Minister, with all due respect, I hope you understand where I am coming from.

**Mr. Imbert:** But you just said an inaccuracy. If you compare it to the 2017 Actual, it is not an increase, it is a decrease.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay, but I am comparing it to the 2018 Revised Estimate, which is 200,000, and therefore there is an increase by 2—

**Mr. Imbert:** I told you that is not a final figure.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Let me finish, please. Let me finish.

**Mr. Imbert:** Not final.

**Madam Chairman:** Members. Minister of Finance, please allow the Member to express the view. Yes, Member for Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Madam Chair, the Revised Estimate for 2018 is 200,000. The Estimate for 2019 is 400,000. It is simple math that the Minister cannot understand. Therefore, it shows under the Increase column, an increase by 200,000; 200,000 more than the Revised Estimate from the 2018 Estimates. I think I am justified in identifying the Increase column. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Again, Madam Chairman, the 2017 Actual is the best guide to what the expenditure should be. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** All right, Members. I quite clearly understand what the Member for Couva North is expressing. Minister of Finance, just as you had indicated when you are reminded constantly of something, you have to answer in a particular way, while it might be somewhat repetitive, I would ask us all to give the necessary indulgence that is required for us to further the process. So that if a Member asks that the figure is an increase in the estimate, and I think that is what the question is, it is an increase in the estimate, Minister of Finance, it may require a somewhat repetitive answer. But if that is what is required, then I would expect you to exercise the necessary tolerance in furtherance of the process, and I have so ruled.

**Mr. Imbert:** Certainly, Madam Chairman.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I was just going to say that if the matter is defined as an increase—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central, I think having regard to what I just said, we no longer need to regurgitate that. I thank you for your assistance.

Do you have a matter on where we are at?

**Dr. Tewarie:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 28, Minister, Other Contracted Services; 2019 fiscal estimates 400,000, an increase by 200,000. Can you tell me what type of other contracted services?

**Madam Chairman:** 200,000 over the 2018 Estimate.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes, over the 2018 Revised Estimate.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay fine, yes.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Great. So can you tell me what type of contracted services?

**Hon. Hosein:** This is for small urgent works to provide for safe environment, equipment, et cetera.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:** You are welcome.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Transport, page 249; Item 006, Local Health Authority, page 250.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Minister, line Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Again, the Estimate for 2019, 15.5 million, an increase by 1.3 million from the 2018 Revised Estimate of 14.1 million. Can I get a clarification again, types of other contracted services?

**Hon. Hosein:** Other Contracted Services, like garbage collection, et cetera.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Just to clarify, Minister, does garbage collection have its own line Item? No? I did not really take a look to see.

**Hon. Hosein:** No.

**Ms. Ramdial:** So it falls under Other Contracted Services?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 250; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, City and Department etc; Item 003, Institutions, we are at page 251; Item 004, Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005, Transport; Item 006, Local Health Authority; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Institutions; Item 007, Households, we are at page 252; Item 009, Other Transfers. We now go to page 263. 25, Arima Borough Corporation: page 263, Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am seeing something on 260—oh, I am sorry, go ahead.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Public Health.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Page 264, Madam?

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are at page 263. Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Parks and Recreation Grounds. We are now going on to page 264, Item 005, Works. Are you there, Member for Oropouche?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** 02, Madam, in Goods and Services.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, we have not reached there as yet. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, line 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. We are seeing an increase for the 2018 Revised Estimates, 834,000 to \$682,000, an increase for the 2019 Estimates. Can you account for this increase?

**Hon. Hosein:** This is for new accommodation.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, where is this?

**Hon. Hosein:** Arima, at the City Hall

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** The question was asked, Madam, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Public Health, page 265; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Parks and Recreation Grounds; Item 005, Works, at page 266; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Public Health; Item 004, Parks and Recreation Grounds. We are moving on to page 267. Item 005, Works; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers. We now go to page 274. 26, Point Fortin Borough Corporation: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Local Health Authority; Item 003, Public Places; Item 004, Transport and Roads; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 275; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Local Health Authority, page 276.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Line Item 28, Minister, Other Contracted Services. The 2019 Estimate is 4 million, an increase by 225,000 from the 2018 Revised Estimate. Minister, would you care to explain or identify what is “Other Contracted Services” for this increase?

**Hon. Hosein:** Usual local—LHA and garbage collection.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Public Places.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 28 again, Other Contracted Services. There is an increase by 65,000, at 200,000 for the 2019 Estimate, and also the Security Services, I am seeing a decrease actually, by 53,000, for 250,000 in 2019. Minister, can you explain both, the increase and the decrease, for both

line Items?

**Hon. Hosein:** For the decrease, if more is needed we would vire, and the other one is a nominal increase, a small amount.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North, maybe it might be more accurate if you ask if they would explain the figure.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes, sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Transport and Roads; Item 005, Corporation Properties; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, we are at page 277; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Local Health Authority; Item 003, Upkeep of Public Places; Item 004, Transport and Roads; Item 005, Corporation Properties; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, we are at page 278; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers. We now move to page 284. 27, Chaguanas Borough Corporation: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries.

**Dr. Tewarie:** If I could just ask on “Cemeteries” there. There is a reduction of 103. What is the rationale, given that, yes—what is the rationale?

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me come in here, Madam Chairman. If you look at the original 2018, it was 714, so it is exactly the same. The same original provision. What would happen during the year is that the borough corporation may need to spend a little more, so they would apply for a transfer or virement from some other Vote and supplement this Vote. So what the Budget Division has done is simply given them the same original allocation in 2019, as occurred in 2018, and they may supplement as and when required.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, what is the situation with the abattoir in

Chaguanas at this point in time, in terms of its maintenance in particular? I am looking at 02.

**Mr. Imbert:** I think that would apply to Goods and Services. I am sure it will come up under the Goods and Services Item for the Abattoir.

**Mr. Singh:** The question has been asked, and directed in a different avenue.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures.

**Mr. Singh:** The maintenance of grounds is proving to be quite a problem. I notice that there has been an increase from 6.9 to \$7.2 million. There has been a particular problem with the much-used Munroe Road Recreation Ground, also known as the Manohar Ramsaran Ground. I would like the Minister to pay some attention to that. There is some kind of ongoing controversy between the curators of the ground and the borough corporation, with no resolution in sight.

**Mr. Imbert:** May I ask the Member, is this affecting the work done by the corporation workers?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, it is affecting the work.

**Mr. Imbert:** I see. And if you look at the original estimates, you will see it is really identical, eh. The original 2018 and the original 2019 are exactly the same, 7,271,400.

**Mr. Singh:** So that is a question of the—

**Mr. Imbert:** But I think that point about interference is a very valid point.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 285; Item 001, General Administration.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Minister, line Item 43, Security Services. I am seeing 2019 Estimates at 2 million, an 855 increase from the 2018 Revised Estimate which was

at 1.145 million. Can you account for this increase in the figure?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I will just ask the Member to take note of the Actual for 2017, which was \$1.9 million.

**11.30 a.m.**

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay. Minister, are you in agreement with that?

**Hon. Hosein:** [*Inaudible*]

**Ms. Ramdial:** Right. Okay. Great. Thanks.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. I thought the Minister was not supposed to back to 2017?

**Mr. Imbert:** Is that a question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Okay. Well, I will put my question. I wanted to a statement. You “buff up” everybody yesterday. Anyway, line Item 15, Madam Chair, Repairs and Maintenance Equipment. The equipment for the entire corporation of Chaguanas 93,000; 100,000 for repair of equipment. When we, as Members of Parliament, want to get assistance for our constituencies, they always say that they “do not have equipment, they are not working properly, they are not functional”. I mean, this is terrible.

**Madam Chairman:** Just so that we will be correct, we are on 19?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** He is on page 255.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. But 285.

**Mr. Imbert:** Sorry. 285, but please note the primary Head.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Goods and Services. Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. The primary Head is General Administration.

**Madam Chairman:** But 19 is Official Entertainment.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. He is calling the wrong Head; he meant 15.

**Madam Chairman:** I just want for us to be correct.

**Mr. Imbert:** He meant 15, Madam Chair, but it is for General Administration. So these will be the vehicles and equipment associated with the administrative function of the corporation, and not the field function that you are referring to.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well right. When you call for help, they say that they do not have any vehicles to come and inspect the area.

**Mr. Imbert:** But that is one other Heads—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No. That is administration.

**Mr. Imbert:** —when you are building grounds. No. I do not agree with you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, we will—

**Mr. Imbert:** This is for General Administration purposes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is where the difficulty lies. They say cannot come—

**Madam Chairman:** One minutes, please, Minister.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—they do not have any vehicles to come.

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, if he is saying—if he keeps saying that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And one more, 93, Madam Chair, Operations of Electoral District Offices for Councillors of Municipal Corporations. What does that entail? Is it councillors' offices? Is that a payment for it?

**Hon. Hosein:** Rent, staff, office supplies, incidentals, et cetera.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For whom, the councillors? I am not hearing you, the Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** The word “councillor” is in the thing. Operations of Electoral District Offices for Councillors—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right.

**Mr. Imbert:**—of Municipal Corporations. So, obviously, it is for councillors.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. So are they paying for the offices?

**Mr. Imbert:** For offices of councillors. That is what it says.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right.

**Mr. Imbert:** So why ask the same question over and over?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many councillors will that be paying for?

**Mr. Imbert:** All of them.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How much is “all of them”?

**Mr. Imbert:** You do not know how many councillors are in Chaguanas Borough Corporation?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Some of the councillors are not being paid. Madam Chair, some of the councillors are being evicted from their offices because fees are not paid. The money is not paid by the corporation for these councillors to be in their offices, and they are being evicted from their offices. Yeah. That is a fact. And they are taking their desk and chair and everything.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is a general problem.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is this the question, Madam Chair?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. [*Crosstalk*] When the PNM is in Government.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is based on a false premise.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And you are not letting the Minister answer. Are you the Minister of Local Government too?

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So the question is—there is a question posed to the Minister based on that experience, and the question is: What is being done about it?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I want to assure you, because a question was posed to me in another place that three councillors were affected, one in Couva, Rio Claro and

somewhere else. And I gave the assurance that this would not happen again, and I liaised directly with the chairman of Couva and the chairman of Rio Claro, and we are working directly with the Ministry of Finance to ensure—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** [*Inaudible*] —with the Mayor of Chaguanas Corporation.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, as you know, Member, I have a relationship with everybody.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. Okay. A good one. A good one. A very good relationship.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 43, Security Services, to hon. Minister. Minister, as you are aware, a councillor in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation whom was shot at and, there arising, out of newspaper reports, allegations against the internal operations in which is it indicated that she was fighting corruption within the borough corporation and that is why her home was shot at. I know that aspect of it is a police matter, but did you cause any investigation to be done at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation having regard to the allegations being made?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes. Member, it is a police matter and well, I want to give the assurance also that the councillor has written to me, and I intend to respond to her accordingly.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance, of Buildings Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. We are at page 287. Item 001, General Administration; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Government Authority. We are

at page 288. Local Health Authority. I am sorry. Thank you. Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 288. Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

We now go on to page 292. 28, Diego Martin Regional Corporation. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Page 294 is it, Madam? 294?

**Madam Chairman:** No. No. We are at page 292.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Okay. Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** We are still under Personnel Expenditure. Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries. We are at page 294 now. Item 003, Market and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, line 28, Other Contracted Services. 2018 Revised Estimates 59,300; 2019 Estimates 400,000, an increase of 341,000. Can you account for what are these Other Contracted Services?

**Madam Chairman:** On page 294.

**Hon. Hosein:** This is adequate and it is consistent for 2017; in 2017 and 2018 Estimates.

**Mr. Imbert:** In fact, Madam Chair, the original Estimate for 2019 and 2018 are identical at \$400,000.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Local Health Authority. You had a question?

Sorry. Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 295; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Sub Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 295; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

We now go on to page 301. 29, San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 301: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc.

Sub-Head 02, Good and Services: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 304. Item 001, General Administration; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers. We now go on to page 309.

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Chairman:** 30, Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 309; Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority, page 309. I recognize Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, under Item 02, Wages and COLA, we have 32,300,000. Does that include the remuneration for litter wardens?

**Hon. Hosein:** No.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Where are litter wardens paid, if I may ask?

**Mr. Imbert:** Ministry of Works and Transport. That was dealt with yesterday. Sorry. Traffic wardens, my apologies.

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, that falls under Contract Employment.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Contract Employment? Would that be under Goods and Services then?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance?

**Hon. Hosein:** It is under the head office.

**Mr. Imbert:** Are we under Goods and Service?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No. No. No. We are not under Goods and Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are under Personnel Expenditure.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am just trying to locate—

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is under the Ministry. It is not corporation by corporation. So the Ministry will engage and pay the salaries and wages and deploy—

**Dr. Rambachan:** And allocate them the corporation.

**Mr. Imbert:**—and distribute this deploy.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is this why, may I ask, Minister?—that a lot of the corporation are having difficulty having some kind of administrative control over the litter wardens? Because they are paid from head office and therefore, there is a problem of who they are really responsible to.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, I do not see—in my view, if they are being paid through the

head office and they are under the control of the corporation, the corporation is supposed to have the authority to deal with them.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Some of the litter wardens do not feel that way, eh.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well—

**Dr. Rambachan:** It creates all kinds of administrative difficulties because for example, if I may?—if I may, the allocation of vehicles to the litter wardens become a problem. So that litter wardens cannot really go out and do their work because they do not have a travelling allowance. They have a flat salary and therefore, a lot of difficulty. So the corporation—when you ask as an MP, why is it that litter wardens have not come out to give tickets in a particular, you being told, “Well you know, the litter wardens do not necessarily report to us”. So that is a problem.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, again, this is something that you all will have to look into and—

**Dr. Rambachan:** I not saying that it is the case all over, but the cases—

**Mr. Imbert:** This is not line Item here

**Dr. Rambachan:** “Umm?”

**Mr. Imbert:** This is not a line Item.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I know it is not a line Item, but the thing is, it is a public matter that comes under health.

**Hon. Hosein:** I would like to, through you, Mr. Chairman?

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

**Hon. Hosein:** I have been getting this complaint from all the mayors and chairmen. They want them to fall under the corporation so that they will have control over them, and we are in discussion with that. And that is the way it will

work.

**Dr. Rambachan:** With his permission—

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, again, I do not want this to entertain—

**Dr. Rambachan:** I know “you talking” about line Item.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is not a line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:**—the debate back and forth. Right? Member for Tabaquite, I will give you a comment, a final comment on it and then we will probably hear from the Minister.

**Dr. Rambachan:** We will bring a Motion to discuss the effectiveness of the litter wardens under the present administrative arrangements.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Mr. Minister, do you care comment or I can move on? Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc, page 310. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, page 310; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Other Contracted Services. You have an increase of \$11.8 million in Other Contracted Services. Can we get an understanding of why this increase to \$55 million?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I just wish to point out that the original allocation for 2018 under this line Item was \$56 million. The 2019 original allocation is \$55,288,400. So it is less.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And contracted—

**Mr. Imbert:** What the Budget Division will do every year based on requests from the corporations, will allocate a certain sum. Whether that is spent or not during the year depends on a number of factors. What the Budget Division has done is

allocated, more or less, the identical amount in 2019 that it allocated in 2018.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You see, I cannot go back to 2017 to tell you that 55 million was also given out there and, in fact was spent. But is it that contractors are owed money and that is included in the \$55.3 million that is allocated in 2019? Are there outstanding payments to contractors? And if so, are these garbage contractors?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance or Minister of Rural Development and Local Government?

**Hon. Hosein:** This will include the garbage—no. We do not any arrears.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are not aware of any areas.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, these payments that are made under this Head to the garbage contractors are made on the basis of a contract between the garbage contractor in the Ministry or the regional corporation?

