



**SECOND REPORT
OF
THE STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**on the Consideration of Proposals for the Variation of
Appropriation for the fiscal year 2017**

SECOND SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT (2016/2017)

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Standing Finance Committee

The Standing Finance Committee was established under House of Representatives Standing Order 82(1) to consider the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. House of Representatives Standing Order 87(1) also states that, *"The Standing Finance Committee shall consider and report on all proposals for the expenditure from public revenue or other funds which are not included in the Annual Estimates, including proposals for supplementary and unforeseen expenditure."*

Publication

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the Parliament website using the following link:
http://www.ttparliament.org/committee_business.php?mid=17&id=219&pid=28

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Date Laid in HOR: _____

Contents

THE COMMITTEE	3
MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE.....	3
MEMBERSHIP.....	3
MEETING.....	3
VARIATION.....	4
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	6
APPENDIX I	8
MINUTES OF MEETING.....	8
APPENDIX II	19
REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	19
APPENDIX III	27
VERBATIM NOTES.....	27
APPENDIX IV	169
PROPOSALS FOR THE VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2017.....	169
APPENDIX V	188
SCHEDULE RELATING TO THE VARIATION OF ESTIMATES 2017.....	188

THE COMMITTEE

Mandate of the Committee

1. The Standing Finance Committee is established by Standing Order 82(1) of the House of Representatives Standing Orders. It is the duty of the Committee to consider the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. The Committee is also empowered to consider and report on all proposals for expenditure which are not included in the Annual Estimates including proposals for supplementary and unforeseen expenditure.

Membership

2. In accordance with the House of Representatives Standing Order 82(1), this Committee is a Committee of the Whole House of Representatives and is chaired by the Speaker.

Meeting

3. The Committee held a public meeting on May 05, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.

4. The purpose of this meeting was to consider proposals for the Variation of the Appropriation provided in the Appropriation (Financial Year 2017) Act, 2016. (See Appendix IV)

5. At the meeting, the Committee discussed the Variation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2017 and noted that the source of funds for the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2017) Act, 2017 will be met from sums already appropriated to certain Heads of Expenditure within the Appropriation (Financial Year 2017) Act, 2016.

Variation

6. The Committee noted that as a result of the mid-year review of Recurrent Expenditure and the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) conducted by the Ministry of Finance, it was necessary to return to Parliament to seek approval for a Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2017) Act, 2017 in the sum of \$1,398,125,544 to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital expenditure for the financial year ended September 30, 2017.

7. The Variation of Recurrent Expenditure of \$1,188,684,544 is required to meet:

- ✓ Personnel Expenditure of \$6,395,700;
- ✓ Goods and Services of \$221,022,780;
- ✓ Minor Equipment Purchases of \$60,658,000;
- ✓ Current Transfers and Subsidies of \$672,043,064; and
- ✓ Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of \$228,565,000.

In addition, the Variation of Recurrent Expenditure was required to retire an advance in the sum of \$21,857,680 from the Contingencies Fund for the conduct of the 2016 Local Government Elections as well as the Tobago House of Assembly Elections held on January 23, 2017.

8. The Variation proposed for the PSIP under the Consolidated Fund is \$209,441,000 and is required to fund urgent needs that could not be satisfied from existing allocations.

9. Accordingly, the Variation on the affected Heads of Expenditure is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Variation of Appropriation for Fiscal Year 2017

Head of Expenditure		Increase \$	Decrease \$
03	Judiciary	20,500,000	-
04	Industrial Court	4,090,000	-
05	Parliament	10,000,000	-
06	Service Commissions	4,920,700	-
07	Statutory Authorities' Service Commissions	770,000	-
08	Elections and Boundaries Commission	21,857,680	-
09	Tax Appeal Board	751,100	-
11	Registration, Recognition and Certification Board	535,000	-
13	Office of the Prime Minister	2,550,000	-
18	Ministry of Finance		1,363,125,544
22	Ministry of National Security	149,491,000	-
23	Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs	72,164,000	-
26	Ministry of Education	180,476,866	-
28	Ministry of Health	196,500,000	-
30	Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development	9,000,000	-
31	Ministry of Public Administration and Communications	56,230,000	-
35	Ministry of Tourism	5,000,000	-
39	Ministry of Public Utilities	275,015,000	-
40	Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries		35,000,000
48	Ministry of Trade and Industry	8,000,000	-

61	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	376,837,045	-
68	Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs	250,000	-
77	Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	3,187,153	-
TOTAL		1,398,125,544	1,398,125,544

Recommendations

Variation

10. The Committee recommends the Variation of the Appropriation for fiscal year 2017 in the sum of One billion, Three Hundred and Ninety-Eight Million, One Hundred and Twenty-Five Thousand, Five Hundred and Forty-Four Dollars (\$1,398,125,544).

11. The Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the House of Representatives.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hon. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP
Chairman

May 05, 2017

APPENDICES

Minutes of Meeting

STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
SECOND SESSION (2016/2017), ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
FRIDAY MAY 05, 2017 AT 11:00 A.M. IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER,
MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D,
INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, 1A WRIGHTSON ROAD,
PORT OF SPAIN

Members of the Standing Finance Committee

PRESENT

1. Hon. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP - Chairman
(*Speaker of the House*)
2. Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP - Minister of Planning and Development
(*Member for Arouca/Maloney*)
3. Hon. Faris Al-Rawi, MP - Attorney General
(*Member for San Fernando West*)
4. Hon. Colm Imbert, MP - Minister of Finance
(*Member for Diego Martin North/East*)
5. Hon. Stuart Young, MP - Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney
General and Legal Affairs and Minister in
the Office of the Prime Minister
(*Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*)
6. Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh, MP - Minister of Health
(*Member for St Joseph*)
7. Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds, MP - Minister of Public Utilities
(*Member for Laventille West*)
8. Hon. Randall Mitchell, MP - Minister of Housing and Urban
Development
(*Member for San Fernando East*)
9. Hon. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP - Minister of Tourism
(*Member for Tobago West*)
10. Hon. Anthony Garcia, MP - Minister of Education
(*Member for Arima*)
11. Hon. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn, MP - Minister of Social Development
and Family Services
(*Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West*)
12. Mr. Esmond Forde, MP - Deputy Speaker
(*Member for Tunapuna*)
13. Hon. Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Edmund Dillon, MP - Minister of National Security
(*Member for Point Fortin*)
14. Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy, MP - Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister

15. Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP	-	<i>(Member for Tobago East)</i> Minister of Community Development, Culture, and the Arts
16. Hon. Darryl Smith, MP	-	<i>(Member for St. Ann's East)</i> Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs
17. Hon. Maxie Cuffie, MP	-	<i>(Member for Diego Martin Central)</i> Minister of Public Administration and Communications
18. Hon. Dr. Lovell Francis, MP	-	<i>(Member for La Horquetta/Talparo)</i> Minister of State in the Ministry of Education
19. Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP	-	<i>(Member for Moruga/Tableland)</i> Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security
20. Mr. Adrian Leonce, MP	-	Member for Toco/Sangre Grande Member for Laventille East/Morvant
21. Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP	-	Member for D'abadie/O'meara
22. Ms. Nicole Olivierre, MP	-	Member for La Brea
23. Ms. Marlene Mc Donald, MP	-	Member for Port-of-Spain South
24. Mr. David Lee, MP	-	Member for Pointe-a-Pierre
25. Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, MP	-	Leader of the Opposition <i>(Member for Siparia)</i>
26. Mr. Rodney Charles, MP	-	Member for Naparima
27. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, MP	-	Member for Tabaquite
28. Mr. Fazal Karim, MP	-	Member for Chaguanas East
29. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, MP	-	Member for Caroni Central
30. Dr. Roodal Moonilal, MP	-	Member for Oropouche East
31. Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP	-	Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla
32. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, MP	-	Member for Caroni East
33. Mrs. Vidya Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, MP	-	Member for Oropouche West
34. Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP	-	Member for Couva South
35. Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP	-	Member for St. Augustine
36. Dr. Fuad Khan, MP	-	Member for Barataria/San Juan
37. Mr. Ganga Singh, MP	-	Member for Chaguanas West
38. Mr. Barry Padarath, MP	-	Member for Princes Town

39. Dr. Lackram Bodoë, MP - Member for Fyzabad
40. Ms. Ramona Ramdial, MP - Member for Couva North

EXCUSED

1. Mr. Rushton Paray, MP - Member for Mayaro

ABSENT

1. Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, MP - Prime Minister
(*Member for Diego Martin West*)

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m.
1.2 The Chairman indicated that in accordance with Standing Order 82(6) and 87, a meeting of the Standing Finance Committee was convened to consider proposals for the Variation of Appropriation for the fiscal year 2017.
1.3 Members were advised that in accordance with Standing Order 45(1) the speaking time in Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five (5) minutes on each intervention.
1.4 The procedure for the consideration of the Heads of Expenditure was outlined.

SUSPENSION

- 2.1 The Standing Finance Committee suspended at 11:04 a.m.

RESUMPTION

- 2.2 The Standing Finance Committee resumed at 11:10 a.m.

PROPOSALS FOR THE VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2017

Head 18: Ministry of Finance - Decrease

- 3.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 18, Ministry of Finance be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$1,363,125,544.
3.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation on the purpose of the decrease.
3.3 The Members for Tabaquite, Siparia, Naparima, Oropouche East, Caroni East, Pointe-a-Pierre, Chaguanas West, Princes Town and Caroni Central sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Social Development and Family Services provided an explanation for the variation.

3.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 18, Ministry of Finance be varied by a decrease by in the sum of \$1,363,125,544.

Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries - Decrease

4.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 40, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$35,000,000.

4.2 The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries provided an explanation for the purpose of the decrease.

4.3 The Members for Caroni East, Naparima and Siparia sought clarification. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the variation.

4.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 40, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$35,000,000.

Total Decrease

5.1 The question was put and agreed that the 2017 Appropriation be varied by a total decrease in the sum of \$1,398,125,544.

Head 03: Judiciary - Increase

6.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 03, Judiciary be varied by an increase in the sum of \$20,500,000.

6.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

6.3 The Members for Tabaquite, Siparia, Oropouche West and Princes Town sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and the Attorney General provided an explanation for the variation.

6.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 03, Judiciary be varied by an increase in the sum of \$20,500,000.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

7.1 The Leader of the House moved that the Standing Finance Committee meeting be adjourned to sit again later in the day. Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

8.1 The Standing Finance Committee adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

COMMENCEMENT

8.2 The Standing Finance Committee was called to order at 2:23 p.m.

PROPOSALS FOR THE VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2017

Head 04: Industrial Court - Increase

9.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 04, Industrial Court be varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,090,000.

9.2 The Minister of Planning and Development provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

9.3 The Members for Couva South, Couva North, Naparima, Tabaquite, Siparia, Fyzabad, Cumuto/Manzanilla sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and the Attorney General provided an explanation for the variation.

9.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 04, Industrial Court be varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,090,000.

Head 05: Parliament - Increase

10.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 05, Parliament be varied by an increase in the sum of \$10,000,000.

10.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

SUSPENSION

11.1 The Standing Finance Committee suspended at 2:46 p.m.

RESUMPTION

11.2 The Standing Finance Committee resumed at 2:47 p.m.

PROPOSALS FOR THE VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2017

Head 05: Parliament - Increase (Cont'd)

12.3 The Members for Cumuto/Manzanilla, Princes Town, Siparia, Tabaquite, Oropouche East, Naparima and Oropouche West sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and Minister of Planning and Development provided an explanation for the variation.

12.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 05, Parliament be varied by an increase in the sum of \$10,000,000.

Head 06: Service Commissions - Increase

13.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 06, Service Commissions be varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,920,700.

13.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

13.3 The Members for Siparia, Caroni East, Oropouche East, St. Augustine, Fyzabad, Pointe-a-Pierre, Naparima, Caroni Central and Princes Town sought clarification. The Minister of Finance, the Minister of Public Administration and Communications and the Attorney General provided an explanation for the variation.

13.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 06, Service Commissions be varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,920,700.

Head 07: Statutory Authorities' Service Commission - Increase

14.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 07, Statutory Authorities' Service Commission be varied by an increase in the sum of \$770,000.

14.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

14.3 The question was put and agreed that Head 07, Statutory Authorities' Service Commission be varied by an increase in the sum of \$770,000.

Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission - Increase

15.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission be varied by an increase in the sum of \$21,857,680.

15.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

15.3 The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre sought clarification. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the variation.

15.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission be varied by an increase in the sum of \$21,857,680.

Head 09: Tax Appeal Board - Increase

16.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 09, Tax Appeal Board be varied by an increase in the sum of \$751,100.

16.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

16.3 The Members for Naparima, Fyzabad, Pointe-a-Pierre and Caroni East sought clarification. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the variation.

16.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 09, Tax Appeal Board be varied by an increase in the sum of \$751,100.

Head 11: Registration, Recognition and Certification Board - Increase

17.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board be varied by an increase in the sum of \$535,000.

17.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

17.3 The Member for Couva South sought clarification. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the variation.

17.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board be varied by an increase in the sum of \$535,000.

Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister - Increase

18.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 13, Office of the Prime Minister be varied by an increase in the sum of \$2,550,000.

18.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

18.3 The Members for Oropouche East, Caroni Central, Siparia, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Naparima, Princes Town and Caroni Central sought clarification. The Minister of Finance, the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security provided an explanation for the variation.

18.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 13, Office of the Prime Minister be varied by an increase in the sum of \$2,550,000.

Head 22: Ministry of National Security - Increase

19.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 22, Ministry of National Security be varied by an increase in the sum of \$149,491,000.

19.2 The Minister of National Security provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

19.3 The Members for Caroni Central, Oropouche East, Naparima, Pointe-a-Pierre, Siparia, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Fyzabad, Tabaquite and Caroni Central sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Security provided an explanation for the variation.

19.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 22, Ministry of National Security be varied by an increase in the sum of \$149,491,000.

SUSPENSION

20.1 The Standing Finance Committee suspended for tea at 4:28 p.m.

RESUMPTION

20.2 The Standing Finance Committee resumed at 5:00 p.m.

PROPOSALS FOR THE VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2017

Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs - Increase

21.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs be varied by an increase in the sum of \$72,164,000.

21.2 The Attorney General provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

21.3 The Members for Chaguanas East, Oropouche East, Caroni East and Cumuto/Manzanilla sought clarification. The Attorney General provided an explanation for the variation.

21.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs be varied by an increase in the sum of \$72,164,000.

Head 26: Ministry of Education - Increase

22.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 26, Ministry of Education be varied by an increase in the sum of \$180,476,866.

22.2 The Minister of Education provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

22.3 The Members for Chaguanas East, Naparima, Caroni East, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Couva North, Couva South and Tabaquite sought clarification. The Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the variation.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

23.1 The Leader of the House moved that the Standing Finance Committee meeting be adjourned to sit again later in the day. Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

24.1 The Standing Finance Committee adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

COMMENCEMENT

24.2 The Standing Finance Committee was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

PROPOSALS FOR THE VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2017

Head 26: Ministry of Education – Increase (Cont’d)

25.1 The Members for Caroni Central, Fyzabad, Oropouche East, Chaguanas East, Oropouche West, St. Augustine, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Caroni East, Princes Town, Siparia, Couva South and Naparima sought clarification. The Minister of Education provided an explanation for the variation.

26.2 The question was put and agreed that Head 26, Ministry of Education be varied by an increase in the sum of \$180,476,866.

Head 28: Ministry of Health – Increase

27.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 28, Ministry of Health be varied by an increase in the sum of \$196,500,000.

27.2 The Minister of Health provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

27.3 The Members for Fyzabad, Caroni East, Oropouche West, Princes Town, Tabaquite and Cumuto/Manzanilla sought clarification. The Minister of Health provided an explanation for the variation.

27.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 28, Ministry of Health be varied by an increase in the sum of \$196,500,000.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development – Increase

28.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 30, Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development be varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,000,000.

28.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

28.3 The Members for Couva South, Caroni Central, Cumuto/Manzanilla and Chaguanas East sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and Minister of Planning and Development provided an explanation for the variation.

28.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 30, Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development be varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,000,000.

Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications - Increase

29.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration and Communications be varied by an increase in the sum of \$56,230,000.

29.2 The Minister of Public Administration and Communications provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

29.3 The Members for Naparima and Oropouche East sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Public Administration and Communications provided an explanation for the variation.

29.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration and Communications be varied by an increase in the sum of \$56,230,000.

Head 35: Ministry of Tourism - Increase

30.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 35, Ministry of Tourism be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,000,000.

30.2 The Minister of Tourism provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

30.3 The Members for Naparima, Tabaquite, Couva North and Cumuto/Manzanilla and Pointe-a-Pierre sought clarification. The Minister of Tourism provided an explanation for the variation.

30.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 35, Ministry of Tourism be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,000,000.

Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities - Increase

31.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities be varied by an increase in the sum of \$275,015,000.

31.2 The Minister of Public Utilities provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

31.3 The Members for Pointe-a-Pierre, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Tabaquite and Oropouche East sought clarification. The Minister of Public Utilities provided an explanation for the variation.

31.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities be varied by an increase in the sum of \$275,015,000.

Head 48: Ministry of Trade and Industry - Increase

32.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 48, Ministry of Trade and Industry be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,000,000.

32.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

32.3 The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre sought clarification. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the variation.

32.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 48, Ministry of Trade and Industry be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,000,000.

Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development – Increase

33.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development be varied by an increase in the sum of \$376,837,045.

33.2 The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

33.3 The Members for Oropouche East, Pointe-a-Pierre, Caroni Central and Fyzabad sought clarification. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Housing and Urban Development provided an explanation for the variation.

33.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development be varied by an increase in the sum of \$376,837,045.

Head 68: Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs – Increase

34.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 68, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs be varied by an increase in the sum of \$250,000.

34.2 The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

34.3 The Members for Oropouche East, Princes Town and Siparia sought clarification. The Minister of Finance, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Minister of Public Administration and Communications provided an explanation for the variation.

34.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 68, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs be varied by an increase in the sum of \$250,000.

Head 77: Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries – Increase

35.1 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries be varied by an increase in the sum of \$3,187,153.

35.2 The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister provided an explanation for the purpose of the increase.

35.3 The Member for Oropouche East sought clarification. The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister provided an explanation for the variation.

35.4 The question was put and agreed that Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries be varied by an increase in the sum of \$3,187,153.

Total Increase

36.1 The question was put and agreed that the 2017 Appropriation be varied by a total increase in the sum of \$1,398,125,544.

Requests for Additional Information

36.2 During the consideration of the proposals for the Variation of the Appropriation for the fiscal year 2017 requests were made for information in writing. See Appendix II.

OTHER BUSINESS

37.1 The Chairman informed Members that the Committee's report will be circulated on Tuesday May 09, 2017 to all Members.

37.2 The Leader of the House move that the Sitting of the House of Representatives be resumed.

37.3 The adjournment was taken at 9:53 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

May 05, 2017

APPENDIX II

Requests for Additional Information

Additional Information requested from Head 18, Ministry of Finance

04/009/11 – Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF)

1. What percentage is the \$1,275,619,525 of the total amount allocated to the Infrastructure Development Fund?
2. How much of the Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF) has been spent to date, what projects were paid for, and how much of the IDF remains?
3. What percentage of the 2017 IDF allocation has been spent/implemented to date?
4. Please provide a list of the projects that would not be completed or started as initially projected for fiscal 2017.
5. Please provide the list of the outstanding bills that have not been verified for payment and the bills and projects that have been subjected to investigation for criminal activity.
6. What process was used for the verification of outstanding payments and what is the status of the verification and by whom was the verification undertaken?
7. What was the rolling amount in the IDF that was met at the beginning of fiscal year 2017?
8. Which projects, if any, have been stopped?
9. How many and which projects have been stopped due to contractors not being paid?
10. Were the Highways from Princes Town to Moruga, the Moruga Port and the Point Fortin Fire Station affected by the reduction?
11. How much of capital development funding has been spent and for which projects?
12. What is the single, largest capital project that will not be utilised/affected by the decrease in allocation?

04/009/23 CARICOM Development Fund

13. Provide all the costs/monies supplied to the CARICOM.

04/007/06 – Food Price Support Programme - \$86,067,019

1. Provide the number of persons who have benefitted from the programme for the period September 2016 to April 2017 and the number who will benefit from April 2017 to the end of the year.
2. How many persons will be cut from the programme due to the reduction in budgetary allocation from April 2017 to the end of the year?
3. What criteria was used to determine the persons to be cut?
4. How much of the original allocation was expended and for what purpose?
5. For what purpose will the remainder of the budgetary allocation be utilised?
6. When did the process of revisiting the programme start and by whom? What was the expertise of this person?
7. Is there a cost for the revisiting, if so, how much was expended?
8. When will the revisiting process for the programme be completed?
9. Was the programme halted during the revisiting process? If so, please provide the period when the programme was halted.
10. For what purposes was the decreased allocation of \$86,067,019 removed?
11. Provide a list of the distribution by region of the 28,000 recipients of food cards.

12. What is the status of the 2014 Poverty Report (KAIRI Report)?

Additional Information requested from Head 40, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries

04/007/01 – Shortfall in subsidy re sale of Petroleum Products - \$35,000,000

1. Are there any petroleum products sold by the retail marketers that are in surplus and therefore do not attract a subsidy?
2. What price per barrel was this reduction made in order to arrive at the figure of \$35,000,000?
3. What is the subsidy to Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP) and what is the surplus?
4. Will the prices of diesel and other fuels be further increased at the pumps?

Additional Information requested from Head 03, Judiciary

02/001/21 – Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings - \$2,000,000

1. What is the name of the company or person contracted to do repairs and maintenance?
2. What was the nature of the repairs undertaken at the three (3) Magistrates' Court Buildings (Rio Claro, Couva and Sand Fernando)?
3. What were the specific repairs carried out?
4. What was the tendering process used for the selection of the companies/persons who carried out the repairs?
5. Have any sums been paid to date, are any sums outstanding?
6. If repairs were completed, was it finished in time and within budget?
7. Provide copies of the letters issued by the Judiciary to the Property Management Administration Division of the Ministry of Public Administration.
8. What was the commencement date for the payment of rent, how much is the rent for the building owned by Sural Enterprises?

02/001/43 and 02/003/43 Security Services - \$11,500,000

5. Provide the security providers other than the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS) for the Judiciary.
6. What sums have been paid thus far and how much is owed for these services?

Additional Information requested from Head 04, Industrial Court

02/001/16 – Contract Employment - \$1,000,000

1. How many contract employees are there?
2. How long have the contract employees been on contract and have these contracts continued to be renewed?

02/001/43 and 02/002/43 – Security Services - \$698,000

3. Are there any written contracts for these services?
4. According to the Auditor General's Report for the period September 2015 to September 2016, MTS produced no contracts for fiscal 2016, is this still the case and if yes, why?

02/001/21 – Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings - \$1,300,000

7. How many elevators required repairs, what were these repairs and the cost of the repairs?
8. As it concerns air conditioners:
 - how many air conditioners are in the building;
 - how many are currently working;
 - how many were repaired;
 - what was the cost of the repairs;
 - how many need to be procured; and
 - what is the cost of procurement?

Additional Information requested from Head 05, Parliament

02/001/23 – Fees - \$500,000

1. What is the nature of the legal fees and for what purpose?
2. What does brokerage and shipping fees refer to?

02/001/58 – Medical Expenses - \$1,000,000

3. What is the policy for medical expenses for Members of Parliament?

02/001/64 – Operations of Constituency Offices - \$2,500,000

4. Has there been/or will there be a review of the criteria for what are considered to be ‘high risk’ constituency offices?

Additional Information requested from Head 06, Service Commissions

Recurrent Expenditure - \$4,920,700

1. In light of the discussions being held with the PMCD to provide support to meet the deficiencies of the Commissions, when will these discussions be completed in order to see a marked improvement in the Commissions?
2. What measurable improvement can be expected from the Service Commissions given the allocation?

02/006/28 – Other Contracted Services - \$2,500,000

3. Which firm was retained to undertake the recruitment process?
4. Would there be an increased funding to meet the deficiencies and when will the deficiencies be met?
5. What is the present salary of the incumbent Commissioner of Police (Ag.) and the Deputy Commissioners of Police?

Additional Information requested from Head 09, Tax Appeal Board

02/001/08 – Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage - \$350,000

1. What is the monthly rental cost of this building?

2. Has any consideration been given to provide government accommodation and if yes, what is the rental cost?
3. Was this allocation of \$350,000 due to an increase in rental fees?
4. Provide details of the current accommodation of the Tax Appeal Board.
5. Provide details by way of examples, how money has been saved/rent has been saved.

Additional Information requested from Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board

Recurrent Expenditure - \$535,000

1. Provide details for the use of the proposed increased allocation.

Additional Information requested from Head 13, Office of the Prime Minister

09/005/06/A/002 - Strengthening of the Strategic Threat Assessment Capacity in Trinidad and Tobago - Think Tank Project

1. Why is the funding quoted in US dollars?
2. When did Cabinet approve this Project?
3. Who are the members of the Project and what is their purpose to the Council?
4. What are the results expected from this Project?
5. Provide the measurable improvements this Think Tank is expected to bring in the areas of capacity building and threat assessment.
6. How many persons are to be trained?
7. What is the capacity of the current National Security Secretariat?
8. Has there/will there be a review of the National Security Secretariat's organisational structure in light of this new project?
9. What are the Project's measurable objectives?
10. How will this Project benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago?

Additional Information requested from Head 22, Ministry of National Security

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$22,600,000

1. Which agency or person is responsible for the management and operations of the CCTV system?
2. Provide a listing of the International Affairs Officers and the Diplomatic Missions at which they are located.
3. Provide the scope of work, nature of contract, salaries and allowances of the International Affairs and ICT Officers.
4. How many International Affairs Officers are on contract, and how many are on the establishment?
5. What steps have been taken to regularize International Affairs Officers?
6. How many persons will this allocation of \$22,600,000 pay?
7. What is the length of term of contracts for both the International Affairs and ICT Officers?
8. Provide the commencement date and expiry date of the contracts for the International Affairs and ICT Officers.

09/005/06/G/005 - Acquisition of a Digital Public Safety Communications System for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) - \$18,563,000

9. What is this system about and how will it benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago?

Additional Information requested from Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$14,164,000

1. Provide a breakdown of renewed contracts compared to existing contracts that the allocation of \$14,164,000 will be expected to cover?
2. Provide a breakdown of the contract positions.
3. How many Graduate Recruitment persons are employed? Are they paid with funds allocated to this sub-item?

Additional Information requested from Head 26, Ministry of Education

03/001/04 - Other Minor Equipment - \$60,658,000

1. Please provide the report on research conducted regarding laptop use.

04/007/09 - Early Childhood Care and Education - \$5,000,000

2. When will the Bed Lamont and the Santan Dharma Maha Sabha be completed?
3. How much does it cost to outfit the completed ECCE Centres?

04/007/23 - Servol Hi-Tech & Advanced Skills Training Programme - \$1,000,000

4. Where are the 15 Adolescent Development Skill Training Departments located?
5. How many persons have benefitted from the Advanced Skills Training Programme?

04/007/25 - Servol's Human Development and Skills Training Programme - \$7,000,000

6. Which seven (7) Secondary Schools benefit from Servol's Human Development and Skills Training Programme?

04/011/02 - National Schools Dietary Services Ltd. - \$50,000,000

7. Are payments to suppliers and contractors up to date?

04/011/08 - Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme Ltd. (YTEPP) - \$30,000,000

8. Will stipends continue to be paid?
9. Please provide details on stipend rates
10. How many trainees are currently part of the programme?

04/006/50 Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago - \$5,000,000

11. How many employees will benefit from the industrial agreements for the bargaining period 2011 to 2013?

12. What is the existing complement of staff of the ACTT?

04/011/10 - EFCL Interest on \$286.5Mn Syndicated Loan arranged by RBC Merchant Bank - \$6,793,143 and

04/011/11 - EFCL Principal Repayment on \$286.5Mn Syndicated Loan arranged by RBC Merchant Bank - \$13,025,723

13. How much of the loan has been utilised to date? If there is a sum remaining, what will be done with it?

14. Please provide an update on the closure of the Sangre Chiquito Prebyterian Primary School since January 2017.

15. What is the resumption date for the construction of the Preysal Government School?

16. What is the status of the Shiva Boys and Parvati Girls Primary Schools?

17. What will be done with the funding under IDF for schools (construction)?

18. Please provide a list of schools in the first phase of construction.

19. How is the priority list of schools determined?

Additional Information requested from Head 28, Ministry of Health

Recurrent Expenditure - \$196,500,000

1. How many suppliers are waiting to be paid?

2. What is the average waiting time for payment by suppliers?

3. Does the allocation provide for the resumption of endoscopic services at South West Regional Authority (SWRHA)?

4. What are the outstanding payables from each Regional Health Authority?

5. What types of surgeries are outsourced to private medical institutions?

6. Provide a list of countries who have utilised a similar programme under the UNFPA and where has it worked.

7. What is the amount owed per month for 'Food at Institutions' at RHAs?

8. What is the average waiting time for cataract surgery at the SWRHA?

Additional Information requested from Head 30, Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

01/004/06 Remuneration to Board Members

1. Provide a disaggregation of the \$150, 000 for each Board.

02/001/16 Contract Employment (General Administration)

2. Does this sum take into consideration the restructuring of the OJT Programme?

3. What are the objectives of the National Tripartite Advisory Council (NTAC) Unit?

4. How many persons are to be hired for the NTAC Unit?

5. What is the organisational structure of the NTAC Unit?

6. Provide details on the salaries and remuneration for employees of the Unit.

04/004/08 Funding for Liaison Office in Canada

7. What are the entitlements of these employees?

06/004/17 Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies

8. Where will the Tobago Campus be located?
9. What is the monthly rental cost?
10. Who is the landlord?

Additional Information requested from Head 35, Ministry of Tourism

02/001/28 – Other Contracted Services - \$1,600,000

1. Provide a breakdown of the payment and details of the PricewaterhouseCoopers consultancy.

Additional Information requested from Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities

04/009/04 - Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost) - \$42,540,000

1. Provide the percentage of 2017 allocation spent to date.
2. Provide the breakeven amount required for TTPost's revenue to cover expenses.
3. Provide the appointment date of the current TTPost board.

06/004/51 - Water and Sewerage Authority - \$227,815,000

4. Does Desalcott or Seven Seas Water produce water at a higher cost?
5. What is the US equivalent of \$137,815,000 to meet outstanding payments for the Desalcott agreement?

Additional Information requested from Head 48, Ministry of Trade and Industry

04/009/23 – Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company - \$4,000,000

04/009/24 – Invest TT - \$4,000,000

1. Provide the current number of employees at Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company and Invest TT.

Additional Information requested from Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

04/009/01 - Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation - \$283,808,644

1. What is the total loan amount withdrawn to date?
2. What is the total loan amount yet to be used?
3. Provide a breakdown and details on the loan funds spent to date inclusive of housing estates.
4. Indicate whether the loan funds were used to facilitate the construction and distribution of housing estates in Union Hall, Victoria Keyes and Egypt Trace, Chaguanas?

5. What is the total outstanding monies owed to contractors that were certified for payment and not paid to date?

04/011/05 - UDECOTT - Interest Payment - ANSA Merchant Bank Ltd. - Fixed Rate Bridge Loan - \$13,028,401

6. Provide a status of the UDECOTT loan agreement inclusive of the loan commitments that were fulfilled.

09/004/08/H/005 - Home Improvements and New Housing Subsidies Programme - \$5,000,000

7. Provide a list of the names, addresses and quantum paid of each recipient of the Home Improvements and New Housing Subsidies Programme during the first six months of fiscal 2017.

Additional Information requested from Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

04/011/03 - EMBD Principal on \$400Mn Loan

1. Provide an update on EMBD projects inclusive of Cedar Hill, Picton and Couva to date.
2. Whether the EMBD has distributed lands to Caroni workers during the past seventeen (17) months inclusive of the number distributed and outstanding?

APPENDIX III

Verbatim Notes

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, LEVEL 2, TOWER D, THE PORT-OF-SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, 1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON FRIDAY, MAY 05, 2017 AT 11.00 A.M. TO 1:12 P.M.; 2:23 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. AND 7:01 P.M. TO 9:53 P.M.

Madam Chairman: Members, good morning. I now call this meeting to order. I want to suggest we do some of the housekeeping business in the hope that the Minister of Finance will reach by that time. If not, we will then see how we proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, could I please register that I think it is a lack of respect on behalf of the Minister of Finance that at a meeting of the finance committee, the Minister of Finance is not present at the time appointed for that meeting.

Mr. Hinds: Madam Chair, let me record the absence of the Minister of Finance, who cannot immediately be accurately explained, he could very well be – *[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Lost.

Mr. Hinds: – in an emergency situation and therefore, it will be incorrect to conclude that it is disrespect.

Mr. Young: Madam Chairman, allow me, first of all, to make a – *[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Apologize.

Mr. Young: – apologize for being a bit late. I was just on the pHon.e with the Minister of Finance, he is actually a few minutes away and I proffer his apologies on his behalf.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right. So Members, I have heard – *[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Madam Chair, can I just ask one question?

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Could I ask, for my information, who gave the time for the finance committee?

Madam Chairman: Okay, so I have heard you, Member for Barataria/San Juan. So, Members, I just want to say this. We know the absence of the Minister of Finance. I have heard all the views expressed. I take it as no disrespect. I know Ministers sometimes have emergency situations and I think, on both sides, that is known and understood. Okay?

So, Members, in accordance with Standing Orders 82(6) and 87, this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee was convened to consider proposals for the variation of appropriation for the fiscal year 2017. Members will know that the speaking time, in accordance with Standing Order 45(1) for the Standing Finance Committee, shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. With respect to our procedure, we would first consider the proposals for decrease and then we will consider the proposals for increases.

Further, Hon. Members, the procedure for each Head of expenditure shall be as follows, and it applies

both to increases and decreases. One, the Head and the amount to be decreased or increased will be announced. Secondly, I will then propose the question that the Head be decreased or increased. Thirdly, the Minister will then be invited to explain the purpose for the decrease or the increase and Members may seek clarification from the Minister. Fourthly, once this is concluded, I will then put the question that the sum, decreased or increased, be approved. Fifthly, the procedure will then be repeated for each Head. Okay, so that at this stage, I will propose that we suspend this meeting to allow the Minister of Finance to arrive. Meeting is suspended.

11.04 a.m.: Meeting suspended.

11.10 a.m.: Meeting resumed.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is resumed. Minister of Finance, we have already done the table setting so we are prepared to commence. I note your late arrival but I expect that there was some supervening circumstance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. May I also apologize for the Leader of Government Business who also had a supervening circumstance and will be here shortly.

Madam Chairman: So we are doing decreases. Hon. Members, we shall consider the proposals for decreases for fiscal year 2017.

Head 18: Ministry of Finance, \$1,363,125,544.

I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. Madam Chairman, as is customary at the time of the mid-year, the Ministry of Finance would look at requests from Ministries in terms of supplementary funding for various Heads of Expenditure and determine what can be accommodated within the constraints of available revenue and the budget deficit.

In this year 2017, we, after careful consideration, have determined that we can make available the sum of \$1 million—a total sum actually. But this Head is a subset of that. A total sum of \$1,398,125,544 of which the bulk is—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, I am sorry, I am not hearing the Hon. Minister very well. I do not know if it is the system or he is in a subdued mood.

Mr. Imbert: Do you wish me to start over? I have no difficulty with that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, please. I will be very grateful.

Mr. Imbert: No problem.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: As is customary around this time of the year, when the Ministry of Finance does its mid-year review—are you hearing me now? “Yuh hearing me now?”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is better. Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: The Ministry of Finance would look at the various requests from Ministries with respect to additional allocations for various Heads of Expenditure, and after careful consideration of all of the requests, the Ministry of Finance would make a determination of what can be accommodated within the constraints of

revenue and within the constraints of the budget deficit.

This exercise, this year, has led to a variation of appropriation as distinct from a supplementation. In other words, the budget is not being increased. We are simply moving Items from one Head of expenditure to another to supplement those Heads of Expenditure where we are of the view that funding is urgently required. The total variation is \$1,398,125,544 of which this particular Head, Head 18, forms the bulk at \$1,363,125,544. The money has come from the Infrastructure Development Fund and also the Food Price Support Programme.

With respect to the Infrastructure Development Fund, the fund had a surplus in it in terms of the inputs and the outputs expected from that fund in fiscal 2017 so we were able to transfer an allocation that existed for the Infrastructure Development Fund into all of these other Ministries.

With respect to the Food Price Support Programme, based on the pattern of expenditure so far for the first six months of the year, we have revised downwards the requirements for this programme. This has not in any way affect the delivery from the programme itself. What it means is that the original estimate for the food price support programme was a bit of an overestimate and now we are refining that estimate and have been able to find \$86,067,019 inside of there. Putting the two together, you get the \$1,363,125,544.

Question proposed: That Head 18, Ministry of Finance, be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$1,363,125,544.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I would just like to find out from the Hon. Minister, at the beginning of the fiscal year 2017, how many persons were, in fact, benefiting from this programme and how many persons were benefiting at the end of April, and would further numbers of persons be not benefiting as a result of this reduction? In other words, what has happened between September 2016 and April, now, where we are and then from now until the end of the year, how many other persons will be cut from the programme?

Mr. Imbert: Well, I do not think it is fair to assume that anybody would be cut from the programme. I think that will be determined by the actual figures themselves. So I give an undertaking that at the time of the debate on the Finance Committee Report on Wednesday, that information will be provided to you. But I do not think it is fair to assume that it is as a result of a cut in beneficiaries. It may very well have been an overestimation, a calculation situation at the beginning of the year.

Dr. Rambachan: But, Hon. Minister, is it not true that the Minister with responsibility for social development had announced that over 13,000 persons were deleted from the programme and is that not the reason why the amount of money fell, and are more persons going to be deleted as a result of this \$86 million reduction?

Mr. Imbert: With due respect, former Minister, Member, as I said, I do not think it is fair to make that assumption and on Wednesday, we will answer that question.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in 2014/2015, this programme, \$294 million was expended; 2013/2014, \$270.5 million; for the estimates for 2015/2016, revised, \$288 million;

2016/2017, which is the one we are dealing with now, is \$288 now being reduced by \$86 million to bring it down to 201.9. It is clear then just on the estimates over the years as carried in the Details of Recurrent Expenditure, 2012 – 2017, that there is a reduction in the amount of moneys.

11.20a.m.

And so my colleague, on the issue that he has raised, the question now comes as to how many persons were being serviced previously and how many will not be serviced, because you definitely have \$86 million left. That is compared to previous years of 288, 294, 270, and so on.

Mr. Imbert: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, that question is virtually identical to the question asked by the Member for Tabaquite. Again, it is not fair to arrive at those assumptions. There may have been duplication. There may have been ghost persons in the system. One does not know. On Wednesday we will answer that question.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: Hon. Minister, well, is it that as we proceed that you can then provide information? How many persons benefitted under the programme to date for fiscal 2017? How many would not be benefiting and, therefore, what criteria has been applied? If that is so, then there has been a cut. How much has already been expended and for what purposes, Hon. Minister? Because this money is the food support programme. Yes? Is it for a transfer to households, or is it for staffing? Is it for administrative expenses? So how much of this was already expended, one, and for what purposes? Whatever is remaining, for the rest of the fiscal year, just a couple months, for what purposes will that be expended? So it is not necessary that all the money is for transfers to households. It can be for administrative expenses as well. So I am asking that question too.

Mr. Imbert: That question will be answered on Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: Well then, what is the purpose of this Finance Committee? Is it not for us to get information so that we can prepare for the debate next week for whichever day you put it?**Mr. Imbert:** You will receive as many answers – *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: Should I give you in writing all the questions, Sir?

Mr. Imbert: Leader of Opposition, as is the custom, as has been the practice in the 25 years I have been here and the 20 years, or whatever period you have been here, you very well know that those questions that can be answered will be answered before Wednesday. We give an undertaking to answer them as quickly as possible. If you can get the answers in writing on Monday, you will get them. If you can get them on Tuesday, you will get them. If the question is very complex, we would most certainly answer the question on Wednesday. That has been the practice in this Committee.

We have no idea what sorts of questions you would be asking and we do not know what assumptions you are making, so we are going to take very careful note, very careful note of your questions. There is somebody transcribing all of this and as is the practice, this will be in the minutes and you will get your answers.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, through you, Hon. Minister, in your note for this Committee you indicated that the Ministry of Social Development has indicated it is in the process of revisiting and regularizing the administration of the programme. As a result, the allocation will not be utilized. This is in your actual minute presented to this Committee.

Can you advise: When did this revisiting start and by whom is this revisiting taking place? Is there a cost to the revisiting? How much has already been paid for that revisiting? I mean, this is what is before us and, therefore, I would expect that you would have this information that you have asked us in your note. We are revisiting and regularizing, so, when did it start? How much has been expended for that? By whom and with what expertise? And when will this revisiting be completed?

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. Now that you have articulated all of those questions, I am certain we can answer all of the questions and we will make our best effort to send the responses before Wednesday, so you would have some time to look at the responses before the debate, as is the practice.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: Whilst this revisiting is taking place, or has been taking place, was the programme stopped, and if so, when? My further question will be: Exactly for what purposes was this money taken, the \$86 million? It is the food support programme, but for exactly what? There is no detail whether it was for money for rent for this programme, whether it was staffing, whether it was for infrastructure. So if you take an \$86million out of this vote, well the Ministry, for this programme under 04/007/06, it must come from specific line items and areas where it would have been expended.

Further question, I think, we would just ask questions – *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I think you have asked that question before. That is the second time you asked that.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: Well, I was hoping you would be a little more informed.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. We will take due note. We will answer your questions, preferably before Wednesday, but certainly by Wednesday.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. My understanding from feedback from constituents is that the programme, effectively, has been shut down. And there are instances, I know, of people in dire need of this food support system that is being curtailed as I see it. Can you give us the assurance that those cases that exist and are likely to exist in the coming months, with respect to the increased taxes and whatnot, could you give us the assurance that their needs will be addressed by the existing allocations?

Mr. Imbert: I think since you have now brought that element into the discussion, I think that is a question that the Minister of Social Development can properly answer, and she is here.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: In terms of what aspect of the question; that the programme has stopped?

Mr. Charles: The ability of the programme, given the cuts in allocations. Is it able to deal with current and anticipated cases of need for food cards and support of this kind?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, I believe so. We have been paying all of the food card recipients. No payment has stopped. All persons who are eligible have been paid and continue to be paid. The food card programme

has not stopped.

Mr. Charles: My understanding is that 13,000 persons have been culled from the list, some of whom are from Naparima constituency and many of whom I know are in need. All I am asking is there – the allocation, can it handle the current and anticipated increases in those who need this programme, yes or no?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Members on the other side continue to harp on the statement that persons have been cut. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has not removed 13,000 persons from the food card support programme who were eligible. The persons who were removed are persons who did not come in when we were doing the re-registration and the assessment and I believe this is because they recognized that they were not eligible for the food card, so they did not come into the Ministry and by dint of that they are removed from the system.

The Ministry has the funds. We continued to pay all persons who are eligible. As a matter of fact, there are approximately 28,000 persons paid every month under the food card programme and we will continue to pay those persons.

Mr. Charles: Yes. I wish to assure you that there are people in Naparima constituency who did not go for two reasons. One is that they felt that they would be discriminated against, and that is their feeling and the other one is that some of them cannot read or write and they were not aware of the need to come forward. So all I am asking is those persons who are in need in Naparima constituency there is money available for them. That is all.

Madam Chairman: Member, just one minute. Member, I think you have asked that question and I think the Minister has responded to that question – *[Interruption]*

Mr. Charles: She has said yes?

