



SECOND REPORT

OF

THE STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

OF THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**on the Consideration of Proposals for the
Supplementation of Appropriation for the fiscal year 2020**

FIFTH SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT (2019/2020)

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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 Presented in the House of Representatives: June 12, 2020

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THE COMMITTEE

Mandate of the Committee

1. The Standing Finance Committee is established by House of Representatives 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 by House of Representatives Standing Order 87(1) 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 Wednesday June 10, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. The Minutes of the Meeting and the Verbatim Notes are attached at Appendices I and II respectively.
4. The purpose of this meeting was to consider proposals for the supplementation of the appropriation provided in the Appropriation (Financial Year 2020) Act, 2019¹. The proposals for supplementation are at Appendix IV. The Schedule relating to the supplementation of estimates for fiscal 2020 is at Appendix III.

¹ Act No. 21 of 2019, the Appropriation (Financial Year 2020) Act, 2019:
<http://www.ttparliament.org/legislations/a2019-21g.pdf>

Supplementation

5. The Standing Finance Committee noted the supplementation to the Appropriation for fiscal year 2020 in the sum of Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Eighty Six Million, Eight Hundred Dollars (\$2,686,000,800) is required to meet:
- Personnel Expenditure - \$68,400,000
 - Goods and Services - \$251,435,064
 - Minor Equipment Purchases - \$250,000
 - Current Transfers and Subsidies - \$2,142,789,736
 - Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies - \$55,500,000
 - Development Programme - \$167,626,000
6. The Committee noted that it was necessary to have a Supplementation of Appropriation of resources to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital Expenditure in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided. The source of these additional funds is the Consolidated Fund.
7. The Standing Finance Committee considered and approved the supplementation to the Appropriation for fiscal year 2020 in the sum of Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Eighty-Six Million, Eight Hundred Dollars (\$2,686,000,800). The details of the Supplementation are provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Supplementation of Heads of Expenditure for fiscal year 2020

Head of Expenditure		Amount
		\$
03	Judiciary	99,648,000
06	Service Commissions	2,142,000
08	Elections and Boundaries Commission	43,000,000
13	Office of the Prime Minister	47,220,000
15	Tobago House of Assembly	105,000,000
18	Ministry of Finance	880,000,000
22	Ministry of National Security	177,824,135

Head of Expenditure		Amount \$
23	Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs	76,550,000
28	Ministry of Health	224,582,640
30	Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development	21,405,000
42	Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government	116,700,000
43	Ministry of Works and Transport	244,484,504
65	Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs	35,374,200
70	Ministry of Communications	30,276,000
78	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services	581,794,321
Total		2,686,000,800

Recommendation

Supplementation

8. The Committee recommends the Supplementation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2020 in the sum of Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Eighty-Six Million, Eight Hundred Dollars (\$2,686,000,800).

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Sgd.
Hon. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP
Chairman

June 11, 2020

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Minutes of Meeting

**STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
FIFTH SESSION (2019/2020), ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY JUNE 10, 2020 AT 2:00 P.M.
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER
OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, RED HOUSE
ABERCROMBY STREET, PORT OF SPAIN**

Members of the Standing Finance Committee

Present

1. Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, MP - Chairman
2. Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP - Minister of Social Development and Family Services
(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 of National Security,
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 and Minister in the
Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal
Affairs
(Member for Laventille West)
8. Hon. Randall Mitchell, MP - Minister of Tourism
(Member for San Fernando East)
9. Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP - Minister of Community Development Culture,
and the Arts
(Member for St. Ann's East)
10. Mr. Esmond Forde, MP - Deputy Speaker
(Member for Tunapuna)
11. Hon. Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Edmund Dillon, MP - Minister of Housing and Urban Development
(Member for Point Fortin)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 12. Hon. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn, MP | - | Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development
<i>(Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West)</i> |
| 13. Hon. Dr. Lovell Francis, MP | - | Minister of State in the Ministry of Education
<i>(Member for Moruga/Tableland)</i> |
| 14. Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP | - | Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security
<i>(Member for Toco/Sangre Grande)</i> |
| 15. Ms. Nicole Olivierre, MP | - | Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries
<i>(Member for La Brea)</i> |
| 16. Mr. Adrian Leonce, MP | - | Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport
<i>(Member for Laventille East/Moroant)</i> |
| 17. Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP | - | Member for D'Abadie /O'Meara |
| 18. Mr. Maxie Cuffie, MP | - | Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration
<i>(Member for La Horquetta/Talparo)</i> |
| 19. Mr. David Lee, MP | - | Member for Pointe-a-Pierre |
| 20. Mr. Rodney Charles, MP | - | Member for Naparima |
| 21. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, MP | - | Member for Tabaquite |
| 22. Mr. Fazal Karim, MP | - | Member for Chaguanas East |
| 23. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, MP | - | Member for Caroni Central |
| 24. Dr. Roodal Moonilal, MP | - | Member for Oropouche East |
| 25. Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP | - | Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla |
| 26. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, MP | - | Member for Oropouche West |
| 27. Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP | - | Member for Couva South |
| 28. Dr. Fuad Khan , MP | - | Member for Barataria/San Juan |
| 29. Dr. Lackram Bodoie, MP | - | Member for Fyzabad |
| 30. Mr. Rushton Paray, MP | - | Member for Mayaro |
| 31. Ms. Ramona Ramdial, MP | - | Member for Couva North |

EXCUSED

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Mr. Barry Padarath, MP | - | Member for Princes Town |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|

ABSENT

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, MP | - | Prime Minister
<i>(Member for Diego Martin West)</i> |
| 2. Hon. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP | - | Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs
<i>(Member for Tobago West)</i> |
| 3. Hon. Anthony Garcia, MP | - | Minister of Education
<i>(Member for Arima)</i> |
| 4. Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy, MP | - | Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister
<i>(Member for Tobago East)</i> |
| 5. Mr. Darryl Smith, MP | - | Member for Diego Martin Central |
| 6. Ms. Marlene Mc Donald, MP | - | Member for Port of Spain South |
| 7. Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, MP | - | Leader of the Opposition
<i>(Member for Siparia)</i> |
| 8. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, MP | - | Member for Caroni East |
| 9. Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP | - | Member for St. Augustine |
| 10. Mr. Ganga Singh, MP | - | Member for Chaguanas West |

ALSO PRESENT

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Sen. the Hon. Kazim Hosein | - | Minister of Rural Development and Local Government |
| 2. Sen. the Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus | - | Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development |
| 3. Sen. the Hon. Rohan Sinanan | - | Minister of Works and Transport |
| 4. Sen. the Hon. Dennis Moses | - | Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs |
| 5. Sen. the Hon. Donna Cox | - | Minister of Communications |

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.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 Supplementation of Appropriation for the fiscal year 2020.
- 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.

PROPOSALS FOR THE SUPPLEMENTATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2020

Head 03: Judiciary

- 2.1 The Chairman announced Head 03, Judiciary, a supplementation of \$99,648,000.00.
- 2.2 The Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

- 2.3 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 03: Judiciary be supplemented by the sum of \$99,648,000.00.
- 2.4 The Members for Oropouche West, Caroni Central, Oropouche East, Couva South, Pointe-a-Pierre, Mayaro and Naparima sought clarification from the Attorney General. Thereafter the Attorney General and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.5 The question was put and agreed that Head 03: Judiciary be supplemented by the sum of \$99,648,000.00.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

- 2.6 The Chairman announced Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, a supplementation of \$21,405,000.00.
- 2.7 The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.8 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development be supplemented by the sum of \$21,405,000.00.
- 2.9 The Members for Chaguanas East, Couva South, Mayaro and Naparima sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.10 The question was put and agreed that Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development be supplemented by the sum of \$21,405,000.00.

Head 06: Service Commissions

- 2.11 The Chairman announced Head 06: Service Commissions, a supplementation of \$2,142,000.00.
- 2.12 The Minister of Finance was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.13 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 06: Service Commissions be supplemented by the sum of \$2,142,000.00.
- 2.14 The Members for Couva South, Oropouche East, Naparima and Caroni Central sought clarification. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.15 The question was put and agreed that Head 06: Service Commissions be supplemented by the sum of \$2,142,000.00.

Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission

- 2.16 The Chairman announced Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission, a supplementation of \$43,000,000.00.
- 2.17 The Minister of Finance was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

- 2.18 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission be supplemented by the sum of \$43,000,000.00.
- 2.19 The Members for Oropouche East, Chaguanas East, Couva South, Tabaquite, Naparima, Pointe-a-Pierre, Caroni Central and Mayaro sought clarification. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.20 The question was put and agreed that Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission be supplemented by the sum of \$43,000,000.00.

Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport

- 2.21 The Chairman announced Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport, a supplementation of \$244,484,504.00
- 2.22 The Minister of Works and Transport was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.23 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport be supplemented by the sum of \$244,484,504.00.
- 2.24 The Members for Chaguanas East, Couva South, Mayaro, Tabaquite, Couva North and Barataria/San Juan sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Works and Transport and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.25 The question was put and agreed that Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport be supplemented by the sum of \$244,484,504.00.

Head 28: Ministry of Health

- 2.26 The Chairman announced Head 28: Ministry of Health, a supplementation of \$224,582,640.00.
- 2.27 The Minister of Health was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.28 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 28: Ministry of Health be supplemented by the sum of \$224,582,640.00.
- 2.29 The Members for Fyzabad, Barataria/ San Juan, Couva South, Tabaquite and Caroni Central sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.30 The question was put and agreed that Head 28: Ministry of Health be supplemented by the sum of \$224,582,640.00.

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

- 2.31 The Chairman announced Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, a supplementation of \$116,700,000.00.
- 2.32 The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

- 2.33 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government be supplemented by the sum of \$116,700,000.00.
- 2.34 The Members for Pointe-a-Pierre, Couva North and Cumuto/Manzanilla sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Rural Development and Local Development and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.35 The question was put and agreed that Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government be supplemented by the sum of \$116,700,000.00.

Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly

- 2.36 The Chairman announced Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly, a supplementation of \$105,000,000.00.
- 2.37 The Minister of Finance was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.38 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly be supplemented by the sum of \$105,000,000.00.
- 2.39 The Members for Couva North, Caroni Central and Barataria/San Juan sought clarification from the Minister. Thereafter the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.40 The question was put and agreed that Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly be supplemented by the sum of \$105,000,000.00.

Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

- 2.41 The Chairman announced Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, a supplementation of \$581,794,321.00.
- 2.42 The Minister of Social Development and Family Services was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.43 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services be supplemented by the sum of \$581,794,321.00.
- 2.44 The Members for Chaguanas East, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Mayaro, Couva South and Pointe-a-Pierre sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Social Development and Family Services provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.45 The question was put and agreed that Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services be supplemented by the sum of \$581,794,321.00.

Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister

- 2.46 The Chairman announced Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister, a supplementation of \$47,220,000.00.

- 2.47 The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.48 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister be supplemented by the sum of \$47,220,000.00.
- 2.49 The Members for Chaguanas East, Couva South, Mayaro, Oropouche East, Pointe-a-Pierre and Cumuto/Manzanilla sought clarification. The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.50 The question was put and agreed that Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister be supplemented by the sum of \$47,220,000.00.

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

- 2.51 The Chairman announced Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, a supplementation of \$35,374,200.00.
- 2.52 The Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.53 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs be supplemented by the sum of \$35,374,200.00.
- 2.54 The Member for Naparima sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.55 The question was put and agreed that Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs be supplemented by the sum of \$35,374,200.00.

Head 22: Ministry of National Security

- 2.56 The Chairman announced Head 22: Ministry of National Security, a supplementation of \$177,824,135.00.
- 2.57 The Minister of National Security was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.58 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 22: Ministry of National Security be supplemented by the sum of \$177,824,135.00.
- 2.59 The Members for Naparima, Mayaro and Oropouche West sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of National Security and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.60 The question was put and agreed that Head 22: Ministry of National Security be supplemented by the sum of \$177,824,135.00.

Head 70: Ministry of Communications

- 2.61 The Chairman announced Head 70: Ministry of Communications, a supplementation of \$30,276,000.00.

- 2.62 The Minister of Communications was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.63 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 70: Ministry of Communications be supplemented by the sum of \$30,276,000.00.
- 2.64 The Members for Pointe-a-Pierre, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Naparima and Oropouche West sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Communications and the Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.65 The question was put and agreed that Head 70: Ministry of Communications be supplemented by the sum of \$30,276,000.00.

Head 18: Ministry of Finance

- 2.66 The Chairman announced Head 18: Ministry of Finance, a supplementation of \$880,000,000.00.
- 2.67 The Minister of Finance was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.68 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 18: Ministry of Finance be supplemented by the sum of \$880,000,000.00.
- 2.69 The Members for Caroni Central, Cumuto/Manzanilla, Couva North and Mayaro sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.70 The question was put and agreed that Head 18: Ministry of Finance be supplemented by the sum of \$880,000,000.00.

Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

- 2.71 The Chairman announced Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, a supplementation of \$76,550,000.00.
- 2.72 The Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.73 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs be supplemented by the sum of \$76,550,000.00.
- 2.74 The Members for Oropouche West and Pointe-a-Pierre sought clarification from, the Minister. The Attorney General provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.75 The question was put and agreed that Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs be supplemented by the sum of \$76,550,000.00.

Total Supplementation

- 2.76 The question was put and agreed that the Appropriation for fiscal year 2020 be supplemented by a total of \$2,686,000,800.00.

REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3.1 Written information to be provided by Ministries/Departments are listed in the Appendix.

OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 The Chairman informed Members that the debate for the adoption of the Committee's Report will take place on Friday June 12, 2020 at 1:30 pm.

4.2 The adjournment was taken at 7:43 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

Wednesday June 10, 2020

Appendix
Written Information to be
provided by Ministries/Departments

Head 30 – Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development
02/005/17 Training

- 1 Provide a breakdown of which organisations the incoming On-the-Job trainees will be assigned.
- 2 Provide a breakdown of trainees in the On-the-Job Training Programme by region.

Head 06 – Service Commissions

02/001/08 Rent/Lease - Office Accomodation and Storage

- 3 Provide a list of the properties currently occupied by the Service Commissions.
- 4 Provide a list of new properties rented by the Commission inclusive of location and owner.
- 5 Is the increase in properties as a result of an increase in the rental fees paid?
- 6 Has the Commission considered foregoing the rental of properties?

Head 08 – Elections and Boundaries Commission

02/001/62 – Promotions, Publicity and Printing

- 7 Provide a breakdown of how the \$2,000,000 will be spent across media platforms.

02/002/08 – Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage

02/001/62 – Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment

02/002/09 – Repairs and Maintenance Buildings

- 8 How did the Commission calculate the allocations for each sub-item listed above?

Head 43 – Ministry of Works and Transport

04/011/20 – NIDCO – Charter of an Inter-Island Passenger Vessel

- 9 What is the infrastructural cost to accommodate the high-speed passenger vessel?

Head 28 – Ministry of Health

02/001/16 – Contract Employment

- 10 Provide the detailed breakdown of the planned expenditure on Cuban doctors and nurses with this requested supplementation.
- 11 Do the nurses recruited from Cuba receive their remuneration directly from the Ministry of Health?

04/009/05 - South West Regional Health Authority

12 How much funds from Heritage Petroleum Company Limited was spent on the Augustus Long Hospital?

04/009/20 - Interest Payment - Ansa Merchant Bank 11yr Fixed Rate Loan \$500Mn ERHA

13 Provide the breakdown of the COVID-19 pandemic projects and programmes being undertaken by the Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA).

Head 42 - Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

01/001/01 - Salaries and COLA

01/001/04 - Allowances - Monthly Paid Officers

14 Provide a breakdown of the number of Municipal Police Officers to be deployed to each Regional Corporation.

Head 15 - Tobago House of Assembly

06/001/06 - Tobago House of Assembly

- 15 How many healthcare workers have been trained?
- 16 How much has been spent on the public education programme?
- 17 How many persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date in Tobago?
 - a. How many of these persons have tested positive?
- 18 How many primary care facilities have been set up?
- 19 How many patients have been quarantined at these facilities and at what cost?
- 20 Provide the breakdown of the \$5,900,000 requested for maintenance of a distinct COVID-19 pandemic response service so as to avoid disruptions in the primary and secondary health care services.
- 21 Is there any difference between this initiative in Tobago and those of the RHAs in Trinidad?
- 22 Have all personnel working under the distinct COVID-19 pandemic response service been trained for this purpose?
- 23 Provide the number of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits that have been acquired.
- 24 How many additional staff will be employed and paid out of the \$23,261,000?

Public Sector Investment Programme (P.S.I.P)

09/003/11/D/349 - Tobago Tourism Agency

25 How many registered hotels/guesthouses are expected to benefit from the Relief Grant?

Head 78 - Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

04/005/31 - Contribution to Non-Profit Institutions

26 Provide the most recent figures for the number of homeless persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

- 27 Provide the names of the eight (8) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that will be allocated funds from this supplementation to enable meals (lunch and dinner) to be provided to the homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic.

04/007/03 - Social Assistance

04/007/04 - Urgent Temporary Assistance

- 28 How many instances of fraud have been detected among applications for Social Assistance and Urgent Temporary Assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Head 13 - Office of the Prime Minister

04/005/01 - Ecclesiastical Bodies

- 29 Provide a list of the Religious Organisations that received funding to provide food support to citizens and permanent residents in response to COVID-19 and the amount received.

04/011/06 - UDeCOTT - Interest payment on \$500Mn Loan

- 30 What is the intended purpose of this loan facility?

Head 70 - Ministry of Communications

02/001/62 - Publicity Promotions and Printing

32. Provide a breakdown of how the \$7,000,000 supplemented was spent during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
33. Provide a breakdown of the amount of advertising conducted during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
34. How many television and radio stations were involved in the advertising and televising of the COVID-19 Pandemic information sharing sessions?

01/001/01- Salaries and COLA

35. Provide a breakdown of the staff at the Ministry identify:
- The total complement of staff
 - The number of permanent staff;
 - The number of temporary staff; and
 - The number of persons in acting positions.

Head 18 - Ministry of Finance

04/007/20- Credit Union Facility Programme - COVID-19

36. Provide the number of persons who accessed this facility and the respective amounts.

APPENDIX II

Verbatim Notes

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HELD IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, RED HOUSE, ABERCROMBY STREET, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY JUNE 10, 2020 AT 2.00 P.M.

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon everyone. This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is called to order. Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 82(6) and 87 this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee was convened to consider proposals for the Supplementation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2020. Speaking time.

Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. As regard to procedure, the Head and the amount to be supplemented will be announced. The Minister with responsibility will then be invited to provide an explanation for the supplementation. I will then propose the question that the Head be supplemented. Members may then seek clarification from the Minister. Once this is concluded the Chairman will then put the question that the sum to be supplemented be approved. The procedure will be repeated for each Head.

Hon. Members, we shall now consider the proposal for supplementation for fiscal year 2020.

Head 03: Judiciary, a supplementation of \$99,648,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Attorney General to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the request for supplementation in the total sum is broken down across several categories. Firstly, with respect to rent or lease for accommodation to cover monthly rental for approximately 19 locations that the Judiciary occupies. There was an original appropriation but we had some virements to meet other more critical positions and so we are effectively looking to top up this Vote.

Under Contract Employment, we are asking for \$31 million and this is required to meet payment of salaries for contract officers specifically in the period August to September 2020. It is as a result of the filling of critical vacancies during the COVID pandemic, and also in the filling out of our Family and Children Division and our Criminal Division and Road Traffic Courts. We have \$3 million outstanding under fees for pathologists and interpreters. These are persons who are ancillary to the court process and we have outstanding amounts for them for the period July to September 2020. So we are a bit forward looking in that expenditure.

Madam Chair, we have an outstanding amount of roughly \$7.7 million for janitorial services and security services to the MTS which is their service provider. Those sums have been outstanding from March to September 2020 and there was an underestimation of that amount. As you know, we have now more facilities under supervision.

Security services at the MTS side are in fact the 51,000,771. There has been an outstanding amount from the period 2019 to 2020. What has gone on is that unfortunately MTS has been starved of payments due and payable to it across a number of sectors for decades. The reconciliation of that amount has come to account now, and the Judiciary's fair share of that amount is approximately \$51 million, nearly \$52 million. Those in the round are the explanations for the appropriation increase at \$99,648,000.

Question proposed: That Head 03 be supplemented by the sum of \$99,648,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. Hon. Attorney General, can you just let us know what is the total number of buildings that are rented or leased by the Judiciary? Thank you.

Hon. Al-Rawi: I really could not say. That is quite a large number. It includes warehousing, it includes a

number of things. The only recent additions by the Judiciary were the Port of Spain North Family Court – Children Courts sorry, and the Fyzabad Court. All others were State owned aspects and have not yet come to book. As you are aware we are about to open the waterfront courts, yielding 169 courts first time since the 1980s that we have had such a quantum leap in growth in the Judiciary and that is state owned accommodation. We have yet to do the arrangements between the water front complex and that. So I could not give you that precise figure. I do know there are only two new recent additions, that is Fyzabad Court and Port of Spain Court, Cipriani, both were the position – forgive me. There was also the Family Court in Tobago which we opened very recently as well.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Attorney General, if you were to disaggregate this figure here, which landlord gets the most and which gets the least?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Easy. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the vast sum is for that. Because you must remember the State receives moneys, Nipdec, any other state facilities, et cetera. So, the Government is the largest landlord in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It rents approximately 2.4 million square feet of space. There is a deficit of space of approximately 2.4 million square feet of space as well. So landlord that receives the largest sector of the pie is in fact the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And the Family Court sorry – in Fyzabad, how much was that –

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure, so the Family Court in Fyzabad was selected by the Judiciary prior to the 2015 election under the leadership of Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. That rental per month I think a couple hundred thousand dollars. I could not tell you off hand, but that is near minuscule next to amount of rental that the Government of the Republic as a landlord receives.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The Magistrates' Court in Princes Town that was never used to conduct a single court hearing, is rent still being paid there?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, yes. Very true. Unfortunately, under the last Government there was a disaster in the procurement of the Princess Town Court. Inadequate, it was worse yet, it was actually sabotaged by the office of the Attorney General under Anand Ramlogan and under the last government because they cancelled the maintenance services unit at the Judiciary. That really is one of the largest tragedies in the Judiciary's performance and the Judiciary's ability to perform, the savagery that went on by the last government canceling the maintenance unit.

Fortunately, this Government has already passed the Note and procured the contract and the build out of that court is in place. We are remedying with dispatch that terrible situation which was caused under your political leader.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: AG, I am asking is rent still being paid?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Of course.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And how much? How much is it?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: I really could not tell you but whilst we are building out the court to take care of that extreme tragedy under Mrs. Persad-Bissessar's regime whilst we could not – **Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** But five years – but AG, you are here five years, is it that it was terminated?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Whilst we could not use it. Yes, yes, I am answering. So whilst we could not use it and rent was being paid under Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and whilst they had cancelled the entire maintenance arrangements in the Judiciary, crumbling the Judiciary, we have fortunately put that into effect. That building is supposedly due for opening I think in a matter of months. The COVID pandemic of course caused a bit of a slow down on that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Can we proceed to Contract Employment, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: One minute please, thank you. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Madam Chair, the question was asked and answered.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Since these items there represent recurrent expenditure –

Hon. Al-Rawi: Um-hmm.

Dr. Tewarie: – and we are asking for a \$99 million increase, is it a reasonable assumption that under all similar headings the recurrent expenditure allocated for the 2020 budget has been consumed?

2.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, I would not allow that wide broad-brush question under this Head of Expenditure, so unless you have another question –

Dr. Tewarie: But –

Madam Chairman: Member Caroni Central, I have so ruled, so unless you have another question you would wish to ask under what we are considering, I would then wish to move on. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Tewarie: I have a follow up.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I will come back. Member for Oropouche East. I will come back.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Mr. Attorney General, I am looking at 02/001/43 Security Services.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: This, of course, represents more than 50 per cent of the amount of monies requested.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: My question has to do with the incompetence of budgeting.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yeah.

Dr. Moonilal: Originally, in the 2020 fiscal measure, 43 million more or less was budgeted for security.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yeah.

Dr. Moonilal: We are now being asked to approve 51.7 million. Have they spent out the 43 million?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, they have, but it is not born out of incompetence, and thank you for asking the question. What happened was the debt that was due and payable to MTS was not crystallized. So you are perfectly right. Of the 99 million that we are asking for, a whole \$51 million or more than 50 per cent is the MTS. What was really the difficulty was that MTS had not been paid for decades and its receivables were only brought to book in large measure by an exercise that the Minister of Finance conducted to make sure that MTS was made liquid. So it was not budget incompetence. It was the fact that the debt needed to be crystallized. This debt is something that you see across a number of other Ministries. The Judiciary just happened to be one of the largest creditors to MTS and we were very pleased to wipe that debt off by making the payments that we were doing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, I will go to the issue of Contract Employment.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: And Attorney General, could you tell us how many contract officers are to be paid between August and September of 2020?

Hon. Al-Rawi: I regret that due to our limitations, I do not have a representative from the Judiciary here with me. And let me just double check –

Mr. Imbert: We would get the information for you.

Hon. Al-Rawi: I could get it for you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair. Could I – as I see the Minister of Finance is intervening here – could I ask when this information will be made available?

Mr. Imbert: Well, I can assure you the Budget Division is listening and would be here as well, and they would provide it by Friday.

Mr. Indarsingh: By Friday. Madam Chair, as you know, a debate on this report will take place, is carded to take place on Friday and really for Members of the Opposition to be able to be in a position to prepare themselves –

Hon. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, I am sorry to interrupt, the Judiciary has just messaged me, thanks for technology. I will have that answer in just a couple of minutes and permit me to correct an error, Princes Town is actually – there is no rent that is being paid. They have just confirmed that for me. So fortunately, we have no rent being incurred at this point.

Madam Chairman: As far as the question, Couva South, what the Attorney General said, we will get it later –

Mr. Indarsingh: In terms of –

Madam Chairman: So, I expect that before we rise today, okay? Can we go to Member for Pointe-a-Pierre?

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Attorney General, going back to the Rent Lease, a combination of 19 locations that you said you have and 6.1 additional increase and you said, the funding you – the original allocation for the rent and lease, you had to vire that money elsewhere.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Could you tell us where that money that you – that 6.1 that you had to vire in other Heads, what it was for?

Hon. Al-Rawi: I will have it in a couple of minutes as the technocrats are not here next to me.

Mr. Imbert: Are you saying vire?

Madam Chairman: Vire.

Mr. Imbert: Vire?

Mr. Lee: That is what he said.

Mr. Imbert: I know what I was hearing “buy” when you were talking.

Madam Chairman: I believe the word is vire. Okay, Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I will pass, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to revert, AG, to the rent and I just need to ask one – have a clarification with respect to the building at the corner of Court Street and Lewis Street in San Fernando that has been actually purchased or rented by the Judiciary and it has been abandoned. Is rent still being paid on that building?

2.15 p.m.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure, Madam Chair, my friend is referring to another scandal under her Prime Minister, where a building which was entirely inappropriate for purpose was purchased. That is the subject of a significant investigation right now. We will get back to that to see if there was any criminality involved.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: No. AG, every year, the Chief Justice says that building is going to be opened. That is why I am asking you if rent is still being paid.

Hon. Al-Rawi: The Ministry of Works and Transport went into that building, which is what I am referring you to. So we will get back the forensic report on that, and I am sure you will be very interested about that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Attorney General inform this meeting of the way the Office of the Judiciary went about filling the said vacancies for the sum of money that is being sought here this afternoon? And, in addition to that, does this figure include any gratuity payments and so on?

Madam Chairman: Contract Employment?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, I am pleased to inform that pursuant to my undertaking, I have received the figures of contracts for the last question, if I may just answer that as we are here. It is 634 people for the Family and Children Division, and for the Criminal Division, it is a further 163 people. So that takes us into answering the last question. May I please ask you, if you would not mind, to just repeat your question? I apologize.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. I said in relation to the sum that is being sought of \$31 million – it is indicated for the payment of salaries –

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: – does this also include the payment of any gratuity at the end of these contracts?

Hon. Al-Rawi: No. I see what you mean. If the total allocation will anticipate the payment of gratuities? I do not believe that it necessarily does because payments are done depending upon the cycle of the contract. Dependent upon the cycle, yes there will be a certain amount that would be for gratuity. But – oh, I am now informed by the Judiciary that this does not have the gratuity. That will be in five years’ time. So they have calculated the contract to run for five years. The five-year gratuity will come up at the end of the fifth year and, therefore, they will seek the appropriation for that at that time.

What this is for is for the 634 plus 163 persons which takes us into the zone of the number of people, and that takes us close to 800-odd people more that we have brought on. These are new hires, new jobs that have been created to operationalize the laws that we have put into effect, which is the Family and Children Division and the Criminal Division. As you know, some of this includes the work that we have been doing in the virtual courts and in the video conferences that we have set up at the prisons. I am sure

that it is good value for money. For instance, in a three-month period, we were able, from the prisons itself, in opening these new virtual courts, these video courts, to do over 1,440 matters without moving a single prisoner outside of the courtroom. That is at the prison.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair. The Attorney General has a very long run up here this evening but, more importantly, he indicated that 634 persons and an additional 163 persons. I do not know if he has the information of how – what was the mechanism used to advertise for the recruitment of these 634 and 163?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure I do. They were in the newspapers. They were widely spread. I am told that thousands of people applied for these jobs. There was an interview panel which was assembled to hire these people and that was a very transparent process. I want to remind you, you remember there is a fella name Watson Duke in Trinidad and Tobago? That gentleman –

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I did not ask about Watson Duke.

Hon. Al-Rawi: I am answering.