**Hon. Hosein:** The regional corporation.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. Does this contract contain specific clauses that deal with the apparatus, clothing and other things that a worker who works on a garbage truck requires in order to protect his or her own health?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** When the contractors are paid that contractor is supposed to provide all those.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister aware that there are people working on these garbage trucks without gloves, without masks, and in many occasions with rubber slippers?

**Hon. Member:** We want evidence.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You want the evidence?

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is the Tunapuna/Piarco Corporation? This line Item is to deal with Tunapuna/Piarco. In this corporation you are saying that?

**Dr. Rambachan:** There are trucks in Tunapuna and in this corporation, there are trucks in Chaguanas, there are trucks in Siparia, they are trucks all over.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Member a specific question. Your complaint or an allegation about lack of protective clothing, does it refer to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Which areas in Tunapuna/Piarco?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Several of the areas, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you identify them so we could deal with it?

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, again—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Pasea, St. Augustine is one area you will see it.

**Mr. Imbert:** So in Pasea, St. Augustine they use rubber slippers?

**Dr. Rambachan:** You asked me to identify an area. I have seen trucks like that, and I have seen trucks otherwise too.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members, now is not the time for the debate.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, he asked a question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Again, information can be provided to the necessary Minister. Again, you can write the Ministry, identifying the specific areas and we can go forward. All right? Other than that, Members, I will proceed unless the Minister has anything to add to the comment.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will engage the corporations.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Great.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman, the role of this Parliament is also to protect

people who have contracts and protect their workers, eh.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, this is the Standing Finance Committee.

**Mr. Chairman:** I need to hear the comment of the Member. I have given him permission.

**Mr. Imbert:** It have nothing to do with this, you know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I have made my comment. I said the role of this Parliament is also to ensure that when contracts are given out to people that they follow the tenets of the contract, so that the workers who work are also protected.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. And, again—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** If I may just interject here. Given what the Member for Tabaquite has said, that is why we are asking for evidence, because sometimes people make broad, sweeping generalizations. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Hold on, Tabaquite. One second.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** So, if we could just get the evidence as it relates specifically to contractors in Tunapuna, we will be able to investigate and get that information, and the Minister in the Ministry will be able to deal with that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members—and I have given the Member for Tabaquite the opportunity that he can communicate with the Ministry in order to so identify these particular contractors, and then the Minister also said after that he will also look into the matter. And that is clear.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Okay. In the same way that we have given undertakings that we will give information, is it that you will give the information? We look forward to receiving it. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that. Oropouche East, you have a comment on this

particular? Last comment.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, I am very concerned with Ministers in the front bench disturbing the Minister in the back who is quite prepared to answer and very competent.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for the comment, Member.

**Mr. Imbert:** Do you have a question?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, let me indicate [*Crosstalk*] that the Standing Finance Committee allows anybody to comment or ask a question. We are not disturbing our colleague.

**Mr. Imbert:** All Members of this House.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** We are Members of this House.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are all entitled to speak.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** And if we have additional information, we are prepared to give it, Mr. Chairman. So, the Member for Oropouche East is misleading.

**Mr. Imbert:** Out of order.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Members, we will move on. Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces—Members. [*Crosstalk*] Members, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, may I humbly—

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance, hold on, hold on, hold on. Minister of Finance, hold on, hold on. What it relates to, Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:** The general conduct of this whole thing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. I have noted it, no need to comment. There is no need to comment at this time. I am moving on. Item 0—[*Crosstalk*] Member for Tabaquite. Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc, and we are on page 312. Sub-Head 03—Couva South, where are you?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 312, 006.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Chairman, to the Minister, I see that there is an increase as it relates to Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment of \$1 million. Could the Minister shed some light?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, I am not hearing you too clearly. Your mike is on, also? Proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** My mike is on, Chairman. I see an increase of \$1 million—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, that is incorrect, that is the wrong line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item—

**Mr. Imbert:** He is looking at Materials and Supplies, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members, we are on—

**Mr. Imbert:** That is why I am going to make a request—

**Mr. Chairman:** 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc, page 312, that is where we at.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Chairman, under Materials and Supplies—

**Mr. Imbert:** You are looking at the wrong line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, give me number.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 12, Chairman, an increase of \$1 million. Could the Minister provide us with some information on how this \$1 million will be spent, this increase.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out that the 2018 Estimate for this Item was 2 million, and the 2019 Estimate is 1.75 million. There is no increase in the original allocation.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** And your question is, how it will be spent?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Whilst I have noted the Minister of Finance's comments in the appropriate column, there is an increase of \$1 million as it relates to the 2019 Estimates, and I am just seeking some information from the Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** And your clarification is based on what, Member?—that you would like to know how it will be spent?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes. How it will be spent?

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Mr. Minister, how will those funds be spent in 2019?

**Hon. Hosein:** On materials and supplies.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, I hear you. Will there be—in terms of the additional materials and supplies, how are you going to spend it, in terms of if there will be an increase of some type of materials or supplies and so on?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I will also like to point out that the 2017 Actual under this Item was 3.2 million. So that 2019 is not—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on, Members. Minister of Finance, we have gone past that aspect. What we are clarifying now is, how the moneys will be spent. And, Mr. Minister, you said supplies and materials. The Member seems to need a little more information. Supplies like, example. Could you just give probably two examples of the material or the supplies, please.

**Hon. Hosein:** Like hot mix and, concrete, sand, gravel.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Okay, Members, Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. We are now on page 312 still. Item 004, Maintenance of Building Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, and we are on page 313. Item 007, Households;

009, Other Transfers. And we will now move on 31, Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, page 317. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 13, I do not want to go back into what has been happening throughout the corporations, but just to ask if, at least, the remuneration that is identified here can reach in a timely basis to the corporations, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will ensure that happens.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Cemeteries. Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 30. Can the hon. Minister indicate, why is there a decrease?

**Mr. Chairman:** An increase?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** A decrease.

**Mr. Chairman:** Or it is “decrease” you said.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes. Decrease.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you can—

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

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No. No. No. Wait, please. No.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is the same issue over and over. It is the same at the 2018 original.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Chair—

**Mr. Imbert:** We keep going over this point over and over and over, you **know**.

**Mr. Chairman:** One second.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:**—Chair, I understand that in 2018 the Revised Estimate was 23,000 and if you have to compare it with the estimates of 10,000 it appears as

though there is not a decrease. But I am speaking in light of the fact that a number of the cemeteries in my area have not been maintained. And therefore, I am asking the question even though the figures may not appear to be a decrease, the mere fact that they are not being maintained properly, I am asking if really and truly, having this figure at the same level of the 2018 Estimate, in fact, is it going to be adequate?

**12.00 noon**

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. So, to simply put, if the figure that is quoted will be able to maintain the cemeteries in 2019?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Absolutely. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** Chairman, I need to clarify here. This is under Personnel Expenditure. It is allowances for daily rated workers. That cannot have any relationship to the maintenance of the cemetery. That needs to be asked under Goods and Services. Come to have some order here.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, Member, we would identify the question when we go to Goods and Services. Item 002, Cemeteries, Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs. Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, hon. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 02, I noticed there is a decrease in the wages and COLA, could you identify how many—will this decrease impact negatively in the maintenance of the markets and the abattoirs?

**Hon. Hosein:** No, it is adequate.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** If they require anymore, sir, would it be possible for it to be increased at all during the period?

**Hon. Hosein:** If it needs, we will do a virement. If the need arises.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, again, line Item 02, there is a decrease, and, of course, I do not need to indicate that there is a serious problem of the grounds being maintained in the Cumuto/Manzanilla areas. It is overgrown and—

**Mr. Imbert:** Chairman, it is identical to the original allocation for 2018. This is just going over in a circular fashion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance, it is the Member's prerogative to ask a question. As the Chair of the Committee, I will determine whether the question will be put forward to the Minister to be answered. I cannot stop the Members from asking whatever question they desire. All right, so—

**Mr. Imbert:** I am not asking you to stop them.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, from that point of view.

**Mr. Imbert:** But I never asked you to stop them. I am just making a point.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, point taken. So, Mr. Minister, ditto, will the same criteria stand here for this question, saying that a virement can be made as we go forward?

**Hon. Hosein:** Obviously, but—

**Mr. Chairman:** Fine. Item 005, Local Health Authority, page 318; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 318, Item 001 General Administration, pages 318 and 319. Cumuto/Manzanilla, I recognize you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. On behalf of my constituents of Cumuto/Manzanilla I am asking on line Item 05. I see there is the decrease with the telephones, and I am just asking if this decrease, has the Minister considered if with the use of phones, particularly in an area that is affected by flood, if a decrease in this area really is warranted, and how it would impact?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, line Item 05, Telephones, if the amount quoted will be adequate.

**Hon. Hosein:** The same goes, if it is not adequate we would vire funds for it also.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 0—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Wait, wait, just now.

**Mr. Chairman:** Come on, Member, a next, okay.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Fine. Go ahead.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line Item 43, Security Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Again, will this decrease hon, Minister affect the effective functioning of security within the constituency—the corporation?

**Hon. Hosein:** The amount is the same as the 2018 original estimate.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I understand that Minister. However, I know there has been some request for additional security and hence the reason why I am asking.

**Hon. Hosein:** The same applies here, hon. Member. If the need arises we would vire the money again.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line Item 68, Water Trucking. Hon. Minister, in my constituency there have been a lot of issues with regard to water and residents have to depend a lot on truck-borne water, and I see there is a decrease. Will the

Minister give an undertaking to vire moneys if it is necessary for the increase in the water trucking, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, Member, similar?

**Hon. Hosein:** We would liaise with WASA. The head office will liaise with WASA for assistance also.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Also, I saw in line Item 93, there is a—

**Mr. Chairman:** One second.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, may I be allowed to point out, with respect to line Item 68, that the 2019 Estimate is identical to the 2018 original estimate, and therefore when you compare those two there is no decrease.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that clarity, Mr. Minister. Next question.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Chair, if there was not a problem within my constituency I would not have been raising it.

**Mr. Chairman:** No problem, Member, and I am giving you the opportunity to ask the necessary questions. Proceed.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Or could I move on?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No, line Item 93—

**Mr. Chairman:** 93?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Again, I see a decrease, and again I am asking for the undertaking from the Minister, if there is any need for virement, that it will in fact be done for the operations?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, but if there is a need. But there should not be a need really,

but if there is a need.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item—[*Device goes off*] The Member with the device. Please!

Item 002, Cemeteries, Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs, Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, Item 005, Local Health Authority. We are now on page 320. Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, page 321, Item 005, Local Health Authority, Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 007, Households, Item 009, Other Transfers, and we now move on to 32, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. And we are on page 325; Item 001, General Expenditure, Item 002, Cemeteries, Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs, Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, Item 005, Local Health Authority, Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc, page 326; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 46, Minister, Natural Disasters. Now, I have noticed in every other regional corporation there was an increase, but in this instance there is a decrease as compared to the 2018 revised estimates by 150,000. Can you explain?

**Hon. Hosein:** Through you, Mr. Chairman, it is the same as 2018 original estimates.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes, but the revised estimates is 300,000 for 2018, so why a decrease by 150,000 in 2019?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, if we need to put in more we would have to vire to

put it in.

**Ms. Ramdial:** To increase?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Ramdial:** So that would be similar to a revised estimate for 2019. Okay, great.

**Hon. Hosein:** These disasters are important.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes, very important, Minister. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I would like just to make a general comment in the context of the observation of the Member for Couva North—

**Ms. Ramdial:** “Um-hmm”.

**Mr. Imbert:**—that when you compare the 2019 Estimate with the 2018 Revised Estimate for this particular line Item of Natural Disasters, the Members observe that there is a decrease of 150,000 between the 2019 Estimate and the 2018 Revised Estimate. I would just like to point out that adequate funds would be available for transfer or virement to this item, because there has been an \$11 million increase in the allocation to the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, as has been the case for all UNC corporations. All of them have received an increase in this fiscal year.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Chair, as you would quite understand, again, it is my right to ask on the different line Items, and I will continue to ask. Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I want to make the point, I did not complain. I offered clarification.

**Ms. Ramdial:** That is all well and good.

**Mr. Imbert:** There has been an increase of \$11 million—

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you for that.

**Mr. Imbert:**—in the allocation for the Couva corporation.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you very much. They need more than that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Okay, Members, fine. [*Crosstalk*] Couva South, what aspect you want to—on a line Item? Because I want to move on from the comments between both the Minister and the Minister for Couva South—the MP for Couva South. So, we are on 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** General Administration, yes. 93, Operation of Electoral District Offices.

**Mr. Chairman:** 93.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes. Mr. Minister, could you guarantee all councillors of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, based on this allocation, that there would be a timely release of funds to ensure payment of rent as it relates to their electoral district offices in this fiscal year?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, okay. Again, Mr. Minister, could you make a general statement for all the other municipalities to come—give us an assurance that on this line Item you will give the assurance that all the councils will, and so on—Give us an assurance, please.

**Hon. Hosein:** I ensure across the board that whatever I could do at my level I will continue to do, as I have been doing all the time.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, I will plead with you to ensure, through your Permanent Secretary, the appropriate request is made to the Ministry of Finance so as to avoid further embarrassment where Councillor Allan “Taxi” Seepersad had to meet burgesses on the street with his desk and chair, and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Couva South. Minister of Finance you care to clarify.

**Mr. Imbert:** I give you the assurance that once the request comes for this particular line Item, operations of offices of councillors for the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, the funds would be released, especially since they got an increase this year. They got an increase.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Minister of Finance, because the Minister of Finance keeps making this general comment, “they got an increase of \$11 million”. Could he tell this meeting how the \$11 million is allocated in terms of the increase? And how many grounds that the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation is responsible for in terms of its geographic expanse?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I thought we were on line Item 19 on page 326, under 02, Good and Services. Mr. Chairman, that is not—*[Interruption]* Mr. Chairman, may I be allowed to speak? The Member has made a long speech, I would like to answer. The Item to which he refers is a completely different line Item. He asked about operations of offices for councillors. That is the Item we are on, and I responded and said funds would be provided, and I made the clarification, we have increased the allocation to the Couva corporation for offices for their councillors. This has nothing to do with the other matter the Member raised. That would be dealt with when we get to it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. And I am moving on now, Members. Item 002, Cemeteries, and we are on page 327. Couva South. Couva North, sorry.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, line Item 22, Short-term Employment. I am seeing a decrease by \$16,000 for the 2019 estimate, can you care to clarify, and also let me just quickly make the point. There are many cemeteries within the

Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, so I think I can advise that it would be in good order to increase short-term employment to maintain these cemeteries rather than have a decrease in funding for short-term employment.

**Mr. Chairman:** And, what is the question, Member?

**Ms. Ramdial:** Can the Minister explain the reason for the decrease by 16,000?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, it seems adequate, but if it is not adequate, virement will have to take place.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Minister, can I get your assurance that it will be done in a timely manner at least.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, Member, hold on. Hold on. Hold on.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister has said, he has given the assurance that it will be done.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes, not a problem.

**Mr. Imbert:** May I comment on this, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** The additional comment—

**Mr. Charles:** How you understand—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on. No, hold on. Hold on. With regard to the decrease or the increase, Minister of Finance, you want to ensure that that is cleared up?

**Mr. Imbert:** I want to clear up, Mr. Chairman, the Member has said there is a decrease in Short-term Employment. I want to point out that in the line Item for cemeteries over all, inclusive of Short-term Employment, whereas there has been a decrease of \$16,000 in Short-term Employment there has been an increase overall of \$191,000, and therefore adequate funds are available for virement.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Let me just point out, Chair, that the increase he speaks about—the

Minister speaks about—with respect to \$191,000 increase, that does not go for the line Item of 22, which is Short-term Employment. It is for other services under that unit for cemeteries.

**Mr. Imbert:** Quite true.

**Ms. Ramdial:** So my specific question is about short-term employment and a decrease in allocations for short-term employment, considering the number of cemeteries that exist within the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation.