Madam Chairman: – on more than occasion. Okay?

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. My question relates to the Infrastructure Development Fund. That is what I was going to ask, if you all have more on the food card. Madam Chair, there are more questions on this food card but my question was on the Infrastructure Development Fund.

Madam Chairman: Actually, we are under the particular head and I am just going to recognize people in the order in which they caught my eye.

Dr. Moonilal: So colleagues can come back with the food card?

Madam Chairman: Once we are under the Head. Okay? **Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, sure. Just a couple questions to the Minister on this. I am hoping that I interpret this right and I am asking for the clarification. Is there a decrease of \$1.25 billion from the Infrastructure Development Fund to go to pay what we see in the report to be salaries, contract services, meals in some cases, minor equipment and so on?

Could I ask if this is so, what percentage is \$1.25 billion of the overall Infrastructure Development Fund? Because it appears that this is a complete collapse of the capital expenditure programme of the projects of the government in fiscal 2017? Could you list for us the projects under the IDF that you determine here will

not be completed or started in fiscal 2017 that will allow for \$1.25 billion to go elsewhere? What are these projects?

Secondly, you are indicating here that you have not been able to pay outstanding bills, which have not been verified. Twenty months into the administration, why have you not been able to verify, or not, outstanding bills and been able to pay these outstanding bills that you make reference to you here, so that you have \$1.25 billion to move elsewhere, from capital projects to what really is recurrent expenditure on equipment and a host of other expenditures? And would the Minister agree that in 2017, this is tantamount to the complete collapse of your capital infrastructure programme?

Mr. Imbert: Taking in reverse order, the answer to the last question is absolutely not, no.

Secondly, the way the Infrastructure Development Fund operates is that it is a rolling fund. If there is money in it at the end of a fiscal year, and what we do in the annual budget exercise is we put money into the fund to top up the fund. And, therefore, the fund already had money in it at the beginning of this fiscal year. And, therefore, this transfer will not affect the amount of money available for infrastructure projects in fiscal 2017?

Dr. Moonilal: But could I ask: What was the IDF budget for 2017, please?

Mr. Imbert: Are you asking me to pull from memory?

Dr. Moonilal: If you do not know it offhand you can give us it before the debate.

Mr. Imbert: As far as I can recall, it is approximately \$5 billion.

Dr. Moonilal: Five billion dollars in the IDF?

Mr. Imbert: That is my memory.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: I think it was one time under the IDB but—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: I do not think so, but we would verify that.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: The sum of 3.532—

Mr. Imbert: Five billion is the entire public sector investment programme. The Development Programme, you asked about the Capital Development Programme, did you not?

Mrs. Persad Bissessar SC: No, he asked for the IDF.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, no problem. The entire Capital Development Programme that you spoke about in your last question, when you alleged that it had collapsed is approximately \$5 billion and the IDF component of that is approximately \$2.5 billion.

Dr. Moonilal: So, out of \$2.5 billion, you have free \$1.25 billion.

Mr. Imbert: I did not say that. Let me explain again that the IDF is a rolling fund, just like the GATE fund. There is money in the fund at the end of each fiscal year and you appropriate money into that fund and—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I see a Member taking photographs in the Chamber here. That is totally unsatisfactory. Could you ask the Member to stop? Yes, “ah camera just flash meh, ah phone”.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me. All Members would have received the bulletin regarding use of hand-held devices and I would expect that all Members would comply with that, okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Member for Diego Martin Central, that is not acceptable for Parliament. You are a new person and you should learn to be respectful. [*Continuous interruption and crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members, please. I have noted the point made by the Member for Caroni East. Any offending Members, I would ask you to desist from taking any photos of the proceedings on the phone. Okay? So let us proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: One final follow-up to the Minister of Finance when I have his attention. Could you undertake to give us a note on the outstanding bills which have not been verified for payment, as you claim here?

Mr. Imbert: It would be extremely difficult to do that by Wednesday, but I will make my best effort to do so. However, a lot of these unverified bills are associated with alleged criminal activity [*Interruption*] and are being investigated by the law enforcement agencies – Madam Chairman, what happen? I cannot continue if they babble this you know. I ask you to restore order, please.

11.35 a.m.

Madam Chairman: Just now please. Members, I recognize we had a “lil” late start, so Members may be unsettled, but we have a lot to do. We know we have a sitting at 1.30, so let us use our time well. Okay. So that I recognize the question asked by the Member for Oropouche East, and I believe the Minister of Finance is in the process of answering that question.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Please proceed, Minister of Finance. And may I just ask if you could kindly – maybe the chair is not positioned properly for your mike, if you could really try and speak a little more loudly. I think you do have such control of your vocal cords so that we can hear. Thank you very much.

Dr. Moonilal: Not after Elias deals with him. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman –

Madam Chairman: Member? Minister of Finance, please proceed.

Mr. Imbert: Well, I will try to proceed in the midst of the noise from Members opposite. As I indicated, some of the bills that have not been verified. In fact, the majority of them are associated with alleged criminal activity, and are the subject of investigation by the law enforcement agencies. Whenever a particular invoice is sent in that attracts the attention of the authorities as being perhaps an attempt to defraud, it is sent to the law enforcement agencies for a further investigation. The vast majority of bills that have not been verified are those types of bills associated with criminal activity that occurred previously.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West – yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, just one final thing. Then Minister of Finance, could I ask then given your explanation, it would be very easy to find the examples of outstanding bills since those would be before relevant authorities for investigation; could we have a list then of those outstanding bills that have been

subjected to investigations by the police or any other law enforcement agencies on any allegation of criminal offence?

Mr. Imbert: In the first instance, identification of persons who are suspected of criminal activity while an active investigation is on the way will defeat the whole purpose and intent of a criminal investigation.

In the second instance, I will try my best to give whatever information is available. We are talking about a large number of bills from the previous Government that are being investigated for possible criminal action.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much of the Infrastructure Development Fund has been spent so far and how much is remaining? So, therefore, how much and what percentage of it has been spent so far from the IDF?

Mr. Imbert: I would not want to give the figures today, but you will get those figures in time for the debate on Wednesday, the reason being we have both expenditure and commitments and expenditure payments are being processed as we speak. So I would not want to give that today, but I can give you a figure by Wednesday.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And could you just indicate what projects they were paid for?

Mr. Imbert: Again, you are talking about hundreds, possibly over a thousand projects. In order to give that type of information, it will require a lot of work, but I would try my best to give as much information as possible.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just earlier on when we were asking certain questions, the Member for Siparia, the Minister of Social Development and Family Services was not here at that time, but she is here now. I do not know if she might be able to draw some light where that \$86 million is going to be moved in line items from her Ministry, the particular –

Mr. Imbert: No, no, let me answer that. This is not the Head associated with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. We are on the Ministry of Finance, Head 18, as you will see in the document before you, if you read it. That is it.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Hon. Minister of Social Development and Family Services indicated that there are 28,000 recipients of the food card programme. I would like to have a distribution by region of this 28,000 – a list of that distribution by region.

Mr. Imbert: Now, remember this is Head 18, Ministry of Finance, but I will obtain the information for you.

Mr. Singh: Well, you took the liberty, Hon. Minister, of asking her to answer a question –

Mr. Imbert: The reason was that the Member for Naparima was raising a very contentious issue about alleged discrimination, so that is why I wanted the Minister to come and deal with that. But in terms of Head 18, I will respond in writing.

Mr. Singh: Secondly, on the IDF, I would like – I do not know whether, I perhaps was lost in transmission. Do we have a list of the IDF projects that are under criminal investigation?

Mr. Imbert: Again, to repeat – Madam Chairman, I find I am having to repeat a lot. As I said, to identify

projects that are under criminal investigation – [*Crosstalk*] Madam Chairman –

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please.

Mr. Imbert: But for the Member for Oropouche to be yelling out “Gestapo!” and that being allowed, that is disturbing this meeting, Madam Chairman. I beg, Madam Chairman, that you intervene. He cannot be sitting down there and bawling out “Gestapo”. It is wrong.

Madam Chairman: Members. Members. Minister of Finance, I did not hear the Member for Oropouche East. I appeal to all Members to really conduct themselves with the decorum that is required in the interest of us advancing the business of the people. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West, as I indicated previously, to identify persons of interest or companies or projects that are subject to criminal investigation, while the investigation is still active would defeat the entire criminal justice system. I am afraid I cannot do that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, I would like to find out from the Chairman of the Finance Committee: What projects were not completed by virtue as you indicated in this note that contracts have not been finalized as initially projected? What contracts – a listing of the projects?

Mr. Imbert: We can give you some indication on that by Wednesday.

Mr. Singh: My understanding is that how you get access to IDF funding is that you do the work and you submit the bills for payment. So the work is done first and then subsequently.

Mr. Imbert: No, and I think it is good opportune moment to explain how the Infrastructure Development Fund works because a lot of parliamentarians are not aware. The development programme side, the Consolidated Fund element of the PSIP is work done by Ministries. The Infrastructure Development Fund is work done by state enterprises. So that a warrant would only arrive on the desk of the Minister of Finance for a release for a project if it is a project that is being executed by a state enterprise. So whether it is UDeCOTT or NIPDEC or some state enterprise like that or quasi-state enterprise. So that all of these projects need to have approval, they need to be awarded. For example, if a contract is not awarded, let us say, tenders have gone out and the contract has not yet been awarded, but it was estimated that the award would have been made some time previously – I take a hypothetical case, a highway project where the estimate was that the contract would be awarded in January and the tender process, the procurement exercise is still in progress – no contract award would have been made which means that that expenditure that was projected for January will now take place in June or July as the case may be and that is what that means.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, with respect to the food support programme, I know that the Leader of the Opposition asked the Hon. Minister with respect to specific line items and Votes for the Ministry, and I do not know if the Hon. Minister of Finance will allow the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to answer this question or we will have to wait for Wednesday. But I am

particularly concerned whether or not there is a correlation with the closure of the Poverty Reduction Unit in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services in that it worked closely with the food support programme that if that is one of the areas where the funds are being pulled out from with respect to the closure of that Poverty Reduction Unit to supply the necessary funds being moved out of this programme.

Mr. Imbert: I will ask the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to deal with that comment about the Poverty Reduction Programme, but just let me make it clear, this is the Ministry of Finance's Head, this is not the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services Head. So there are no programmes in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services Head that are being pulled in or out as the case may be. What happens here is that as the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services engages in its food support programme, it makes a request for release of funds from the Ministry of Finance, because the funding is under the Head of the Ministry of Finance. So there are no programmes that are being pulled here and there. With respect to the poverty reduction matter, I would ask the Minister if she can answer today to respond to you or if not on Wednesday.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Poverty Reduction Unit, the approval was granted for three years and that approval came to an end. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services was not in a position to, at this point in time, recommend continuation of the programme because when we looked at the programme, the major objectives of the programme were not met. For example, one of the key deliverables was the development and implementation of a National Policy on Poverty Reduction. That policy has not been developed to date. The unit was also required to collect and have available data on poverty in Trinidad and Tobago, and that was not done. In light of all of that, we were not in a position to recommend the continuation of that programme.

The food support programme is a totally different programme to the Poverty Reduction Unit. While food support is one of the mechanisms used to help to alleviate poverty they are not directly linked. So the discontinuation of the Poverty Reduction Unit has nothing to do with the continuation of the food support programme.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chairman. If, again, the Hon. Minister of Social Development and Family Services could clarify, could the Hon. Minister indicate what has since been put in place to reconcile the two issues that she has identified?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: The major services that were provided by the Poverty Reduction Units had to do with the SEED Grants. The Ministry continues to process application received in terms of the SEED Grants and where it is deemed that they are suitable for approval, they will be approved. So that continues. Well, I am not sure what the other issue is because the food support programme continues. There has been no interruption in the food support programme.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, to remind you, you spoke about data and data collection and what had and had not happened. Could you again reconcile what you have said with respect to the data collection which would

inform a programme such as the food support programme?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: The Ministry has a Research Division and that unit continues to do all of the research that is required by the Ministry pending a decision on resumption or the introduction of a new Poverty Reduction Unit.

Madam Chairman: I would allow one more question to the Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, since the closure of this Poverty Reduction Unit and you are now saying that the Ministry has engaged other elements, are you then satisfied that the information that is coming to the Ministry with respect to the data collection is informing this food support programme in a sustainable way that it is actually working? Are you satisfied with that?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: I am satisfied that the information we have at present is sufficient for us to continue to manage the food support programme.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Though you, can you advise us in this Committee what is the status of the 2014 Poverty Report? We are talking about poverty. The Kairi Report, which we have read about. The Member for Princes Town was talking about data assisting with this programme. So there was 2014 Poverty Report –

Mr. Imbert: What does that have to do with this Head?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Poverty.

Mr. Imbert: No, this Head?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We are dealing with the –

Mr. Imbert: No, I am sorry. That is not related to this Head.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Food Price Support Programme. And Minister, with the greatest of respect, you are insisting it is the Head, the Ministry of Finance, which is true. In fact, in some instances, you would say all the moneys are under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And the Ministries' moneys are allocated for them and then they apply to the Ministry of Finance to release the funds. Yes. This money, the \$86 million, from what I have read in the agenda and the note presented to us is for the Food Price Support Programme. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has indicated it is revisiting and regularizing and will not be using the allocation.

And, therefore, the questions being asked by this side clearly have a relationship to what is being done in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and in terms of the releases of request, or do not request, and for what purposes those are requested or not requested. I am sorry, I cannot see the connection.

11.50a.m.

Mr. Imbert: That may be so, but in this Standing Finance Committee we are dealing with Heads of Expenditure, and we are dealing with Head 18, Ministry of Finance; it is not correct to say that the Ministry of Finance is dealing with all the other Heads of Expenditure, such as the Judiciary, and so on.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, we are dealing with the food support programme.

Mr. Imbert: So this is Head 18, Food Price Support Programme, and we are satisfied that there will be sufficient funding available to pay all of the food price support for the balance of the fiscal year.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minister, through you, Madam, we are dealing with Head 18, Ministry of Finance, 04/007/06, Food Price Support Programme; that programme is not administered by the Ministry of Finance, this is why the Minister of Social Development and Family Services is able to tell us it was not shut down, how many persons are involved, and so on. So, with due respect, Minister, it is your Head, but the programme is one administered – I might be wrong, is the Ministry of Finance administering this programme then?

Mr. Imbert: Subject to an intervention by the Chairman, the fact that we are looking at Head 18, Ministry of Finance, Food Price Support Programme, does not entitle you to ask every question under the sun about every single Ministry, every – I say, subject to the intervention of the Chairman, we have rules here; this is Head 18, Ministry of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, are you in a position to answer the question or not?

Mr. Imbert: Not at this time, Madam Chairman. I can endeavour to obtain an answer by Wednesday.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: It is a follow-up to the question asked by the Member for Siparia: given a 2014 report by Kairi, who were consultants for the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services at the time, they identified 300,000 citizens living beneath the poverty line in Trinidad and Tobago, does the Minister think, in the light of that bit of data, and others, there are three reports, do you think it wise to curtail the expenditure for the Food Price Support Programme by \$86 million?

Mr. Imbert: That is based on a false premise, a totally false premise. I repeat what I told the Member for Tabaquite, it is not correct to make an assumption that persons who should be beneficiaries of this programme are not going to be in receipt of food price support. That is an incorrect assumption, and all of those statements you have made are unfounded. If you would like to know whether the Ministry of Finance will make available funding to all of the beneficiaries of the Food Price Support Programme, the answer is, yes, we will make available funding to all of the beneficiaries.

Mr. Charles: Again, this is the last time I will touch on this, I am not talking about the beneficiaries, I am talking about those in need, and there is a report that says there are 300 citizens of this – 300,000, the Kairi Report, and it is before a Finance and General Purposes since February his year, according to reports in the *Express*, and all I am asking, will there be money to cater for their needs?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: With respect to Head 18, the Ministry of Finance will make available all necessary funding to beneficiaries of the Food Price Support Programme. I will say that 10 times if you want me to, you know.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members – Member for Siparia, sorry, I did not see you. We are still under Head 18, yes?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Under the IDF, can the Hon. Minister tell us what percentage of the IDF has been implemented to date? Surely that is fully within your Ministry.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member for Caroni East, I believe, asked that question.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And do you have an answer?

Mr. Imbert: Why are you repeating; I answered him?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Because I did not hear your answer.

Mr. Imbert: I said I would make that information available to him by Wednesday. I did not want to guess, because there is expenditure and commitments, matters are being processed, I want to be accurate. I do not want to say something here today that is not accurate. The information will be made available on Wednesday. I gave that answer to Caroni East with respect to that identical question. You were not paying attention.

Madam Chairman: All right, Members, please.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, from the numbers being removed from the IDF it appears that almost 50 per cent of the amounts allocated for expenditure in the IDF is not going to be used. It was 3.5 – \$3,275,000 – that was allocated to the IDF, we are now removing \$1,257,619,525 out of that IDF, and, therefore, it is 50 per cent of the projects under the IDF, would the Minister agree, that are not going to be proceeded with?

Mr. Imbert: Once again, Madam Chairman, the Member for Siparia is not paying attention. I told the Member for Oropouche East that it is a rolling fund. We came into 2017 with a surplus in the fund, and with this – [*Interruption*] – Madam Chairman, everybody cannot talk.

Madam Chairman: Members, we have a tight schedule, I would ask people – I know people are really very passionate about these issues – if we could contain our passion so that we can get ahead. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, this is a very important point, I would be grateful, Madam Chairman, if I can make this point without interruption from the other side, so I will try again. The Infrastructure Development Fund is a rolling fund. Every year you may have a surplus in the fund. We came into fiscal 2017 with a surplus in the Infrastructure Development Fund, and, therefore, this adjustment will not in any way significantly affect the performance of the Infrastructure Development Fund.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough to tell us, what is that rolling amount that you came into fiscal 2017 with?

Mr. Imbert: I will let you know on Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is there anything that you do know, Sir, for today?

Mr. Imbert: I do not think that is an appropriate question.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished? Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the Minister indicate what process they have used for the verification for the outstanding payments, and what is the status of the verification process? And, lastly –

Mr. Imbert: That question was asked twice already.

Madam Chairman: I believe that question was asked already, Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: Twice.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Verification by whom, and so on. He has not answered it.

Madam Chairman: Well, I think a certain response was given to that question, I do recall.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, well, last one on that, how much of the outstanding bills have been paid, and how much has been left to be paid from last year?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, that is simply a version of the question asked by the Member for Oropouche East, he asked the same thing, and I told the Member for Oropouche East I will try my best, within the confines of the propriety of the criminal investigation, or the integrity of the criminal investigations taking place, I will try my best to provide as much information as I can with respect to bills paid, bills not paid, bills that may be queried, and so on.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Chair, through you, to the Minister of Finance, Minister, some time ago when you made the second drawdown on the HSF, you indicated that that money was going to be allocated for support of the PSIP, and you then, when asked to identify specific projects you indicated simply that it was going to be used for the PSIP. The PSIP consists of many projects, given this \$1.257 billion here, is any of the HSF funding included in this, first of all; and, secondly, if the HSF funding was for the PSIP, why are we transferring this now at this point?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the original appropriation, or the original estimate for the Infrastructure Development Fund was \$2.63billion; we are decreasing that estimate by \$1.257 billion. The revised provision is \$1.37billion; however, the Public Sector Investment Programme is of the order of \$5 billion, and the drawdown from the HSF is of the order of \$1.7 billion. So if we took the drawdown from the HSF of 1.7 and applied it to this 1.37 we would still require funding from other sources of the order of, in excess of \$3 billion. So that, you can see that the drawdown from the HSF will only partially fund the PSIP for 2017, and if applied to the Infrastructure Development Fund, would fund the entire revised provision for the Infrastructure Development Fund, leaving over a portion for the funding of the development programme Consolidated Fund side of the development programme.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, are you aware, or can you tell us how many projects have been stopped because contractors have not been paid?

Mr. Imbert: I would not be able to answer that question now.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. Are you aware, in my own constituency, a school being built by Emile Elias? Construction has stopped for 18 months now because the contractor has not been paid.

Mr. Imbert: I am not familiar with that matter.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Moosai has not been paid, two schools are 75 per cent complete. Construction has stopped because the contractor has not been paid.

Mr. Imbert: And what does this have to do with the IDF? Are these IDF projects?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Are you sure they are IDF projects?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, you can correct me?

Mr. Imbert: Could you show me the line, the sub-head, what page it is on?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will show it to you on Wednesday, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: I thought so.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes. Okay. So I am asking, again, the question, Madam, which projects have been stopped under the IDF?

Mr. Imbert: Until you can identify to me those specific matters, I cannot answer you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: There is no quid pro quo. I am asking, through you, Madam, whether any projects have halted because contractors have not been paid, projects under the IDF, and if so, how many and which ones? – that is my question.

Mr. Imbert: I already answered that, it was the second set of questions that I said I am unable to answer because these may be hypothetical questions; you provided no evidence.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: On Wednesday you will provide yours, I will provide mine. Thank you, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Ma'am. Chairman, just a simple question to the Minister of Finance: Would the Minister agree, in light of all that had been said on this matter, that the Government's claim that they do not have money is flawed and inaccurate, and it is really the failure to spend moneys allocated by Parliament for the Infrastructure Development Fund, and it is not that they do not have money, but it is a complete failure to execute programmes and projects?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: I believe that suggestion by the Member for Oropouche East to be absurd; everybody knows that we are financially challenged. That is an absurd question.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam. On the issue of money, decreases from the Ministry of Finance with respect to the CARICOM Development Fund, 04/009/23, how is the figure that we are now reducing by \$19,439,000, it is almost an exact figure – it is not \$19 million or \$20 million – can the Minister tell us, you know, how did we arrive at this as being the figure that we reduce this item by, the reason for it?

12.05 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: I would have thought it would be self-evident. If you look at the commentary, it says that Cabinet

agreed to limit the contribution to \$10 million.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: To what?

Mr. Imbert: It is there in black and white on page 5:

“Cabinet agreed to limit Trinidad and Tobago’s contribution to the second funding cycle of the Fund to US\$10.0Mn...”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minister, I am kindly requesting that you give the rationale. Why was it decided to do so, to cut it by this \$19-plus million? What is the rationale? Why 19? Why not five? Why not 10? When Cabinet decided, it would have had a reason.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I cannot answer the Member for Siparia if the Member for Oropouche East keeps screaming down there. I am asking you, Madam Chairman, would you please muzzle the Member for Oropouche East? To answer the Member for Siparia, I would like to answer the Member for Siparia. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members; Members; Members. Minister of Finance, I do not think I want to muzzle anybody. I will just ask again— [*Interruption*] Member for Couva South, because I said I am not muzzling anybody, I do not think you would really challenge me. Okay? I would just ask again, we have a certain procedure. Everybody would be recognized once they comply with the procedure, and I will also ask us all to just maybe contain a bit of our passion until we reach to their turn. Okay? So, Minister of Finance, please.

Mr. Imbert: Let me go back. If you look at the notes. [*Interruption*] It is very hard with the Member for Couva South making noise. If you look at the notes, Madam Chairman, we explained that Cabinet agreed to limit the contribution to— [*Interruption*] Finished?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: It is very difficult if the Member for Siparia keeps talking. I will try.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, I am sure with your experience you can rise above that and continue with your trend of thought, please.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. For the fourth time, on page 5:

“04/009/23 - Caricom Development Fund...Cabinet agreed to limit Trinidad and Tobago’s contribution to US\$10.0Mn or TT\$70Mn for the 2017 fiscal year.”

It should be obvious therefore that the original provision would be the total of \$70 million plus \$19,439,000. It should be obvious, and it is contained in the documents circulated to the Hon. Member, that the original allocation would have been \$89,439,000. So since the Cabinet agreed, because of revenue difficulties, to limit the contribution to \$70million, and the original allocation was \$89,439,000, it should be obvious that when you subtract \$70 million from \$89,439,000 you get \$19,439,000.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you, Hon. Minister, for the arithmetic, but I still ask again—the rationale for limiting it by that amount. As I said, why not 20, why not 30? Why did you go at 19? What was the reasoning behind this decision? You say it is a revenue issue, but why 19? Is it that 19 would have— why, what is the rationale?

Mr. Imbert: How many times are you going to ask me the same question?

Madam Chairman: Members, please.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But you are not answering, Sir, and you are being very facetious.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You need some help today, you know. You should not answer all these little questions.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia, Minister of Finance, please. Let us just be very gracious, as we had started. Minister of Finance, could you kindly –

Mr. Imbert: I am incapable of answering this question.

Madam Chairman: Please answer. [*Interruption*] Member for Naparima. Minister of Finance, please answer the question.

Mr. Imbert: In consideration of our obligations to Caricom, in consideration of the fact that oil is somewhere around \$45, in consideration of the fact that the expenditure profile of the Government was bloated in the five-year period of the former administration, in consideration of the totality of the circumstances, we felt it was a reasonable sum to appropriate and allocate and pay 70 million Trinidad and Tobago dollars to the Caricom Development Fund.

Mr. Charles: Given that our Caricom colleagues tend to emphasize the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is the main beneficiary of the Caricom enterprise, would the Minister, at some stage – and he is not obligated to – provide to the citizens an idea of all the costs, the support moneys that we supply to Caricom, for example, the Caribbean Development Bank, UWI, et cetera, so that we would have a sense of what this is costing us?

Mr. Imbert: I will most certainly do that, but not under this Head. This is the Caricom Development Fund. If you want to know about this, I will talk about this.

Dr. Rambachan: I am just curious to ask the Minister, I noticed that they said they were going to allocate US \$10 million or TT \$70 million. The official exchange rate is \$6.7993 today. Are you using \$7, and is that a signal of a further deterioration in the value of the TT dollar?

Mr. Imbert: No, we rounded off the figure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam, through you, Hon. Minister, you said that in view – I may not be quoting your exact words, but the gist of what you said – that in view of the bloated, et cetera, et cetera. Yet in 2016 you budgeted \$65million for this fund, but you proceeded to pay \$165 million in fiscal 2016. And now you are saying you did that previously bloated, and so on, and so on. I do not think that is a fair assessment of why you overpaid by double the amounts and now you are cutting it in this regard. Perhaps you are cutting because you paid more than you estimated in the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Imbert: I cannot see that that is a question; that is just a statement supported by no evidence. I do not believe a word of what you just said.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I do not believe a word of what you are saying either, Sir.

Madam Chairman: All right, please; Member.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That goes a little far in the estimates you placed in this Parliament.

Mr. Imbert: I do not believe you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: In 2017, in 2016, Estimates of Revenue and Estimates of Expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: Produce the estimates.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, I would ask the Hon. Minister, if he does not believe me, to look at his own books, but I do not think it is proper in this Parliament for him to sit here and accuse us of lying to this Parliament.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia, are you finished with the intervention?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The intervention would then be, Madam, on this issue, you are reducing in this cycle and for fiscal 2017 by this amount, and yet you paid in the previous year more than you had even allocated for. Why? And that would be the question. Minister, could provide an answer eventually.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. I will have to check the veracity of the allegation first.

Madam Chairman: Member, Minister of Finance, could you please. Your answer is, that you will provide an answer?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. That will be by when?

Mr. Imbert: Certainly by Wednesday.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Under Head 40, would the Minister indicate to us whether any of the petroleum items –

Madam Chairman: Just now. We have not reached Head 40 as yet, Member for Naparima. We are still under Head 18.

Mr. Charles: Sorry, sorry.

Dr. Tewarie: I want to ask through you, Chair, to the Minister of Finance again, what is the largest capital project that has been affected by this IDF decrease?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, for the seventh time, the IDF is a rolling fund. We came into 2017 with a surplus.

Dr. Tewarie: No, no, no. I think the Minister is misunderstanding.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. Member for Caroni Central, I think when the answer is complete you may have a follow-up, and I will allow that.

Mr. Imbert: They just do not like my answer.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please.

Mr. Imbert: Right. For the seventh time, the Infrastructure Development Fund is a rolling fund. We came into fiscal 2017 with a surplus in the Infrastructure Development Fund and, therefore, a reduction in the

appropriation will not significantly affect the ability of the fund to finance development projects in fiscal 2017.

Dr. Tewarie: Just indulge me, Minister of Finance, through you, Chair. So there is no project ongoing that is affected by this change in allocation?

Mr. Imbert: That question cannot be answered at this time. As we go along in the fiscal year, new projects will come into play done by state enterprises, which will be funded by the IDF, and other projects may be in different stages of implementation. It is only at the end of the fiscal year that a definitive answer could be given to that type of question.

Dr. Moonilal: On a related matter, Madam Chair. You have stated categorically in the material given to Members, funds provided for capital projects under the IDF will not be fully utilized in fiscal 2017. You have already determined what will be and what will not be utilized in fiscal 2017. So clearly you are in a position to say what are the capital projects or what is the single biggest capital project to which funds will not be utilized. Do you agree with me or not?

Madam Chairman: So what you are saying—you now asked your question.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Madam Chairman, as I just indicated to the Member for Caroni Central, there may be other projects that have an increase in funding. It is not possible at this point in time to indicate which projects will be affected, if any, by this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can the Minister indicate—you indicated that PSIP is divided into IDF plus capital development projects. Can you give us an idea and appreciation of how much of the capital development funding has been spent and for what capital development projects?

Mr. Imbert: Not under this Head.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, yes, it is contained based on the variation of the appropriation which deals with this matter as well. You have here the variation proposed for the Public Sector Investment Programme, which is PSIP, under the Consolidated Fund is \$209 million, et cetera, and is required to fund urgent needs that could not be satisfied from existing allocations. So I am simply asking you, how much has been spent from the capital development and for what projects?

Mr. Imbert: Let me see if I can explain as best as I possibly can. This particular Head is the estimate for the Infrastructure Development Fund, it has nothing to do with the other aspect of the development programme. Does that explain why in this element we are treating only with the Infrastructure Development Fund and not projects executed by way of the Consolidated Fund?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, could you just then direct me to which area within this finance thing that we can find that answer?

Mr. Imbert: We are on a Head here. This is a variation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, we will come to it.

Mr. Imbert: You see, in this exercise we are dealing with what is written, you know, not something else.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I am showing you what is written on page 1 of the document.

Mr. Imbert: Page 1? Which page 1?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not your document. I have a document.

Mr. Imbert: You have a document, a secret document?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister tell us, specifically, whether the projects under the IDF – the highway from Princes Town to Moruga, the Moruga port and the Point Fortin Fire Station – whether those three projects will be affected by this reduction or cut?

Mr. Imbert: For the umpteenth time, the IDF came into 2017 with a surplus, [*Interruption*] so it is a false assumption –

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, maybe for clarity if you could just address the three specific projects as posed.

Mr. Imbert: I will answer that question on Wednesday.

12.20p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Just for my own clarification, Madam Chair, to the Minister of Finance. Is he then saying, based on this surplus and this rolling fund that he is talking about, the IDF, that no capital projects will be affected by this reduction of \$1.2 million?

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I think that question has been posed several times.

Mr. Imbert: Multiple times and –

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: – answered multiple times.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, I am speaking. It has been posed several times and responded and therefore, I would not allow it.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 18 varied by a decrease in the sum of \$1,363,125,544.

Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$35,000,000.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the Minister of Finance to exercise the option of whether he would make a brief opening statement.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly, and just to clarify, like the items before it, this is purely a finance matter. The estimate of the subsidy would have been based on an estimated oil price and estimated prices of petroleum products at the beginning of the fiscal year. As a result of variations in the price of oil and variations in the price of fuel, specifically diesel and gasoline and other products of that nature, there has been a reduction in the estimate of the amount required for the petroleum subsidy for fiscal 2017 of the order of \$35 million.

Just to clarify further, at the beginning of the year you have to understand that these are estimates of expenditure. As the year goes by and the situation evolves, the Budget Division can make a more refined and

a more accurate estimate, and in this particular case, looking at the pattern of petroleum product pricing over the first six months, the Budget Division is in a position to revise the estimate for the subsidy for fuel to allow a reduction of \$35million.

Question proposed: That Head 40 be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$35 million.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can the Minister give us an idea of what he believes or what he could project he said is an estimated, subsidized value, could he give us an idea of how much has been reduced or has been claimed from the reduction in subsidy, and what he expects the entire, total of the subsidy reduction to be?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Thirty-five million

Dr. Gopeesingh: So far?

Mr. Imbert: I answered your question, asked and answered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What you estimate for 2017 fiscal year to be?

Mr. Imbert: You asked me, what the reduction in the subsidy would be? – \$35 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking you now what your estimate for 2017 reduction in subsidy to be?

Mr. Imbert: Thirty-five million.

Madam Chairman: I think that question has been asked and answered, Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: Asked and answered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you said it is \$35 million then for the entire fiscal 2017? That is the question.

Madam Chairman: Member, I believe that is the question and that question has been answered. Member for Naparima.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. If he says it is \$35 million.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister tell us whether any of the petroleum products, whether they are in surplus right now and therefore do not attract a subsidy? And secondly, on what price per barrel was this projection made to come up with a \$35million reduction? It has to be based on a price, a petroleum price.

Mr. Imbert: I will try my best to explain. The price of fuel does not automatically follow the price of oil. There is a lag. So that the price of oil may go up, the price of gasoline and diesel does not automatically go up. Similarly, if the price of oil goes down, the price of these petroleum products do not automatically go down.

So that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has a model into which they put various factors, they would put into that the estimates of oil price using the benchmark crudes for –

Mr. Charles: Brent.

Mr. Imbert: No, not Brent. In fact, in Trinidad and Tobago there is a basket of crudes and the crude benchmark that we use that is close enough to our basket is West Texas Intermediate, not Brent. So that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries would put into their mathematical model the projections of the price of WTI and the other benchmark crudes in the basket using estimates from entities such as the Energy Information

Administration of the United States, the IMF, the World Bank and other credible entities that estimate and forecast oil prices.

So they will put those estimates in, from these credible institutions, and then they would look at the pattern of the pricing of petroleum products such as motor gasoline, motor diesel, how it reacts to changes in oil prices and that is another mathematical model, and having done that, they would come up with an estimate with respect to the subsidy for the fiscal year.

And the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries having done that, put in all the factors, put in all the assumptions, looked at the pattern of pricing, looked at the estimates of oil pricing and petroleum product pricing for the year, has now refined its estimate and indicated that there will be a saving in the subsidy estimate of the order of \$35 million.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you for the lecture, but it was unnecessary. In the basket of elements that go to come up with the price, I know that the price of oil is a significant component, and all I asked was: what was the price of oil that goes into that basket? But I will go to the other question: Are there any petroleum products in surplus now?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: What do you mean by surplus?

Mr. Charles: Perhaps I can explain. The price at the pump is usually when you can compute the price. If it is higher than the price at the pump, it is in surplus. If the price at the pump is lower than the basket of inputs that you spoke about, if those are higher, let us say it is \$4 a barrel, the cost, X refinery price, customs duty, et cetera, if that is higher than the price at the pump, it attracts a subsidy, the Government has to subsidize NP. And all I am asking is: At this point in time are there any products, petroleum products sold by the retail marketer that is in surplus?

Mr. Imbert: That will change on a daily basis.

Mr. Charles: Yes. But today.

Mr. Imbert: You are asking me today?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Do know the price of oil today?

Mr. Charles: I give up, I give up.

Mr. Imbert: I am not that good. I cannot tell you what –

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Charles: I give up.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Charles: I was the marketing manager of –

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance and Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: What are your projections?

Madam Chairman: Is that a question?

Mr. Charles: Yes. A follow-up question. What are your projections for, whether products will be in surplus or in subsidy?

Mr. Imbert: I think a lot of people in the world are trying to figure that out right now.

Mr. Charles: "Is Trinidad we talking about." I used to do that every year. What is the subsidy to NP and what is the surplus.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, is that the answer that you are unable to say?

Mr. Imbert: I think it would be wrong of me to attempt to answer that question off the cuff –

Mr. Charles: He does not know.

Mr. Imbert: – on the hoof, as it goes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am in amazement. This is the Hon. Minister of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago and one would expect that he would have the various scenarios, worst case, best case and he should have some planning scenario.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, that was not the question, you know. The question is: what is it today? And the price of oil jumps a \$1, \$2 in one day, so it is impossible to answer today.

Mr. Charles: What was the price for the last quarter?

Mr. Imbert: I can see whether I can give more information by Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is amazing.

Madam Chairman: I recognize the Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam, I will move other Heads when you are ready.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I wanted to ask the Minister whether it is his intention to further reduce – to further increase the price of diesel, as well as other fuels at the pumps, given the situation here where he wants to increase revenue.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Rephrase that question.

Dr. Rambachan: Is it your intention or the part of your immediate projection to raise the price of diesel and other fuels at the pumps?

Mr. Imbert: I had indicated on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in the budget statement of 2016 and 2017 that it was the Government's intention, over a three-year period, to phase out the fuel subsidy.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So the answer is, yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Can the Minister indicate whether he intends to do that to any extent in this fiscal year?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Dr. Rambachan: Any further?

Mr. Imbert: I am not in a position to answer that question at this time.

Dr. Rambachan: Maybe in the mid-year review.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You will tell us on Wednesday.

Madam Chairman: Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$35million.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 40 varied by a decrease in the sum of \$35,000,000.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the 2017 Appropriation be varied by a total decrease in the sum of \$1,398,125,544

Question agreed to.

The 2017 Appropriation varied by total decrease in the sum of \$1,398,125,544.

Madam Chairman: We now go onto increases. Hon. Members, we shall now consider the proposals for increases.

Head 03: Judiciary, \$20,500,000.

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

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. When we did the initial budget for 2017, the Judiciary pointed out to us that they needed additional funding. And we have looked at the matter over the last six months and we find it appropriate, based on the income available to the Government and the request from Judiciary, to transfer the sum of \$20,500,000 to the Judiciary to facilitate repairs to three Magistrates' Court buildings and the air-conditioning system at the Hall of Justice among other things.

Madam Chairman: Are you completed?

Mr. Imbert: That is it.

Madam Chairman: Yes?

Question proposed: That Head 03 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$20,500,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Hon. Minister, on what basis did you just choose three Magistrates' Courts, Rio Claro, Couva and San Fernando? And when in a debate here in the Parliament I had raised the question of the dilapidated condition of the Siparia Magistrates' Court and nothing has been done at all to improve the conditions at that court. What makes Rio Claro, Couva or San Fernando more important than Siparia [*Interruption*] which is in the south-western region and which has been in a dilapidated condition for a very, very long time?

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. Member for Couva South, I am hearing you. Okay? [*Interruption*] Member for Couva South, [*Interruption*] Member for Couva South, I am sure you intend to oblige by the rules. Thank you. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: I will ask the Attorney General who may have more information than I have –

Madam Chairman: Attorney General.

Mr. Imbert: – to deal with that and we have someone from the Judiciary here with us.

12.35 p.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Member, thank you for the question, very well posed and very important. Quite simply, there is priority for resources when we look through to the case flow that passes through these particular courts selected, the case flow and volume traffic in these three courts selected are rather large, and therefore there is a need to prioritize that. You must remember as well that we also have the operationalization of the Children and Family Division Courts in Tobago, in Fyzabad, and also in Port of Spain, and in the overall circumstances for this particular year the priorities being given to these three. The Judiciary's team – one of whom is sitting to the left – is very conscious of the need to look at all of the plant and machinery aspects, but for this particular financial year we are focusing on these three as we roll out the plan moving forward.

Dr. S. Rambachan: Since you came into office I have raised this matter of the Siparia court, and you are telling me that the Judiciary who sits in Port of Spain does not have any consideration as to what happens – the administration of justice – in Siparia, and continues to happen in Siparia to the detriment of people using that court, including people who practise in the court, where to such an extent there has not even been a handle to come down from the steps, and where people have fallen down and injured themselves in that way. You want to tell me Hon. Attorney General that the Judiciary is not aware of the extent of the deterioration of that particular court?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Hon. Member, I certainly have not nor will I ever say that. I am confident from my own interaction with the members of the judicial team that sit, that they are intimately aware. The situation in the other courts is equally important.

Mr. Imbert: Could I intervene here? The officer from the Judiciary has informed me that renovation work is and has taken place on the Siparia Magistrates' Court, and that they have stabilized the court, and that they are now in the process of acquiring land to expand the capacity of the Siparia Magistrates' Court.

Mr. Al-Rawi: In terms of the Head – just to point out. *[Interruption]* In terms of the Head, in terms of the need for these three particular courts, it is related solely to this financial year in this position.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. Through you, whose decision was it for these three courts? Because my colleague is saying whether the Judiciary is aware or not. Was the Judiciary who selected these three as their priority or was it some other agency of the Government?

Mr. Imbert: This was determined to be the priority at this point in time.

Hon. Member: What!?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I cannot hear the Hon. Minister, please.

Mr. Imbert: Based on the availability of funding, it was determined that these were priority projects at this

point in time. *[Interruption]*

Madam Chairman: Members! Members, I am recognizing the Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you, Madam. My question is, Sir, by whom was the observation made? Is it the Judiciary? A unit to the Judiciary? The Ministry of Finance? The Attorney General? By whom, Sir, was this priority given? By whom?

Mr. Imbert: As with any other agency, as with any other agency the Judiciary would make a request for supplementary funding. In the context of what is available, because of our financial challenges, the Judiciary would be asked to prioritize based on the amount of money that is available. The amount of money available was \$20,500,000. And this is what came out of that exercise.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Which Ministry or agency is responsible for the care and maintenance of these buildings listed? Which Ministry or agency?

Mr. Imbert: From the records, the Judiciary.

Mr. Al-Rawi: The Judiciary.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, through you. I see in the note given to us that the funds are required to facilitate payment for repairs. By whom were these repairs carried out, through you, Madam?

Mr. Imbert: The details would be provided.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is there a reason we have a Standing Finance Committee? Can I ask, through you, Madam? I do not know how we are expected to debate this matter when not a single question can be answered today. In a Standing Finance Committee, we have been all brought here from 11.00 o'clock this morning, deferred a few minutes, and we have no answers to questions.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Respectfully, Member for Siparia, on this particular Head we are answering, with respect to your question as to whom the contracts were given to, essentially in payments, I undertake to get that information for you. I, unfortunately, do not have the names of the persons, and I would like to be correct in that. That was an exercise that the Judiciary would have procured, and which the Attorney General's office does not have, so I just like to be accurate. I am happy to assist you on anything else.

Madam Chairman: Just before we proceed, just for the purposes of the record. The Member for Siparia was stymied in the completion of her question, so even if the information cannot be given today, Member for Siparia, if you could complete the question that you were asking.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I asked who did the repairs. By whom were the repairs carried out? I will continue with that. By whom was it carried out? What was the process by which—what tendering process was used for the selection of the persons or companies carrying out the repairs? And, of course, the specifics per repairs carried out per company? Have any sums been paid to date? Or is it all the moneys are outstanding for the repairs done on these three places? If the repairs have been completed, has it been carried out in time and within budget? And, what was the nature of the repairs undertaken at these three buildings, these three courts? Those are my questions on this Item.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Member, the representative from the Judiciary has indicated that we can have those answers to you today, so we will provide them during the course of the day.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am particularly concerned with San Fernando Magistrates' Court, and I am seeing here funds were required to facilitate payment for repairs. It is my understanding that nothing has started at the San Fernando Magistrates' Court thus far, and also I am seeing that it is solely for repairs. Is any allocation being done for the air conditioning? Because attorneys continue to practise in conditions that are bereft, and conditions that are not suitable for performance in court. So, I was wondering if any moneys has been allocated to outfit the magistrate court with air conditioning? Because we continue to be baked in there and continue to play hide and seek with pigeons at the San Fernando Magistrates' Court.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Hon. Member, you have raised a very important issue, very close to my own heart. Unfortunately, when I came in as Attorney General I discovered that nothing had been put in place to deal with the San Fernando Magistrates' Court, notwithstanding five years of significant request by the Judiciary. I uncovered, from the Judiciary, several unanswered requests from two Attorneys General sitting previous to me, not one soul bothered to agitate themselves to address those issues. The requests involved:

1. Repairs to the old court.
2. The upgrade of the court.
3. The completion of the property which was bought from the St. Joseph's Convent, what was laid in disuse and abandoned.
4. The provisions for actually operationalizing the Family Court.