Madam Chairman: You asked a question.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yeah. There is a fella name Watson Duke, relative to your question, who was camped outside the Hall of Justice steps refusing to allow the Judiciary to expand itself by the nearly 800 jobs that we have added and he asked for that Criminal Division to not be supported. That was in the face of all of those advertisements where thousands of people applied for jobs. We are very pleased that the Judiciary has created nearly 800 important and viable jobs to this country.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Attorney General, seeing the period is August to September 2020, my question is, why it is we need contract officers during August when the Assizes close, Court of Appeal close, Family Court close and Civil Registry close. Why do we need workers in August?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Because you are wrong. None of the courts are closed. They are all open.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: In August?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yeah. In fact, yesterday we signed the rules, the Civil and Criminal Proceeding Rules, to do away with the court vacation for this year and for the next year due to the COVID pandemic. So contrary to your assertions, the Judiciary is now open all year round in full functionality. And, for the record, they never even closed under the COVID pandemic. I would remind you, as I just said, in a matter of the period of March 16, 2020, to May 13, 2020, the Judiciary conducted 1,440 matters from the prisons of Trinidad and Tobago without having to bring a single prisoner to a courtroom in Trinidad and Tobago. So there is no closure of courts.

The publication of the Rules Committee has gone out. There will be no court vacation for this year and for next year. And I would just like to remind, the court vacation has never applied to the Magistracy. The Magistracy sits all year round, and you just included the Magistracy there. So, I would just like to remind you that the Magistrates' Court has been, since the colonial days, open all year round.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I did not mention the Magistrates' Court AG, but what I am saying is, how you will need 700 almost 800 persons, if you are also doing and boasting about this 12 virtual courts. Why you need 800 additional persons?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Easy. Easy to explain. Perhaps you were not paying attention in the five years we have been in Parliament.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Of course I am paying attention AG.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Easy to explain. We have had a massive expansion of the Judiciary in a way that has never hit Trinidad and Tobago. Whilst we have been operationalizing laws, like the motor vehicle and road traffic, the Criminal Division, the specialist courts under the Criminal Division, the specialist court that is the Children Court, the specialist court in the family arena, whilst we have opened the Family Court in Tobago, the Children Court in Fyzabad, the Children Court in Port of Spain, as we open nearly 125 brand new courts in a month's time, you have to have people inside these courtrooms to staff and work. Justice has been denied for decades, because there has not been a proper attention to providing plant and machinery, meaning buildings and things inside of buildings; people, that is staff and processes. Unlike every other Government, this Government has had the courage to spend appropriately, as you are seeing here, we are spending a further \$31 million on people in 800 new jobs. Let me repeat that. Madam Chairman, \$31 million on 800 new jobs. That is a massive achievement by the Judiciary.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West, I would allow you one more question and then I would

take the next one.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: AG. I just want to rebut what you said –

Hon. Al-Rawi: That is not a question.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: – that the courts are opened. I would ask, do you really believe the courts are open? In San Fernando Supreme Court, you could not file a single document from COVID to date.

Hon. Al-Rawi: That is not a question.

Madam Chairman: All right, so –

Hon. Al-Rawi: That is not true.

Madam Chairman: In terms of – one minute please. We are really dealing with the expenditure here, so the discussion of about whether a court was open or not, I am not going to allow.

2.25 p.m.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The AG said it was open. He said it was open.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. AG, I have two questions, the first one on Sub-Item 08, Rio Claro Magistrates' Court, I know has been on a double-shift system and that has been tied specifically with Princes Town –

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Paray: – any indication if, you know, this allocation would try and resolve that issue in Princes Town to ease up what has been happening at the Rio Claro Magistrates' Court?

Hon. Al-Rawi: So this allocation which is for rent would not ease it up. The allocation which is important is the one that has been spent already which is to do the works. So whilst we build out the Rio Claro court and the Princes Town court, let me remind you, this is because the last government – I know you were not a Member of it then, and many Members here were not with responsibility for the portfolio, so it is no criticism to individual Members opposite me now. The last government destroyed, dismantled and removed the building maintenance committees that the Judiciary had. So whereas the Judiciary could have used its own carpenters, its own welders, its own people to do their maintenance, that was taken away from them. They were left, therefore, with crumbling facilities. They were also left with nothing but promises.

I am sure you recall that there was an announcement for the creation of a judicial complex in the east, all that happened in that was that a contract was given to an architect in breach of the Central Tenders Board and it had to be cancelled. So, respectfully, the expenditure of \$6,142,000 on Sub-Item 08 is for Rent. We have, fortunately, awarded those contracts, they are in the course of built out. We have reinstalled the building committee. We have ring-fenced the money for the Judiciary in a way that has never happened before. The Judiciary, as I have just explained under Sub-Item 16, they have hired 800 people to run courts, we are now breaking records. And for the record, as I say that, all filings are being done electronically, so I cannot understand what the Member for Oropouche West is talking about –

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: That is not true.

Hon. Al-Rawi: – because you can file your documents electronically.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: That is not true.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, AG.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro, I believe you said you have one more question.

Mr. Paray: Yes, one more question under Sub-Head 37: Janitorial Services. AG, I noticed in the 2020 estimate for Janitorial Services was \$11,954,000 and it was about \$2.7 million higher than the previous year. I am seeing that you are asking for an additional \$7.7 million in some adjustments going forward.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Paray: The question that I have is: What would have been the reason for this additional expenditure on top of that?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. Perhaps you missed it a little while earlier, I was explaining that. Because both janitorial and security services are provided by MTS, MTS was owed money for decades. In fact, in the period 2010 to 2015, they had accumulated a massive amount of money due and payable to MTS and it just was not paid. What we did is we went back on an MTS accounts divisions, did a reconciliation exercise – it was led by the Minister of Finance – and we crystalized what each state enterprise owes in terms of

security and janitorial services. You will see it in the Attorney General's office, for instance, in some sub-divisions, but at the Judiciary where MTS provides both security and janitorial, we were not in a position to crystalize the correct amount that was due.

So the increase that you are seeing here of \$7.735 million is because we now know what is due and payable to MTS under Sub-Item 37, that is Janitorial Services, and you will see an increase of 51 – nearly \$52 million for security services again provided by MTS, because now we know what was not paid, in particular, in the period 2010 to 2015.

Mr. Paray: AG, but –

Hon. Al-Rawi: You must remember MTS is one of the largest employers in Trinidad and Tobago, small, decent honest, hard-working janitors and security providers who have not had the benefit of the amount of money that should have come into the system. Fortunately, our Minister of Finance conducted an excellent exercise to make sure that the money can be paid to the people that matter.

Mr. Paray: AG, I am just going with how it is written in the document here where you advised that this money is for the provision of Janitorial Services for March 2020 to September 2020, so I am of the assumption this is to pay for services going forward –

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Paray: – not necessarily for old debt.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yeah. Because we used the rest of the money already to pay for the arrears. So what happens is that the mid-year point, which is where we are, you have run out of money. You ran out of money because under the Sub-Head, under 37 or 43 you expended money, so you used everything that was estimated. It is in the first column, the estimate for janitorial was nearly \$12 million, the estimate for \$35 million was for security, and what we have done here –

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I am getting a lot of – I am interrupting the Attorney General, but –

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, I have not recognized you. I believe the Attorney General is answering a question. [Crosstalk] Member for Couva South, I believe the person I have recognized is the Member for Mayaro.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Madam Chair, so just to finish the answer. So the first part is that we have used the money already, the second part is that the additional moneys are to carry on the year forward till end of year, which is September, but very importantly, it also includes the fact that in the “go forward” we have 125 new courts to look after. Let me repeat that, beginning – end of June, July to September, Trinidad and Tobago will have in aggregate 125 new courtrooms that did not exist before. So, obviously, we are going to have to have janitorial and security for those services, because this Government and this Judiciary has massively expanded its footprint to provide justice. So it is a combination of two events; one, the arrears that is due and payable to MTS for historical debts that were never settled, that money has been used. We have run out in the Vote of those moneys and now what we are doing, we are contemplating the massive increase in the Judiciary for the benefit of the citizens.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I just want to correct something for the record earlier I had asked. I had given the figures \$43 million for the Security Services under 43, it is in fact – I have just checked the book – it is \$35.8 million.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: So that it is \$36 million, more or less. What we have here is an increase – 148 per cent increase. Part of the problem, Attorney General, is that in the document given by the Ministry of Finance – this is why I said it is really the incompetence of budgeting – they state here that it is required to facilitate payments, but what you are saying it is required to facilitate back payments.

Hon. Al-Rawi: I am saying both. I apologize if I have not made it clear.

Dr. Moonilal: If it was absolutely clear then we will understand because it is back payments we are dealing with, because you already had \$5 million more for fiscal 2020, which was 35.8 million and now you are asking for 51.7 million, which is 148 per cent increase just for a few months of the year. So this is back payments and if it is back payments, we ought to know the breakdown for the back payments.

Hon. Al-Rawi: So, Madam chair, if I may address the Member's concerns in a number of ways: number one, I would not wish for any scorn to be poured upon the very hard-working members of the Budget

Division who prepared the very summary documents that come before us; number two, I will take the blame if there is not clarity that is provided. And let me explain this way, it is not only for the arrears, that is part of it, it does also include the rapid expansion, the massive expansion of the footprint of the Judiciary, and therefore, security services at Princes Town and at Tower D, when we open Tower D, and in the retrofit of the Hall of Justice, we are going to require more positions. It was not anticipated in the last budget when we made these appropriations, Madam Chair, that we would have been able to really break our own records. So, quite frankly, the jump from \$35 million to \$87 million is because we have just done it so good, so well. The ability to expand the Judiciary so rapidly by expanding 125 new courtrooms and adding 800 jobs, I know that is a little hard for some Members to capture, but it is the truth.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I ask a question?

Madam Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: Are we on 02/001/43? I just want to know that—

Madam Chairman: I believe so.

2.35 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Right. So on that Item, Member for Oropouche East, if you look at the last line in the explanation given, it is for the provision of security services.

Dr. Moonilal: Could the Minister speak up. I am not hearing him clearly with the muffled sound.

Mr. Imbert: I will oblige. If the Member for Oropouche East would look at page 4 of the document circulated to Members, under 02/001/43, Security Services, you would see at the last line it is for the provision of security services from fiscal 2019, which you should know is from October 01, 2018, to September 30, 2019, to 2020, which you should know is from October 01, 2019. So it is for two fiscal years, and therefore what the Attorney General said is absolutely correct. It is to provide money for fiscal 2019 and 2020, and therefore it provides for backpay and going forward to the end of fiscal 2020. It is exactly what the Attorney General said.

Dr. Moonilal: So what did you do with the money that was budgeted, which was in excess every single year?

Mr. Imbert: You have got the point now. It is for two fiscal years, so therefore it is backpay and going forward.

Dr. Moonilal: And you did not know this before?

Mr. Imbert: So therefore your point is wrong.

Dr. Moonilal: You are incompetent.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, the Court Executive Administrator has informed me that the Princes Town court will be ready in six weeks' time. Secondly, I am able to also confirm that contrary to any misunderstanding that some Members may have, you must remember that the increase in these line items for Contract Employment, 16, the courts, not only do they not close, but the court office is now a permanent feature. So even though somebody may not be sitting, the court office still works, the transcriptionist still works, the backlog still works and therefore, even though the Member for Oropouche West was unfortunately on the wrong track to say that the courts close, the point is that the court offices and the backlog arrangements are always in operation. The Family Court never closes. The Children Court does not close and the Magistracy does not close, and now the High Courts will not be closing either.

Mr. Charles: Item 16, Contract Employment. In the 2020 estimates the budget was 190 million, representing a 9.2 million increase in the Item Contract Employment. The Attorney General has said that this is because of the excellent work that he has done to employ 800 persons to run the court—additional persons on contract. If I am correct, is this not a case of poor budgeting?—because you must have anticipated additional courts would be opened. Even if it was 10 courts, you could have put in a figure at the start of the budget year. But the fact that nothing—well, from what we see, very little was budgeted, and you had all these ideas in your mind. Is it a case of poor budgeting?

Mr. Imbert: Allow me to answer, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. I am going to allow a very limited answer because I believe that was already answered, put another way by the Attorney General. But just in the event it may have escaped some of us, I would really ask if it can be answered just directly and in a limited way. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: It will be done very quickly, Madam. The budget that is presented in this House, usually in

October for the last couple of years, is based on decisions of Cabinet up to that time. After the budget has been presented and debated and passed, the Cabinet meets regularly every week, and every week there will be new Items that will come for Cabinet decision, for Cabinet approval and these new Cabinet decisions during a fiscal year would lead to new Items of expenditure which are not known when the budget is read. That is the answer. So all of the things the AG has been speaking about is the evolution of what has happened in the Judiciary since the budget was read.

Madam Chairman: Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to add a few short particulars to what the Minister of Finance said. I thank the Minister of Finance of course for that clarity. But I would like to say what happened is we accelerated and the Judiciary was able to accomplish the opening of the Family Court in Tobago, which has a children's court, a family court. We are six weeks out from opening the Princes Town court, and we are mere weeks away from opening the Port of Spain waterfront courts and the retrofit of the Hall of Justice. That is a massive expansion.

Again, I will put it very succinctly as I end now. We are the victim of our great success. The Judiciary is to be complimented on its excellent work in opening such a massive expansion of employment and courts to give justice to citizens.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, a follow-up. The Minister has indicated that he is employing 800 new persons, and he has articulated a plethora of achievements, but I am someone who is tied in new budgeting practices to performance output related to expenditure. Would the Minister be minded to tell us, all these great achievements and the \$31 million that is additional that is being required, would that reduce the backlog in the various courts, in particular the Magistrates' Court, and if so by how much? If you would venture to give us an idea that we are putting money and there is value for money.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. Madam Chair, I have exact numbers.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. In terms of the question, Member for Naparima, I heard you say Criminal Courts and Magistrates' Court and so on. If I look at the explanation it says, "Family Court, Criminal Division, District Criminal and Traffic Courts".

Mr. Charles: So the question could be rephrased to say: What would be the measurable reduction of in the backlog in these specific courts?

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Easy, easy, easy. My friend apparently does not pay attention to anything in Parliament. Let me repeat. There were two areas of logjam. One is in the annual flow of cases and the second is in the backlog. With respect to the annual flow in the Criminal Division in particular, I want to remind the Member of the Criminal Division and of the motor vehicle and road traffic aspect of it. By the amendments that we just did up to last week in this House, which are going to be partially proclaimed immediately, we will have the effect of taking the annual caseload in the Magistracy for example, we have an annual caseload of 146,000 cases per year, we will eliminate 104,000 cases every year from that. With the passage and proclamation in December, on December 23, 2019, of the dangerous drugs amendments, we removed 8,500 cases per annum from the 146,000. As we open the Criminal Courts, the Criminal Division at the Hall of Justice because of the Civil Division move, upon the proclamation of preliminary enquiries abolition we will remove a further 26,000 cases from the 146,000. That leaves us with, instead of an annual load of 146,999 cases, we are down to 8,500. That is current year on year load.

With respect to the backlog, the spot speed camera enforcement law demerit points that we did just on Friday, we are about to proclaim the new section 26A of that law. It was clause 26 of that particular law which allows the Chief Justice to take approximately 80,000—let me repeat this—80,000 cases in backlog and deal with it in a fast track system and therefore we are achieving a massive backlog clearing by the operationalization of this law, package of laws, together with the combination of increased expenditure, in particular for Contract Employment, as we increase it from \$119 million to \$150 million. So those figures are easy to speak for.

Madam Chairman: Another question, Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: Yes. But Attorney General, you know the average citizen is concerned about the fact—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I ask what line Item the Member for Naparima is on?

Mr. Charles: Same Item 16.

Madam Chairman: I believe we are talking about Contract Employment.

Mr. Charles: The average citizen is not concerned too much about reduced by X and reduced by that. What they are interested in is if I am charged and I am before the courts, how long would it take, and it would be good for them to know that it now takes two years and you will reduce it to six months. I think they will be happy to hear that.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I intervene? You cannot be having a general discussion on extraneous matters here.

2.45 p.m.

Hon. Al-Rawi: So, Madam Chair, to answer the Member's question, I think the hon. Member is suggesting that citizens may want to know something else. I think it is important for them, I think they genuinely are very much pleased and concerned to know that you are going from 146,000 to 8,000 cases because 43 magistrates doing a 146,000 as opposed to 43 doing 8,000 cases is a massive difference. Right? You will agree? It is a huge difference.

I think the hon. Member is correct when he says, what will the time frame be? The time frame is almost instantaneous because these matters are now done electronically. We are doing electronic filing, electronic distribution, distribution via TTPost, appearances on your laptop, appearances that at designated zones. So we have gone from this archaic concept of justice into the modern realm of justice. Let me repeat. At the prisons in the COVID period we were able to do 1,440 matters virtually.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I am okay.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 supplemented by the sum of \$99,648,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Attorney General. So, hon. Members, by agreement, we are going to move to Head, I think, it is Head 30 which is the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development \$21,405,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am just checking. Right. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the sum is required to supplement the 2020 funding to the On-the-Job Training Programme as a result of the 10 per cent increase in stipends with effect from December 01, 2019, as stated by the hon. Minister of Finance in the 2020 budget presentation, and to facilitate an expected increase in the in-take of trainees from July 2020. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 30 be supplemented by the sum \$21,405,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, might you be able to tell us of this \$21.4 million allocation, what amount is going to be allocated for the 10 per cent and what amounts will be allocated for the increase in trainees for July of 2020?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am so sorry, I was temporally distracted.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Could you repeat?

Mr. Karim: Yes, of course. Yes. Of the \$21.4 million, \$21,405,000 to be exact, might you be able to answer – and since there are two basic tenets of this increase, might you be able to tell us what is the allocation of this amount for the 10 per cent increase, and what is the allocation for the number of increase in the trainees which is stated here from July 2020?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The 10 per cent increase is approximately 150,000. And the second question?

Mr. Karim: The amount therefore, which will be the balance I expect, of the \$21,405,000 which will be allocated, how many trainees do you expect that would be responsible for in the uptake from July 2020? – the increase.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: All right. So as we speak now the total trainees are a little over 5,000 and with an intake of trainees we had anticipated 400 a month, but of course with the COVID-19 coronavirus in terms of even the training, because our approach is one of training these trainees, at least one week in different

aspects before placing them. That figure is being revised to take into consideration the fact that mass gatherings are not allowed at this point in time. So the director and her staff are in the process of working out actually the figures, 400 a month, but what can be practically placed. So I cannot give you that information because it is a work in progress at this point in time.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: It is just a hunch that I have, that is, I find \$150,000 which you said was going to be for the increase in the stipends a bit low when compared to the number of persons you say are currently on the programme. Is this a calculated accurate figure of stipend increase, \$150,000? And how many trainees will this increase in the stipends we are catering for?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: One second.

Mr. Karim: Sure.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am advised by the director of the programme that the increase is approximately \$3 million a month. Yes.

Mr. Karim: So the—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: So you are quite correct.

Mr. Karim: The figure was not accurate?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes. I am advised that I—the initial advice was incorrect.

Mr. Karim: I thought so, it was very small when compared to the—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well I know you are familiar with the OJT programme having been responsible for it, MP.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. May I?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Karim: The supplementation requested in the finance year 2020 is 45 per cent less than the sum requested and granted in financial year 2019, despite the 10 per cent increase in the OJT stipend effective December 2019. What do you think is responsible for this comparatively smaller request?

Mr. Imbert: Could I intervene? Could you explain yourself a little better? What are you trying to say?

Mr. Karim: Yeah. When you compare 2019 with 2020.

Mr. Imbert: What in 2019?

Mr. Karim: In 2019 you had an allocation of 39,258,000 when you requested an increase; and this increase is 21.4. I am asking the question, what is responsible for this significant decrease in the allocation you requested?

Mr. Imbert: You talk about a decrease in the supplementary appropriation?

Mr. Karim: I have the figures here, you know. You presented it at the budget, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: What are you trying to say? The total allocation? The supplementary appropriation?

Mr. Karim: No. The supplementary allocation for 2019 was 39,358,000. You are now coming— [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: That is not relevant. This is a supplementation on the 2020 appropriation.

Mr. Karim: May I ask the question? What is responsible for this reduction?

Madam Chairman: But I think the question does not have— [*Crosstalk*] I do not get the question.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Let me repeat.

Madam Chairman: [*Crosstalk*]—to relate to 2019.

Mr. Karim: With your permission.

Madam Chairman: It was really related to 2020.

Mr. Karim: Okay. May I ask with your permission, Chairman?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Yeah. Let me rephrase the question. Will the Minister say what is responsible for this decrease in the supplementary allocation to 21 million?

If you want I can move on to another—

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Member, whatever the supplementary increase in last fiscal year was, that is completely irrelevant to the supplementary increase in 2020. This is a supplementation of the 2020 appropriation. What happened last year is irrelevant.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, may I ask the hon. Minister to tell us, what is the total number of trainees participating in the OJT programme as at May 31, 2020?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Approximately 5,013 trainees.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Might you be able – Madam Chair, can I continue? Might you be able to indicate to us the number of trainees that are registered at each of the regional offices that comprised this 5,000 –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: All right.

Mr. Karim: – including Tobago?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Okay. These are the providers. The number of trainees as at May 2020 – you want them at the various levels? You would like them?

Mr. Karim: At levels would be good, and at the regions.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I know you might end up there, so let me give you it upfront.

Mr. Karim: Okay, sure. Thank you.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: You are welcome. Level 1 – would you like a breakdown in gender also?

Mr. Karim: If you have it.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Okay. So Level 1, in the public, 394 males and 1,303 females; in the private sector, nine males, 28 females; and non-government organizations, three males and 14 females. That is Level 1.

Level 2, in the public sector 233 males, 563 females; in the private sector 10 males, nine females; NGOs, four males, 11 females.

Level 3, 45 males in the public, 114 females; no males in the private, one female; two in the NGOs and – two males with nine females.

Level 4, in the public sector, males 547, females 1,422; in the private sector, 11 males, 23 females; NGOs, 19 males, 13 females.

And Level 5, which has either the Master's level, 53 males in the public sector, 146 females; two males in the private sector, four females; and no males at the level of NGOs with four females.

Total in the public sector, 1,272 males, 3,548 females; private sector, 32 males, 65 females; and NGOs, 28 males and 68 females.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you. Madam Chair –

Mr. Imbert: And just for the record, may I come in here?

Madam Chairman: Member, if you would just hold and let me just invite some other Members, we would take you back in the next round.

Mr. Imbert: Sure. Okay, sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Imbert: And, Madam Chairman, I would like to come in at some point in time on this Item.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Could the Minister indicate how much of this allocation is being spent on the 10 per cent increase in stipends paid to OJTs who are already employed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The 10 per cent increase which was effective December 01, 2019, increased the bill by approximately 3 million.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, how much money is to be spent to facilitate the expected increase from July of 2020?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, as I indicated to your colleague, MP Fazal Karim, that is a work in progress. The anticipated target we had was 400, and that had to be reviewed because of the COVID-19 situation. So, the director and her team is, as we speak, although she is here, it is a work in progress.

Mr. Indarsingh: And will you be in a position to provide to this meeting a breakdown of which organization these OJTs would be assigned to?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Oh gosh, no, but we could – if you ask the question nicely, MP, I would supply you with the information subsequent to –

Mr. Indarsingh: I have asked you very gracefully, Minister.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: That will do.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Indarsingh: So when – Madam Chair, when would we get this information?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Oh gosh, subsequently.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no, no. Madam Chair –

Madam Chairman: – Okay, Member –

Mr. Indarsingh: – when we are being told by Ministers “subsequently”.

Madam Chairman: I think what the Member would like to know is, whether it will be provided before Friday.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yeah, tomorrow is a public holiday.

Mr. Indarsingh: I see the Leader of Government Business intervening here too. Is this a –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I am speaking with you –

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: – I am not conversing with the Minister.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, let us just –

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Madam Chair, but we cannot derail this meeting –

Madam Chairman: – do not be distracted.

Mr. Indarsingh: – we want information.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, do not be distracted, the Minister is going to answer your question. She said it cannot be given before Friday, she is going on to amplify and say something else, let us hear what it is. Minister.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, this is not even the listing that I thought it was. This is a listing for something else. So, the information can be supplied but it cannot be supplied –

Mr. Indarsingh: By when?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: – at this point in time, and tomorrow is a public holiday, Madam Chair.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, Madam Chair, will the Opposition be granted this information sometime Friday morning before the –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I cannot make that promise, Madam Chair.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, Madam Chair, this is an exercise in futility. The Opposition will be in no position to prepare itself for the debate on Friday.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I think that is a very unfair comment towards me. I am here to facilitate, never to inhibit. Always to facilitate.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, you just indicated a breakdown of the number of OJTs who are in the State sector and those that are in private businesses.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: And NGOs.

Mr. Paray: Yes, and NGOs, and those seems to be very small compared to the State sector OJTs. My question is, based on the 10 per cent increase, which for the private sector employers, I am assuming they would have had to raise their portion of the payment as well, has there been any fallout from that? Has there been an indication from the private sector employers that they cannot afford the increase? Have you been notified of anything like that?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am informed, MP, that the fall off occurred post-COVID, not as a consequence of the increase, but as a consequence of the coronavirus, where a little over 100 trainees, the private providers indicated their financial constraints and their inability to continue with the trainees at this point in time. But they were hopeful that once business picked up, so they are in the process of trying to place those trainees.

Mr. Paray: Any opportunity to absorb them back into the State sector where there would be opportunities?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am further informed that the private sector, because these trainees have been under training, they have developed a certain level of speciality, and they would want to hold on to the trainees. But because of their concern financial situation, they are unable to do so, and a Cabinet Note is being prepared for me to take to Cabinet requesting that Cabinet step in and assist until they get back on their financial legs.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you say whether any moneys are owed to the private employers? And if so, how much as of May 2020?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There is an outstanding amount owed in the sum of approximately \$350,000.

Mr. Karim: Might we be able to indicate by when that sum may be paid to the employers.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We would want them to be paid as quickly as possible because we want to stimulate them, to keep them at that level of employment of the trainees. So we will try our utmost best following the approval to get that payment to those private sector providers.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, given the number, the several thousands of trainees in the system, can you say what is the ratio of the placement and marketing officers who supervise these trainees, to how many trainees are they responsible for?

Madam Chairman: I would not allow that question under what we are examining here, Member.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, just to clarify a question, a point raised earlier. I have the actual numbers here.

Madam Chairman: I can barely hear you Minister of Finance. That is so unusual.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, just to clarify an issue raised by the Minister which seemed to confuse everybody, sorry, the Member, which seemed to confuse everybody including himself, in 2019 the original allocation for the OJT was \$204 million. That was subsequently revised, an increase of \$242 million by the end of 2019. In 2020 the original estimate, 284 million, an increase of 41 million over the revised 2019 and now we are adding another 21. So we are going up by over \$65 million over the increased amount of 2019. So your question really did not make any sense.

Mr. Karim: I know some things do not make any sense to some people, but the question I want to ask is this – [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Okay, so –

Mr. Karim: Can you indicate –

Madam Chairman: Just, just one minute. Minister of Finance and all Members, maybe we will advance in a much more productive and expeditious way if we stop throwing barbs at each other. I know in this environment it is considered, you know, healthy banter, but I think for this occasion let us try and just keep very focused, okay? We all understand things differently and compute things differently, but I think it is all valid. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for your great amount of wisdom. May I ask the question with respect to the hon. Minister, might you be able to say of this \$21.4 million in terms of the increase in trainees, how many trainees do you project for Tobago, what you have existing and how many do you plan to increase utilizing this amount of money?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: You would recall that I did indicate that we have a work in progress taking place. But with regard to Tobago the current trainees assigned, 259. Projections 2020 – no, no, that is something else. But 259 trainees.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Minister, given the state of the economy and the fact that graduates of our tertiary institutions, I know exams have been delayed, but the output of our tertiary sector are not able to find jobs. Have you noticed an increase in those trying to, who qualify, are trying to access OJT programme? I know you have said 400 per month. Can you give us an idea of the shortfall? – that there are probably 600, or 800 or 20 applying and your intent to cater for 400.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: All right. What I can say, through you, Madam Chair, what I can say is that as a consequence of the decision by the Cabinet to increase the intake on the programme and that information being placed out there in the public, we have trainees to be placed, approximately 1,400 trainees to be placed. And it is this number that I indicated to your colleague that the director and her team – because we had anticipated placing 400 a month, but we have to radically review that figure and that is the work in progress.

Mr. Charles: So this 1,400 is the normal –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Oh no, that is a consequence of us indicating that we are going to increase the programme so that we had that influx of young people.

Mr. Charles: So it is not a consequence of the state of the economy and therefore more people accessing it.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, no, no.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, you continuously speak about the expansion of the programme and on the 29th of May, 2017, severance payments were handed out to approximately 106 persons. Could you tell us now how many persons you have on the establishment of

the On the Job Training Programme?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: But, Madam Chair, I think the MP, my MP for Couva South has the information wrong, because although those letters were handed out, those members of staff were treated extremely generously and more than half of them are now employed on the programme.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I am simply asking, could the Minister tell us now how much persons are on the establishment of the OJT?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: You want to know the establishment of the OJT?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: But you spoke about the people being retrenched, so I had to correct that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I have the information. I am not speaking out of turn.

Mr. Imbert: – how many?

Madam Chairman: Members. In terms of – Member for Couva South in terms of the item that we are looking at, sub Item 17, Training, and the explanation which has been given to us on page 12 of – a document which I believe have been circulated, matters relating to the 2020 accounts, I will not allow that question. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I just want to repeat something I had ask for and if I could get that commitment that you will be able to supply it to us in writing would be good. That is, the number of trainees currently in the system by regions and what this increase is going to be alongside by regions. If you do not have it and I could get it in writing at some time I would be most grateful.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes. You would like the information broken down by region?