**Mr. Chairman:** And again, Members—

**Mr. Imbert:** I can assure you—

**Mr. Chairman:**—both Minister of Finance and Couva North, the Minister has answered the question.

**Mr. Imbert:** The virement will be approved.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. I am moving on.

**Mr. Imbert:** There is more than enough money.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am moving on, Members. Right. The Member has thing. Is Naparima in his seat?

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, because I know he was trying to get my attention.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs, Item 004 Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Yes. Thank you, Chair, under line Item 04, Electricity, again, the 2019 estimate is 100,000, bear in mind the 2017 actual was 649,000, the 2018 revised estimate is 151,000, and now for the 2019 estimate it is 100,000, a decrease

by 51,000. We have many grounds within the corporation, and therefore this decrease in electricity—Minister, can you give some clarification, exactly what is impacted by this decrease of 51,000? Buildings, grounds, which buildings, which grounds?

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, the corporation should be in a position to manage their allocations. But if there is need, we have the know-it-all to vire the funds. They will be in a position to have funds vired. I sign virements all the time across the board.

**Ms. Ramdial:** In a timely manner, right, Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Very timely manner.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:** I tell people that my desk is the cleanest desk in the whole Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you for that information, Mr. Minister.

**Ms. Ramdial:** I believe that. I believe that.

**Mr. Chairman:** I would hear the Minister of Finance now.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, it is true.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, when the request for virement comes, if it comes—  
[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us listen in Members.

**Mr. Imbert:** When the request for virement to the electricity item comes, if it is required to come, the decrease is 51,000, and there is 444,000 in increases available under the Maintenance of Buildings and Grounds item. And therefore, there is eight times the amount available for virement, and it will be approved.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. I will move on. Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In relation to the Minister of Finance continuing to boast about

his allocations, and so on, for Couva—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chair, that should not be allowed. I did not boast. I stated a fact. Mr. Chairman, please!

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, could you, under Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance, please! Proceed. I did not hear you, you know.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am asking the Minister, could he inform this meeting how many grounds fall under the responsibility of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation as it relates to maintenance?

**Mr. Chairman:** That information could be provided.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I want to hear the Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** 103 grounds.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 103 grounds.

**Hon. Hosein:** Recreation grounds.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Local Authority, page 328. Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Again, Mr. Minister, line Item 22, Short-term Employment, a decrease by 50,000 from the Revised Estimate of 2018—800,000 to now 750,000 under the 2019 Estimate. Can you explain that decrease? Minister of Local Government.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** We expect short-term employment to be controlled and managed by the corporation. This is an Item where we have serious oversight in terms of Short-term Employment. It is a very small decrease. Less than 10 per cent. But, the overall allocation for the Local Health Authority has been increased by \$7

million, and therefore if 50,000 has to be found to put the Short-term Employment expenditure at the same level as 2018 Revised, we have available to us an amount of about 50 times the requirement.

**Ms. Ramdial:** And in a timely manner?

**Mr. Imbert:** And I want to repeat that this item has been increased by \$7 million, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation.

**Ms. Ramdial:** We should get more.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc. I recognize Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. Minister line Item 12, this line Item is Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads, etc. This is critical to this corporation, line Item 12, Materials and Supplies, and I want to ask the Minister of Finance if he can help me go through the different years, because I am seeing in the revised estimate of 2018 of \$840,000 out of an allocation of \$5 million. Could you explain why would this figure be so low as a revised estimate in 2018?—first, before I pose my other question?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, it is very difficult for me, having been told that I should be not looking at the other columns and rows, to be now asked to look at a column and row that the Opposition has been adamant I should not look at. *[Interruption]* So, the whole morning I must not look at the original 2018?

**Mr. Lee:** No, but in your capacity as Minister of Finance—

**Mr. Imbert:** But, why now? All your Members said, do not look at that. I must look at that now? I am going to make the point, using the template insisted upon by Members opposite, insisted upon to the point of getting a ruling from the Chair,

that there has been an increase in 2019 in this item of \$1.77 million. And I am happy to increase the allocation for materials and supplies for State Traces, Local Roads for Couva/Tabaquite in the sum of \$1.77 million. I am happy to do that.

**Mr. Lee:** So, can I make a question? My question would be, to the Minister of Local Government: In 2018, was that line Item being starved, and lack of funding, because a lot of our roads in Pointe-a-Pierre, and Couva, and elsewhere, were not able to be repaired because of lack of funding and materials. So that the question I would like to ask is that would that be rectified in 2019, given that, according to the Minister of Finance, there is an increase—well, it is not really—

**Mr. Imbert:** Not according to me. It is what the book says.

**Mr. Lee:** Well, the book says, 1.7 million increase. So, the question I would like to ask is that I hope we do not have a repeat of what happened in 2018 of lack of materials to be able to provide services to the constituents of Couva, Pointe-a-Pierre, both Couva North, Couva South, Tabaquite and environs, and Caroni Central.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will ensure. I will do all in my—

**Mr. Lee:** Does this category apply to oil sand? This material and supplies that we get?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures—

**Mr. Imbert:** Increase.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** I was just pointing it is being increased.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Local Health Authority, page 329, Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 007, Households, Item 009, Other Transfers. We now move on to 33, Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 333, Item 001, General Administration, Item 002, Cemeteries, Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs, Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, Item 005, Local Health Authority, Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc.

**Mr. Charles:** Is this on page 359, Sir?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, 334.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, we are on page 334, and we are now going to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 334 to 335. Item 002, Cemeteries, Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs, Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, Item 005, Local Health Authority, page 336, Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, Item 005, Local Health Authority, Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera, page 337; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 337, Item 007, Households, Item 009, Other Transfers. We now move to 34, Siparia Regional Corporation; Sub-Head 001, Personnel Expenditure, page 342, Item 001, General Administration. Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** On that page, I would come down to—should I just go down the page or I will just wait for your call?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you have to wait for me please.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Cemeteries, Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, page 342. You with me, Fyzabad?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, I noticed a decrease of 270,000 there overall for Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, can you give an explanation?

**Mr. Imbert:** Personnel Expenditure.

**Dr. Bodoë:** But that would impact on—

**Mr. Imbert:** It is personnel.

**Dr. Bodoë:** All right, well, I will ask it under Goods and Services.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I think you should.

**Mr. Chairman:** Moving on, Item 005, Local Health Authority, page 342. Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, you had an expenditure of 15,600,000, can you provide in writing for me, preferably, the number of workers who would be paid by this amount, and the categories of workers who are included in that allocation?

**Hon. Hosein:** Thanks for the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** That would be provided, Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Sure. Nice.

**Mr. Imbert:** No sense in the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister! Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc. Fyzabad again.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yeah. Likewise, Minister, under wages and salaries, that expenditure of 20,900,000, if I can have the number of workers who will be paid? If the Minister has the number or if you can provide.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, that will be provided?

**Hon. Hosein:** Provide the numbers also.

**12.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. We are on page 343; Item 002, Cemeteries. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I was just going to ask in General Administration, if you would permit me, Minister?

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure, go ahead.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, with regard to Goods and Services, General Administration, there is an overall decrease of \$518,122, but I just want to ask about, Item 23, Fees. I see there is a big decrease here of 795,428. Can you perhaps give an explanation for that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister? Line Item 23, Fees.

**Hon. Hosein:** There was a legal matter.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Which has been settled?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me—

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** If you look at the original for 2018 and the Revised, you would see the big jump from 140 to 890. So they had to move money around to deal with a legal matter in 2018. That may not happen or it may happen.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I just wanted to just—

**Mr. Imbert:** I am just clarifying for you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am glad you are happy for the clarification.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Cemeteries.

**Dr. Bodoë:** [*Laughter*] You stop saying increase.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; please. Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. We are on page 344; Item 005, Local Health Authority. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chair. With regard to Other Contracted Services under the Local Health Authority, does this just relate to garbage collection or does it include other services?

**Mr. Imbert:** Local Health—

**Dr. Bodoë:** Only garbage collection?

**Mr. Imbert:**—will be primarily garbage, mostly garbage.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera. Sub-Head—Member for Fyzabad, you have a question here again?

**Dr. Bodoë:** I just wanted to ask the Minister about the decrease of 135,000—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Line Item 12, under Maintenance State Traces, Local Roads, Materials and Supplies, in view of the large number of state traces and local roads in the region.

**Hon. Hosein:** Normal virement.

**Mr. Imbert:** Member, if you look at it very carefully, you will see there is a huge increase under Other Contracted Services, of 968,000 which more than compensates for the decrease in materials and supplies. So the corporation can

shift from doing it by direct labour, where you would have materials and supplies, or contracting it out to small contractors and they can vire in-between. So there is an overall increase of \$832,000 which is more than adequate to deal with the decrease in one Item of \$135,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads et cetera. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 345; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads et cetera. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

We now move on to 35, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. We are now on page 350. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc, page 351. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Page 351; Item 001, General Administration, page 351, I recognize the Member for Oropouche West.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, line 68, Water Trucking. I am seeing there is—just a—I would say an incremental increase, about \$80,000. Would that suffice knowing that in Penal/Debe Regional Corporation we have only one working truck and we have to service thousands of persons?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** As I said before, I will liaise with WASA to assist because I talked to the Chairman. As a matter of fact we spoke at Penal/Debe concerning WASA

and I intervened at one point in time. And if there is a need for virement, we will also vire funds.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Cemeteries. Page 352 now. Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads et cetera, page 353. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 01, General Administration; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads et cetera. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

We now move to 36, Princes Town Regional Corporation. We are on page 358. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority, on page 359; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. I recognize the Member for Naparima, page 359.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. I refer to 02, Wages and COLA. Could the Minister indicate what jobs are being referred to here in terms of State Traces and Local Roads? Is this road inspectors and others?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Road officers.

**Mr. Charles:** Road officers. Minister, I see a decrease of \$500,000 in respect of 02, Wages and COLA. And given the plethora of problems we have in Naparima, Princes Town, and Moruga/Tableland with about 700 traces, endless landslips and potholes, et cetera, do you think that is justified—this decrease of half a million, is justified?

**Hon. Hosein:** Once it is necessary we will vire, and you will hear me saying vire all the time because I do it all the time.

**Mr. Charles:** So it is not a case of people going home or anything like that?

**Hon. Hosein:** No, no, no.

**Mr. Charles:** Or not filling—so what accounts for this 500 decrease?

**Hon. Hosein:** It was deemed adequate at the time, but as I said, once the need arises we will ensure that they vire the funds.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Chairman. To the Minister, just a general clarification I am looking for. Mr. Minister, you continue to use the phrase or terminology “virement of funds”. When you vire funds, are you suppressing expenditure in another area? Could you clarify that for me please?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, but based on the needs and the vire—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** That means if you have suppressing expenditure in areas you are suppressing the delivery of goods and services to the regional corporation.

**Hon. Hosein:** Not necessarily, but you see I have the confidence in the Local Government Authorities, which is the mayors, chairmen and CEOs and so on. And if they take it upon themselves to say they want a virement they will know best.

**Mr. Imbert:** Chairman, as a general statement on that matter, this particular corporation, Princes Town has been increased; its allocation has been increased by \$2.8 million in 2019 over the 2018 Revised Estimate. And in many cases, Mr. Chairman, there would be savings in particular areas because projects have not been completed in accordance with original timelines, acquisition of equipment, like vehicles have not taken place. So savings occurred in a particular line Item

which can then be transferred to a particular Item which requires more expenditure and that does not constitute a suppression or starvation or any adverse action whatsoever. It involves proper management of funds, and as the Minister has said, we expect the—[*Crosstalk*] I “doh” know why the Member is talking. I did not say a word when he was talking.

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

**Mr. Imbert:** It involves proper management of funds and as the Minister said, he has confidence in the corporations to manage their funds efficiently, professionally, effectively and competently. So there will be no problem.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Service; Item 001, General Administration, pages 359 to 360. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, an allocation of 664,200. Is that in respect of the Hosein Building in Princes Town, Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** I think so.

**Mr. Charles:** 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation, I think it is.

**Hon. Hosein:** I want to believe so. Well, it is no connection with me, “eh”.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, I know. [*Laughter*] And if we accept that—

**Hon. Hosein:** No relation.

**Mr. Charles:** And if we accept—no problem. My understanding is that there are challenges—and I am just asking whether this has been drawn to your attention—challenges with respect to office accommodation, accessibility for people like the disabled persons and what not and I think there have been so OSH issues with that building.

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, as you know and everyone in this House know, I have a

hands on approach with all the corporations and I am aware of exactly what you are saying. I visited the corporation and—

**Mr. Charles:** You are addressing the issues.

**Hon. Hosein:**—it has been brought to my attention and I think right now they are looking for a building to rent, because it is not adequate.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. A follow-up, Sir. At some time there was discussion about erecting a new building, is this at all on the tables at all? Again an alternative, a complex? I do not know. I am asking.

**Hon. Hosein:** It should be in the next fiscal year.

**Mr. Charles:** Next fiscal? Excellent. Another question, Sir. Item 46, Natural Disasters, an increase of 25,000 and 120. And I think Minister you are aware of the problems we face with flooding, with Councillor Vashti Sookoo, Raffi Mohammed in Barrackpore.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah, I know.

**Mr. Charles:** Right, you know. Do you think our 120,000 is adequate to deal with the—

**Hon. Hosein:** Head Office has some funding and we usually assist.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay, I accept. And Item 68, Water Trucking. I understand that the entire Vote of 420 Estimate for this year will be barely enough to pay the accrued expenses for last year. And so, therefore, if 420, which is an increase of 200,000, my understanding is that the figure owed is close to \$400,000. Is this so? And it would mean therefore that they would have no money if they handle expenses from last year.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, what we have been doing, we are trying to liaise with WASA to assist the 14 corporations if and when necessary and is always necessary. So I

will try to—

**Mr. Charles:** So in the case of a short-fall you are promising that you will get WASA to assist in the delivery.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, yes, because I have been doing that.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority, page 361; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads et cetera, page 361. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Right, 006 deals with Goods and Services?—with the maintenance of traces and local roads?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, goods and services, yeah.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. Is the Minister—given the kinds of problems we have in Garth Road, Cunjal Road, Coryal Road, Iere Branch Road, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, potholes galore. Is an allocation of 2.8 million—which is probably the cause of one major landslip, is this adequate? And what relief when my constituents ask about potholes and what now, Garth Road, et cetera—

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I understand. I come from Local Government. I understand Local Government and I have been around this country since I took up this office, all over this country and I know what you are talking about first hand. The money “does” never be enough. “Doh” matter what you do it will never be enough. I get letters, phone calls every day from councillors, aldermen. What we would do we try—on a daily basis—

**Mr. Charles:** Minister, I share your concern and I know you are concerned, but I think you need to impress upon the Minister of Finance the gravity of the situation.

And these are rural people and they feel neglected. So that I trust that you would use your good offices to impress upon the Minister of Finance to be kind and responsive to the urgent pleas and plight to the people of Naparima—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I have stayed out of this conversation but my name is being continuously called and certain insinuations are being made. Mr. Chairman if any objective assessment is done of expenditure on roads in rural areas, such as parts of Naparima—

**Mr. Charles:** Garth Road.

**Mr. Imbert:**—parts of Naparima, one would see that more than 50 per cent of Government expenditure is spent in these areas. It is wrong to insinuate otherwise. We spend millions of dollars in rural areas, more than the urban areas in terms of road work.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that comment. Is there another question?