Notwithstanding umpteen requests from the Judiciary, not a single effort was made by the Ministry of Finance under two Ministers of Finance, or under two Attorneys General. Since then we have cleaned up the notes and we are seeking the source of funding for the upgrades of the court in particular, the Magistrates' Court, and the operationalization of the Family Court. So I share your urgency in this issue, and it is being addressed with the Judiciary as we speak, with the allocation of funding to be requested from the Ministry of Finance in the very shortest space of time. In the meanwhile, a representative from the Judiciary has informed me that there are some works anticipated to move ahead, but the extent of renovation required, which we both share passion for, has to now be actualized.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Hon. Attorney General. Hon. Attorney General, you indicated that with respect to identifying the three Magistrates' Court, Rio Claro, Couva and San Fernando, that those courts were determined for repair based on the volume of cases in the Magistrates' Court in those particular areas. But then you went on to make a further comment with respect to the Family and Children Division of the court, and you identified Port of Spain, Tobago and Fyzabad – my question really is, what was the rationale for Fyzabad, if you use the caseload with respect to the three that were identified prior, what was the rationale

for Fyzabad? Do you have a significant amount of issues arising in that particular locality, or constituency, or region that would warrant going to Fyzabad as opposed to San Fernando? Could you give us an idea of some of the reasons that were advanced for going to Fyzabad?

Mr. Al-Rawi: The Fyzabad project for the Children and Family Division Court was selected by the previous Government. That selection coming from the previous Government, and the recommendations made then, we continued the process commenced by the Judiciary with the public administration division, which caused the selection of that property. It was perfected. The load which will come by the redistribution of children and family matters, by moving to Fyzabad will lighten the workload of the particular courts. Now, I noticed that there is a small conversation going on, and there is some expressed doubt as to what I have just said. The correspondence predating the tenure of this Government is available and will demonstrate what I have said.

So, that is a matter of fact which I am prepared to demonstrate by showing the letters that had been issued by the Judiciary to the property administration division of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. But to answer your question, Member for Princes Town, the shunting of some of the caseload to the Fyzabad positioning will alleviate some of the burden in the particular courts. That is specifically in relation to children's matters. The Family Court as a broader than pilot project court, is going to be a feature in San Fernando, by dealing with the premises acquired by the last Government, which is the St. Joseph Convent's property on the promenade.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Hon. Attorney General, for that answer. Would you be kind enough to furnish us with the information that you have just indicated that is in your possession? And further to that, can you also indicate to us whether or not the rent for that particular building has already started to be paid, and who is the proprietor?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. I can certainly provide that information, as I have done already in the Parliament on quite a few occasions in relation to this very issue. In fact, a specific question was put on the floor of this Parliament, which I answered. So, I would be pleased to repeat it again.

Mr. Padarath: Could you so do so now for us, if you have the information?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Which aspect of it?

Mr. Padarath: In terms of whether or not the rent is already being paid? And who is the proprietor?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure, hold a second. I can confirm that the rents, according to the Judiciary representative, have started to be paid, that they have taken possession of the property, that there is joint contribution funding coming from the United Nations Programme and US Aid, and the corporate entity which owns the company – I cannot remember the name right now, I should get it in just a couple of moments and give it to you.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Hon. Attorney General. Could you tell us as well if you could provide it in writing, if you do not have it now, as of when and how much is the rent?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. I can get those details for you. I can get that during the course of today.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Sir.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is –

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sorry, Madam Chair, in answer to the question just posed, if I could complete it, I am told it is Sulal Enterprises Limited, and I will get the monthly rental for you in just a moment.

Mr. Padarath: Could you be kind enough to repeat that with respect to the actual name, sorry?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure, of course. Listen, let us jump straight to the elephant in the room that you are asking about, because it was answered on the Parliament floor already. You are trying to draw – and I do not think it is pejorative on your part.

12.50p.m.

If you are asking a question as to whether the property is related to a Member of the sitting Government, the answer is, yes. One of the owners behind Sulal Enterprises is the wife of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. That commencement of the transaction began by the previous Government. It was completed at the request of the Judiciary and there is full and complete transparency in that and there is nothing pejorative and I have answered that on the Parliament floor on several occasions.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the 2017 appropriation for Head 03 – *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am sorry, Madam. Are we still under items of the Judiciary?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So are you taking it one at a time?

Madam Chairman: No, well I did not see any other – *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am sorry. I did not know we were proceeding.

Madam Chairman: Well, we are doing everything that is under Head 03.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. So there is 02/001/05 on the issues related to telepHon.e increases of \$3.5 million. That is the next item I believe, under Judiciary.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Member for Siparia. I am informed that the original allocation was insufficient, so it was not so much an increase or any expansion in the services. It was just the additional sums requested to meet the overhead expenditure in respect of that item.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam. Would the Hon. Attorney General be kind enough to tell us what accounted for that initial budget decrease that you had underestimated by \$3 million – \$3.5 million.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. Quite starkly, the initial sums appropriated by the Budgets Division of the Ministry of Finance were an underestimate. Once it was recognized, the Judiciary indicated the position and the Minister of Finance undertook, as he has, to deal with it at the mid-year variation so that we can literally try to find the money to meet the expense items as we do now.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Through you, Madam. What effect if any did this reduction in allocation have in the operations of the Judiciary? I mean 2015, 9.5; 2016, 9.6; revised 2016, 9.6; 2017, an estimate 3.6 and you are now adding 3.5. Has there been any effect on the operations of the Judiciary as a result of such a major slashing?

Mr. Al-Rawi: To answer your question again, it has been tight, it has been hard. We have been trying to find

the resources in the particular economic environment that we are in to literally make it happen. So what has gone on, as we progress during the year and in a direct coordination between the Judiciary and the relevant divisions of the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Attorney General, as we make savings on any Head that represents a saving, the moneys are transferred and vired across to expenditures with the constant effort being applied to try and find savings and to limit expenditure. Most importantly though, the focus has been on the maintenance of staff and on the maintenance of the continuity of the Judiciary as with the Attorney General's office and so we are trying to make it work as we go along, literally causing savings and applying them where we can.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Attorney General, you indicated again that the three courts that were identified, the Magistrates' Courts, was based on an assessment that was done based on caseload. I am assuming that there would have been a comprehensive assessment with respect to other Magistrates' Courts. Can you then be in a position at this time to let us know which are the others that are earmarked, because I am particularly concerned about some of the issues that we are experiencing at the Princes Town Magistrates' Court as well.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I have been fighting with the microphone going on. Thank you, Hon. Member. If I put it most simply and plainly, all of the plant and machinery at the Judiciary is in need of attention, some with greater degree of severity than others. When we factored, for instance, some of the repairs to the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court, which did not turn out to be what it was hoped it would have been, there was a shifting of priorities, et cetera. The reality is that money fell out from the bottom of the floor or the floor on which we stand in respect of budgeting allocation fell out and we have been trying to find the priorities in the current economic circumstances. The caseload is one of the issues. The severity of repairs ranked in priority and the urgency was another factor. I must remind you that pursuant to the Minister of Finance's and the Government's commitment to cause an independence in the Judiciary as it relates to financial management, there has been a much more fluid dynamic in allowing the Judiciary to establish its own priorities. The reality of the situation is that we just do not have enough money in Trinidad and Tobago, in the current economic circumstance, to achieve all of the objectives that we would like to achieve.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, if you would allow me to the Hon. Attorney General, just to backtrack a little. With respect again to the Family and Children Division, could you give us an idea, I know you and I have spoken on this on several occasions, but if you can give us an idea of what is happening with respect to operationalizing this particular division.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure, I am very pleased to do that. Cabinet yesterday approved and confirmed the partial proclamation of that Bill and the very large 18 Bills that are to be amended by it. So that has been approved and confirmed. The partial proclamation will kick in on the 15th of May. The courts have been identified at Fyzabad and at Port of Spain. The protocols have been approved and confirmed by the Parliament. The UN

protocol adoption for case management has been approved and confirmed by the Cabinet. The staffing positions are before the Cabinet now for workout, just matching up resources with position aspects. So we have made a significant amount of process, all of the job descriptions are finished, the PMCD Division of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications has completed its exercise.

So basically, we have taken approximately five to seven years' work. We have put it in to literally one year's effort and we are pleased to say that it is being operationalized and that the hirings ought to be in a position in or about the mid of May with the partial proclamation kicking in to run as quickly as we can. We have come in, the country, thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications and the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs offices, we have come in for significant commendation as a country, from the UN and from the US Aid co-funding supporters. And I am very pleased to say that in conjunction with the operationalization of the Child Protection Unit and the establishment of over 102 positions out of 168 position sand the operationalization of improvements at the Children's Authority, thanks to the very hard effort of the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Minister Ayanna Webster-Roy, we have made massive and significant progress in this area of the law.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Hon. Attorney General. I am very happy to hear some of the progress that has been made. I know when we met in the Joint Select Committee there were several other areas in law that we felt needed to be addressed. And in light of operationalizing the Family and Children Division of the court, I am almost certain that there are other aspects of the law with respect to children's rights and children's issues in the context of the Child Protection Unit and the Children's Authority that you may be looking at. Can you give us an idea of what is next to come?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. And while I think this discussion is important, I just want to remind Members that we are just dealing with the particular item under consideration and the purchases. I have allowed you some leeway, Member for Princes Town, but in the interest of the business that is before us, I am sure you would have another opportunity –

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, I will just quickly answer. There is a supplementary Bill which has been prepared already and which will be coming to Parliament, which is a miscellaneous provisions Bill which will attend to the vast majority of items already done. So again, we have truncated about three years of work into several months work and you will be very pleased to see it shortly. Thank you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam. I am looking at Judiciary 02/001/37 – Janitorial Services. The services of the janitor, an increase of \$3.5million. This is also similar to the previous item where there was a severe underestimate in terms of the allocation in Appropriation Bill 2017. The question is, when we read the note to finance committee we are being told that these increases are because of urgent and critical matters that have risen, but it is clear that these are matters that would have definitely been, should have been envisaged,

as falling for allocation and what we are doing now is just sort of topping up. Now, Hon. Attorney General, I am not of the view—I do not know, Madam, you will guide me, is it that we can only ask questions or we cannot make any observations. I need to know. Is it only I must ask questions.

Madam Chairman: No, no—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking.

Madam Chairman:—that you can make an observation based on what is before us.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay.

Madam Chairman: And then maybe the Minister can respond to the observation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you for your guidance, Hon. Madam Speaker. And so I am asking, can you provide us with what agency or company is responsible for providing the services of janitors? Is it an existing service provider or are there new companies? Was there any selection process at the tendering process? Is there additional work to be done? Is that why we are increasing this? Are there higher salaries to be paid? Is that why we are increasing the allocation? And what sums were paid thus far for these services? And what is owed for the said services?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure, thank you very much. May I say with respect to the observation made by you, Hon. Member, you are spot on correct. There ought to have been a higher allocation, much like the previous line item we just discussed. It was not factored, largely because of the difficulties in the economic circumstance and the intention was that we would come by mid-year to do the supplementation. It was done that way to facilitate savings that could have been had from other Heads and then to manage otherwise. So your observation is correct.

The provider of the services is MTS, which has been the long-standing provider for these services. There was a continuation of the tendering processes used on umpteen occasions in respect of the continuation of MTS. It is not with respect to additional works, it is really with respect to recurrent expenditure anticipated to take us to the year end as there could be no further savings achieved on the line item. It is not at a higher sum, it is at the continuing sum and I understand that sums have been paid but the projection now before us is for the continuation of expenditure, to year's end, with the understanding that wherever we find savings in any other Head we may on the closing of accounts of the year, account for how they may have been viring between Heads.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Can we move on to the Security Services, increase of \$11.5 million, 02/001/43 under Judiciary—Head 03.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Member for Siparia, I do not mean to be presumptuous, but it is the same service provider and same circumstance and I say mea culpa, ultimately, as the line Minister, but the fact is that, again, it is for the very same reasons that I just explained on Janitorial Services. The attempt was to find savings elsewhere, fill the hole by vire but now we have to come back on this point.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Can we ask then, what agency or company is responsible for providing—

Mr. Al-Rawi: MTS.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: As well.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, Ma'am.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For this.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, Ma'am.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sums paid thus far and sums owing?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Same response as previously. There were sums paid. If you wish me to confirm the sums paid already, sure, I will have that done for both of them.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. Again, the issue of planning. Here it is that we are, maybe I should ask it this way. Can you advise how much did the Judiciary request of the Government?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I will find out. I will get that sum for you. I am sure it was way more than was provided as with every Ministry –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It always is.

Mr. Al-Rawi: For every Ministry – it always is.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Perhaps we can get an idea. You see, I am concerned about this, Hon. Attorney General, because we have spent a lot of parliamentary time on a bid to pass new laws that will put an even greater burden on the Judiciary. And I am not seeing any real – I am not seeing anything in the mid-term review, in this variation. So it means for this fiscal year there will be no really additional help, not just for the Judiciary, but for the DPP.

A lot of the laws we are being asked to pass here I am not seeing anything that will assist in implementing all these great ideas you have. I am very concerned.

1.05p.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. The good news about that is that we have achieved savings in other Heads and found the money to do the essential aspects. And when we come to the Attorney General's Head of Expenditure, perhaps that will become a little bit more apparent, where we will show how we took money from other Heads and used it to ensure the stability of the system that we hope to rely upon in the amendments that we are pursuing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you, Hon. Attorney General, but when we get there, I will see \$50 million was for fees.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And I will explain, happily so, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will be happy for the explanation.

Mr. Al-Rawi: You will be very pleased.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. I hope so. I hope you have paid the lawyers, at least.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a quick question, Madam Chair, to the Attorney General, through you, which is that I just wanted you to confirm that MTS is the only provider of security services to the Judiciary.

Mr. Al-Rawi: If MTS is the only provider of security services to the whole of the Judiciary?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, you said that MTS was the provider.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: I just wanted to clarify and to confirm.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. Just one moment. I am told by the Judiciary representative that there are four providers. MTS is the major provider. There are three other providers and they are spread across the relative sector. There is warehousing; there is asset management; there is the Judiciary itself. If you would like, I can get you the names of all of the providers and provide them during the course of today.

Dr. Tewarie: Just the other three besides MTS.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I will, sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, to the Hon. Attorney General, just for my information. It was just really a question that I had considered and if for clarification you can provide, in consultation with the representative for the Judiciary: Does the Judiciary have a procurement unit? And if so, what is the capacity of that procurement unit?

Mr. Al-Rawi: There is a current structure for procurement. That procurement across all of the state sectors is being changed right now as a result of a circular from the Minister of Finance in anticipation of the full operationalization of the public procurement law. So right across the entire spread of "State Enterprise" – and I use that in inverted commas within the context of how it is interpreted in the Public Procurement and Disposal of Property legislation. Right across the entire gamut, public procurement units are being operationalized. They are being operationalized by the establishment of new positions and the absorption of old positions in relative sectors. So right now the structuring of that is the subject of a circular from the Ministry of Finance. All divisions, all state enterprises, all Ministries are busy building out those units, as we are slightly delayed in the full operationalization of that law, but it is coming into effect.

Mr. Padarath: It is uniform –

Mr. Al-Rawi: No, it is not uniform, because one size does not fit all, because some entities may do procurement once a month, others may do it every day and in different and larger circumstances. So it is not a one-size-fits-all. There has been a colloquium and a constant discussion between Permanent Secretaries, Ministry of Finance and also chairmen and officers in the public sector and state enterprises, so that we get the right fit to make sure that they can become compliant with the public procurement law.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, again to the Hon. Attorney General. In light of public interest with respect to that particular circular, is it something that you would be willing to share with us?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is on the website.

Mr. Padarath: It is on the website? The circular?

Mr. Al-Rawi: It is on the Ministry of Finance's website.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 varied by an increase in the sum of \$20,500,000.

Madam Chairman: Might I ask in terms of Head 04, Industrial Court, are you all likely to be long? [*Crosstalk*]
You could do it in five minutes?

Head 04: Industrial Court, \$4,090,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to be very judicious in his—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, the Leader of the House is indicating, sotto voce, of course, that if we do not finish in the five minutes that she would stop it. Now, the Minister of Finance has five minutes, so, really, clearly, we cannot finish in five minutes.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: May I indicate that the Standing Orders are very clear that at 1.15 the Standing Finance Committee has to come to an end in order for us to start Parliament at 1.30. So I am not stopping it judiciously or injudiciously. I am stopping it in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister of Finance has five minutes. There is no way we can finish in the five minutes. That is the point I am making. [*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Members, I would want you all to have some confidence in the way the Chair understands things. I do not think stopping it means that it will come to an end, but it is certainly meant to accommodate the sitting which is scheduled to begin at a particular time. So that it is not to end the process completely, of the Standing Finance Committee. I think, having regard to the point made by the Leader of the Opposition that the opening statement, whether the Minister of Finance takes five minutes or now, would eat into the time of questioning, and having regard to the fact that it is almost 1.12 p.m., I would want to suggest that the procedural Motion be entertained now and we re-embark on this at a subsequent time. Leader of the House.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly. Madam Chairman, I beg to move that this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee be adjourned to later today when the questions that still exist and still want to be posed can be accommodated.

Question put and agreed.

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

2.23 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now resumed. We are under the Head of increases. We are under the proposals for increases.

Head 04: Industrial Court, \$4,090,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Leader of the House to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. As it relates to the Industrial Court, as you well recognize, this is a superior court of the record and funds are required under recurrent expenditure to provide for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the rest of 2017, including Contract Employment, Security Services; and funds are also required for the security services for the General Administration Division and the South Office. Funds are also required to meet the cost for repairs to elevators, for maintenance to air-conditioning, generators and for other contracts to the end of the fiscal year.

Madam Chairman, if I may, I would now pass it over to the Minister of Finance. Thank you very kindly.

Madam Chairman: So do I take it that the opening statement is complete?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, because it is accurate. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 04 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,090,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for clarification, the increase of \$1,092,000 in relation to Salaries and Cost of Living, does this mean that there have been additional judges that have been recruited at the Industrial Court?

Mr. Imbert: This has nothing to do with judges, this is just for staff.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can we get an explanation with respect to Contract Appointment and the \$1 million increase?

Mr. Imbert: This is simply to supplement the Contract Employment Vote.

Miss Ramdial: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Can you tell us how many contract employees exist?

Mr. Imbert: At this time, the answer I can give you is approximately 10. If further information is forthcoming from the court, we would let you know by Wednesday.

Mr. Charles: Could you give a justification, Minister, of why you would increase contract officers, why that is being prioritized as opposed to judges in the Industrial Court?

Mr. Imbert: Question based on a false premise. There is a requirement for funding for persons who are in posts in Contract Employment.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: I will pass.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chairman, the matter of Contract Employment, you said there are 10 persons on contract now, why is it that you do not have permanent positions and you continue to just employ contract positions and for how long have these persons been on contracts and have their contracts continually been renewed?

Mr. Imbert: These are matters that are within the domain of the Public Service Commission.

Dr. Rambachan: So are you saying that the Public Service Commission has not been dutifully fulfilling their duty or the requirements of the court by getting permanent employees in the positions and just have contract employment?

Mr. Imbert: I would not use your phraseology to ascribe a lack of duty on the part of the Public Service Commission. I would just state that it is a well-known fact that there are a number of establishment positions within the entire public service which are not being filled by the Public Service Commission. You would have seen a recent report of a committee meeting where the DPA came and said that there are 9,000 vacant positions. Now, they said the DPA is responsible for filling these positions. So this is a matter purely within the purview of the Public Service Commission.

Dr. Rambachan: Does it concern you, Minister, or should it concern us that these people who are on perpetual contract employment that they have a difficulty getting on properly with their lives because they cannot get proper mortgages and they cannot get access to the kind of long-term bank financing and so on? Should it be of concern to institutions and are you concerned also about it? The Public Service Commission is not fulfilling its duty toward citizens and leaving them in this kind of abeyance with their lives?

Mr. Imbert: Again, I would not use your phraseology and just let me correct something you have said. Banks do issue loans and give mortgages to people on contract. That is a misconception.

2.30 p.m.

With respect to how the Public Service Commission operates, everybody in this Parliament, whatever side of the House we have been on, has expressed concern at the exceedingly slow pace at which the Commission operates, in terms of filling posts. It is not just the Public Service Commission. It is all the commissions. There is an exceedingly slow pace, with respect to these commissions. There is nothing new about this. This has been going on for more than 30 years.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I am concerned. What happened 30 years, happened 30 years. I am concerned with your statement where you said this is just the Public Service Commission. Should we just sit down and lie down and accept inefficiency in the country like we are seeing here, therefore, and simply say this is the Public Service Commission? Should we continue to accept that if we are to progress as a society, progress as a country, progress as a nation and become competitive?

Mr. Imbert: First, let me correct something you have said. I did not say that. I did not say this is just the Public

Service Commission. I said this is within the purview of the Public Service Commission. So please quote me correctly.

Dr. Rambachan: I quoted you correctly.

Mr. Imbert: And, secondly, this particular Government does not have a constitutional majority and we are in no position to change the Constitution. However, I do recall our immediate predecessor Government, of which you were a part, entered its parliamentary life with a constitutional majority, 29 seats. And, therefore, you were in a position to do something.

Perhaps, if you are willing to lend support, towards the reform of the Constitution, we may see something happening in the future.

Dr. Rambachan: But I do recall, within recent times one Attorney General who has found a useful and very creative way of not going for constitutional majorities in order to get certain legislation passed.

Mr. Imbert: That statement that you just made, with the greatest respect, is wholly irrelevant. You asked me what we can do about the Public Service Commission. The only way we can deal with the Public Service Commission is to amend the Constitution. And we would need a large majority to do that and, therefore, there would have to be a meeting of the minds on what the new form of the Commission would be.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sorry Madam, thank you. On the Industrial Court, under "Security Services - \$698,000", who is the service provider for these security services? MTS.

Mr. Imbert: The National Maintenance and Training Security Company.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. Do you have a written contract with them for these services?

Mr. Imbert: Some of the contracts are complete and some are on a month-to-month basis.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I asked this and, perhaps, you might have a better answer on Wednesday. It seems to be the preferred day for answers. But I am looking at the report of the Auditor General for 2016, and on page 30 of that report, we are seeing where MTS is contracted for security services but the Auditor General is saying that no contracts were produced, as required by law, to the Auditor General, for this. Now this is for 2016. We are now in fiscal 2017, so I am asking if that situation is still the same and why so?

Mr. Imbert: Wednesday is definitely the preferred day for the answer to that question.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Wednesday is the preferred day.

Mr. Imbert: Is the preferred day for the answer to that question.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, I make the point again—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: And in any event, the Auditor General's Report for 2016, are you referring to the year ended September 2015?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: These are for your time.

Mr. Imbert: I am just asking. The report that you are referring to—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This is the report laid in the Parliament.

Mr. Imbert: The report that you are referring to—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It was just laid today.

Mr. Imbert: You are referring to?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 2016.

Mr. Imbert: September 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is from September 2015 to September 2016.

Mr. Imbert: So you are referring to that year?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Wednesday is the preferred day for answering that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, through you, I again make the point that, if we are to debate this on Wednesday, I do not even know if Wednesday is a debate day because we have not been told. If that is the debate day, then how can we possibly properly participate in a debate if all the answers are being given on Wednesday? Through you Madam, for the parliamentary democracy, we should get it before Wednesday if we are to participate properly in that debate on Wednesday.

Mr. Imbert: I have attended at least 25 Finance Committee meetings, maybe 50, maybe 100. The Member for Siparia maybe attended 80. At every single Finance Committee meeting this is the procedure. There are Standing Orders, which give the number of clear days between the meeting of the Finance Committee and the debate on the Report of the Finance Committee. This has been the practice, the history and it is the regulation of this Parliament for at least the 25 years that I have been here. We have a Finance Committee meeting, questions are asked. We answer them as best we can and we endeavour to provide the answers when the debate on the report occurs, which is within three clear days of the meeting.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Through you Madam, so is the hon. Minister saying that he is satisfied with that process? And if something has happened for 25 years, it does not mean it is the best. That is why you are over there and I am here. You had change to bring.

Mr. Imbert: I would think that hon. Members opposite would be satisfied because — [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, we are not.

Mr. Imbert: — they flow from the new Standing Orders which you drafted and you approved when you were in Government. It is your Standing Orders. So you did this. You created this situation where we have a meeting today and we have a debate on Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is true, Sir, but through you, Madam, for a proper — I am glad the Minister, by the way is giving us parentage for these new Standing Orders because they had never admitted that they were our Standing Orders, but it was from both sides of the House, of course. It came from both sides. But the Standing Orders do not say that you must give the answers on the same day as the debate and, therefore, again, I implore, through you, Madam, in the interest of the democracy and of the parliamentary debates, the Minister endeavour to provide the answers.

Mr. Imbert: The answers would be provided as has been the practice in this place, I suspect for about a

hundred years, on the day or before the debate on the report of the Finance Committee. And you cannot say "it eh right" because you were Prime Minister for five years.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance and Member for Siparia, could we then – [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are in charge.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia, Minister of Finance, I take it from, as the Minister of Finance had said earlier, that the questions will be given as soon as possible and with Wednesday being the latest possible time.

Mr. Imbert: Within practicality, Madam Chairman. Just let me make that clarification.

Dr. Rambachan: Through you, Madam. Minister, you have \$698,000 under Security Services and then you said here:

“Funds are required to meet expenditure to the end of the fiscal year for contract employment, and for security services for the General Administration Division and the South Office.”

Is this amount, in particular for Security Services, due to an increase in the cost of security services or is it additional security services and is it at the south office? And if so, what has prompted, the need additional security services? What has prompted the need for additional security services?

Mr. Imbert: No. I answered, no. No to all your questions.

Dr. Rambachan: So if it is no to all my questions, then why are you spending more money on Security Services?

Mr. Imbert: Because the original provision was not adequate. We are not spending any more. This is a variation of appropriation to deal with a requirement. The original allocation was inadequate.

Dr. Rambachan: Through you Madam, so is it that those who set out to prepare the budget did not prepare proper and accurate budget of the needs of the Industrial Court division?

Mr. Imbert: No, to all your questions.

Dr. Rambachan: The weight of the office is getting on your shoulders. You are getting very angry.

Mr. Imbert: Angry? I look very happy.

Madam Chairman: Members, let us please refocus on the matter before hand.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you. Madam Chairman, if I could just assist the hon. Member. Specifically, the need for the supplementation now is to meet the shortfall in the original allocation. The original intention, bearing in mind the constraints of the economic situation which we met in the reading of that budget, resulting in the Appropriation Bill, was that we would try our best to find savings in other Heads, which could have been vired across, within the Industrial Court.

Not having that ability as at today's date, having the balance of the books now at hand, there is a need to come back to continue the supplementation, which we are obtaining from another point. So it was not any misstep on the part of the Director of Budgets because that is the person who prepares the statements. It was with a specific strategy to give an allocation, find savings as you work your way along knowing that the mid-year review would come up, we would have an opportunity to make adjustments as we could, as we do now.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, I find this is a very curious response because what the hon. Attorney

General is really saying is that they really never went into any detailed planning to prepare the budget. They just put a figure there and left it. So, in terms of the entire budget, is this why we are seeing today also the massive underspending that took place in the Infrastructure Development Fund? Is that the way the budget was prepared, that was not a true reflection of what the country's needs were? Or is it that the Government really did not have a plan for this year?

Mr. Imbert: Again, the answer is no to all your statements. As the hon. Member will be aware, having been a Cabinet Minister for five years and three months, the budget documents are estimates. The variation of appropriation is not something that has fallen from the sky. When your Government was in power there was a variation of appropriation in every single year, sometimes more than once. This is standard and there is nothing extraordinary about this and all of that hyperbole and carrying on would not change the fact that this is a routine exercise.

Dr. Bodoë: Madam Chair, if I may just ask on the Repairs and Maintenance of buildings and the sum of \$1.3 million. It is stated here air condition, generators and other contracts. Can the Minister, perhaps, give us some clarity on what the other contracts would pertain to?

Mr. Imbert: Normal routine maintenance to the buildings.

Mr. Singh: Paint and plumbing.

Mr. Imbert: Windows, doors, locks, carpet.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Shelves, air conditioning, parts and labour, et cetera.

Dr. Bodoë: It was just that I was hoping that I would get something more specific, in terms of value for money and the process and so on.

Mr. Imbert: Routine building maintenance, locks, windows, doors, floor – *[Interruption]*

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: – walls. “What else yuh want tuh know”?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the hon. Minister state how many elevators required repairs, and what was the cost to those elevators? How many elevators and what was the cost?

Mr. Imbert: There are difficulties with one elevator. The other information you require, we would make every effort to provide it by Wednesday.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chair. I am reading in the 2014 annual report and I am quoting here, and I am dealing with item under "Security":

Due to the need for improved security, the court acquired, installed and operationalized additional CCTVs throughout the building in Port of Spain. The level of monitoring throughout the building has increased in keeping with better security administration.

Are these working and have they worked to reduce the cost of the security in the head office?

Mr. Imbert: I am not sure what item you are on and where is security cameras?

Madam Chairman: Under Security Services.

Mr. Imbert: Security Services, that is people.

Mr. Charles: Yes, but ought the equipment lead to a reduction in the people required, not to monitor the building?

Mr. Imbert: Not necessarily. You might have enhanced surveillance.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, if you can also provide the information for the air conditioners? How many air conditioners are currently in the building, how many are working and how many were in fact repaired, the cost as well?

Mr. Imbert: That is a curious question, but we will try our best to provide the information.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 04 varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,090,000.

2.45 p.m.

Head 05: Parliament.

Question proposed: That Head 05 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$10,000,000.

Madam Chairman: In the meantime, may I ask the Minister whether he can make his opening statement?

Mr. Imbert: I will try. Madam Chairman, we have looked at the needs of the Parliament, in particular, consumables for sittings of the Parliament. [*Crosstalk*] That is hard, you know, with that drone down there. We have looked at the needs of the Parliament, in particular Materials and Supplies, in terms of consumables. We have examined the training needs of the Parliament, also in terms of fees for legal matters and other services. We have had to increase the allocation for overseas travel as well as other contracted services.

We are also now implementing for the first time after the previous administration failed to implement it, a medical plan for Members of Parliament. So we are putting in an allocation there of \$1 million for that. Also, we have increased the allocation for constituency offices based on the pattern of expenditure for the first six months of the year.

Madam Chairman: May I just suspend for two minutes to allow the Clerk to get here to assist the Minister? So I will invite questions in the meantime. The Clerk is in the Chamber. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Can the hon. Minister advise what is the average cost of a meal for a sitting of Parliament?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. Approximately \$65 per Member per sitting. [*Crosstalk*] I do not think the concept of the word "average" is well known to Members opposite.

Madam Chairman: Any other questions for this Head? Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The policy for payment. What is the policy for payment of medical expenses?

Mr. Imbert: It flows from a Cabinet decision made by the previous administration which they chose not to implement which we are now implementing. We will get the details for you, but it has been circulated to

Members. So we will refresh your memory by recirculating it.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, through you, to the hon. Minister. I recall during the last budget debate we had raised the issue of the amount that was allocated for Official Overseas Travel for conferences, seminars, et cetera. An additional \$700,000 is being sought and the question really is that in terms of the planning for these events, conferences, seminars, et cetera, usually we would know this long in advance. Again, I raise this in the context that during the budget debate I had raised the issue that if you looked across most of the Ministries, there was a significant increase in official overseas expenditure in almost every Ministry whereas the Parliament was actually decreased.

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Mr. Padarath: The question really is that what sort of planning has gone into this that we are now coming in the middle of the parliamentary session – well really at the end – asking for \$700,000?

Mr. Imbert: Firstly, the statement that we increased the overseas travel Vote for every other area and cut the Parliament is false. So I would like to correct the record with respect to that. We had asked everybody – we cut that Vote in most areas – to try to save money, because as a country we are facing financial problems. The Parliament has been able to contain its expenditure to a level that is a little below the 2016 expenditure and they are getting this supplementation to achieve that objective.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, on the issue of Operations of Constituency Offices, there has been a concern for a while now – whether it is this Parliament or ones before – with the issue of security at the constituency offices. Is there any intention by the Parliament to ensure that constituency offices are properly staffed with security officers or even police officers in an attempt to ensure that there is proper safety? I know that there have been several instances where Members have raised this particular issue in light of circumstances and other events happening at their constituency offices where they would have felt unsafe or whether or not incidents would have occurred with regard to safety.

Mr. Imbert: I am advised – famous words – the Member for Siparia is laughing – that this security provision has already been implemented for high-risk areas and would be rolled out across the board for all Members who require it between this year and the next financial year.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I go on to my question, I wanted to find out, where are the high-risk areas that the Minister of Finance has identified?

Mr. Imbert: What I would do is make available, which Members already have, the Minutes of the House Committee which is a bipartisan committee and has membership of both sides which has considered this matter, and both sides of the House have determined where the high-risk areas are, in the first instance, and how we roll out security to the other areas that require it. So I suggest you ask your colleagues.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under “Fees”, we are having an increase of \$500,000 to meet the payment of legal fees for ongoing matters and brokerage and shipping fees to the end. Would you kindly advise what legal matters are ongoing? Which or what legal matters are ongoing?

Mr. Imbert: They are industrial relations matters, employee/employer matters.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: With respect to the Parliament or with respect to the – well, Parliament the Head, but inside of the Parliament or with respect to constituency offices?

Mr. Imbert: Both.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Both?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, both.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Would you care to share with us the nature of these legal fees that we are paying, for what purpose? If you do not wish to name persons, it is okay, but what are we paying these legal fees for?

Mr. Imbert: The information will be provided.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: I am referring to the previous matter, the rollout of security at high-risk locations and then the extension to other areas was decided at a House Committee meeting chaired by the Member for Oropouche East. So ask him.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am not asking him anything. “How yuh vex with me so, Minister of Finance?”
[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: You could try that trick on me whole day, you know. It would not work.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Calm down.

Mr. Imbert: You need to calm down. You need to calm down.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia and Minister of Finance, I really like the very light spirit that you all are bringing to these proceedings, but let us try and keep it very tight as we could possibly.

Mr. Imbert: I am familiar with her tricks.

Dr. Rambachan: I am just interested in finding out what is the reference here to brokerage and shipping fees in terms of the parliamentary expenses, brokerage and shipping fees?

Mr. Imbert: We will find out for you.

Dr. Moonilal: The Member for Oropouche East would like to ask a question. Bearing in mind those discussions and decisions were taken a couple years ago, would the Minister of Finance agree that in the context of rampant criminality and assault and the reports of break-ins at constituency offices and so on, every single constituency office in Trinidad and Tobago should be deemed a high-risk area? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: No, no. I think this is a matter that is solely within the purview of the Parliament and the House Committee where you have membership. I suggest you address those matters to the Parliament where everybody is present and address it to the authorities in the Parliament. You know very well what you need to do.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chairman. With respect to the item 6, \$100,000 for training – \$600,000, 02/001/17. I recall coming as a Member of Parliament to this Parliament on one of their training programmes, and we were given state-of-the-art, you know, First World ideas about parliamentary oversight committees. I

think we were told—and this is just a preface to the question—of best practices globally. I think it was Prof. Stapenhurst of McGill University. He said it should be chaired by Independent Senators or by the Opposition and nothing happened. The question is: Could we look forward to this training having results in terms of change behaviour, et cetera with the staff?

Mr. Imbert: I would urge Members to read the documents before them. This has nothing to do with what you are talking about; this is staff.

Mr. Charles: This is staff. I am saying can we look forward to the staff changes?

Mr. Imbert: That is not what you said.

Mr. Charles: You did not listen, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: No, that is not what you said. Do not try that.

Mr. Charles: I could rephrase the question.

Mr. Imbert: “Doh try da low dodge on me.”

Mr. Charles: Can we look forward to changes in staff behaviour as a result of this expenditure?

Mr. Imbert: You are asking me that? I suggest you pose that question to the proper authorities.

Mr. Charles: So you just allocate money and you do not look at outputs.

Mr. Imbert: Pose that question to the proper authorities. In fact, file a question.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, if I may?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: As the Chairman of the House Committee, I would like to make two points please. With regard to the point that was just raised by the Member for Naparima where he asked about change in staff behaviour, I would like to commend the Parliament on the behaviour of the staff of the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, Madam Chairman, the staff of the Parliament is one of the arms of the Public Service that has been exemplary. [*Desk thumping*] They have been exemplary, and they operate at an extremely high level of professionalism. So I would like to say that the training has worked in their favour and we will continue to support that kind of training. I am literally shocked at the Member for Naparima for asking that question.

Madam Chairman, let me make the further point, just to correct the record and, as I said, as Chairman of the House Committee, there has been only one report of concern with regard to crime in an area where a Member of Parliament sited his office. And so, Madam Chairman, I am very surprised at the Member for Oropouche East for asking that question with regard to break-ins because we have had no reports at the House Committee of any break-ins at constituency offices. As a matter of fact, Madam Chairman, a number of reports of break-ins were reported during the last administration. Madam Chairman, I am really—again, I am shocked at the Member for Oropouche East, because we have had no reports at the level of the House Committee. Thank you very much.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, you will get your time. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, I am shocked that the Member for Arouca/Maloney could interpret in any way that I can cast any aspersions on the quality of the performance of the staff of Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, their performance is exemplary and I would like to underscore that from this side. [*Desk thumping*] The question was, if the hon. Member would only listen, the question is how do we get them to, in the context of continuous improvement, to utilize this \$600,000. [*Crosstalk*] It is not enough. It is not enough.

3.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Thank you again, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, I am also shocked by the outburst from the Member for Arouca/Maloney, but I want to remind her, in case she forgot, that the House Committee is not the police station. [*Desk thumping*] When there are incidents at the constituency office, or sub-office, Members may report that to the police in their district. They are not obliged, and they certainly will not readily report that to the House Committee of Parliament, which meets on occasion, they meet. So to say that you have one report from a Member, it is fine if a Member would report it to the House Committee, but they report to the police. And, in some cases, there are certain break-ins, or interferences at the office, and so on, that Members may not report, because in this society, whether you are a Member of Parliament or an ordinary citizen, a lot of incidents take place and they are simply not reported for several reasons. So to come here and say that you object to creating a zone of security for parliamentary offices because one matter reported to the House Committee, I mean, that to me is inaccurate.

Mr. Imbert: Right, so that was a question, right? Let me just say something, Madam Chairman, if I am allowed—

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, and all Members, I just want us to, at this stage, just revisit the process and what we are engaged in. It is going to be a long day and we have to at least exercise respect and be tolerant of each other. Okay? So I know that outburst was maybe out of whole passion, and we all must be a little tired and taxed, but, please. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, with respect to this item, Operations of Constituency Offices, and with respect to the whole question of security at constituency offices, it is an obligation of every Member of Parliament, which you would see in the manual for the operations of constituency offices—if you bothered to read it—that it is an obligation that if there is a break-in at your office you are obliged to report it to the Parliament. It is irresponsible of a Member to say anything different. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members—

Mr. Imbert: Stop talking nonsense.

Madam Chairman: Members, I just want to remind Members, in the event that the break was not long enough, that lunch is still available for Members who need to eat lunch and, Members, it would mean that if we get

through this process quickly, some Members will be able to filter out and have their lunch. Okay? Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, to the hon. Minister with respect to contracted services, there is the issue of:

“...broadcasting equipment, IT Support, cable service and provision of security services at Dock Road.”

— and it really has, again, to deal with the broadcasting of the Parliament channel. I know that the hon. Minister was pointing us to committees where the information would be readily available, whether it is through the House Committee, or any other Committee, but, Madam Chair, while we are looking at an increase of \$3 million with regard to broadcast equipment, I would have been very happy if the Broadcasting Committee of the Parliament would actually convene.

I remember on my first sitting here, a Member of the Government congratulated me for being appointed to that Committee because the Committee never meets. And, therefore, if the hon. Minister is saying that the Committee would be able to inform us on issues regarding parliamentary offices, and so on, I would think, likewise, that the Broadcasting Committee would have been convened to deal with issues of expenditure relating to the Parliament channel. Up to now it has never been convened.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you so much. For the benefit, for the edification of the hon. , the purview of the parliamentary, the Broadcasting Committee is well described in the Standing Orders, procurement is not an agenda item for the Broadcasting Committee. The Broadcasting Committee looks at rules and regulations, it does not—the Broadcasting Committee does not look at the procurement of equipment for the Parliament. That is a matter for the accounting officer of the Parliament. It has nothing to do with that committee.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Chair, would the hon. Minister give the undertaking to convene the Broadcasting Committee which has never been convened?

Mr. Imbert: I cannot make any such commitment. That is not for me to do.

Mr. Padarath: But part of the functioning of the Broadcasting Committee deals with issues that are related here with respect to IT support, and so on.

Mr. Imbert: That is not so, the Broadcasting Committee deals with protocols, rules and regulations for broadcast.

Mr. Padarath: Which can be enforced through the IT support.

Mr. Imbert: That is not so, you have it all wrong. It is a procurement matter, and that is a matter for the accounting officer in the Parliament.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair, I am on Training, and we have something called weapons and firearms training. Hon. Minister, is this a new unit to be established, and whether there will be

outsourcing of personnel to deal with this unit?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Like any security matter, that is the Parliament Security Unit, the police unit, and this is not a matter for discussion in this forum.

Madam Chairman: You are next, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you very much. I do not know if that unit is the same that we see when we come to Parliament, but I have noticed on a few occasions, today included when I arrived at the Parliament, there is no one outside. You know, the entrance – what you call it, the –

Hon. Member: The Chamber entrance.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Not the Chamber entrance, the one next to it, you know, it is like a basement.

Madam Chairman: Might I just ask, Member, that, in light of where you are going that you would be a little guarded –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: That is the point I was making, it is not for discussion at this forum, our security arrangements, come on.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, would you kindly look at your security arrangements at my constituency office, and I will ask this question –

Mr. Imbert: I think you may have been here when there was an invasion of the Parliament.

Madam Chairman: Members, Members, please.

Mr. Imbert: Were you not here when there was the invasion of the Parliament? You want another one?

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They will start to riot soon, you know, if you continue this way.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia, I understand that there may be a specific concern –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, there is.

Madam Chairman: – I would ask you, at least, for the details, if you could speak to the Clerk about the details, but a wider question I will allow.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Another question, yes, Ma'am. Well, I will ask the Clerk to look into the matter, certainly, and the Leader of the House. Madam, the question is we are talking about high-risk areas, and that security would be offered at the offices, and so on, and, first, high-risk, well fine. Can we be provided with the criteria to determine what is a high-risk constituency office? Now, this is not just for us as MPs going into the offices, it is for the persons who visit the office, and I am sure many of us have had the experience of all kinds of people, and your staff who is there all day, sometimes late into the evening, so I am asking the question of what criteria will be used to determine high-risk offices.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: If the hon. Member had read the Minutes of the House Committee meeting, chaired by the hon. Member for Oropouche East, the hon. Member would know –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That was a few years ago.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, well you must read, you would know that it was decided by the Committee, chaired by your Member, that that is a matter for the police to determine. So that the police were asked to assess the security risks and threats at each office in order to determine which ones were of the highest risk, and that is something that your Government did, so you need to remember.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure, well it was a good thing that we did that. [*Laughter*] Therefore, Madam Chairman, through you –

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Madam. Through you, Madam, that would have been done, I do not know how long ago, two years ago, three years ago; if it was 2012, I do not know, a few years ago, and, therefore, has there been any review of this matter, given present circumstances?