Mr. Karim: By regions that exist now and the projected increase as a result of the 20 –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I cannot give you that one because that is a work in progress.

Mr. Karim: I know –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: But I could give you what obtains now.

Mr. Karim: But if you have a projection like you give just now for Tobago –

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: But it is a work in progress.

Mr. Karim: How long do you think we will progress to get the work done? [*Crosstalk*] Okay.

Madam Chairman: Minister, are you in a position to answer?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, Madam Chair, as I indicated to the Member of Parliament, he asked for the projected and I am not in a position. If he wants the projected based on what we had anticipated, 400 a month, he can get that, but that is no longer real because we have the new normal.

Madam Chairman: So, do you have another question Member for Chaguanas East?

Mr. Karim: No, Ma'am.

Question put and agreed.

Head 30 supplemented by the sum of \$21,405,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you Minister, thank you PS.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good evening everyone.

3.15 p.m.

Head 06: Service Commissions \$2,142,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I certainly would not take five minutes. The note itself is self-explanatory.

Madam Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Imbert: The note itself self-explanatory. It was required to supplement the allocation of the Service Commissions to pay rent for several properties between now and the end of the fiscal year.

Question proposed: That Head 06 be supplemented by the sum of \$2,142,000.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. The note whilst the Minister said is self-explanatory to facilitate the payment of rent for several properties, could the Minister provide this meeting with a list of the said properties?

Hon. Imbert: They will be provided on Friday.

Mr. Indarsingh: On Friday?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, the day after tomorrow.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, according to our estimates for fiscal 2020 there was an \$8.6 million allocation for this heading, I wanted to ask the Minister if that \$8.6 million has been exhausted. And in response to the first question from my colleague from Couva South, what new properties you have been renting, where and by who, and at what rent that you need 25 per cent increase on that budget of \$2.1 million for about five months in the fiscal year?

Hon. Imbert: That information would be provided on Friday.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Minister, could this expenditure – if it is an increase, or if it is a new building, could this not been anticipated when you budgeted for fiscal 2020? And Minister, I do not buy the point you raised earlier that in budgeting you have to wait for Cabinet to make a decision. It is the first time I have that you have an anticipated expenditure, you are buying a car, for example, and you do not budget for it, if only in a preliminary way.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Charles: The question is: Could you not have anticipated this expenditure?

Hon. Imbert: No. The answer is no.

Mr. Charles: You could not?

Hon. Imbert: No, and the reason is that during a fiscal year, all sorts of things happen. A building may be declared unfit by the Occupational Safety and Health Authority, they may bring on additional staff, they may have Cabinet approval for more resources. All sorts of thing happen during a fiscal year.

Mr. Charles: So Minister, we need clarification. We need to know is it the building broke down; is it something came up; OSHA did not? You ought to be in a position to tell us clearly? This is \$2 million of taxpayers' money.

Hon. Imbert: Is that a question? Are you asking a question?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Charles: You should have been able –

Hon. Imbert: That is not a question.

Mr. Charles: – to tell us the expenditure.

Hon. Imbert: That is a statement.

Mr. Charles: The question is: Why are you not in a position to tell us today what accounts for the increase in expenditure and not give us airy-fairy, it may have, it could have. We are past that stage.

Hon. Imbert: I did not give you that in response to your question. I gave you that explanation in response to the fact that during a fiscal year, a number of things arise that are not anticipated at the beginning of the fiscal year. That is why you have a supplementation, a variation, and a mid-year review. The answer to the questions asked will be provided on Friday.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a quick question here, Madam Chair, through you, what is the storage for? Is it for documentation or something else?

Hon. Imbert: Most Ministries would have a combination of physical accommodation for their staff and their operations, and then most Ministries would also have archives which are stored in a remote location. A breakdown as to what is physical accommodation and what is archives will be provided on Friday.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Could I follow-up by asking if the EDMS, the Electronic Document Management System, is progressing because there was an indication last time of some progress being made?

Hon. Imbert: That has absolutely nothing to do with this Item. This is Office Accommodation and Storage.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I am happy that the Minister has committed to work on the public holiday tomorrow to prepare his answers for Friday, but I am startled by his lack of preparedness for today's meeting.

Hon. Imbert: That is not a question.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the question whether or not the increase in rental for this sub-heading is as a result in any case of increases in rent by various buildings as opposed to the accumulation of new rental locations?

Hon. Imbert: That information will also be provided on Friday.

Dr. Moonilal: Completely unprepared.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. My colleague asked the question, but I feel the Minister of Finance is hiding information this evening.

Madam Chairman: I am sorry, Member for Naparima, I really did not see you.

Mr. Charles: Sorry, Madam Chairman. Minister, given the fact that we are, in essence, in a guava season, things are tight, revenues are down, expenditure are increasing, has the Government taken a policy decision with respect to reducing rents so that it would be in a better position to deal with the fiscal deficits as they arise?

Hon. Imbert: The line Item is Service Commissions—

Mr. Charles: Yes, rents.

Hon. Imbert:—Service Commissions, so I will answer that on Friday in the context of the Service Commissions.

Mr. Charles: The Government has oversight over the Service Commissions' rents?

Hon. Imbert: I will answer your question as to whether they have assort to get a reduction in rents for the Service Commission office accommodation on Friday.

Mr. Charles: Unprepared.

Question put and agreed.

Head 06 supplemented by the sum of \$2,142,000.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now go on to Head 08, and just as a heads-up so that we can be prepared, there is an agreement that after Head 08, we shall then go on to Head 43 which is the Ministry of Works and Transport. Okay? So we move on to Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission \$43,000,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister of Finance

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much. Madam Chairman and Members, in this fiscal year, we already had one election, the local government election of November 2019, and it is likely, it is possible, that there may be an election before the end of this fiscal year by September 30th. So in anticipation of that possibility, the Ministry of Finance looked at the expenditure over the years with respect to a general election and has come up with this supplementary appropriation for the EBC in the possibility that there may be a general election before the end of September 30th. So it is all in the realm of possibility. We are taking in front as it were—using the local parlance—and making the accommodation for the EBC in the possibility of an election before the 30th of September.

Question proposed: That Head 08 be supplemented by the sum of \$43,000,000.

3.25 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Again, I wanted to put it to the Minister that when this House approved the 2020 fiscal package, we approved a figure almost \$40 million in excess of the 2019 figure because it was said then that we were facing not one but two elections—the local government election of December 2nd of course and the general election which could be held in fiscal 2020. So that the figure for 2020 was \$105 million which was almost \$40 million more than 2019. Today, we are told that we need \$43 million more for the EBC because the Minister got it wrong with his 2020 figures. Is this another case of this level of incompetence or is it that something is happening at Scott House that we are not aware of that they require additional moneys in excess of \$105 million budgeted? That is my question.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is routine that when the budget is presented during the fiscal year, there will be adjustments based on assessment of the situation. We are simply making sure that the EBC has enough money to deal with a possible general election which may occur before the 30th of September. That is it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, you are finished?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Dr. Moonilal: I have another question but I can wait if you want.

Madam Chairman: Okay, sure, please. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, the overtime monthly paid officers increase of \$3.5 million, might you be able to give us some information with respect to that? How many members of staff we are talking about and maybe some categories of that staff? – 3.5 million monthly paid officers.

Hon. Imbert: I am told they have just over 200 persons right now and they want to go up to about 347 as the election approaches, so this is in anticipation of overtime payments already being paid to staff who are already working overtime and the staff that will be brought on to work overtime in the election. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just for clarification, Minister, you said all members of staff of the EBC will be required to work overtime?

Hon. Imbert: More or less.

Mr. Indarsingh: More or less?

Hon. Imbert: Pretty much.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay, and with respect to 02/011/62, the \$2 million that is being allocated for Promotion, Publicity and Printing, could the Minister provide a breakdown in how this \$2 million will be spent on the different media platforms?

Hon. Imbert: We can give you that by Friday.

Mr. Indarsingh: By Friday?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you very much. Item number 02/002/22, Short-Term Employment, \$20.5 million. Minister, it says here the sums required to pay persons employed in the short term to undertake field work in communities in preparation for the 2020 parliamentary elections, can you give us an understanding of what you mean by field work in the communities and how many persons are going to be employed to cover this 20.5 million?

Hon. Imbert: Okay. I am advised that this should also have indicated that this is a provision for persons who are working on the actual election day itself. So the field work is the normal field work that the EBC will do, verification and that sort of thing, plus I am told about 13,000 persons who would work on polling day itself.

Dr. Rambachan: 13,000?

Hon. Imbert: 13,000. And I want to make the point in answer to Member for Oropouche East who likes to shout a lot, we are in a COVID situation so that whatever was anticipated in October in terms of the cost of preparing for the general election must now be reviewed and revised and revisited in the context of social distancing and other restrictions that may occur as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and that should be obvious.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, do you have any more questions?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. I was trying to absorb the answer to that question.

Madam Chairman: Okay, well we can come back. Member for Oropouche East, are you ready?

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, well on the document given to us by the Ministry of Finance and by the Minister, I am seeing what must certainly be an error of some kind under the EBC, Rent/Lease/Office Accommodation and Storage, \$100 million. I assumed that that is an error that slipped the Minister.

But I was really concerned with the overall approach of the Minister to budgeting for the EBC and this increase of \$43 million in terms of its accountability to the Parliament. And I wanted to ask, through the Minister to the EBC, whether we can expect from the EBC any increase in their efficiency, accountability and responsibility since they have been denying a meeting with the United National Congress now for several months and they are unable to meet the Opposition party to discuss pertinent matters related to the upcoming general elections and that sounds to me like a lack of responsibility and accountability and that is also part of budgeting that you spend the money wisely but you are also responsible and accountable.

Madam Chairman: Member, I got lost. I know you are entitled to a five-minute intervention. I am not sure there is a question in that statement.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I repeat?

Hon. Imbert: No, the usual allegation.

Dr. Moonilal: I am merely asking through the Minister whether the EBC will commit itself to be more responsible to the population and the political parties in the upcoming general election since they have refused to meet the Opposition party and they have refused to meet a delegation to discuss pertinent issues for the upcoming general election.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chair, I am struggling to find out what line Item that is.

Dr. Moonilal: That is my question.

Hon. Imbert: What line Item is that? You were rambling. What is that? What line Item?

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, unfortunately I cannot seem to find that under any line Item.

Hon. Imbert: It is not there. "He just carrying on".

Dr. Moonilal: So be it, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, I am seeking a "principles of budgeting" response. The Minister earlier when I queried him on the contract payment indicated that it is not the policy of the Cabinet or the Government to anticipate –

Hon. Imbert: What line Item, please?

Mr. Charles: I am asking here on the \$43 million.

Hon. Imbert: Line Item.

Mr. Charles: Line Item 001. Sorry, the Head 8, the \$43 million recurrent expenditure. So all of these.

Hon. Imbert: Well, there are Sub-Items. Which Sub-Item?

Mr. Charles: All of these.

Hon. Imbert: All the Sub-Items?

Madam Chairman: Wait one minute. Yeah, let us hear the question.

Mr. Charles: You indicated to my colleague from Oropouche East that a figure was put in, an estimated figure –

Hon. Imbert: On this? On this?

Mr. Charles: Because of the general elections.

Hon. Imbert: On this?

Mr. Charles: Yes, under the EBC and you said that this subsequently had to be recalibrated based on information provided by the EBC. I am just asking the question, if you anticipated and you put in a figure and the figure is 40 million and you told my colleague that that was based on your – you knew two elections were coming. Why did you estimate here and in other areas you did not estimate?

Hon. Imbert: My difficulty, Madam Chairman, is I said none of those things. "Yuh making it up". I did not say any of that.

Mr. Charles: I am making up that you did not say –

Hon. Imbert: You are making that all up. So ask a question. Stop making false allegations.

Mr. Charles: The question is why did you put in an estimated figure here and when on the contracts that I asked about earlier, you said no, the policy is not to estimate on this.

Hon. Imbert: I have not spoken to you on this Item yet. "Yuh making it up."

Mr. Charles: It is principles of budgeting you would not understand.

Hon. Imbert: "Yuh making it up."

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima and the Minister of Finance. Member for Naparima, could you let me know, I understand that you are asking the overall supplementation figure. I do not know in terms of contracts if it is on this Item. I am not seeing anything about contracts under Head –

Mr. Charles: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Chairman: Excuse me?

Mr. Charles: I think I made the point.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me?

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, how do I say it?

Madam Chairman: You mean you are vacating your question?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

3.35 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister –

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Hon. Minister, line Item 08/09/21 and the explanation given in the document is the sum is required to pay for Rental Accommodation, Vehicles and Equipment which are required for use in the preparation for and during the 2020 parliamentary election. I am assuming that is the general election. First of all, could you tell us what is the correct figure for the Office Accommodation?

Hon. Imbert: It appears on the face of it that it should be \$100,000. Just hold on, I have the Budget Director here. Just hold on one second. It is not what any of us think. It is \$1 million. It is a typographical error.

Mr. Lee: Okay, \$1 million. Thank you, hon. Minister. Minister, through you to the EBC, could you tell us the \$1,780,000 for Vehicles and Equipment and Repairs and Maintenance of Building of 500,000, all in respect of the general elections anticipated. Let me take it, the Vehicles and Equipment, the \$780,000, what would that utilize, those vehicles?

Hon. Imbert: I do not think we could give you those kind of details now. If you want to know how these figures were built up, I could certainly provide that information on Friday.

Mr. Lee: Okay, so then could you give us when in the future –

Hon. Imbert: Soon.

Mr. Lee: – the accommodation, rental of these accommodation?

Hon. Imbert: For these three Items, yeah.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, for these three Items.

Hon. Imbert: Sure, sure.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Under 02/002/22, Short-term Employment, Minister in recent times I have received telephone calls from individuals whose spouses are passed on. One, as it relates to La Horquetta –

Hon. Imbert: Could you tell me the line Item, please?

Mr. Indarsingh: I already pointed in the direction.

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item, please? I am sorry.

Madam Chairman: 02/002/22, Short-term Employment.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, right.

Mr. Indarsingh: And one person from the constituency of Couva South too. Has the EBC embarked on any exercise where field officers are going out to homes of deceased persons and demanding to retrieve the ID cards of the deceased persons, and for what purpose, if I could be informed?

Hon. Imbert: Okay. I am advised that at the end of May EBC resumed verification in terms of checking deceased persons in the field.

Mr. Indarsingh: So they are going out identifying themselves properly? Because the two telephone calls I received, the persons indicated that there was no proper identification, and as a result of that they did not allow them in their homes, and the alleged EBC officers threatened the persons to return with law enforcement officers and so on to retrieve these ID cards.

Hon. Imbert: Well, that is either double or triple hearsay. I cannot respond to that. You are reporting hearsay.

Mr. Indarsingh: Not hearsay. I am telling me what has actually –

Hon. Imbert: This is double hearsay.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and I interact with people.

Hon. Imbert: I cannot respond to hearsay.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Same Item, Short-term Employment, Ma'am. I just want to have the Minister confirm or to clarify for me that the \$20.5 million for Short-term Employment has to do with the fieldwork involved in voting list verification between now and the calling of election, but it all includes 13,000 people who will be hired on polling day itself. I just want to have clarification on that.

Hon. Imbert: I said that twice already. Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Madam Chairman, 02/002/01, Travelling and Subsistence, 1 million. Minister, are these field officers already employed by the EBC, or are they to be employed? And I have a part (b) to the question.

Hon. Imbert: Most of them are already employed and the Commission will take on a few additional persons as and if required.

Dr. Rambachan: And part (b) to it is: How does the EBC determine which addresses they are going to verify? Because it says here: "are required to verify addresses of the electorate". How does the EBC go determining which of these addresses are to be verified?

Hon. Imbert: Could you be more specific with your question?

Dr. Rambachan: It says here "the sum is required to pay travelling expenses and subsistence" –

Hon. Imbert: Uh-huh.

Dr. Rambachan: The field officers who are required to verify addresses of the electorate". This supposes that the field officers are going out to a location. How is that determined?

Hon. Imbert: All right. Member, I had asked the officer, and the answer is what I thought it was. If a person applies for a transfer from one electoral area to another, or a polling division to another polling division within a constituency, or a new applicant, a new registrant, the EBC seeks to verify the address. So if it is a brand new application or if somebody is trying to move from one area to another, the EBC seeks to verify the address. Okay?

Dr. Rambachan: Right. So Minister, Madam Chair, through you, so throughout the whole year is this not done on a continuing basis, that the people already paid to do this, or is this now specific to the election?

Hon. Imbert: The answer is yes, obviously. And I want to make the point, this is a supplementation. It is a supplementation. So there would be money in this Item already. This is simply to supplement the amount that is already there.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: So it is done throughout the year and obviously with the election imminent, there is heightened awareness. So there will be more and more people coming in now, who may be anxious about transferring their vote from one place to another. And, therefore, the amount of verification that is required would naturally increase. It always happen in election. People rush down the EBC to get their ID card sorted out, that kind of thing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Line Item 02/002/17, Training, 5 million. Hon. Minister, would you be able to indicate to us how many persons will this cater for? I am seeing here it is polling day staff. If we could get a sense as to descriptors, who are these people. I have a sense of it, but I would like to hear from the EBC. How many persons, the reason –

Hon. Imbert: You are asking the question more than once, you know.

Mr. Karim: How many persons?

Hon. Imbert: 13,000.

Mr. Karim: How much?

Hon. Imbert: 13,000.

Mr. Karim: 13,000. Have these people been selected for training already?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mr. Karim: And by when do you think they might be able to be required for training?

Hon. Imbert: There is an advertisement out in the papers now for trainers and by the end of the month, the EBC has told me that they should begin to process the applications to lead to decisions to select people to do training.

Mr. Karim: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, 02/002/22, Short-term Employment. Just two short questions here for clarity, actually.

[Electronic device goes off in Chamber]

What is –

Madam Chairman: Could the Member who has that disturbing device please leave the Chamber, spend a 10 minutes, work out their issues and then return. Thank you. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I almost forgot the matter I was raising. Anyway, there are two matters I believe; one Short-Term Employment. We were told some time ago in the context of the COVID pandemic, and so on that the EBC announced that persons whose ID cards would have expired during the time would be allowed to vote in the general elections this year. Now, I am hearing the Minister saying that people are rushing to the EBC office to renew the ID Cards.

Hon. Imbert: I did not say that.

Dr. Moonilal: You just said that.

Hon. Imbert: I did not say that.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I would leave it there because –

Hon. Imbert: Do not say things that I did not say.

Dr. Moonilal: You said that people rushing to the EBC office to renew their ID cards.

Hon. Imbert: I did not say that.

Dr. Moonilal: Anyway –

Madam Chairman: Please.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam, let me go on to the next issue. My substantive first question is: Is the EBC adopting a position that persons can vote with outdated ID cards, one?

3.45 p.m.

And two, if it is that the EBC is using the 2018 voter list for 2020, what is the need for \$21 million for Short-Term Employment to undertake field work in communities in preparation for the general election? Because they are using data of 2018 before, not new data they are accumulating?

Madam Chairman: But you just said, “if it is”.

Dr. Moonilal: Excuse me?

Madam Chairman: You said “if it is”?

Dr. Moonilal: If it is, and you can clarify now, this is what we are here for the Minister – **Madam Chairman:** Minister, Minister.

Dr. Moonilal: – should not get upset due to his incompetence.

Madam Chairman: Sure. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I want to put on the record the repeated use of the word “incompetence” by the Member is deliberate.

Dr. Moonilal: Give me another word, what you like, “unprepared”?

Hon. Imbert: You are putting false accusations on the record. [*Crosstalk*] The fact of the matter is –

Dr. Moonilal: Well, tell me what word to use.

Hon. Imbert: – would you stop talking? Allow me to finish. When the fact of the matter is – [*Crosstalk*] Madam Chairman, I would like to speak without interruption, please. I am asking you as Chairman. You think you could allow that? Thank you.

Madam Chairman: I think you now have absolute silence.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much. Firstly, let me correct a misstatement made by the Member for Oropouche East. What I said is, at election time people naturally become anxious and go to the EBCs office to see if they can renew their ID card. That is what I said, okay? Not what you said.

And secondly, persons are allowed to vote without an ID card. That is the law. They would simply go in the red line and the Member is an experienced Member, he would know that, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I do not want to argue with this Minister who is getting agitated at this hour, so early in the proceedings –

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I want to ask the Member to ask questions –

Dr. Moonilal: The second part of my question –

Hon. Imbert: Stop making allegations.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Minister –

Madam Chairman: All right, okay –

Dr. Moonilal: Coax him–

Madam Chairman: All right, so, Member for Oropouche East, I will call on another Member and then I will take you in the next round. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, there is Item 02/001/62, and it mentions “to sensitize public on the role out of the new identification card”. Could the Minister explain what that means?

Hon. Imbert: I am just checking to see which one you are talking about, 02/002 – what?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, it is 02/001.

Hon. Imbert: Oh, 001, sorry. Thought I heard 002.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, 62.

Hon. Imbert: The EBC has been for some time now seeking to roll out a new identification card, what the EBC has just advised me is that if an election was called suddenly, they would redirect those funds towards the general public education and promotion for a general election, and they would defer the roll out of the new national identification cards. So it all depends on the timing of the election itself.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, so the critical question here for me is whether the new identification cards would be rolled out prior to the next general elections or after?

Hon. Imbert: If the election is called soon, no. That is what they just said, it is a timing thing.

Dr. Tewarie: The later the election, the more likely?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, just again to clarify based on Caroni Central’s question. Minister, this new identification card, the roll out, I have heard you about the possibility of a general election. Irrespective of whether general election is called or not, could we be told when will there be the need for the roll out of this new identification card?

[Hon. Imbert confers with EBC Official]

Hon. Imbert: What I am advised is that if COVID had not got in the way, they had planned to roll it out in July but, of course, three months more or less have been lost and therefore, that matter is now being revisited and reviewed in the context of when an election would be. If COVID had not occurred, they would have been rolling it out next month. That obviously has to be revisited now, okay.

Mr. Indarsingh: And again, setting aside COVID, setting aside general election and so on, could we be told, is there a projected date beyond the general election, beyond COVID, when the new ID cards will be rolled out?

Hon. Imbert: That would not be in this fiscal year, Member. It is not relevant. We are only talking about 2020 fiscal year here which goes up to the end of September.

Mr. Indarsingh: We have a right to ask, you cannot determine the questions coming from on this side.

Hon. Imbert: And I have a right to tell you we are only talking about expenditure in fiscal 2020, not 2021.

Mr. Indarsingh: We have a right –

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, Member for Couva South and Minister of Finance. Member for Couva South, while I hear your comment, I think your question was asked and answered. No one said that you did not have a right, all right. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I am just tagging on Item 02/01: Travelling and Subsistence for \$1 million. Is there a policy that dictates and decides the use of personal vehicles for field officers at the EBC?

[Hon. Imbert confers with EBC Official]

Hon. Imbert: It is all tied in to persons who are schedule travelling officers and there are procedures and regulations with respect to the use of personal vehicles. The person must apply to the Chief Election Officer for permission and so on, and they must be a schedule travelling officer as well.

Mr. Paray: Just a follow up, Madam Chair. In terms of this particular facility, can the EBC identify the number of field officers who actively participate in this programme who would be entitled to this travelling allowance and subsistence?

Hon. Imbert: Approximately 35. I see Oropouche has left the Chamber.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 08 supplemented by the sum of \$43,000,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Chief Elections Officer and your support team. And Members, we are now going on the Head 43 and just to again alert you, after Head 43 we will then do, by agreement, Head 28 which is the Ministry of Health.

Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport \$244,484,504.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Works and Transport to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Sinanan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, just to indicate that we are very grateful for the opportunity to present ourselves here to answer any questions that might be relevant to the increase in finding in the mid-year review. I thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 43 be supplemented by the sum of \$244,484,504.

3.55 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I just want to get some details with respect to line Item 04/011/18, National Helicopter Services Limited, an increase of \$20.4 million to meet the debt obligations, and that is an increase. If you can tell us, is it for what type rating of the aircraft, is it the Sikorsky, is it the WL, if you could give us some details as to the in this increase?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah, it is the Sikorsky aircrafts. It is the Sikorsky aircrafts.

Mr. Karim: How many?

Hon. Sinanan: One.

Mr. Karim: One?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, with your permission, is it actively in operation?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, we do have in actual operation yes we do have two, two in operation at this time.

Mr. Karim: But this debt is for one?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah the debt is for one, but we do have two in operation.

Mr. Karim: Might you be able to indicate to whom this debt payment is scheduled to be paid?

Hon. Sinanan: These are the Royal Bank, RBC. These are for loan payments – RBC.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister 04/007/12, Fuel relief grant to registered taxi and maxi-taxi owners. Minister, could you tell us how the figure was calculated, because you have maxi-taxi and registered taxi, right?

Hon. Sinanan: Um-hmm.

Mr. Indarsingh: Give us a breakdown in terms of how much has been paid so far in relation to registered maxi-taxi? – inclusive of the 12-seater, the 25-seater maxis. And have any grants been paid to rental firms in this country where maxi-taxis of a 12-seater and 25-seater have been – in terms of being owned by rental firms?

Mr. Imbert: You do not want to know bicycle too?

Mr. Indarsingh: You do not worry.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chairman, maxi-taxis are supposed to be owner driven, and in some instances you might have several owners are drivers on a maxi. We do not have any indication where rentals, companies that rent, because maxi size carry the traveling public. Those maxis are not included in this listing. Those rental companies that have maxi-taxis, they do private jobs and things like that. That is not included in this listing,

Mr. Imbert: And may I also say those would not be maxi-taxis in the strict sense of the word.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, they are registered. Are they not registered as 25-seater and 12-seater?

Hon. Sinanan: No, but they are not under the different bands, under the Maxi-Taxi Association; only painted. They will be like plain white.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much. So could you tell us as we speak, Minister, how much of this fuel relief grant has been actually paid up to this point in time?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. In terms of the maxi-taxis, which is the one we started about two weeks ago, we have 1,150 grants being processed at different stages; a significant amount would have been paid out. My

information is that there are very few that are still pending. Obviously, we have to wait for the maxi-taxi owners to present.

Mr. Indarsingh: So how many have actually –

Hon. Sinanan: 1,150 so far.

Mr. Indarsingh: Have been paid out?

Hon. Sinanan: At different stages of payment.

Mr. Indarsingh: I do not understand the term “different stages of payment”.

4.00 p.m.

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. We have 1,150 maxi-taxi owners at different stages of the process, meaning, they first have to fill out the application form, then they submit it to the Licensing office. It is verified, we check, and then it is submitted for payment at the Ministry of Works and Transport. So far, we have 650 already paid out and, as I said, we have 1,150 at different stages of the process because there is a criteria.

Mr. Indarsingh: So how much in total have applied for this grant?

Hon. Sinanan: Eleven hundred and fifty at this stage.

Mr. Indarsingh: Eleven hundred and fifty?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Is there a cut-off date?

Hon. Sinanan: No, there is no cut-off date, it is a one-off payment.

Mr. Indarsingh: It is a one-off payment?

Hon. Sinanan: It is a one-off payment.

Mr. Indarsingh: So the possibility of accessing this particular grant, will it lie in terms of eternity?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: You could apply in 2025 and get it?

Hon. Sinanan: It is a relief grant. It is a fuel grant for this pandemic COVID period, and we will be guided by the Minister of Finance going forward. At this stage, we do not have a cut-off date because, again, the maxi-taxis have to present themselves. The maxi-taxis owners have to present the relevant documents for us and, at this stage, we do not have a cut-off date.

Mr. Imbert: And just let me come in. This is for this fiscal year, up to September 30th. Obviously, it will be a different thing in the next fiscal year. Okay?

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you.

Hon. Sinanan: So that answers it.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, in addition, could you tell us, because the moneys that are being sought is for registered maxi-taxis and so on or active taxi owners. What about the private school bus drivers who played a very important role in terms of transporting children when schools were actively engaged? Have you considered this particular group of people?

Hon. Sinanan: There are different levels. What we are dealing with is those who provide public transport in terms of the travelling public on a route. So, there are some of them who actually operate on a route outside of the school transportation system and this covers them. If somebody has a private arrangement with a vehicle that is not on a route, meaning it is not banded, this does not cover that.

Mr. Indarsingh: So you took no consideration that these persons would have been out of revenue since schools have been closed?

Mr. Imbert: Allow me to come in here. This is a very – COVID-19 is very evolving and a dynamic situation. As matters arise, the Government looks at it and we address it. And in this particular case, the maxi-taxis are dealt with first. Now, what do you call them? The standard taxis, registered taxis – I am never sure what the correct word is, the four-seaters – and this as other interest groups arise, we look at it and we take decisions. It evolves.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, if you could probably in our analysis, schools have been closed, how long now? I do not know how long you need to consider that persons who are involved in private school bus transportation, they are unemployed. They are not getting any form of revenue stream and so on, and you need to consider that in terms of if you are providing a relief grant, why are you discriminating?

Mr. Imbert: I think you are misunderstanding the policy.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I am not misunderstanding. I am asking you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva –

Mr. Imbert: I believe you are and I am going to answer you. The public health restrictions that are published have limited maxi-taxis and taxis to 50 per cent of their capacity in the first instance, and I think it is 75 now, and there was an announcement that at some point in time it will go up to 100. So that maxi-taxi owners were not able to carry the full amount of passengers, so this is relief to assist them as a result of that. What you are talking about is something completely different and, as I said, these different things are considered on a case by case basis. This fuel grant is as a result of the public health restrictions which prohibited the taxi drivers from carrying more than 50 per cent of their capacity.