**Mr. Charles:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment and Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures and we are now on page 362; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads et cetera. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and subsidies; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

38, Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities. Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 370; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 371; Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Members we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated

Fund, page 98; Item 003, Economic Infrastructures, pages 98 and 99. I recognize the Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, with regard to line Item 010, Restoration of Landslips. Can you indicate whether the landslips in Murray Trace would be included in that allocation?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, just tilt your mike a little lower down. You got the question, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** I am looking for it. Member you can ask the question again.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure. I was wondering Minister, whether the restoration of the landslips in Murray Trace and Namdeo Trace are included in that project? Under Restoration of Landslips, 010.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will have to provide that detailed information. I cannot say exactly. I will have to provide that information to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Information will be provided. A supplemental? Okay, we will now go to the Member for Couva North.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you. Minister, line Item 003, Restoration of Local Bridges. I see the 2019 Estimate for 3 million. Would you kindly give an undertaking to give us a list of those local bridges you intend to restore? And also the same for line Item 001, Restoration of Local Roads, an undertaking to give us a list of those local roads for 18.6 million for fiscal 2019. Yes, Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, I will have this list provided for you.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you. Let me ask all my questions before—Minister, line Item 020, Local Roads and Street Signage Programme, a new project of \$7.6 million.

Question, where is this programme going to be taking place and when it is expected to start?

**Hon. Hosein:** In the near future. Probably in the next two weeks and all 14 corporations.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow-up, next question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Page 99, 040, Support for the Automation of Construction Permitting Process, \$2 million; a new project. Could you enlighten us and elucidate what this is about, Minister, for \$2 million that is supposed to be in 2019?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance, can you give us that information?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Use your mike please.

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, I was—okay, thank you very much for that invitation, Mr. Chairman. The intention is to allow for the application for construction permits online to avoid unnecessary red tape and travel and inconvenience and waiting in offices. This is a Government wide initiative to try and make as many applications for as many services as possible online.

**Mr. Lee:** This is a very good initiative. When you feel it would start?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** May I intervene?

**Mr. Chairman:** You can clarify.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Sorry. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, you would recall that yesterday when I spoke in my capacity as Minister of Planning and Development I indicated that there was this new project and you will recall that with the PAFT legislation that we will be amending that both Local Government and Town and Country Planning would be working together on simple applications, which is

what Local Government will be doing. As a consequence of this we have this project which is in the Ministry of Planning and Development and in Local Government to deal with construction permits being done online rather than having to—it will also involve members of Local Government and the Town and Country Planning Division working together to ensure that the construction permits are done in a particular way and online. So there would be a change.

**Mr. Lee:** Would this be one platform that would share between both planning and town and country?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, it will be. And it will help us to improve the time and it will also assist with the ease of doing business concern.

**Mr. Lee:** Good.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto—you have another question? Okay, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Line Item 45, Minister, Implementation of Local Government Reform, \$2 million new project. Could you elucidate what this project is about?

**Hon. Hosein:** Remember the Ministry has been in regular dialogue with the corporations to get in a state of readiness for the reform. Progress has been made in all pillars laid out in the draft policy. While we await legislative amendments which are before the LRC, Law Revision Commission, Ministry of Legal Affairs, achievements, establishment of the volunteer network comprising civil society groups providing community services for the benefit of citizens across the country; disaster capacity building initiatives across municipalities, beginning of localization of contractor services across municipalities; increase effective municipal policing and repairs to schools and public buildings by municipal bodies in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. So these are the few that we have

started to work on before the reform actually comes in place.

**Mr. Lee:** You mentioned in your last statement there repairs to schools as part of this project. Has that been implemented as yet or is just—

**Hon. Hosein:** No, we have been in dialogue with the various corporations and with the Ministry of Education. We did assist and the schools normally assist, eh. Generally, the corporations assist with the schools in their communities. You “cyah” refuse a school when they come and ask for whatever help, a little plumbing, a little electrical, whatever.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize you Member for Caroni Central. We have a list that we are going by here— order. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. I just have a couple of questions. The first one in line Item 009. Could the hon. Minister indicate when the residents of Gainer Road will be getting their Bailey bridge?

**Hon. Hosein:** I have been in talks with the Member and I am happy to report that we have Bailey bridges to assist different communities. We could not assist because there were parts that was missing and in the last two weeks we have purchased the parts and so on, and we will be coming up to Cumuto/Manzanilla to assist you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Next one.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Just to ask, the local roads, 020, Local Roads and Street Signage Programme. Will the Minister consider at all utilizing in this line Item to provide signage for roads that are considered to be—required to be adopted

because they considered to be bastards, you know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, I do not like that word. Use a different word, please, “nah”?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Orphan roads. That is the name of the thing, orphan roads—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, but the word you used before.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Sorry. They are considered to be orphan roads and therefore a number of roads in my constituency requires signage, but because they are orphan roads they do not have that opportunity to get the signage.

**Hon. Hosein:** As I said, Mr. Chairman, we will be liaising directly with the corporation and they are going to make the recommendations, and I know you have a good relationship with your Sangre Grande Regional Corporation so I am sure they will make the projections to have it done.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance, you just want to shed some light here?

**Mr. Imbert:** I just want to make that if a road does not have a formal name the residents of the road simply apply to the corporation and propose a name. It is taken to the council, the council approves it and henceforth that is the name of the road.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am familiar with the process but there has been some problems in the past that is why I am asking. And the final question is, a request rather, line Item 001, 010, if the same information can be provided for my constituency as to what areas will be impacted in those line Items.

**Hon. Hosein:** With the roads?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** The Restoration of Local Roads and the Landslips. If any will apply for my constituency.

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay, I will have to get that information.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yeah, yeah, thank you.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, thank you very much. Mr. Minister, I just want to go back to 020 to ask one question. This is a new project—

**Mr. Chairman:** 020 on page?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Page 98. You are there? Just a quick clarification. This is indeed a new project and you say Local Roads and Street Signage Programme. The corporations have always been erecting street signs and so on, pursuant to the process that the Minister of Finance indicated. What is contemplated by this new project of signage programme? That is my first question, I have another one.

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, we are going to standardize all the street signs throughout the country. I have discussed it with the mayors and chairmen and they have agreed and we are going to start this—they were very eager. I took almost one year to discuss this with them.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Meaning that they will all be one colour or one size or one writing and that type of thing.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah, to standardize the writing on the plate and—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Fine.

**Mr. Imbert:** International standards.

**Dr. Moonilal:** International standards.

**Hon. Hosein:** International code.

**Dr. Moonilal:** International code. Oh, there is a code that—

**1.00 p.m.**

Because, you know we have in the Penal/Debe area, Mr. Minister, you might

be aware of a long-standing dispute involving the naming of the Mawasi Trace and the corporation and the court. And we have had, really, a long battle and I am hoping that—

**Hon. Hosein:** I know of it.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—somehow we can have an intervention that brings resolution to the matter. My second question is on 045, just to follow up on the local government reform matter—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, one second. We have not gone on to that. Let me just bring the record up to speed. Right?

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, but people asked on that already, eh.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. One second. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and other Services, pages 99 to 106. We are taking that together. So proceed.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, sure. On the issue of the implementation of local government reform, Minister, could I ask if it is contemplated that the Local Government Reform Programme will be in place before the holding of local government elections due next year? Or would the Government consider postponing the local government elections until the implementation of the full Local Government Reform Programme that you have embarked upon? [*Crosstalk*] Yes, Minister, I am not hearing you because of the noise in the front. But I am—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Members, please.

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I am not in a position to answer the second part.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Hon. Hosein:** I have no intention of reaching on that level. But what I can say is that the local government will be coming to the Parliament, I feel it is before Christmas. It is at LRC now and should be coming—

**Dr. Moonilal:** And then we will get a good look at the elements.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Page 104, under Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, line Item 286, Local Government Tourism Programme. Minister, I must say I am very disappointed that there has been no allocation for 2019 in light of \$20 million going for festivals to the THA for 60,000 people. We have 150,000 people within Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation—

**Mr. Chairman:** Question, please.

**Ms. Ramdial:**—and no funding allocated for Local Government Tourism Programme. I am very, very disappointed. Minister, can you give an explanation, please, why there is no allocation?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, what I am being advised is that the project was not—the feasibility study was not completed on time. You are talking about the local tourism aspect it in Couva—

**Ms. Ramdial:** “Um-hmm”. Feasibility study for all tourism programmes within the corporation.

**Hon. Hosein:** No. There is one project that was selected.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Which is that project?

**Hon. Hosein:** Carli Bay Recreational Facility.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Right.

**Hon. Hosein:** And it was not completed. Okay. The land matters, they say, was not dealt with as yet and the concept is not completed.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay. So that is the reason why there is no allocation?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah.

**Ms. Ramdial:** All right. Okay. And one more line Item, 289, Environment Enhancement and Preservation. There has been no allocation for 2019. Can I get an explanation for that, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** All environmental projects are under the Green Fund. It has been shifted to the Green Fund.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Where can I find this under?

**Mr. Chairman:** It is under the Ministry of Planning and Development.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay. All right.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you, Chair. 026—

**Hon. Member:** What page?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Page 99, Design of a Comprehensive Local Area and Regional Development Planning Process. Minister, I did not see—I do not know if the programme still exists, but I did not see anything referring to the Local Economic Development initiative. Is that still part of local government? And how do you find the allocation?

**Hon. Hosein:** It still is, and it is definitely continuing.

**Dr. Tewarie:** But there is no line Item related to it. I looked through—as we look through the local government, I looked for it.

**Mr. Chairman:** What is the name of it?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Local Economic Development. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** We are now clarifying, Member. So you are asking if it is coming under 026?

**Dr. Tewarie:** No. This line Item refers to design of a comprehensive local area

regional development planning process. So I am asking, since I did not see LED under any of the Items listed, whether it exists, first of all, and secondly, whether it will be subsumed under this planning process.

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I will have to get this information to you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So you will send something on that?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** So that information will be provided in writing.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you. In relation to this, then, there is a \$1 million allocation. So that is ongoing. And we had clarification on the automation of construction, 040, and the relationship between local government and planning, and in some contexts, Ministry of Trade and Industry, in relation to the ease-of-doing-business with these permits. So what we know from the information we have, Chair, is that there is some decentralization taking place in relation, at least, to this construction permit matter. In the 045, Implementation of Local Government Reform, based on the Minister's answer, he seemed to suggest a phased process in which certain Items are going to be addressed during the coming year.

My question is this: First of all, can we expect a phased process of decentralization? Secondly, will the matters related, that derive out of the Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill, be fully executed in relation to local government? And, thirdly, will the devolution part of local government reform also be included in any aspect of local government reform this year?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, could I simply ask what line Item we are on?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on line Item 045: Implementation of Local Government Reform. You care to—[*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, he just wants to stop me from asking the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** He cannot do that, Member for Caroni Central.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, come on. These pejorative comments, he just throw them across the floor.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. And I have placed it on the records, Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is so insulting, man. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Tewarie:** I did not insult you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, could you give a comment?

**Dr. Tewarie:** I did not insult you, Minister. I take your insults quietly. I “doh” even respond.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, he is now accusing me of insulting him when he is the insulter and I am the insultee. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, Members. The Minister is ready to proceed.

**Hon. Hosein:** Some of these—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Come on. Let us listen in, please. Let us listen in.

**Hon. Hosein:** Some need the legislation and what do not need any legislation, we are trying to put them in perspective, as we speak right now. I do not know if that satisfies.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, but I—you suggested that some decentralization elements are going to be set in motion. You also said the legislation will come to Parliament before Christmas. I understand that. I meant on the implementation side, in the fiscal year 2019, are you going to be phasing in some decentralization elements and some devolution elements? Or is it just decentralization elements?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think—Mr. Chairman, I think the Member is trying to anticipate the Local Government Bill. I suggest he waits, because we cannot have a debate about something that has not even been laid in

the Parliament yet, or has its first reading. He is asking questions about the legislation that is to come. So I suggest that we just wait until it comes. It is coming soon.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, you said that some aspects that can be done without legislation.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** What I suggest, as the Chairman, you could provide that in writing. That information that does not need legislation, that you could provide it in writing to the Member. Right?

**Hon. Hosein:** Certainly.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, I would appreciate that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, great. Oropouche West, you still have a question?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, page 105, under Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, line 311—

**Mr. Chairman:** Local Roads and Bridges Programme?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** 311, Drainage and Irrigation Programme.

**Mr. Chairman:** 311?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Page 105—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I am with you. Page 105, Penal/Debe Corporation, and we are on 311.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, Drainage and Irrigation Programme, is there a commencement date for this programme?—one. And two, if the areas have been identified, in particular the Blackwater Channel in Woodland, the

Sudama Teerath in Tulsa Trace, the Alligator River.

**Hon. Hosein:** Through you, Mr. Chairman, I do not have the specifics but I could get it for you.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Okay, sure. Line 312, Development of Recreational Facilities, if you have identified those facilities, in particular, to the Bunsee Trace Recreational Facility and the one at Dignity.

**Hon. Hosein:** I do not have the details, but I have seven grounds—

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Recreational facilities?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, to be upgraded.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Okay. Line 316, Construction of Markets and Abattoirs. I just need to know where these will be located, and how many markets and abattoirs.

**Hon. Hosein:** Barrackpore market is one. And the other one is the Penal market. Yes.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** That is for refurbishing?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, the Barrackpore market and the Penal market.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** So you are going to construct a Penal market?—because I believe there is one already.

**Mr. Chairman:** Pardon me? The question again? If you are going to construct—

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Yes, if they are going to construct or you are going to refurbish, because I am seeing this line is Construction of Markets and Abattoirs. Because there is the Penal market—

**Hon. Hosein:** It is to improve the—

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** So it is for improvement?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, improvement works.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** All right. And, of course, the Local Roads and Bridges Programme, if perhaps you could elucidate on that. Not now, but perhaps if you could give a list.

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay, you will have that list for the local roads and bridges also.

**Mr. Chairman:** That would be provided.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Chair. On page 99, line Item 038, Development of West Park, there was an allocation in 2018 of \$5 million. Obviously, it was not utilized and there is no allocation. What is the status of this project which is opposite the West Mall—the lands opposite the West Mall? Prime real estate.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is in progress.

**Mr. Singh:** That means—

**Mr. Imbert:** Work is going on. If you pass there, you will see construction work under way.

**Mr. Singh:** No, but—so that therefore—but there is—I mean, guide me as to where the funding coming from for that—

**Mr. Imbert:** It is being funded by a state enterprise at this point in time through a loan and through the IDF. UDeCOTT is handling it. Sorry, NIDCO is handling it.

**Mr. Singh:** NIDCO is handling the development of the park?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** And the allocation is under NIDCO?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is NIDCO.

**Hon. Member:** IDF.

**Mr. Imbert:** IDF.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, perhaps you can guide me when we reach that stage in—

**Mr. Imbert:** But it is under construction. If you go down there you will see.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Well, I am not familiar, but I just saw the line Item.

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, I am familiar. I pass there regularly.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, good. Next Item is on page 101, the development of—line Item 146, Chaguanas Borough Corporation, Development of Cemeteries and Cremation Facilities. There is an allocation of—2019 estimate of \$500,000. Hon. Minister, you will recall in your visit to the Lakhan Cariah Cremation Site, the competition that exists between the embers of the burning corpses and the fishermen bringing in, bringing out, their produce, and also the retrieval of the pleasure crafts. And, hon. Minister, you would have seen that in the Felicity area in this Casicou area, is the greatest growth, the largest growth of pleasure crafts moorings taking place outside of San Fernando and Chaguaramas area.

So clearly there is need for the relocation of the Lakhan Cariah Cemetery because there are public health considerations; there are aesthetic considerations; it provides a limit to the growth of the pleasure craft industry and the fishing industry in the Felicity area in Central Trinidad. This allocation—what is this allocation of \$500,000 for in the context of what I have said?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, on page 101, Chaguanas Borough Corporation, line Item 146, in terms of that figure there of \$500,000, in terms of the usage based on the comments that he made—page 101, Development Programme book.

**Hon. Hosein:** This money was allocated—I remember visiting with you and all what you spoke about, I saw the need for it, but this money was—upon that meeting I had talks with the Mayor and he was going to have a consultation with the people in the area to do improvement works, and so on. But this money was allocated to develop the facility to make it more user-friendly and convenient for members of the community, for example, putting in fencing, road paving and

perimeter lighting, et cetera.