Mr. Imbert: I am not sure what this has to do with this line item.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So the process was done –

Madam Chairman: Just now, Minister of Finance, I do not believe the question is finished.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He is telling me to wind up and he is – it is not finished. Has there been any review? – and now that the Minister is saying that they intend to proceed with helping offices that are high-risk.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I was pointing out we are on –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Security, Constituency Offices.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, no, please, we are either on 02/001/17, which is Weapons and Firearms Training, which is the question that emanated –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, no, Constituency Offices.

Mr. Imbert: No, I am answering. Madam Chairman, I am answering the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, who asked about weapons and firearms training, security unit. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, that was the Member for Oropouche West.

Mr. Imbert: Hold on, that is the question I am addressing. Are you now asking about 02/001/64?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking about Constituency Offices, yes.

Mr. Imbert: What are you asking?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The criteria that would be utilized for high-risk, your answer was that, we did it before, and the police gave –

Mr. Imbert: Right, so what else are you asking?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking if there would be any review of what was done a few years ago.

Mr. Imbert: Well, I would think that would, again, be a matter for the House Committee.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For the seventh time after.

Mr. Imbert: I believe that would be a matter for the House Committee now, for the eighth time.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Good. Thank you so much.

Mr. Imbert: You are welcome. *[Laughter]*

Madam Chairman: Are you finished, Member for Siparia? Member for Oropouche East. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: My question was answered.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 05 varied by an increase in the sum of \$10,000,000.

Head 06: Service Commissions \$4,920,700.

Question proposed: That Head 06 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,920,700.

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

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I would, most certainly, not exceed five minutes. As the notes indicate, this is self-explanatory, it is for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, for Fees relating to software, and other matters, such as examination fees, and for Other Contracted Services with respect to the search for a new Commissioner of Police.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam. The increase in the allocation for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, is it that this is for increased staff, or is it, again, an underestimated last year's Appropriation Bill, 2017, and, therefore, you are just topping up to meet the same expenses? Is it a new expense? And the second question will be under Other Contracted Services, or if the Minister wants to answer this one first.

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, this is to what?

Mr. Imbert: Top-up.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So that it was underestimated in the first place?

Mr. Imbert: No, we have refined the estimate, and we have examined all of the Heads and sub-heads where virements and transfers are available, and we have concluded we need to top-up this Vote.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So this is not an urgent matter that has suddenly raised its head?

Mr. Imbert: We need to pay the staff.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Other Contracted Services, \$2.5 million, this refers, through you, Chair, to funds to meet the administrative cost of recruitment for a Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police. I would ask the Minister if he could give us some guidance as to what that cost entails, administrative cost, what kinds of matters, and what is the status of this process of recruitment?

Mr. Imbert: Well, we have two Members of Parliament here who I would refer this question to, the Minister

of National Security and the Minister of Public Administration and Communications, so could you disaggregate your question, please?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. What are the administrative costs, specifically, that this money would be used to pay for?—that is the first part of it, and the second one is, what is the status of the process of recruitment? Where are we in the process?

Mr. Imbert: Okay, Minister of Public Administration, could you deal with the cost part?

Mr. Cuffie: Yes. The administrative cost refer to the retention of a firm to handle the recruitment exercise, and the associated costs.

In terms of where we are with the process, the firm has been recruited and they are negotiating the final costs.

3.15p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Would you be able to tell us which firm has been recruited?

Mr. Cuffie: I can provide that information to you subsequently.

Mr. Imbert: I am actually told that the recruitment exercise can only be completed when the funds are made available.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is where you are in process, but the hon. Minister has spoken of the retention of a firm. We are seeking to find out the name of the firm.

Mr. Imbert: The information would be provided on Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is one. And the tendering process, the selection process to recruit this firm?

Mr. Imbert: You will get that information on Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you so much. I may be ignorant, I see IHRIS Oracle software licence fees. Would you care to expand on what that is for?

Mr. Imbert: I can tell you what IHRS is, Integrated Human Resource System, but with respect to Oracle, I will pass that over to the Minister of Public Administration and Communications.

Mr. Cuffie: The Fees refer to the licence to use the software. It needed updating and it became due, and we simply just updated it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Can you tell us what it is that you use this system for?

Mr. Cuffie: It is an Integrated Human Resource System that is used for paying salaries. It is also used for determining pension and leave. There are several elements to it, but it really runs the human resource machinery of the public service.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Imbert: I can provide the details. The commission has given me some details. On October 30 and November 03, 2016, the commission issued a tender notice in the daily newspapers.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Your mike is not very loud, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: I think I will provide this in writing on Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You were doing fine.

Mr. Cuffie: A question was asked that –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister is giving the information.

Mr. Cuffie: The tender notice – that was a question to the House and it was answered.

Mr. Imbert: You are talking about at another time?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, no; now in Finance Committee.

Mr. Imbert: Just because it was answered before, if we have the information we can provide it. So let me provide it now. On October 30 and November 03, 2016, the commission issued a tender notice in the daily newspapers for the engagement of a consulting firm to assist with the recruitment process for the offices of Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police. Ten firms responded to the notice, and requests for proposals were subsequently issued to the 10 firms, of which four submitted bids by the closing date of November 18, 2016. Evaluation of the bids was completed on November 22, 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That has been the most complete answer for the entire day. I want to thank the technocrat who has assisted you in this matter. Thank you very much. That is the only answer we have had for the day.

Mr. Imbert: You are welcome.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, in view of the open revelations by the service commissions recently, in front of a joint select committee of Parliament, that the service commissions are heavily understaffed and under-resourced, what is the decision of the Government to give some more support to these commissions: the Public Service Commission, the Police Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission? It was very elucidating in terms of the deficiencies that the service commissions are experiencing. What is the Government going to do? Would you consider giving some increased funding to take care of these deficiencies?

Mr. Imbert: I am advised by the service commission that they are in active discussion with PMCD to look at providing the required support to the service commissions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can we have a little understanding about when you believe that that is going to complete and, therefore, there would be some marked improvements in the delivery of the service commissions?

Mr. Imbert: That is a very complex question, and I think it would be best that we endeavour to answer that by Wednesday.

Dr. Gopeesingh: By Wednesday?

Dr. Moonilal: I am just trying my best to follow this business here. Is it that \$2.5 million is to be spent in the next few months on this single item of associated administrative costs for recruitment of a commissioner and deputy commissioner; \$2.5 million in a process that is not known? To my knowledge, an order was approved by the House without the support of the Opposition. It was struck down at the court. There has been no other process approved for use. What exactly is the \$2.5 million for if there is no procedure approved to recruit a commissioner and deputy commissioner?

Mr. Imbert: I would want the Attorney General to correct the record with respect to the procedure.

Mr. Al-Rawi: First of all, the procedure is well settled. Secondly, nothing was struck done by the court. There was a modification of a few of the lines of the Order which this House passed. In those circumstances, the order of Mr. QJustice Rajkumar flowed to the commission. They settled the entire process. They went through the procedure for the procurement of the consultant firm, which is a local firm, pursuant to the Order. That is now awaiting the disbursement of funds.

The funds identified here are, indeed, for the process, as it includes all of the ancillary items including psychological, medical, other testing, et cetera, for the various applicants who would be providing their information for assessment by the firm and the Police Service Commission. Bearing in mind that this entire process is at complete arm's length, pursuant to the Constitution itself, where the sole authority for that process rests with the Police Service Commission.

Mr. Cuffie: Madam Chairman, let me just add to what the AG said—the order from the court mandates a procedure, including an assessment centre, the medicals, and that whole process is covered by the allocation that is before us today.

Dr. Moonilal: As a final point, is the Government in a position to assure the House and the taxpayer that this \$2.5 million is a final figure, or would there be more moneys required for this process at a later time?

Mr. Imbert: I am advised by the commission that they are going to make every possible effort to complete this exercise before the end of the fiscal year and, therefore, they will expend all of the funds available to them. I can tell you, at the level of the Government, we will make every effort to ensure that the budget is met and that there is no cost overrun with respect to this matter.

Mr. Ramadhar: Could the hon. Minister indicate as to the cost of the process, as it compares to the actual salaries of the successful candidates?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am not sure that the salaries have been fixed yet, so that is a loop. You know in electronic theory you have a loop, it just loops around? That question cannot be answered.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, how much of the \$2.5 million will be paid to the firm that has been contracted for the process?

Mr. Imbert: All.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: All of it? Well then the answer given earlier is not accurate?

Mr. Imbert: I do not know what the answer was given earlier.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You were not listening to your colleague?

Mr. Imbert: I am not sure that your interpretation is correct. Could you please repeat what you think was said?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, let the AG tell you what he said.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Certainly. The cost to the firm is the entire amount shown here, and that cost includes the firm having to cater for the medicals, the psychological, et cetera. So those are disbursement costs, which are included in the sum. So it is entirely correct.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And we still do not know who is the firm. None of you know.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I certainly do not know.

Mr. Imbert: Member for Siparia, I did say that we will let you know by Wednesday. Stop rushing; do not rush.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You know everything, except the name. You are not being real. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: How could you know everything of cost, and cannot know the name?

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, Member for Oropouche East.

Mr. Imbert: What is that outburst over there?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please. I recognize the Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Just for clarification. I know that currently there is more than one Deputy Commissioner of Police. Is it that this is for one Deputy Commissioner? I just wanted clarification. I know currently that there is more than one Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Imbert: The recruitment process is for the Commissioner of Police and three Deputy Commissioners of Police. One Commissioner of Police and three Deputy Commissioners of Police. I would excuse you, because you are new, but your leader came to this Parliament to effect that very exercise some years ago. You should know better.

Mr. Lee: To the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo. Based on his statement that the firm was retained, could you also identify who was responsible, what body was responsible for that process?

Mr. Cuffie: Service commission.

Mr. Imbert: Obviously it is the service commission that did it. That is obvious, we have said so.

Mr. Lee: The Police Service Commission?

Mr. Imbert: Obviously it is the service commission.

Mr. Lee: I just wanted to verify.

Mr. Charles: To the Minister of Finance, one of the criticisms of our budgeted process is the fact that the moneys allocated are not tied to measurable outputs. So we are very good are providing money, not good at saying how this money would improve the service. One of the criticisms of service commissions in Trinidad is they take an inordinately long time to process requests for information, et cetera, make appointments. We are—a question is coming.

Madam Chairman, \$4.9 million is being allocated. Could the Minister tell us what measurable improvement we could expect from the service commissions as a result of this expenditure?

I look at their annual report, and the only thing I see, when they talk about an outlook, improvements, major processes, the only thing I see here that is related to this is the implementation of project Integrated Resource Information System. All the other areas that they are looking at are not included.

Mr. Imbert: I give the assurance I will pass that question on to the service commissions for an answer.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want, through you, to ask a question on the IHRIS Oracle software,

and the question is a very simple one. Over and over, the Auditor General reports on sums of overpayment that have been detected, that have to be recovered and, secondly, on pension payments that take an inordinately long time for the retirees from the civil service. Will this system allow you to address and manage that in a much more efficient and effective way?

Mr. Cuffie: Eventually it will. There are some gaps in terms of the implementation of all the modules in the system, but we have a plan. We are working on it, but eventually that system will ensure that we pay people's pensions on time and at the correct amounts.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, Chair. Could the hon. Minister indicate what is the present salary of the incumbent Acting Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioners?

Mr. Imbert: That information will be made available on or before Wednesday.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister, with respect to fees, again licences for antivirus software, IHRIS Oracle software licence fees. The question really is that these two sums are quite substantial – are these annual subscriptions or are these one-off payments?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, annual.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. With respect to procurement in the Service Commissions Department, we dealt with the issue of – we cannot get the name of the firm – the process for procurement. I note in the Auditor General's Report for 2016 with respect to procurement issues that 23 items were not seen. The three quotes requirement for 23 items were not seen, contrary or in contravention of the CTB directive of the relevant matter. I am asking the question, has this matter been rectified since this took place?

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Can you kindly tell me which one of these items relates to any one of those 23 items?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I have asked you about the procurement issue for the –

Mr. Imbert: Which one of these Heads?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: – the Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Imbert: So which one of these Heads refers to your question?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. I will give it to you in a second, 02/006/28.

Mr. Imbert: 02/006/28.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Other Contracted Services.

Mr. Imbert: That is the recruitment of a commissioner.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 2.5. Yes.

Mr. Imbert: That has nothing to do with those 23 items.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: How do I know that? I am asking. I am asking. That is the question I am asking.

Mr. Imbert: I am advised that –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are advised by whom? I did not see you consult anyone.

Mr. Imbert: I have my advisor [*Crosstalk*] at my side. Madam Chairman, if we are going to continue, could you ask the Member for Siparia to stop being so trivial? I have received an answer from the technical advisor.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The thing about it, you did not complete the question.

Madam Chairman: Members. Member for Siparia and Member for Diego Martin North/East, if maybe we can just focus on what our objective is. The question has been asked. Member for Diego Martin North/East, are you in a position to answer it now?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Could you kindly proceed.

Mr. Imbert: None of this money relates to those 23 items.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Can you tell us what they relate to?

Mr. Imbert: It is written here, I will read it for you.

“Funds are required to meet the” – [*Crosstalk*] – “associated administrative cost...”

No. No. Madam Chairman, the hon. Member said 02/006/28. That has one meaning in the English language.

“Funds are required to meet the administrative cost of recruitment of a Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police.”

Not those 23 items you are talking about. Come on, you could do better than that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Minister, you are not concerned that people are breaching the Central Tenders Board directive?

Mr. Imbert: They have rules here. [*Crosstalk*] This is a Finance Committee.

Madam Chairman: Members.

Mr. Imbert: It is not a free-for-all.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, ma’am.

Madam Chairman: And Member for Diego Martin North/East, I will suggest we discontinue this line of questioning. Member for Siparia, I will ask you to ask another question that you have to ask.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No further question on this item, Ma’am. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 06 varied by an increase in the sum of \$4,920,700.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam DPA.

Head 07: Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission, \$770,000.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the hon. Minister to exercise his option to make a brief opening statement of not more than five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I think the printed notes are self-explanatory.

Question proposed: That Head 07 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$770,000.

Madam Chairman: No questions?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 07 varied by an increase in the sum of \$770,000.

Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission, \$21,857,680.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the Minister to make a brief opening statement of not more than five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this represents expenditure already made and it was funded by way of an advance from the Contingencies Fund and we are retiring the advance.

Question proposed: That Head 08 varied by an increase in the sum of \$21,857,680.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister of Finance, is this a normal process of advancing bodies via the Contingencies Fund in this fashion?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. That is what it is for. It is called contingencies for a reason. Do you wish for me to define the word “contingency” for you? You want me to define the word “advance” for you? You want me to do that?

Mr. Lee: No.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 08 varied by an increase in the sum of \$21,857,680.

Madam Chairman: Thank you for the representative of the EBC.

Head 09: Tax Appeal Board, \$751,100.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the Minister to exercise his option to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: Again, Madam Chairman, I think it is self-explanatory.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members —

Mr. Imbert: Sorry. Go ahead. You go ahead.

Question proposed: That Head 09 varied by an increase in the sum of \$751,100.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, given the avalanche of appeals that we can expect in the wake of the onerous property tax, and I know there are a number of people just waiting to — do you think that contract employment of \$180,000, fees of 221,000 and they are offering one office a rental lease office of \$350,000, do you think this is adequate to the anticipated avalanche that you are going to expect in the not-too-distant future?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Well firstly, I do not expect any such thing, and the answer is, yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you indicate what is the monthly rental cost of this building?

Mr. Imbert: We will get that information for you.

Dr. Bodoë: And perhaps if any consideration is being given in terms of providing Government accommodations as opposed to rental of a building?

Mr. Imbert: We will look into that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Is this a rent increase that you are now, you know, that is being asked for this \$350,000 in both locations?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: We will get that information for you, but I rather suspect this is a rental contract entered into by the previous administration. You might very well ask yourself.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Lee: No. No. No.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are doing an increase. No, please.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima. I will take you after Member for Siparia.

Mr. Charles: I can defer to you.

Mr. Lee: As I asked a question, Madam Chair, if this was an increase?

Mr. Imbert: I will get that information for you. The documentation does not speak.

Mr. Lee: I was—I cannot ask myself this question.

Mr. Imbert: You were being interrupted by the Member for Siparia. The word increase does not exist on this page. This is simply funds that are required to facilitate the payment of rental accommodations.

Mr. Lee: Then I will ask then when you are doing budget allocations they would have allocated the 12 months for the monthly rental by 12 and that would have been considered.

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Now that \$350,000 is an addition to those figures, I am asking a simple question whether this is an increase in the rental accommodation.

Mr. Imbert: So you are asking now for the third time and I will answer for the third time. I will get that information for you.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: You want to ask it a fourth time?

Madam Chairman: Member, Member for Diego Martin North/East, please. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at 02/001/16, Contract Employment.

“Funds are required to meet the payment of salaries to the end of fiscal year for: two (2)...Reporters, one (1) IT Consultant, one (1) Business Operations Assistant.”

I am thinking about the skills mix that would be necessary, again, in the context of the property tax. Would it not require lawyers, evaluators to assess rather than a Business Operations Assistant? In other words, the skills mix does not seem consistent with the anticipated requirements.

Mr. Imbert: To answer to the first part of that question is, no, because we are a long way away from any intervention by the Tax Appeal Board. If you would familiarize yourself with the process you would realize that the Tax Appeal Board is the last stage in the process and therefore, it is unlikely that the Tax Appeal Board will get involved in any of these threatened appeals in fiscal 2017.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: And this is precisely the problem. We wait until the problem arises and then we get staff. Does it not make sense to have the staff now, get them trained and what not, so when that happens they would be ready to move from day one.

Mr. Imbert: I am sure that the Tax Appeal Board could handle it.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, we are not hearing the Minister of Finance. I do not know why he is so quiet today and not speaking out. But he is not speaking – we are not hearing properly. Could you just lift your voice as you continue?

Mr. Imbert: Maybe it is this microphone. Maybe it is this microphone.

Madam Chairman: Maybe we are having a little technical problems. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Maybe it is this microphone.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, are there any further questions?

Mr. Charles: Could the Minister tell me how the Decisia Tax Judgement Database maintenance is going to assist the Tax Appeal Board in the performance of its duties?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: I am a bit lost. I am not the Chairman of the Tax Appeal Board. This will not assist me with respect to my duties. Are you not aware of the configuration of the Tax Appeal Board?

Mr. Charles: Say “yuh” do not know. Say “yuh” do not know.

Mr. Imbert: No. No. No. The question was: How would this Decisia Tax Judgment Database help me –

Mr. Charles: No.

Mr. Imbert: – in the performance of my duties?

Mr. Charles: The Tax Appeal Board.

Mr. Imbert: No. You asked me about me. So ask the question again.

Madam Chairman: No. Minister of Finance, [*Crosstalk*] Minister of Finance. Members, we recognize that there may be technical difficulties in the Chamber, so if we keep a little quiet we might assist. I believe the question was, the Tax Appeal Board, how will it assist the Tax Appeal Board in carrying out its duties?

Mr. Imbert: Okay. I think the hon. Member for Siparia next to you being a senior counsel, although in a strange way, would be able to tell you what LexisNexis is and what the Decisia Tax Judgment Database is. These

would be online repositories of legal authorities, legal precedents, judgments and other works, scholarly articles and other matters that would assist the Tax Appeal Board in coming to a decision. There are many of them, you have West Law, LexisNexis is a famous one. It is just a database that gives all of the current judgments and historical judgments and decisions and precedents, and also some of the databases give you learning, theory and that sort of thing. So in the absence of these databases, I think, the Tax Appeal Board would be in difficulty. With them the Tax Appeal Board can access the leading judgments and the most up-to-date authorities and precedents. That is how it is at this time. You okay now? So I did know then?

Mr. Charles: If you answer like that all the time.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: I very well knew. Right?

Madam Chairman: I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, the Tax Appeal Board has been complaining for an inordinately long time that their accommodation is not at the required level. Is there any thinking from the Minister of Finance and Minister of Public Administration and Communications to improve their accommodation so that they can be efficient?

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: As we sit here, I am in no position to tell you about the current accommodation of the Tax Appeal Board. We will get that information for you. I would not want to make an answer now that would be prove to be inaccurate, so we will get it for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, but has it ever been brought to your attention? And Minister of Public Administration and Communications, has it been brought to your attention that their accommodation –

Mr. Imbert: What the Attorney General has just told me is that this matter is under review at this point in time to see what can be done to provide the board with the accommodation it requires.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And if and when you bring the revenue authority – which might never be – where would that be in situation with the Tax Appeal Board?

Madam Chairman: Member, I am not going to allow that –

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, all right, Madam.

Madam Chairman: – for what is under consideration, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I was trying to search for an answer somewhere. I appreciate that.

Mr. Charles: Yes, I recall asking a question in Parliament about how much fees was spent on rents by the Government, and I recall that a figure was given of \$380 million annually. In the context of our financial circumstances – and I am looking, I am speaking specifically to 02/002/08, is the Minister comfortable – and I know he will just answer and say yes – but is he doing the most diligent – pursuing the most diligent efforts to reduce the office accommodation cost so that there will not be a strain on the government budget?

Mr. Imbert: We are.

Mr. Charles: Again, referring to this, could you show by this or any other example, where you have actually worked to save the money? To save these rents?

Mr. Imbert: We will.

Mr. Charles: Of what?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 09 varied by an increase in the sum of \$751,100.

Head 11: Registration Recognition and Certification Board \$535,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement.

Mr. Imbert: I believe of all the matters before us, this is the most self-explanatory.

Question proposed: That Head 11 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$535,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Chair, just to find out from the Minister, is there an increase in the number of board members, that is why there needs to be additional moneys?

Mr. Imbert: Well, I am at a bit of a disadvantage, because just like the Tax Appeal Board, I do not have the benefit of one of the officers attached to this board, so I will get that information for you and you will have it in time for the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 11 varied by an increase in the sum of \$535,000.

Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister, \$2,550,000

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

Mr. Imbert: This money, Madam Chairman, is required to pay for a strategic threat assessment project.

Question proposed: That Head 13 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$2,550,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Just a couple questions relating to this, to the hon. Minister. Could you tell us when Cabinet agreed to approve—it is quoted here in US dollars, why is it quoted in US, is it some foreign help that you are looking for—this project? And who are members of this Think Tank Project? Who really are the Think Tank Project, and what is their purpose in relation to the National Security Council?

Mr. Imbert: The information will be provided on or before Wednesday.

Dr. Tewarie: I have a simple question, Madam Chair, which is, what is this project and what are the results expected from this Think Tank Project? Because it seems to me like a new institution within the national security system—

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, who will be thinking?

Dr. Tewarie:—that is supposed to provide something that we cannot now do.

Mr. Imbert: We will give further details on Wednesday, but I doubt that this is new. I am sure this is the combination of some work that has been going on for some time, and the notes indicate it is aimed at capacity

building of the staff, and clearly to deal with the assessment of strategic threats. Strategic threats to critical installations, strategic threats to national security, et cetera. But, we will provide more information for you by Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. The project is a totally new project. I went through the estimates very carefully and there is no line item. There is 09/005/06, but there is no 002. It falls under multi-sectoral which is the 005, but there is no 002, so this is a totally new project. If it is there, well I would have missed it, I will be grateful for your guidance, but I did look for it very carefully, because it seemed very strange, because on the one hand it is saying to be a Think Tank Project. The question is there, how do I reconcile it? Think Tank Project. But on the other hand it is saying, it is aimed at capacity building in research methods and methodologies. So it seems to be for training, but on the other hand it is for strategic threat assessment, so I would ask, through you, is it a training facility? What is it exactly? What does this thing entail?

Mr. Imbert: I will read the note for you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And others have asked, you know, who are the persons on the Think Tank Project? How will it work and so on? And the second question will be, what is the money to be paid for? Is it to pay someone to come and do something? Or is it to pay for staff? What exactly is the \$2.5 million to be utilized for? People? Building? Lobbyists? Consultants? I do not know. Those are my questions.

Mr. Imbert: You seem to have a lot of time on your hands. You have a lot of time on your hands.

Madam Chairman: Member! Member, please.

Mr. Imbert: I will read the notes:

“The project is aimed at capacity building to strengthen the technical skills of staff in areas such as research methods and methodologies and strategic analysis.”

That is clear.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is the extent of your answer.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. I said I would provide further details by Wednesday. I said that thrice.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are very soft today, you know.

Mr. Imbert: That is no excuse for you not listening.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We cannot hear you. We are not hearing you, I mean, you are being very offensive. But it is clear that people are not hearing you properly, because your voice is very low-keyed today.

Mr. Imbert: You wish me to shout?

Mr. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am a “lil bit” confused as well, as to the terminology perhaps incorrect, the think tank, because when I think of think tank I think of persons who come together to come up with ideas and support and, you know, to brainstorm. So, it does not state that here, and I just want to ask really, what is the purpose really and truly of the Think Tank Project? I see all of this, but it does not relate to the name.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, to avoid—at the risk of being charged for repetition, the project is aimed at

capacity building.

Mr. Newallo-Hosein: How will it benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Imbert: Further details would be given on or before Wednesday.

Mr. Charles: Yes, and thank you, Madam Chair. Again, it reminds me when you are answering questions and you have no information, how you could carry on, and capacity building, and think tank, et cetera. In your response on Wednesday I will be grateful if you could provide measurable improvements in our threat assessment, in our capacity building, in our ability to deal with crime, and not activities that have no link to measurable outputs that would improve our society. Could you provide the measure for that?

Mr. Imbert: It is a free —

Madam Chairman: Excuse me! Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: The hon. Member is free to carry on like that, I will provide further details. *[Laughter]*

Madam Chairman: Yes, but Minister of Finance, the question was asked, if on Wednesday you would provide those measurable details.

Mr. Imbert: There is a lot more said than that, so I will provide the information.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: But all of the other grandstanding, it is a free country. You are free to grandstand.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but Member, inside of here and under the same Standing Orders that we all refer to, each intervention is allowed five minutes. Okay? Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Speaker, my question was asked by the hon. Member for Siparia.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam. How many persons are to be trained?

Mr. Imbert: Further details would be provided on Wednesday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, and how many persons are to be trained?

Mr. Imbert: I think I answered that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I asked that already, yes. I am repeating like you are. And there was one other question, with the greatest of respect to you and all of you on that side, your answer is a nonsensical answer. All you are doing is repeating, all you are doing is —

Mr. Imbert: Nonsensical.

Hon. Member: To put it mildly.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, to put it mildly, you are just repeating the words of the — *[Desk thumping]* That is my respectful view, and you are really evading answering the question for something that is very ambiguous.

Mr. Imbert: That is disrespectful. Disrespectful!

Madam Chairman: Members! Members!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are disrespectful in your answers.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia, even though you said, in respectful view, I know as a seasoned

parliamentarian, and you can find better words. Okay? And I am certain you can. I would like to caution all Members, the day is yet still young.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: *[Laughs]* Really?

Madam Chairman: And I would at least ask us all to exercise some discipline, some tolerance and some respect. I would invite any Member who would like to go outside and maybe take a “lil” walk and come back in, they are free to do so. Okay, that might help us. All right? Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I mean no disrespect, and thank you very much, Madam Chair. But I am getting the impression that moneys are being allocated without a total understanding of aspects of— is it correct that questions are asked before allocations are made? What is this project? What is the efficacy of this project? What is the benefit to the society? And what is the rationale? And then you allocate based on what you hear *[Desk thumping]* but we get the impression— sorry, I get the impression that this is not done.

Mr. Imbert: I get the impression that was not a question.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, not only can a question be made, an observation can be made *[Desk thumping]* and you can respond to an observation.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I do not think I am required to respond to an observation.

Madam Chairman: So, you pass on it?

Mr. Imbert: I will respond to a question.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, with respect to the national security secretariat, now the explanation that you have given, again, deals with the technical—strengthening and building the technical skills of staff in such as research methods, et cetera. Have there been— first of all, what is the capacity of the current national security secretariat? And whether or not there has been a review with the organizational structure of the national security secretariat in terms of your explanation of building and strengthening the technical skills of the staff in those research methods and so on? Has there been any review of the organizational structure of the national security secretariat? One. And what is the capacity? Two.

Mr. Imbert: Well, this project is simply dealing with strategic threat assessment. We would try to deal with your question, but it does not really relate to strategic threat assessment. So, we will endeavour to give you an answer within the constraints of available resources. You want to answer it? Okay.

Mr. Young: Thank you very much. This is simply a training, training for those who are part of the national security threat assessment which is comprised of a number of different elements from within the intelligence, and not necessarily one of them, and it is pure training.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Member, while I—thank you, Madam Chair. While I take your answer in good stride and I am fully aware that there are several agencies involved. I am specifically asking, as a coordinating body, the national security secretariat, whether or not a review has been done with respect to the organizational structure in light of this new project coming on stream.

Mr. Imbert: You want to answer it. Go ahead if you wish.

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Madam Chair, the question of the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre is in fact a very sensitive area that deals with an assessment of the threat to Trinidad and Tobago. The ITAC comprise the members are the Chief of Defence Staff, the Commissioner of Police, the Director of SSA and various heads of divisions. And the threat assessment centre deals with threat that is pertinent to Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, the question of the Think Tank is based on bringing into people who can contribute, including various agencies like the University of the West Indies and so on, to contribute to capacity building in the area of analyzing the threat in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not something for us to go into any great detail at this juncture and I want to submit that, Madam Chair.

Dr. Tewarie: I was just going to ask the – through you, Chair, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, if this is only for training, how do you explain the notion which is written here of research and methodology and Think Tank and so on. That is why I asked the question about whether it was a new institution, meeting a need that is now not met by existing institution.

Mr. Young: All right, I apologize. I was not in the Chamber when the first set of questions came. *[Interruption]*

Madam Chairman: I think the Minister of National Security would be better to – *[Interruption]*

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Madam Chair, the ITAC is not a new institution. It existed for quite some time, even during the last administration as part of the National Security Council Secretariat. It has always been there. The Integrated Threat Assessment Centre has always been there and what this note speaks to is building the capacity of that centre. The Think Tank aspect is to bring various kinds of expertise to bear on that and there should be no greater details given, provided at this place, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, I am getting more and more confused, with the greatest – *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I have a suggestion.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: One second. The Minister on the one hand is speaking of training; the other Minister is speaking of something else and it is just not there. On the one hand it is training, on the other hand it is bringing in people and then says this has always been there. I do not know that ITAC has always been there. What has not been there is this, the Item, 09/005/06/A/002 has not been an Item in the estimates under the Office of the – *[Interruption]* yes, okay fine. So the Minister, the other Minister is agreeing it is a new item. ITAC may have been there. Certainly. Being a new line Item, Ministers explain ITAC and, yes, what ITAC does and the Minister for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West is speaking about training. The two just are not jelling together.

Mr. Young: Okay, let me, Madam Chair, through you, as I said a short while ago, I joined the Chamber conversation late. What Minister Dillon had said is accurate in answer to your question. Is it a new line Item? The answer is, yes, it is a new line Item. All that Minister Dillon has said is correct, one of the elements being utilized under this budget here is for training. Not everything is training. I retract that, it is what Minister Dillon is saying and as part of all that he has said, there is an element of training as well.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So \$2.5 million is for training? [*Crosstalk*] Okay, fine. But what are the other elements then, please, for the 2.5? It is a new item, so it needs to be explained.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, could you bring some clarification to this whole – [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Yes. The project, as the Minister of National Security indicated, is not a new project. If the Member is indicating this is a new line Item in the estimates, it is merely being crystalized at this time in this way. But the activity, from what the Minister of National Security is saying, is not a new activity. And therefore, this is simply an allocation under a particular Head which has been created.

As you know, from time to time you would have Sub-Heads created that might have flowed from a larger Head in another item. So as I indicated, we will respond to your queries. We understand what the question is. The question is, what is this? Is it new? What does it do? What does this expenditure involve? Does it involve bringing in people? Is it a foreign firm? Does it involve goods and services? Does it involve the hiring of personnel? What is it intended to achieve? What are the measurable objectives? I heard all of the questions and I think we can prepare an answer to you that will deal with all of these issues.

I do not think – this is my respectful view, since we have given an undertaking to answer all of these questions, I do not think it is productive to just continue asking little bits and pieces. We will provide, as best as is possible, a comprehensive explanation for this item, including dealing with whether this is new, old, existing, something that happened in the past, something that has just happened, why is there a line Item for it at this time? How come there was not a line Item before? Why is it in US dollars? What does it involves? Does it involve foreigners? Does it involve locals? Et cetera, et cetera. We will provide, as best as we can, a comprehensive explanation of this matter for you.

Dr. Moonilal: In light of his comprehensive promise, I withdraw [*Crosstalk*] my question.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 13 varied by an increase in the sum of \$2,550,000.

Head 22: Ministry of National Security \$149,491,000.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the hon. Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Ministry of National Security has nine divisions, including the general administration, comprises roughly about 20,000 persons inclusive of military and paramilitary personnel, both within the established rank and contract position.

Madam Chair, national security deals with providing the relevant security to the people and the territory of Trinidad and Tobago. In doing so, one of its mandate is to ensure that it provides the necessary, not only strategic and policy direction, but in fact the necessary tools, equipment and technology to forward the agencies of national security to do their job effectively and efficiently. And it is based on that mandate to provide those things that the Ministry of National Security, in looking at its budget expenditure up to this point, requested an increase in estimate to the tune of \$149,491,000 and basically it is within two areas, Madam

Chair, one with respect to Recurrent Expenditure to the tune of \$22.6 million and the Development Programme of \$126,891,000, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 22 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$149,491,000.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister. Is there anywhere in this there is the element for the backpay for members of the national security services that was promised by the Government?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No?

Mr. Imbert: We paid it already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Is there any element inside here for payment to the family of officers who have been murdered?

Mr. Imbert: No, there is not, but I can tell you that there is no need for an appropriation for that, because the Commissioner of Police, which is the Head that that matter falls under, has his own Head now. This has been the situation for some time, many, many years, including all the years that you were in Government. The Commissioner of Police recently sought the approval of the Minister of Finance for a virement to provide funding for the payment of compensation to officers killed in the line of duty and I approved the virement and the Police Commissioner announced it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, the question on the CCTV system. The CCTV system has been installed generally by TSTT over a number of years. Could the Minister state, who runs the system? I know it is a matter of national security at times, but the ICT professionals assigned to the CCTV, whereas it is managed by TSTT in terms of its installation and maintenance. Could you give an explanation of this issue?

Mr. Imbert: What I can explain is that the ICT professionals referred to in this note work for the Ministry of National Security.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there any relationship with those personnel and the personnel who look after the maintenance of the CCTV cameras nationally throughout Trinidad and Tobago in terms of assisting in helping to—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: These individuals are operators. The system is provided by TSTT, the hardware.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry, I missed that.

Mr. Imbert: The hardware is provided by TSTT. These are operators who work for the Ministry of National Security.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And maintenance as well by TSTT.

Mr. Imbert: The hardware and all of the aspects associated with the hardware inclusive of maintenance are the purview of TSTT.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you, through you, Ma'am, to the Minister, maybe of National Security. Could the Minister indicate to us and give an assurance to come, I am not sure you will have the information with you

now, the list of those international affairs officers, their names. At which diplomatic mission they are located? Their scope of work? Just remind us of their scope of work, the list of names of international affairs officers and at which diplomatic missions are they located?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Salaries and allowances.

Dr. Moonilal: And salaries and allowances provided.

Mr. Imbert: We will provide whatever information is safe within the confines of the national security system.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I just make a query there. Now an international affairs officer at an overseas mission, New York, Toronto, London, wherever, are you saying that you will not want to provide the name of that person, their terms and conditions of employment, scope of work on some ground of national security?

Mr. Imbert: We will provide whatever information is safe to provide.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. I recall when the budget debate – we went through the line by line Item, the Minister indicated, we noted that there were cuts to a number of programmes that dealt with at-risk youth, in particular males. And those programmes included, like the: police youth clubs, the cadets, MiLAT, MYPART, Civilian Conservation Corps. So I got the impression that moneys would have been reallocated to this what I call “preventative measures” to help our youths steer from crime. I see nothing.

Mr. Imbert: Which line Item are you on?

Mr. Charles: I am on all the items, with respect.

Mr. Imbert: You cannot be on all. You have to be on one. Which one you on?

Mr. Charles: I am on Development Programme.

Mr. Imbert: List the number.

Mr. Charles: All right. A question on 02 since you –02/001/16 International Affairs Officers at Overseas Missions, another question. My understanding is that all of them are on contract and that there is a high attrition rate because they do not have job security. Could you tell us, how many of them are on contract? How many of them are on the permanent establishment and what steps are being taken to regularize their positions?

Mr. Imbert: I am advised they are all on contract. With respect to the other matters we will see whether that information can be provided by Wednesday.

Mr. Charles: So are you saying that they are all on contract?

Mr. Imbert: I said that.

Mr. Charles: I am just asking.

Mr. Imbert: You asking again? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair, through you, Madam Chair. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Can the crosstalk please desist.

Mr. Lee: To the Minister of National Security. The \$22,600,000 that is being requested here, is it due to the result of new staffing?

Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a combination of both, the existing contract position and also there is a projection for new staffing for areas such as, and I can give you some examples. We are bringing on stream the Electronic Monitoring Management Agency that deals with the electronic management bracelets and so on. So we have hired a deputy manager there, they are now recruiting staff who will be on contract positions.

4.15 p.m.

The DNA Custodian Unit will also have contracted positions. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of National Security also would have contracts. So basically it is a combination of existing and intended that fits within the remainder of the fiscal year – units that are coming on stream.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I had another question, but based on what the hon. Minister said, the \$22.6 million is for those three items. But you have just mentioned that it is for some other positions.

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those are the critical areas but, as I said, they also built into that, units that will come on stream before the end of the fiscal year; as I mentioned before, the Electronic Monitoring Project is coming on stream. We already hired the monitor. We hired the additional staff to staff out that unit. The DNA Custodian—the DNA Unit—is also coming on stream before the end of the fiscal year. So we are also hiring staff to fill out those units. So there is a combination of existing shortfalls in the critical areas mentioned here, but also –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But there are others.**Maj. Gen. Dillon:** – others coming on stream before the end of the fiscal year.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. And how many persons are we speaking of here?

Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide that figure for you between now and –

Mr. Imbert: Please clarify by what you mean by “here”?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: How many contract officers would this money pay, the \$22.6 million?

Mr. Imbert: Fine. So, the Legal and Project Execution, International Affairs Officers and ICT professions.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, but the Minister is now saying that there are other areas –

Mr. Imbert: We will have to deal with what is before us.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is what I thought but the Minister is saying otherwise.

Mr. Imbert: But that is a fact. It says –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister is saying otherwise.

Mr. Imbert: I know that, but it says that this \$22,600,000 is to meet the shortfall in these critical areas. Okay? That is what the document says. If there is other information that should be provided, we will provide it. But I have to go on what is written here.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, wait, wait, please. So, I must disregard what the hon. Minister has said, that these other areas will not be paid from this money?

Mr. Imbert: The document is clear that this \$22,600,000 is for the shortfall –

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister is saying something different.

Mr. Imbert: – in the following critical areas.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, I understand.

Mr. Imbert: If there is any other information that would assist you, we will provide it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. So the question was, which I think you have already taken note: How many persons this \$22,600,000 would pay? Further, these are existing contract officers. What is the nature of their contract? Is it on a month-to-month basis? I guess it would be a mix. So how many would be on month-to-month and how many would be on a fixed-term contract out of this?

Mr. Imbert: We will provide the information. I am told it is all fixed term but if there is any further information that is required we will provide it. With respect to the Legal and Project Execution Department officers, the International Affairs officers and the ICT professionals, I am told it is all fixed contracts.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: If they are all fixed term, would you kindly provide, as well, the length of the term, the commencement date and expiry dates?

Mr. Imbert: We will try our best to provide that information within the time constraints.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. For the positions that are identified here in Contract Employment, the Legal and Project Execution Department, IA, ICT, could you tell me how long have they been employed? How old is this contract?

Mr. Imbert: I believe that the Member for Siparia asked me when was the start date and when was the end date.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I believe if we answer that you will get the answer to your question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If it is current, I would like to know when they were recruited and the –

Mr. Imbert: I believe when you get the commencement date you will know when they were recruited.

Hon. Member: Same question.

Mr. Imbert: I think so. I think it flows logically.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are we on the Development Programme 09/005 – under that same heading, Madam Chair? Or not yet?

Madam Chairman: We could do anything under Head 22.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. I want to ask a question on the Development Programme. Could the hon. Minister indicate what is the total cost for the construction of the National Operations Centre? What percentage has been completed?

Mr. Imbert: This Head is dealing with payments to Huawei. So you will get an answer with respect to Huawei if you ask a question about Huawei.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hold on. It said National Operations Centre Construction Project, \$108 million. So it is construction project I am asking about.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. But the explanation is given under, Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Well, I will ask. How much is Huawei charging for the construction of the project and how much has been paid to them so far?

Mr. Imbert: The question is, what is the cost of the Huawei contract and how much has been paid to Huawei so far?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Madam Chair, to answer the question, the original contract for the Huawei project cost US \$89 million. To date, we have paid US \$59,918,511. This project started in 2014, Madam Chair, and I want to say that the project, when it started, although it had received the National Security Council approval, it was discovered that there was never Cabinet approval for the expenditure, and therefore that is being rectified by this Government, notwithstanding we have paid more than 50 per cent of the total amount thus far.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It reminds us of Massy Communications.

Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am reminding you and I am reminding the other administration that they did not have the necessary Cabinet approval for the expenditure, and so we are rectifying that now.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It is not the same thing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may ask under 09/005/G/005, the Digital Public Safety Communication System which speaks of an expenditure of \$18,563,000, can I ask the Minister, perhaps to shed some light on what the system is and the purpose of it and how it is going to benefit the citizens?

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Definitely. Madam Chair, the Digital Public Safety Communication System is a communications platform that has been provided through Harris Corporation. The contract started in 2012. In 2012, based on the ageing system that existed at the time, it therefore provided a new 999 dispatch centre, new digital fully encrypted capabilities throughout, not only the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, but throughout the agencies of national security. Therefore, there is now a common platform using the Harris Communication System network through the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the Strategic Services Agency, across the agencies of national security, so that they can communicate in an interoperable manner.

So in practical terms they can communicate across agencies. The platform is the Harris Corporation's platform—Harris Network. It is a new system that was developed—digital system. Before, you realize that we had the analogue system, and therefore the agencies with a different kind of system were not able to integrate. What this system does—as I mentioned it started in 2012—is it gives us the ability to communicate

across agencies with also the capacity to add other agencies, not only within national security but across the government sector. It gives us that kind of capability. The outstanding amount to that is, in fact, two more milestone payment to the tune of US \$2,651,000, giving you a total of TT \$18,563,000 to close off that contract at this point in time.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is this the system which is being used to monitor private citizens' telephone calls?

Mr. Imbert: I will answer that. No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Then if not, what is the system that we are paying for, if it is not the Harris and it is not the Huawei system?

Mr. Imbert: Member, we are dealing with 09/005/06/G/005. What is your question with respect to that item? Could you please elucidate with respect to 09/005/06/G/005?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are purchasing with Huawei, telecommunications equipment.

Mr. Imbert: Huawei is not that item, 09/005/06/G/005. Which item are you referring to?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking on the Development Programme on the telecommunications equipment.

Mr. Imbert: Which item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 09/005/06/F/010.