Hon. Sinanan: If I could just add to what the Minister said there and taking your point, if it is that these school buses are not transporting school children, it means they are parked up, and this is a fuel grant. You would not need fuel if they are parked up, and you are also allowed to access all the other grants at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. So, if your bus is parked up, you really do not need a fuel grant, but you could access the other grants out of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, a couple questions on Item 712, that is with regard to the fuel relief grant. The active taxi owners, have any grants been processed for those? I could not remember if you mentioned that. And if they have been processed, is it the same \$2,000 as what the maxi-taxis are getting?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. Firstly, we dealt with the maxi-taxis. We are in consultation now with the different taxi associations. Unfortunately, they are not as organized as the maxi-taxi association. We are meeting with them. We met with them this week. Their grant is \$750, because the average maxi which takes 20 passengers, it might be a lil bit unfair to give a taxi that takes four passengers the same amount. So the taxi grant is \$750 which we are in the process of meeting with them, because there are some criteria that you have to fulfil in order to achieve. It is not difficult to achieve, but you must indicate to us that the taxi was actually working prior to the stay-at-home measures.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just a follow-up on that. I know with regard to the maxi-taxis, right, you will have a situation where you have the grant being issued to either the owner or the operator or is it to the maxi-taxi itself? Because you may have one man having multiple ownerships of multiple vehicles. Has that been a challenge?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Mr. Paray: Is that an issue that has come up?

Hon. Sinanan: It is not a challenge because, again, this is a fuel grant and maxi-taxis are basically registered to an owner. So the owner gets the grant. But, again, this does not stop the drivers, because I know for a fact there are some maxis may have up to four drivers because maxis, they work 24 hours. The drivers are not just limited to this grant. They can then access the other grants offered by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. This is a fuel grant for the vehicle – they are operating the vehicle. So considering if you have four drivers, five drivers, it will still take the same amount of diesel at any point in time. I mean, if it is \$300 to full, if you have four drivers, it will still take the \$300 to full.

Mr. Paray: Last follow up. Thank you. Minister, I notice in the writing you have the rebate for 5,000 registered and/or active maxis.

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Mr. Paray: What is the rationale for differentiating between the registered and the active?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, because you may have –

Mr. Paray: Because if you are not active the situation may be you do have to pay for fuel.

Hon. Sinanan: That is why we have criteria, because on the register we may have a certain amount of maxi-taxis registered, but that does not mean that they were all working at the time. So, the criteria, and why we use an average of 5,000, because that is what we anticipate, the amount of working maxis at the time, and that is why we ask you to bring in your inspection certificate for 2019. That is one of the criteria. So once you have that inspection, because we try to make it as simple as possible and if your vehicle was inspected in 2019, it is more than likely it will be working at the time of the shutdown.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, you have 5,000 registered or active maxis.

Hon. Sinanan: Active, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: But 1,150 applied for grants. Am I correct?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. So that is 23 per cent of the maxis. Why do you think only 23 per cent have applied for the grant and 77 per cent have not applied?

Hon. Sinanan: No, I am not saying they did not. This is what we have so far. Every day we get applications. It is just there is a criteria, so you have to fulfil the criteria and they are coming in every day. But what we do, we work along with the different maxi-taxi associations and they are helping us to make sure that the requests are genuine requests, because we did find some people trying to double dip. We did find some people whose bus was down maybe for the last two or three years, all of a sudden they come and they apply for the grant. So we have 1,150 that so far would have qualified and it is the different stages of it. Every day we get applications and we anticipate—I mean, the owners did indicate they are very happy for this. It might be small, but it does help them.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, earlier on, I heard you say that maxi-taxis are supposed to be owner driven?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, most of the maxi-taxis are owner driven. However, you are allowed to have several drivers on a maxi, because one owner may not be able to drive his maxi all the time. I mean, some owners indicate they have instalments to pay, so when the bus parks up or when they finish drive, somebody else takes the bus. So people, most of the buses will have at least two drivers.

4.10 p.m.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, I know. Have you come across where there are fleet owners of maxi-taxis and now it is one owner of three, four, five, and that they are renting them out to drivers?

Hon. Sinanan: Now, I have not come across that but I am not putting it beyond that there might have but not on any individual name, because you are not supposed to have—it is not supposed to work like that. It is not supposed to work like that so we do not have any application in front of us where one person has three or four buses.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, you have a request for 87.7 million for the *Jean de la Valette*. Can you tell us what type of operational expenses will be covered?

Hon. Sinanan: That would be like that—

Ms. Ramdial: Charter for an inter-island fast ferry vessel.

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah. That is the charter vessel and we do provide them with fuel. It is a charter vessel so that vessel comes with most of its staff and everything, but we do provide them with fuel and so on.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. So that is part of the cost?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: The fuel grant that you are giving, is that per month as long as the COVID Regulations last?

Hon. Sinanan: Sorry? No, it is a one-off payment. It is a one-off payment.

Dr. Khan: It is a one-off payment?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Khan: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Minister, I am looking at line Item 11-28 with regard to the *MV Galleons Passage*. I am taking a look at the size of that variation, \$58,906,000, and the question that I have is, when you look at the items that have been described, purchase, delivery, commissioning, berthing operations and maintenance, the *Galleons Passage* has been with us for quite some time. How would these items be missed in the budget allocations, the annual allocations?—because I do not see these things as simple items that you missed in an audit. These are substantial contracts that would have had long-term arrangements. How would you miss that, that you have to make a variation now for \$58 million?

Hon. Sinanan: It was taken up by NIDCO who manages the ferry and now we have a line Item specific for the ferry. So it was not missed.

Mr. Imbert: This is in fact a reimbursement to NIDCO for money they have already spent from other sources. Okay? So at the time of the budget it was not anticipated that this would be done in this way. It is now being reimbursed.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, if I recall, the amount paid for the *Galleons Passage* was about TT \$117 million, if I recall?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Dr. Rambachan: So is it now that we are saying that the *Galleons Passage* is really costing us \$175 million?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, I do not think you could use the operational costs and add it to the capital cost every year, because if that be the case then, I mean, maybe this Parliament over its lifespan might have been about \$100 billion.

Mr. Imbert: It is for the operations.

Hon. Sinanan: This is for operational costs so you cannot add this to the capital cost.

Dr. Rambachan: Sure. But let me just take something out then, just to read:

The sum is required to meet additional expenditure in respect of purchase, delivery, commissioning, berthing...

—and I will take off now, “operation and maintenance”. What percentage of operation and maintenance would have been part of the 58 million? — because I would think that if those other things are there —

Mr. Imbert: Member, Member —

Dr. Rambachan: You would have to capitalize it.

Mr. Imbert: — this does not lead to the conclusion that you are concluding.

Dr. Rambachan: Well then, I do not understand accounting.

Mr. Imbert: This is simply a reimbursement. What would have happened is that NIDCO would have used funds that had been given to it and use its own funds to acquire the vessel to operate it, and so on. This is simply a reimbursement, so you cannot add this 58 to the 117. Okay? It is just a reimbursement for money they spent.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, with due respect to the Minister, it does not say reimbursement here so I am not reading this wrongly, it says, “additional expenditure”.

Mr. Imbert: That is why you are getting an explanation.

Dr. Rambachan: The Minister is now saying something different, that the document clearly says “additional expenditure”. So that leaves a doubt in my mind as to whether this is really a refund or is it an additional expenditure. I do not think I am wrong in asking the question.

Hon. Sinanan: No, you are not wrong and that is why we are here to clarify, you know, any questions, and it is a refund, so that is why it will show up like that there.

Dr. Rambachan: So just to finish my question —

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: — what was the real cost of the *Galleons Passage* then?

Hon. Sinanan: The exact figure that you mentioned.

Mr. Imbert: One hundred and seventeen million dollars. And let me make a point here. If you look at the Item very carefully, closely, and completely, you will see it is 04/011/28-NIDCO. So this is not a direct expenditure of the Ministry of Works and Transport. This will fall under Transfers and Subsidies, and therefore this is money for NIDCO and it is obviously a reimbursement.

Dr. Rambachan: It is still taxpayers’ money and from the Ministry of Finance, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: No, you are missing the point. “Doh dodge. Doh dodge, yuh dodging now. Yuh dodging.”

Question put and agreed to.

Head 43 supplemented by the sum of \$244,484,504.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, PS. We now go on to Head 28, Ministry of Health. And just again, the order again has been agreed to be changed so after the Ministry of Health we will go on to, I believe, it is Head 42, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. So we now go to Head 28, Ministry of Health.

Head 28: Ministry of Health \$224,582,640.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Health to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this supplementation falls under three major categories; one, for the COVID-19 response to set up the parallel health care system in which

to date 589 persons have been treated and/or accommodated. We have spent money on four major headings: consumables, HR, infrastructure and equipment, and this was used to supplement the 2020 allocation. The second major item for expenditure was a loan taken out with NIPDEC for the procurement, storage and distribution of pharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceuticals.

The third major area for the supplementation has to do with infrastructure, especially for loans taken out to build and construct the Central Block and, surprisingly, loans for the Arima Hospital, because the Arima Hospital, contrary to folklore, was never built cash from moneys taken from NGC. So these are some of

the reasons why we have the supplementation, and I am now prepared to answer any questions.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 28 be supplemented by the sum of \$224,582,640.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to the Item Contract Employment of \$3 million, 034/.295, can you indicate, with regard to those 11 new ICU nurses, the terms and conditions of their employment and where they have been deployed?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure. So the terms and conditions of their employment have been decided by contract between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba, as you know. Their monthly rate of income is TT \$6,300; housing allowance, \$2,000; transport allowance, \$500; incentive allowance, \$1,575; meal allowance, \$625; consolidated uniform allowance, \$2,400. Member, when employees leave their country, they are paid displacement allowances, even if you are leaving Trinidad to go to Tobago and Tobago to Trinidad. Their deployment is as follows—and let me state, these are intensive care nurses for which we have a shortage in Trinidad so we are not disadvantaging any local nurse, as you know.

4.20 p.m.

Their deployment is as follows: Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, four; San Fernando General Hospital, three; Port of Spain General Hospital, two, and Scarborough General Hospital, two.

Dr. Bodoë: Did you mention the duration of the contract?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Three years.

Dr. Bodoë: Minister, in view of the shortage of the intensive care nurses, can you indicate whether any training plans are there for local nurses?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes. So under the office of the Technical Director of Nursing we have in Trinidad now instituted, and the first batch is already completed, an intensive care nursing programme for Trinidad and Tobago. So we are hoping that our local nurses can upgrade their skills and that is underway.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you say at this time how many expected to be graduated in the first batch?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I cannot give you the exact figure.

Dr. Bodoë: Minister, with regard to the 20 doctors attached to the Ministry of Health's programme, can you indicate their terms and conditions and how they were recruited?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure. So these 20 doctors were recruited to man the hotline, the COVID hotline. They were paid a stipend of \$5,000 a month. They were not called upon to do medical duties, but to man the hotline.

So far, I could give you some figures to see what they have done. From May 1st to May 21st, 2020, there were 1,000 calls. But what we are doing now with the hotline as we have gotten over the first wave so to speak, we have retooled the hotline to provide a little more robust mental health support and direction for callers and we are also retooling the hotline as a crucial tool for reporting of events—event-based surveillance. So if a member of the public sees something and they want to report it, they can report it to the hotline. So in all so far between infrastructure and staff, we have spent about \$100,000 on the hotline.

Dr. Bodoë: It is also mentioned "other staff". Can you give us an idea of what that entails?

Hon. Deyalsingh: So, other staff will be things like extra catering when we had our first case of COVID from March 12th and so on, additional security and so on.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay, I will continue. Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. If I can just move on to the allocations for the individual RHAs, Madam Chair, and just to look at the expenditure with regard to the Eastern RHA, that \$33,113,990. Minister, can you give us a rough breakdown of how much has been spent?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Bodoë: I just wanted to clarify first of all though, is that the estimate going forward from now until the end of the financial year?

Hon. Deyalsingh: No, no, I can give you. So those were the allocations. The actual amounts spent to date, and I have it here. Eastern RHA, they were allocated \$33,113,990. They have committed and spent to date \$3,260,993. For the Northwest Regional Health Authority, they were allocated \$16,606,000. To date they have spent and/or committed \$3,712,602. For South-West Regional Health Authority, they were allocated \$5 million. I will get that figure for you, and for North-Central, where the bulk of the money went, they were allocated \$129,950,000. They have spent to date \$23,843,101. The total expenditure across all four RHAs in Trinidad – and I will confirm one figure for you – is \$45,832,458.

Dr. Bodoë: So, Minister, with the ERHA you have only spent just about \$3 million out of a \$33 million allocation?

Hon. Deyalsingh: To date, yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate to us what that additional expenditure – why would you have asked for such a large allocation? Sorry; can you clarify whether this allocation is towards the end of the financial year?

Hon. Deyalsingh: No. So when I went to Cabinet initially to ask for the money, we were allocating funds for the first three months of the COVID response. You have to remember in those days, facing this for the first time we had no experience to go on, we had no precedent, so we tried to come up with a worst case scenario so that we do not have to go back to Cabinet every two weeks, and this is the scenario we came in with. And so far Cabinet had approved \$157,000 roughly, and to date we have spent and/or committed \$45 million roughly.

Dr. Bodoë: I just wanted to ask with regard to the SWRHA allocation. I know that there were plans to operationalize the Augustus Long Hospital.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: I am assuming that the Augustus Long would have come under the SWRHA.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Right.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate what sort of expenditure would have been incurred at the Augustus Long, and where we are in terms of preparedness, and what is the facility being used for currently?

Hon. Deyalsingh: So in the case of Augustus Long it did not come out from this allocation, because Heritage Petroleum outfitted and spent the money on Augustus Long. Augustus Long will be ready or is ready – if you hold on one second I will give you the details – it will be ready by the end of this week. It is to be used for tertiary care, because we are outfitting that with ICUs and ventilators and so on, to help supplement what is going on at Couva in the case that the global pandemic revisits our shores.

Dr. Bodoë: Right, and the staff allocation for Augustus Long would come from one of the current hospitals or would it be new staff being implemented?

Hon. Deyalsingh: It will be a combination of new staff and existing staff from South-West RHA.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate the expenditure from Heritage Petroleum for the Augustus Long?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I will not have that figure with me.

Dr. Bodoë: Could you undertake to provide that in writing for us?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I will.

Dr. Bodoë: Just one more question, Madam Chair. Now as part of the preparation for the COVID-19 and preparing for the worst case scenario, you would have mentioned the procurement of additional ventilators.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate how many new ventilators have actually been procured and are in the country at this time?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure. So pre-COVID there are approximately 123 ventilators across the health care system. In assuming the worst, we decided that the evidence at that time showed if you have 100 cases, 5 per cent or five would need ventilator support. So at the start of our response back in February worst case scenario we were saying at that time, if you have 1,000 cases of COVID in Trinidad, 5 per cent of 1,000 is how much, about 50? We brought it up to 74. So we were actually catering for 1,500 positive cases of which 5 per cent would need ventilator support. So we took up the ventilator count for COVID only, not touching a single ventilator in any of the other hospitals as a parallel health care system, to 74. At any one time we

never used more than four or five—at any one time. So we were over supplied with ventilators, but we were planning for the worst.

Dr. Bodo: So you are saying the number of new ventilators is 74?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Approximately, yes.

Dr. Bodo: Just for clarification. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay, can we move on to the Member for Barataria/San Juan. Thank you very much, Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Khan: Minister, the nurses from Cuba, you said they get a salary of \$6,300, et cetera, and it went on with the breakdown. Do the nurses get this salary directly in their hands?

Hon. Deyalsingh: That I will have to check. I know it is under a government arrangement with Cuba. I do not want to commit an answer and be incorrect, but I will check for you, Sir.

Dr. Khan: Okay. Another thing on the section on 009 with the North-West, Eastern, North and South, the values there, you said they spent \$45 million.

Hon. Deyalsingh: To date, yes.

Dr. Khan: So to date. How many people have been tested so far?

Hon. Deyalsingh: The number of people tested so far—number of patient tests, 2,952.

Dr. Khan: How many people were positive?

Hon. Deyalsingh: 117.

Dr. Khan: And how many people were quarantined?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Quarantined to date—I just gave you a figure, I think 589 persons have been either treated and/or quarantined in the parallel health care system, and the total to date of 589.

4.30 p.m.

Dr. Khan: My question, Minister, is that given the small amount of people who are quarantined versus those people who were tested, do you think \$45 million, et cetera, is value for money?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. So let me give you one example, because I was shocked when I got this figure this morning. When we were looking—and I have the figure here. One of the drugs that we have to use, and you will know it, it is a drug called human globulin immune. You know, each patient that we have to put on that cost between 100 to \$200,000 per patient, so that is why. You just cannot look at some basic costs.

Meropenem injectable, we had to spend \$792,960 on that alone. Sodium valproate, because you have to control your seizures, \$1 million, and that was provided free of charge, but what is shocking was the human globulin immune. Each patient could eat up between 100 to \$200,000 in one drug; one drug, that does not count. The paracetamol injections, the propofol, it does not count. The PPE, it does not count. the cost of infrastructure to set up the systems. Safety goggles, \$86,000; caps \$193,000, methylated spirits, half a million dollars. It is an expensive undertaking, Member.

Dr. Khan: Further question.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member.

Dr. Khan: On 04/011/06, the financing of the Arima Hospital for the completion.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Khan: Could I ask a question? When did this financing for the Arima Hospital begin?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. So in coming into office, there was no long-term financing. I think your administration would have had some other agreement with the China Eximbank that was never signed, sealed and delivered. This Minister of Finance sought long-term financing through local banks. And on this particular line item, there is a RBC loan for US \$16.9 million over a 10-year tenure. This sum is required to facilitate the payment of interest on a US \$16.94 million 10-year fixed rate loan for the completion of the Arima Hospital. There were several loans taken out to finance the Arima Hospital. both in US dollars and TT dollars because contrary to folklore, the Arima Hospital was never funded cash from NGC money. The taxpayer had to incur those loans.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Minister. Could I also ask—could I ask if any money was paid out before the election of 2015?

Hon. Deyalsingh: What I could tell, one week after being appointed a brand new Minister of Health, China Railway came to me and said, “Minister, you owe us the remaining 5 per cent of the 15 per cent down

payment which was due in May of 2015.” So the administration, at that time, did not complete their payment of 15 per cent. We had to pay it out in November of 2015, because at that time the moneys were used for other purposes.

Dr. Khan: So therefore, Minister, the work had started before 2015?

Hon. Deyalsingh: No. No work actually started. There was a sod turning, the same way the Couva hospital was opened for election purposes, there was a sod turning, there were no completed designs. Designs were completed in January 2016. Hard construction started in March 2016, and that is the true story and facts of the Arima Hospital.

Dr. Khan: Are you then saying that the foundation was not started before September 2015?

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So I have allowed –

Dr. Khan: It was. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: I would like to come in, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Member for Barataria/San Juan, and Minister of Health.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, with your permission, I would like to come in, please.

Madam Chairman: I am so happy you said, with my permission, after I finish. I have allowed a lot of historical context. I am always reminded that the Minister of Finance tells us that this discussion is based on what is before us. So I will ask us to now discontinue this line of conversation. Member for Chaguanas East. No? Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with request to Contract Employment, could you just give a breakdown in terms of the \$3,340,295? How much has been set aside for the nurses from Cuba, the 20 doctors and other staff?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. So the sum was required to supplement what was allocated to us in the 2020 budget. It was done, I gave you the breakdown for the salaries of the nurses. I gave you the breakdown for what we are paying the doctors and other staff. If you want further details, we can provide that to you in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: And could we have that by Friday?

Hon. Deyalsingh: We will certainly endeavour to do that.

Mr. Indarsingh: And with respect to the allocations to the respective regional health authorities, you have indicated – and the sums of moneys have been stated in terms of the supplementation. How much has been set aside in the respective regional health authorities for infrastructure and equipment and additional human resource services?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. So I will get those details for you, but those were the total details – those were the total figures under the headings of personnel, infrastructure, HR consumables, but I can get the details for you.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman –

Mr. Indarsingh: Infrastructure and equipment –

Mr. Imbert: No. No. It was another Item. [*Crosstalk*] it was another Item that is relevant to this fiscal year and this supplementary appropriation. Okay? There was another Item that was under discussion that was closed off, but I wanted to make an intervention.

Madam Chairman: And it is related to this?

Mr. Imbert: Not historically.

Madam Chairman: It is related to this?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Madam.

Madam Chairman: And it is current, as you tell me all the time.

Mr. Imbert: Current. Not historically.

Madam Chairman: I will give you an opportunity.

Mr. Imbert: But not on this Item, it was on a previous Item.

Madam Chairman: All right. We will take –

Mr. Imbert: One that was closed off.

Madam Chairman: We will take you a little later. Yes, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I hope that the Minister will provide the information as it relates to

infrastructure and equipment in relation to tents and whatever financial arrangements that exists between service providers and the respective regional health authorities.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, Madam Chairman, I do have the details here.

Madam Chairman: Sure.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes. I found them. It is a pretty exhaustive list. Do you want me to call it out or supply to you?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, for the record and you can call it out.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. So let us go. The HR under ERHA \$3,053,807.53; for equipment, \$819,151.54; consumables, \$1,679,333.54; facilities, \$408,730.90.

North Central RHA, HR, \$2,080,551.82; equipment, \$5,046,893.91; consumables, \$5,708,902.22; facilities, zero.

North West RHA, HR, \$1,136,214.21; equipment, \$730,666.61; consumables, \$1,027,310.43; facilities, \$818,410.53.

South West RHA, HR, \$9,790,08.85; equipment, \$733,064 and no cents; consumables, \$5,189,501.91; facilities, \$36,250.08

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much.

Hon. Deyalsingh: You are welcome.

4.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member of Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodo: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, I just want to draw your attention to one of the loans here, Item 04/009/20, that is the interest payment to the ANSA Merchant Bank, and it is indicated here that the loan of 500 million has been upsized to TT 1 billion, and it says to finance expenses related to the RHAs COVID-19 pandemic projects and programmes.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Mm-hmm, yes.

Dr. Bodo: So that is an increase in the loan of \$500 million?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Correct.

Dr. Bodo: Can you indicate what were these COVID-19 pandemic projects and programmes going to be undertaken by the ERHA?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Most of this loan was taken under ERHA for all the RHAs to pay mainly trade payables that would have accumulated over time, in addition to some COVID responses.

Dr. Bodo: All of the RHAs?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodo: Okay. So it was just a matter of the contracting that was done under the RHAs?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Correct. Correct, and distributed amongst all the RHAs.

Dr. Bodo: Would you be able to provide a breakdown in writing by Friday?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Of course. So, the first loan was for \$500 million. That went to trade payables. There was a second loan for 500 of which 249 million has been used, so there is a balance of about 251.

Dr. Bodo: Which is expected to be used at the end of the financial year?

Hon. Deyalsingh: To be used mainly for trade payables.

Dr. Bodo: Okay. Item 04/011/05, NIPDEC, I just wanted to find out, Minister, can you indicate when that loan was finalized?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodo: That is the loan for 671,327.7.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Correct. So that would have been finalized in late 2019 early 2020. It is a seven-year fixed rate loan that facilitates the purchase for both pharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceuticals for the fiscal 2020 period.

Dr. Bodo: So, Minister, can you indicate when these funds were disbursed to the Government?

Hon. Deyalsingh: When was what, sorry?

Dr. Bodo: I say can you indicate when the funds were disbursed?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay, so to date 262.5 million has been drawn down or disbursed.

Dr. Bodo: And that would be for all of the consumables in the RHAs?

Hon. Deyalsingh: To date, yes.

Dr. Bodoie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Item that I wanted to speak about was the next one which is current, 04/011/06.

Madam Chairman: 06?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: That is Arima?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Has the question been asked?

Mr. Imbert: No, I was trying to answer some of the points when you said you do not want historical information.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay.

Mr. Imbert: I wanted to clarify this.

Madam Chairman: Okay, one minute Minister of Finance. We have the Member for Barataria/San Juan coming up, so I feel you will get an opportunity there.

Mr. Imbert: No, but I wanted to deal with some of the questions as asked.

Madam Chairman: Yes, yes, and that is why I am saying –

Mr. Imbert: He may not ask them, now that he knows that I am going to –

Madam Chairman: No, one moment please.

Mr. Imbert: He may not ask them.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, I am saying that I have the Member for Barataria/San Juan in the line-up, you may get an opportunity.

Mr. Imbert: But he may not ask the question.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Member for Tabaguite.

Mr. Imbert: He may duck and run. He may duck and run.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. Madam Chair, I want to deal with 04/009/2, /3, /4 and /5 together. Minister, through you, Madam Chair, you said about – well when I added it up it was about 45.8 million, has been spent before the RHAs so far?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Which line Item are you on?

Dr. Rambachan: 04/009/2, and I am taking /2, /3, /4 and /5 together.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay, right.

Dr. Rambachan: Right? So 45.8 million, about that, has been spent of the amount here?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Is that your figure to date, and do you expect to spend much more, or what are you projecting to spend out of all of these here?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. So, it is difficult for anyone at this point in time to say how this global pandemic will play out in any country. What I can tell you going forward is that a lot of the expenditure is going to come in quarantining free of charge returning nationals. It is not a cheap endeavour. If you would notice, cases 115, 116, 117 occurred over a month ago. So most of the money going forward, if we do not get community spread, is going to be spent on quarantining returning nationals, as we bring them back in an orderly, strategic manner that we can cope with. And we also have to work on the assumption that for every national we bring back that is a potential positive case, and then that goes into the hospital system where you have to now spend money to treat them, and then eventually in a convalescent setting. So it is important to say how much money is allocated for treatment, convalescent, step down, because you have to work on the assumption –

Dr. Rambachan: The point I am making –

Hon. Deyalsingh: – that the Minister of National Security who is bringing in over a 1,000 persons over the next week –

Dr. Rambachan: A thousand Canadians.

Hon. Deyalsingh: – we have to assume that 50 to 100 per cent of those persons could potentially turn positive as we see with the cruise ships.

Dr. Rambachan: I am not arguing about the cost there, I am just trying to establish that the bulk of the

COVID seems to have flattened, and you spent 45. I agree there is a risk with the imported cases still coming back.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Rambachan: My next question is this, you said you have 74 ventilators?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. Those are new ventilators, Minister?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Most of them are new. Yes, yes. We bought some and we got some. There were a few donations, but most of them we bought.

Dr. Rambachan: What steps are you taking to ensure that these assets will be protected, and how are they going to be distributed in the RHAs? Because, you know, I was reading where the ventilators if they are not used and not checked and so on, they become of no value.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Correct.

Dr. Rambachan: So what steps have been taken to protect what is a major costly investment of 74 ventilators?

Hon. Deyalsingh: A ventilator costs the investment of what?

Dr. Rambachan: To protect a major expenditure on 74 ventilators?

Hon. Deyalsingh: So, that is why we brought on someone in the person of Dr. Anthony Parkinson, who is leading that charge to make sure that all our MME, especially our intensive care equipment, if it is not being used, is being properly maintained. But I want to go back to the comment you made. You said that the curve was flattened. I just want to tell the national population, the curve was flattened not because of sunshine, not because of heat. It was flattened because of the work of this Government [*Desk thumping*] led by the Prime Minister, led by the Minister of Health, led by the Chief Medical Officer and led by every single medical worker.

Dr. Rambachan: And not by what you call –

Hon. Deyalsingh: It was not flattened because of sunshine.

Dr. Rambachan: But you consider the worship of the sun to be voodoo, eh?

Madam Chairman: Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, on 04/11/07, 04/11/08 and 04/11/09, I noticed that there are three loans for the Central Block?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Khan: 11.19, 70.3 million and also US \$ 12.4 million. I do not know at this time, could you indicate what is the quantum or the ratio of local labour being used to Chinese labour at this point in time?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I do not see how that arises.

Madam Chairman: Just one moment please Minister of Health.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I do not see how that arises.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Health.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I do not see how that arises, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Health, one minutes please. I am not going to allow that question as posed by the Member for Barataria/San Juan. Okay.

Dr. Khan: Can I ask why?

Madam Chairman: Because we are dealing here with the payment of the loan. Minister of Finance, I believe you wanted to make an intervention on these payments, I would allow that now.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: I will allow the other questions.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I want to make the general point that 04/009/20, 04/001/05, 04/011/06, 04/011/07 and 04/011/08 are actions of the Minister of Finance because these are interest payments and loan payments based on financing facilities which would have been arranged and guaranteed and executed by the Minister of Finance.

4.50 p.m.

And all of these have arisen for various reasons. They all flow from requirements, operations and activities of the Ministry of Health, but it is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance to go and secure the financing. And what we do as a Government, and this is not an unusual practice, this is something that

has been done for years by multiple governments, is that having arranged the finance for all of these activities, the procurement of pharmaceuticals, COVID-19 pandemic, financing of the Arima Hospital, et cetera, all of these things here, the appropriation is then put into the respective Ministries, in this particular case, the Ministry of Health.

So the Minister of Health goes out, invites proposals, makes a decision on who should get the financing, arranges the financing, signs the letter of guarantee and so on, and then interest payments and principal repayments will come up during the fiscal year and therefore, all of these appropriations have to be made. Many of these things are done long after the budget. This is why they are appearing now for the first time. And in the particular case of 04/011/06, the UDeCOTT, RBC, Royal Bank, US \$16.9 million, which is about TT \$110 million or so, the interest payment that we are now required to make in fiscal 2020 of \$2.837 million has arisen. The reason why I, as Minister of Finance, have to ask permission of the Parliament to supplement the appropriation for health to include this interest payment is because no financing was arranged by your government for the Arima Hospital. And I, as Minister of Finance, this year have had to make these arrangements to allow the hospital to be completed.