**Mr. Singh:** Where is that? What facility is that?

**Hon. Hosein:** This is 146?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes. But which facility?

**Hon. Hosein:** Felicity and Longdenville.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Where in Longdenville?

**Hon. Hosein:** Felicity cemetery and Longdenville cemetery.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Naparima, you still have a question?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, two questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure, one at a time.

**Mr. Charles:** Page 106, and Item 338, Development of Cemeteries and Cremation Facilities. I will wait.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, could I ask, in the objective of good order, that we go corporation by corporation? Because it is confusing the staff behind me, jumping from corporation to corporation. Could we go: Tunapuna, Sangre Grande, and just complete and we move on? I am asking, and it is a humble request coming from me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, yes, but it would mean now that each one of your Members, Chief Whip, when we identify Tunapuna or Penal, they would then have to—

**Mr. Lee:** No, what we would find is that each Member would belong to—

**Mr. Imbert:** They would have different interests.

**Mr. Chairman:** One person would have the particular—great suggestion.

**Mr. Imbert:** I thank you very much for that compliment, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Charles:** He did not want me to bring up anything about Naparima. That is the problem. So he has carried us back.

**Mr. Chairman:** So we are on page 100, Port of Spain. Any questions on Port of Spain aspect? I would presume no. I should not presume, right? Arima Borough Corporation, same page, 100. San Fernando City Corporation, page 100, Pointe-a-Pierre, question? Right, Mr. Minister? Let your technocrats know, we are dealing with San Fernando on page 100.

**Mr. Lee:** Page 100, under San Fernando City Corporation, line Item 077, Development of Recreation Facilities, if you can provide it in writing, the \$1.8 million and the particular locations that are supposed to be recreational development for 2019. You could provide that in writing. I also will go on to page 101 within San Fernando Corporation. Minister, if you could provide in writing at a later date, 089, Local Roads and Bridges Programme, the identification of those areas, and also 095, the Procurement of Motor Vehicles and Equipment for \$800,000. What equipment is designed or estimated to be purchased in 2019?

**Mr. Chairman:** You got that, Mr. Minister? All are to be provided in writing.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Provide that in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** You want to say something, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** No, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We are still on page 101 and we are going on to Point Fortin Borough Corporation. Any questions from the Members? Chaguanas Borough Corporation at the bottom of page 101, questions, Tabaquite?

**Dr. Rambachan:** 148, it is on the other page.

**Mr. Chairman:** So we are on page 102, Chaguanas Borough Corporation.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Construction of Markets and Abattoirs. In 2018 you allocated \$3.6 million but nothing was spent, and now you are allocating \$1 million for the abattoir in Chaguanas. What is the update on the abattoir?

**Mr. Chairman:** Abattoir update, Chaguanas.

**Hon. Hosein:** Just one second. Okay, Member, provision was increased substantially in the last fiscal allocation to facilitate payment in the amount of \$1.8 to the contractor for works completed in fiscal 2016 to 2017 on the market roof project. This project has since been completed. The rest of the project entailed installation of central AC, electrical upgrades, et cetera. This allocation is in line with the amount received by other corporations for this Item.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So there is nothing for the abattoir?

**Hon. Hosein:** No. I am being guided, this was an RDC project, the abattoir.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But are you aware of the state of the abattoir in Chaguanas?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, I visited the abattoir.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 156, Municipal Police Equipment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Still on Chaguanas?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes. I see \$1 million is allocated there. Mr. Minister, a couple weeks ago, and even up to last week, the police were refusing to work because they said they had no guns. Are you aware whether they have now gotten their guns and whether they are out on the streets?

**Hon. Hosein:** They received the funding for what you are enquiring about.

**Dr. Rambachan:** For the guns?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So they would be able now to go out and do the work?

**Hon. Hosein:** According to what I have been told here.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, line Item 408, Establishment of a Tourism Park. I see no allocation again for Chaguanas Borough, 2019. Can you clarify?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I will have to provide you with the information, based on my advice.

**Ms. Ramdial:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am moving from Chaguanas now. I am going on to Diego Martin Regional Corporation, same page 102. San Juan/Laventille, Regional Corporation. Now to page 103: Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. And I know the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla will furnish us with some questions here. Proceed.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, this line Item 242, what type of equipment you hope to procure for the corporation that is so badly needed?

**Mr. Chairman:** 241?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** 242.

**Mr. Chairman:** 242, Procurement of Motor Vehicles and Equipment.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, you had enquired earlier about water?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** “Um-hmm”.

**Hon. Hosein:** And this is to purchase a water tender.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, all right. Line Item 233—Minister, I do not want to go through it again, so I am just going to call it: 233, 234 and 240, if you can identify what programmes are in place in my constituency, please—instead of going through the whole process.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you will provide that in writing, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Sure.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, assurance given. We now move across to page 104, and we are coming down to Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. And I recognize Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, there was, in 2018, an estimate of \$14,400,000 and your revised estimate—

**Mr. Chairman:** Give me the line Item, please.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am dealing with the overall allocation.

**Mr. Chairman:** Overall allocation. Proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And it was revised to \$12,350,000. In 2019, there is an allocation of, or an estimated allocation of \$16,500,000. Mr. Minister, will this be upheld in terms of the allocation for the fiscal year? Or will it be reduced?

**Mr. Chairman:** In terms of the question—

**Mr. Imbert:** I will answer that.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Based on what I have seen—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, the Minister of Finance will answer.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—the revised estimate for—because the Minister kept boasting about increases to the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance will provide a comment or an answer.

**Mr. Imbert:** Member for Couva South, I got the question the first time, you know.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I know you are a very attentive gentleman.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, but you do not have to repeat three times. Every effort will be made to disburse the entire allocation. It all depends on availability of funds, tax

collections, revenue collection, the out-turn of the economy—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And it is important to underline that, because—

**Mr. Imbert:** But every effort will be made to disburse the entire allocation to all 14 corporations in 2019.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you for your response.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, under Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation, line Item 261, could he provide a listing of the recreation facilities for the \$1.8 million budgeted 2019, please? Also line Item 262, for \$500,000 which is the cemeteries and cremation facilities. Line Item 263, Minister, could you explain this line Item, please?—because 632 was expended in 2018 and then 100,000 is budgeted for 2019, Local Government Public Conveniences Programme. Could you just enlighten me what this programme is about, line Item 263?

**Mr. Chairman:** Just before you answer, Mr. Minister, on that one, assurances are being provided for the other two line Items to be provided in writing?

**Hon. Hosein:** In writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Nice. So you can now proceed to 263, if you have an answer.

**Hon. Hosein:** The corporation plans to upgrade and provide functional amenities to the members of the public by constructing a facility in Gasparillo.

**Mr. Lee:** In Gasparillo. So has this public facility been constructed already in 2018, or it has started? Because I see over \$600,000 was expended.

**Hon. Hosein:** This is for this fiscal year, 2019, Gasparillo.

**Mr. Lee:** Well, restrooms?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** What part of Gasparillo? Why Gasparillo? Not that I am against the Member for Tabaquite.

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, the—

**Mr. Chairman:** It is a literal question?

**Mr. Lee:** No, no.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is “Why Gasparillo?” a literal question?

**Mr. Lee:** No, no, that is just a comment I was just making.

**1.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** So where are we now?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, the corporation requested it to be done in Gasparillo.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. So we are now moving to Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, and I will recognize the Member for Mayaro and we are on page 104 to the bottom.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Chairman. Minister, line Item 365—in terms of the reduction in funding for Disaster Preparedness. Taking into consideration we had two massive floodings which you did tour with me last year and the fact that, you know, we are susceptible to the adverse weather conditions on the east coast there, why it is we had this reduction in that Disaster Preparedness funding, that allocation? Line 365, page 105.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, we are working right now with the corporation that—most of the flood-prone areas in south in regard to the flood early-warning system—because we are coming to be having this thing now. The flood early-warning system is a new initiative and this will done in Mayaro, Princes Town, Penal/Debe. These areas are the most flood-prone areas: Mayaro, Princes Town, Penal/Debe.

**Mr. Paray:** This allocation is for technology or is it for an assessment or something in terms of the early-warning system?

**Hon. Hosein:** Technology.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I heard the technocrat. I did not quite hear you, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Technology. I asked for an explanation.

**Mr. Chairman:** No problem.

**Mr. Paray:** And last question. Minister line Item 376, Construction of Public Conveniences. I see an allocation for \$200,000, any indication of where these conveniences are going to be erected? `

**Hon. Hosein:** I could find out and let you know, but I know it is to construct washroom and toilet facilities and that was requested by the Mayaro Corporation.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. We remain on 105, Siparia Regional Corporation. I recognize Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chair. I have two questions. The first would refer to line Items 296 to 301. In the interest of time and for convenience, if I can have in writing a listing of all the projects that would be covered by these line Items for the allocations?

**Hon. Hosein:** 296?

**Dr. Bodoë:** 296 straight to 301.

**Hon. Hosein:** 296 to 301.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yeah. 296, 297, 298, 299, 300 and 301.

**Mr. Chairman:** That would be provided in writing, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes. I will provide it in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Next question.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Second question would be with regard to line Item 303, Procurement of Motor Vehicles and Equipment for the expenditure of 800,000. Do we have an idea of what equipment will be purchased under that line Item?

**Hon. Hosein:** No. I will have to get it from the corporation because they requested it and—

**Mr. Chairman:** To be provided?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** To be provided. And the last one would be 320, the Construction of Performance Arts and Culture Building. I see no allocation in 2019. Can you indicate what is the status of that project, has it been completed?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** The justification was not completed, but it will be done in this fiscal year. Once they provide all the information and so on, it would done in this fiscal year.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So the project has not been started yet?

**Hon. Hosein:** No.

**Dr. Bodoë:** All right. But it has not been abandoned?

**Hon. Hosein:** No. No.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay Members, we will now go to page 106, Princes Town Regional Corporation. I recognize Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have two questions. The first one relates to Item 338, Development of Cemeteries and Cemetery Facilities, an allocation of half a million dollars. I am asking the Minister if this allocation

relates to the Iere Village Cemetery which I understand has been plagued by landslips? In fact, the cemetery, part of it has slipped and, therefore, it is closed; and is there a case of a replacement or rehabilitation of the Iere Village Cemetery?

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. The council will have to decide where they want to spend the funds, but I know they got it. I have something here, but I do not want to read it out and I am not sure about it.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Hon. Hosein:** I would have to get it directly from the chairman.

**Mr. Charles:** But the matter is receiving attention?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, definitely.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Minister. And 339, Local Roads and Bridges Programme, 4 million. This is for all secondary roads in Moruga, Tableland, Naparima and in Princes Town, and the general question and then a specific question. General question: if the Minister feels that 4 million is adequate given the fact that I was told—and I want to make abundantly clear I am not jealous and saying that Tobago should get less. But Tobago was allocated \$25 million for local roads and bridges, and us—and the entirety of the Princes Town Regional Corporation has been given one-sixth that allocation.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you want to know if the amount is enough.

**Mr. Charles:** Is the amount enough and justified particularly in the context of the Minister of Finance's statement that there is equity that we get in Naparima with the other areas of Trinidad and Tobago, a view which I disagree with profoundly.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is that amount enough, Mr. Minister, in terms of for that—

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, if this amount is not enough, we have the entity which is the RDC, which deals with rural development, and we will be able to assist as you

know.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. And the second question: Minister, if you could make available the list of roads to be handled by this? I am particularly interested in Coryal Road, Iere Branch Road, Ruiz Road, Lengua Road, Jaipaulsingh Trace and Papourie Road.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, I will have to get the list from the corporation to provide you with it.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 340 under the Princes Town Regional Corporation, which deals with Local Government Building Programme and allocation in 2019, an estimate of 300,000. Can the hon. Minister indicate pretty much what this particular allocation will be used for under the Local Government Building Programme, please?

**Hon. Hosein:** 340?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Hon. Hosein:** This is for the police post.

**Mr. Padarath:** And this police post, hon. Minister, would be housed at the Princes Town Regional Corporation?

**Hon. Hosein:** No, separate. I visited the police posts. It is away from the—I forget the name of the street. By the transport yard, sorry—where the transport yard is. As you enter the transport yard, it is the building on the left. It is under construction right now.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure. Minister, do you expect with this allocation of 300,000 that that project will be completed, or do you expect that it will roll over into the next financial year?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, this should help. This should be adequate.

**Mr. Padarath:** Adequate to complete the project?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes. Once it is managed properly and so on.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, I was happy that you raised the issue that this is for the police post because I want to move to line Item 404, Municipal Police Equipment, an allocation of 500,000. The question that I really have flows from the answer you gave for line Item 340—going into 404—which is the establishment of the police post; and now we are seeing Equipment, a Vote providing for equipment for the municipal police. As you are aware, Minister, over 100 officers were promised two years ago—Princes Town Regional Corporation has six officers at this time, the least among all regional corporations in the country. Could the hon. Minister indicate whether with this Vote in Municipal Police Equipment, how many officers will benefit from this particular Vote in terms of being equipped; is there any plan to increase the capacity to utilize this particular Vote?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, you are not singular in this. You have other corporations that have less police than six, but—

**Mr. Imbert:** Less police than—

**Mr. Chairman:** One person answering, please.

**Hon. Hosein:** But you know, the Government took an initiative to have the 1,400 police in each—100 in each corporation, 200 in Port of Spain. The first batch will be passing out in early December and I think around 200 officers; a next batch will be starting in February.

**Mr. Imbert:** May I come in here, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** You have completed, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Go ahead.

**Mr. Imbert:** Being the line Minister for the Statutory Authorities Commission, the chairman has been in regular contact with me because the Statutory Authorities Commission is doing two boroughs, two cities, and the Public Service Commission is doing the 10 corporations, and they are work in tandem. So I do know that they are almost to the end of completing the training, and so on, for about 200 officers. Right now they need new uniforms which is something that was raised with me last week and we are going to deal with it. So I think within the next couple months there would be 200 additional municipal corporation police officers to be disbursed and spread among the 14 corporations.

**Mr. Chairman:** Princes Town, a follow-up question, or additional?

**Mr. Padarath:** Follow-up. Based on the answer given by the Minister of Finance, hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, it will then indicate to me that based on the 200 figure provided, if 200 officers pass out by January we will still be nowhere closer to 100 officers per municipal corporation to utilize this particular Vote, am I right or am I wrong?

**Hon. Hosein:** We are closer than that.

**Mr. Padarath:** With 200 officers, hon. Minister, in 14 corporations—

**Mr. Imbert:** Could I just come in again? It is quite a laborious exercise to invite applications; do a shortlist; do a background check in terms of a character reference, police record and so on; then interview; then shortlist; then train; and then equip. It is taking a long time. It is not a simple matter. You are talking about 1,400 police officers. When you think about the current strength of the police service being about 6,000 or 7,000, this is a huge amount of police officers. It is not something that can be done in one year. It is just not physically possible.

But with these 200, this would go a long way to dealing with the current situation.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 204 of the same book. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 201 to 205. Question, Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, line Item 001, page 204, Construction of Integrated Fishing Port for Moruga. Has that project been completed, or is it 100 per cent completed? Because there is no allocation in 2019 and only a small amount was utilized in 2018 of just over \$600,000—has that port been completed and operationalized?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, this project has been transferred to the Ministry of Works and Transport.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. Next question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mr. Lee:** Page 205, line Item, 007, Upgrade of Community Infrastructure in—sorry. 003, Development of Rural Communities, \$56 million budgeted for 2019, 2.2 was the revised figure for 2018 out of an estimate of 15 million. Could you indicate what is supposed to happen for \$56 million in 2019 in the development of rural communities and what communities are these, targeted?

**Mr. Chairman:** You could provide that information now, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** I have a long list—

**Mr. Lee:** No, but you could provide it in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. So it will be provided in writing.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** And my last question, 010. This is a new project, Latrine Eradication Project, 2.6 million for 2019. Could you enlighten us a bit about this programme

and the location of this project?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:** What page are you on?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on page 205.