Mr. Imbert: F/010?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Where it says: Supply and Installation of Telecommunications Equipment.

Mr. Imbert: That is the first one. You are going back to Huawei. So what you want to know about Huawei?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to know which telecommunications system is being used for monitoring private citizens' telephone calls.

Mr. Imbert: What does that have to do with this Head?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is this the Huawei system, or is it the Harris system?

Mr. Imbert: What is this Head? I have already told you that this system under this Head is not being used to do that. But whatever is being done is what you have to check into what you did.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I just want to find out, through you, is the Harris system operable at this point in time, or is it still being installed?

Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is operable at this point in time.

Dr. Rambachan: So this money is to pay off for the system?

Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is right. That is the balance due on the payment, the final two milestone payment.

Dr. Rambachan: And have you found the system to be efficient and of good use to the agencies?

Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is very much so. It is the new technology.

Dr. Rambachan: So the Partnership Government made a very good decision to bring that on. [*Desk thumping*]

Maj. Gen. Dillon: And not only that. This responsible Government continued the process, as opposed to that

Government that did not do so, and I could cite examples.

Dr. Rambachan: You are following good footsteps.

Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, no, no, no. The responsible Government did not act on impulse. The responsible Government –

Dr. Rambachan: Like the good boats you got.

Madam Chairman: Can we proceed, please? Are you finished, Member for Tabaquite, with your questions?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, through you to the Minister of National Security. I want to just confirm, is it 100 per cent complete or you are still doing the analogue-to-digital –

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, it is highly operational.

Mr. Lee: This is in respect to the Digital Safety Communication System? Because I understand you say it is installed –

Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is installed. It is working. It is installed and operating. As I said, these are just the two final milestone payments to close off –

Mr. Lee: So all the analogue-to-digital has been completed?

Maj. Gen. Dillon: We have completed those transfers. We are now increasing it across other agencies in national security.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: The total amount is just under \$150 million and the question I want to ask is: Did the Ministry of National Security receive all its allocation up to this point within the budget? This is for the Minister of Finance.

[*Interruption*] All right. Okay. Just one second. Although I understand that the Budget 2017 is not increased by these variations, has the budget for the Ministry of National Security been increased by \$150 million?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: The allocation for the Ministry of National Security has been increased by these amounts. All right?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 22 varied by an increase in the sum of \$149,941,000.

Madam Chairman: Might I suggest that we take the suspension now and we resume at 5.00 p.m.? Thank you.

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

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

Madam Chairman: The Meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is resumed and we are now at Head 23, the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General \$72,164,000.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the Attorney General to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five

minutes.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, under Head 23 we are seeking the sum of \$72,164,000. It is disaggregated across a few Heads: firstly with respect to Electricity, the sum of \$3 million; Telephones \$5 million; Contract Employment \$14,164,000; and Fees \$50 million. These sums come about as a result of a number of factors.

First of all, the Ministry of the Attorney General moved offices from Cabildo Chambers and also certain aspects of its office at South Quay. On the merger you must remember that we are dealing with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Office of the Attorney General. In doing that, we rearranged our electricity aspects with certain standby procedures. Our billings had to be reconciled as we gave up certain properties and took on certain other things. Specifically, we invested in new technology in respect of the Voice over Internet Protocol type telephony which we have at the Ministry of the Attorney General, and we had to connect the sub-offices that we had whilst we take the phased approach from moving out of Registration House at South Quay and moving the facilities across from Cabildo Chambers.

With respect to Contract Employment, the Ministry has 1,950 employees roughly. The sums with respect to Contract Employment represent the Ministry's commitment to maintaining the contracts for 452 people. The insistence to keep these contract officers is borne on the back of the work which the Ministry is conducting on the criminal justice reform and on the fraud aspect and registry reform as it relates to fraud at the Ministry of Legal Affairs Division. Specifically, therefore, we seek in the allocation for Contract Employment of \$14 million to achieve that.

With respect to Fees, I am very pleased to say that the Attorney General's Office spent \$6,680,000 of a total of \$66,345,000 from the year prior, representing 4.8 per cent of the previous expenditures by the last Attorney General. The Attorney General's Office inherited from the term prior to my tenure \$137,128,741 in Fees which were unpaid by the last Attorney General. The sum of money represents expenditure which has to factor paying those outstanding arrears.

In the expenditure to date to April 2017, the Ministry of the Attorney General has spent in fact \$39,777,854—that is out of the total of \$50 million that was allocated to us. That \$39 million represented payment for almost exclusively the arrears in Fees which we inherited, but almost 90.3 per cent, that is \$35,927,000 was actually spent on one firm and that relates specifically to expenditure by the DPP's Office, as we are obliged to pay for the expenses of the DPP. So the DPP's expenses accounted for 90.3 per cent of the expenditure which we had.

We were allowed, Madam Chairman, to actually take benefit of viring funds from fees to keep salaries in tack. So we vired moneys from the account of the Fees, we kept Contract Employment in place, we did the reconciliation as to the staff that is required to specifically handle the anti-money laundering, counter-financing of terrorism and civil fraud, which we are improving at the Ministry of the Legal Affairs, and which relates to work which we are going to ask them to do very shortly in legislation which we are bringing to the Parliament

now.

So in summary, we have had massive cost savings, we have reduced the external expenditure on legal fees, dropping it down to 4.8 per cent of what the previous Government would usually spend in a year, and we have specifically kept in employ 452 people who would otherwise have gone home. I thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 23 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$72,164,000.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. To the hon. Attorney General: Might you be able to give us some information with respect to 02/001, that is you did indicate that that \$14.1 million was for Contract Employment—of that amount how many were renewals and how many are new ones?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, hon. Member for the question. The information that I have is that it is there for just continuation of contracts. The contracts were under the six-year programme of approved contracts and this was specifically to keep the persons who were employed previously in employment. I must add that at the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, we kept every single employee that we inherited without changing any persons. So we have had very little new employment. This is really continuation of employment.

Mr. Karim: Of that complement that you quoted, what percentages do you have in terms of you have legal, technical, IT, Admin—

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Mr. Karim: The complement that you would have and in terms of a breakdown. Just for us to get an idea as to the comparison.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure, just give me a moment. I should have that here. The Contract Employment includes general allocations for Short-Term Employment and I would have to double-check what the specific breakdown is across legal versus technical or others, but I can tell you it does include IT, Legal Affairs technical staff, investigative officers. I am not quite sure whether it includes legal contract officers per se, save that I certainly do recall that the renewal of contracts at the DPP's Office featured inside of that. What I can do is to try to get you an answer by this afternoon for that breakdown.

Mr. Karim: Attorney General, might you be able to indicate how many of the graduate recruitment persons you have, if that programme really is included in this complement of contract employees?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Unfortunately, I will have to ask the Permanent Secretary. I can, again, undertake to get that for you hopefully by this afternoon.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to elucidate a bit in terms of 02/001, that is, "to bring to account foreign payments for the provision of legal services", can you give us a sense as to the largest cost items and what that would have been if you can so do?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. The largest cost items actually come from the Office of the DPP in respect of foreign payments, and that is specifically in relation to the Clico Commission of Enquiry—the Clico investigation, sorry. Not the commission of enquiry. The investigation which the DPP's Office has been conducting for several years now.

The second largest items are for fees outstanding committed by the previous Attorneys General, including matters such as the extradition of Jack Warner, certain other matters, et cetera. So there are quite a few matters that are outstanding there. The payables are resident in Astigarraga and Davis which relates to the Galbaransingh and Ferguson matters, and also Charles Russell which is the standing Privy Council agent for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on generally all matters that go to the Privy Council.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Ma'am, through you, to the Attorney General. The increase in the allocation to the Ministry is \$72,164,000, did I hear you correct when you said that your initial budget was \$50 million?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, that is correct.

Dr. Moonilal: So does this mean that your budget has been increased by over 100 per cent with this variation?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, because we are bringing to account all of the fees that were left behind by the previous Attorney General in the sum of \$137,128,741.16.

Dr. Moonilal: And is it correct therefore that at the beginning of the financial year you were not aware of these bills to be paid?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No. Quite far from that, what had happened was the figure was in fact a lot larger, and what we did is we compromised a lot of the figures. So we entered into direct negotiations with a number of the attorneys and we asked them for discounts. Discounts were received up to 60 per cent in some instances. In some instances, certain foreign counsel hired by previous Attorneys General took – one in fact took the cause to go to court and sue for fees and that matter is being struck out in the courts right now.

We certainly are also on an exercise of reconciling exorbitantly large payments made by the last Attorneys General, and those matters will be headed to court for taxation or for certain further action.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I say just by the way as you give this good explanation, is this an approach that you recommend to other Cabinet Ministers to meet and treat with contractors and reduce if possible their bills?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I fail to understand which Head you are speaking about on this point and I would not venture beyond that.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I then ask: When exactly did the Ministry move into the new towers?

Mr. Al-Rawi: We moved across in September of last year. I should add that we have not fully moved. The Departments for the Chief State Solicitor and the Solicitor General are still resident at Cabildo Chambers. Cabildo Chambers is being worked on by the Office of the Prime Minister's team for the retrofitting as the companion building for the Parliament. So those two offices, Chief State Solicitor and Solicitor General, will be looking for a new home and facility.

We are also not completely moved from the Registration House at South Quay largely because the outfitting works conducted under the last Government for the housing of documents at the vault, at the new building – the suppression systems for fire – instead of using gas systems in the vault so that we could protect the old documents in Trinidad and Tobago, somebody installed water systems into the vault and obviously

you cannot put on the water sprinklers system to protect the papers of Trinidad and Tobago, some of which are hundreds of years old. So we have been delayed in having to do retrofitting works at the vault, but we are pressing on with that project to try and retrofit and get it up to speed.

Dr. Moonilal: But could I ask since you volunteer all this good information, has the Ministry made the requisite contractual arrangements with providers of that service so that that retrofitting has started?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes. UDeCOTT is actually on the way right now and that is an IDB-funded aspect.

Dr. Moonilal: Great. Could we ask therefore that before the debate we could be provided with information as to contractors, the scope of work and the cost of that retrofitting?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Could you just point to which line item that is inside of here?

Dr. Moonilal: But you are giving us some good information that we would like further information on.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I will happy to provide whatever is required on the line items. So I do not respectfully think whilst that is useful information – and I answered it gratuitously because of your question – I do not think that it is relevant.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Fine. If there is no more information that you will give, is fine. You raised this in your opening statement, the DPP and the Office of the DPP, and spending money on the Office of the DPP and so on, could I ask: Did the Government consider using the Cabildo Chambers building when vacated properly by the Attorney General for use by the DPP?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No. The DPP's Office is in fact the subject of a different location. The DPP is about to conclude a location by way of management with the Property and Real Estate Division for a separate office which the DPP's Office has selected for itself. That companion building at Cabildo is to save the Government close to a billion dollars in having to construct a new companion building at the Red House. So we are saving close to a billion dollars in expenditure by retrofitting Cabildo for the purposes of the Parliament.

5.15 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Would you have an idea of where the new building for the DPP may be located?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, I am told it is at Park Street along – yeah, it is at Park Street.

Dr. Moonilal: And it is a private building that you are renting?

Mr. Al-Rawi: It will be a private building, yes. That is provided, of course, the matter has to go – once the DPP has indicated the parameters of his choice, it then has to go through public admin to the Cabinet for approval. But we are awaiting on the DPP's position.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. So that process is being undertaken by the property division of the Ministry of Public Administration?

Mr. Al-Rawi: It is and it is subject to the DPP's signing off.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, sure. Could I ask then on some other matters here? For the contract employment, \$14 million. Now, if we read these figures correctly, this is a variation to allow you to finish the fiscal year 2017.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Correct.

Dr. Moonilal: So that in Contract Employment, you require another \$14 million for the four months or so ahead of us?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, that is correct.

Dr. Moonilal: You had mentioned before and it has been a recurring theme about ghost workers at this Ministry and we were very concerned with that in the context of any wrongdoing. Could I ask whether this would include workers who were there before? Whether those ghost workers have been exorcised? Whether any action has been taken by any relevant authority to bring to justice persons who may have broken the law on the allegation that these persons were improperly hired and were working for salaries and not delivering work and so on?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. The ghost workers are actually workers who when called to come to work by name and who were receiving cheques under the previous Ministry never turned up for the execution of contracts which they were requested to come in and formalize. Those ghost workers are, in fact, known by name and by position. That information has been handed over to the law enforcement agencies for their action.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you say when this information was handed to the police?

Mr. Al-Rawi: That was handed over in the budget 2015, just about a month after that.

Dr. Moonilal: And to your knowledge, at this time, no action has been taken by the police?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No.

Dr. Moonilal: Or the matter has not come to a conclusion?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No, it has not and we have been requesting. I am aware, however, that the police say that they are active on it. Again, that is a matter for them. I cannot agitate more than just constant enquiry.

Dr. Moonilal: Would you be in a position to supply to the Parliament the list of these ghost workers who have been reported to the police?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No, it is the subject of a criminal matter.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask, on the issue of fees, would you also be in a position to list the payments being made to persons or organizations, in and outside of Trinidad and Tobago, firms and so on, that will constitute the payment of \$15 million between now and the end of the fiscal year?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No, I will not. But I can tell you that I have answered in written form already every single payment that has been made by the Office of the Attorney General in the House of Representatives.

Dr. Moonilal: But then if you have already answered, it would not be a problem for you.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I said that has been made. You asked for the perspective. The reason that I cannot give the perspective just yet is that we are in the course of negotiating payments with persons. So we have asked for them to factor their fees down because we have said to them that we are in hard financial times and we have asked for concession, particularly from those who have received vast volumes of work, and we are asking them, as most corporate entities do, to consider the volume trade over quantum.

Dr. Moonilal: Without giving then the quantum of money, would you be prepared to give the list of attorneys

and firms that you are now currently in negotiation with?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I do not think that that exercise can be completed before Wednesday. I have no objection to doing it but I do not think it would be completed before Wednesday because it is a work in progress. Prior to the current arrangements now, the files were actually managed in the Solicitor General's Department and it was a rather untidy affair.

What I have asked the Permanent Secretary to do is have an accounting officer put specifically to deal with fees so that one could track exactly what the fees are as opposed to them being assigned to literally 100 attorneys with each person in a different zone and different state. It was very untidy and things were in arrears. So we have restructured that department and that restructuring exercise is afoot right now.

Dr. Moonilal: So you are not prepared to give the list of companies or firms?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I think my explanation was quite clear and I am sure you understand it.

Dr. Moonilal: It was very lengthy. Just wanted to get it in a summary form.

Mr. Al-Rawi: It stands as it is.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I also ask, Attorney General, given your explanation of more than 100 and something per cent increase in the budget, you somehow always seem to suggest that your lack of spending equals performance. So by not spending money, you perform.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Well, I am not suggesting that, I saying that the department has performed by far better and it was simply done on the comparison that we actually used the underworked staff of the Solicitor General's Department and the Chief State Solicitor's Department because they were fundamentally underused. Because the previous arrangements, prior to my time, saw the expenditure of close to \$400 million in external expenditure with the state attorneys not having to do the workload that they were capable of doing. So we have significantly improved the outturn and performance of the Solicitor General's Department and the Chief State Solicitor's Department by spending internally as opposed to externally which has resulted in a diminishing of the extent of fees.

Dr. Moonilal: So then, Attorney General, you would be in a position to give us a list of all those matters that have been dealt with since 2015?

Mr. Al-Rawi: That would be a very long list and will not be ready before Wednesday.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, I would just allow you this last question and maybe you can come back at another intervention.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, I would come back later but to finalize this question is that you would be prepared to give us a list of all matters completed since September 2015 to now by the Office of the Attorney General?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No, I would not be able to do that before Wednesday because it is too long a list and too large a list to have a commitment for it to be done.

Dr. Moonilal: But you could make a commitment to please supply to us even after Wednesday? Could make such a commitment?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I cannot make that commitment.

Dr. Moonilal: You cannot make that commitment?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No, I cannot.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Through you, Madam Chair, to the Attorney General, in terms of the DPP indicating that there is necessity to increase his amount of personnel in his department and so far from you, I believe, we got only 32 employed out of – you will probably give us the figures, how many are required?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Is there any area within here – if you find suitable staff to be assisting the DPP, is there any arrangement within this financial thing that you can assist the DPP in getting more staff? That is the first question.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. Let me clarify the position. The appointment of staff to DPP, the vacuum that existed in the DPP's Office is that there was a huge unfilled portion of the permanent establishment of the DPP's Office. The contract staff was certainly in place. The need to improve the strength really was on the permanent side of the equation. The Office of the Attorney General has nothing to do with that. That is done by the Judicial and Legal Services Commission.

If I had the authority to fill the department, I would fill it in the morning, but regrettably, I do not have that position. What I have done is to engage in constant advocacy with the JLSC and the JLSC heard the call and appointed 30-plus persons to the permanent establishment of the department. I am told by that the JLSC that the second round of appointments is imminent and that that will have an immediate effect.

Wherever the DPP has asked for assistance from the Attorney General's office, in whatever field it has been, it has been completely met with – how should I say – an anxious support. We have provided photocopiers, we have provided fees, we have provided all the travel arrangements, we have provided the security arrangements, we have provided the buildings. All of the aspects to ensure the readiness for the DPP's department to be properly staffed, outfitted and supplied have been met with gusto by the Attorney General's office.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give a little indication of the permanent personnel required that he has been asking for? Thirty out of how many?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. I will get the precise figure. I can get that for you within this afternoon.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. One more. The same suasion that you – moral suasion that you have used for the Judicial and Legal Service Commission in terms of personnel for the DPP, is there a consideration by the Attorney General and your office to ask for a similar thing for more magistrates and judges based on the situation now existing with the slowdown in the judicial process?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I am very pleased to tell you that the partial proclamation due to kick into effect on May 15, 2017

of the Children and Family Division ceased the operationalization of an amendment to the Supreme Court of Judicature Act, which immediately improves the complement of High Court judges and magistrates and that that will meet the interim point. I am, right now, in discussions to carry a further note to the Parliament to deal with the appellate function to see an improvement in the number of judges at the Court of Appeal. So that matter has already received attention and will come into effect on the May 15, 2017.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I crave the indulgence of the Chairman to you that one of the complaints that the judicial officers have made that if you have to increase the amount of personnel as judges, you have to find more accommodation because they say they are cramped. Is there anything there on that? You want to respond? If there is any allocation that you will consider –

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure, I will answer the question and then I will ask if we can come back to the Heads just in the interest of time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, go ahead.

Madam Chairman: I just wanted to put everything in context before you answer, Attorney General. While I think we are quite happy for the generosity of information, I just want to alert Members that we have to stop at six o'clock to take another matter and we still have this to complete. There are opportunities to ask general questions under the ordinary business of the Standing Orders, so if we can use our time more, you know, appropriately rather than the sort of general omnibus, yes though important, discussion. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I am guided by your high degree of alacrity in the matter. I just have one more question for the –

Madam Chairman: And is it within the matters being considered before us? Yes, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The issue of police prosecutors and the need for replacement by judicial officers, does that come under you? And therefore it comes under the contractual obligations of \$50 million. If there is any area inside there where public prosecutors, police prosecutors in the Magistrates' Court particularly that be replaced by judicial officers or does that come under JLSC?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Fifty million dollars is for legal fees. Police prosecutors come under the police. That is not a Head even under our Ministry. Perhaps, I can talk to you on the side, there is a lot of information I can give you on that otherwise.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Accepted.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Madam Chair, I know that you had indicated earlier that we can use the provisions provided for us under the Standing Orders. Can I be assured that if I submit a request that it would, in fact, be responded to by the Government?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I do not understand what you are saying, sorry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is okay. Going on, Madam Chair, through you, recurrent expenditure for electricity and telephones. I find \$3 million and \$5 million for electricity and telephones are pretty high. You have indicated here that funds are required to liquidate bills on hand and to meet projected expenditure. What

projected expenditure do you expect to cost \$3 million in electricity or perhaps you would like to say what is the number to be liquidated and therefore we will be able to —?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Okay. The previous years, the electricity bills were \$4,891,853.44 and similar periods behind that. So we have actually achieved a reduction of close to \$1.2 million in telephony and that is because of the transfer of systems that we have had in causing a better utilization of technology. So, in fact, we have saved about \$1.2 million per annum.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But you are asking for an increase. Are you not?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So therefore, it may not be that you have reduced, you are just asking for an increase. It could have been either the same or more.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I am saying that we have caused a savings down from \$4,891,000 odd down to this figure.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many buildings are projected to supply electricity in this — is it only you under this?

Mr. Al-Rawi: The Office of the Attorney General with its 1,950 employees occupy several offices across Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, so this \$3 million is for across Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, Ma'am.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And your telephones, is this landline or does it include cellular?

Mr. Al-Rawi: It would be both.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For fees, \$50 million. I know that the Member for Oropouche East had requested a breakdown and you could not supply it. At least you indicated that you could not provide it before Wednesday or even by Wednesday. My question is: How would you know that you would require \$50 million if you are unable to determine how many persons you have to?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Fifty million was the allocation on the estimate of expenditures for the appropriation Bill. So it was estimated that it would be \$50 million. We are now coming back in this line Item here, we are asking for the increase of another \$50 million. So there were two 50s. Right?

5.30 p.m.

We are \$50million previously and \$50million is being asked for now. Specifically, the inherited legal fees as at September 2015 stood at \$137,128,741.16, and we have factored that down from previous amounts and we are trying to compromise the payments.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And this is specifically for foreign payment?

Mr. Al-Rawi: No, this includes both local and foreign payments.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How do you propose to pay with a lack of foreign exchange?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Pardon, how do we what?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Propose to handle your foreign debt with foreign exchange issues?

Mr. Al-Rawi: The moneys can be found.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Just to follow up on this one matter as the Attorney General spoke of inherited fees. Could the Attorney General tell us of the \$50million you expect to spend in the next four months? How much of this will go for inherited fees and how much will go for fees generated by your own administration?

Mr. Al-Rawi: It is to be determined still.

Dr. Moonilal: So you are not aware of that at this time?

Mr. Al-Rawi: As we compromise fees, we can make savings on the left and right. If we do not use all of the fees, which is likely, because we may vire the fees out to support other aspects, in particular contracts.

Dr. Moonilal: So the \$50million really may not be for fees. It could go into contract employment, telephone, electricity anything?**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Possibly, and at the closing of the year end we will be able to account for that.

Dr. Moonilal: So at this stage, really, we do not know how much money will be spent on fees?

Mr. Al-Rawi: That is correct.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 varied by an increase in the sum of \$72,164,000.

Head 26: Ministry of Education \$180,476,866.

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

Mr. Garcia: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Education is responsible for all areas of education, from early childhood care, primary, secondary and tertiary education. In our efforts to achieve our goal of excellence in education we seek additional funding in some areas of our operations because we have met some challenges in meeting some of our commitments. We have been making adjustments in many areas, while holding fast to our commitment to the education sector. We will be happy to answer any question or query that will clarify our request for additional funding. Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 26 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$180,476,866.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 03/001/04, could you give us an idea as to how these laptops were procured? The 13,600 and the 16,000 replacement batteries, how is the procurement process? This is the first Item, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: This is an appropriation that we are giving them.

Mr. Karim: Well, how are you going to procure it? What is the process of procurement?

Mr. Imbert: That was not the question. The question was: how were they procured?

Mr. Karim: Since it is an allocation now, could you indicate to us the procurement process?

Mr. Garcia: We will be going through the Central Tenders Board. With respect to request for proposals, we will be sending out request for proposals and we will be going through the Central Tenders Board.

Mr. Karim: Thank you. Minister, would you be able to tell us, these laptops that are going to be issued, will it be for all Government, Government-assisted and private secondary schools?

Mr. Garcia: Government and Government-assisted schools.

Mr. Karim: With respect to getting value for money, can you tell us the status of connectivity of the schools to utilize these laptops?

Mr. Garcia: Well, that is one area that we are looking at. We have been able to achieve tremendous success, but still there is a lot of work to be done and we are hoping that by the beginning of the new academic year we would have that settled in all our schools so that the laptops would be used properly.

Mr. Karim: With respect to the laptops again, will you be able to tell us, in terms of the replacement batteries, how many charging carts are available or going to be available to each secondary school?

Mr. Garcia: At this point we will not be able to give the specific information where that is concerned, but it is part of our overall ICT in education plan.

Mr. Karim: How many secondary schools, hon. Minister, we are looking at in in this area?

Mr. Garcia: About 125 secondary schools.

Mr. Karim: With respect to the utilization of this amount of expenditure, do we have assigned to each of these secondary schools an ICT technician that is going to enable the infrastructure to be properly utilized?

Mr. Garcia: All our secondary schools have posts for ICT technicians.

Mr. Karim: With respect to these posts, there was a situation before that, you answered a question in the Parliament, with respect to the technicians being on a month-to-month or as opposed to three-year contracts, and you promised that that was going to be taken to Cabinet. Was that rectified? You would notice it had to do with acquisition of the – you see one of the things that we are looking at, and Minister of Finance you have really, in a sense told us that frequently, when we are expending State money, Government of Trinidad and Tobago money, we want to make sure that we get value for money. And I am indicating, the questions I am asking is whether we are going to be getting value for money with the architecture or the infrastructure for this technology.

Mr. Garcia: Would you allow me now to answer the question?

Mr. Karim: Or, sure. Sure. It is your colleague who interrupted.

Mr. Garcia: Yes, but you strayed you see and I wanted to bring you back on track.

Mr. Karim: Sure. Do not use any –

Mr. Garcia: That request is before PMCD and as soon as PMCD returns it to us, we would take it to Cabinet.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member, may I now move on to –

Mr. Charles: In respect of 04/007/09 - Early Childhood Care and Education - \$5million. In this allocation, can the early childhood centre at Ben Lomond that is almost 99 per cent complete and Reform Village, Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha School, that is 100 per cent complete, can we look forward to that being started, and if so,

when? Opened.

Mr. Garcia: I cannot give those specifics at this time. In fact, we will be embarking very soon on the resumption of construction of schools. I will give that information subsequently.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. And on 03/001/04, I understood, and correct me if am wrong, that there were some concerns with the laptop policy that was carried out by the People's Partnership Government where each child going into secondary school was being given a laptop. What is the present policy with respect? Giving it to students who go into secondary schools or to schools to be managed on behalf of the students?

Mr. Garcia: You are correct. There were some concerns and we found that the previous policy resulted in a lot of waste. What we have decided, with respect to the new policy, is that the laptops will be given to the schools, so that the children would have access to these laptops in the schools.

Mr. Charles: So have you given consideration to use of laptops after school, at home and whatnot, which is what I understand is the norm in developed countries?

Mr. Garcia: What was the norm or what has developed as the norm in Trinidad and Tobago, with respect to the previous policy, was there was too much wastage. And because of the need to be more stringent in our resources, we have decided that it would be much better and a better use of resources to have the laptops stored in the schools.

Mr. Charles: I would like you to, again quantify that wastage. Because I want to—have you done a cost benefit analysis, with respect to the wastage to which you allude to and the benefits of having children at home, after class, using the laptops to advance their education?

Mr. Garcia: You, know what we have found in most of our homes, there is the presence of laptops in the homes. We have found that due to our research and as I—*[Interruption and crosstalk]*—have been saying over again—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Singh: Poor people do not have.

Mr. Garcia: Will you permit me to answer the question? As I have been saying over and over again, the policy that we have adopted was to eliminate waste and to ensure that the laptops are used more effectively by our students.

Madam Chairman: Member, I would allow you one more question and maybe you would come back on another intervention.

Mr. Charles: Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that there are 300,000, according to data, there are 300,000 people living in Trinidad under the poverty line, and I could tell you that in Naparima, in the rural areas, you go into ex-sugar workers who have been laid off and whatnot, there are no computers at all. It seems to me, and I am asking you, if the policy in effect is to put the poor families at a disadvantage when it comes to tech voc, when it comes to IT education.

Madam Chairman: I will not allow that. That is argumentative.

Mr. Charles: Okay, thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. We see for distribution 6,300 laptops for Forms 1 and 2, 6,300 each. The population in Form 1 is approximately 17,000 and Form 2 is about 17,000. So, therefore, by putting 6,300 laptops to each one of the forms, could you tell us what would be the modus operandi and the process for these students, all 17,000 in Form 1, when you are giving out 6,300 laptops?

Mr. Garcia: I am surprised that you are asking this question because that was explained on several occasions in this House already. What we are saying we are not giving each child a laptop. In each school, we would have an average of 50 laptops in the laboratories in the schools, for use of the students. And that is why we have those numbers, 6,000-odd.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you are replacing the computers in the laboratories by this mechanism?

Mr. Garcia: We are providing laptops for the children in Form 1. And those who did not receive laptops last term, we are providing laptops for their use in the schools, and those laptops will be placed in the schools, in the laboratories, in the schools.

Dr. Gopeesingh: One of the criticisms you tried to lay against the past administration was that there were no storages within the schools to keep the laptops and no charging areas. What storage do you have now to say that you are going to keep these 6,500 laptops; storage in the schools?

Mr. Garcia: That is an area that we would be having discussions with our principals.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So that means, are you going to wait for the storage to come in first and then bring the laptops or are you going to be – *[Interruption]*

Mr. Garcia: We would be having discussions with our principals, all the principals of our secondary schools. We would engage them in discussions with respect to storage.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. The issue of the 2016/2017 academic year, and you said that these laptops and batteries are to be distributed for this academic year. Now is May, the academic year for education finishes in June, could you tell me how possible it is – since you indicated that there is no tendering taking place so far – how are you going to secure this for this academic year 2016/2017?

Mr. Garcia: I can tell you that the laptops will be procured during the latter half of fiscal 2017. That is all I can say at this moment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The latter half of fiscal 2017?

Mr. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And, therefore, it would not be for the academic year 2016/2017. It will be for 2017/2018.

Mr. Garcia: I was at pains to explain that these two year groups, students belonging to these two year groups will get their laptops.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry, I missed that.

Dr. Moonilal: Just repeat it.

Mr. Garcia: I have been at pains to explain that students who belong to these two year groups, that we have just identified, will have access to these laptops in the schools.

5.45 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you said in the academic year 2016/2017, Minister.

Mr. Garcia: Yes and those students—

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you said the tendering will take place towards the latter half—

Mr. Garcia: Because we need the financing. The financing was not available before.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you are bit confused there in the whole process.

Mr. Garcia: There is nothing confusing about that. Simple intelligence will tell you, how clear it is.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Which you seem not to have. I take that back, Madam Chair—

Mr. Garcia: We could expect anything from you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The fact that he does not have the intelligence, I take that back.

Mr. Garcia: We could expect anything from you, anything at all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. I would not respond to the best woodman, but I mean. *[Laughter]*

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The issue, Madam Chair, of a price allocated to the purchase of these equipment, \$60 million, it means that a price has been determined for these laptops and batteries already. So if there is no tendering, how could a price be allocated to it of \$60,658,000?

Mr. Garcia: Those are estimates as a result of our investigations. Those are estimates.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Last area, Madam Chair. If your estimates show that you need \$60 million and you need 1,600 batteries at a cost of approximately \$400 for one which is about \$6.4 million, it leaves \$54 million to purchase 13,600 laptops which comes up to a cost of \$4,000. Are you aware that in our five years of the People's Partnership, the cost were approximately \$4,000 for one in the first year; \$3,300 in the second year; \$3,300 in the third year; \$2,800 in the fourth year and \$2,200 in the fifth year? Does your research not tell you that the approximate cost of a laptop now is approximately \$2,200 but you have \$4,000 as your approximate cost for a laptop?

Mr. Garcia: Our objective is to move forward and not dwell in the past.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you are prepared to spend \$4,000 when you could spend \$2,200?

Mr. Garcia: We are prepared to provide laptops to each of our secondary schools so that the children, the students in those schools would have access to the laptops.

Madam Chairman: Member, you will come back on a full intervention. May I move on to the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that you have indicated that you will be liaising with the schools for storage facilities and so forth, will the Ministry be providing funding to the schools who lack these storage facilities to be able to construct them?

Mr. Garcia: Let me say, once more, that we are in discussions with our principals with respect to storage and, therefore, at this moment, I am unable to say whether we will be providing funding. It all depends on the

discussions that we will be having with our principals.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, I have been to various schools and I could tell you that the storage facilities are way lacking and, therefore, they would have some security concerns which brings me to the next question –

Mr. Garcia: Is that a question or a statement?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: – that during the last budget you had cut security. With security being reduced, how do you anticipate that these laptops that you are placing in schools will be actually secured?

Mr. Garcia: I do not understand your question. What you are saying, security has been reduced in our schools?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It was in the last budget, security was reduced.

Mr. Garcia: You could remember my saying that?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Of course. I asked the question and we brought the question to you –

Mr. Garcia: I cannot remember my saying that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: – if there was going to be a concern with students.

Mr. Garcia: No, I cannot remember my saying that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Mr. Garcia: Apparently, again –

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: When you had the cost of security, we asked the question in reducing it.

Mr. Garcia: You are having some difficulty in remembering.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, might I ask you just check so that you could put it more specifically and we will come back on another intervention? Do you have another question to ask?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, I do.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Concerning, I know that you indicated that the IT personnel that you are waiting on PMCD. My question is, why is there not a provision placed in this budget for the month-to-month contract? Is there sufficient funds for your IT personnel, because as far as I am concerned they have not been paid?

Mr. Garcia: We have IT personnel in schools, but they are operating on a month-to-month basis at present.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: At present, but they have not been paid. My question is there is no provision in this.

Mr. Garcia: Again, you are making false statements.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, I am not, Sir.

Mr. Garcia: Yes, you are making false statements.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, Minister.

Mr. Garcia: All our employees who are on month-to-month, they have been paid their salaries.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I remember asking Minister –

Mr. Garcia: You are speaking in the past. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, “04/007/23 – Servol Hi-tech & Advanced Skills Training

Programme—\$1,000,000”, two questions pertaining to this. Can you firstly identify the 15 Adolescent Development and Skill Training Departments as to where they are located? Secondly, how many young adults have benefited from this programme?

Mr. Garcia: Just give me two seconds, please.

Madam Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Garcia: We are unable to provide that at this moment, but we will give it to you subsequently.

Miss Ramdial: Just one more question on “Servol’s Human Development and Skills Training Programme — \$7,000,000”. Can you identify the seven secondary schools that benefited from this adolescent development programme?

Mr. Garcia: Again that is another area that we will provide the information subsequently.

Miss Ramdial: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Chair. With respect to 04/006/50, whilst the allocation is in relation to the 2011 to 2013 bargaining period, is the Minister prepared to tell us what is the status of the 2013 to 2016 bargaining period? Also with respect to 04/007/09, does this allocation take into consideration the operationalization of the Sonny Ladoo Early Childhood Education Centre which is completed and has been abandoned through the pulling back of the security and the school is currently being vandalized?

Madam Chairman: As far as the first question, Member for Couva South, I will only entertain the question as far as it relates to 2011/2013 bargaining period. That is what is under consideration. So I do not know if you want to rephrase your question. In the meantime, the hon. Minister can answer the second question.

Mr. Garcia: We are looking at all our ECCE centres with a view to having them completed — those that have not yet been completed. Again, we are working together with the Ministry of Finance to ensure that we have sufficient funds to complete the construction of all the schools.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, on the average, an ECCE Centre which has been completed, how much will it cost to outfit with furniture and so on?

Mr. Garcia: You cannot expect me to answer that question now. I do not have that information at my fingertips.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, but you have been the Minister of Education for the last two years.

Mr. Garcia: Yeah, but I am not God.

Mr. Indarsingh: That reeks of arrogance, that response, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Minister —

Mr. Indarsingh: I know that he is a bit —

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask for order please?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, please, let us just do not try to — [Crosstalk] Member for Couva South. Minister, are you in a position to provide that information before Wednesday?

Mr. Garcia: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member for Couva South, do you have another question?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister. 04/011/02, when we look at these figures, the allocation of \$50 million, we would have recalled that in 2017 – and we have the estimates there and the revised estimates – that there was a shortfall of \$84.3 million. So this really represents still a shortfall of \$34.3 million. [Crosstalk] How are we going to satisfy the requirements given a substantial shortfall of \$34.3 million for the continuation of the programme?

Mr. Imbert: I would answer that, Madam Chairman. This is the amount we have provided to the company, and we have asked them to maximize efficiency and eliminate waste.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, if I may continue?

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: The hon. Minister of Finance indicated that is to maximize efficiency and eliminate waste, but there was a recent report that alluded to the Minister of Education that indicated that many students come to school only on the days when meals are served. I am asking the question as well, whether this shortfall of \$34.3 million is going to see any further cuts as there have been cuts to the School Feeding Programme, firstly. And, secondly, are all of your payments – given this shortfall of \$34.3 million, are all of your payments to suppliers, contractors and caterers, current and up to date and, if not, how much are you owing these people?

Mr. Garcia: Again, at this point, I do not have the figures and those figures can be supplied to you subsequently.

Mr. Karim: I want to ask a follow-up question. Do you intend, given the statement by the Minister of Finance, to have any further cuts to this programme for efficiency purposes and as he indicated – I am quoting him – to eliminate wastage but, at the same time, students are unable to get a basic meal at times?

Mr. Imbert: Let me clarify. This like many other programmes came into the new administration with a lot of unnecessary expenditure. You would have heard the Minister of Health talked about \$200 million in fake expenditure on the Arima Hospital. So I am sure there is a lot of room inside of here because of the squandermania of the UNC to still provide the meals to the children that require them.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, do I have an unanswered question?

Mr. Imbert: The answer is all children who need the meals will get them.

Mr. Karim: All children who need the meal will get the meal. I ask another question whether they have been all commitments – are there any outstanding debts to contractors or caterers given the shortfall?

Mr. Garcia: I just told you that you will be provided with that information subsequently.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre? Member for Tabaquite?

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, earlier in your contribution you said that research was done that indicated that your policy on the way laptops are to be distributed and used, part of

that decision was based upon the fact that the research indicated that there are laptops available in the homes and, therefore, that contributed to your decision. Can you tell us who did that research? Where the research was done? And is it possible that that research can be made available to the Parliament, because this is a very, very important decision you have taken where you are removing an essential educational empowerment tool of students required especially after hours in the home where they can do their research and study accompanying their homework and what have you and you are taking this away from them. Can you say to us who did that research that informed this particular change in policy?

Mr. Garcia: That research was conducted by officials of the Ministry of Education. I remember clearly in my budget speech contribution I quoted from that research that was done. Again, I can make that available to you.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Secondly, earlier you said that you did not care about what a laptop cost in the past, you did not care about the past.

Mr. Garcia: I never said that. Those were not my words. I never said that.

Dr. Rambachan: The former Minister of Education, the Member for Caroni East said that a laptop came down to \$2,200 over the five years, and we just calculated it and you were in tacit agreement that a laptop is costing now \$4,000. I want to ask you this question. Are the specifications for the laptops that you are supplying fundamentally superior and different to the laptops supplied by the People's Partnership administration, almost 100 per cent more?

Mr. Garcia: I said two things just now: one was that we will ask for persons who are interested in supplying the laptops to submit to us their tenders. And, secondly, that it will go through the Central Tenders Board and on the basis of these two aspects, we will decide on the quality of the laptops.

Dr. Rambachan: So you are again saying that no tenders have been prepared, no tenders have been sent out for these laptops therefore, obviously, these laptops are not going to be available for students in this educational year. If it is not available, just say it is not available and it is going to be available next year. No problem with that.

Mr. Garcia: I cannot say that at this point.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Madam Chairman, through you again, Mr. Minister, in many universities of the world you have the universities partnering with business and partnering with communities in order to ensure the sustainability of the universities and the education for people. You have over the last 20 months presided –

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, could you please. Leader of the House.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, I beg to move that this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee be adjourned to sit again later this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

6.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

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

Madam Chairman: The Standing Finance Committee is now resumed. We are at Head 28: Ministry of Health.
[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, education.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I am sorry. We are still on the Ministry of Education and there is an order which we left off. So, I call upon the Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I was saying to the hon. Minister, through you, that there are so many institutions in the world and in Trinidad, including the University of the West Indies, which are partnered by business houses and by other persons who have the capacity to so partner with educational institutions. And in this country in every single community that you can think of where there are so many children, the People's Partnership Government had begun this programme of early childhood education and had built several early childhood centres and some of which were under construction and some of which have been completed and many 90 per cent, 85 per cent what have you. And it is, to me, short-sighted thinking and perhaps no thinking at all that we could have these educational institutions parked up, as it were, children in community centres, children in cramped spaces and the Minister would not think —

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I just ask, what line item you are on?

Dr. Rambachan: I am on the —

Mr. Imbert: Line item.

Dr. Rambachan: — Early Childhood Care and Education, \$5 million.

Mr. Imbert: No. Which line item, please?

Dr. Rambachan: 04/007/09.

Mr. Imbert: And could you now ask, please.

Dr. Rambachan: You cannot dictate to me what to speak and how to ask my question. You are in no position to do that.

Madam Chairman: Members. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Tabaquite and Member for Diego Martin North/East. Member for Diego Martin North/East, could you channel your request through the Chair.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: As I indicated before, we have pointed out the line item and indicated before every Member has an intervention of five minutes in which they can make an observation in which they can ask a question.

Dr. Rambachan: My question to the Minister, through you, is this: Minister, have you considered partnering with the communities to get the communities involved as partners to the institutions even by way of helping you provide the facilities in the schools that will allow these schools to function? If you say that moneys are a problem for you, let the communities take ownership of the institutions under your guard rather than have them sitting there wasting away, being vandalized and not being occupied by the children who have to occupy

them.

Madam Chairman: This is under the Early Childhood Care Division?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. Early childhood.

Madam Chairman: Would the Minister of Education or the Minister of Finance take this question?

Mr. Garcia: Thank you very much. Let me first state that, we are all aware of the stringent economic times that face us now and because of that we had to prioritize our construction programme or the resumption of our construction. We simply cannot at this time say after the construction of all our schools, we have schools that are in various stages of construction not only at the ECCE level, but at the primary and secondary level. And in an effort to bring value for money and in an effort to ensure that we maximize our resources, we have prioritized the resumption of the construction of our schools. This Government is aware of the importance of the early childhood sector and we are doing everything to ensure that those persons who operate in that sector are not left behind.

Considering your statement about partnership, as you would know and all of us in this House would know, it is the responsibility of this Government to stretch out its hands to the community, and we have been working together with various community groups and community organizations to ensure that they partner with us in ensuring that they also play their part.

Only this morning I attended a function at the Queen's Royal College where Shell had partnered with that school in providing valuable resources, and this is indicative of the efforts that are being made by this Government in area of partnership. So in essence, let me simply say that, yes, we are partnering with our stakeholders so that we can supply the needs of our educational communities.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, are you finished? Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Could the hon. Minister of Education, Mr. Minister, please, assist me with this because I believe it is a typographical error in the report provided to Members. You are saying that the funds required here, \$60million for the laptops, you are saying that you are seeking \$60 million now, this is the first week in May, to provide laptop computers 6,300 for students to use in the schools, not to take home, and that is for students in 2016/2017 academic year. That academic year ends in June. Are you telling the House that between the first week in May and June you will secure \$60 million, you will buy 6,300 laptops, you will place 50 in each and every school and the students will use it until the end of June? Or are you expecting the students to go to in the holidays and use the computers in the school? —because that is the effect. So, I suggest that it is a typographical error and this should really be distributed in 2017/2018 academic year, fiscal.

Mr. Garcia: Your question has been answered sufficiently before, but with all due respect to you I will attempt to answer it again. It is for two periods that we are looking at. I that said already. And also the laptops are to be used not only by secondary school students, but as well as by secondary school teachers of which 1,000 laptops will be provided for the use of secondary school teachers. There are two year groups of students that

we are dealing with and this is the reason why we are asking for an additional \$60million.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask in a related question: Why did the Ministry choose to buy laptops and not desktops which you can keep and install in the computer labs and so on?