Dr. Khan: Could I ask a question to you, Minister of Finance, since you said that you are responsible for financing. When you said in 04/011/06 that this interest payment is for a loan for the completion of the Arima Hospital, the completion, which is the end. How was the financing arranged initially to start the hospital prior to September 2015?

Mr. Imbert: There was nothing done –

Dr. Khan: There was.

Mr. Imbert: Nothing.

Dr. Khan: There was.

Mr. Imbert: You did nothing – [*Crosstalk*] – and what I had to do, what the PNM Government had to do was to arrange a series of financing arrangements over a period of years – [*Crosstalk*] – to finance the hospital. You arranged nothing, not one red cent.

Dr. Khan: You arranged 85 per cent, we raised 15 per cent.

Mr. Imbert: You did not arrange a red cent.

Dr. Khan: Yes, we did.

Madam Chairman: All right, so –

Mr. Imbert: We had to do everything.

Dr. Khan: All right, all right, “nah”.

Madam Chairman: I think again – I was assured we would not go into the historical context. Do you have any other questions, Member for Barataria/San Juan? Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I have a rather simple question, Madam Chairman. It is a follow-up from a question my colleague raised and the Minister explained it had to do with the ERHA. But the Minister explained that that loan, which was increased, was in fact for all the RHAs, right?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: And initially when I saw what was happening with the ERHA, I was wondering if they were doing anything different than the others. In other words, they were – for instance, what it says here is, to finance expenses related to the regional authorities, COVID-19 pandemic projects and programmes and meet expenditure under goods and services. And when I saw the loan associated here, I wanted to know if they were doing anything different. I still ask the question in order to find out if in any way the ERHA is differentiated in either the things that it is acquiring or the work that it is doing in terms of COVID preparation and execution during the COVID period.

Mr. Imbert: Now, just allow me to come in here first, please. I want to explain something. When the Ministry of Finance arranges financing for a Ministry, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Health has a number of regional health authorities –

Dr. Tewarie: Four.

Mr. Imbert: And when we arrange a loan, in this case it is 500 million and then upsizing, the loan is not for any single RHA. It is the RHA that borrows the money, guaranteed by Government and then that RHA distributes to all the RHAs. So the loan is in the name of the eastern RHA, but it is then for the general use of the Ministry of Health for all the RHAs. Okay? So it is not for any particular RHA. It is for the entire

RHA system.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Hon. Deyalsingh: As was said earlier.

Dr. Bodo: Thank you, Madam Chair. [*Inaudible*]— this next question back to the allocation for the four RHAs—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Bodo: And you did indicate that the existence—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Which allocation? The loan or the COVID response?

Dr. Bodo: No, the COVID response, separate from the loans. You did indicate that the parallel health care system was in place and of course, the Couva hospital would have worked in that system. But the point I am asking how is that, at the peak of the crisis, you know, you would know as I do that certain surgeries and so on, would have to shut down for purposes—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Elective surgeries only.

Dr. Bodo: Elective surgeries and now that they have restarted, as you indicated, there would obviously be a backlog and a waiting list. Can you indicate whether any of this allocation is going to be used, for example, to shorten that waiting list, or to fast track, or to facilitate those who would have been waiting for surgeries and other procedures?

Hon. Deyalsingh: So let me clarify. When a health system is preparing for an adverse event, whether it is a hurricane that you have notice of coming, a global pandemic, one of the first things you do is try to decant as many people as possible. That is standard operating procedure. So all non-emergency cases go home, you cancel your non-elective surgeries list. We restarted non-elective surgeries about three weeks ago or more, and we have made a substantial dent in that. We do not see any significant need for expenditure here to further clear up the elective surgery list. But if we do need to, it is there, because it can be related to a COVID expense.

Dr. Bodo: So you are saying that internal arrangements within the RHAs are facilitating the backlogs.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Correct.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 28 supplemented by the sum of \$224,582,640.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Health.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Members, again in anticipation of us moving ahead, we will now go on to Head 42: the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. After that we will go on to the Tobago House of Assembly, Head 15 and after that, we will go on to Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. So we now proceed to Head 42.

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government \$116,700,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As always it is a privilege to appear before the Standing Finance Committee and by extension, all citizens of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to give an account for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government finances. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 42 be supplemented by the sum of \$116,700,000.

5.00 p.m.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you say Emergency Food Support, Sub-Item 42, under 007, for \$20 million, could you state how this was distributed among the different corporations and I am amusing it was for hampers and other funds? Could you give a description of how this \$20 million was disbursed and I am assuming this was for the COVID-19 support?

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much. There was a Cabinet Minute No. 746, dated April 30, 2020, and it was agreed upon that \$10 million in the first instance for three months to deal with the COVID pandemic, and then a \$20 million allocation to be used also for the pandemic by the 14 corporations. So I have it here, the \$30

million—the total for 14 corporations will be 2,142,000 and this will supply 20,000 families. It “will be breakdown” into—for the 14 councils we will have supermarket vouchers and the NAMDEVCO vouchers.

The councillors, the elected councillors, will be able to make the recommendations to the CEO, the CEO will make the recommendations to the Permanent Secretary and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, and the Permanent Secretary will liaise with the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and that is where the funding allocation.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, I just want to seek two clarifications. One is, is it \$30 million is the allocation or \$20 million? I think I heard you say 10 and then 20.

Mr. Imbert: What happened was the Cabinet approval is for 30, 10 per month for three months, but the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is able to reallocate funds from within their existing appropriation for 10 of the 30. So we are topping it up with the additional 20. Okay?

Mr. Lee: The second question for clarity, Minister. The distribution throughout all the corporations quantum wise was it evenly distributed?

Hon. Hosein: Yes. Yes, it was done evenly for the 14 corporations.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 04/009/04 CEPEP, you are asking for 56.7 million and you are saying this to accommodate for the 15 per cent increase in wages to the daily paid workers, how many daily paid workers, Minister; and also for fees, for contractors, what type of fee you are referring to here for contractors?

Hon. Hosein: You are talking about the management fees for contractors. The contractors will – well you know they had an increase from the 1st of December. So the contractors from 20,000 a month will be getting 23,000 a month; labourers, well they move from \$15 hour to 17.50, and before was \$90 a day, now it is 105 a day; the operators will be 126.50 a day and it moved up to \$145.47 a day; for the foremen the rate was 143.75 and the daily rate now is 165.31.

Ms. Ramdial: Thanks.

Mr. Imbert: And may I just come in and say that is not for a full day, eh.

Ms. Ramdial: Sorry?

Mr. Imbert: That is not for a full eight-hour day.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: So four hours right, Minister?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: It is a four-hour day. So if you are thinking about the quantum.

Ms. Ramdial: Thanks.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, going back to line Item 04/007/42, when you indicated to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre that 20,000 families would have been catered for, is that 20,000 families throughout Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Hosein: Yes, throughout the 14 corporations.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Twenty thousand families?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is that sufficient?

Hon. Hosein: Well, that is the 30 million we are working with.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thirty million for 20,000?

Hon. Hosein: 3-0, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 04/11/09, the National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation programme of \$40 million, just seeking clarification. I see in your write-up it was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. Could you tell us when that programme was transferred to your Ministry; and this quantum of 40 million was that the quantum that was allocated in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries that was transferred now to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, or is that an additional sum of money?

Mr. Imbert: That is supplementation.

Mr. Lee: Supplementation. So it is additional?

Mr. Imbert: The Reforestation Programme just like the Unemployment Relief Programme is paid from the Unemployment Fund which is based on a levy on oil companies. So there is a fund in the Treasury called

the Unemployment Fund, and both the reforestation and the Unemployment Relief Programme are paid from that. So money is deposited into that fund from time to time. It is a percentage of volume by the price of oil and so on, and from that moneys were drawn to pay for reforestation and URP. Now that this has gone to a company, it is being given its own allocation—okay?—instead of coming out of that Unemployment Fund.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Follow-up question, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Now that this programme is under you in a company, I know you had several issues—not under your Ministry, before,—with the workers getting paid in that particular area, reforestation. Could you now give some clarity if all these workers, you know the arrears that is owed to these workers will be brought up to current?

Hon. Hosein: I was just advised that they were not paid for last month, but it is being addressed right now.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Hosein: And you asked when it started, it started in April 2020. It was transferred to us.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, you indicated that last month they were paid some arrears. Is that the entire amount of arrears that were paid off, or is there still moneys outstanding?

Hon. Hosein: It is just the salary. Just salaries for 21 workers.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I know Minister. I am asking if the entire arrears were in fact paid off or there are still outstanding amounts.

Hon. Hosein: It is outstanding. I just said it was outstanding and they are sorting it out right now.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For the entire amount?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: For 21 workers. Not 2,000 eh, 21.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 supplemented by the sum of \$116,700,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister, thank you, PS and other representatives from the Ministry. We now go on to THA, Head 15, and please be reminded after that we go to Head 78, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I just simply ask, because I was asked a question just now by the Minister of National Security who is handling Office of the Prime Minister, Head 13, and, of course, his own Head 22. Are you changing up the order from what is on the paper?

Madam Chairman: I am being directed.

Mr. Imbert: Oh, it is no problem. Are you being directed to change the order?

Madam Chairman: I think requests are being presented by the Leader and being discussed with the Whip, and when there is agreement then I do as agreed.

Mr. Imbert: I am so guided accordingly.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Head 15, Tobago House of Assembly.

Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly \$105,000,000.

Madam Chairman: I now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister of Finance.

5.10 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: I am terribly sorry, Madam Chair, I apologize. Could you just tell me the Head in question? Which one?

Madam Chairman: The Tobago House of Assembly, Head 15.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much. Madam Chairman and Members, because of COVID-19, we have made certain decisions as a Government and as a Cabinet to make sure that the COVID-19 support to people and the fiscal stimulus coming out COVID-19 is not restricted only to the island of Trinidad because we are a unitary state, Trinidad and Tobago.

So that, whereas the Ministry of Health has received quite a significant supplementary appropriation and also, loan financing for dealing with the parallel health care system and all of the other

expenditure associated with COVID-19, in Tobago, the Tobago Regional Health Authority reports to the THA and not to the Minister of Health. So we thought it appropriate and necessary to provide \$50 million to the Tobago Regional Health Authority to deal with issues related to dealing with the pandemic in Tobago because they are a separate entity.

Similarly, Tobago has its unique characteristics. It is mainly a tourism-dependent economy so we also thought it appropriate to make an allocation of \$50 million to the Tobago House of Assembly, specifically for the Tobago Tourism

Agency to assist hoteliers in Tobago, and that includes guesthouses with a support programme which is now being managed by the THA to hoteliers and guesthouses in Tobago.

In addition, the Tobago House of Assembly has a small enterprise grant programme which is called the Enterprise Development Programme, Enterprise Assistance Grant Programme and we thought it appropriate that we should top up that grant programme as well.

So in total, we are seeking approval for supplementary appropriation to the Tobago House of Assembly in a total sum, I believe, of \$105 million – if I just make sure I am correct – 105, which is made up of \$50 million for TRHA COVID-related expenses, \$50 million for a hotelier support programme and \$5 million for an enterprise development programme to assist small businesses in Tobago.

Question proposed: That Head 15 be supplemented by the sum \$105,000,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chairman. To the Minister, on line Item 06/001/06, Recurrent Expenditure, you have an appropriation of \$50 million. Now this \$50 million is to be disbursed: training health care workers and educating the public for \$4.271 million. Minister, can you tell me how many health care workers were trained and how much was spent on the education campaign programme?

Hon. Imbert: I would have to provide that for you on Friday but I can assure you that you will get the information.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. I move on. Establishing primary care facilities to meet the health care needs of persons in quarantine or self-isolation. Minister, can you tell me how many of these primary care facilities were set up and how many patients were quarantined, where and at what cost?

Hon. Imbert: I will try my best to provide that information by Friday. It is a little detailed as you will realize.

Ms. Ramdial: There is another request – and that is at \$16.5 million. I move on, thirdly, \$5.9 million and I am seeing here it is to maintain the COVID-19 response service. What entails – what makes up part of this service?

Hon. Imbert: Well, that is essentially a parallel health care system in Tobago. In other words, they do not want to upset the normal functioning of the regular health care system in Tobago so they have a parallel system, and that is what this money is for.

Ms. Ramdial: So can you give us a breakdown of this \$5.9 million?

Hon. Imbert: What it is? I will give you that on Friday as well.

Ms. Ramdial: And also, the acquisition of PPE and other equipment as well as employment of additional staff, we have a whopping \$23.2 million. Can you tell me how many PPE suits were provided and how many persons to be hired for this \$23.2 million that is being asked for?

Hon. Imbert: I will give you that on Friday.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chairman, I want to move on to the PSIP, Public Sector Investment Programme for \$55 million. Minister, well, as you said earlier on, \$50 million for the Tobago Tourism Agency for the hoteliers. Is this still for the 490 hotels or –

Hon. Imbert: All right. Now, that is a bit of misleading –

Ms. Ramdial: – has it been revised?

Hon. Imbert: – that is a bit of misleading information. What had happened is that there was an outreach programme, two persons in the hospitality industry in Tobago and a number emerged from the private sector, not from the public sector. So the private sector in Tobago alleged that there are 491 hotels and so on. So it is now the responsibility of the Tobago House of Assembly to look at these claims of 491 hotels/guesthouses and determine which of them are bona fide. So that that number should not be used at all. It is not a formal number, it is not an official number. It is just a number that was put out by persons

in the private sector.

Ms. Ramdial: So, do you have a formal number of hotels to benefit?

Hon. Imbert: I can get that for you.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: The number of registered bona fide –

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, registered, legitimate hotels –

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, I will get it for you, what is on the records.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. I also move on to line Item 09/003 Enterprise Development for \$2 million. Exactly how many persons or businesses to benefit from this \$2 million?

Hon. Imbert: Well, you have to look at the two together eh, the two and three, it is a total of five and my understanding is that it is a grant programme. So that this is an allocation that we are giving them, they would not have spent it yet, eh. So you are asking a kind of forward-looking question there but I will see what information I can get out of them.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. All right.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Member, I could come back to you. I will invite Caroni Central at this stage.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a couple of questions, Madam Chair. One of the things that is mentioned here is addressing, in a distinctive way, the COVID-19 pandemic response in Tobago and I just wondered, except for the fact that it is Tobago and a small island and a different culture, were there any elements of that that were different from what the other RHAs were doing?

Hon. Imbert: I really cannot tell you. I can ask them. I am sure they are following the standard protocols but as to whether they have a different approach in Tobago or not, I doubt. I think the health care system in Trinidad and Tobago follows the same protocols.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. Okay. And the other thing is, have all people under the jurisdiction of the regional health authority in Tobago now been trained for this?

Hon. Imbert: I cannot answer that but I will get the answer for you. I mean, they have been at it now for quite a while. We sent this money quite a while ago, I would hope that that is so but I will find out for you.

Dr. Tewarie: All right, so it might be a combination of some trained and perhaps some are not?

Hon. Imbert: I really cannot give you a definitive answer today.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And the hotel grants, Madam Chairman, through you, you have the enterprise development grant and in a sense, they are being –

Hon. Imbert: That is for small businesses.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, they are being topped up for small businesses to help people through.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, they would have had an allocation already and we are simply increasing the allocation.

5.20 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: But for the Tobago Tourism Agency and the hotels, one of the things that I have been concerned about is whether – well I mean, in a way, the question might not be appropriate here because it is an allocation. And I will leave that matter, Madam Chairman.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, I just want to ask, with respect to the funding for COVID-19 to the TRHA, do you have an idea as to how many persons were tested for COVID and how many were positive?

Hon. Imbert: I do not, but I will ask the TRHA for the information.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Baratavia/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, of the 50 million for the Tobago Tourism Agency –

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Khan: – would the Minister of Finance or Ministry of Finance have any oversight or audit of method used to distribute the funds or any such action on the quantum of funds and where it is going?

Hon. Imbert: Initially there was a view that there should be some level of oversight, in terms of guidelines of how the money should be spent. But then, based on representations made by the hoteliers in Tobago –

[*Chairman: Mr. Forde*]

– it was felt that this is something that is best handled by the Tobago House of Assembly itself. So that, we have now changed the manner in which the programme is to be administered and it is now the

responsibility of the Tobago House of Assembly which would formulate its own policy and distribute the funding to the hoteliers, based on an internal Tobago solution to the issues, rather than a top-down approach from central government. It was felt it is best that the THA handle it itself. So they will get a block allocation. They would have to account for it in the normal way to the Auditor General and that sort of thing. But we are no longer giving them any direction with respect to this. We felt it is better to let Tobagonians handle it themselves. Okay?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 15 supplemented by the sum by \$105,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services \$581,794,321.

Mr. Chairman: We now move on to Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. I would like to welcome Madam Minister and also Permanent Secretary and your assistants from the Ministry. Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family, a supplementation of \$581,794,321. I will now invite the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of no more than five minutes. Over to you, Madam Minister.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is the core social sector Ministry with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of Government's social and human development policies. The Ministry is mandated with the responsibility for addressing the challenges of poverty, social inequality, and social exclusion, with particular emphasis on developing and executing programmes and services that protect and assist the vulnerable and marginalized groups in society such as the disabled, the elderly, the poor, the indigent, the socially displaced, ex-prisoners, deportees and persons living with HIV and AIDS. Our motto, Mr. Chairman, is helping, empowering, and transforming lives. Mr. Chairman, we are here at your disposal and at the disposal of the Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 78 be supplemented by the sum of \$581,794,321.

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

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Hon. Minister, line Item 02/001/16, Contract Employment, \$6.5 million. While you would have given us some of these positions, might it be possible for you to tell us how many of each of these that have been identified here, these contract positions?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman, essentially this additional amount is for remuneration for 62 customer service representatives; 10 accounting personnel, project managers, all of whom assumed duty at various dates from March 2020, and these persons are assigned to the Social Welfare Division and the accounts department of the Ministry and their persons who are assisting with the COVID relief.

Mr. Chairman: Supplemental.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, is it at one location? Is it that at your head office? Or is this dispersed throughout the Ministry?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: It is across the Ministry. Some of the customer service representatives are at the 10 locations, the social welfare offices, and we have other persons throughout other offices in the Ministry. We also had a call center that we set up, and as a consequence of that we had persons at the call center.

Mr. Chairman: Supplemental, proceed.

Mr. Karim: May I, with your permission, hon. Minister, ask the question with respect to the call center. I have been having some reports that in some cases calls are made to the call center and they are not being responded to. Have you had any situations like that that needs to be corrected or responded to?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We had reports of that nature. However, we were able to supplement the number of persons who work at the call center and that will account for some of these numbers that we have here. We were also able to supplement the number of lines that we had at the call center. We were also able to get mobile devices so that we that we could have instituted a 24-hour service. So I am sure that the information that you have may have been at the beginning of the establishment of the call center, but that is no longer the case. And as a matter of fact, the call center no longer exists, but not – we have a call center that we have always had, but it no longer exists for the COVID issues.

Mr. Chairman: I now recognize the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hon. Minister, can you indicate if the Ministry has any intention of hiring more persons in these positions?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, under the normal hiring processes, we would hire contract—persons on contract, but the positions that I am talking about with regard to the COVID was specifically in relation to the COVID issues.

5.30 p.m.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, can you state how many vacant positions that you intend to fill at this present time?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: When you say vacant positions are you talking about positions on the establishment or contract positions? What positions are you talking about?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: In relation to this line Item.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on Ma'am, excuse.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: This is specific to Contract Employment—sorry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Again, hold on, one second Minister, let us identify the line Item so it would make it easier for both the Minister to be able to answer the question and also for the Chairman to so direct. So just identify the line Item and then—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The line Item is 02/001/16, we are still on Contract.

Mr. Chairman: Right, Contract Employment, Madam Minister.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And I am asking would this figure here, I know that the Minister indicated that it is to deal with the staff that you have, but in your messages it also says that the recruitment of additional staff to fill vacant positions. So I am asking a very specific question. How many vacant positions do you intend to fill? And as well, what is the duration of these contracts and the intended commencement date please?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The positions that we would be filling are short-term contract positions not contract positions per se. Short-term, which is for a maximum of about six months.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Commencement date?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Sorry?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The commencement date please?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, as I said we commenced in March.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, line Item 05/31 Contribution to Non-profit Institutions. Minister, can you identify how many NGOs would have participated in this programme and approximately how many meals that may have been distributed through the programme so far?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: This was additional financial support to NGOs for nutritional support and accommodation for the homeless. I think there are about eight NGOs that deal specifically with accommodation for the homeless. With regard to this specific Item we dealt with funding for the operationalization of the COVID-19 temporary shelter which is at CSDP, including operational cost for meals and the total amount was \$194,802 per month to engage the services of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to manage the centre, and that was for an initial period of three months. To date, St. Vincent de Paul has been paid the sum of \$97,401, and the centre has been accessed by 56 persons. And I can indicate that—just to give you a further breakdown—I can indicate that the staff was four caregivers, two supervisors, two janitors and that cost was \$49,800; meals cost \$52,080; security \$54,000; PPE in the sum of \$3,207 and that included facial masks, latex gloves, and dupont full body suits; miscellaneous items in the sum of \$3,248; and a 20 per cent administrative cost fee of \$32,467.

Mr. Chairman: Supplemental, Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Minister, out of the \$10 million that was allocated, where that is being provided now, how much has been drawn so far?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The original allocation was \$8,000,500. The balance on the allocation is \$4,871,419, the expenditure as at the 1st of June is \$3,628,581. And the expenditure for fiscal 2019 was \$6,190,000.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister, 04/005/31, in your remarks I think you indicated I think that there were eight organizations that were involved in providing meals to the homeless

during the COVID-19 pandemic –

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Meals and other support.

Mr. Indarsingh: That was established organizations who have been approved already by the Ministry?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: These are organizations that have existed over time for that specific purpose of providing meals to the homeless.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: And the Ministry does give subventions to some of those organizations. I think in fact we give subventions to about 22 organizations under this particular Vote, but for the pandemic and the COVID there were eight specific ones that were engaged specifically in case there was an increase for them.

Mr. Indarsingh: So the Ministry, Minister, did not receive, let us say, any new applications from non-governmental organizations to engage in this particular area of providing meal to the homeless and so on?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: For the homeless?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yeah.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: During the COVID –

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Except what I just told you, for the homeless. There were other applications to assist people, but for the socially displaced what I said previously is what stood.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, line Item 04/007/08 Disability Grant 101,822,208, based on the write-up here, Minister the sum is required and I read “to supplemental the shortfall in the allocation for 2020 under this grant, and as a result of a top-up...” –

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Um-hmm.

Mr. Lee: – “...to existing beneficiary and to cater for new beneficiaries.” Firstly, I would like to ask how many individuals access the disability grant? What is the meaning of “top-up”? And what new beneficiaries or new benefits this amount is being catered for?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay, the existing beneficiaries are 24,627 persons and that includes 1,535 children. With regard to the top-up, you may recall that we had indicated that had during this COVID period that persons who were already receiving disability grants, their grants would be topped up in the sum of \$150, \$300, \$450, and \$500 depending on the size of their family. So that is the top-up that I am talking about and that would have been \$150 per month for three months, and it would have come in one payment so that they did not have to expect it over a period of time. It would have been for three months.

Mr. Lee: And the “new beneficiaries” what is the “new”? “New” meaning what? Additional individuals coming on the programme?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes. What had happened is there was several people who had applied for disability assistance and we may not have processed their applications as yet, but because of the pandemic we thought it prudent to give something during this time to keep those people whole until we were able to process their applications.

Mr. Lee: And my final question, the top-up was just a one-off for the three-month period?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes, but it was \$150 by three.

Mr. Lee: Right, and after that?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Or \$450 by three.

Mr. Lee: So it is not a continuous top-up?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No, it is just a top-up for three months.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Cumuto/Manzanilla Member.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Mr. Chair, line Item 04/005/31. Madam Minister, could you indicate –

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, sorry, sorry, could you repeat?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 04/005/31, Contribution to Non-profit Institutions.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Oh the Non-profit, uh huh.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Could the Minister indicate the recent figures of homeless persons in Trinidad and Tobago?

5.40 p.m.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We can provide that figure on Friday.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Minister, could you also indicate these eight NGOs who—given this subvention to provide for the homeless, can you identify who those eight persons are, please?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Oh, the NGOs we can provide the names on Friday.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And can the Minister indicate how many of those persons that were assisted during this period became homeless as a result of COVID-19?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: None.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: None?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: None became homeless as a result of COVID-19. None.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So, what we, what we—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Let me, may I be allowed Mr. Chairman? May I be allowed to say something? With regard to the issues surrounding COVID-19, there are people in Trinidad who are called homeless, socially displaced, some people call them vagrants. These are the people that we are talking about. Persons who are socially displaced, persons who are homeless, persons who live on the street, these are the persons. What we recognized at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is that the COVID pandemic may have created an even more difficult situation for those persons. And in order to make sure that they were not even more challenged than they are now, we made sure that those organizations that would normally give them support were made whole so that they could give support. And that was the objective of making sure that we had this money to give to those NGOs.

Mr. Chairman: Supplemental, Member? Go ahead, proceed.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Am, Madam Minister, hearing what you said, I am not disputing that, what I would like to know is that there—you indicated 22 NGOs that receive funding currently, who assist in this area.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: More or less.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What is the difference between the eight NGOs getting in addition to this 22 persons—NGOs?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: I did not say that. I said that at present there are 22 NGOs who receive funding under the Vote of Non-profit Institutions, Contribution to Non-profit Institutions. That is what I said.

Mr. Chairman: Moving on Member, I recognize Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, I would like to deal with line Item—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, sorry, Mr. Chairman. Could I just say that under these NGOs we also have homes for older persons. So it is not just— So I want the member who was a Minister of social development and who would know what, or should know what I am talking about.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, I am just addressing line item 04/007/04 for urgent temporary assistance—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay.

Mr. Karim:—50 million. This sum is to provide additional funds for rental assistance—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mr. Karim:—for families and it is mentioned the criteria of these families. Might you be able to indicate whether the original sum has been exhausted, and if so, I just wanted to get a sense as to what would the total number of applicants and how many have received this grant so far?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay, the balance on the allocation for this, as at the 6th of June is \$20,075,145. The expenditure thus far is \$9,924,855. Mr. Chairman, this additional that we are asking for is to provide assistance to families for two months, and we have estimated approximately 10,000 families. And that was for families who may have been retrenched, terminated, or have a reduced income. Thus far, we have a total of 3,948 applications for COVID. But Mr. Chairman, let me reiterate that this Vote is not only the COVID assistance. This Vote is because this Ministry on a normal basis provides rental assistance to citizens and permanent residents of Trinidad and Tobago. So this is what this Vote is about.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. The Minister has already answered the question, but I would want to find out—Minister, you indicated that 3,940 applications were received for urgent temporary assistance. If I am correct?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Sorry. Repeat what you said.

Mr. Indarsingh: You indicated that 3,948 applications have been received—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh:—for assistance under the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of this figure, how many of the applications were from persons who were terminated or had their income reduced?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: All of the applications would have been from those persons.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no. I mean, there is a difference between if you are terminated or your income—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Oh, you want them separated?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yeah.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: I would not be able to give that information.

Mr. Indarsingh: But you think you could provide that by Friday?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No, no. We would not be able to provide that. The way the applications were done, we had it under that heading: retrenched, terminated, reduced income, so they would not have had to circle one of the three. They would have had to be within that category.

Mr. Indarsingh: And of the applications that have been received, all have been approved or they have met the criteria?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: They are all being processed. We are processing them.

Mr. Indarsingh: How many have been processed up to this point in time?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We are processing in the region of—on the last occasion that I spoke, we had indicated that we have a difficulty with the processing because several persons are trying to defraud the Government. So this is a very painstaking process, and so, we are going through them one by one and trying to get it done.

Mr. Indarsingh: Now, but Minister if you were terminated, that is a straightforward issue.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes, but remember—all right. I am being told that we are processing at this time 2,965.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. And again, I do not want it to be confused, but I am saying in relation to persons who have been terminated that should be relatively straightforward, and the issue of rental accommodation, because this—I see it is termination curtailed or income reduced.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: It is retrenched, terminated or reduced income.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yeah. So how many of the rent applications are in question at this point in time?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: On the last occasion that we checked, there were over, I think, 82 that were in question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: The question was asked and answered, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Cumuto/Manzanilla, your turn.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, Line Item 04/ 007/ 04, the same line item you were on. Is there a cap on the rental assistance?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: \$2,500.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And just to ask if someone's rent was, in fact, over that amount, would the Ministry still pay the difference?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No, \$2,500.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So, you will pay \$2,500?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And is there—what if there is a request for a further three months? Would the Ministry entertain it? Would there be a—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We have said that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—a cap? Is there another cap?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The cap remains \$2,500 and if it goes over three months, we would examine that and then reduce it to \$1,500, and then to \$1,000.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What is the process in going through it, Madam Minister, in light of the fact that persons have not received their rental assistance because of the fact that you are not doing your due process? Landlords are getting very antsy and some persons have been threatened with eviction.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: As I said in answer to the question posed by Couva South, we are processing 2,965 at this time. So we are doing our best.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many members of staff are in this process to assist in this regard, Madam Minister?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The 62 persons that we have that I told you were CSRs, were accounts persons, were persons doing verification. Those are the persons involved. And in addition to that, the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretaries, they are all involved.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 04/007/03: Social Assistance. Madam Minister, how many families have been impacted thus far?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The public assistance, it is estimated that over 40,000 families will benefit from the temporary grants, where a member has been retrenched, terminated or experienced reduced income.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: This figure of \$171 million is to take –

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We provided the top up for 17,824 families. With regard to pensioners, we have been paying 99,322 pensioners, and we have seen an increase of about 3,045 pensioners. With regard to the disability assistance, there are 24,627 existing beneficiaries, including 1,535 children and we have also given 18,000 – there is also an additional 18,603 persons that we expect to benefit from various grants provided by the Ministry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, on the same line Item 04/007/03, is there any intention by the Ministry to resume the food cards to the School Feeding Programme for parents who are not in receipt of a grant and who are in need of such assistance?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: I have said this on more than one occasion. When we determined that 20,500 families would benefit from the food card, we looked very closely at the numbers that were provided to us by the Ministry of Education as the number of registered recipients of the School Feeding Programme. Several of those families have more than one child. When the Ministry very carefully extrapolated, it was clear that once we gave out, at least, to 20,000 families, we would have covered all or very close to all of the families who were not already in receipt of a permanent food card. If there are families that are still in need, we have made sure that the faith-based organizations have been funded so that they can give food assistance to these families, and we have made sure that in every way we have tried to capture every citizen who may be in need at this time.