**Hon. Hosein:** This will affect three corporations: Mayaro/Rio Claro, San Juan/Laventille and Port of Spain Corporation. It is the first phase. The money was allocated and head office will assist the corporations to deal with this project.

**Mr. Lee:** And in a simple way, elucidate: what is supposed to really happen with that—you go into the particular private homes of individuals and try to upgrade their facilities?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** This has been in progress in Port of Spain for many, many years. It is common in communities, unplanned communities, where people live very close to each other, on top of each other, where when the houses were built they did not install septic tanks and soakaways and there is no access to a sewer system. In Port of Spain they have been quite successful in removing the latrines or replacing them with septic tanks and soakaway systems, and this is what this is all about. Yes, you go into the private homes and you will assist them. The Government pays for it to replace their latrine with a septic tank and soakaway system.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are okay, Pointe-a-Pierre?

**Mr. Lee:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Princes Town?

**Mr. Padarath:** I am fine.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are fine. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, 205 to 206; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 206. Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 060, Construction of Administrative Complexes. Here we have listed in 2019 an estimate of 40 million. As you are aware, the Princes Town Regional Corporation's building has been condemned, yet the corporation continues to occupy the building despite having failed OHSAs twice. I think that is a serious indictment on the Ministry to allow the corporation to continue without finding alternative accommodation for them. Can the hon. Minister indicate through this line Item whether the Princes Town Regional Corporation will be constructed or relocated?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, this Item here has to do with the Penal/Debe Administrative Complex and the Diego Martin Administrative Complex. I have been liaising with the Chairman of the Princes Town Corporation, and when I visited there for the last statutory meeting I saw the need for a new complex, but it depends on the funding and so on we receive. I advised them to look for a property to rent and they were looking. The last conversation I had was a couple weeks ago. They said they found somewhere but it was in a basement and it was not assessable to the public and so on. Somewhere on the Main Road in Princes Town. So I will continue to liaise with them to ensure, but there is definitely a need for a complex because the place is not adequate and it is not safe, user-friendly and so on.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, hon. Minister, for the answer. I am quite happy to hear your assurance that the Princes Town Regional Corporation will get assistance in terms of moving out of that sick, failed OHSAs building twice in this financial year. Thank you for that assurance.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Princes Town.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Madam PS and your senior members of the Ministry. Thanks for coming. Yes, Members, we will now break for lunch. We will resume at 2.30 p.m.

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

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Colleagues, we will now resume the Standing Finance Committee. I would like to go to Head 61.

*Head 61:* Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, \$1,457,192,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a brief statement kindly not exceeding five minutes. Proceed, Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Thank you very much. Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, together with its implementing agencies, is mandated to stimulate national development by transforming the country's urban and peri-urban landscape—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on. Members, we now resumed from lunch so let us kindly get on with the business of the House at this time please. And again, I would like to hear, and each one of us should want to hear the Minister of Housing. So proceed.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I say again, Mr. Chair, that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, together with its implementing agencies, is mandated to stimulate national development by transforming the country's urban and peri-urban landscape as well as providing affordable housing solutions in a holistic and responsible manner. This mandate is

aligned to the national strategic development goals, Vision 2030, putting people first by creating sustainable cities and communities to enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry's core areas of responsibility include: provision of government-subsidized housing; monitoring and evaluation of housing trends and markets in the country; provision of home improvement grants and subsidies; regularizations of tenure of housing for squatters; land settlement; urban development.

The Ministry has eight affiliated organizations which implement and promote its policies, plans, programmes and projects. These are: Housing Development Corporation, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, Land Settlement Agency, the East Port of Spain Development Company Limited, East Side Plaza and New City Mall.

Mr. Chairman, this Ministry is focused on increasing home ownership through its accelerated housing programme with its associated mortgage programme, the aided self-help programme and the housing and village improvement programme. We also focus on providing a greater number of rental units and maintaining the HDC's rental properties. The Ministry also assists in the refurbishment of existing housing stock through the provision of home improvement grants.

Our urban development portfolio is spearheaded by the UDeCOTT which delivers capital projects. Our urban regeneration projects, which include infrastructural developments in urban areas, utilizing a comprehensive and integrated approach. Companies such as East Port of Spain Development Company Limited and UDeCOTT are committed to achieving community

regeneration through economic, social, physical and cultural developments. In Port of Spain, the New City Mall and the East Side Plaza are instrumental in nurturing and promoting microbusinesses and entrepreneurial activities to create productive employment opportunities and private sector investment.

Mr. Chair, another of our Ministry's main responsibilities is the enhancement of the living conditions of certain communities through infrastructural developments carried out by the land settlement agencies. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, through its various agencies, continues to deliver on its mandate to provide affordable, innovative, sustainable housing solutions, the redevelopment and regeneration of urban and peri-urban spaces and infrastructure development. The Ministry remains committed to ensuring that our policies and programmes remain relevant. We will continue to re-engineer and innovate as the need arises.

Permit me also to extend sincere thanks and appreciation to the Permanent Secretary and the Ministry's team, as well as the agencies that fall under the Ministry's purview for facilitating a seamless passing of the baton of responsibility. I look forward to next fiscal year to build on the work started by my predecessors. I thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would like to welcome at this time, Madam Permanent Secretary of your Ministry and also the senior executives from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. Welcome.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,457,192,000 for Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft*

*Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme.*

We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Colleagues, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 302 of our Recurrent Expenditure booklet; Item 001, General Administration, page 302. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 302 to 303. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 304; Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, pages 304 to 305. Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Board and Similar Bodies, page 305; Item 004, Statutory Boards.

The next booklet. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of Assembly*. 18 - Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund - Administration. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 449. I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, line item 06, Remuneration to Board Members; 2019 is budgeted for the remuneration fees of board \$327,000—is there a board in place presently, Minister?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is a board in place. The board, however, does not have a full quorum at this point in time. They have four members. Five are required for a quorum out of the nine. We are in the process of fulfilling that board right now.

**Mr. Lee:** Can I ask a general question with respect to that line Item? In respect to

Pointe-a-Pierre, the Tarouba area falls under Sugar Welfare, and trying to get some sort of assistance from that agency in trying to bring some clarity to the owners of properties within that Tarouba area that falls under the sugar welfare—and the infrastructure aspect—has been a challenge for me as an MP in respect of who has the responsibility for that particular area. So I am asking that as you have a board in place, and I am hoping that I can get some clarity from that board because I have had a challenge in the last two years in trying to get some information on the infrastructure aspect of the Tarouba lands that fall under the sugar welfare board.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** So if I get you right, you are asking for some information as to how we can treat it, correct?

**Mr. Lee:** Yes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can provide you with that.

**Mr. Chairman:** That will be provided.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you very much.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Minister, on this same matter, 06, Remuneration to Board Members, I am quite aware that you are relatively new to this particular portfolio, but could you indicate—not necessarily now, but in writing at a later time—if this board over the last three years was ever properly constituted, and when that board was last constituted and the members then?

**2.50 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Now, Member, remember the statutes, as we go by, are based on 2019, in terms of your questioning.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, well, let me phrase it differently then.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, we have made that clear in terms of our demarcations.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, sure. In 2019, the projection is \$166,500. This, Minister, is

to ensure—the increase, sorry. I am looking here at the current figure for 2019, is it 580, estimate—?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 327, 06, 327.

**Dr. Moonilal:** 327, correct. The Actual 2017 was 25 and you have an increase, so at this time, the board is not fully composed at this time.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just asking how long this has been so? That is all.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That was with effect from— About three months now because of the resignation of one of the members.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask the name of the member who resigned?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Vinda Maharaj.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 450; Item 001, General Administration. We now move to 54, Land Settlement Agency: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What page, Sir?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on page 458, Item 001, General Administration, of the same booklet. You have a question, Member?

**Dr. Moonilal:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 458; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Contract Employment, I notice you have a \$14 million allocation which is \$2.4 million more than the previous year. Can you give me an idea of who are these contract officers and what are they doing and with what goals

in mind for achievement at the end of the specific financial year?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yeah, sure. One second. Let me clarify your question. You asked the question, who? Do you request the name of the individual or do you want the positions? I want to make that clear.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The name of the individual does not matter.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Because you said who, who are the contract—so I want to clarify.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay, all right, so I do not want the names. All I want is: How many persons are there?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can give you that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** In what positions are they there, what are they doing? But I want to know that in relation to what are the goals that they intend to achieve and what are the deliverables in this, because there is always a question of this Land Settlement Agency and whether it is achieving its goals or not.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, that information can be provided now?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can provide the number of persons. I can provide some of that now.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** So I can give you, the total number of contract officers are, in fact, 27 right now. There are a number of different positions from Accounts Clerk, to Administrative Support Clerks, Conveyance Officer, Corporate Secretary, Field Investigators, Hospitality Attendants, ICT Support Officers, Land Use Planners, Legal Officers, Paralegal Officers, Security Officers, Business Operations Assistants. I am just running through it randomly to give you a sense

because if I give you the entire list, it will take us some time. So, Field Investigators, GIS Technicians, Planning Technicians, Research Officers, Security Patrol Officers, Audit Clerks, Accounts Clerks. So there is a list and the list can go on. I can provide you with the entire list if you so desire, but those are the categories of contract officers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you have specific deliverables?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, of course, we do have specific deliverables. They worked in achieving the Land Settlement's remit in terms of both squatter regularizations which involves improving conditions of persons living in squatter communities and so on. They are also involved in the aided Self-Help programmes. So there are a number of programmes across the Land Settlement Agencies that these contract officers assist in achieving the goals and objectives.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And Item 22, in addition to the Contract Employment, you have \$3.2 million worth of Short-term Employment. What is defined as your Short-term Employment and what kinds of occupations?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Short-term Employment is about three-month employment and it depends on a number of different situations, for instance. So that that would involve short-term projects, for instance, like a perimeter survey, that will take three months to complete so you do a short-term contract for that and areas of those.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now go to Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, a general question on 001, General Administration. For this budgeted amount for Land Settlement Agency, how many squatters are likely to be regularized in 2019, and in how many settlements?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, one second, I can give you the answer in a while.

**Dr. Tewarie:** If you do not have it now, you can provide, you know, once we have the information.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The answer is that we are in fact—all right, for 2018/2019, we are going to be regularizing 1,000 sites, 1,000 squatters. That is the aim for 2018/2019.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So that will be 1,000 lots—1,000 plots?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yeah, 1,000 squatters.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Do you know how many sites or if it is going to be one site or several?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 10 sites, 2018/2019.

**Dr. Tewarie:** You do not need to provide it now but could you give us the information on the names of the sites.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sure, we can do that.

**Mr. Chairman:** To be provided?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** To be provided.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, page 449; Sub-Head 03, Minor—oh, I am so sorry, I called the wrong thing. My apologies. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 459; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 459; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Member, we will now move to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 123; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 123 to 126. I recognize Oropouche

East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Chairman. I will just ask the Minister, on Item 086, could the Minister indicate the works done for the 2018 period because there is no estimate for 2019.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** All right. There were no releases under this Vote for 2018.

**Dr. Moonilal:** There were no releases. Okay, thank you. Secondly, Minister, at 075, Rehabilitation and Maintenance of HDC Rental Apartments and Housing Units, if I am correct, I am seeing the Estimate for 2019 at \$22 million.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct.

**Dr. Moonilal:** If I can ask, whether now or later, to have a breakdown of the proposed works and proposed estates that work will be commencing in the 2019 period, to use that \$22 million provided.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** All right, I can provide you with some of that information. The planned rehabilitation and maintenance work to be carried out in fiscal 2019 includes: remedial works to roofs; refurbishment works to buildings in Naparima Mayaro Apartments, Rushworth Street, Orchid Gardens, Corinth Hill, Harmony Hall; drainage, dredging, cleaning, refurbishment of vandalized units. And also, works in some of the areas like Lake View, Point Fortin, remedial works to houses; Embacadere, remedial works to roofs; Naparima Mayaro, refurbishment works to buildings and recreational; Jamadar Street, roof repairs; Rushworth Street, refurbishment works to buildings; Orchid Gardens, refurbishment works to buildings; Corinth Hills, refurbishment works to buildings; Oropune Gardens, refurbishment works to buildings; Maloney Gardens, refurbishment works to buildings; Dorata Street, demolition of structural compromising buildings; Trou

Macaque, demolition of structural foundation, of structural buildings, compromised buildings, that is; Chaconia Crescent, drainage; Vieux Forte, slope stabilization and drainage works; Greenvale detention pond, dredging and cleaning; Oasis detention pond, dredging and clearing; Harmony Hall, refurbishment of buildings and infrastructure. So those are some of the—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you, thank you very much, Minister. Minister, if I may just add something on to this area here. One of the critical problems we face now in several HDC sites, including sites that you have called there, given the crisis with crime and criminality and so on, there have been a lot of complaints concerning lighting in the various HDC districts, and if I can ask that in the coming fiscal, under this heading or another, as the case may be, to devise some programme in collaboration with T&TEC to install street lights in several of the estates. And I think immediately, for example, of Wellington in Debe. I think, of course, of the Corinth Extension, I think you are aware of it. The Union Hall Estate as well, which is up and running and there is a second phase there. But there are a lot of complaints that have been coming in that and I am wondering whether some of the resources here could be used as well, in collaboration with T&TEC to have a special programme for street lighting in the HDC estates and the HDC can undertake their own assessment, security assessments and so on, to facilitate that.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Quite certainly. As a matter of fact, it is captured under the heading: health and safety retrofitting works to be conducted in fiscal 2019.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What number is that, please?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, this is my response to you in terms of electricity because HDC plans to retrofit older buildings, to include lighting, demolition of fire damaged units, repairs to fire escapes and also look at the lighting in the

various communities, especially in the new areas and so on. Commissioning of fire suppression units. We are also implementing a HSE response and evacuation procedure at these developments. So electricity in terms of lighting and so on is also captured under that heading so we will be addressing those issues.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Great. Minister, at number 235, I am seeing the allocation for 2019 at \$10 million and if as well, you can indicate, if you choose now, but I mean, you can indicate in writing later, I guess. What really, is the Housing and Village Improvement Programme about? Which villages and so on are earmarked to be the beneficiaries of this line Item, to the tune of \$10 million in fiscal 2019? And I address the Minister of Housing, frontally.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The Housing and Village Improvement Programme is an initiative that was taken by this Government to look at areas that are sort of characterized by very poor underdeveloped housing conditions, and the pilot project was done in Moruga, in Samuel Cooper Settlement in Moruga. It actually is a combined effort between the villagers and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, where the villagers contribute in terms of sweat equity and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, through the LSA, would contribute roughly about \$100,000 towards the building. So we combine working, ensuring that the community is involved in the programme, so it is a combination of the HDC, the Land Settlement Agency together with the community, working together to give start-up houses as a matter of fact. So they actually are start-up houses, so they are not complete houses they are provided with. Working together with the community to provide start-up houses.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Minister, for outlining the policy and project agenda. In fact, I might say I missed terribly your presentation in the

budget, I would really have liked to hear about that. Minister, in this Housing and Village Improvement Programme, could you indicate how a village or somewhere in the country listening to you today, hearing of this very ambitious programme and helpful programme, can apply? Does a village apply? I imagine it is not an HDC site we are talking about—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, it is not.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—it is a village. How would the village of Retrench apply, to say we have a particular area that is depressed, we would like to partner with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and develop ourselves so that we can also benefit from this useful endeavour? What is the criteria? What is the application form? What do they satisfy? I am sure it is a very objective criteria.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** All right. It is not based on an application from the villagers but it is based on a social survey that is conducted by the Land Settlement Agencies. And we intend to conduct those surveys throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, and based on the result of those surveys, we will identify them and based on a needs basis, the areas that can benefit from this programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. And as Members of Parliament in the House, are we also free vis-à-vis this programme, to communicate with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and/or the Land Settlement Agency to propose where villages can benefit from this programme of sweat equity of villagers and assistance from the Ministry to build starter houses in specific areas?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, I am sure you can propose. But again, you can certainly propose and we will listen. Let me give you some of the selection criteria: quality of the infrastructure, sort of unpaved roads in villages and so on;