And secondly, are you going to also install security devices on these laptops, because a laptop, of course, is much easier to walk away with, to remove from the property of the school and so on. When we were there I understand one was stolen and somebody from an area, anyway, somebody was indeed apprehended. So would you explain why the decision for laptops and not desktops, and tell us whether a security device will be installed to protect them?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Education.

Mr. Garcia: Thank you. The decision to use laptops instead of desktops was as a result of advice we got from an IT department. In addition, let me state that it has been pointed to us that nobody uses desktops again. Desktops are going out and therefore, the laptops are those devices that are now being used.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Thank you. And I have a next question, but I would have liked to ask, Madam Chairman, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education from Moruga/Tableland, but I imagine the Member from Arima could answer. In the area dealing with the EFCL interest on the loan and so on, would you consider as well some of the moneys you receive here to complete the Ramai Trace Hindu School which is 90 per cent complete and with funds provided here you can easily complete that school, as you promised, to be opened for the new academic year in September?

Mr. Garcia: I have made the promise to you that the Ramai Trace Hindu School will be completed and I repeat that promise now.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on 04/011/08, YTEPP Limited. Hon. Minister, in the budget statement we saw that YTEPP got a decrease in the allocation of \$49.6 million almost \$50 million, but there now is an allocation \$30 million which continues to show a deficit of \$20 million from even that decrease.

Could you give the assurance, because this money that is being allocated here is to meet operating costs which would include, of course, salaries and administrative costs, rentals, utilities and about so on? Could you give the assurance that in spite of this allocation, which is still a shortfall, that no jobs will be lost at YTEPP?

And secondly, that stipends will continue to be paid at the rate at which it was agreed to?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Education.

Mr. Garcia: Thank you very much. I cannot at this stage give any assurance that no jobs will be lost. I certainly cannot give that assurance.

Mr. Karim: Can you give the assurance then that stipends will continue to be paid, and if you can confirm, what is the stipend rate and how many trainees do we have in the system?

Mr. Garcia: I do not have that information now, but as usual, I can get that information for you later on.

Mr. Karim: Just a follow-up question. I am on Item 040/006, The Accreditation Council. With respect to the allocation of \$5million for the bargaining period 2011 to 2013, can you indicate how many persons would have benefited from that increment, that award?

Mr. Garcia: That information can be supplied to you subsequently.

Mr. Karim: Okay. And if you can also, in supplying, tell us: What is the existing complement of staff as compared to the bargaining period?

Mr. Garcia: Yes. I will do so.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the 2017 budget there were funds allocated for the restart of construction of schools. Have any of those schools scheduled for the restart of construction been started with the allocations?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Education.

Mr. Garcia: As I had stated earlier, we have decided with the concurrence of the Ministry of Finance to move around finances so that we can almost immediately resume the construction of schools. At this point, we have identified 10 schools that we hope to start in a matter of days.

Dr. Tewarie: Is Preysal Government one of those? It was in the allocation.

Mr. Garcia: Yeah. I will answer that later on. I do not have that list with me. I will answer that later on.

7.15 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I am going to ask you a question similar to the one I asked the Minister – well, to the Minister of Finance, you may want to answer it, which is that this \$180-plus million is really an addition to your existing allocation, so you have an increase of \$180 million, but you just answered that some of the allocations for 2017, for work to be done in 2017, has not been used, I gather. Are you going to be able to expend all of these funds by the end of the fiscal year?

Mr. Garcia: The additional sums that we are asking would really be for recurrent expenditure.

Dr. Tewarie: All right, so they are going to be eaten up in that process?

Mr. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, okay. Can you answer the Preysal question now?

Mr. Garcia: Which question, Sir?

Dr. Tewarie: The question about Preysal Government.

Mr. Garcia: I do not have that with me, but I can assure you that you will get that information soon.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And the final thing that I want to say, it is more an observation, Minister, it is about the laptop programme. You have mentioned that our laptop programme had a lot of wastage. One of the Members on our side asked that you categorize that wastage, but in my view it would be very difficult to identify wastage by giving a child a laptop, every child. [*Desk thumping*] I just want to caution though, in the age in which we

live, giving 50 laptops to a school with large numbers of children in this day and age, I can talk to you about this because my grandchildren are very young and all of them are with iPads most of the time they have spare time, and it is really part – it is as essential as a book to read in the house was 20 years ago. I just want to caution, that this is not a good strategy, for it is better than having nothing, but it is not a good strategy if we are serious about keeping the country at the head of the curve in the 21st Century.

Mr. Garcia: I just want to make a comment. As I had stated previously, our decision – and the Member for Caroni Central is not paying attention to me. He has asked a question, I am about to answer, and he is talking to somebody else.

Dr. Tewarie: I am paying full attention.

Mr. Garcia: Our decision to go this way was based on research, empirical research. And I made the promise to furnish the Member for Chaguanas East with the result of that research. That research tells us that it was better use of the laptops, if we go the way that we have proposed.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to National Schools Dietary Services Limited, and I know mention was made of increasing efficiency and so on. Minister, the question I have is, whether in this improvement and improving efficiency of the service, whether the nutritional content – *[Interruption]*

Mr. Garcia: I am having a difficulty in hearing you, Madam Chairman.

Dr. Bodoë: Sorry, I am speaking about the School Feeding Programme, Minister.

Mr. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: And the question I was asking, is in terms of increasing the efficiency of the expenditure, whether the nutritional value and the health content of the meals are in any way compromised?

Mr. Garcia: No, that is not compromised. In fact, we have been having meetings regularly with both the board and the CEO of that company, and we have been assured on every occasion that the nutritional elements and the nutritional values will not be compromised. We have been given that assurance.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just as you have given an undertaking to complete Ramai Trace Hindu School, can you give a similar undertaking to complete Shiva Boys High School with this allocation? And also Parvati Girls?

Mr. Garcia: Shiva Boys and Parvati Girls are not in the first stage of our new thrust, but I can assure you that they will not be left unresolved. But the first stage, they are not included

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Chair. To the Minister of Education, Curepe Presbyterian, could you give us the status of that school, please?

Mr. Garcia: Unfortunately, Curepe Presbyterian is not in the first stage. But, again, I want to give you the assurance that that would be attended to subsequently.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Can the hon. Minister indicate whether San Chiquito Presbyterian School is in the first stage?

Mr. Garcia: No, that is not in the first stage.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is the Minister aware that all the infants have not been to school since January 09, 2017 because there is no school literally?

Mr. Garcia: I am not aware of that. That is news to me. This is the first time I am hearing that. This is the first time I am hearing that. We have been in constant contact with our supervisors, with our principals almost on a daily basis, and it is the first time I am hearing that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I have been to the school just last week and I have been assured that there has been no school for the infants since the school has been condemned. Would the Minister therefore give an undertaking to investigate this?

Mr. Garcia: Of course, I will investigate it. Certainly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the Minister indicate how much of the loan of \$286.5 million has been utilized? And for what schools have they been utilized for payments? And how much is remaining? And what is the intent of the Ministry of Education to do with the remaining money, if there is any at all?

Mr. Garcia: Just a minute. Are you speaking about the Abercrombie Fund?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The \$286.5 million syndicated loan with RBC Merchant Bank.

Madam Chairman: 04/011.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 04/011, thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Garcia: Okay, I will get that information for you later on. I will get that information for you later on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, and if you would be kind enough to get the information—in the finance budget statement you had a listing of a number of schools with a certain budgetary allocation for each school, since you indicated that no school construction has started, or schools that were under construction have not been proceeding, could you indicate what is going to be done with the funding that is available under the IDF programme where a certain amount was allocated for X amount of schools?

Madam Chairman: Member, could you identify what Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It comes under the same Item, 04/011/10 and 04/011/11. Because, this is an addition to the amount of money that has been allocated for construction of schools under the IDF programme.

Mr. Garcia: I think that you are a bit confused. I am sorry to say that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not—

Mr. Garcia: Just let me finish, please. I listened to you very attentively.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are being rude and you are most confused. You are most confused.

Madam Chairman: Member! [*Crosstalk*] Member for Caroni East—just now. Member for Caroni East!

Dr. Gopeesingh: He is being very obnoxious.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, I would like you to just desist. [*Interruption*] Member! Member!

Dr. Gopeesingh: I would not tolerate the disrespectful behaviour from another colleague.

Madam Chairman: Member! Member!

Dr. Gopeesingh: Disrespect.

Madam Chairman: Member! Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am being bullied. *[Laughter]*

Madam Chairman: Member!

Hon. Member: “Why yuh doh go home?” *[Crosstalk]*

Madam Chairman: Can we resume with the business now, please? *[Interruption]* Member, I do not believe that the statement was said in a disrespectful way, therefore I would just ask us all, I know we might be a bit tired, but we still have a very long journey. All right? So, let us try to show that we are really resilient people. Minister of Education.

Mr. Garcia: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I want to assure the Member for Caroni East, that I had no intention of being rude or of bullying him. Certainly you would know that I cannot bully you. *[Laughter]* You know that? So, be assured that no disrespect has been meant. But at the same time we recognize that there are certain things that would get you hot under the collar, and I will try my best not to repeat those things. But still I maintain that in your questioning perhaps you were somewhat confused, because at first you spoke about a loan and then you went on to the IDF, and I am finding some difficulty.

Dr. Gopeesingh: *[Interruption]*—question on that matter, Minister.

Mr. Garcia: Your question is convoluted, I must say that and therefore it gives me great difficulty in answering you. However—

Hon. Member: Nobody can answer that.

Mr. Garcia: Nobody can answer that, of course. But, we will try, and I will give you my response later.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You will give the response in writing?

Mr. Garcia: To your convoluted questions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I do not think I am being bullied by you, you know. *[Laughter]*

Madam Chairman: Members! Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to know whether the Minister can give us an update on Siparia Union Presbyterian?

Mr. Garcia: Pardon, say that again, please, Sir.

Dr. Bodoë: Siparia Union Presbyterian, can you give us an update as to the status?

Madam Chairman: Might I ask under what Item Member for Fyzabad?

Dr. Bodoë: Sure, that would be with regard to the 04/011/08, where it speaks to, in the text, funds are required for the design and construction of primary and secondary schools. *[Interruption]* No, I am asking.

Mr. Garcia: That school is not in that programme at present.

Madam Chairman: So, this is under—Members, please—04/011/10 and 04/011/11?

Dr. Bodoë: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: All right. Yes, please, Minister of Education.

Mr. Garcia: Okay, as I said, that school is not being considered at this point.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Speaker, hon. Minister would you be – we have asked for several schools and we have been told they are not there, and we have no way of knowing, would you be able to give us a list of –

Mr. Garcia: Yes, I would give you a list. I would make available a list for you as soon as possible with the schools that we will commence reconstruction in the very near future.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, thank you, and would you kindly indicate the status of the Shiva Boys' and Parvati Girls' of construction with no allocation?

Mr. Garcia: I would give you that information subsequently.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sir.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town, you are okay?

Mr. Padarath: The Member for Siparia raised it already.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just under – I heard the Minister indicate that he would give a listing, but I continue to hear of, that is not in our priority, and that is a second set, and so on. Could the Minister elaborate and provide how he has arrived at this criteria of priority and a second set, and so on?

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Minister could you give that in writing, please.

Mr. Garcia: Yes, certainly I will do that.

Mr. Ramadhar: Actually, exactly the question as my friend posed, because had he not put into the public domain that Curepe Presbyterian was on a priority list, have you changed your list?

Mr. Garcia: The priority list that we are working with at present involves 10 schools. Ten schools that are in critical need of urgent attention, in terms of the continuing of the construction process. Curepe Presbyterian is a school that has already been established, and I know that it is undergoing some expansion, and I want to give you the assurance, Member for St. Augustine, that we will not leave that school behind. I told you already that we are going to attend to that school as soon as we are able.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you. Whenever that is.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, picking up on the point for the Member for St. Augustine, I know in the last financial year we did raise the issue of the Princes Town Presbyterian Primary No. 1 School, and I know you have been having some discussions with that. But it must have started based on discussions with the Ministry of Education, that that school would have started construction in this financial year. However, that has not happened. It did not appear in the estimates, and so on, in the last budget, I know discussions are ongoing. Would we see Princes Town Presbyterian, one, be reconstructed in the next financial year?

Madam Chairman: I would not allow that question, please, Member.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Just asking, is Cowen Hamilton Secondary included in any of these refurbishments or rebuilding?

Mr. Garcia: We will give a list of all the schools that are in the first phase of reconstruction.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 varied by an increase in the sum of \$180,476,866.

Head 28: Ministry of Health \$196,500,000.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the Minister of Health to make a brief opening statement for not more than five minutes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Head 28, Ministry of Health, Recurrent Expenditure is being increased by \$196,500,000, disaggregated across three regional health authorities as follows:

[Chairman: Mr. Forde]

North West Regional Health Authority – \$30 million;

North Central Regional Health Authority – \$96, 500,000; and

South West Regional Health Authority – \$70 million.

Mr. Chair, these figures are to pay outstanding trade payables across, about 26 different categories to continue to provide critical services and to purchase items such as: medical supplies, equipment, to maintain plant in hospitals and health centres, continue provisional food at institutions, security, to pay private medical institutions, utilities, medical gases, linens and waste removals. So those are the reasons for the increases and I want to thank the Minister of Finance for agreeing to increase Head 28.

Question proposed: That Head 28 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$196,500,000.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, just two questions. Could you indicate how many suppliers are involved? I know some of this you may have to provide in writing.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yeah, the number of suppliers –

Dr. Bodoë: The number of suppliers that are waiting to be paid and the average length of time these suppliers have been waiting on payments? And the third question, just to follow up. I know you mentioned several categories that the extra moneys are going to, with regard to the medical equipment. Again, you may have to provide this in writing, if you can provide a list of the equipment that –

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure, I can give you –

Dr. Bodoë: – that can be provided for each of the RHAs.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I can give you that now.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay, absolutely.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So, under medical equipment for the North West RHA, supply, installation, commissioning and maintenance of instruments for neurology services in the main operating theatre at Port of Spain General Hospital.

Two, supply, installation, commissioning and maintenance of instruments for laparoscopy and bariatric surgery, the main hospital, main operating theatres; digital x-ray unit for the St. James facility. Supply, installation, commissioning and maintenance of four new neonatal resuscitators for the maternity department of the Port of Spain Maternity Hospital. Supply, installation, commissioning and maintenance of an anaesthetic machine and monitor for the St. James medical facility.

Under the Eastern RHA, purchase of 11 medical refrigerators for the Sangre Grande Hospital; to purchase x-ray units for the Rio Claro and Mayaro District Health Facility; to tender for three additional ambulances for the authority's fleet; to purchase neonatal medical equipment.

For the emergency medical equipment for the San Fernando General Hospital and other district health facilities under South West: bed replacement programme at San Fernando General Hospital; computed radiography reader for San Fernando General Hospital; urgent equipment for primary health care; and MRI machine for San Fernando Hospital.

Under the North Central Regional Health Authority, supply, installation, commissioning, training and maintenance of lab equipment for use by the diagnostic laboratory services at Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex; equipment for the cardiac surgery initiative; eight single channel infusion pumps; two triple channel infusion pumps; and 10 infusion stands for the Paediatric Department at Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex; upgrade of the 1.5 tesla magnetic resonance imaging machine; upgrade of seven outdated pieces of equipment for the lab for both portable and wall-mounted units; medical equipment for the Mount Hope Women's Hospital; three portable ventilators for use in the Adult Emergency Department at Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex; and two blood gas machines for use in the adult intensive care unit at the main lab at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you Minister, for that comprehensive list.

Mr. Deyalsingh: You are welcome.

Dr. Bodoë: With regard to San Fernando and this is just for information. In terms of the endoscopy service I understand that has been suspended. Can you confirm that or if not can you indicate whether some of these funds may go towards providing –

Mr. Deyalsingh: I will certainly look into that for you with the board. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, hon. Minister. Well, I heard you mentioned some areas to be upgraded in the Eastern Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But there is no allocation according to this Head 28. If we look at Head 28, is there –

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, the Member asked me a totally separate question which I gladly answered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Head 28 was for Recurrent Expenditure which I explained.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, are you going to seek some further support funding for the Eastern Regional Health

Authority bearing in mind some of the things you want to do there.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes. So like for Eastern, we have already sought some increased funding because we have to replace the CT machine at that facility. That CT machine should have been replaced some years ago. It spent more time down than up and we are doing all that is necessary to have a brand new CT machine installed. You would have noticed in the newspaper earlier this year requests for proposals that went out for the supply and installation for a new CT machine there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have two short questions for you.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: These authorities, you are seeking to get some funding for them which the Minister has approved?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there any area you feel that you will be able to give us the true amount that is owed by these regional authorities.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure, I can provide the list of the age payables.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For how much they owe. A lot of them—

Mr. Deyalsingh: I could endeavour to do that, yes. So let me take a note of that.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, let me preface my question by saying that I mean this with no malice or ill will, except to say when I spoke—

Mr. Chairman: Keep it within the context, please.

Mr. Padarath: When I spoke in the budget of last year, I had spoken about a gentleman called Johnny Gonzales who eventually was well known in the newspaper for having been the owner and promoter of Imij and Company who subsequently recently passed away from pancreatic cancer. With respect to the NWRHA, I know that the St. James Hospital falls under that as well, can you say whether or not there is any review committee established within the NWRHA that would help you access in terms of the shortages, one. And also—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Shortages of what?

Mr. Padarath: Cancer medication.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right, yes.

Mr. Padarath: And also to help you to bridge that gap or help the Ministry, in fact, to bridge that gap in term of shortages.

Mr. Deyalsingh: That is an excellent question. Hon. Member, if we are to be honest and not play politics with health, I think we could all agree that the shortages of drugs has been a chronic problem for many years. What we are doing now for the first time is bringing some sanity to the way drugs are procured and distributed. For example, what used to happen in the past, which is unacceptable, was that NIPDEC used to actually do the forecasting. NIPDEC does not have the capacity to do that. And I stated publicly that the Ministry of Health

in my opinion abdicated a lot of its monitoring and evaluation exercises to NIPDEC. We at the Ministry are now taking over that responsibility. Two – [Interruption] – no, of doing estimates and forecasting to purchase and let NIPDEC purchase.

Two, we are now for the first time insisting that drugs be prescribed according to protocols. And the first three areas we have agreed upon are: oncology, HIV/AIDS, metabolic diseases. So that we will guarantee patients under these three very serious categories, are consistent supply of pharmaceuticals. To date, we have trimmed the national formulary, which is bloated, upwards of 1,000 drugs down to about 700, and we will be going into the new tendering cycle this year with a trimmed formulary without jeopardizing patient care. And let me say, WHO recommends a national formulary of not more than 400 drugs. And the Member for Fyzabad is agreeing with me. But over the years, because of advocacy to get drugs onto the formulary for economic reasons and none were taken out, we find ourselves suffering from that. So we done that – I am not finished, I am giving you a comprehensive answer.

Three, for the first time we have engaged UNFPA to use software for the management of our supply chain. It is called Channel and it is not costing us a fortune. Also the Chief Medical Officer who is the chairman of the Drug Advisory Committee has been told in no uncertain terms he is to exercise his oversight authority over what the Drug Advisory Committee approves at the tendering process. No longer can an advocate for a drug rushing to the Drug Advisory Committee and advocate for a drug that has not been approved by the Drug Advisory Committee. That will stop.

Secondly, we are making – not secondly, thirdly, fourthly, fifthly – we are making increased use of the PAHO strategic fund like it has never been used before. Let me explain. The PAHO strategic fund is a fund set up where countries can order drugs through PAHO, which is on PAHO's recommended and approved list at substantially discounted prices. The only difference is that when you purchase through the strategic fund you have to pay much sooner than if you order from a regular supplier. So we are working with the Ministry of Finance because the cost benefit analysis of that is fantastic. You pay earlier but the cost is significantly less.

Let me give you an example. When we came into office there was a perennial shortage of morphine sulphate, the injections – for years. And I encountered that. You realize you do not hear about shortages of morphine again, because we engaged the PAHO strategic fund. So to solve the issue for oncology, HIV Aids we will be using the combination of techniques. I have now spoken about – also, I must tell you that we are now going after our suppliers and making sure our local distributors that they adhere to the terms and conditions and let me give you an example.

Do you know now in 2017 we are now getting some drugs into the country that were awarded in 2015, because nobody was holding suppliers accountable. So there are lots of reasons why there are drug shortages and I am telling the population that within a year – and I had promised this in the last debate – that by the end of 2017 we should have this issue firmly under control and I stick to that and I give the country my commitment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Just two questions, hon. Minister. What you have just said is

comprehensive and detailed information on the change from NIPDEC in sourcing and purchasing and so on.

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, no, no. I did not say, change of sourcing. I said the Ministry will be undertaking now the projections and then NIPDEC will purchase what we say we need.

Ms. Newallo-Hosein: All of that. How does this really defer or does it put in place for the lack of critical medical supplies. All that you have said, how does it deal with the lack of critical medical supplies?

7.45 p.m.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Well, I gave you the scenario that we will be implementing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I know, but you are talking about implementing in a year.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I have just explained it in full. And what we are doing in the interim is that we are working with suppliers to bring in those same critical drugs in a much more timely manner. And let me add that Trinidad and Tobago is not the only country in the world that has drug shortages. I could direct you right now – because I did it here – to the WHO Report which speaks to global shortages of drugs across the world, including oncology, including normal saline, including injectable antibiotics, including antipsychotics. So what we are saying is that our patients in Trinidad will be guaranteed a decent, reliable supply of drugs and shortages must not be due to internal processes here, but it must be due to global shortages. And even when there are global shortages, there are second and third line drugs that can be used and that are being used across the world.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I do not think that helps the population to put them at ease, but nevertheless, regarding this channel that you spoke about, is that currently being utilized?

Mr. Deyalsingh: We are now trialling it for the first time in Trinidad and Tobago. We started populating all the domains in January of this year, so we are working between Nipdec, the RHAs and it is being overseen by the Ministry of Health.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And it cost the Government nothing?

Mr. Deyalsingh: It is a free trial so far from UNFPA.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is a trial?

Mr. Deyalsingh: It is a free trial from UNFPA, but if it is coming from UNFPA we will not be paying commercial rates.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What is the rate that you anticipate it will be?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Well, I do not have an anticipated rate cost as yet, but we are trialling the process.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So you are trying something and you do not know what the rate will be?

Mr. Deyalsingh: We do not have a cost as yet but I anticipate it will not be anything near the \$40 million that the last administration paid one supplier here to manage CDAP. It will be substantially less.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I am looking particularly to SWAHA. I am seeing you have to pay private medical institutions. What is the total amount of money you owe to these

institutions? That is one. Two, what type of surgeries are outsourced to these private medical institutions? And why are those surgeries not done at the hospitals?

Mr. Deyalsingh: The list I have from SWRHA—it is not SWAHA, it is SWRHA—for private medical institutions, the amount that I have in front of me is \$6,060,349.25. These will be basically surgeries that cannot be performed at any of the public institutions, so therefore under the arrangement we use the private institutions. Some of it could be for eye surgery and so on. But if you want a list of that, I can surely provide you with that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Certainly.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I go to Fyzabad and then we will go to Caroni East.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, just as a follow-up with regard to the outsourcing of the surgical services. I am certain that the equipment for vitreoretinal surgery was provided and I understand that now that service is not being provided in-house. Can I invite you to maybe look at that and perhaps send a response in writing?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Actually, I got a note just yesterday from South-West indicating that they will be restarting that programme.

Dr. Bodoë: That is very good news.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Good. Because that is something that concerned me and I am happy to say that the advice I have from South-West is that it will be restarted.

Dr. Bodoë: I am very happy to hear that. I am sure the population will be as well. Another follow-up. With regards to this channel system that you spoke about, Minister, with regards to the supply chain, is this only for drugs, or do you intend—because, you know, one of the issues we have is not only drugs, but other consumables and so on. Even basic things like gauze sometimes run out, not necessarily because of procurement issues. Can this system be adapted to look at the supply chain or inventory control management for all of those consumables, inclusive of drugs?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you for the question because it allows me the opportunity to tell the population that the system is being adapted for both pharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceuticals.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, on payment for private medical institutions, there are two private institutions that provide radiotherapy treatment for the oncology patients, probably approximately 1,000 patients per year needing radiotherapy treatment: the Brian Lara Treatment Centre and the Southern Medical Centre. Could you give us an appreciation of if they are owed any money, how much each one of these institutions is paid per year for the radiotherapy treatment, both the Brian Lara and the Southern Medical Centre? And what is the cost per patient now?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure. The figure I am aware of for both—for radiological services is approximately \$68

million per year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For both. And approximately how many patients would have—

Mr. Deyalsingh: One thousand patients per annum. And I think that is what we have allocated to both. Not \$1,000 each, about \$500 each.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. That is the figure—

Mr. Deyalsingh: And I think that is the figure you could agree to.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Now, in terms of the provision of pharmaceuticals, how do you intend to probably deal with the situation where one pharmaceutical company dominates the scenario in terms of provision of most of the pharmaceutical supplies in the country? And I think you, as a pharmacist, know more than any one of us.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes. Well that is why I said, hon. Member—and it is an excellent question, because I do not think you want to have a public system held—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Ransom.

Mr. Deyalsingh:—to ransom. And that is why I said when I was answering the question fully, we will be making use of the PAHO strategic funds in a way never before done so. And I will tell you that, as a Ministry of Health, these actions you have to be very brave to take them, because you are going to get pushed back.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. The last one. I would just like to recommend, being an oncologist myself for all these 29 years—

Mr. Deyalsingh: And a very good one at that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: He is.

Mr. Chairman: Come to the point, please, Members. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Members: That was the point.

Mr. Chairman: The question then. I have other Members waiting. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question is, would you pay particular attention to ensure that we have a smooth supply of the chemotherapeutic agents so that chemotherapy treatment will not be put into abeyance and during that period the cancer becomes worse?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So it is an onerous responsibility but we ask that of you.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure. But let me tell you what I am doing, hon. Member, because oncology is a very serious issue. The recent issue in San Fernando was not due to a shortage of chemotherapy drugs. What had happened was that you have to train pharmacists, especially to mix these drugs.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I appreciate that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Train them to use a fume hood; give them the PPE and so on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And a chamber.

Mr. Deyalsingh: When I came into office I accelerated the training of pharmacists. However, there is an anomaly existing with the RHAs where the Tobago RHA can pay a higher rate of pay –

Dr. Gopeesingh: For the pharmacists.

Mr. Deyalsingh: For the mixing of chemotherapy. And one of the pharmacists who we had trained decided to take up an offer in Tobago. But before that, we were already in the process of training two people. So they will come on stream within the next week or two. However, the patients at San Fernando – so we were down from two to one. The patients from San Fernando were offered the services of the chemotherapy department at Eric Williams and, sadly – and it gives me no pleasure to say this – some of them refused to go to Eric Williams. So there was no shortage of chemotherapy drugs. And let me say, before we decentralized, everyone had to go to Eric Williams as you fully well know. So there is no shortage of chemotherapy drugs. That is very near and dear to me. Good?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. Minister, two questions. The first one has to deal with an issue you raised a short while ago about the programme UNFPA.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: I know the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla raised the issue of fees, and so on. Can you give us an idea of some of the other countries that have utilized a similar programme that possibly you can use as a benchmark and where it has worked in the context of Trinidad and Tobago being a small island developing? And also, secondly, I heard a murmur from many Members on our side when the issue of oncology came up in terms of what is the status of the National Oncology Centre at this point.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Health, please make it brief.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure. As far as the channel software is used, it is being used in a lot of different countries. I will get the list for you. As far as the National Oncology Centre is concerned, a position is before the Cabinet right now and I am hoping that Cabinet will make a decision soon.

Mr. Padarath: Is the work ongoing?

Mr. Deyalsingh: No. Work on the National Oncology Centre has not been progressing well. That is a project that has spanned three administrations and we are determined to bring it to a conclusion.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, can I just ask –

Mr. Chairman: One second. You want to ask a question, Minister of Finance?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. In this appropriation done by the Ministry of Finance, we were asking for an additional \$196 million in recurrent expenditure for trade payables for three Regional Health Authorities. I am beginning to wonder what line item these questions relate to. This is recurrent for RHAs. This has nothing to do with

projects. It is not projects. I have to come and bring some order in here.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: What line item?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I am seeing here Food for Institutions. What is the average cost for food per month at the institutions, and what is the total amount that is owed?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay. Again, I will give you the example of Southwest. It is \$1,875,038.60. But I could give you more details into that if you so require.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Per month?

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, that is the total amount owed, but if you want per month, I would not have that off the top of my head now.

Mr. Chairman: Cumuto/Manzanilla, you still have a question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I know that you indicated earlier that the recurrent expenditure dealt with Northwest, North-Central and South-West. Is there no recurrent expenditure for Eastern?

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, Ma'am. There is recurrent expenditure but they did not request any extra. If there is no recurrent expenditure the thing would collapse. This is an additional allocation on top of what was allocated in the budget.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am surprised because there are so many issues in Eastern and I am surprised that they did not make a request.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, there is no line item relating to Eastern.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite. And keep it relevant, please.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, earlier in your contribution under "Private Medical Institutions", you made references to eye surgery at private medical institutions. Given that you have a dedicated surgical unit at the San Fernando General Hospital, one in Sangre Grande, how is it that we are still paying for eye surgery at private medical institutions?

Mr. Deyalsingh: If we look historically, the figures are coming down significantly under the tenure of this administration. For example, we are performing many more cataract surgeries within the public system, much more than before. In some instances we have doubled it. So there is still a need but the need is declining rapidly under this administration because the doctors and everyone are cooperating to perform surgeries in-house rather than outsource.

Dr. Rambachan: Through the Chair, can you give us the average waiting time now for cataract surgery in San Fernando?

Mr. Deyalsingh: I cannot give you an exact timeframe, but I know it has been significantly enhanced. But I can give you that later on.

Dr. Rambachan: And that is an assurance you are giving me?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Thank you, Members.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 28 varied by an increase in the sum of \$196,500,000.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development \$9,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development or the Minister of Finance to make a brief statement, no more than five minutes.

8.00 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the notes indicate, the additional allocation of \$9 million in recurrent expenditure is designed to deal with supplementary funding for a number of areas such as remuneration to board members for the various boards that report to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, Contract Employment, Short-Term Employment and other standard matters such as Rent/Lease Accommodation, Telephones, Contract Employment, Funding for the Liaison Office in Canada, and Funding for the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies.

The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has tried throughout the year to work with its allocation and has done a number of transfers and virements and so on, and this is the inescapable additional amount required to allow them to do the work for the balance of the fiscal year that they are required to do.

Question proposed: That Head 30 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,000,000.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not seeing the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, so I will have to ask the Minister of Finance. Under 01/004/06, this \$150,000 is for which board?

Mr. Imbert: This will be a general allocation for all of the boards that are under the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, for example, the OSHA Board, the Recognition Board and so on. If you want a disaggregation of the \$150,000, that can be provided to you?

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you. Under 02/001/16, could you elaborate on this \$3.5 million for contract employment? Does this take into consideration the restructuring of the On-the-job Training Programme?

Mr. Imbert: I would have to give you further details. I know that the Ministry is looking at dealing with the OJT Programme directly, and there would be a requirement for some contract employment. I did not want to give you precise details now. I will obtain the information from the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, or I will request the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to provide the information to the Parliament for Wednesday's debate.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Chair, before we go on, is the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development in the jurisdiction or out of the jurisdiction?

Mr. Chairman: I am not in a position to answer that, hon. Member. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you very much, Chair. I would like to ask just two questions on the National Tripartite

Advisory Council. I know this is a bringing together of business, labour and government, what is the main objective that you are trying to achieve with this?

Mr. Imbert: The Minister of Planning and Development I think is in a position to answer that question. I am sure she can answer.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, I was asking a simple question, Minister, which is, I know that the National Tripartite Advisory Council brings together business, labour and government, what did you bring it together to achieve?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you. Should I give the full details now, or you want me to give you the information on Wednesday? I could give you some.

Dr. Tewarie: If you just give me a sentence or two—

Mr. Chairman: Precise and straight to the point.

Dr. Tewarie:—and you can give me something on Wednesday. That is fine.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: One of the things was the promotion of the 2030 vision. Another is to ensure that there is some even-handed concentration on how things occur in the country with regard to labour relations, the way the employers deal with labour matters and, of course, the issues related to the Government in relation to all these sectors. Another is to be able to look at the issue of diversification. The objective really is to ensure that the social partners work together at a time when there is a fairly challenging situation in the country that the social partners work together in ensuring that we ride this out effectively.

Dr. Tewarie: So is it now that you are going to establish a secretariat? Under it, I see room here for employees and—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. That is not done, but that is what you are going to do?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: The secretariat is being established. We have had interviews and persons will be employed in the secretariat. We have also found a location for NTAC secretariat. The secretariat will not only provide support to NTAC, but do research for areas of interest of the members of NTAC. Does that help you, Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, I am okay. I am just trying to understand what is going on there.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Sure.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I just want to ask the persons that you referred to that are in the process of being interviewed, were those positions advertised?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, they were.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: In what newspapers, or where?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Everywhere. Every newspaper and on the Government's website.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What benefit will be there to the citizens coming out of the National Tripartite Advisory Council?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Pardon me?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What benefits are to be derived for the citizens to derive out of the council?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: One of the things is really supposed to be industrial harmony. That is one of the areas that is supposed to be derived.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is it that we are bypassing the unions?

Mr. Chairman: Members please. Please. Yes, it is a Standing Finance Committee and we have identified the various levels, but I find we are going down a little too much in depth with the constant—yes, the Minister would have said something, but the constant question. So, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, anything else?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to say one thing if I may? Thank you very much. Tripartite. I do not know if the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla is not aware, but tripartite means government, labour – which is the unions – and the employers. So, there is no way that the labour section could be bypassed. They are part of it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I thought they withdrew; that is why I asked the question.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Sorry?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I thought they withdrew, that is why I asked the question.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: But NTAC is tripartite.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Chair. I just have a couple questions for the Minister under 04/004 with respect to Funding for the Liaison Office in Canada. Minister of Finance, if he does not have the information I would not mind getting it at another time. So the questions are: Where in Canada is this liaison office located? Secondly, what is the—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, it is in Toronto. As you probably know, there was one building purchased for the entire High Commission – well not the High Commission. The Consulate and all officers are now located there in Toronto.

Mr. Karim: Just another question.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: That happened while I was the High Commissioner.

Mr. Karim: Okay. How many members of staff are employed there; and the entitlement?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: We will give you that information on or before Wednesday.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In relation to the National Tripartite Advisory Council, could the Minister advise of how many persons have been hired, and indicate the organizational structure taking into consideration also that the labour movement has withdrawn from the National Tripartite Advisory Council?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: The labour movement withdrawing has nothing to do with that hiring process. That took place –

Mr. Indarsingh: I am simple asking.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: I am simple answering – that took place whilst the labour movement was part of NTAC. And as far we know, they have withdrawn temporarily and they are still part of NTAC. With regard to the number of persons hired, that would be provided on or before Wednesday.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the respective salaries for each position.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You would like that on or before Wednesday also?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. Certainly.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay, we will do that.

Mr. Indarsingh: With respect to 02/004, there is an indication that 41 additional contract officers would be hired shortly, would that be within OSHA; and also, how will the Ministry go about advertising for this additional 41 officers?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: As is normal the contract positions are advertised, and they are done in the national newspapers and on the website of the Ministry.

Mr. Indarsingh: So the interview process will be conducted by –?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Sorry?

Mr. Indarsingh: The interview process?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It will not be conducted by the Minister, but there will be a team set up in the Ministry to conduct the process.

Mr. Indarsingh: So will the OSHA Board be bypassed in this process?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Well, I am not the Minister, but I do not think that whatever is done will be anything that will bypass the natural and organized process for hiring persons.

Mr. Indarsingh: I make the statement, Mr. Chairman, in the context where the Minister interfered in the OSHA Division.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: May I be allowed to complete what I am saying?

Mr. Chairman: Members, please. Hold on. The Minister is saying she has not yet completed answering. Kindly?

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Chair, is the substantive Minister of Planning and Development acting for the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Planning and Development is answering the question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Chair, I am asking the –

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You know I cannot answer the question?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister is answering. Let her finish answer. You will have your turn after, Sir. You will have your turn after, Member.

Mr. Indarsingh: In what capacity?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: I am answering the question in two capacities: as the Leader of Government Business, and as a member of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. If you could not answer a question that somebody else posed from a different Ministry when you were in the Cabinet, then I am sorry to hear that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Can I continue?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, finish.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much. There is a normal process and procedure for interviewing people, and that normal process and procedure will be followed.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to item 06/004, Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies. Could the Minister indicate where is this location for the new Tobago campus? What is the monthly rental? And who is the landlord?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: That information will be provided on or before Wednesday's sitting.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chair. 02/001/16, I just want to know how many persons are expected to be employed in this unit, the NTAC unit. How many persons are expected?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: That information will be provided on or before Wednesday's sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 30 varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,000,000.

8.15 p.m.

Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications \$56,230,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Public Administration and Communications to make a brief opening statement, maximum of five minutes.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Ministry of Public Administration and Communications is responsible for the use of ICT across Government Ministries. These allocations have to do with the enterprise allocations for the whole of Government for which the Ministry is responsible and the \$56,482,000 are for agreements with Microsoft, Symantec and Oracle products used across the public service. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 31 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$56,230,000.

Mr. Chairman: I now recognize the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, and I refer to 02/002/28, Other Contracted Services, \$21 million, based on invoices submitted by Massy Technologies InfoCom (Trinidad) Limited. My question is: is this a subsidiary at the same level of Massy Communications? That is one. Secondly, was Cabinet advised of this outsourcing of this information and, secondly, what were the procurement measures used?

Mr. Chairman: Do you have those three questions, Minister? All right. Proceed.

Mr. Cuffie: The answer is yes, yes and yes. Cabinet was advised, it was approved by Cabinet and the procurement process took place under the previous administration, we are just paying the bills.

Dr. Moonilal: Now, I just want the Minister to be a bit clearer with us. He is giving this type of answers like the Minister of Finance. My question is, if it is that, as you say, your answer to your first question is yes, that Massy Technologies is linked to Massy Communications, why are you paying bills when your Government took a decision by TSTT to buy out Massy Communications for \$250 million?

Mr. Chairman: Member, I would not –

Dr. Moonilal: Is it not that you are buying the company?

Mr. Chairman: Member, I would not entertain that question. It is not part of the line item.

Dr. Moonilal: No, what I am saying is there is no need to pay these bills if you buy the company.

Mr. Chairman: Member, the relevance of the last part of your question. I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, line item 02/002/23, the Microsoft fees; I stand to be corrected but I think in December 2016, you had announced that you had signed a new Microsoft agreement and now I am looking at this, the fee of \$34.9 million, there is a penalty of \$350,000. Given the economic – US dollars – hard times that we are in, what would have accounted for that penalty?

Mr. Cuffie: I announced that we had reached agreement, we had not signed the agreement yet. To sign the agreement, there were some things that we needed to fine-tune for minor things that affected the signature of the agreement. So when we signed, there were penalties that related to the use of Microsoft products over several years that were not accounted for in the agreement.

Mr. Lee: Follow-up. Since then, Minister, what would be in place to prevent a penalty occurring in the future?

Mr. Cuffie: Well, I should let you know that we saved US \$40,272,000 by signing this agreement and thus far – million, sorry – we have met all our obligations in terms of timely payment. But the most important fact is that we now have a process for looking at the use of Microsoft products across all the Ministries and ensuring that the products that we signed on for are the ones that are, in fact, used.

Dr. Rambachan: Hon. Minister, through the Chair, how can you be liable to pay US \$350,000 as a penalty when you are in a negotiation and both parties to the negotiation would recognize that as part of the negotiation, you agreed that this is going to be the price and then you end up paying a penalty? Why should you pay a penalty if you are both in negotiations and you agreed that this is going to be the price? Is this penalty because you signed the agreement late or is this penalty like an interest payment?

And for a company like Microsoft which is making so much money for all these years in Trinidad, have you attempted to get them to waive this so-called penalty? But I disagree with our country paying a penalty. If the penalty is due to a negligence; I want to know whether this is due to negligence on the part of the Government in not meeting particular deadlines. But I can see in a negotiation, if you agree to something, you can ask for a deferral of the payment or is it that you did not have the cash flow to pay and you agreed to pay the penalty? What is the real cause of this US \$350,000?

Mr. Cuffie: Let me explain, maybe I was not clear before. The penalty has to do with the use of Microsoft products. Now, under the existing agreement, you are allowed, I think, it is 17,000 licences of one category and I cannot remember the other figure.

Dr. Rambachan: Whatever.

Mr. Cuffie: Right. When they did an analysis, an audit of the use of Microsoft products, we found that the

Ministries, departments and agencies were using far more than they were entitled to use under the agreement. So the penalty was applied to us for the use of products that were not covered by the licence. Now, we negotiated a settlement based on the fact that we have now established how many licences we have, how many we are going to pay for. But the fact remains that, previously, we were using far more licences than we had agreed to, so we still had to pay that penalty.

Dr. Rambachan: And you are saying, Minister, that neither yourselves nor Microsoft did that audit before, therefore, they did not know how much you were using and you did not know how much you were using until that audit was done?

Mr. Cuffie: It is part of the process. Now, all of this took place prior the—I think the agreement, the last signed agreement ended somewhere around 2014 and the Government was lax in terms of doing the audit and the analysis to find out exactly how many licences there were and how they were being used, and Microsoft had a penalty in the previous contract that said that if you use too many licences or if you have licences on your computers that you have not paid for, then this is the penalty, and given that we saved US \$40 million, we could not, I mean, quibble over \$350,000.

Dr. Rambachan: So are you saying that Microsoft was ripping us off in the country all the time?

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, probably another word. I am sure you can—

Dr. Rambachan: All right. Do you think Microsoft was overcharging this country all the time given that you can suddenly save US \$40 million?

Mr. Cuffie: I understand the economics of the software industry. Once you produce a piece of software, anything—there is no additional cost for selling it. So Microsoft is not losing anything by whether they sell 80 or 800. Right. The fact of the matter is, we were using software and we were not—*[Interruption]* Yeah, optimizing our use of software. Also, we were not being careful enough to ensure that only the software that we paid for was being used. It was a loose arrangement.

Dr. Rambachan: But through you, Chair—no, but just a second.

Mr. Chairman: You are going back and forth.

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, with due respect, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Give the point.

Dr. Rambachan: With due respect, then you are saying to me that taxpayers in this country are looking at public service managers who are not functioning with the level of discipline, efficiency and in terms of their diligence as to what is happening in their Ministries. This is what I am hearing here and that the country is paying a high price for that in terms of public sector management.

Mr. Cuffie: I agree with you, the country paid a high price for the lax approach to management in the public service, and the fact that several Ministries, Departments and agencies were using software that they were not entitled to and just allowed people to just put things on their computers and when the audit was done, it showed that, you know, they did not even need it or that they had it.

Dr. Rambachan: Poor public service management.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Member for Tabaquite. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: My question was answered.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, you still have a question?

Mr. Lee: No, I am good.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. The Item Development Programme, I just want to be very clear on this.

Mr. Chairman: Just give me the number, please.

Dr. Moonilal: 09/005/06/F/011, page 16. I want to be clear, it says here Cabinet agreed to the transfer of the Ste. Madeleine Staff Club and Golf Course Project to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. That project was under the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. Why? Could I ask?