5.55 p.m.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, Minister, in addition to these faith-based organizations being accountable to God, is there any other way of them being accountable to how many persons they have reached out to?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, I think that God is the highest accountant that they could be accountable to, but each faith-based organization has signed an agreement with the Office of the Prime Minister that specifies exactly how they are to account for the money that has been given to them, and that is to say that they must bring in bills, receipts, invoices that indicate what they have spent. They must also bring in the names, telephone numbers, addresses and ID card numbers of every recipient of the food support that they were able to give.

[Chairman: Mrs. Annette-George]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And, Madam Minister, how can one – Would be able to determine whether the persons who are receiving from the faith-based are in fact not receiving from the regional corporation or even from the MP's office? How will the Ministry be able to keep a proper account to show that everyone is in fact receiving who needs assistance and none of the same persons are receiving the same assistance over and over thereby denying other persons?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, MP, I am sure people would use their best endeavours, but we do know that there will be some people who go to every location to try and get something. But if it is food, I do not think

we could begrudge them but we are hoping that most who are most in need will get what is available.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And, Madam Minister, there are persons, their MPs were told that they would receive food support of 150, of which 50 was received many weeks ago. When would the other food basket—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: There are 41 constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago. The amount that NAMDEVCO can do is 7,000 per month for the next four months, and we are doing our best.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am taken back, of course, we have heard this before, where people might be trying to defraud the system and therefore deny bona fide persons. If I may ask with respect to line Items 04/007/03 and 04/007/04, if you can give us a sense as to how many such instances you may have discovered—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: I will provide that information if we can on Friday.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 78 supplemented by the sum of \$581,794,321.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you, Madam PS, and other members of your Ministry. We now go on to Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister.

Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister \$47,220,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of state in the Office of the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was just wondering if I got demoted—

Madam Chairman: “Oh”, I am sorry.

Hon. Young:—Minister of state. That is fine. Madam Chair, the Office of the Prime Minister is the Ministry that works in support of the various items that fall under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister’s Office, and in this particular instance, as a result of the COVID pandemic, there were certain decisions that were taken and the Prime Minister’s Office was the Ministry that it was decided to work with the religious bodies to get certain relief to our citizens through these religious bodies. And then, there are also just two other items under the Office of the Prime Minister: one is with respect to the payment of UDeCOTT; the line Ministry is the Office of the Prime Minister so it is interest payments for a UDeCOTT loan, and then the other is some money for the National Security Council.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 13 be supplemented by the sum of \$47,220,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, may I seek your intervention on line Item 04/005/01, Ecclesiastical Bodies, \$30 million, and this sum is to enable the major religious organizations. Might you be able to indicate to us who are these major religious organizations and the sums that were allocated to these major religious organizations?

Hon. Young: Certainly, Madam Chair, that information is available. It is a very, very long list so what I can do is, through you, it can be provided in writing, because it is available but to sit here now and go through—what I can say is that the various religious bodies, all religious headings, the Roman Catholics, the Anglicans, the Baptists, Hindus, Muslims, et cetera, who are identified by the umbrella bodies, certain sums of money were given to them and they then in turn were, under certain guidelines and standard operating procedures, were charged with the responsibility to then distribute amongst their various religious sub-bodies, but that list can be provided.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of the concerns that various places of worship have expressed to me, and I am sure to my colleagues, is that some of these religious organizations are not under the umbrella and therefore, they have been asking for assistance. I do not know if there is any consideration at this stage, even though it might be late, but it is always necessary. So the question is: Is there any consideration for those independent organizations?

Hon. Young: The answer is, yes, Madam Chair. What I can say is that the independent groups were required to meet the following criteria in order to be considered for funding. The religious body must have

a minimum of five affiliated bodies, churches, temples, masjids, assemblies or gatherings or schools, and its administration has the capacity to distribute food hampers and is already engaged in food distribution; be a registered or incorporated body and can support the cursory geographical distribution gaps known in the country based on discussions with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Ministry of Local Government and other known distribution agencies.

The Government took a decision, a considered decision, to use the major umbrella bodies, so we are aware that there are some smaller churches and other religious bodies who are not members of some of these umbrella bodies, especially on the evangelical side, and that has been taken into consideration and we are looking at providing a sum, a block of money, but it then becomes difficult and we have to figure out. And I think they have worked out the mechanics of how it would then be distributed, but not every single religious church or other body would be able to access the funding, but we have done as best as we can using the umbrella bodies. But the particular issue you have raised has come to the Government, and we are looking at it and we actually dedicated a block to try and get it out to those various smaller bodies.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, just to follow up on the concern raised by my colleague, Chaguanas East, for example, Minister – and I have heard you saying that the Government is considering. So, for example, there are representatives who have interacted with me, for example, from the Chinmaya Mission of Trinidad and Tobago, the Kabir Panthi, the Islamic Missionaries Guild, the [Ahmadiyya](#) organization, the [Arya Samaj](#), and so on, and I hope that the Government will treat them in a very equitable manner in going forward.

6.05 p.m.

Hon. Young: The Government's distribution of these funds has been on a very equitable manner, and hence the use of the umbrella bodies. You would appreciate that there are certain organizations that may choose not to associate with some of the umbrella bodies. So for example one that you just called out there, an Islamic organization, so they may choose not to associate with ASJA or some of the other recognized umbrella bodies. That is one of the difficulties or one of the downsides of not associating with the religious bodies. But we did identify this and we have identified a blocked sum to try and get it to these smaller organizations.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, I just want to ask a question under line Item 01/65, Expenses to Cabinet-appointed Bodies. Exactly how many people comprise the National Security Council? And secondly on that, the line Item identifies that the \$6 million is to meet expenditure to September 2020. How many months of coverage prior to September 2020 does that \$6 million cover?

Hon. Young: First of all, the composition of Government Ministers on the National Security Council – the Chair is the Prime Minister, then there is the Attorney General, the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, the now Minister of Public Utilities, Minister in the Attorney General's Office, Minister Hinds, and the Minister of Finance. That is the composition of the National Security Council.

We then bring before us the various heads: The Commissioner of Police, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Director of SSA, and whoever else it may need to meet with. And the secretariat is provided by the National Security Council Secretariat that operates out of the Office of the Prime Minister.

This \$6 million was money that was actually used to pay legal fees in the Office of the Prime Minister and so now what is being done is it is being reinstated to the National Security Council.

Mr. Paray: So it is not only stipends?

Hon. Young: No, no, no, this was money that was utilized by the Office of the Prime Minister from the allocation of the National Security Council, and now they are being reimbursed.

Mr. Paray: Is it covering a 12-month period, from September to September?

Hon. Young: It is in this fiscal. So it was a block of money that was used and now they are being reimbursed for it.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well one question was already answered. Just a simple second question. If the Minister could be kind enough to just tell us, because we do not have it according to the Ministries' breakdown, the specific loan for UDeCott. What was the loan in question? Just

this one.

Hon. Young: Yes, the loan, this is a TT \$500 million facility at a rate of interest of 4.50 per cent. It is a syndicated loan facility.

Dr. Moonilal: What was it taken out for?

Hon. Young: I do not have that information.

Dr. Moonilal: You can get it for Friday, is it possible?

Hon. Young: I am sure the Minister of Finance can.

Dr. Moonilal: But would you undertake to get the information for Friday?

Hon. Young: I will speak to the Minister of Finance who is in charge of these things, and he would be able to provide the information.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just to go back to the funding to the ecclesiastic bodies. Was the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for distributing that \$30 million, or did it fall under another Ministry?

Hon. Young: No, the Office of the Prime Minister working along with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. So the first tranche of \$10 million has been distributed, but funds at the time – because we wanted to get it out there to assist in this pandemic because we knew that persons needed to get the assistance. Again there was a pulling of funds from different Votes, different Heads, so now other Votes were utilized. So now with the receipt of this \$30 million we will be able to put back that \$10 million into those various Heads and the other \$20 million would be distributed.

Mr. Lee: So there is still a balance of 20 million to be distributed?

Hon. Young: Yes, yes, because remember it is for a three-month period, so it was 10 months, \$10 million per month.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, thank you. On that same matter if I could ask a follow-up question, hon. Minister? Can you indicate what was the criteria used in determining whether one body received a figure compared to another body? For instance you would find the Muslim and the Hindu organizations got by far less than the other organizations? Can you indicate what was the criteria?

Hon. Young: They got hit the hardest?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, they got less.

Hon. Young: So how it was broken down is all of the umbrella bodies provided the number of members. So you had like for the Anglican church how many, for the Islamic umbrella organizations they would say what their membership was, for the Hindu faith, and it was based on the size of the membership and it was then prorated according to the size of membership under these umbrella bodies in the various religions. So obviously if you have more members you would get more money than if you had less. It is not based on your religious faith, it is based on membership.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 13 supplemented by the sum of \$47,220,000.

Madam Chairman: We now go on to the Ministry of Finance. No, I am guided, we now go on to Head 65, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs.

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs \$35,374,200.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Moses: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the fulfilment of its mandate, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs represents the interests of Trinidad and Tobago at regional and multilateral fora. The Caribbean community and the

United Nations feature among these fora. In order to ensure continued and meaningful engagement and to yield benefits in support of this country's development objectives, Trinidad and Tobago's financial contributions to such organizations must be provided for adequately.

For fiscal year 2020, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs' allocation for the Sub-Head "Current Transfers and Subsidies", was insufficient to cover the obligations of Trinidad and Tobago for contribution to the Caribbean Community Secretariat, the United Nations Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund and the United Nations peacekeeping operations. Supplementary allocation contemplated in

the current exercise will ensure that Trinidad and Tobago in remains in good standing with these organizations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 65 be supplemented by the sum of \$35,374,200.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 004/001/01, Caribbean Community Secretariat, \$9.5 million approximately. We are told that the funds are required to replenish the allocation which was vired to treat with an urgent commitment under the UN peacekeeping operations. So it is now necessary to enable the Government to meet its financial obligations to the Secretariat at the end of the year. Would the Minister give us an idea of what was the nature of this urgent UN peacekeeping operation which required this urgent transfer from the Caricom Secretariat of \$9.5 million?

6.15 p.m.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, with limited resources over the last financial, we at the Ministry sought to balance the payments to meet our obligations in some of the international organizations. And it is within that context that the need was deemed to the greatest to satisfy the careers with the United Nations, that is the crux and the underpinning rationale that led to such a transfer.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Okay. I accept that. 004/003/01, the United Nations Regular Budget on Working Capital Fund, that has been increased by \$15.1 million. And we are told that the funds are required to meet the shortfall on the original provision to ensure that Government's commitments are met to the end of the financial year. I want the Minister to bear with me a little bit. The United Nations, this is in the Draft Estimates. The United Nations Regular Budget on Working Capital Fund, in 2018, 5.6 million was allocated and spent, so we fulfilled our obligations in 2018.

In 2019, nothing was— although money was allocated in the Estimates— nothing was spent, and in 2020, 5.7 million was allocated. So as far as we have in front of us, the only outstanding expenditure is 5.7 million. Assume in 2018, we fulfilled our obligations and in 2019, we did not. But the 2020 Estimates of 5.7, we used to fulfil that 2019 obligation, then the question arises: Why do we need 15 million to meet the shortfall when by my estimation we are only 5.7 million short?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: What has happened is that, money was transferred or vired from other line Items to make the payments and now these Votes have to be replenished.

Mr. Charles: So you are saying that the reason given here, they are required to meet the shortfall on the original provisions. It is a question of moneys from here were vired to other expenditures.

Mr. Imbert: No. Moneys were vired from other Items to this Item in order to make the payments that had become due, and now the money has to be returned from whence—

Mr. Charles: So therefore, we should see an allocation just like the one before. You took from the Caricom Secretariat, and then you now come to replace it. If you are now telling us that moneys were taken from other Heads and brought here, we ought to be seeing in front of us the repayments to those Heads.

Mr. Imbert: You would not see that. What occurs during a financial year is that virements and transfers take place on a weekly basis. You are just replenishing a particular Item and then that money can, itself, be moved around according to need.

Mr. Charles: All right. My only concern here is that, you sought to replenish in the Caricom Secretariat, but we are not seeing it here, but I take your word for it.

I go on to the UN Peacekeeping Operations, 004/003/04, and we are told that the 2020 allocation was utilized to pay outstanding contributions for the year 2016 to 2018. Additional funds are now required to facilitate the 2019 and 2020 contributions.

Now, when I look, again, at the Estimates for the UN Peacekeeping, I see, fact, that in 2018, 4.3 million was spent, so that we cannot say we are dealing with a backlog of payments. Our research shows that 4.9 was the actual expenditure in 2017, so 2017 and 2018 have been accounted for. And in 2020 Estimates, 5 million was budgeted. So let us assume that 5 million in 2020 went to pay 2019, the question arises: Why do we now need additional \$10.7 million? And let me put it this way, 9.5 million was taken from the Caricom Secretariat and given to Peacekeeping Operations, that is this Vote. So they already start off with nine that was vired to this Vote and then you have \$5 million allocated. So that is nine and five,

14.5 million, and now you are putting an additional 10.7 million. So therefore, Minister, you need to explain why 25 million is being allocated in this financial year for this Vote?

Madam Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I have some amount of faith that we are not jumbling up figures in a way that would –

Mr. Charles: I can give you the book.

Hon. Moses: – in what is a rather simple matter, mandatory obligatory payments that need to be met by Trinidad and Tobago to international organizations fixed on quota subscription contributions to these organizations. No middlemen, nothing untoward, of course, needless to say.

In respect of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations over the years, there has been quite a backlog dating a number of years, five, six, seven years perhaps, and what is required is an amount of about \$10 million – 10.707 plus \$9,700, that would allow us to clear our debts up until the end of June, and still there will be an outstanding sum, just about \$167,622. So that – the original provision was not sufficient and with this allocation, we would be able to wipe away all the debt, save \$167,000 that I had just mentioned, that is the simple reality.

Mr. Charles: No. It is not a simple reality.

Madam Chairman: Just a minute. [*Crosstalk*] Just let the Minister finish, and then you can pose your other question.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I would endeavour to answer in detail all questions that it is excessively transparent, please. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Yes. Madam Chairman, I wish to categorically state here today, that all payments, there is no question of a backlog. In 2015, the UNC paid 16.6 million to this Vote. In 2014, it was \$12.87 million because I knew they will come and say that there was a backlog. In 2013, it was 10.2 million. In 2012, it was 15.4 million. And in 2011, it was 2 million, Madam. So therefore, to come and say it was a backlog to the UNC, it is not correct, and I think if the Minister says that, he has to apologize. The other thing I wish to make with respect to this –

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just speak on that point he just made? The document is very clear. The 2020 allocation was utilized to pay outstanding contributions for years 2016 to 2018.

Mr. Charles: Good.

Mr. Imbert: That is in black and white.

Mr. Charles: So let us go to the –

Mr. Imbert: So what you carrying on about?

Mr. Charles: – so 2018, Minister, it is either we paid for 4.3 million or we did not, and I putting it to you that we paid \$4.3 million. So 2018, is taken care of, so we have 2019 and 2020 –

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Charles: – of which 5 million was allocated. Right? So we have two years of which 5 million was allocated for one year, so we are really outstanding for one year.

Madam Chairman: Just a minute.

Mr. Imbert: You want me to repeat, again, Madam Chairman? I will repeat the words, outstanding contributions for the years 2016 to 2018.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chairman –

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Moses: I can render a bit more clarification.

Madam Chairman: Yeah.

Hon. Moses: I wish to refer to a document from the United Nations on the status of contributions, a summary document it is as of the 10th of June, meaning today, 2020. And the outstanding obligation, in respect of Peacekeeping Operations, amount to US \$1,608,775.50. That is the state of it. So these jumbled-up figures, we are referring to acronyms from the past, I cannot readily respond to that. But what I can give is the factual situation and the payments that we have made, and with the allocations, we would be in good and proper standing so as to ensure that the mandates of the Government of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, they are implemented.

Mr. Charles: Right. Minister, could you just give us the date of that letter of the United Nations?

Madam Chairman: I believe it was quite clear. The Minister said –

Mr. Charles: He said –

Madam Chairman: – the 10th of June, 2020, which is today.

Mr. Charles: So the 10th of June, we owe 1 million? Am I reading you correctly?

6.25 p.m.

Hon. Moses: This document can be sourced from the United Nations. It is an up-to-date statement, and statements are plenty and can be readily access on an ongoing basis from the United Nations.

Mr. Charles: And it said we owed – I was just asking clarification Minister. Did it say that we owe as of today US 1 million?

Hon. Moses: Through you, Madam Chair, 1,608,775.50 United States cents, and it is detailed the different categories of peace-keeping operations.

Mr. Charles: Okay, so the question is, if today we owe \$1 million, why are we today meeting to approve \$10.7 million? Was that included in the outstanding payments?

Hon. Moses: [*Laughs*] I would think that 1,600,000 multiplied by the rate of exchange and some ancillary costs detailed in this said document would explain in detail the figure cited in Trinidad and Tobago dollars.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Anymore questions Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: Just one last question.

Madam Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Charles: There were a number of areas in the UN – like the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Criminal Court. Could the Minister tell us if we are up-to-date in those things, given the request for specific items in the UN budget item? Are we up-to-date with our budgetary contributions to the United Nations?

Madam Chairman: Is that question under 004/003/01? Is it where that question is cited? Under which of the –

Mr. Charles: Well, under the one that just identified Minister, that is one specific item of the UN budget. So, okay if we are dealing with that. My question was: Are we up-to-date on our other expenditures to the United Nations?

Madam Chairman: All I am asking Member is that we have three specific Sub-Items here. I would really encourage you to locate your question under one of these.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 65 supplemented by the sum of \$35,374,200.

Madam Chairman: Thank you Minister, thank you madam PS. We now go on to Head 22, Ministry of National Security.

Head 22: Ministry of National Security \$177,824,135.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of National Security to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Ministry of National Security, as everyone is aware, is the Ministry that assists the various organizations and agencies in protecting and serving in Trinidad and Tobago and providing a level of security and safety for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and what we have here are various Heads, in particular the prison service, and dealing with some outstanding items for the prison officers. We then have some extraordinary expenses which are for the upgrade of our coastal radar system. We then have money for the Strategic Services Agency, which is for the upgrade and the cost associated with the implementation of the upgrade of our new CCTV project throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and some other works at the SSA, and then we have the ODPM as we prepare for the hurricane season.

Question proposed: That Head 22 be supplemented by the sum of \$177,824,135.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 01/004/01, looking at Salaries and COLA, \$15 million, Overtime monthly paid officers

\$18 million. Allowances, that is 01/004/04, \$19 million, and Government Contribution to NIS, \$11 million. And they say that the sum is required to effect payment of increments, overtime and allowances due in fiscal 2020 to prison officers – to officers of the prison service. And the question I would like to ask is in preparing the 2020 budget it is not difficult to anticipate what the overtime payments will be given past and historic information and the allowances, so why was this \$63 million, which is fairly significant, why was this not anticipated in the budget preparation?

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, first of all, the amount for overtime is not 60 million. The amount for overtime is 18 million.

Mr. Charles: \$18 million?

Hon. Young: What has happened is the prison service recruited 272 and 238 prison officers on November 01 2019 and February 17 2020, respectively, and this of course had a knock on and a domino effect of increasing the amounts for salaries and COLA, overtime allowances and government contribution to NIS. What we were doing is pushing for the recruitment of more prison officers to the prison service, and we had two batches coming in this year, this fiscal year, outside of those who were already employed and that is what led to these increases.

Mr. Charles: Minister, Item 02/001/36, Extraordinary Expenditure. And you say the sum is required to meet the cost of the upgrade and maintenance of coastal radar system, the counter trafficking unit, the witness protection programme, and the rental of vehicles for the use in covert operations. Now, when I look at the Estimates here, the Estimates for 2020, National Security, Goods and Services, it is on page 125 of the Estimates, 125. The figure is \$800,632,223, not 708, 610,423. Could you just explain that discrepancy, because we are talking about \$100 million, close to?

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, I am not sure what the Member for Naparima is referring to. The document in front of us, what I see here under this specific Head is for the amount that was provided for. The provisions in the Estimates of the budget that was passed is \$50 million, and what we are looking to do is increase it by \$23 million to take it to \$73 million. So I do not know where he is getting his figures from and what he is referring to, with the greatest of respect.

Mr. Charles: The original figure is not \$708 million?

Hon. Young: Maybe in UNC land, but according to the document we have is 53 million.

Madam Chairman: If you can give us the reference to the page that you are on it might help the discussion.

Mr. Charles: Excuse me? Yes, okay. All right. Okay, just now, just give me a moment.

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Charles: Yes, yes, Schedule related to supplemental Estimates. Goods and Services, Sub-Head 02. It is 708,610,423. That is provision in the estimates for 2020.

Hon. Young: Correct. And what you will then –

Mr. Charles: Direct charges and Transfers and virement, 708,610,423.

Hon. Young: It real hard dealing with “duncey” people, you know. So, Madam Chair, when you add 23 million to 708,610,423 a normal person who can add would get 731,610,423. So what it is, I repeat again, is an increase of \$23 million and we are explaining the increase of \$23 million under the particular line Item 36 – Sub-Item 36: Extraordinary Expenditure. What my friend is referring to is the total amount of Goods and Services which was provisioned in the budget of 708,610,423. When you add 23 million, which is what we have come here to do, you now get the new figure.

Mr. Charles: So, 708 plus 23 million would give you –

Madam Chairman: But Member, if you are on page 7, if I may assist you, and you have Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services –

Hon. Young: Eight plus 23 –

Madam Chairman: Under that you have Item 001: General Administration –

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, it is simple you know, eight plus 23 is 31.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Item 36: Extraordinary Expenditure, you see 50 million, then you see 73 million and then you see 23 million. So 50 million plus 23 million will give you the 73 million.

Hon. Young: What my friend is referring to is above that, Madam –

Madam Chairman: I know, but what I am trying –

Hon. Young: I am helping him. In my effort to help him to add –

Mr. Charles: Yeah, let us get it.

Hon. Young: Eight plus 23 is 31; eight plus 23 is 31.

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Hon. Young: Okay, good.

Mr. Charles: All right. So, Madam, let us look at 04/009/02: Strategic Services Agency, \$86,824,123. And I am being told the sum is required to facilitate payments associated with CCTV, works on the Knowsley Building, contracts for technical support for the National Operations Fusion Centre, procurement of 30 computers, upgrade to the sewer uplift pump at the National Security Training Academy, a facility at Cumuto. But in the SSA budget, the Estimates, right, already the budget for the SSA was increased by \$21 million and we are told, at the explanation, includes provision for the National Operation Centre and the National Security Training Academy, which were two of the items listed here. Is the Minister saying that additional sums are required over and above what was budgeted?

Hon. Young: Yes. That is why you have a supplementary budget, if you have to go over the amounts.

Mr. Charles: And could you say what areas specifically with respect to the National Operation Centre that caused the increase in this supplemental requirement?

Hon. Young: Two specific areas, one would recall, Madam Chair, that what had happened is under the previous administration they had gone and they had built the National Operation Fusion Centre at the Knowsley Building. They were over budgeted, there was no money provided for it. So what is now happening is that the work has been completed, we now need to do some roof and ceiling works and also, some additional works to the perimeter wall, because I have asked them to reinforce the perimeter wall. And then also, the technology that is inside of there, there is a need for the technology to be upgraded and that feeds into the computer system as well.

Mr. Charles: Minister, in the Estimates we hear about a National Operation Centre and here we are hearing about a National Operation Fusion Centre. Is it the same thing or something different?

Hon. Young: So National Operation Centre was a very preliminary term, it was a very primitive term. Fusion means the bringing together of all of the arms of national security. So under my tenure, what I did is changed it to the National Operation Fusion Centre and gave access to all of the various agencies in national security for them to work together. And that, Madam Chair, is actually something that is working quite well. So you have the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the police service, our intelligence services, customs, immigration, fire services, prisons, all using it and it is no longer the toy of one individual.

Mr. Charles: Minister –

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima, might I ask you to allow the Member for Mayaro to intervene at this stage and then I will come back to you.

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I would also like to intervene on that particular Item in due course.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister Item 01/36, Extraordinary Expenditure. Can you identify what portion of that \$23 million goes towards witness protection, because I know that will be something very critical in the fight against crime. And how many people currently is in that programme and if the programme is local or a combination of local and foreign relocation in that programme?

Hon. Young: Absolutely. First of all what I can say, Madam Chair, and I am happy to be able to say to the country, once again, they have never lost a witness under the Witness Protection Programme, right. This Witness Protection Programme is a body of a statute. It comes out of the Justice Protection Act, I believe is the name of the Act. They continue to do a great job. Five point five million dollars out of the 23 is being allocated to them. I am not going to say the amount of persons who are in there, for obvious reasons, and I am sure you appreciate that. And yes, there is a combination. We have MOUs with other countries where we are able – we sometimes house witnesses for other countries, as do other countries house for us. But that is a very small fraction of the number of people we have in the Witness Protection Programme.

Mr. Paray: Minister, have you seen an increase over the last year in terms of people willing to come forward to give evidence in matters and be willing to join the Witness Protection Programme based on its effectiveness. Have you seen that?

Hon. Young: The answer is, no. A lot of people, the public often gets confused between those who maybe under police protection and being in the Witness Protection Programme itself. The Witness Protection Programme means that you basically giving up your liberty and you are living under this programme. You have to sign a very carefully worded document where you basically agree to abide by the rules of the Witness Protection Programme and it really is a trading-in of your liberty. So you find a lot of people are turned off by that. There may be certain people who are witnesses for a criminal activity and criminal charges who are under police protection which is something different.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair –

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, do not forget that I wanted to comment on that item, okay.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: – under Extraordinary Expenditure, Minister, I am seeing here it is for the rental of vehicles for the use covert operations. How many vehicles would be rented and why is it that you have to rent vehicles? Does the Ministry have enough or sufficient vehicles to do that? How many?

Hon. Young: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, this is something that has been around from time immemorial and, no, the Ministry cannot have a fleet of vehicles, because the whole purpose of covert vehicles is for the use of our police service, our defence force and our intelligence services, and you cannot have the same vehicles being used. So what you have is firms who are able to rotate the vehicles. Because what you would find is the criminal element would be able to identify by the number plate. So if the Ministry has a certain fleet of vehicles, after time, they would no longer be effective because the element – the criminal element would be able to identify right, well, those vehicles with those number plates are being used by those operators. So what you do is, there are contracts with certain companies and they rotate the vehicles.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And if you were to disaggregate this figure here, how much money you think would go to that?

Hon. Young: It is not – actually what I am seeing and Mayaro I am sorry, the \$5.5 million that I referred to before is actually to meet the expenditure of both the Witness Protection Programme, the rental of vehicles for covert operations and the Counter Trafficking Unit. The figure of 17.5 million is for the upgrade of the maintenance of our coastal radar systems. So when you add those two, that is how you get the 23 million.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima. I will take you after.

Mr. Charles: Item 004/009/10: Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, ODPM, increased by \$5 million. The sum is required to enable the ODPM to meet the cost of preparation for the 2020 hurricane season. And these cost include, the expenditure and personal protected equipment, hurricane season, disaster stores, operation vehicles, HVAC system and implementation of a national alert state system.

6.45 p.m.

Now, given that it is anticipated that this year will witness a significant rise hurricanes – in fact, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the vision of the US national weather service, predicated an above normal 2020 Atlantic hurricane season with up to 19 storms. They also forecast six to 10 storms, et cetera –

Hon. Young: Correct.

Mr. Charles: – do you think that a \$5 million is adequate? – Given that we are spending \$87 million on the SSA, do you not think that the 5 is going to be adequate?

Hon. Young: So, Madam Chair, the answer is yes fortunately because of the relationships that we have developed we have nurtured and we have built. Some of our allies, for example, the United States, China, Canada, and some other countries, they have actually donated quite a lot of equipment to the ODPM. The ODPM is really not the hoarder, but they are the ones who are in charge of all the equipment and the distribution. So it is felt at this time that this additional – because, of course, they already have an allocation, but this additional allocation of \$5 million should be sufficient.