presence of drains in the villages; access to pipe potable water to houses in the village areas; electricity in terms of whether there is direct supply of electricity in terms of quality of the housing; the percentage of sub-standard and below sub-standard housing; employment and income levels, percentage of persons currently employed; access to community facilities; disabilities; susceptibility to natural disasters; historical significance; tenure status, et. cetera. So those are some of the areas that we looked at.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, could I add one issue to that? The persons in ownership and occupation of a lot of land, with all the criteria that you have described, those persons, is it for persons who have already received a certificate of comfort or is it squatters communities? What tenure of security does the occupier require to access this programme?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It would be anyone who fits this criteria. You do not necessarily need to have a certificate of comfort to qualify for it.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, you could be in a squatter community?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Of course.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, thank you, thank you very much. And I am seeing here under line Item 237, Regularization of Squatter Communities, and I think my colleague from Caroni Central had raised a matter. If we can now or at a later time, indicate the communities that would benefit from this Vote of \$15 million for the fiscal 2019.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Between 2018 and 2019, we intend to look at Blitz Village, Tarouba, Bois Bande A and Bois Bande B, Blake Avenue in Sangre Grande and Moonan Road.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. Minister, 239, Government Aided Self-Help Programme, a

new project here. You have a proposed of \$2.5 million. Would you care now and/or later to give us some detail as to the character of this programme, the intended beneficiaries, the process for accessing the programme?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Certainly. The Government Aided Self-Help Housing Programme was officially launched on November 10, 2017. This is a new initiative of the Ministry that targets low and middle-income earners and assists them to manage the construction of their own homes with financial and technical support from the State. Through this strategy, fully developed housing lots are sold at 30 per cent of its market value. Beneficiaries of this programme will have access to subsidized mortgage facilities from the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited. Pre-approved house plans and oversight assistance for the constructions of their dream homes. Citizens who own land but still require assistance with the home construction process, can access subsidized mortgages from the TTMF, pre-approved housing plans, a list of contractors, technical oversight for the construction of their homes. So that is the basis of the programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, I really do applaud that. It sounds remotely familiar to the Land for the Landless Programme, but I—but Minister, could I ask—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is an improvement, better than that, better than the Land for the Landless.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, I am sure that your programmes are much better than those that went before you. There were four Ministers before you there and I pray to God you do not have four Ministers after you in the remainder of the term. On this matter, Minister, you would be aware that there were national random draws for the Land for the Landless Programme, could I ask, given that—I believe it was

two random draws. Those applicants who were successful, are those applicants being considered as well, for the Government Aided Self-Help Programme and how many applicants so far have been awarded assistance under the Government Aided Self-Help Programme?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Again, an audit was conducted with respect to those who were selected randomly and there were some people who were qualified, some who have been qualified and those who were qualified are being treated with.

**Dr. Moonilal:** If you could, at a later time, just indicate exactly how many persons who were successful at the random draw, would have qualified and are being provided for under this Government Aided Self-Help Programme. I could understand that, Minister, because as you may know, the random draw was for persons who applied. It is when you are selected, you go through the process to see if they qualified. I think San Fernando East did not understand the concept then, but that is what it was for. So the amount of persons who would benefit, who were fortunate enough to be selected by a random draw.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can provide that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. Good, good.

**Mr. Chairman:** Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah, could I have a quick follow-up question on that? What is the process by which a person who applied in the random draw process but who did not carry over to your process, can make an appeal for reconsideration, given that they might have legitimate reasons for doing so? That is to say they own no land, they have a family, et cetera.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, but when you say did not carry forward—if they did

not carry forward, it means either, if they were qualified, then they are still—they are being treated with. If they did not qualify, then it means that they did not qualify. So it is not a question of carrying over that individual.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, well, I am not asking this in a vacuum. At least one constituent came to me in which all the conditions were legitimate and she had originally been selected in the random draw, had been notified, but she does not now qualify. I wrote a letter to you on the matter, I am not saying that you have seen it or not—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Fair enough.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And I just wanted to know, what was the process by which one makes an appeal on behalf of somebody like that who has a legitimate claim?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, that will be dealt with on a case by case basis. We will see what the issues are.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 126. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 217 of the same booklet.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yeah, I have it marked out here but there were so many issues arising. 217, yes. We are at 217.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Social Infrastructure, and we have pages 217 and 218. Proceed, Oropouche East.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Identify which page you are on and line Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am on page 217, under Settlements, 230, Accelerated Housing Programme. Minister, you have a Vote here of \$200 million for the Accelerated Housing Programme for this fiscal. I would like to get some details. Now, this comparatively speaking is not a grand sum for Accelerated Housing Programme, so you will have your priorities. If you could outline the priorities for the fiscal

2019, that would be provided for, for the \$200 million that you have budgeted, your priorities and then I will ask some questions on other issues.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, before we continue, the Ministry of Housing will also benefit from the housing bond that we intend to float during this fiscal in the amount of \$1.5 billion. So in addition to this \$200 million, they will also have \$1.5 billion available to them for their Accelerated Housing Programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, I was coming to those issues and related issues after we got an explanation of what you are going to use with the 200 for now.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. So Minister, for now, the figure identified.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** All right, with respect to the 200 million allocated for 2019, the HDC intends to continue ongoing—restarted on new projects such as Trestrail Lands, D'Abadie; Bon Air South, Arouca; Real Springs Housing Development; River Runs Through, Arima; Buen Intento, Princes Town.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, could I ask the status if you could now, again, or provide the information of the proposed housing estate at Indian Trail in central Trinidad? What is the status of that estate? Again, if you need some time, it is not, you know, I do need—

**Mr. Chairman:** He is gathering the information.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide that to you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. That is fine. The related matter with that, Minister, is if we can have an assessment from you of moneys outstanding for works completed by contractors in the housing sector. How much is outstanding for completed works or works not in dispute? Because I know you have some disputes with persons and so on, but for works that have been certified and where there is no dispute, the amount outstanding and the name of the contractor that is being owed by the HDC.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I am unable to give you that accurate figure at this point in time because it is difficult to ascertain. In fact, most of those matters are still under investigation to ascertain finalized figures and so on.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, well, I will take it from you that some or most, as you say, matters are still being investigated. It is regrettable that three years plus, we are still investigating but having said that, you must have in your possession at the Ministry or thereabout at the HDC, works that have been completed, certified and for which there is no dispute. The question really was: What do you propose in 2019 fiscal, in terms of meeting and treating with outstanding debts to the contractors where there is no dispute?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, once there is no dispute, then we will settle accordingly.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You will settle accordingly?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Once there is no dispute, of course.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Good. Could I move on, or colleagues—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you go ahead, Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yeah. The Urban Redevelopment and Urban Renewal, Community Development, I am seeing here, if the Minister would be kind enough to give us some detail on the work proposed for the \$12 million and \$3 million in both 001 and 002. What works should be carried out in this fiscal, pursuant to that line item?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Okay, in terms of 001, this is implementation of Urban Redevelopment Programme for East Port of Spain. We are looking at the areas such as Romain Lands, Morvant, with respect to covered drains, pavements and handrails and so on; Gerbera Avenue, Coconut Drive and they are also involved in

the Latrine Eradication Programme in 19 communities throughout east Port of Spain. In fiscal 2019—some of those started in 2018 and continuing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, still have additional information?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, that is it.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I follow-up? Minister, pursuant to these two line Items that deal with redevelopment and so on and the HDC communities, Minister, you might be aware that the HDC and the Ministry of Housing, procured two trucks, the famous pothole machine trucks, they were “huffed” by the Ministry of Works and Transport.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, Member, line Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am on Urban Redevelopment and Urban Renewal which includes some road works as the Minister said, and drainage works and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** The trucks relate to that also?

**Dr. Moonilal:** It relates to that.

**3.10 p.m.**

And the objective Minister was to use those machines to patch the roads in HDC communities, because we understood that we could not pave all the roads—

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

**Dr. Moonilal:**—we did not have the money.

**Mr. Imbert:**—that does not—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Would you take steps to retrieve those trucks from the Ministry of Works and Transport to undertake critical work in the HDC communities as it is?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I am advised that this—

**Dr. Moonilal:**—for fixing the roads.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am advised that this does not apply to this line Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But, could you repeat what is this Urban Redevelopment and Renewal about? I got the impression that it was to—

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, Minister you—

**Dr. Moonilal:**—spruce up.

**Mr. Chairman:**—would have given the information on that particular line Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—and rehabilitate communities.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, I am guided, that again, the information you are requesting is not identified in these line Items.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But, Sir, these line Items have nothing to do with refurbishing and fixing buildings, roads and infrastructure, and so on.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I think I had mentioned drains, covered drains, pavements, hand rails, bleachers, hard courts and the—

**Dr. Moonilal:** But Minister, surely fixing potholes is related to fixing drains and—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is under—

**Mr. Imbert:** This line Item does not refer to the trucks that the Member is speaking about.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, we need to move on.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** What is your next question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am on the next page. But you are not there yet. That is the multilateral—I will leave it there for now.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, so we go to Item now 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 218. Proceed, Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, thank you. Minister, could you just confirm the development?

I am at 001, development and management of the property located at 43 Independence Square, Port of Spain. Could you confirm what property is this?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is the property commonly referred to as the “Drag Mall”, next to New City Mall.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. Fine.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** If you recall it was—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Salvatori?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. There was a fire there quite recently.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Right, that is the building we are talking about.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Development Programme provides for \$4 million. What exactly you propose to do with the \$4 million in fiscal 2019?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Again, because of the fire that was there recently, I think it was in August. Around August there was a fire that literally destroyed that building. After engineers checked, they said that the building was unsafe and we have to move all the tenants out. It is a question of demolition and looking at reconstruction later on.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am really asking this question for Pointe-a-Pierre. But, with respect to line Item 005/06, could the hon. Minister indicate who is the owner of this property, and how long is this project expected to take?

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are you?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We are under—

**Mr. Chairman:** One second, Member. You said 005 and 06.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We are under Multi-Sectoral, you know.

**Mr. Padarath:** I am on the other page, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are on the same Item that your colleague just spoke about?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right and the question is again? Let us go.

**Mr. Padarath:** The question is: Who is the owner of the property and how long is this project expected to take please?

**Mr. Chairman:** Right Minister, that is on 001, the same property with the fire, he would like to know who answers his question.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is a Ministry of Housing and Urban Development property. It is State property.

**Mr. Padarath:** Is that confirmed, because you said probably?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, no. I did not say probably. I said property.

**Mr. Padarath:** Or, okay, sure. And how long is the project expected to take and be completed?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I do not have a timeline yet but it is based on the demolition and reconstruction. But we catered to start the project in 2019.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Minister, the allocation for this particular line Item, can you indicate whether or not this sum will complete the entire project, or do you envisage that you will require more money in the next financial year?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is difficult to say, because it is based on the cost for the demolition and then plans are being dealt with for the new building, so.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay, so there is no total comprehensive of both demolition and reconstruction?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct. It depends on the amount of work to be done.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Madam PS and all the senior executives of the Ministry. Thanks for coming.

Minister of Finance, you are responsible?

*Head 12:* Public Service Appeal Board, \$3,500,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister of Finance.

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

**Madam Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Head 12.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Public Service Appeal Board is a tribunal that handles appeals of decisions made by the Public Service Commission. Public officers would have issues with respect to promotion, appointments, and disciplinary matters, where they would either be seeking a decision from the Commission or they would have received one, and would not be satisfied with the outcome of their matter. They are entitled to appeal decisions of the Public Service Commission to the Public Service Appeal Board. It is an intermediary tribunal. There are many tribunals like this, which are set up ostensibly to avoid the cost and delay associated with going to the High Court. It is intended to be a form of dispute resolution.

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

*Question proposed:* That Head 12 stands part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$3,500,000 for Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the

following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We shall now examine the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 53. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 53 and 54; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 12 ordered to stand of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you Minister, Registrar and the members of the Public Service Appeal Board.

Head 09: Tax Appeal Board. We are at page 46 of the Recurrent.

*Head 09:* Tax Appeal Board, \$5,772,600.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** The Tax Appeal Board of Trinidad and Tobago is a superior court of record, established in 1966 by Act of Parliament, Chap. 4:50 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago. As a superior court, it determines the procedure to be followed in an appeal and issues practice directions from time to time.

The Court deals with a wide variety of issues and appeal in respect of both direct and indirect taxes, as well as anti-dumping appeals and other related matters such as land and building taxes, petroleum taxes and appeals pursuant to various pieces of legislation such as the Financial Institutions Act, the Tourism Development Act.

In relation to both direct taxes, such as income and corporation tax and indirect taxes such Value Added Tax or Customs and Excise Duty, the quantum

involved routinely concerns appeals from assessments involving millions of dollars. Because of the nature of the jurisdiction, it frequently involves multinational corporations seeking to offset head office expenses among members of the group or debt write-off. Okay? That is the functions and purview of the board.

*Question proposed:* That Head 09 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$5,772,600 for Head 09: Tax Appeal Board, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 46. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/ Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one question. Line Item 25.

**Madam Chairman:** Line Item 25?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** “Um-hmm”. Remuneration.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 46?

**Hon. Imbert:** What is the issue?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** If the hon. Minister can identify the direct charges to this line Item, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, like all other similar bodies where there are direct charges, this is to pay the members of the board.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, and is the board properly constituted?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes. Under General Administration, Minister, if a matter comes up that involves a suspected infringement of any kind on the part of a taxpayer, is that matter dealt with by the BIR, or can the individual then challenge the matter to go to the appeal board, or is it dealt with by the appeal board?

**Hon. Imbert:** The appeal board just deals with assessments.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is all?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, just assessments.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It does not address any of those issues?

**Hon. Imbert:** It deals only with assessments.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 09 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you Mr. Registrar. Thank you, Minister.

*Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal, \$2,478,100.*

**Madam Chairman:** We are at page 369. Hon. Members, could we have some order, please? I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** The Equal Opportunity Tribunal has the exclusive jurisdiction to adjudicate certain defined claims of discrimination, victimization and offensive behaviour initiated under the Equal Opportunity Act. It is a superior court of record and has the powers and jurisdictions of such a court; has the power to impose fines, make orders for damages or grant injunctions. The Tribunal's

functions are judicial, which is separate and distinct from the Equal Opportunity Commission. That is it.

*Question proposed:* That Head 75 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,478,100 for Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One question. Line Item 23, Salaries-Direct Charges, if the hon. Minister can indicate.

**hon. Imbert:** It is the same thing.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I know but then comes my next question: How many matters are pending before the Tribunal?

**hon. Imbert:** Approximately 30 matters are pending before the Tribunal and in the last fiscal, they gave judgment in 12 matters.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 75 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank you, Chairman. Thank you.

*Head 02:* Auditor General, \$41,804,855.

**Madam Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief

opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** The Auditor General's Department performs the audit function for the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

*Question proposed:* That Head 02 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$41,804,855 for Head 02: Auditor General is comprise of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 6. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree with the Minister of Finance, the Auditor General does a very important function for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; 01 Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance 2019, \$21.8 million. Could the Minister provide or state how many positions? What is the complement of staff at the Auditor General? How many are filled and how many vacant positions there are?

**Hon. Imbert:** Two hundred filled, 100 vacant and they are in the process of filling 50 of the 100.

**Mr. Lee:** Fifty of the 100. Follow-up question. Can the Minister of Finance—those positions that are filled, are top level positions vacant at this point in time, like the Auditor General or the hierarchy of the Auditor General's Office, for a lack of a better phrase? Yes?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Lee:** No means all are filled?