Mr. Cuffie: I think there was a mistake in placing it there because it was a government property, but really sport facilities fall under the Ministry of Sport so we correct it by sending it to sports.

Dr. Moonilal: Well then, Mr. Chairman, we reserve the right to ask questions related to this under the Ministry of Sport or should we ask under the Ministry of Public Administration?

Mr. Cuffie: It is now under the Ministry of Sport but if I can answer, I will.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, should we raise it under the Ministry of Sport then?

Mr. Chairman: Once there is a relevance to the answer that was given by the Minister and it is on the same line item.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, because I think the Minister of Sport might be in a position to answer some of these matters more than the Ministry of Public Administration.

Mr. Chairman: Now it appears under the Ministry of Sport also. Do you want to bring it here or you want to wait for the Minister of Sport?

Dr. Moonilal: Well, the Minister of Sport is not in the Chamber.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, are you able to?

Mr. Cuffie: It depends on the question he wants to ask.

Dr. Moonilal: I just want to ask, what exactly is this project about? Whether \$250,000 is an initial expenditure on this project? What is the intention, the scope? Whether this involves private sector participation as opposed to Government? Because, quite frankly, I do not think Government, at this time, given all that you have been saying, is in a position to use taxpayers' money to develop a golf course. I find that even scandalous and there was a proposal before, under the former administration, on this matter. Because as you know, the CEPEP Company Limited, under our administration, assumed responsibility for the Ste. Madeleine administrative centres and we saved a considerable amount of money there at that time. There was a proposal for private sector involvement in this so that the taxpayer will not expend one dollar on what really is a recreational facility.

Mr. Cuffie: The \$250,000 allocation is simply to do an appraisal to see the viability of the project that you

mentioned and what is the best way to go forward with this project. *[Interruption]* It is a—

Dr. Moonilal: No, but I then ask: Could not the Ministry and the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago where requisite talent should exist, could they not do this for free rather than using a quarter million dollars only to do a feasibility as to essentially a sports club?

Dr. Rambachan: Buy bread for children.

Mr. Cuffie: This is simply an allocation. *[Interruption]* No money has been spent. The money was put so that if any work needed to be done to examine the feasibility, there would be funds that would cover it.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the question? You see, the Minister of Finance is raising another matter. This is a quarter million taxpayers' dollars in a time when you complain you do not have money, not a cent should be spent, not even on a feasibility for a sporting club house essentially and a golf course. This is a matter squarely should reside with the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago. Do you not agree with me? And invite the private sector to do their own feasibility. Do you not agree with me? This is my question.

Mr. Cuffie: I agree with you because that is why it has been transferred to sports.

Dr. Moonilal: My question is simple, Minister. Do you agree with me that the private sector should undertake their own feasibility at their own cost as to whether this is a viable economic project to be partnering with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and do you further agree with me that not a cent of taxpayers' dollars should be used for this purpose?

8.30 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, this transaction results in the deletion of this Item from the Ministry of Public Administration, and it reappears under Head 68, and as an experienced Member, the Member for Oropouche East should know that all of those questions he is asking should be asked under Head 68, because this Item is no longer under this Head.

Dr. Moonilal: But Chairman, you invited me to ask the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Minister of Finance, in all fairness we gave the Minister of Public Administration the opportunity to answer or not. Right? And he said to pose the question and then we will deal with it. So okay, we will move on. We will bring it up under sports.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 31 varied by an increase in the sum of \$56,230,000.

Head 35: Ministry of Tourism \$5,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Tourism to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Miss Cudjoe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the document before us is self-explanatory. The Ministry of Tourism is asking for its allocation to be varied by an increase of \$5million under recurrent expenditure, specifically \$1.8 for Contract Employment, \$1.6 million for Short-Term Employment and \$1.6 million for Consultancy. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 35 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,000,000.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chairman. I am a little at a loss. I am talking 02/001/16, Contract Employment, \$1.8 million; Short-Term Employment, \$1.6 million; Other Contracted Services, \$1.6 million. Would the Minister give us an indication of what this Contract Employment is required to achieve, in terms of your strategic plan?

Secondly, given the fact that the Tourism Development Company has been closed, I would gather that the onus would now rest, at least in the short-term, heavily on the Ministry of Tourism. So could you just give us an indication of—

Miss Cudjoe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Interesting that the Member chose to answer his own question. As it relates to Contract Employment, 02/001/16, this item deals with the employment of contract officers within the Ministry. The number of contracted officers within the Ministry, we have 14 contract officers. As a matter of fact, it is a small Ministry; 92 officers in total. We have 61 monthly-paid, 14 contract officers and 17 short-term contract officers. So this basically covers departments like IT, Communications, the Legal Officer I and II; a number of vacancies that had not been filled before. So we are going to advertise for these positions in three tranches. Next week you will see seven. Then you will see six and then you will see the others.

Mr. Charles: Yes, given that it is only \$1.8 million and we are talking 14 contract officers, are you sure that you are recruiting people of the requisite skills necessary, given the fact that tourism has been identified as one of the major areas for the transformation and diversification of the economy?

Miss Cudjoe: Mr. Chairman, through you, the Ministry has a team of officers in the HR Department. And although it is a small Ministry, it is the same structure that we have been using over the years. The Ministry is responsible for policy and, of course, the state enterprise is responsible for the implementation of that policy-implementing strategy, and so on.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Chair. At 02/001/28, Other Contracted Services, here funds are required to meet existing contractual obligations and for consultancy services in relation to the new entity expected to replace the TDC. What is the nature of this Consultancy? And if this consultancy has been determined, in terms of the terms of reference, can that be made available so that we can understand how that relates to the sum of \$1.6 million? How did you arrive at \$1.6 million for this consultancy and are there specific terms of reference?

Miss Cudjoe: Okay. The moneys that we are requesting, actually, are not specifically for the Item that the Member has identified. If he reads the whole statement it says:

“... to meet existing contractual obligations and for consultancy...”

So the existing contractual obligations, first and foremost the PSIP item, which is for the establishment of the regulatory authority, we have to do consultations for that and we would have debated and requested funding for that. But over the fiscal year, we would have had to pay PWC for consultancy services provided, relating to the Maracas project. So we still have to get moneys now to treat with the PSIP consultancy.

In addition, the Tourism Development Act was created in 2000. So it is called the TDA 2000. That regime has never been reviewed. So this is 17 years later, so have to have a consultancy to treat with reviewing

the TDA 2000.

And then, of course, we have—in the usual fashion this is nothing new and this is nothing foreign. When TIDCO would have gone to TDC, the Ministry of Tourism would have engaged consultants to treat with the recruitment process and helping the new entity with its strategic plan.

Mr. Charles: It would seem to me that you do a consultancy and the consultancy would advise on the way forward. You do not make a decision and then bring in a consultancy to provide information. It seems, because the consultancy may very well say you should have kept the original thing. So would it not have made more sense to get the consultancy, get the entire strategic long-range plan; then, on the basis of that advice, you break up or you keep or you enhance or you do capacity building, et cetera?

Miss Cudjoe: Mr. Chairman, I want to make myself very, very clear.

Mr. Charles: Do so.

Miss Cudjoe: Absolutely clear. This Consultancy funding that we are requesting are for three consultancies. One, to treat with the review of the TDA; two, to treat with the regulatory authority; and three, to treat with the recruitment process. This has nothing to do with the review of the structure. The review of the structure was already done and this is nothing new or foreign. This is done every time an entity is closed down or a new one is established.

The Ministry does not have the capacity to execute a recruitment exercise of this nature, of this magnitude. As I said before, we are a very, very small Ministry with about four people in HR who pretty much are clerks that are acting up for the most part. And then you would run the risk of saying the Government or the Ministry interfered in the recruitment process for the entity.

When you look at the closing down or the establishment of new entities over the years, and I went back to the notes where TIDCO was transformed into TDC and it is the same structure. It is the same thing that is done. So this is nothing new or foreign.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Chair. Minister, the first question, just to clarify. You have here it is for consultancy services in relation to the new entity expected to replace TDC, but is it not two entities that are going to be established to replace TDC; one for Tobago and one for Trinidad?

Miss Cudjoe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you are well aware, Member of Parliament for Couva North, tourism development in Tobago falls squarely under the remit of the Tobago House of Assembly. Therefore, the Tobago House of Assembly would be handling all expenses and all arrangements relating to the Tobago entity. For the Trinidad entity, the Ministry of Tourism would be treating with that.

Miss Ramdial: All right, and my second question: Is it then that the alternative plan given by the CWU for TDC has been dismissed and you are moving ahead with your original plans?

Miss Cudjoe: The Government is moving ahead with its original plan.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, Sir, the Minister referred to PWC. Exactly what is PWC being paid for at this time still? That is Pricewaterhouse consultants, may I ask? Coopers—sorry.

Miss Cudjoe: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Exactly what are they being paid for?

Miss Cudjoe: They would have done some work relating to the Maracas project on behalf of the Government, for the Ministry of Tourism and they are being paid. They are now being paid.

Dr. Rambachan: What work was done?

Miss Cudjoe: So it is a late payment.

Dr. Rambachan: What work, may ask I, is that?

Miss Cudjoe: I would be delighted to provide those details to you on or before Wednesday.

Dr. Rambachan: Sure, no problem.

Mr. Lee: Sorry, Chair. Just one quick question, and maybe I missed it. Who is the consultancy firm that is assigned to provide the services for this new entity to TDC? Do you have one as yet?

Miss Cudjoe: No, the firm has not been selected as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. Come on, you all have to make sure that I catch your eye quickly.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. What process would be used to source this consultant?

Miss Cudjoe: Selective tendering.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 35 varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,000,000.

Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities \$275,015,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Public Utilities to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of no more than five minutes.

Mr. Hinds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, during the course of the fiscal we had, at the Ministry of Public Utilities, some outstanding obligations that had to be settled, and in addition to that some increased operational expenses in the three agencies: TTPost, Solid Waste Management Company Limited and, of course, WASA. And we sought the approval of the Ministry of Finance to utilize some of the allocations to deal with those matters, and they have now come up for review. That would suffice for the time being, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 39 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$275,015,000.

8.45 p.m.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister of Public Utilities, 04/009/04 line item. That \$42,540,000, does it include the requirements for the workers that were protesting in TTPost earlier in April?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, indeed. As a consequence of pay negotiations and settlements by their respective bargaining units between 2011 and 2013, that three-year period, the workers were owed a certain amount of money, \$49.8 million with precision. In July of 2016, 50 per cent of that was paid to the workers, and the protest action that you saw, based on what the workers submitted, had to do with two things. One, they claimed that their

working circumstances were not adequate and also the outstanding back pay.

The second tranche, the second 50 per cent, was paid in April as you identified correctly in the sum of \$24.9 million and it has for the time being resolved the impetus for their protest.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Line item, 04/009/04. Hon. Minister what percentage of the initial 2017 allocation has been spent to date?

Mr. Hinds: I am unable to tell you immediately and off my head with accuracy and that would be provided at first opportunity.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And also, the last audited financial statements printed by TTPost was for the year ended September 30, 2007. Can the Minister determine what and how the expenditure would be monitored and accounted for?

Mr. Hinds: Well we aim, as all Ministers and Ministries ought to ensure that they are practised and operated on the basis of what we call best practice and, most certainly, in accordance with the financial regulations to which they are subject. We have only very recently received the financial report for 2008/2010, and we are analyzing those looking for any shortcomings and looking for opportunities to improve them so that we would make the financial management better going forward.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the hon. Minister, I know that the Member for Chaguanas West had raised this at one particular point and if you can give us some clarify with respect to line item 06/004/51, Water and Sewerage Authority, can you give us an idea of the volume in terms of the reconciliation between volume and price of desalinated water for Desalcott with respect to the reflected figure in this line item?

Mr. Hinds: Well, you might recall that some time back in the '90s, the then Government engaged a private entity, Desalcott, to build and to provide desalinated water for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It engaged the provider in what is commonly known as a take-or-pay contract, something that those of us who were in Opposition at the time stoutly opposed because we felt that WASA had the capacity and Trinidad and Tobago's environmental and natural circumstances permitted us to provide adequate amounts of water – groundwater, well water.

We felt that desalinated water may not at that time have been strictly necessary and, certainly not, on the basis of a take-or-pay arrangement, meaning this provider would provide 40 million gallons of water per day and whether we, through WASA, used it or not, we were committed to paying for 40 million gallons. That exists up to this very day, and it is that arrangement that I personally – well, let me not give a personal view, but there is a view that this is untenable.

As a result, we find ourselves regularly burdened with a debt to Desalcott. Their contract actually as well said it has to be paid in US dollars. So very often, and particularly in these trying circumstances with limited foreign exchange, right now we have TT equivalent to pay, but the company wants payment in US dollars as is contracted and agreed, largely as well in fairness to it because it has US suppliers of various materials that it would use and has to pay in US. So that is the state of affairs. We had to meet outstanding

payments to them in the sum of TT \$137.815 million for the desalinated water produced as I indicated.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I just wanted to correct something firstly. I do not recall when that establishment was agreed to in the '90s that it was 40 million gallons. It was 24 million gallons a day.

Mr. Hinds: Sorry, thank you. Thank you very kindly.

Dr. Rambachan: It was increased to 40 million gallons under the Prime Minister Patrick Manning administration.

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: But you also said that you believe in Opposition that you could have provided the water that was necessary, then why did you continue when you came into Government with the contract with Desalcott if you were so sure that you could have provided the water that the people of Trinidad and Tobago needed?

Mr. Hinds: That is a very good question. That is a very good question. I would say, to some extent, over the years, it appears as though WASA became more and more dependent upon that entity, so it continued. As a matter of fact, there is a very strongly held view that it is WASA that is supporting the entity as opposed to it being the other way around. So we are with it. We are engaged in negotiations with the provider to consider a reduction in the rate, and as well to consider a rearrangement of the contract from purely US dollars to at least some US and some TT to facilitate the changed circumstances, the trying circumstances, as now subsist for the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Rambachan: So there is Desalcott Minister and there is Seven Seas. Is that not so?

Mr. Hinds: I am talking about the production of desalinated water.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I know, but there is Seven Seas who also produces desalinated water.

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Can you tell us which one is producing for you at a higher cost? Are you paying Desalcott –

Mr. Hinds: I am not able to say that immediately.

Dr. Rambachan: But can you provide that for the –

Mr. Hinds: Yes, that would be made available at first opportunity.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I want to go back to the postal services. This \$42.5 million you require does say that the Postal Service Corporation is a subsidized operation that was just losing money. Have you ever calculated what it will take in terms of revenue generation by the postal service to at least break even or if not break even to, at least, cover the kind of expenses by having an equivalent revenue? In that context, have you spent any time or the board, directed the board that the postal services should reinvent its business model in line with other similar type of operators – bring in terms of parcel post business so that they could generate the kind of revenue that will result in a lowering of the cash requirements that they need from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago? Have you considered this? Has any of this been done in terms of reinventing the business model for its operations?

Mr. Hinds: Well, yes it is almost self-evident that in light of the technological advances that we have seen in

the last, I would say 20/25 years, the traditional postal service has come under serious challenge. This question of pen pals and writing letters – many, many institutions are now operating on a paperless basis, and postal services all over the world have come under that challenge and, therefore, yes there is an understanding that modernization and realignment of the products and the service offered is necessary.

I am happy to advise you that the current board, led by a very astute chairman, is engaged in that activity as we speak, rearranging, realignment and redefining the way it does its business with a view of capturing new markets in lieu of the lost market from the traditional business.

Dr. Rambachan: May I ask, through you, how long has that board been in place under this new dynamic chairman that you are talking about?

Mr. Hinds: I think this new board came into existence maybe about a year ago, about a year ago. We did not rush in and disrupt the operation without proper thought.

Dr. Rambachan: About five months ago?

Mr. Hinds: I am unable to tell you precisely when, but I know the board is at work and at work admirably so.

Dr. Rambachan: That they continue to be a cash drain on the Treasury?

Mr. Hinds: Well the operation is what it is. I mean, you have negotiations for improved salaries, you have inefficiencies. Consideration is being given – contemplation is being given, for example, towards introducing – and right now TTPost has started to roll out the S42 mailing system and postal codes and that sort of thing. And, of course, in complementarity to that the question of automated sorting machines. Those are the kinds of things that are being looked at as we speak.

Dr. Rambachan: It does not answer the fundamental question of how they are going to redefine their business model in order to increase their revenue.

Mr. Hinds: Well, all I can let you know is that that process is on the way. I like the way you are thinking, but I would just let you know it is not novel, it is happening as we speak.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, line item 04/011/02, Solid Waste Management Company Limited, \$4,660,000, and basically in the statement it was to meet the shortfall of paying a second tranche of arrears. Two questions: one is that this expenditure should have been known and it should have been budgeted for. That is one. Why not? And then the second, was it a follow-up, the intention not to pay the arrears to the workers and only when they protested recently that it was paid?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised and properly so that it should have been budgeted in the 2014/2015 budget because the wage settlement was for the period 2011 to 2013. I think there was settlement in 2014 of thereabout – in 2015, sorry. So that it was not budgeted then; as a result it had to be dealt with. So 50 per cent was actually paid to the workers in July of 2016 and the other 50 per cent, \$4.66 million, was paid in April of this year, 2017.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. I heard the Minister kindly give his view on the Desalcott arrangement undertaken in the late '90s.

Mr. Hinds: Let me just say quickly. My personal view is not really the issue here.

Dr. Moonilal: No, no, your view is not important. But could I ask, had it not been for the Desalcott supply of water today, what would have been the position of water today if we did not have Desalcott operating? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hinds: Well, for me, since you asked me my personal opinion, I said in an earlier discussion in this Parliament today that there is well-known Madamas river somewhere out in the north.

Dr. Moonilal: What river is that?

Mr. Hinds: Madamas.

Dr. Moonilal: Madamas River?

Mr. Hinds: Yes. That can provide easily another 20 million gallons of water, refurbished wells and other things. There are other countries that operate without desalinated water and do it pretty reasonably. A large part, 56 per cent of the water we get is, as you know, groundwater.

9.00 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the Minister, it is a very intriguing area, and so critical, is it your intention to go to Cabinet with a Note to propose the exploitation of the Madamas River to provide water in the future for this country?

Mr. Hinds: I do not know if a Note is necessary, but I know it is part of the thinking that is required to deal with the critical circumstances, as you described it, with water in the country. We have to find ways, and one of the ways, as I said earlier is certainly to repair and maintain our water lines so that we will not be – yesterday, in a walkabout in my own constituency, Member, I saw a massive water leak. The residents told me that that has been so for two years, and if we can deal with issues like that then we would have saved a lot of water, and we would be able to do better in terms of its supply to citizens.

Mr. Chairman: You have a next question?

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, I have two more questions.

Mr. Chairman: Two more, ask them one time, please.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. What I am trying to say, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, the Minister is really, you know, bringing a brilliant idea here, but he says, this is all the thinking, how will you translate thinking about the Madamas River into some –

Mr. Hinds: I do not know if that is relevant to what the line item refers.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members –

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, may I come in here, please?

Dr. Moonilal: But he has invited some policy issue.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, hold on. At this time, Member for Oropouche East, we need to move on. We need to move on because, when I say, it is on the same point in the thinking and the thought of the Minister, and both of you, I think we need to move on.

Dr. Moonilal: I have a separate question.

Mr. Chairman: What is the next question?

Dr. Moonilal: Are you aware that the former Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, actually advanced the idea of building six desalination plants given the success of this.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, no need to answer, Mr. Minister. I will now identify – Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you still want to ask your question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: “Yep.”

Mr. Chairman: Proceed, line item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Item 06/004/51, it states here:

“Funds are required to meet outstanding payments to Desalcott of \$137,815,000...”

I just wanted to know, I know that would be in TT dollars, what is it in US?

Mr. Hinds: Their obligation –

Mr. Chairman: Member, hold on, no, no, no, no, Member, you really want him to answer that?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, because I would like to know. Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Well, he needs to know what the rate is today, at least.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, this would have worked out at a rate, I would like to know what rate worked out that.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you want to answer the question?

Mr. Hinds: I am unable to answer that immediately.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I must object, this is the Finance Committee, we can provide that information to the Member.

Mr. Hinds: Yes, we can.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Wednesday?

Mr. Imbert: It is easy, we just have to get the rate of exchange for today and we will do the calculation. None of us know what the rate is today.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 39 varied by an increase in the sum of \$275,015,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks for coming, Mr. PS.

Head 48: Minister of Trade and Industry \$8,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, as the Minister with the responsibility for finance for the time being, I am responsible for all the variations of appropriation, and I will deal with this particular one. As the Minister, I am also familiar with all of the reasons for the variation and can answer all and every question. With respect to Head 48, we are allocating an additional \$8 million to deal with additional sums required for salaries and expenses for these two companies, Creative Industries and InvestTT.

Question proposed: That Head 48 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chairman. To the Minister of Finance, could the Minister indicate how many persons are employed at both the Creative Industries and InvesTT?

Mr. Imbert: We will provide that information on or before Wednesday.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 48 varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,000,000.

Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development \$376,837,045.

Mr. Imbert: I will deal with this, these are all loans payments –

Mr. Chairman: One second, I am coming to it. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, these are loan payments. If you look at it, funds are required to facilitate principal and interest payment – *[Interruption]* Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Members. Members.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much. If Members look at the documents you will see these are financing issues, funds are required to facilitate principal and interest payments on an ANSA Merchant Bank loan, taken out by the last administration, and, in addition, funds are required to deal with a debt obligation organized by the last administration. These are purely financing issues and are required to pay loans. It has nothing to do with housing.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 61 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$376,837,045.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East, line item.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have several questions on this matter, I just want to take my time. Through you, I want to ask the Minister of Housing and Urban Development a question, if the Minister of Finance will permit such a dastardly act. The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, the Housing Development Corporation, indeed, entered into arrangements for this loan, unless I am mistaken I think this loan was also approved by the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, unlike the Massy/TSTT business, but could I ask the Minister, and you are free to make the statement that you were prevented from making earlier, could I ask, in terms of the loan, my question –

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, one second, Oropouche East, come to your point, which one of the loans you are identifying?

Dr. Moonilal: I am speaking on 04/009/01.

Mr. Chairman: Right, question.

Dr. Moonilal: In terms of this loan arrangement, could the Minister remind us of the purpose of this loan, whether it was to facilitate the Accelerated Housing Programme, the amount of money drawn from the loan so far and expended, and, specifically, moneys used from this loan arrangement to facilitate the construction and distribution of housing programmes at specific estates in Trinidad, particularly, outstanding moneys owed on projects such as Union Hall, Victoria Keys, Egypt, Chaguanas, and elsewhere, where the funds here were identified as funds to support those housing estates. So, essentially, I would like to get an appreciation of what has been done with the money, how much is owed to contractors where their payments have been certified by the Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Imbert: It is not relevant.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, we are here to approve money to pay on a loan, all I want to ask is have you been using the money and for what purpose, and if you can outline for us, that was my first question, the expenditure on the drawdown on the loan arrangement for the HDC, and, specifically, what it has been used to do. That is my first question.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, which one?

Mr. Imbert: Let me deal with the financial issues first, and if the Minister of Housing and Urban Development is so disposed to deal with the other questions, which are wholly irrelevant. This appropriation, this variation—

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Member asked a question, just proceed with answering it, please.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I will answer the relevant part. Mr. Chairman, this variation is simply to facilitate principal and interest payments on loans taken out by the previous administration, not by this administration, and it has nothing to do with things taking place in this fiscal year.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, could I repeat the question? I think the Minister of Housing and Urban Development understands the question.

Mr. Chairman: I do not think you would need to. Minister of Housing and Urban Development, you have anything to add?

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, I think he understood well.

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide the information?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, I can provide the information, what I can say right now is that the loans were taken for the Accelerated Housing Programme, \$1.5 billion was borrowed by your Government. It was borrowed to finance the following projects, Oasis Gardens in Chaguanas, Fairfield Housing Estate in Princes Town, Victoria Keys in Diego Martin and Eden Gardens in Freeport. All the other pieces of information I can provide to you at a later date.

Dr. Moonilal: I just want to clarify with the Minister, you are making a commitment that on or before

Wednesday next you will provide a breakdown of how this money was spent vis-à-vis those housing estates, the outstanding amounts owed on those estates to contractors that have been certified for payment and not paid, how much money has been drawn down from that loan, how much is yet to be used by the Housing Development Corporation. That is the data we require for next week, and I am getting a commitment from you that you will present that data.

Mr. Mitchell: I will give you that information, I can tell you that all the money was drawn down prior to September 2015.

Mr. Imbert: Precisely, you spent all the money.

Dr. Moonilal: That is not correct, that is not correct, but could I follow with a next question? The next question involves the second item here, which is 04/011/05, UDeCOTT, it is, again, on Interest Payment, and for the specific loan I will like to get the same information as to the nature of the loan, what it was taken for, and to what extent have you fulfilled the commitments in terms of construction. I will also like to get some information on two related projects, the Arima Hospital and the Point Fortin Hospital –

Mr. Imbert: What? That is not here.

Mr. Chairman: Is there any relevance?

Dr. Moonilal: –the extent to which UDeCOTT has finalized the loan arrangements for that.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I object.

Mr. Chairman: One second. Member for Oropouche East, in terms of the last question you now raised, in terms of the line item, those questions raised on the Arima Hospital, is it identified here?

Dr. Moonilal: Well, it is concerning UDeCOTT, and it also a loan arrangement.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, hold on.

Dr. Moonilal: Well then, I will move on. I will move on.

Mr. Chairman: We need to move on.

Dr. Moonilal: So I move on to the next question.

Mr. Chairman: You have a next question?

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, many more.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Mitchell: Can I answer that first question? I could answer the first question that you just raised.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Mitchell: The purpose of the loan was start-up costs for the Couva Children's Hospital, Penal Hospital, Phase I police stations: Arima, Brasso, Cumuto, Guapo, La Brea, Moruga, Oropouche, Piarco, Maloney; this was a bridging loan, and it was recently converted to a 10-year fixed rate loan, and you all spent all the money.

Mr. Imbert: And you spent all the money before the election.

Dr. Moonilal: And could you confirm those police stations whether they were completed by the former administration? You can do that in the debate.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh spen’ all de money already, man.”

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, next question.

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, my next area, I am moving to the Squatter Settlements Regularization Programme, now, Minister, you are asking us to approve this figure, in May, we are in the first week of May, you are asking us, I imagine next week, to approve \$75 million to the Squatter Regularization Settlements Programme, and you have outlined the expenditure, is it realistic that in four months you will get this money approved and you will expend money as you indicated here? Or is this money to pay bills that you have already have in hand that have been certified for payments on this programme?

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is for, with respect to the squatter settlements regularization, this is for pre-construction works, land surveying, infrastructure and construction supervision, electrification of sites, corrective drainage and water works; these are for passed bills and for ongoing works.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the Minister, in relation to this, those sites that you are going to undertake infrastructure work, and so on, could you tell us whether or not those persons on these sites will now be asked to pay property tax?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, that is not relevant.

Mr. Mitchell: That is not relevant to this line item.

9.15p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I continue?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: The sites have been identified. Could I ask you to put in writing the sites that you are going to undertake construction infrastructure work and utility works on, so that we can receive that on or before Wednesday?

Mr. Mitchell: I can tell you now: La Savanne in Guayaguayare, Gomez Trace, Moruga, Western Trace, Moruga, Kangalee Village, Valencia, Nurse Trace, Guayaguayare, Arena B, Freeport, Arena C, Freeport, Pro Village, Moruga, Sundries and Ramlal in Penal. Let me just remind you, all sites under the last administration were constituencies of the then Government.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask you why two sites in particular have been left out, Golconda and Ciperio Road in San Fernando East?

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chair, those sites have been completed.

Dr. Moonilal: You are telling me that Ciperio Road, adjacent to the housing development Pleasantville, that has been completed? That has not been completed, it is overrun by bush.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, right, thank you. Mr. Chairman, the nine sites that I have just called, those are the sites approved under the NUP programme to be upgraded.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, you still have a question?

Mr. Lee: The Home Improvement and New Housing Subsidies Programme of \$5million, could the Minister state how many families would benefit from this subsidy?

Mr. Mitchell: From the \$5 million approximately 400families will benefit; 400 beneficiaries.

Mr. Lee: How many families would have benefited with it previously or in the fiscal year to date?

Mr. Mitchell: Throughout the programme 4,000 families are expected to benefit.

Dr. Tewarie: Just two quick questions really. Were the nine sites you mentioned included in the 2017 budget for allocations? I will ask you quickly because the second one is related to that. Is this \$75 million to allow you to complete? Is the work ongoing with this?

Mr. Mitchell: The work is ongoing and the \$75 million, we are expected to complete all those sites by the end of the fiscal.

Dr. Bodoë: Minister, can you give an idea of how many citizens would benefit from this? I am speaking about the Squatter Settlements Regularization. Do you have a figure on the number of citizens who will benefit?

Mr. Mitchell: Approximately 1,900citizens, families, will benefit.

Dr. Moonilal: Just a quick one, the Minister can put it in writing. Could you indicate to us the list and names and addresses of the recipients of the Home Improvements and New Housing Subsidies Programme?

Mr. Chairman: Which line item?

Dr. Moonilal: 09/004/08/H/005, page 18. Could you indicate for the first six months of the fiscal year the names and addresses and quantum paid to recipients of this Home Improvements and New Housing Subsidies Programme?

Mr. Mitchell: I can do that.

Mr. Chairman: Cumuto/Manzanilla, last Member.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I think Member has asked the question already, so I will await that response.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 61 varied by an increase in the sum of \$376,837,045.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you for coming, Madam.

Head 68: Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs \$250,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This facility at Ste. Madeleine is a golf course. It was recently switched over from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs for obvious reasons; it is a golf course. The \$250,000 is for us to do a feasibility study to take a look and to get some detail and depth with regard with how we plan to move forward with this particular golf course. Mr. Chairman, that is pretty much it in a nutshell.

Question proposed: That Head 68 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$250,000.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As you will recall, I did raise some matters earlier when

we came to the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. I just want to raise a general matter and then the specific issue.

I just need some explanation, the way it is placed in the report. If this is moving from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, it should read as a decrease from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications and an increase to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. But it comes under the general area of increases in the report, whereas – we are moving the same money from the IDF to 18 Ministries, but this is moving from Public Administration to Sport, so should it not read as a decrease on Public Administration and an increase in Sport, but it falls in the setting as an increase.

Mr. Cuffie: Under the Development Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: But having said that, that is just the way it flows here. So the substantive issue is: Minister, would you agree with me that the Government ought not, in times like these where the Government is today crying blood because they do not have money, they do not have dollars, that – *[Interruption]* I will ignore the comments from the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Chairman: Members, hold on. The Member has five minutes in order to give a preamble, before he comes to the point. As the Chairman I will so guide. Go ahead, Member for Oropouche East

Dr. Moonilal: At a time like this, when the Government is crying blood that they do not have money, to take a quarter million dollars of taxpayers' money, not to develop a golf course, but to spend that money on a feasibility study or some type of consultancy, for the Government to embark really on running a clubhouse and a golf course, when there are enough resources in the private sector.

In the Ste. Madeleine area incidentally, in that Ste. Madeleine compound and all over, we have several business persons who can by themselves finance such a study, make proposals to the Government and your Ministry can simply look at proposals and award some type of lease or some arrangement. Is this the best use of money?

Secondly, even if you want to do a feasibility study from the Government, do you not have this type of resource in the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago that could embark upon some type of study of this facility? Because clearly this has to be a private sector activity. It cannot be that the Government that says they cannot plant pepper in Caroni Green, now wants to run a clubhouse and a golf course.

Mr. Chairman: Member, could you come to the question now, please. So the question is?

Dr. Moonilal: My question is, would the Minister agree that this money ought not to be spent from the taxpayer, but the private sector should do their own feasibility at their own cost, bring the reports to the Government and you decide what best could be done, and this is essentially a private sector development and not a government development?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Chairman, it is very fitting that the Member for Oropouche East would bring this up, because he has been hounding me to get this project going, and I find it strange how – *[Laughter]*

Dr. Moonilal: Not to spend taxpayers' money.

Mr. Mitchell: Nevertheless, because he has been hounding me.

Mr. Chairman: Members, Members!

Mr. Smith: Just to educate, and let the Member for Oropouche East know, there is also a golf course in Sevilla, where the former Minister of Sport, Anil Roberts, spent \$6 million on a wall. If they had done this feasibility study, then we would not have wasted taxpayers' money then to do that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Where is the line item for that?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia, you would have your opportunity.

Mr. Smith: So I think the Member for Oropouche East should welcome this with open arms, because I know this is his constituency and he plays at that golf course.

Hon. Member: No, no, no.

Mr. Smith: It is not his constituency?

Mr. Mitchell: That is the constituency of San Fernando East.

Mr. Smith: Well, he plays there nevertheless.

Dr. Moonilal: And that is not San Fernando East, "doh try dat".

Mr. Smith: Nevertheless he plays there, and one would think that he would be happy, as he is hounding me to do this feasibility study. So those mistakes done in the past, with the former Minister of Sport, will not happen. I am hearing it will create employment, but more importantly, the question asked before is what we are being told that this was not part of the plans for public administration to do a feasibility study. So it is not money being taken here. It is the first time it is going to be done, and if we something that we could move forward with or a public/private or whatever it may be, we will make a decision from there, Mr. Chairman.
[Crosstalk]

Mr. Padarath: To the hon. Minister, would this particular move from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, can you say whether any work has been started on this feasibility study, and also what are your projections in terms of a long-term plan? I myself have actually visited that property, and there is a substantial amount of work that needs to be done there. Is this also a priority project of the Government? Also, has this feasibility study commenced under the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, or any work at all, has been commenced with respect to this feasibility study? Again, what are your projections in the future as a priority project of the Government?

Mr. Smith: This facility was handed over to the Cabinet a few weeks ago, so my team at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Sports Company is now looking at it. The Member for Princes Town is absolutely right, it is extremely run-down, similar to how the Brian Lara was left to be run-down. We do not want that to happen. Golf is a growing sport in that area especially, so we want to go in there, see what we can do to enhance it and get young people and people in the area utilizing the golf course again, especially as we are pushing the sports tourism thrust.

Mr. Padarath: But hon. Minister, you would recall when Caroni Limited was closed down, it was left by your

administration to be run-down and for many years it was left unoccupied and unused.

Mr. Smith: And it is sad that the Member for Oropouche East, being the Member of Parliament there, left it there for an additional five years.

Mr. Padarath: Corrected, it is San Fernando East constituency and not Oropouche East.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members, I think the point has been made. Member for Siparia, do you still have a question?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You were saying that a feasibility study would be done at the tune of this quarter million dollars. Have you contracted for someone to do it already, and if so what process and who may that be, or which company?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Chair, as I said, a few weeks ago this was transferred to the Ministry of Sport, so we are now ventilating that to get plans to move forward.

Mr. Cuffie: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I think I made the point that no work has been done, no money has been spent. It is simply an allocation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But an allocation is to be spent. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Mr. Imbert: Chair, not Deputy Chair.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is 9.27, okay. [*Crosstalk*] Sir – that would solve the problem. [*Laughter*] I am looking at the Development Programme estimates, and I have not seen, and I will ask the hon. Minister – the explanation being given is that this has been transferred from Public Administration, Head 31, to Sport, Head 68. The facility may have been transferred. My question is this: Was there this \$250,000 allocated when it was under public admin.

Mr. Imbert: I will answer that, the answer is yes. It was allocated.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes to which one? I have not finished with the question, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: It was allocated under public admin.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, one second. Continue, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking an “either/or”, how he could jump and answer?

Mr. Chairman: So let us get the “or” now.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The question is whether in 2017, a quarter million dollars was allocated for this purpose under public admin?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So it means for 18 months public admin did absolutely nothing? You said no money –

Mr. Imbert: 2017.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 17 months.

Mr. Imbert: Not 18 months, we are only six months into 2017.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So what you would do, kill me for a few months. It is a few days.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia, you finished your question? You got your answer.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is still not answered.

Mr. Chairman: It was not answered?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, it was not answered.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, let the Member for Siparia finish her question, please.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For the 17 going on 18 months, the money sat idle.

Mr. Imbert: Six months; six months.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, for a couple months, let us.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, please, come on, chair the meeting.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am not getting to finish my question. You can talk the rest of the night.

Mr. Chairman: Let her finish her question and then you will have the opportunity to make the correction.

Go ahead.

9.30 p.m.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: For the period of time that this has been under the Ministry Public Administration and Communications, which it seems since September 2015, nothing has been done with this project.

Mr. Cuffie: The project, \$250,000 was allocated in the budget last year.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: This was there?

Mr. Cuffie: And over that time we looked it and decided that it did not fit in the Ministry Public Administration and Communications and we had it transferred to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. And Minister is now going to do a feasibility study. Okay. Thank you very much. But where is the decrease out of, again, where is the decrease?

Mr. Imbert: It is there, it is in the document under Ministry of Public Administration and Communications.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: What page? Page?

Mr. Imbert: Oh, please.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: No. No. No. Please.

Mr. Imbert: You really want to see that? All right.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: When you are varying – no, I saw it there.

Mr. Imbert: We will get it for you.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: You so want to get this golf course, you put it twice.

Mr. Imbert: We will get it for you.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: You put it twice in the document.

Mr. Imbert: We will get it for you. It is there.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: When in the same way you decreased finance and energy to put it elsewhere, in the same way you have to have a decrease.

Mr. Imbert: Under Head 31.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes. I know.

Mr. Imbert: On page 16 at top of the page.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: I know where it is, you did it twice. This golf course is so important.

Mr. Imbert: You asked whether it was allocated under Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, that was your question. It was, and it has been deleted from Ministry of Public Administration and Communications and added to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. You have gotten an answer to your question now.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sir, Sir –

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: – I am not the Minister of Finance, but I have been looking at these estimates for the longest while and I have been looking at the document presented for this Standing Finance Committee. Okay? We have at the start of the document the decreases from the Ministry of Finance decreased by X dollars \$1.3 million or something. Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries decreased by so much. Those were the two Ministries where the decreases were. Then he went on in the document to increases. So, admit, it should not have been there. It should have been where you decreased one Head.

Mr. Imbert: It has been decreased on page 3. Look at page 3. We decreased it from Ministry of Public Administration and Communications.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: It does not say that.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. It does. Mr. Chairman –

Mr. Chairman: Members.

Mr. Imbert: – this must be settled. The Member for Siparia is asleep. Page 3.

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member.

Mr. Imbert: Page 3, Head 31. It is decreased. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Members, the Member for Siparia is satisfied.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: No. No. But we will move on.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: It is right there in black and white.

Mr. Chairman: It is okay. Fine.

Mr. Imbert: Page 16. Look at it.

Mr. Chairman: It has been cleared, Minister.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 68 varied by an increase in the sum of \$250,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Head 77: Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries \$3,187,153.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries or the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of no more than five minutes.

Mr. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this sum has been transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to pay a loan that was taken out by EMBD under the Member for Oropouche East on the 15th. It first started on 12 August, 2015, and then the 15 August, 2015 where they put this country in a position that they had to borrow.

[Chairman: Mrs. Annette-George]

EMBD borrowed \$400 million, Madam Chair, \$400 million less than a month before a general election on a short-term loan. Madam Chair, this was then distributed in 10 contracts amongst a handful of contractors, and now we the taxpayers are burdened with this short-term loan repayment of \$400 million. EMBD, as they would have known, is not an entity that earns any income that would have able to service a \$400 million loan. And we have also found 900 metres of road being awarded to a contractor. He was paid over \$10million and we cannot find the road. So this \$3.1 million is to repay that loan that took place under the Member for Oropouche East.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you finished with the statement?

Mr. Young: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Hon. Members.

Question proposed: That Head 77 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$3,187,153.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I want to thank the Minister for his full explanation to which I have several questions to ask him on his explanation for the one line that is in the report. I want to ask the Minister whether he could tell us whether this loan arrangement had the full approval of the Ministry of Finance and the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago unlike the TSTT Massy loan arrangement to which the Minister knows a lot more than he will tell the public. I have more questions.

Mr. Young: The answer is, no. The Cabinet approved \$300 million, you went and borrowed \$400 million.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I invite the Minister to get evidence to support that. But I would like to put it on the record that the Cabinet and the Ministry of Finance approve loans, not a Minister of housing. So those insinuations—I am not a chairman of a board, so those insinuations you should go and say it outside. The loans are approved by the Ministry of Finance and the Cabinet, unlike the TSTT Massy loan.

Could I also ask, you claimed in your opening address about a contractor building 900 metres of road or claiming that for \$10million and you could not find the road? Have you taken any action at all against any operative of EMBD, any such contractor, beyond mauvais langue and rum-shop talk, have you taken any action against anyone for wrongdoing that has resulted in any investigation?

My next question, the Minister talked about contractors building up loans – building up payments

and in particular –

Mr. Young: The answer to the question was, yes.

Dr. Moonilal: – and could I ask the Minister if he is aware that the contractor that sued the Government for a billion dollars, \$600 million of work was undertaken under the Uthara Rao and Christine Sahadeo, EMBD under the prime ministership of Mr. Patrick Manning [*Desk thumping*] \$600million in work was undertaken out of the \$1 billion that the contractor is suing this present administration for?

Madam Chairman: Member, we have heard your statement. Is this under the Head, under Recurrent Expenditure of the \$3,187,000?

Dr. Moonilal: The Minister made a statement.

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, the answer is that the sum is disputed, however, if what the former Minister said, the Member for Oropouche East, over the period 2010 to 2015 that would have fallen under him for payment, once again, he has personally saddled this country with any of that such indebtedness.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I repeat the question to the Minister who did not understand? Is he aware that the debt owed to contractors was contracted under Uthara Rao and Christine Sahadeo under a PNM administration?

Mr. Young: Madam, he said it was a certain contractor. And again, my answer is that that debt is being disputed and defended in the courts. And any debt that would have come from that period, according to the explanation that the Member for Oropouche East has just given, would have fallen due and owing under his period of stewardship between 2010 and 2015, because Christine Sahadeo was not there between 2010 and 2015, but the Member for Oropouche East was and there was not action nor any payment of any legitimate debt and it is actually being disputed.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Is the Member aware that they debt built up to contractors was prior to 2010 involved payment for works that were not done in terms of infrastructure development, undergrown electricity, water lines that were simply not there and contractors built up a debt at EMBD under the former PNM administration?

Mr. Young: And, Madam Chair, if in fact what the Member for Oropouche East has said is true, I think the public of Trinidad and Tobago should ask him about dereliction of duty on his part because he seems very familiar with it and took absolutely no action against the contractors. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Is the Minister aware that the contractors reduced their bills to the EMBDC by \$400million because of investigations undertaken by the former administration?

Mr. Young: It is amazing –

Dr. Moonilal: If you are not aware you can find the information.

Mr. Young: – if that is true, Madam Chair, it is amazing that this is the first Trinidad and Tobago is hearing of it, and I do dispute that.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, could ask now on the substantive issue, could the EMBDC, could you undertake – because the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is not here, could you get an update on

the projects in the EMBDC particularly projects in Cedar Hill, Picton, Couva where they have stopped completely infrastructure development work and those lands are now overridden by bush and debris and are now unusable for further work to be done to distribute?

We would also like to know whether the EMBDC has been indeed distributing the lands to Caroni workers, agriculture and residential sites, in the last 17 months or so?

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, as we started off on line item under Head 77, this is a simple allotment of \$3.18 million to repay a loan undertaken under the stewardship of the Member for Oropouche East where the country was burdened for \$400 million. Nothing he has just requested falls under this particular item.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, let me clarify very – the loan was taken for a purpose. It was to develop the lands and distribute to the Caroni workers, residential and agriculture. All I am asking, is the Minister aware whether in the last 17 months one square foot of land has been distributed to the Caroni workers; how much distributed; how much outstanding; and whether work on the estates have continued or ceased? That is all.