Mr. Charles: Well it does not include, but should we not include additional sums for assisting flood victims, et cetera, in –

Hon. Young: Well the ODPM is not the first responder. So what you have is the Disaster Management Units of the various municipal corporations. They are first responders. ODPM is not the body. They are really a coordinating body. So they are not giving out to those who are suffering from floods. That will be under Social Development and Family Services, and some of the other Ministries. ODPM really is the

coordinator to make sure there are sufficient resources for the assisting of persons and the rescuing of persons. Not for the giving out of food and that sort of thing.

Mr. Charles: One last question?

Madam Chairman: All right. One last question, then I will allow the Minister of Finance who wants to add some clarification to this discussion. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Yeah. I would have thought given what we are seeing in the United States, in other countries, where they are talking about shifting money away from what we call crime suppression. They have crime prevention—no, no, no it is related to the SSA.

Madam Chairman: So your question—

Mr. Charles: So the question is: Why are we spending so much money on this and we are not seeing an equivalent sum on crime prevention like the cadets and whatnot, and crime rehabilitation?

Madam Chairman: So you are under 04/009/02?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Is that where you are?

Mr. Charles: Yes, I am.

Madam Chairman: And you are asking why we are spending so much money there?

Mr. Charles: Why we are spending on this area, and one would expect in an increase in the budget.

Madam Chairman: So why are we spending so much money under 04/009/02?

Hon. Young: So, Ma'am, what this—

Mr. Charles: Essentially a spy agency.

Hon. Young: So, Madam Chair, what this money really is, is as I said, the vast majority of it is for the cost associated with the implementation of the new CCTV national programmes. So it is a good opportunity to once again remind the country that under the former administration they had agreed to an annual contract in the hundreds of millions of dollars. This new system is being procured for a cost of around \$80 million. There has been significant savings of approximately \$200 million because of this, but the money needs to be paid. So we need to pay for these new cameras, new state-of-the-art system, and that is an important measure in the fight against crime.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, now start your intervention.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is the point I was trying to address, because if someone listened to what the Member for Naparima has been saying and one does not have all the information, one could go away with the wrong impression. The total of \$86 million for the Strategic Services Agency of the Ministry of National Security is being proposed by the Ministry of Finance because we are aware that there are a number of new items that the Ministry of National Security has to deal with. The Minister has just explained that this \$86 million is not for work on the National Operation Fusion Centre, which is the impression a listener would have got listening to the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: No, I read this from a report.

Mr. Imbert: I did not interrupt you. And the Minister has just explained that the 86 million is for a number of different things, CCTV, Knowsley Building, National Operation Fusion Centre, upgrade of the sewer pump at the facility in Cumuto, and so on, and therefore, this 86 million is now to deal with the new procurement of CCTV cameras which came up after the national budget was read. It is not something that just came out of nowhere and was not budgeted for. It was in progress. The procurement was in progress.

Mr. Charles: Like the work on Knowsley Building, it was in progress.

Mr. Imbert: Procurement was in progress and the bulk of the 86 million is for the cameras that the Minister has spoken to. The 86 million is not for Knowsley, for the National Operations Fusion Centre, which is the false impression that the Member for Naparima is giving.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, if I may—

Mr. Charles: But if I may too?

Hon. Young: I was very clear in saying what is the work to be done at Knowsley. It is the reinforcement of the wall, and some work done on the roof and the ceiling which is a minimal amount out of the 86 million which is the point the Minister of Finance is making.

Mr. Charles: Since he had a comment—and the Minister, are you comfortable with moneys, the large segment of the National Security budget being spent on what we call suppression and policing, and not on

rehabilitation and on prevention? That is all.

Mr. Imbert: I am very comfortable in allocating additional sums to the Minister of National Security and his Ministry for proper modern CCTV cameras which are very important in this day and age. I am very comfortable.

Mr. Charles: And increase your revenues and lock up cockroaches.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima, we cannot all allow the impression that we are going to all be speaking at the same time. Okay? And Members, I just want to remind you all that the agreement is that we will end at 8.00. We have three more Heads to examine which gives us an approximation of 20 minutes. So lest Members think that they are being suppressed in their questions, if we will use our time very productively, I am sure we will get through the exercise.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 22 supplemented by the sum of \$177,824,135.

Madam Chairman: I thank you, Minister, and we now go on to Communications. I have been told that it has been agreed we will go on the Ministry of Communications, Head 70. Head 70: Ministry of Communications. And in the meantime might I just alert Members, after Head 70 we will go to Head 18 which is the Ministry of Finance, and then Head 23, the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

6.55 p.m.

Head 70: Ministry of Communications \$30,276,000.

Madam Chairman: I will just do the preliminaries while the Minister gets here. Head 70: Ministry of Communication, a supplementation of \$30,276,000. I will now invite the Minister of Communications to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Cox: I just want to say good evening and I am ready to begin.

Question proposed: That Head 70 be supplemented by the sum of \$30,276,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Sub-Head 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, an increase of \$7 million from originally estimate of 44.2 million. Could you explain on account to what is this substantial rise of \$7 million in Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

Hon. Cox: Okay, one of the main reasons is because of the fact that we have had to increase our promotions with regard to the pandemic. We have been assisting other Ministries and agencies to get their messages out. It required increased publication via traditional and new media channels. The COVID-19 pandemic placed additional commitments to the existing funds in the Vote, expenses associated with on-going television information sharing and publications, more productions for sensitizing the public with regard to the pandemic and clarifying general regulations and guidelines.

Mr. Lee: Just an additional part of the question, that extra \$7 million, you might not have it with you but could you provide a listing of how that \$7 million, for the period of COVID-19 pandemic, how that was spent or will be spent?

Hon. Cox: Let me check to find out if the PS has any information. [*Discussion with PS*]

All right, I will supply it in a little while.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 06/004/53, National Library. You indicated \$5.5 million to facilitate operational expenses and to pay outstanding bills. Can you indicate what is the amount of the outstanding bills, and what exactly would be the operational expenses of the library, please?

Hon. Cox: Okay, this request was made to fund outstanding commitments of sums owed to suppliers and contractors for building maintenance, supplies, telephone, security, janitorial and gratuity payments. At this time, there are some types of maintenance services being withheld at NALIS building due to the large sums of money owed to contractors.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Can I can go ahead?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Can the hon. Minister indicate what outstanding work you are referring to that was done on the library and what period you are referring to?

Hon. Cox: Well I was informed that there is a critical need of upgrade of the building. That is the information that I have.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, line Item 02/001/10, Office Stationery and Supplies. I know during the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings were done virtually, why is there need for office supplies to increase to a half a million dollars?

Madam Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Cox: Okay, I am checking. It is Office Stationery and Supplies, the supplies would cover the urgent need for sanitizing and the printing of posters, et cetera. The Ministry purchased supplies during this period for all the divisions. But there was also a need to pay outstanding balances and purchase the supplies required for the use at the Ministry of Communications at this time.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Minister, so printing would not fall under 02/001/62 where there is an allocation for further supplementation of \$7 million?

Hon. Cox: No, this was particularly for Publications and Promotions. This other printing here had to deal with concerning the pandemic and the Ministry itself, well the staff.

Mr. Imbert: Could I also come in here? If you look at the description, it is clear. One is Stationery which is not printing and the other is Printing. You print on stationery but you have to procure the stationery. Okay? It is two completely different things.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The Minister playing with words now.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. I know it was asked by my colleague from Pointe-a-Pierre and the \$7 million and they say associated with televising and information sharing. Does the daily health briefing come under this Item or that is a Ministry of Health line Item?

Hon. Cox: No, we have to absorb some of the costs as TTT is under the Ministry of Communications.

Mr. Charles: All right. Well, in the information that you are supplying to my colleague, could you indicate how much advertising is involved and the stations involved, television and radio stations?

Hon. Cox: Okay. I am not sure if we will have that information today.

Mr. Charles: Well, not today but—

Hon. Cox: Okay. All right. That is no problem.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, through you, the Ministry of Communications is a pretty well-funded Ministry. The allocation this year was \$261 million and that was more, for instance, than the Ministry of Trade. I see the main expenditure here is really under the PSIP for Strategic Redevelopment of TTT and it is for outstanding amounts from the year before. Would it not have been possible to address this debt or this payment that had to be made for equipment from savings rather than take additional sums in terms of supplementation here?

Hon. Cox: What savings are you talking about?

Dr. Tewarie: The line Item would be Head 78.

Mr. Imbert: May I make a general statement? The reason for the supplementation is that a detailed examination has been made on all savings already made and all potential savings for the balance for the fiscal year and after that analysis is done, a supplementation, a Bill is prepared. So this takes into account any possible savings.

Dr. Tewarie: So basically then, I can assume that no savings were possible?

Mr. Imbert: I just said that. I thought I just said that.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, I just want to clarify, Minister, that is all.

Mr. Imbert: I thought I said it. Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: 01 Salaries and COLA, could you give us an idea of the complement of the Ministry of Communications and how many permanent employees, how many acting—permanent, temporary and those in acting positions?

Hon. Cox: Okay, we will provide that information for you.

Madam Chairman: Minister, do you have it or you said it will be provided?

Hon. Cox: Yes, that will be provided.

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

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, under the PSIP increase of \$12.6 million which is Strategic Redevelopment of TTT, the sum is to pay outstanding amounts for contractors and upgrade of equipment. Is this final – because I know when we did the budget and we were going through the Heads, I had asked the same question and the Minister of Communications at the time, I think it was Minister Young who was handling that portfolio.

7.05 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: In October of last year?

Mr. Lee: When we did the Head.

Mr. Imbert: October of last year?

Mr. Lee: Yeah. No? Okay. This question was raised about the TTT redevelopment and equipment upgrade, based on a PSIP line item, and now we are seeing additional 12.6 million. Is this the final payment in respect of equipment upgrade to all contractors owed?

Hon. Cox: Actually the upgrade, 7.5 million is needed for completion of that particular project that started a while ago. So this payment is long outstanding, and the rest of money would be for some things like the repair of transmission sites, accounting software, transmitter lines, and things like that. That is what the rest of money would be –

Mr. Imbert: Are you asking whether this will clear off all outstanding payments? That is what you are asking?

Hon. Cox: Just only for the upgrade.

Mr. Imbert: So the answer is most, but not all.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line item 02/002/12. You have here funds are required to purchase foreign watermark paper. Is it the normal procedure for the Ministry of Communications to purchase this type of paper for Elections and Boundaries?

Madam Chairman: Could you repeat, please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is it the normal procedure for the Ministry of Communications to purchase this foreign watermark paper and regular printing paper for the Elections and Boundaries Commission?

Hon. Cox: Yes, in an election year, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, so Elections and Boundaries are not responsible for purchasing their own?

Mr. Imbert: Can I just point out that it is the Government Printery that prints ballots and other documents associated with the election, the Printery, which falls under the Ministry of Communications.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 70 supplemented by the sum of \$30,276,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you Minister. Thank you Madam PS. We now go on to Head 18, the Ministry of Finance.

Head 18: Ministry of Finance \$880,000,000.

Madam Chairman: A supplementation of \$880 million. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I certainly would not need five minutes. In an effort, I hope which will bear fruit to avoid questions that should not be asked, the first item, the Food Price Support Programme, is there because the Ministry of Finance is the one that makes the actual payments to the financial institutions for the Food Price Support Programme, the food card programme, and so on. The Ministry of Finance does not administer this programme. It is simply where the allocation is placed so that, you have already asked all of your questions to the Minister of Social Development and Family Services with respect to this. All we do at the Ministry of Finance is pay. We do not manage. So I just want to make that crystal clear.

With respect to the next item: 04/007/18, Salary Relief Grant, that is our estimate. When we originally estimated this grant, we estimated for a period of three months and we estimated about 80,000 recipients. And with respect to the final item, that is an arrangement with the credit unions. There are two umbrella organizations. There is a league and a financing organization, and then there are several

individual credit unions.

As Minister of Finance, I have already signed all of the agreements with the umbrella organizations and individual credit unions to access the first 100 million of this credit union facility programme, and that is primarily directed towards individuals to offer them soft loans in the credit union system. And the second 100 million to make up the 200, would be focused on small businesses, who would be associated with credit unions and would seek to access these soft loans from credit unions.

Madam Chairman: Minister, are you finished?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, I am.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 10 be supplemented by the sum of \$880,000,000.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma'am, I just have a few questions. Now, it is possible, in the rotation of people in the Parliament, that I may have missed something that might have been said by the Minister of Social Development and Family Services, but I want to ask for the Food Price Support Programme, how many people are targeted there and how many people have received?

Hon. Imbert: I want to repeat, Madam Chairman, that all the Ministry of Finance does is pay. The questions with respect to how many people have received, how much they have received, et cetera, those have already been directed to the Minister of Social Development and Family Services, and I am sure the answers would be forthcoming.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, so I missed that during the time I was out. What about this salary relief grant? I thought I heard the Minister say —

Hon. Imbert: No ask away, ask away.

Dr. Tewarie: Sorry?

Hon. Imbert: Go ahead. Ask any question you want.

Dr. Tewarie: I thought I heard the Minister say that the target number here was about 80,000. Is it reasonable to ask how many of those 80,000 have received?

Hon. Imbert: Of course. The information I have so far, we have just over 56,000 applications, of which 48,000 have been evaluated and screened. So that is a little over 80 per cent have been evaluated and screened. And of that 48,000, 27,000 have been found to be eligible. So just 57 per cent of the 48,000 applications already screened, out of the total 56,000 have been found to be eligible. The total grant paid out so far, 22,345, for a total dollar value of \$31 million. And what this essentially means is that we have accommodated 70 per cent of the applications so far that are valid. So we have paid out 70 per cent of the applications that have come in, that have met the criteria, in terms of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago registered in the NIS system, and so on, and so on. Okay?

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Minister, you would remember that originally you had said that the target number was about 100,000, and this is now a revised figure. Is there—I know that in planning, you would have catered for the highest possible number in the COVID pandemic. Is it that the information that you have now tells you that there are likely to be 80,000 people who would apply for this, or who would need to benefit from this?

Hon. Imbert: No, we had assessed the industries at the beginning when we came up with this number as being essentially industries within the hospitality sector, bars, restaurants, hotels, that sort of thing, and we had asked various business organizations, the Central Statistical Office, and the other sources of data, to tell us how many people were employed in those sectors. As I indicated previously, and in another forum, the figure is approximately 60,000. We were then told there were another 20,000-odd who were in sectors that provide services to that sector. So that give you the 80, and then we estimated that a further 20,000 persons outside of that sector might apply for the grant and that is how we got the 100,000.

7.15 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: What we have on hand, so far, are 56,113 applications.

Dr. Tewarie: Who have applied? Yes.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, so that is what we received. But we do receive applications every day, eh. What we found is a leveling off of applications, you know, the number per day is going down steadily, and as the hon. Prime Minister indicated in a press conference recently, I think over the weekend, he indicated that when we did all our estimates, it was based on three months of disruption. But a number of sectors have

resumed, the construction industry came back out, manufacturing came back out, now retail is back out. So that, the entire three months is no longer applicable to all sectors. It will be some yes that would be out for the entire three months but not all. So persons are back on the job and therefore, they would no longer require the salary relief grant. What it allows us to do, by putting in this allocation, is to look at all applications that are coming in, not just in the initial sector. Because although the numbers from the initial sectors might be lower than originally anticipated – because we anticipated a three-month complete closure, is now gone to a two-month, but there are others who are still out in like the school sector and so on. So it gives us the flexibility now to look at all persons who have been affected by the public health restrictions. Okay? So, it is a dynamic evolving situation.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Now based on what you said Minister, in your answer, a fair number, a fair percentage of people have actually received grants.

Hon. Imbert: Seventy per cent of the valid applications.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, and you have 56,000 applications, you have gone through them but two categories remain right, which is that those who have not yet received or have not yet been processed. And the question I have in relation to those is: What is the waiting time for them? And then the second thing that I want to ask is the other categories, those who have not been able to qualify, and the question I have there is: How long will it take for them to be notified as to the reasons why they did not qualify, or do you plan to do any such thing?

Hon. Imbert: I can give you some information on that. Let me just give you some statistics here. The screening unit has screened 86 per cent of the applications received –

Dr. Tewarie: Eighty-six?

Hon. Imbert: Eighty-six per cent. So they have done quite a tremendous job as far as we are concerned and they have done that in just a couple months. They started on around the, I think, it was the 15th of April or some date like that. So, in less than two months, the screening unit has screened 86 per cent of the applications. They are now doing payouts of 1,000 a day and so on, new payouts. So they are moving very rapidly. Persons who do not qualify, because they are not nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, or for example they had lost their jobs in February and so on, is very little one can do for them in these circumstance. What the unit has told me, they think there are about 4,000 persons out of the 56,000 who just made mistakes on their application, you know, putting the data in the wrong column or something like that. And they are reaching out to them on a constant basis, on a daily basis. So that, in terms of time frame, as I said, they have done 70 per cent of the applicable applications and I think by the end of this month they will complete all. That is what they have told me. By the end of June, all eligible applications would have been paid out, who have put in their applications.

Dr. Tewarie: And people can continue to apply if they are late?

Hon. Imbert: Of course, they can. And you see that is the flexibility that the Prime Minister was talking about. That because some industries have come back in earlier than expected, there would be some people who were not contemplated at the beginning on the 19th of March because the lockdown was an evolving thing. And therefore, we are keeping this entire system open for persons who apply and each application would be dealt with on a case by case basis and we are making every effort to pay everybody who deserves to be paid. Okay.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Tewarie: I have just –

Madam Chairman: Okay, Member, maybe I can ask you to give –

Dr. Tewarie: – way?

Madam Chairman: – way to the others?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, I will do that.

Madam Chairman: – and I will take you in the next round? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 04/007/20, can you indicate how many credit unions benefited from this facility programme? And what is the criteria that is used for persons to apply for it?

Hon. Imbert: I do not have an exact number, I know it is over 20, and on Friday I can give you the exact

number, but it is all the financial credit unions. You know there are some credit unions that are not financial credit unions per se, in terms of granting loans and that sort of thing. But my memory tells me that all of the financial credit unions have participated, and we have signed agreements with them. But I will give you the exact number then.

What this does for individuals is allows them to access soft loans of up to \$5,000 per month for three months, a total of \$15,000. The small business side of things is still being fine-tuned by the credit unions themselves. So those details are not immediately available today and the loans are at half the normal rate. That is what the credit unions tell us.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, you said soft loan and therefore, it means that it has to be repaid with interest and so forth. With persons who are in fact unemployed and have not been able to get any employment even though places are opened up, what is in place and what do you suggest be put in place for persons like those so that they do not incur an indebtedness against their name and of course, against the credit union?

Hon. Imbert: The way the system is working the loans are guaranteed by the Government. The loans are being provided by the credit unions using their normal procedures but in the event that the persons cannot pay, the loans are guaranteed by the credit unions, so the credit unions are protected. So the credit unions are not going to be at risk because of this.

What I would also say is that persons have been given a significant moratorium before they are asked to pay. In some cases, up to 12 months. So this is really to provide temporary support to someone. They can borrow \$5,000 a month, per month for three months, \$15,000, and they do not have to start repaying that \$15,000 for one year. So it is felt that during that year people could, you know, recover themselves, they can recover and acquire the ability to start repaying that \$15,000, okay? But the loans are guaranteed by the Government. So the credit union themselves are not at risk. But because they have the infrastructure, we decided to use them. It is much faster and it is much more equitable to go through the credit union system. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, the Public Sector Investment Programme, PSIP, I see \$100 million allocated for construction of the Tobago international airport –

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Ms. Ramdial: But therein you also have the payment of project management fees to NIPDEC. Can you share with us the cost or what is the project management fees to NIPDEC?

Hon. Imbert: Well, I think this is a typo. It should be “NIDCO”.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, NIDCO.

Hon. Imbert: Because the project is being managed and I will get clarity on that, but I am pretty certain it should be “NIDCO”. In terms of what NIDCO’s fees are, there are standard fees in the industry in the state sector based on what is being done. In case, it is a design-build contract. The contractor is responsible for both the design and the construction, so the project management fees would be lower than if, for example, NIDCO had to do design and supervision. I will give the precise details on Friday in terms of what NIDCO’s fees are. Okay.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. One other question does this allocation include the \$41 million for the land acquisition for the airport?

Hon. Imbert: No, a loan of \$300 million was raised for land acquisition. That \$41 million is the first payout of that \$300 million. That is in a separate account dedicated just for land acquisition. This \$100 million is what is expected would be billed by the contractor during this fiscal year on the project. Okay.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, great. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, line Item 07/20 under the Credit Union Facility Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Paray: I realize that basically you are financing this \$200 million to provide for the credit union programme, my question is, I know at one of your planning interviews, you discussed the issue of the small

and micro enterprises where the \$300 million programme to give them assistance which will be far and apart from the coverage that the credit union is giving. My question is: Are you going to make the same type of allocation to provide for that programme? And if so, why have you not allocated it in this supplemental arrangement?

7.25 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: Well, the simple answer is I am not going to make the same type of allocation and therefore, it is not required to be here. And I could leave it at that. But the point is that has been funded through a loan. So it is not an appropriation, so you would not see it in the appropriation. This is money that we are appropriating. Because these credit unions, we do not want them to be out of pocket, they are giving the loans to their members using their own funds, and then every month they will come to us with a statement as to the loans that they have given out and we will replenish their funds. So this has to be appropriated. The small business programme is a loan program through First Citizens Bank, by the way, and that is going to be, again, put in a special account to provide the guarantee to FCB and the other banks who would be participating in that. So it does not have to be appropriated, so you would not see it here.

Mr. Paray: Any idea of how soon that programme will be ready?

Hon. C. Imbert: I would think by Friday, what we work with trying to tie up now is the threshold. We were thinking of lowering the threshold, you know, down to say an annual turnover of \$1,000,000 for small business and below that, would be a grant program through NEDCO. So we are tying that up and that decision will probably be made today or tomorrow. But all of the paperwork has been done.

Mr. Paray: I guess the banks will use their normal strategy for seeing the — looking at the companies and looking at their viability.

Hon. Imbert: Well, what is happening is the Government would guarantee 75 per cent of the loan. The other 25 per cent would be guaranteed just with a personal guarantee. This is to help people, so that no collateral will be required from the small businesses. You just sign personal guarantees. If at the end of the day the person does not satisfy the loan, the banks may very well even write off that 25 per cent. But the Government is guaranteeing the 75 per cent. The banks, of course, will go through the normal collection procedures to see if they could recover the loans and so on. But the fact that the Government is guaranteeing 75 per cent gives the banks that level of comfort so that it should be a very fast disbursing process.

Mr. Paray: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Question was answered.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I do not think the Minister answered the question on this. But would you know, Minister, how many loans or how many people have taken up the option with the credit union facility and have actually drawn down on the credit union facility programme?

Madam Chairman: I believe the answer was that information, it is not available.

Hon. Imbert: I do not have it, but if it is available by Friday, I would provide it, okay? If.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I wanted to ask one question that is not related to something here, and you can choose to answer it or not. *[Laughter]*

Madam Chairman: Member, it is not only a question of whether the Minister would choose to answer it. It is a question of whether — *[Inaudible]*

Hon. Imbert: The Chairman is chairing the meeting, not me.

Dr. Tewarie: It is related, Ma'am. I mean, it is not a line item,

Madam Chairman: It may be related, but it has to be related to a line item. Okay. So, unfortunately, that is not the procedure we follow under here. All right, I am sure you would get another opportunity to ask that question at the appropriate forum. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair, hon. Minister, line items are 04/007/18, I just want to ask if by chance, when your staff would have been going through the salary relief grant, if you were able to identify — I would be able to identify the request by constituency?

7.30 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: We do have the addresses of everyone, but we certainly do not match them to even a region.

I could tell you how many in Trinidad, I can tell you how many in Tobago. That is it. I cannot do better than that.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 18 supplemented by the sum of \$880,000,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. We now go on to Head 23, the Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs \$76,550,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Attorney General to make a brief

opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, I make myself available to the questions and the enquiries of my colleagues and I thank you for this opportunity.

Question proposed: That Head 23 be supplemented by the sum of \$76,550,000.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. AG, we are looking at Line Item 02/001/16, contract employment, and I am seeing for the period April to September, there were 105 contract officers. AG, why would contract officers be required during the COVID pandemic from March 22nd?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. I thank the hon. Member for her enquiry. In fact, the number is 207 not 105. The 105 reported is correct, but we have, in fact, increased our manpower by 205 people specifically because we have hired people to scan and digitize all the records of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to land, and that is in an effort to go online with something called the Property Business Real Estate Solution, which is the system by which we will radically transform Trinidad and Tobago's land ownership and land titling mechanisms. This is something that has been long in the waiting. It has been long in the making. We installed robust software, hardware and scanners. What we needed, if you recall I always say, plant and machinery, people, processes and law.

Whilst we pass the law, whilst we put in the processes with the IT, whilst we move to the new Registrar General's Office from South Quay and consolidated six buildings, if I recall, we needed people and, therefore, we are very pleased to have hired 207 people. The figure of \$11.5-odd million here, represents the period April to September. We have covered the balance for the rest of the 207 but out of that 207, 105 of those contract officers were not capable of coming in. What we did, in particular, is we moved people away from Short-Term Employment and we put them onto contracts.

When I came in as Minister of Legal Affairs, in particular, there were literally hundreds and hundreds of people on Short-Term Employment. What we have sought to do is to move those people from Short-Term Employment into contract positions: BOA I positions, et cetera, and therefore, we are bettering their terms and conditions, because as short-term employees, they did not have benefits that other persons in the employment have.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: AG, during the pandemic, those workers were actually deemed essential to be out?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, so number one, the regulations make all Ministries essential workers. Number two, what we did, we operated remotely in most instances. Number three, we operated on a shift system. So we have been continuously at work. As an essential worker myself, I have been to work every single day as have most of my staff members on rotational business and whilst obeying and complying with the regulations for the Public Health Ordinance.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I am looking at fees AG. I am seeing \$50 million here for Fees. It is to meet local and foreign attorneys. Who are these local attorneys one, and how much is being paid from if you disaggregate again, this number here, this sum?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And, perhaps, you could answer that, then I could follow up?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Who are the local attorneys and the amount paid, and then you could tell us who are the foreign one and the amount paid.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. First of all, let us start with the 50 million. The 50 million is broken up into two categories: 30 million at the Attorney General and Legal Affairs side and 20 million at the DPP's side. The 20 million at the DPP side is almost exclusively for attorneys and professionals involved in the Clico investigation. That is the criminal investigation. The \$30 million on the Attorney General and Legal Affairs side is to take care of fees involved in the launch of the Legal Affairs products: the Property and Business Real Estate Solution, the companies reform which we are doing which is another solution. And, very importantly, because as Attorney General, and as I have said on record before, the last Attorney General, Mr. Ramlogan, the substantive one, who was before me, he spent \$444 million on legal fees at the Attorney General's Office.

I run under the portfolio of the Attorney General three Ministries. I have inherited the Ministry of Justice. I run the Ministry of Legal Affairs and I also run the Attorney General's Office. In the \$444 million that Mr. Ramlogan spent, he also left a debt of roughly \$140 million in arrears. That \$140 million in arrears, for

instance, I regrettably will not share with you the names of attorneys as much as I want to, because in one instance here, I have an attorney-at-law, who has a \$20 million bill outstanding. Let me repeat this. It is, in fact, \$17,227,466.50. That one attorney, that near \$20 million was for a sum incurred under Mr. Ramlogan; one attorney. I would love to call that attorney's name, but I would not because as an Attorney General, I cannot stand here and call people's names that are not present in the Parliament, as much as I would like to.

Madam Chairman: Attorney General and Member for Oropouche West, just for us to be quite mindful of the time and in terms of the questions and the answers, we can relate them specifically to the Sub-Items and try to be mindful that there are other Members who would like to speak and the lights go off here at 8.00 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Attorney General, during your time, this last five years, who are the attorneys? That is what I am asking about. Who are the attorneys you are going to pay?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, Attorney General, I am not going to allow that question and may be the Member for Oropouche West can ask that question under another –

Hon. Al-Rawi: As you please.

Madam Chairman: – under opportunity afforded by the parliamentary rules and procedures. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Items 02/009/23 and, of course, 001/23. Are these Fees for legal representation of the State or those are ordered to be paid when losing a case or a combination of both?

Hon. Al-Rawi: 009/23 is the Criminal Law Department.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And 00/123.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sorry. Which one is it that you are asking for?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Both.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Both? Okay. 009/23 is the –

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I am not going to allow that. I believe that question was answered in terms of what the Attorney General discussed with the Member for Oropouche West in terms of these being fees split between the DPP for a criminal investigation and in terms of. Okay. So I would not allow that. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Attorney General, Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, \$50 million.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Lee: And it is broken down into three areas.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Could you just say that out of that 15 million how much is outstanding for external counsel fees since 2018? That is just a number like –

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Mr. Lee: Would that clear up all the backlog that is owed to lawyers that do public work?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes. So the sum is of the 15 million, the sum with respect to attorney fees that are outstanding, the sum is \$5,618,040.49. We call for all fees that were outstanding by attorneys. The Law Association then asked its members to come in and they have now brought a figure forward to us, because it is wrong to have had people represent the interest of the State in legal aid – sorry private individuals via the State in legal aid and, therefore, I want to liquidate that sum to those hard-working attorneys that pass through the legal aid, \$5,618,040.49.

7.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Attorney General, legal aid again, I am going to do a preamble, is that usually you will find that advocates in a murder trial will get \$10,000 flat no matter if the trial is two, three or four months, with this allocation here would you have any allowance to increase the remuneration for these attorneys in –

Madam Chairman: I am not going allow that as a question.

Hon. Al-Rawi: It is not \$10,000. It is \$30,000 at max. The law was changed.