**Hon. Imbert:** You asked the question and I gave the answer.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, 01. Is the Minister satisfied that the shortage of staff, 50 are being recruited and there is a vacancy of 100? Does that vacancy, or the vacancies that exist, affect the output of the Auditor General's Department?

**Hon. Imbert:** Obviously.

**Mr. Charles:** Obviously. And, therefore, since this is a critical function in government to what extent, what is the shortfall, in terms of what should be done and what has been delivered? I know that they could outsource to firms in the private sector to do audit reports. But is it affecting, in your view, the output of this critical function?

**Hon. Imbert:** Obviously.

**Mr. Charles:** What is—could you describe how this is affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of Government's performance? And do not tell me significantly.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Substantially.

**Mr. Charles:** What is the answer?

**Hon. Imbert:** Substantially.

**Mr. Charles:** Substantially. So, therefore, you are saying that substantially the Auditor General's Department is not functioning at optimal capability because of the shortage of staff?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am not saying that.

**Mr. Charles:** What are you saying, substantially?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am saying if they had their full complement of staff, they would

have been able to produce more output.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah, but that is a vague answer. What I need to find out, Madam Chair, is the extent to which our report, our financial statements, are audited on time and effectively as in Singapore and First World countries. Yes, yes, and give us an idea of where we stand in the continuum, from Haiti to Singapore, in terms of this audit function.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am afraid I am unable to do that at this time. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members. Hon. Members!

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I think the lunch hour has—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I do not think I am in a position to look at the continuum of supreme audit agencies between Haiti and Singapore and place Trinidad and Tobago in that continuum at this point in time. However, I will endeavour to ask the Auditor General's Department to look at this question and provide an answer as soon as possible.

**Mr. Charles:** I will rephrase the question, and this is the last time. Could the Minister tell us how many reports are outstanding to date?

**Hon. Imbert:** That information would be provided to you in due course, at the earliest possible time.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Sir. Excellent answer.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Tobago Services; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 28. With the increase, do you see this hampering the function and the efficiency of the Auditor General's Office?

**Hon. Imbert:** Member, did you refer to Tobago?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Well, it is under Tobago Services.

**Hon. Imbert:** I thought I heard Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** No, we passed Tobago. We are at Sub-Head 02, General Administration; Item 001. So is it Other Contracted Services on page 7 to which you refer? Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Tobago Services; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, we are at page 2. We have nothing under Multi-Sectoral. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 02 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Auditor General, thank you. Thank you.

*Head 01:* President, \$17,993,810.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** The President is the Head of State.

**3:40 p.m.**

*Question proposed:* That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$17,993,810 for Head 01: President is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following

Sub-Heads and Item to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are page 2. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Tobago Services; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum \$17,993,810 for Head 01, President stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

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

*Head 05: Parliament, \$125,111,500.*

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

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, notwithstanding I did not receive an opening statement from the Parliament, because they think I need no help. The Office of the Parliament provides administrative and apolitical support services to the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is— [*Crosstalk*] I take it we are so relieved.

**Hon. Imbert:** We are almost at the end.

*Question proposed:* That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$125,111,500 for Head 05: Parliament is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*

and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We are at page 26; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, \$18 million. I just want to—for my own clarity this \$18 million dollars includes all of Parliament staff, Leader of the Opposition Staff, MPs, et cetera, that relates to Parliament?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** A follow-up question with respect to 01. In respect of terms and conditions in respect to the staffing at the Leader of the Opposition's office, we have been having some issues, it does not matter, you know, who is in the Opposition office at this point in time or any time. But we have always had a challenge with the CPO in trying to give us clarity in the terms and conditions of certain members of the Opposition staff and I was wondering if—

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not under this Head.

**Mr. Lee:** What is not under this Head?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is under Goods and Services. You are anticipating.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. Sorry for that.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, I wish that were true. We have not reached there yet.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. I will defer.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that you indicated in line item 01, that this includes all staff including constituency. Could you identify the positions in the parliamentary staff and in particular, if there are any research services for—in this area for parliamentarians and particularly support services for experts that will be required in committee stages, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** Not yet.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Your consideration, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I can tell you from my own experience in committees, if an expert is required, the committee makes a request of the Speaker or the Clerk as the case may be, and the services are procured, under Goods and Services. We are still on Personnel Expenditure, we have not hit Goods and Services yet.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, further to the discussion we just had on line Item 01, would line Item 16 take care of the request for research services for parliamentarians.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. But, I can tell when we made substantial increases in the allowance for constituency office staff. There is an allowance there for a research offer who is treated specially and is allowed to be paid at a much higher than the rest of the staff. So research services are available to elected Members of Parliament through constituency office by way of a provision for the operation of the constituency office and the engagement of staff in that office.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And if I may ask, hon. Minister, if the same is applied to the Office of the Parliament, in terms of research assistants and so forth. I know that they have been doing a fabulous job. But, in terms of having funding to be able to increase their capacity in light of their very many committees that are in place. They have been very much assisting us and I just want to commend it and, of course, I am sure that they will require more funding.

**Hon. Imbert:** Not here. But you can make a case for it.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you for the consideration. Line Item 13, I see there

is a decrease in funding and I am just asking Minister, in light of the fact that you have an increase in fuel is this adequate—is this funding adequate to provide for the Parliament who oftentimes have to go to various constituency offices to deliver critical mail.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am told that if the provision is not adequate they would seek a transfer of virement or they can approach the Ministry of Finance for a supplementation in the mid-year.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Line Item 64, I am just asking hon. Minister in light of the fact that so much is happening within the constituency offices. I am asking if there is any consideration for an increase to goods, and in light of the fact that there is an increase in Goods and Services, if consideration will be given to line Item 64, for a further increase.

**Hon. Imbert:** A further increase of what?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Of funding to the constituency offices?

**Hon. Imbert:** What exactly do you mean by that? Do you mean an increase in the allocation for expenses? An increase in the allocation for staff? What do you mean?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** For expenses, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** Like what telephone, electricity and so on?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, Sir.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. There is something called the House Committee.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, I know that it has not been in place for quite some time, Sir.

**Hon. Imbert:** And that matter has to be addressed by the House Committee. Okay. So what I would suggest you do, if you are of the view that the present

amount of—it is about \$8,000, is not adequate for your telephone bill. Then make representation to the House Committee and it will be considered.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** We have not had a House Committee, Sir, with all due respect. But, thank you for the advice.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 97, Minister, Expenses of the office of the Leader of the Opposition, \$3 million. I presume this line Item is where the office staff of the Leader of the Opposition is utilized?

**Hon. Imbert:** Three million is for that.

**Mr. Lee:** All right. Some of the concerns that we have—who sets the terms and conditions of the staff at the Leader of the Opposition's office.

**Hon. Imbert:** Chief Personnel Officer.

**Mr. Lee:** Some of the concerns that we have it relates to the staffing and the job description and understanding the CPO, understanding the role of some of the descriptions and the job functions of the staff at the Leader of the Opposition office. And I was wondering that if some consideration could be given using the House Committee in Parliament to maybe determine the terms and conditions of the—not only the Leader of the Opposition's staff, but maybe Parliament as a whole until we get some sort of autonomy in respect—

**Hon. Imbert:** I did not quite understand what you just said. The terms and conditions of Parliament—

**Mr. Lee:** Of the Leader of the Opposition staff.

**Hon. Imbert:** Members of Parliament.

**Mr. Lee:** No, no. Not the Members of the Parliament, maybe the parliamentary staff and also the Leader of the Opposition's staff in determining really and truly the CPO does not understand—

**Hon. Imbert:** Hold on, you said parliamentary staff? What do you mean by that?

**Mr. Lee:** Well, we have staff at the Parliament who—

**Hon. Imbert:** This line Item is Expenses.

**Mr. Lee:** No, I am talking in general now, using the House Committee.

**Hon. Imbert:** Be specific please.

**Mr. Lee:** Let me just stay with line Item 97.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you.

**Mr. Lee:** In the Leader of the Opposition's staffing, we have some issues in the job description and function that is being really understood by the CPO or lack of understanding. And I was wondering as a remedy maybe we can set up a committee using the House Committee of Parliament to maybe look at and determine the terms and conditions and the remuneration of the Opposition staff under line Item 97.

**Hon. Imbert:** Regrettably not. The CPO set terms and conditions for all public offices.

**Mr. Lee:** So how we enlighten them, the CPO to—

**Hon. Imbert:** Make representation.

**Mr. Lee:** Say that again.

**Hon. Imbert:** Make representation.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Minister. To who? Through the—?

**Hon. Imbert:** Chief Personnel Officer. If you are not satisfied with the established process where you make representation to the Clerk, who then makes representation to the Chief Personnel Officer, make representation directly.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** If you are not satisfied with the way things are happening.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 094, International Bodies.

Hon. Members, we shall now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme* at page 9. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Consolidated Fund; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and other Services.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 005. I am just asking if this includes the funding for the operations as well as the maintenance of the parliamentary proceedings.

**Hon. Imbert:** What is the problem?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am just asking if under 005, if this figure includes the operations as well as the maintenance of the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is a mix between recurrent expenditure and development programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Would the hon. Minister look and see if it is adequate and probably look at revising it at all?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not for me to do that. It is for the Parliament to make representation and I can assure you and the Parliament that if they make representation they will be treated favourably.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Sir. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$125,111,500

for Head 05, Parliament stand part of the schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Madam Clerk. Thank you officers of the Parliament.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$43,672,921,405 be approved as a grand total.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to:* That the Bill be reported to the House.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we shall now suspend for five minutes.

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

**4.02 p.m.:** *House resumed.*

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, mercifully, I wish to report that a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago, for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2019, was considered in Standing Finance Committee and passed without amendments. I now beg to move that it be read a third time and passed.

*Bill reported, without amendment.*

*Question put:* That the Bill be now read a third time.

**Hon. Imbert:** Division.

*The House voted:* Ayes 21

AYES

Imbert, Hon. C.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Mitchell, Hon. R.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Garcia, Hon. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Hon. C.

Forde, E.

Dillon, Hon. Maj. Gen. E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Mc Donald, Hon. M.

Francis, Hon. Dr. L.

Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

Olivierre, Ms. N.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Leonce, A.

Smith, D.

*The following Members abstained:* Mr. D. Lee, Mr. R. Charles, Dr. B. Tewarie, Dr. R. Moonilal, Mrs. C. Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. V. Gayadeen-Goopeesingh, Mr. R. Indarsingh, Mr. B. Padarath, Mr. R. Paray and Ms. R. Ramdial.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members! Order please! I am having difficulty

even hearing the Clerk. Hon. Members, upon a division, 21 Members voted for; no Members voted against; 10 Members abstained. The Bill is carried. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

**COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES  
(MEMBER FOR OROPOUCHE EAST)**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):**  
[*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, I beg to move a Motion of Privilege. Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 32, I seek your leave to raise a question of privilege in the House today, the first opportunity available for me to do so.

Madam Speaker, on October 10, 2018, earlier in this sitting of the House before the commencement of the Standing Finance Committee and during the reply of the Minister of Finance, the Member for Oropouche East made the following statement directed to the Member for Laventille West, and I quote:

“Da is why Snake have some lead for you.”

Madam Speaker, this phrase “have some lead for you”, Madam Speaker, is considered a grievous threat to life and limb as it is a phrase familiar to persons involved in law enforcement and frequently used by those engaged in nefarious criminal activities. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the vulnerable youth in our society also know the meaning of this phrase, because it is common jargon in some popular music. Madam Speaker, even more troubling, is the fact that an individual known as “Snake” has been convicted of assault against the Member for Laventille West in the conduct of his parliamentary duties in his constituency.

It is for this reason, Madam Speaker, that immediately after the utterances by the Member for Oropouche East, there was an uproar in this House. All of this

was carried live on the Parliament Channel, radio station and live video feeds. Madam Speaker, you will recall that the Member for Laventille West immediately rose in protest, and sought to direct your attention to the offence. By his reaction, it was clear that he apprehended a threat to his life [Laughter] from the words of the Member for Oropouche East—

**Madam Speaker:** I would expect every Member of this House to display a certain decorum at all times. If any Member finds matters conducted here are matters of some joke they are free to go outside, have their fun and come back in.

**4.10 p.m.**

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. By his reaction, it was clear that he apprehended a threat to his life from the words of the Member for Oropouche East and drew this to the immediate attention of the Chair and the House. However, the menacing words of the Member for Oropouche East were not heard by the Chair, but they were in fact heard by several Members in this House and recorded in the *Hansard*. They have also been covered and repeated in newspapers and on social media.

Madam Speaker, as Leader of the House, I will be the first to admit that crosstalk is common in all parliamentary assemblies and has been a feature of our House, but such crosstalk has boundaries. With respect to volume, you, Madam Speaker, call the House to order and regularly remind us not to disrupt the tenor of the debate. However, with respect to content, such crosstalk never falls below the standard expected of all hon. Members in this House until now.

Madam Speaker, for a Member of this House to tell another Member during proceedings of this House, in the very face of this House and in the hearing of Members and others that, and I again quote:

“Da is why Snake have some lead for you.”

—amounts to a serious indignity to this House and an apparent threat to a Member.

Madam Speaker, Erskine May states that:

“It is...impossible to list every act which might be considered...a contempt”—of this House.

However, any act which has the tendency to directly or indirectly obstruct or impede the House or any of its Members or officers in the performance of their functions, or can produce this result by bringing the House into ridicule, may constitute a contempt.

Further, Madam Speaker, Any act of disorderly or indecent conduct within the precincts of this House can be treated as a contempt, particularly if it is beneath the dignity of this House and brings the House into public odium.

Madam Speaker, the conduct of the Member for Oropouche East in this regard, one, amounts to a threat to the life of another Member of this House, whether direct or indirect. Madam Speaker, it is a serious indignity to this House and brings it into public odium.

Madam Speaker, this House has a duty to protect itself, and it is against this background that I raise this matter as one concerning a matter of privileges and ask for it to be sent to the Committee of Privileges for consideration and report.

I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon Members, I hereby reserve my decision which shall be delivered at a subsequent time.

**COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES  
(MEMBER FOR OROPOUCHE EAST)**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon Members, I now will deliver my ruling, based on a matter of privileges that was raised on the last occasion.

Hon. Members, at a sitting of the House held on Wednesday, October 10,

2018, the Member for Arouca/Maloney and Leader of the House sought and was granted leave to raise a matter of privilege in accordance with Standing Order 32. Having reserved my decision at that time, I now rule, pursuant to my duty under Standing Order 32(4), on whether a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been made out, thereby warranting further investigation.

Freedom of speech in Parliament is of fundamental importance. Parliament is intended to be a forum for free and frank debate, and Members should be able to raise issues without having to agonize over the exact form of words used, or providing extensive supporting evidence for any assertion made. Hon. Members, the privilege of freedom of speech enjoyed by you as Members of Parliament is, in fact, the privilege of your constituents. It is not for your personal benefit, but to enable all Members to discharge their functions in the public interest.

As Speaker, it is my duty to jealously guard and defend the freedom of speech and debate. However, the freedom carries with it a responsibility to exercise the right judiciously and prudently. Therefore, the privilege of freedom of speech does not absolve Members from being accountable for statements they make.

As I have repeatedly advised, Members are required to take full ownership and responsibility for things said in this House. Freedom of speech is not an exemption from the duty to research carefully, nor does it discharge Members from being circumspect before exercising the freedom. Pursuant to the Standing Orders, my sole duty is to consider whether the submission made by the Member for Arouca/Maloney suggests a reasonable possibility that a contempt has occurred.

Hon. Members, I have considered the submission and I am of the view that a prima facie case of contempt has been established and that the matter should be referred to the Committee of Privileges for its investigation. In making this ruling,

I do not express a decided opinion on the substantive issue, as the Committee of Privileges will thoroughly consider and investigate the matter raised, and I so rule.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):**

Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn do a date to be fixed.

*Question put and agreed to. House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.18 p.m.*