Mr. Young: Madam, the full amount of the sum borrowed, this \$400 million was actually fully distributed in the period of less than a month. All of the works were not done and those matters are currently, have been investigated and action is currently being taken.

Dr. Moonilal: So the Minister is admitting that the current administration has done absolutely no work on those sites?

Mr. Young: I think, Madam Chair, the answer is, no. This current administration has actually sought to protect the taxpayers for the burden that you imposed on them.

Dr. Moonilal: Have you done infrastructural development work at any site in Trinidad in the EMBDC or is that company just established on paper and doing absolutely nothing?

Mr. Young: After all of the money was drained just before September 07, 2015, the company is now trying to recover.

Dr. Moonilal: Is the company bankrupt?

Mr. Chairman: Members, in terms of the – I have allowed a certain line of questioning, but I would like Members to really confine themselves to precisely what the line Item is. It is just for the repayment of the loan. Okay? So that I would not allow any questions with respect to the company. Member for Siparia.

Mr. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Madam. When you finish this line item, I think, we would have completed and I seek your guidance as to the way forward.

Today, many questions that were asked, hon. Ministers undertook to provide answers on or before Wednesday, before the debate. But, Madam, I know, through the Committee that you Chair, about assurances that the word assurance is not given or certain words are not used, then there is no way we can seek to enforce the undertakings given. And therefore, through you, I seek your guidance as to whether we could ask the Minister of Finance that the figures are given are, in fact, assurances that these matters will be provided to Members.

9.45 p.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Chairman, just before you go, in keeping with the spirit of the question raised by the Member for Siparia, I did undertake before the conclusion of this sitting to give the following answers, which I do have. I was asked, how many more legal staff were needed at the DPP's office. The answer is Senior State Counsel I, 34; Senior State Counsel II, 11; Senior State Counsel, 12; Assistant DPP is three; Deputy DPP is three; a total of 63. I was asked for the position of when the vacancies would be finished. I have been informed by my Permanent Secretary that she is awaiting—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: When the vacancy will be filled?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, forgive me—filled, the process would be finished. We are currently awaiting the feedback from the DPP, as he must guide his selection of which offices he wishes to have filled first. We were also asked by the Member for Oropouche East whether we could provide all the matters that the SG and Chief State Solicitor are involved in, and they have confirmed that that would be an impossible exercise to confirm before the sitting on Wednesday. So, I have completed the list of matters that were asked of me which would at least ease any undertakings now requested.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, in like manner, as the AG has reported, I would like to report on the number of persons who are employed at the Labour Consulate in Toronto, and that number is six. Thank you very kindly.

Madam Chairman: My understanding is that the committee of assurances has no jurisdiction under what happens at the Standing Finance Committee—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking for Members here.

Madam Chairman: The Parliament would write the relevant Ministers with respect to what undertakings were given as a reminder.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, please, I crave your indulgence? My question is, having not used the words of undertaking, or guarantee, or assurance, this whole exercise today, for, I do not know how many hours, 10 hours or more, would have been an exercise in futility. And therefore without those undertakings from Minister, I am asking if the hon. Minister of Finance, is the person really in charge of all of this, he says that he undertake to provide it. Else we have wasted the entire day here today. Minister, through you.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Government will seek to provide as much information as is possible.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Through you, Madam, the ones that you said that you would provide, we take ourselves on ice?

Mr. Imbert: I beg your pardon?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The items throughout the day where Ministers would have said that they would provide X or Y on or before Wednesday, you are now qualifying that to say—I am asking you, are you qualifying it to now say, you will provide as much as you can. There were specific items that persons undertook to provide.

Mr. Imbert: You know it is difficult to answer a question if you just keep rolling, and rolling, and rolling.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You see, you do not wait for the question to come. [*Interruption*] You see, you can never stop speaking. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Members, please!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You must listen sometimes.

Mr. Imbert: Would you kindly ask the question?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, I will regulate this meeting, please. Member for Siparia, could you ask the question?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, I have asked the question, I do not wish for our time spent today to be an exercise in futility, should it now be that the Minister is skating on ice. He is now saying, well, we will provide as much as we can. There were specific issues that were raised, the Minister of Planning and Development has come and reported some of it, the AG has reported some, and there are others. Many Ministers, so I am in your hands, Madam up, and I am guided

Madam Chairman: All right, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, I object. I indicated the Government will answer as many question as is possible. With respect to individual assurances given by individual Ministers with respect to specific questions posed to them and answered by them, I would expect that the Ministers who gave these commitments will fulfil these commitments. Madam Chairman, I realized the Member for Siparia was not listening, so I will say it again.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: There is no need, I heard you, Sir. I can multitask.

Mr. Imbert: You sure you heard me?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I can multitask.

Mr. Imbert: You sure?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much for that answer.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 77 varied by an increase in the sum of \$3,187,153.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the 2017 Appropriation be varied by a total increase in the sum of \$1,398,125,544.

Question put and agreed to.

The 2017 Appropriation varied by a total increase in the sum of \$1,398,125,544.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now adjourned. Members are asked to please note that the Committee's Report will be circulated on Tuesday, May 9, 2017 to all Members. I now call upon the Leader of the House.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman. I beg to move that the House be now resumed.

Question put and agreed to.

9.53 p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee adjourned.*

APPENDIX IV

Proposals for the Variation of Appropriation for the fiscal year 2017

**AGENDA FOR THE MEETING OF THE STANDING
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE 2017 SESSION OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO BE HELD ON**

5TH MAY, 2017

MATTERS RELATING TO THE 2017 ACCOUNTS

ITEM NO.	S.F.C. NOTE NO.	FILE NO.	SUBJECT
01	01	F:BUD:4/4/8	Variation of the Appropriation for the fiscal year 2017

NOTE FOR STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

ITEM NO. 01

S.F.C. (2017) 01

F:BUD:4/4/8

VARIATION OF THE APPROPRIATION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

The matter for the consideration of the Standing Finance Committee is the Variation of the Appropriation in the sum of **\$1,398,125,544** to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital expenditure to September 30, 2017.

2. The Standing Finance Committee is asked to note that as a result of the mid-year review of Recurrent Expenditure and the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), which was conducted by the Ministry of Finance, it is now necessary to return to Parliament to seek approval for a Variation of the Appropriation Act, 2017 in the sum of **\$1,398,125,544**.

3. The Standing Finance Committee is asked to note that the variation of recurrent expenditure is required to meet Personnel Expenditure of \$6,395,700; Goods and Services of \$221,022,780; Minor Equipment Purchases of \$60,658,000; Current Transfers and Subsidies of \$672,043,064; Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of \$228,565,000, giving a total of **\$1,188,684,544**. Included in the Variation of recurrent expenditure is the sum of \$21,857,680 to retire an advance from the Contingencies Fund for the conduct of the 2016 Local Government Elections as well as the Tobago House of Assembly elections held on 23 January, 2017. The Variation proposed for the Public Sector Investment Programme under the Consolidated Fund is \$209,441,000 and is required to fund urgent needs that could not be satisfied from existing allocations.

4. Further, the Standing Finance Committee is asked to note that the sourcing of funds for the Variation of the Appropriation Act 2017 will be met from sums already appropriated to certain Heads of Expenditure, within the Appropriation Act, 2017.

5. Accordingly, the Variation on the affected Heads of Expenditure is as follows:

		Variation

	Head of Expenditure	Increase	Decrease
03	Judiciary	20,500,000	
04	Industrial Court	4,090,000	
05	Parliament	10,000,000	
06	Service Commissions	4,920,700	
07	Statutory Authorities' Service Commissions	770,000	
08	Elections and Boundaries Commission	21,857,680	
09	Tax Appeal Board	751,100	
11	Registration, Recognition and Certification Board	535,000	
13	Office of the Prime Minister	2,550,000	
18	Ministry of Finance		1,363,125,544
22	Ministry of National Security	149,491,000	
23	Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs	72,164,000	
26	Ministry of Education	180,476,866	
28	Ministry of Health	196,500,000	
30	Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development	9,000,000	
31	Ministry of Public Administration and Communications	56,230,000	
		Variation	
	Head of Expenditure	Increase	Decrease

35	Ministry of Tourism	5,000,000	
39	Ministry of Public Utilities	275,015,000	
40	Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries		35,000,000
48	Ministry of Trade and Industry	8,000,000	
61	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	376,837,045	
68	Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs	250,000	
77	Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	3,187,153	
	TOTAL ESTIMATES	1,398,125,544	1,398,125,544

6. The Standing Finance Committee is also being advised that savings have been identified from the following Heads of Expenditure to meet the projected liabilities to the end of the fiscal year.

- **Head 18 – Ministry of Finance - \$1,363,125,544**

04/007/06: Food Price Support Programme \$86,067,019 – The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has indicated that it is in the process of revisiting and regularizing the administration of the Food Price Support Programme with a view to ensuring efficiency of the service to eligible individuals accessing the programme. As a result the total allocation will not be utilized.

04/009/11 – Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF) \$1,257,619,525 – Funds provided for capital projects under the IDF will not be fully utilized in fiscal 2017 given that contracts have not been finalized as initially projected. In addition, outstanding bills have not been verified for payment.

04/009/23 – CARICOM Development Fund - \$19,439,000 – Cabinet agreed to limit Trinidad and Tobago’s contribution to the second funding cycle of the Fund to US\$10.0Mn or TT\$70Mn for the 2017 fiscal year.

- **Head 40 – Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries - \$35,000,000**

04/007/01 – Shortfall in subsidy re sale of Petroleum Products \$35,000,000 – There was a significant reduction in subsidy claims due to declining oil prices and the consequential impact on petroleum product prices at the refinery.

7. Accordingly, the Standing Finance Committee is asked to approve the Variation of the 2017 Appropriation in the amount of \$1,398,125,544 to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital expenditure to September 30, 2017 for the Heads of Expenditure indicated at paragraph (5) above.

8. Explanations for the proposed increases under the following Heads of Expenditure are as follows:

Head 03 – Judiciary

Recurrent Expenditure - \$20,500,000

02/001/21 - Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings - \$2,000,000

Funds are required to facilitate payment for repairs to 3 Magistrates' Court Buildings (Rio Claro, Couva and San Fernando) and the air-conditioning system at the Hall of Justice.

02/001/05 – Telephones - \$3,500,000

02/001/37 – Janitorial Services - \$3,500,000

02/001/43 } Security Services - \$11,500,000

02/003/43 }

To meet operational costs for these sub-items for the balance of the fiscal year.

Head 04 – Industrial Court

Recurrent Expenditure - \$4,090,000

01/001/01 - Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance - \$1,092,000

Funds are required to provide for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the rest of fiscal 2017.

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$1,000,000

02/001/43 } - Security Services - \$698,000

02/002/43 }

Funds are required to meet expenditure to the end of the fiscal year for contract employment, and for security services for the General Administration Division and the South Office.

02/001/21 – Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings - \$1,300,000

To meet cost for repairs to elevators and for maintenance to air conditioning, generators and for other contracts to the end of the fiscal year.

Head 05 – Parliament

Recurrent Expenditure - \$10,000,000

02/001/12 - Materials and Supplies - \$1,700,000

Funds are required for the continued provision of meals and consumable items for the sitting of Parliament for the remainder of the fiscal year.

02/001/17 – Training - \$600,000

To cater for the training of staff in several areas in keeping with the Training Plan as follows:

Parliamentary Reporting in the Digital Age; Legislative Drafting; and Weapons and Firearms Training (Security Unit).

02/001/23 – Fees - \$500,000

To meet the payment of legal fees for ongoing matters and for brokerage and shipping fees projected to the end of the fiscal year.

02/001/27 - Official Overseas Travel - \$700,000

To meet the cost of anticipated Overseas Travel to the end of the fiscal year.

02/001/28 - Other Contracted Services - \$3,000,000

Funds are required to service existing contracts to the end of the fiscal year for preventative maintenance for broadcasting equipment, IT Support, cable service and provision of security services at Dock Road.

02/001/58 - Medical Expenses - \$1,000,000

For the payment to the end of the fiscal year for Medical Bills for all Members of Parliament.

02/001/64 – Operations of Constituency Offices - \$2,500,000

To meet anticipated expenditure to the end of the fiscal year.

Head 06 – Service Commissions

Recurrent Expenditure - \$4,920,700

01/001/01 - Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance - \$1,741,700

Funds are required to provide for salaries and cost of living allowance for the remainder of fiscal 2017.

02/001/23 – Fees - \$679,000

To meet shortfall in allocation to the end of fiscal 2017 for the following:

- Licenses for anti-virus software - \$200,000;
- IHRIS ORACLE software license fees - \$300,000; and
- Examination payment fees (support staff: Invigilators, supervisors, examiners, markers, cleaners) -\$179,000.

02/006/28 – Other Contracted Services - \$2,500,000

Funds are required to meet the associated administrative cost of recruitment for a Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Head 07 – Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission

Recurrent Expenditure - \$770,000

01/001/01 - Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance - \$577,000

Funds are required to meet the shortfall for the payment of salaries and cost of living allowance to the end of the fiscal year.

02/001/28 - Other Contracted Services - \$193,000

Funds are required to meet payments to the end of the fiscal year for: one (1) Legal Consultant and one (1) IT Consultant.

Head 08 – Elections and Boundaries Commission

Recurrent Expenditure - \$21,857,680

08/01/002/03 - Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers - \$2,300,000

08/02/002/01 - Travelling and Subsistence - \$1,150,000

08/02/002/05 – Telephones - \$150,400

08/02/002/08 - Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage - \$277,050

08/02/002/09 - Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment - \$510,000

08/02/002/12 - Materials and Supplies - \$500,000

08/02/002/17 – Training - \$3,000,000

08/02/002/21 - Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings - \$60,000

08/02/002/22 - Short-Term Employment - \$9,410,230

08/02/002/57 – Postage - \$2,000,000

08/02/002/67 - Promotions, Publicity and Printing - \$2,500,000

Funds are required to retire an Advance from the Contingencies Fund in the sum of \$21,857,680 for the conduct of the 2016 Local Government Elections as well as the Tobago House of Assembly Elections held on 23 January, 2017.

Head 09 – Tax Appeal Board

Recurrent Expenditure - \$751,100

02/001/08 - Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage - \$350,000

Funds are required to facilitate payment of rental accommodation of A.A. Laquis Building at No. 27 Frederick Street Port of Spain and Storage at A.J. Mauritzen Warehouse at Queen Street.

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$180,000

Funds are required to meet the payment of salaries to the end of the fiscal year for: two (2) CAT Reporters, one (1) IT Consultant and one (1) Business Operations Assistant.

02/001/23 – Fees - \$221,100

Funds are required for payment for Lexus Nexus 2017 annual subscription, Decisia Tax Judgement Database maintenance and EOS Web Integrated Library System.

Head 11 – Registration, Recognition and Certification Board

Recurrent Expenditure - \$535,000

01/001/01 - Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance - \$287,000

01/001/06 - Remuneration to Board Members - \$248,000

Funds are required for the payment of salaries and cost of living allowance and remuneration to board members to the end of the fiscal year.

Head 13 – Office of the Prime Minister

Development Programme - \$2,550,000

09/005/06/A/002 – Strengthening of the Strategic Threat Assessment Capacity in Trinidad and Tobago – Think Tank Project

Cabinet agreed to grant approval for funding in the sum of US\$375,000 through the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) to support and strengthen the Strategic Threat Assessment Capacity in Trinidad and Tobago – Think Tank Project which would be based with the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC), National Security Secretariat (NSCS). The project is aimed at capacity building to strengthen the technical skills of staff in areas such as research methods and methodologies and strategic analysis.

Head 22 – Ministry of National Security - \$149,491,000

Recurrent Expenditure - \$22,600,000

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$22,600,000

Funding is required to meet shortfall for salaries and allowances of existing contract officers to the end of the fiscal year in the following critical areas:

- Legal and Project Execution Departments assigned at Head Office;
- International Affairs Officers at Overseas Missions;
- ICT Professionals assigned to the CCTV System.

Development Programme - \$126,891,000

09/005/06/F/010 - National Operations Centre Construction Project - \$108,328,000

Funds are required to settle outstanding payments to Huawei International and Huawei Technologies for the supply and installation of telecommunication equipment (hardware and software), training, technical support and system integration services planning and design for specialized communication equipment.

**09/005/06/G/005 - Acquisition of a Digital Public Safety Communication System for the
Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) - \$18,563,000**

Funds are required to settle outstanding payments to Harris Corporation with respect to the supply and delivery of a Digital Safety Communication System and Associated Services including Maintenance and Training for the TTPS and, further services provided by Harris Corporation for infrastructural upgrades and operational capacity enhancement.

Head 23 – Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Recurrent Expenditure - \$72,164,000

02/001/04 – Electricity - \$3,000,000 }
02/001/05 – Telephones - \$5,000,000 }

Funds are required to liquidate bills on hand and to meet projected expenditure to the end of the fiscal year.

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$14,164,000

Funds are required to pay salaries and allowances to the end of the fiscal year for all categories of contract officers (Legal, Technical, IT and Administrative).

02/001/23 – Fees - \$50,000,000

To bring to account foreign payments for the provision of Legal Services and to meet bills on hand as well as anticipated expenditure to the end of the fiscal year.

Head 26 – Ministry of Education

Recurrent Expenditure - \$180,476,866

03/001/04 - Other Minor Equipment - \$60,658,000

The funds are required to meet the purchase as agreed to by Cabinet for 13,600 laptops and 1,600 replacement batteries which are to be distributed in the 2016/2017 academic year. The laptops are to be used by Secondary School students at the forms 1 and 2 levels (6,300 laptops each) as well as teachers of secondary schools (1,000 laptops).

04/006/19 - Servol Junior Life Centres - \$2,000,000

Funds are required to enable servol to continue to provide critical educational training, counselling and support to persons 13-16 years old at 10 Junior Life Centres.

04/006/50 - Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago - \$5,000,000

Funds are required for the payment of arrears of salaries and allowances owed to employees as a result of industrial agreements for the bargaining period 2011-2013.

04/007/09 - Early Childhood Care and Education - \$5,000,000

Funds are required to enable servol to continue to provide critical educational training, counselling and support to young children at 62 Early Childhood Care and Education Centres.

04/007/23 - Servol Hi-tech & Advanced Skills Training Programme - \$1,000,000

Funds are required to enable servol to continue to provide critical educational training, counselling and support to persons 17-23 years old at 15 Adolescent Development and Skill Training Departments.

04/007/25 - Servol's Human Development and Skills Training Programme - \$7,000,000

Funds are required to enable servol to continue to provide critical educational training, counselling and support to young adults under its Adolescent Development Programme at 7 Secondary Schools.

04/011/02 - National Schools Dietary Services Ltd. - \$50,000,000

Funds are required to ensure the continued supply of meals to primary and secondary school students for the remainder of the academic year.

04/011/08 - Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme Ltd. (YTEPP) - \$30,000,000

Funds are required to enable YTEPP to meet its operating costs inclusive of the payment of stipends for the remainder of the fiscal year thereby allowing the organization to achieve its mandate of providing an alternative means of education through the provision of skills training courses at its 26 centres.

04/011/10 – } EFCL Interest on \$286.5Mn Syndicated Loan arranged by RBC Merchant
 } Bank - \$6,793,143

04/011/11 – EFCL Principal Repayment on \$286.5Mn Syndicated Loan arranged by RBC
Merchant Bank - \$13,025,723

Funds are required to finance interest and principal debt obligations due in August, 2017 on a loan for the design and construction of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres as well as primary and secondary schools.

Head 28 – Ministry of Health

Recurrent Expenditure - \$196,500,000

To pay outstanding trade payables for the provision of critical services such as: medical supplies, equipment, plant maintenance, food at institutions, security, private medical institutions, utilities, medical gases, linen and waste removal services owed by the following three (3) Regional Health Authorities for fiscal 2017:

- North West Regional Health Authority - \$30,000,000;
- North Central Regional Health Authority - \$96,500,000; and
- South West Regional Health Authority - \$70,000,000.

Head 30 – Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

Recurrent Expenditure - \$9,000,000

01/004/06 – Remuneration to Board Members - \$150,000

For the continued payment of emoluments to Board Members to the end of the fiscal year.

02/001/16 – Contract Employment (General Administration) - \$3,500,000

To meet payment of salaries and allowances to the end of the fiscal year for all contract officers currently employed. In addition, the Ministry expects to hire shortly several officers for the newly created National Tripartite Advisory Council (NTAC) Unit.

02/001/22 – Short Term Employment - \$750,000

To meet expenditure to the end of the fiscal year.

(Occupational Safety and Health Authority)

02/004/05 – Telephones - \$60,000

To meet shortfall based on projected expenditure to the end of the fiscal year.

02/004/08 – Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage - \$200,000

To meet expenditure to the end of the fiscal year for rental of Office Accommodation at Duke Street, Port of Spain and Alexandra Street, St. Clair.

02/004/16 – Contract Employment - \$3,090,000

To meet payment of salaries and allowances to the end of the fiscal year for 50 contract officers currently employed in the various sections of the Organisational Safety and Health Authority (OSHA). In addition, the Unit is expected to hire some 41 additional contract officers shortly.

04/004/08 – Funding for the Liason Office in Canada - \$500,000

For the payment of salaries, allowances and operating expenses to the end of the fiscal year for the administration of the Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme (CCSAWP).

06/004/17 – Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies - \$750,000

To meet the cost of rent accommodation to the end of the fiscal year for the new Tobago Campus.

Head 31 – Ministry of Public Administration and Communications - \$56,230,000

Recurrent Expenditure - \$56,480,000

02//002/23 – Fees - \$34,956,964

To meet payments as agreed to by Cabinet for:

i) The acquisition and management of enterprise-wide licences for use of Microsoft software in Ministries, Departments and Agencies for three (3) years with effect from 01 July, 2016 – June 30, 2019 at a cost of US\$4.250Mn per annum in accordance with contractual agreement between the Government (iGOVTT) and Microsoft Corporation. However, due to delays in approval for and signing the agreement the Ministry has an outstanding debt of US\$4.6Mn approximately, TT\$31Mn (US\$4.25Mn for software licence and US\$.350Mn penalty);

ii) The acquisition by iGOVTT of a Symantec Endpoint Security Software and Service Enterprise Agreement to provide information security products and services on an enterprise wide basis inclusive of the installation and maintenance of the solution for the period February 05, 2017 to February 04, 2018 at a cost of \$3.9Mn.

02/002/28 - Other Contracted Services - \$21,523,036

To meet payment of outstanding invoices submitted by Massy Technologies InfoCom Trinidad Limited for:

- i) the use of Oracle Products by Ministries, Departments and Agencies - TT\$2.1Mn;
- ii) the cost of the Oracle Software Licences for use by the Pensions Project of the Ministry of Finance - \$6.0Mn; and
- iii) payments for maintenance service for Phase II of the Government Communications Backbone to the end of the fiscal year from TSTT and Fujitsu at approximately \$9.8Mn and IBM at \$3.6Mn.

Development Programme – (\$250,000)

09/005/06/F/011 – Ste. Madeleine Staff Club and Golf Course Development - \$250,000

Cabinet agreed to the transfer of the Ste. Madeline Staff Club and Golf Course project to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Head 35 – Ministry of Tourism

Recurrent Expenditure - \$5,000,000

02/001/16 – Contract Employment - \$1,800,000

To meet expenditure for salaries and allowances to the end of the fiscal year for existing contract positions and to also facilitate the filling of 13 vacant positions shortly.

02/001/22 – Short Term Employment - \$1,600,000

To meet expenditure to the end of the fiscal year.

02/001/28 – Other Contracted Services - \$1,600,000

Funds are required to meet existing contractual obligations and for consultancy services in relation to the new entity expected to replace the Tourism Development Company (TDC).

Head 39 – Ministry of Public Utilities

Recurrent Expenditure - \$275,015,000

04/009/04 - Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost) - \$42,540,000

Funds are required to meet the shortfall on operating expenses, inclusive of salaries to the end of the fiscal year.

04/011/02 – Solid Waste Management Company Limited - \$4,660,000

To meet the shortfall on operational costs for the rest of the fiscal year because of the payment of the second tranche of arrears of Wages and Cost of Living Allowance to Daily-Rated employees of the Solid Waste Management Company Limited for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013 as agreed to by Cabinet.

06/004/51 - Water and Sewerage Authority - \$227,815,000

Funds are required to meet outstanding payments to Desalcott of \$137,815,000 which represents arrears for desalinated water purchased during the period August 2, 2016 to December 1, 2016; debt obligations to security service providers in the sum of \$35.0Mn; electricity costs totaling \$44.0Mn and facility rental/leases in the amount of \$11.0Mn.

Head 48 – Ministry of Trade and Industry

Recurrent Expenditure - \$8,000,000

04/009/23 – Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company - \$4,000,000 }
04/009/24 – Invest TT - \$4,000,000 }

Funds are required to meet payment of Salaries and other operating expenses to the end of the fiscal year.

Head 61 – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development - \$376,837,045

Recurrent Expenditure - \$296,837,045

04/009/01 - Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation - \$283,808,644

Funds are required to facilitate principal and interest payments of \$241.2Mn and \$42.6Mn respectively on the ANSA Merchant Bank \$1.5Bn loan that are payable in fiscal year 2017.

04/011/05 - UDECOTT - Interest Payment - ANSA Merchant Bank Ltd. - Fixed Rate Bridge Loan - \$13,028,401

Funds are required to pay debt obligation for interest on the loan that was finalized in October, 2016.

Development Programme - \$80,000,000

09/004/08/H/002 - Squatter Settlements Regularization - \$75,000,000

To meet the cost of providing security of tenure to eligible squatters who have been illegally occupying State Lands prior to January 1st 1998, and have completed and fulfilled all necessary requirements under the State Land (Regularization of Tenure) Act, Act No. 25 of 1998. Accordingly, related physical infrastructure works are required on several sites:

- Pre construction works - \$ 8.2Mn

- Land Surveying - \$ 2.7Mn
- Infrastructure Work and Construction Supervision - \$21.5Mn
- Electrification of Sites - \$ 7.7Mn
- Corrective Drainage and Water Works - \$34.9Mn

09/004/08/H/005 - Home Improvements and New Housing Subsidies Programme - \$5,000,000

To provide subsidies to eligible low income families to finance home improvements and purchase new houses.

Head 68 – Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs

Development Programme - \$250,000

09/005/06/F/001 - Ste. Madeline Staff Club and Golf Course Development - \$250,000

Cabinet agreed to the transfer of the Ste. Madeline Staff Club and Golf Course project from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Head 77 – Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

Recurrent Expenditure - \$3,187,153

04/011/03 – EMBD Principal on \$400Mn Loan

Funds are required to meet the shortfall in principal repayment which is due on July 31, 2017.

Schedule relating to the Variation of Estimates 2017

SCHEDULE

RELATING TO VARIATION OF ESTIMATES - 2017

Table of Contents

Page No.

Head 03 Judiciary	1
Head 04 Industrial Court	2
Head 05 Parliament	3
Head 06 Service Commissions	4
Head 07 Statutory Authorities' Service Commission	5
Head 08 Elections and Boundaries Commission	6
Head 09 Tax Appeal Board	8
Head 11 Registration, Recognition and Certification Board	9
Head 13 Office of the Prime Minister	10
Head 18 Ministry of Finance	11
Head 22 Ministry of National Security	12
Head 23 Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs	13
Head 26 Ministry of Education	14

Table of Contents (continued)**Page No.****Head 28 Ministry of Health****16****Head 30 Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise
Development****17****Head 31 Ministry of Public Administration and Communications****19****Head 35 Ministry of Tourism****20****Head 39 Ministry of Public Utilities****21****Head 40 Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries****22****Head 48 Ministry of Trade and Industry****23****Head 61 Ministry of Housing and Urban Development****24****Head 68 Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs****25****Head 77 Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries****26**

SCHEDULE
RELATING TO VARIATION OF ESTIMATES - 2017

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2017 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2017	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
HEAD	03	JUDICIARY	\$ 405,336,600	\$ 425,836,600	\$ 20,500,000	\$	Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	189,046,900	209,546,900	20,500,000		
Item	001	Judiciary Trinidad	166,319,900	185,319,900	19,000,000		
Sub-item	05	Telephones	5,400,000	8,900,000	3,500,000		
Sub-item	21	Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings	2,000,000	4,000,000	2,000,000		
Sub-item	37	Janitorial Services	9,000,000	12,500,000	3,500,000		
Sub-item	43	Security Services	24,449,000	34,449,000	10,000,000		
Item	003	Judiciary Family Court	21,192,500	22,692,500	1,500,000		
Sub-item	43	Security Services	2,000,000	3,500,000	1,500,000		

HEAD	04	INDUSTRIAL COURT	38,558,060	42,648,060	4,090,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	24,119,300	25,211,300	1,092,000		
Item	001	General Administration	24,119,300	25,211,300	1,092,000		
Sub-item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	7,200,000	8,292,000	1,092,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	12,437,260	15,435,260	2,998,000		
Item	001	General Administration	9,884,860	12,655,860	2,771,000		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	1,000,000	2,000,000	1,000,000		
Sub-item	21	Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings	200,000	1,500,000	1,300,000		
Sub-item	43	Security Services	900,000	1,371,000	471,000		
Item	002	South Office	2,552,400	2,779,400	227,000		
Sub-item	43	Security Services	560,000	787,000	227,000		
HEAD	05	PARLIAMENT	125,908,000	135,908,000	10,000,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	89,989,600	99,989,600	10,000,000		
Item	001	General Administration	83,410,400	93,410,400	10,000,000		
Sub-item	12	Materials and Supplies	3,061,716	4,761,716	1,700,000		
Sub-item	17	Training	130,000	730,000	600,000		

Sub-item	23	Fees	500,000	1,000,000	500,000		
Sub-item	27	Official Overseas Travel	560,000	1,260,000	700,000		
Sub-item	28	Other Contracted Services	3,117,000	6,117,000	3,000,000		
Sub-item	58	Medical Expenses	250,000	1,250,000	1,000,000		
Sub-item	64	Operations of Constituency Offices	34,387,434	36,887,434	2,500,000		
HEAD	06	SERVICE COMMISSIONS	72,296,000	77,216,700	4,920,700		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	37,545,000	39,286,700	1,741,700		
Item	001	General Administration	37,545,000	39,286,700	1,741,700		
Sub-item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	29,000,000	30,741,700	1,741,700		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	29,501,000	32,680,000	3,179,000		
Item	001	General Administration	21,224,000	21,903,000	679,000		
Sub-item	23	Fees	2,450,000	3,129,000	679,000		
Item	006	Police Service Commission	5,537,000	8,037,000	2,500,000		
Sub-item	28	Other Contracted Services	2,050,000	4,550,000	2,500,000		
HEAD	07	STATUTORY AUTHORITIES' SERVICE COMMISSISON	5,102,000	5,872,000	770,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	3,345,900	3,922,900	577,000		
Item	001	General Administration	3,345,900	3,922,900	577,000		

Sub-item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	2,460,000	3,037,000	577,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	1,753,100	1,946,100	193,000		
Item	001	General Administration	1,753,100	1,946,100	193,000		
Sub-item	28	Other Contracted Services	286,400	479,400	193,000		
HEAD	08	ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION	90,824,500	112,682,180	21,857,680		Variation of Appropriation - To retire Advance from the Contingencies Fund - Warrant No. 1 of 2017
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	35,302,000	37,602,000	2,300,000		
Item	002	Election Expenses	4,000,000	6,300,000	2,300,000		
Sub-item	03	Overtime	4,000,000	6,300,000	2,300,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	47,822,500	67,380,180	19,557,680		
Item	002	Election Expenses	21,100,000	40,657,680	19,557,680		
Sub-item	01	Travelling and Subsistence	1,400,000	2,550,000	1,150,000		
Sub-item	05	Telephones	400,000	550,400	150,400		
Sub-item	08	Rental/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage	800,000	1,077,050	277,050		
Sub-item	09	Rental/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment	500,000	1,010,000	510,000		
Sub-item	12	Materials and Supplies	1,400,000	1,900,000	500,000		

Sub-item	17	Training	2,000,000	5,000,000	3,000,000		
HEAD	08	ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION (cont'd)					
Sub-item	21	Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings	350,000	410,000	60,000		
Sub-item	22	Short Term Employment	10,000,000	19,410,230	9,410,230		
Sub-item	57	Postage	1,000,000	3,000,000	2,000,000		
Sub-item	62	Promotions, Publicity and Printing	2,500,000	5,000,000	2,500,000		
HEAD	09	TAX APPEAL BOARD	7,203,000	7,954,100	751,100		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	4,288,500	5,039,600	751,100		
Item	001	General Administration	4,288,500	5,039,600	751,100		
Sub-item	08	Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage	1,950,000	2,300,000	350,000		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	435,735	615,735	180,000		
Sub-item	23	Fees	50,000	271,100	221,100		
HEAD	11	REGISTRATION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION BOARD	3,810,700	4,345,700	535,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	2,510,000	3,045,000	535,000		

Item	001	General Administration	2,510,000	3,045,000	535,000		
Sub-item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	2,100,000	2,387,000	287,000		
Sub-item	06	Remuneration to Board Members	218,000	466,000	248,000		
HEAD	13	OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER	227,913,000	230,463,000	2,550,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	11,500,000	14,050,000	2,550,000		
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	2,000,000	4,550,000	2,550,000		
Sub-item	06	General Public Services	2,000,000	4,550,000	2,550,000		
Project Grp	A	Administrative Services	2,000,000	4,550,000	2,550,000		
Project Desc	002	Strengthening of the Strategic Threat Assessment Capacity in Trinidad and Tobago - Think Tank Project	-	2,550,000	2,550,000		
HEAD	18	MINISTRY OF FINANCE	5,885,146,470	4,522,020,926		1,363,125,544	Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	4,201,917,450	2,838,791,906		1,363,125,544	
Item	007	Households	380,856,470	294,789,451		86,067,019	
Sub-item	06	Food Price Support Programme	288,000,000	201,932,981		86,067,019	

Item	009	Other Transfers	3,459,309,100	2,182,250,575		1,277,058,525	
Sub-item	11	Infrastructure Development Fund	2,629,000,000	1,371,380,475		1,257,619,525	
Sub-item	23	CARICOM Development Fund	118,884,000	99,445,000		19,439,000	
HEAD	22	MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY	4,456,103,323	4,605,594,323	149,491,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	864,536,678	887,136,678	22,600,000		
Item	001	General Administration	201,672,511	224,272,511	22,600,000		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	18,000,000	40,600,000	22,600,000		
SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	368,668,000	495,559,000	126,891,000		
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	253,408,000	380,299,000	126,891,000		
Sub-item	06	General Public Services	253,408,000	380,299,000	126,891,000		
Project Grp	F	Public Buildings	102,000,000	210,328,000	108,328,000		
Project Desc.	010	National Operations Centre Construction Project	99,000,000	207,328,000	108,328,000		
Project Grp	G	Equipment and Vehicles	82,720,000	101,283,000	18,563,000		

Project Desc.	005	Acquisition of a Digital Public Safety Communication System for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	41,000	18,604,000	18,563,000		
HEAD	23	MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS	296,582,300	368,746,300	72,164,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	139,621,300	211,785,300	72,164,000		
Item	001	General Administration	126,865,000	199,029,000	72,164,000		
Sub-item	04	Electricity	3,300,000	6,300,000	3,000,000		
Sub-item	05	Telephones	2,850,000	7,850,000	5,000,000		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	27,500,000	41,664,000	14,164,000		
Sub-item	23	Fees	45,377,494	95,377,494	50,000,000		
HEAD	26	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	5,327,738,200	5,508,215,066	180,476,866		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	03	MINOR EQUIPMENT PURCHASES	2,176,000	62,834,000	60,658,000		
Item	001	General Administration	1,800,000	62,458,000	60,658,000		
Sub-item	04	Other Minor Equipment	1,000,000	61,658,000	60,658,000		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	1,699,885,336	1,819,704,202	119,818,866		

Item	006	Educational Institutions		1,346,581,320		
			1,339,581,320		7,000,000	
Sub-item	19	Servol Junior Life Centres		4,039,000		
			2,039,000		2,000,000	
Sub-item	50	Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago		19,000,000		
			14,000,000		5,000,000	
Item	007	Households		128,283,830		
			115,283,830		13,000,000	
Sub-item	09	Early Childhood Care and Education		20,000,000		
			15,000,000		5,000,000	
Sub-item	23	Servol Hi-tech & Advanced Skills Training Programme		7,000,000		
			6,000,000		1,000,000	
Sub-item	25	Servol's Human Development and Skills Training Programme		20,000,000		
			13,000,000		7,000,000	
HEAD	26	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (cont'd)				
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises		331,395,052		
			231,576,186		99,818,866	
Sub-item	02	National Schools Dietary Services Ltd.		200,000,000		
			150,000,000		50,000,000	
Sub-item	08	Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme Ltd.		75,000,000		
			45,000,000		30,000,000	
Sub-item	10	EFCL - Interest on \$286.5Mn. Syndicated Loan arranged by RBC Merchant Bank		6,793,143		
			-		6,793,143	
Sub-item	11	EFCL - Principal Repayment on \$286.5Mn. Syndicated Loan arranged by RBC Merchant Bank		13,025,723		
			-		13,025,723	

HEAD	28	MINISTRY OF HEALTH	5,507,654,930	5,704,154,930	196,500,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	4,075,555,500	4,272,055,500	196,500,000		
Item	009	Other Transfers	3,964,000,000	4,160,500,000	196,500,000		
Sub-item	02	North West Regional Health Authority	1,045,000,000	1,075,000,000	30,000,000		
Sub-item	04	North Central Regional Health Authority	1,061,000,000	1,157,500,000	96,500,000		
Sub-item	05	South West Regional Health Authority	1,107,389,000	1,177,389,000	70,000,000		
HEAD	30	MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	430,699,855	439,699,855	9,000,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	32,120,300	32,270,300	150,000		
Item	004	Occupational Safety and Health Authority	565,000	715,000	150,000		
Sub-item	06	Remuneration to Board Members	565,000	715,000	150,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	47,049,400	54,649,400	7,600,000		
Item	001	General Administration	32,386,500	36,636,500	4,250,000		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	7,650,000	11,150,000	3,500,000		

Sib-item	22	Short Term Employment					
Item	004	Occupational Safety and Health Authority	2,948,113	3,698,113	750,000		
			11,527,500	14,877,500	3,350,000		
Sub-item	05	Telephones	210,000	270,000	60,000		
HEAD	30	MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (cont'd)					
sub-item	08	Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage	1,300,000	1,500,000	200,000		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	8,000,000	11,090,000	3,090,000		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	309,224,855	309,724,855	500,000		
Item	004	International Bodies	262,855	762,855	500,000		
Sub-item	08	Funding for the Liason Office in Canada	-	500,000	500,000		
SUB-HEAD	06	CURRENT TRANSFERS TO STATUTORY BOARDS AND SIMILAR BODIES	21,350,000	22,100,000	750,000		
Item	004	Statutory Boards	21,350,000	22,100,000	750,000		
Sub-item	17	Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies	21,350,000	22,100,000	750,000		
HEAD	31	MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS	1,006,328,000	1,062,558,000	56,230,000		Variation of Appropriation

SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	722,451,542	778,931,542	56,480,000		
Item	002	Science and Technology	115,684,470	172,164,470	56,480,000		
Sub-item	23	Fees	36,442,000	71,398,964	34,956,964		
Sub-item	28	Other Contracted Services	71,758,000	93,281,036	21,523,036		
SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	29,950,000	29,700,000		250,000	
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	20,950,000	20,700,000		250,000	
Sub-item	06	General Public Services	20,950,000	20,700,000		250,000	
Project Grp	F	Public Buildings	750,000	500,000		250,000	
Project Desc.	011	Ste. Madeleine Staff Club and Golf Course Development	250,000	0		250,000	Transferred to Head - Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
HEAD	35	MINISTRY OF TOURISM	80,829,371	85,829,371	5,000,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	28,915,621	33,915,621	5,000,000		
Item	001	General Administration	28,915,621	33,915,621	5,000,000		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	2,200,000	4,000,000	1,800,000		
Sub-item	22	Short Term Employment	1,500,000	3,100,000	1,600,000		

Sub-item	28	Other Contracted Services	700,000	2,300,000	1,600,000		
HEAD	39	MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES	2,867,909,500	3,142,924,500	275,015,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	680,835,000	728,035,000	47,200,000		
Item	009	Other Transfers	570,804,800	613,344,800	42,540,000		
Sub-item	04	Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost)	75,000,000	117,540,000	42,540,000		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	99,600,000	104,260,000	4,660,000		
Sub-item	02	Solid Waste Management Company Limited	75,000,000	79,660,000	4,660,000		
SUB-HEAD	06	CURRENT TRANSFERS TO STATUTORY BOARDS AND SIMILAR BODIES	1,697,525,000	1,925,340,000	227,815,000		
Item	004	Statutory Boards	1,697,525,000	1,925,340,000	227,815,000		
Sub-item	51	Water and Sewerage Authority	1,697,525,000	1,925,340,000	227,815,000		
HEAD	40	MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND ENERGY INDUSTRIES	941,381,500	906,381,500		35,000,000	Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	813,486,500	778,486,500		35,000,000	
Item	007	Households	801,726,900	766,726,900		35,000,000	

Sub-item	01	Shortfall in subsidy re sale of petroleum products	801,726,900	766,726,900		35,000,000	
HEAD	48	MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY	193,725,135	201,725,135	8,000,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	110,242,800	118,242,800	8,000,000		
Item	009	Other Transfers	106,659,800	114,659,800	8,000,000		
Sub-item	23	Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company	4,750,000	8,750,000	4,000,000		
Sub-item	24	InvesTT	4,650,000	8,650,000	4,000,000		
HEAD	61	MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT	1,112,107,000	1,488,944,045	376,837,045		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	953,863,600	1,250,700,645	296,837,045		
Item	009	Other Transfers	361,841,372	645,650,016	283,808,644		
Sub-item	01	Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation	354,341,372	638,150,016	283,808,644		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	592,022,228	605,050,629	13,028,401		
Sub-item	05	UDECOTT - Interest Payment - ANSA Merchant Bank Ltd. - Fixed Rate Bridge Loan	17,547,698	30,576,099	13,028,401		

SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	86,100,000	166,100,000	80,000,000		
Item	004	Social Infrastructure	80,500,000	160,500,000	80,000,000		
Sub-item	08	Housing and Settlements	75,500,000	155,500,000	80,000,000		
Project Grp	H	Housing Opportunity Programme	35,000,000	115,000,000	80,000,000		
Project Desc.	002	Squatter Settlements Regularization	22,000,000	97,000,000	75,000,000		
Project Desc.	005	Home Improvements and New Housing Subsidies Programme	10,000,000	15,000,000	5,000,000		
HEAD	68	MINISTRY OF SPORT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS	325,366,379	325,616,379	250,000		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	10,400,000	10,650,000	250,000		
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	1,400,000	1,650,000	250,000		
Sub-item	06	General Public Services	1,400,000	1,650,000	250,000		
Project Grp	F	Public Buildings	-	250,000	250,000		
Project Desc	001	Ste. Madeline Staff Club and Golf Course Development	-	250,000	250,000		Transferred from Head - Ministry of Public Administration and Communications

HEAD	77	MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LAND AND FISHERIES	829,281,240	832,468,393	3,187,153		Variation of Appropriation
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	186,369,500	189,556,653	3,187,153		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	126,954,000	130,141,153	3,187,153		
Sub-item	03	EMBD - Principal on \$400Mn Loan	94,647,000	97,834,153	3,187,153		