Madam Chairman: I am not allowing that as a question, Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: We go on to public defenders' department, AG, where is this located and how many attorneys you have to fill –

Hon. Al-Rawi: This is a radical development for Trinidad and Tobago to assist in quickening the criminal justice system, because defence counsels are in short supply. We therefore propose that counsel of competence be provided if your defence counsel is not able. We have secured a building which is weeks away from opening, it is at 23 Stanmore Avenue in Port of Spain. It is what people refer to as the big Yufe's building. Secondly, there are 30 attorneys who have been hired in that department, the Chief Public Defender, passed Sen. Hasine [Shaikh](#); a Senator who sat on the UNC Bench in this Parliament on several occasions opposite me. I was very pleased to hire her. She came first in the interview and has put her best foot forward and is a very talented young lady. She is the Chief Public Defender, and we are ready to rock and roll on that basin.

Madam Chairman: Any further questions, Member for Oropouche West?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Just one more.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: You will have junior attorneys being pulled in, for want of a better word, would there be senior attorneys to overlook or have an oversight for these junior attorneys?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Ma'am. So part of this sum is for not only the Chief Public Defender and the Deputy Chief Public Defender who are both senior attorneys, but a range of attorneys: Legal Officer I, Legal Officer II, Legal Officer III and Senior Legal Officer. But more importantly, I have been in discussions with the Government of the United Kingdom and the public defenders' division there, and also with several of the states in the United States of America, and we are exploring right now the use of Senior Counsel, Queen's Counsel, coming from those jurisdictions to team lead and carry their experience into this part. So it is going to be exciting times for young lawyers who may be involved in that and not so young lawyers who will be involved in that. This is a massive transformation of justice.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Attorney General.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 supplemented by the sum of \$76,550,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Attorney General.

Question put and agreed to.

Appropriation for fiscal year 2020 supplemented by \$2,686,000,800.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, please note that the debate for the adoption of the Committee's Report will take place on Friday, June 12, 2020, at 1.30 p.m.

7.43 p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee adjourned.*

APPENDIX III

Schedule relating to the Supplementation of Estimates 2020

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	03	JUDICIARY	504831,700	604479,700	99648,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	261685,200	361333,200	99648,000		
Item	001	Judiciary Trinidad	254381,700	354029,700	99648,000		
Sub-Item	08	Rent/Lease-Office Accommodation and Storage	23183,000	29325,000	6142,000		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	119987,000	150987,000	31000,000		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	8000,000	11000,000	3000,000		
Sub-Item	37	Janitorial Services	11954,000	19689,000	7735,000		
Sub-Item	43	Security Services	35820,000	87591,000	51771,000		
HEAD	06	SERVICE COMMISSIONS	86478,900	88620,900	2142,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	34196,400	36338,400	2142,000		
Item	001	General Administration	25251,000	27393,000	2142,000		
Sub-Item	08	Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage	8665,000	10807,000	2142,000		
HEAD	08	ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION	109656,600	152656,600	43000,000		
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	38472,100	41972,100	3500,000		
Item	002	Election Expenses	4000,000	39000,000	35000,000		
Sub-Item	03	Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers	4000,000	7500,000	3500,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	64117,500	68117,500	4000,000		
Item	001	General Administration	30463,700	34463,700	4000,000		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	1650,000	3650,000	2000,000		
Sub-Item	62	Promotions, Publicity and Printing	300,000	2300,000	2000,000		
Item	002	Election Expenses	33653,800	69153,800	35500,000		
Sub-Item	01	Travelling and Subsistence	1430,000	2430,000	1000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-Item	05	Telephones	200,000	400,000	200,000		
Sub-Item	08	Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage	961,600	1961,600	1000,000		
Sub-Item	09	Rent/Lease Vehicles and Equipment	857,200	1637,200	780,000		
Sub-Item	12	Materials and Supplies	1300,000	2320,000	1020,000		
Sub-Item	17	Training	4210,000	9210,000	5000,000		
Sub-Item	21	Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings	450,000	950,000	500,000		
Sub-Item	22	Short - Term Employment	18800,000	39300,000	20500,000		
Sub-Item	57	Postage	1360,000	2860,000	1500,000		
Sub-Item	62	Promotions, Publicity and Printing	3760,000	7760,000	4000,000		
HEAD	13	OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER	277713,670	324933,670	47220,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	87258,470	93258,470	6000,000		
Item	001	General Administration	85463,690	91463,690	6000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-Item	65	Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies	37294,000	43294,000	6000,000		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	157732,090	198952,090	41220,000		
Item	005	Non-Profit Institutions	63346,790	93346,790	30000,000		
Sub-Item	01	Ecclesiastical Bodies	10500,000	40500,000	30000,000		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	20052,400	31272,400	11220,000		
Sub-Item	06	UDECOTT - Interest payment on \$500 Mn. Loan	0	11220,000	11220,000		
HEAD	15	TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	2264630,000	2369630,000	105000,000		
SUB-HEAD	06	CURRENT TRANSFERS TO STATUTORY BOARDS AND SIMILAR BODIES	2033000,000	2083000,000	50000,000		
Item	001	Tobago House of Assembly	2033000,000	2083000,000	50000,000		
Sub-Item	06	Tobago House of Assembly	2033000,000	2083000,000	50000,000		
SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	231630,000	286630,000	55000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Item	003	Economic Infrastructure	106608,000	161608,000	55000,000		
Sub-Item	11	Other Economic Services	43300,000	98300,000	55000,000		
Project Group	D	Tourism	23800,000	73800,000	50000,000		
Project No.	349	Tobago Tourism Agency	5000,000	55000,000	50000,000		
Project Group	G	Business Services	10000,000	15000,000	5000,000		
Project No.	002	Enterprise Development	1000,000	3000,000	2000,000		
Project No.	019	Enterprise Assistance Grant Programme	1000,000	4000,000	3000,000		
HEAD	18	MINISTRY OF FINANCE	6361953,418	7241953,418	880000,000		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	4212300,770	5012300,770	800000,000		
Item	007	Households	382910,957	1162910,957	780000,000		
Sub-Item	06	Food Price Support Programme	239300,000	419300,000	180000,000		
Sub-Item	18	Salary Relief Grant	40000,000	440000,000	400000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-Item	20	Credit Union Facility Programme - COVID-19	0	200000,000	200000,000		
SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	89331,000	189331,000	100000,000		
Item	003	Economic Development	0	100000,000	100000,000		
Sub-Item	15	Transport and Communication	0	100000,000	100000,000		
Project Group	A	Air Transport	0	100000,000	100000,000		
Project Desc.	009	Construction of a Terminal and Associated Facilities at the ANR Robinson International Airport	0	100000,000	100000,000		
HEAD	22	MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY	3737016,954	3914841,089	177824,135		
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	2184372,500	2247372,500	63000,000		
Item	004	Prison Service	619995,000	682995,000	63000,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and COLA	386346,300	401346,300	15000,000		
Sub-Item	03	Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers	60000,000	78000,000	18000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-Item	04	Allowances - Monthly Paid Officers	139849,700	158849,700	19000,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	33779,000	44779,000	11000,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	708610,423	731610,423	23000,000		
Item	001	General Administration	143151,500	166151,500	23000,000		
Sub-Item	36	Extraordinary Expenditure	50000,000	73000,000	23000,000		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	367585,131	459409,266	91824,135		
Item	09	Other Transfers	250237,600	342061,735	91824,135		
Sub-Item	02	Strategic Services Agency	198000,000	284824,135	86824,135		
Sub-Item	10	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM)	13000,000	18000,000	5000,000		
HEAD	23	MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS	393585,200	470135,200	76550,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	191070,100	252620,100	61550,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Item	001	General Administration	133596,000	195146,000	61550,000		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	40000,000	51550,000	11550,000		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	40000,000	70000,000	30000,000		
Item	009	Criminal Law Department	41062,950	61062,950	20000,000		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	20094,950	40094,950	20000,000		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	56898,500	71898,500	15000,000		
Item	005	Non-Profit Institutions	33000,000	48000,000	15000,000		
Sub-Item	01	Legal Aid and Advisory Authority	33000,000	48000,000	15000,000		
HEAD	28	MINISTRY OF HEALTH	5235201,862	5459784,502	224582,640		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	353984,060	357018,355	3034,295		
Item	001	General Administration	185057,630	188091,925	3034,295		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	120000,000	123034,295	3034,295		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	4423169,422	4644717,767	221548,345		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Item	009	Other Transfers	4262918,097	4461536,687	198618,590		
Sub-item	02	North West Regional Health Authority	960000,000	976606,000	16606,000		
Sub-item	03	Eastern Regional Health Authority	415000,000	448113,990	33113,990		
Sub-item	04	North Central Regional Health Authority	1342590,000	1472540,000	129950,000		
Sub-item	05	South West Regional Health Authority	1222835,300	1227835,300	5000,000		
Sub-item	20	Interest Payment-ANSA Merchant Bank Ltd -11 year Fixed Rate Loan \$500Mn. Eastern Regional Health Authority	26301,400	40250,000	13948,600		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	61330,996	84260,751	22929,755		
Sub-item	05	NIPDEC - RBC Merchant Bank (T&T) Ltd. TT\$671.3Mn. 7 year Fixed Rate Loan Notes	0	14000,000	14000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-item	06	UDeCOTT - RBC Royal Bank (T&T) Ltd. US\$16.9Mn. 10 year Term Loan-Arima Hospital	0	2837,451	2837,451		
Sub-item	07	UDeCOTT - FCB Ltd. TT\$101.9Mn. 11 year Fixed Rate Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block at POSGH	0	2466,577	2466,577		
Sub-item	08	UDeCOTT - CIBC First Caribbean International Bank (T&T) Ltd. TT\$70.3Mn. 8 year Fixed Rate Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block at POSGH	0	1671,426	1671,426		
Sub-item	09	UDeCOTT - CIBC First Caribbean International Bank (T&T) Ltd. US\$12.4Mn. 8 year Fixed Rate Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block at POSGH	0	1954,301	1954,301		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
HEAD	30	MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	454648,883	476053,883	21405,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	349393,664	370798,664	21405,000		
Item	005	On the Job Training Programme	285860,173	307265,173	21405,000		
Sub-item	17	Training	274000,000	295405,000	21405,000		
HEAD	42	MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	2442496,811	2559196,811	116700,000		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	351976,000	468676,000	116700,000		
Item	007	Households	4100,000	24100,000	20000,000		
Sub-item	42	Emergency Food Support	0	20000,000	20000,000		
Item	009	Other Transfers	344706,333	401406,333	56700,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-item	04	Community Based Environment Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)	344706,333	401406,333	56700,000		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	3169,556	43169,556	40000,000		
Sub-item	09	RDC - National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme (NRWRP)	0	40000,000	40000,000		
HEAD	43	MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT	2548280,000	2792764,504	244484,504		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	1143396,026	1387880,530	244484,504		
Item	007	Households	32018,000	57126,000	25108,000		
Sub-item	12	Fuel Relief Grant to Taxi and Maxi Taxi Owners	7500,000	32608,000	25108,000		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	745988,669	965365,173	219376,504		
Sub-item	011	NIPDEC - Repayment of \$1.542 Bn. Fixed Rate Bonds - PURE	72856,099	100030,072	27173,973		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-item	018	National Helicopter Services Limited (NHSL)	59685,371	80165,618	20480,247		
Sub-item	020	NIDCO - Charter of an Inter-Island Passenger Vessel	72707,120	160420,782	87713,662		
Sub-item	021	NIDCO - Ship Management Services for Inter- Island Ferries and Water Taxis	0	25102,263	25102,263		
Sub-item	028	NIDCO - Operation and Maintenance of the M.V. Galleons Passage	0	58906,359	58906,359		
HEAD	65	MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS	273047,930	308422,130	35374,200		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	62007,459	97381,659	35374,200		
Item	001	Regional Bodies	27178,415	36703,815	9525,400		
Sub-item	01	Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM)	23491,556	33016,956	9525,400		
Item	003	United Nations Organisations	27654,844	53503,644	25848,800		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-item	01	United Nations Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund	3774,900	18916,000	15141,100		
Sub-item	04	United Nations Peacekeeping Operations	20433,544	31141,244	10707,700		
HEAD	70	MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS	227165,000	257441,000	30276,000		
SUB-HEAD	01	PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	25201,700	27101,700	1900,000		
Item	001	General Administration	6669,000	8569,000	1900,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	5000,000	6900,000	1900,000		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	25873,205	35873,205	10000,000		
Item	001	General Administration	13086,600	22186,600	9100,000		
Sub-Item	05	Telephones	300,000	700,000	400,000		
Sub-Item	10	Office Stationary and Supplies	100,000	600,000	500,000		
Sub-Item	21	Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings	400,000	1000,000	600,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
Sub-Item	43	Security Services	1000,000	1600,000	600,000		
Sub-Item	62	Promotions, Publicity and Printing	4200,000	11200,000	7000,000		
Item	002	Government Printery	7529,145	8129,145	600,000		
Sub-Item	12	Materials and Supplies	400,000	1000,000	600,000		
Item	003	National Archives	4717,300	5017,300	300,000		
Sub-Item	43	Security Services	650,000	950,000	300,000		
SUB-HEAD	03	MINOR EQUIPMENT PURCHASES	590,000	840,000	250,000		
Item	001	General Administration	250,000	500,000	250,000		
Sub-Item	02	Office Equipment	100,000	350,000	250,000		
SUB-HEAD	06	CURRENT TRANSFERS TO STATUTORY BOARDS AND SIMILAR BODIES	134326,455	139826,455	5500,000		
Item	004	Statutory Boards	134326,455	139826,455	5500,000		
Sub-Item	53	National Library and Information System	134326,455	139826,455	5500,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2020 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2020	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
SUB-HEAD	09	DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	17165,000	29791,000	12626,000		
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	13665,000	26291,000	12626,000		
Sub-Item	06	General Public Services	13665,000	26291,000	12626,000		
Project Group	A	Administrative Services	9885,000	22511,000	12626,000		
Project Desc.	004	Strategic Redevelopment of T.T.T.	5000,000	17626,000	12626,000		
HEAD	78	MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES	4968500,000	5550294,321	581794,321		
SUB-HEAD	02	GOODS AND SERVICES	115966,688	122527,457	6560,769		
Item	001	General Administration	87614,468	94175,237	6560,769		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	13620,703	20181,472	6560,769		
SUB-HEAD	04	CURRENT TRANSFERS AND SUBSIDIES	4752598,400	5327831,952	575233,552		
Item	005	Non -Profit Institutions	19822,400	30149,800	10327,400		
Sub-item	31		8500,000	18827,400	10327,400		

APPENDIX IV

Proposals for the Supplementation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2020

AGENDA FOR THE SECOND MEETING OF STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE 2020 SESSION OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
TO BE HELD ON

10th June, 2020

MATTERS RELATING TO THE 2020 ACCOUNTS

ITEM NO.	F.C. NOTE NO.	FILE NO.	SUBJECT	PAGE NOS.
01	01	F:BUD:4/4/8	Supplementary Appropriation for fiscal year 2020	1 - 17

NOTE FOR STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

ITEM NO.

F.C. (2020)

F:BUD:4/4/8

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2020

Standing Finance Committee is being asked to consider the under-mentioned proposal:

Provision of Supplementary Funds in the sum of *Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Eighty Six Million, Eight Hundred Dollars (\$2,686,000,800)* to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital Expenditure to September 30, 2020, in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided.

2. Standing Finance Committee is asked to note that as a result of the review of the Recurrent Expenditure and the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) which was conducted by the Ministry of Finance it is necessary to return to Parliament to seek approval for the Supplementary Appropriation (Financial Year 2020) Act, 2019 for fifteen (15) Heads of Expenditure totaling \$2,686,000,800.

3. Further, the Standing Finance Committee is now being asked to approve the additional funding amounting to \$2,686,000,800 which is required to meet the following:-

- (i) Personnel Expenditure - \$68,400,000
- (ii) Goods and Services - \$251,435,064
- (iii) Minor Equipment Purchases - \$250,000
- (iv) Current Transfers and Subsidies - \$2,142,789,736
- (v) Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies - \$55,500,000
- (vi) Development Programme - \$167,626,000

These additional funds will be sourced from the Consolidated Fund.

4. Details of the total proposed net Supplementation by Heads of Expenditure are given in the Table below:

Supplementation by Heads of Expenditure - 2020

Heads of Expenditure		Amount \$
03	Judiciary	99,648,000
06	Service Commissions	2,142,000

Heads of Expenditure		Amount \$
08	Elections and Boundaries Commission	43,000,000
13	Office of the Prime Minister	47,220,000
15	Tobago House of Assembly	105,000,000
18	Ministry of Finance	880,000,000
22	Ministry of National Security	177,824,135
23	Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs	76,550,000
28	Ministry of Health	224,582,640
30	Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development	21,405,000
42	Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government	116,700,000
43	Ministry of Works and Transport	244,484,504
65	Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs	35,374,200
70	Ministry of Communications	30,276,000
78	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services	581,794,321
	Total	2,686,000,800

5. Explanations for the areas for the proposed supplementary funding are as follows:

Head 03 - Judiciary

Recurrent Expenditure - \$99,648,000

02/001/08 - Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage - \$6,142,000

The sum is required to facilitate the payment of monthly rental of accommodations at nineteen (19) locations to the end of fiscal 2020. Funds which were originally provided were vired to meet urgent payments under various sub-items under Sub-head 02: Goods and Services.

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$31,000,000

The sum is required to meet the payment of salaries to contract officers for the period August to September 2020; as well as to facilitate the filling of critical vacant contract positions of Judicial Support Officers and Business Operations Assistants and other positions in the Family Court, Criminal Division, and District Criminal and Traffic Courts.

02/001/23 - Fees - \$3,000,000

The sum is required to meet outstanding payments owed to funeral homes from fiscal years 2018 to 2020, Jurors owed for services from fiscal years 2019 and 2020, to pay Pathologists and Interpreters for July to September 2020, and enable the renewal of software licences for fiscal 2020.

02/001/37 - Janitorial - \$7,735,000

The sum is required to facilitate payments to the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS) for the provision of janitorial services for March 2020 to September 2020.

02/001/43 - Security Services - \$51,771,000

The sum is required to facilitate payments to the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS) for the provision of security services from fiscal 2019 to 2020.

Head 06 - Service Commissions

Recurrent Expenditure - \$2,142,000

02/001/08 - Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage- \$2,142,000

The sum is required to supplement the 2020 allocation to facilitate the payment of rent for several properties to year ending September, 2020.

Head 08 - Elections and Boundaries Commission

Recurrent Expenditure - \$43,000,000

01/002/03 - Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers - \$3,500,000

The sum is required to meet the payment of overtime to staff who are expected to work beyond normal working hours in preparation for the 2020 Parliamentary Elections.

02/001/23 - Fees - \$2,000,000

The sum is required to meet the cost incurred as a result of recently filed petitions in relation to the 2015 Parliamentary Elections.

02/001/62 - Promotions, Publicity and Printing - \$2,000,000

The sum is required to facilitate payment to various media platforms to sensitize the public on the roll out of the new National Identification Card.

02/002/01 - Travelling and Subsistence - \$1,000,000

The sum is required to pay travelling expenses and subsistence to field officers who are required to verify addresses of the electorate.

02/002/05 - Telephones - \$200,000

The sum is required to meet the cost of telephone services provided to Returning Officers who are assigned handsets and temporary land lines for use during Parliamentary Elections 2020.

02/002/08 – Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage - \$100,000

02/002/09 – Rent/Lease – Vehicles and Equipment - \$780,000

02/002/21 – Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings - \$500,000

The sum is required to pay for rental of accommodations, vehicles and equipment which are required for use in the preparation for and during the 2020 Parliamentary Elections.

02/002/12 – Materials and Supplies - \$1,020,000

The sum is required to purchase materials and supplies necessary to conduct the 2020 Parliamentary Elections.

02/002/17 – Training - \$5,000,000

The sum is required to meet the cost associated with training of polling day staff.

02/002/22 – Short Term Employment - \$20,500,000

The sum is required to pay persons employed in the short term to undertake field work in communities in preparation for the 2020 Parliamentary Elections.

02/002/57 – Postage - \$1,500,000

The sum is required to pay TTPOST for the mailing of poll cards throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

02/002/62 – Promotions, Publicity and Printing - \$4,000,000

The sum is required to pay for advertising in the print and electronic media.

Head 13 – Office of the Prime Minister

Recurrent Expenditure - \$47,220,000

02/001/65 – Expenses of Cabinet-appointed Bodies - \$6,000,000

The sum is required to enable the National Security Council to meet expenditure to September 2020.

04/005/01 – Ecclesiastical Bodies - \$30,000,000

The sum is to enable the major religious organizations to provide food support to citizens and permanent residents, in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/011/06 – UDeCOTT – Interest payment on \$500Mn Loan - \$11,220,000

The sum is required facilitate the interest payment on UDeCOTT TT\$500Mn 4.50% Fixed Rate Syndicated Loan Facility.

Head 15 - Tobago House of Assembly

Recurrent Expenditure - \$50,000,000

06/001/06 - Tobago House of Assembly - \$50,000,000

The sum is required to enable the Tobago Regional Health Authority to meet expenditure associated with the Covid-19 Pandemic. This includes the cost of:

- i) training healthcare workers and educating the public - \$4,271,000;
- ii) establishing primary care facilities to meet the healthcare needs of persons in quarantine or self-isolation and manage patients who test positive for the Covid 19 virus - \$16,568,000;
- iii) maintenance of a distinct Covid-19 Pandemic response service so as to avoid disruptions in the primary and secondary health care service - \$5,900,000; and
- iv) acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment, as well as employment of additional staff - \$23,261,000.

Public Sector Investment Programme (P.S.I.P) - \$55,000,000

09/003/11/D/349 - Tobago Tourism Agency - \$50,000,000

The sum is required to enable the Tobago House of Assembly to administer the Relief Grant to the Tobago Tourism Sector to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic.

09/003/11/G/002 - Enterprise Development - \$2,000,000

09/003/11/G/019 - Enterprise Assistance Grant Programme - \$3,000,000

The sum is required to provide relief to entrepreneurs whose businesses have been impacted negatively by the Covid - 19 Pandemic.

Head 18 - Ministry of Finance

Recurrent Expenditure - \$780,000,000

04/007/06 - Food Price Support Programme - \$180,000,000

The funds are required to strengthen the Social Protection System to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic:

- increased beneficiaries for food cards;
- temporary food cards to families with reduced income through retrenchment/termination of employment;
- food support to children registered for meals under the National School Feeding Programme;
- emergency food support through provision of hampers;

04/007/18 - Salary Relief Grant - \$400,000,000

The sum is required to facilitate a Salary Relief Grant to alleviate the financial challenges experienced by persons suffering loss of earning as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/007/20 – Credit Union Facility Programme – Covid-19 - \$200,000,000

The sum is required to facilitate an agreed Credit Union Facility Programme as a strategic response to the adverse economic impact resulting from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Public Sector Investment Programme (P.S.I.P) - \$100,000,000

09/003/15/A/009 – Construction of a Terminal and Associated Facilities at the ANR Robinson International Airport - \$100,000,000

The sum is required to facilitate the award of contracts and the payment of project management fees to National Infrastructure Development Company Limited (NIDCO) for the construction of the new Terminal as well as associated works at the ANR Robinson International Airport, Tobago.

Head 22 – Ministry of National Security

Recurrent Expenditure - \$177,824,135

01/004/01 – Salaries and COLA - \$15,000,000

01/004/03 – Overtime – Monthly Paid Officers - \$18,000,000

01/004/04 – Allowances – Monthly Paid Officers - \$19,000,000

01/004/05 – Government’s Contribution to NIS - \$11,000,000

The sum is required to effect payment of increments, overtime and allowances due in fiscal 2020 to officers of the Prison Service.

02/001/36 – Extraordinary Expenditure - \$23,000,000

The sum is required to meet the cost of the upgrade and maintenance of the Coastal Radar System; the Counter Trafficking Unit; the witness protection programme; and the rental of vehicles for the use in covert operations.

04/009/02 – Strategic Services Agency - \$86,824,135

The sum is required to facilitate the payments associated with the CCTV Project; works on Knowsley Building; contract for technical support to the National Operations Fusion Centre; procurement of 30 Computers; and Upgrade of the sewer uplift pump at the National Security Training Academy (NSTA) Facility, at Cumuto.

04/009/10 – Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) - \$5,000,000

The sum is required to enable the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) to meet the cost of preparation for the 2020 hurricane season. These costs include expenditure on Personal Protective

Equipment (PPE); hurricane season disaster stores; operational vehicles; HVAC System; and implementation of the National Alert State System.

Head 23 – Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Recurrent Expenditure - \$76,550,000

02/001/16 – Contract Employment - \$11,550,000

The sum is required to meet the payment of salaries for 105 contract officers with effect from April, 2020 to September 30, 2020.

02/001/23 – Fees - \$30,000,000

02/009/23 – Fees - \$20,000,000

The sum is required to meet the payment of outstanding fees to local and foreign Attorneys for the provision of services for previous and current years.

04/005/01 – Legal Aid and Advisory Authority - \$15,000,000

The sum is required:

- to pay external counsel fees outstanding since 2018 to Attorneys on the external panel;
- meet expenditure for the newly established Public Defenders Department; and
- to effect the payment of arrears of salaries owed for the period January 01, 2011 to December 31, 2013 and January 01, 2014 to December 31, 2016. Pursuant to a revision of the terms and conditions of employment of contract officers, arrears are to be paid for the period January 2012 to December 2017.

Head 28 – Ministry of Health

Recurrent Expenditure - \$224,582,640

02/001/16 – Contract Employment - \$3,034,295

The sum is required to supplement the 2020 funding to facilitate payment to eleven (11) new Intensive Care Nurses from Cuba; twenty (20) Doctors attached to the Ministry of Health’s Covid-19 Hotline and other staff with effect from May 2020 in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/009/02 – North West Regional Health Authority - \$16,606,000

04/009/03 – Eastern Regional Health Authority - \$33,113,990

04/009/04 – North Central Regional Health Authority - \$129,950,000

04/009/05 – South West Regional Health Authority - \$5,000,000

The funds are required to supplement the 2020 allocation to the four (4) Regional Health Authorities to enable the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The funds are to meet the cost of consumables, infrastructure and equipment and additional human resource services.

04/009/20 – Interest Payment – Ansa Merchant Bank 11yr Fixed Rate Loan \$500Mn ERHA - \$13,948,600

The sum is required to service the \$500Mn Fixed Rate Loan Facility for the Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA) which was upsized to TT\$1Bn to finance expenses related to the Regional Health Authority's Covid-19 Pandemic projects and programmes and meet expenditure under Goods and Services.

04/011/05 – NIPDEC – RBC Merchant Bank (T&T) Ltd. TT\$671.3Mn. 7 year Fixed Rate Loan Notes - \$14,000,000

The sum is required to facilitate the payment of interest on a TT\$671,320,827 7-year fixed rate loan notes facility for the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC) which becomes due in September 2020. The loan was acquired to meet the cost of procurement, storage and distribution of pharmaceuticals/non pharmaceutical items.

04/011/06 – UDeCOTT – RBC Royal Bank (T&T) Ltd. US\$16.9Mn. 10 year Term Loan – Arima Hospital - \$2,837,451

The sum is required to facilitate the payment of interest on a US\$16.94Mn 10 year fixed rate loan for completion of Arima Hospital, due July 2020.

04/011/07 – UDeCOTT – FCB Ltd. TT\$101.9Mn. 11 year Fixed Rate Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block at POSGH - \$2,466,577

The sum is required to facilitate the payment of interest due August 2020 on a TT\$101.9Mn Partial refinancing facility for the Central Block – Port of Spain General Hospital.

04/011/08 – UDeCOTT - CIBC First Caribbean International Bank (T&T) Ltd. TT\$70.3Mn. 8 year Fixed Rate Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block at POSGH - \$1,671,426

The sum is required to facilitate the payment of interest due in September, 2020 on a TT\$70.3Mn Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block – Port of Spain General Hospital.

04/011/09 – UDeCOTT – CIBC First Caribbean International Bank (T&T) Ltd. US\$12.4 Mn. 8 year Fixed Rate Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block at POSGH - \$1,954,301

The sum is required to facilitate the payment of interest due in September 2020 on a US\$12.4Mn Loan for Redevelopment of the Central Block – Port of Spain General Hospital.

Head 30 – Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development

Recurrent Expenditure - \$21,405,000

02/005/17 – Training - \$21,405,000

The sum is required to supplement the 2020 funding to the On the Job Training Programme (OJT) as a result of the 10% increase in stipends with effect from December 01, 2019 as stated by the Honourable Minister of Finance in the 2020 Budget Presentation and to facilitate an expected increase in the intake of trainees from July, 2020.

Head 42 - Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Recurrent Expenditure - \$116,700,000

04/007/42 - Emergency Food Support - \$20,000,000

The sum is required to provide funding for emergency food support to needy households in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/009/04 - Community Environment and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) - \$56,700,000

The sum is required to meet the shortfall a result of the 15% increase in wages to the daily-paid workers and fees to contractors within the Community Environment and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) as mandated by the Minister of Finance in his Budget Presentation for fiscal 2020.

04/011/09 - R.D.C. - National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme (NRWRP) - \$40,000,000

The sum is required to provide funds to the Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago (R.D.C) to enable the continuation of the National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme which was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

Head 43 - Ministry of Works and Transport

Recurrent Expenditure - \$244,484,504

04/007/12 - Fuel Relief Grant to Registered Taxi and Maxi-Taxi Owners - \$25,108,000

The sum is required to facilitate the disbursement of a fuel relief grant to 5,000 registered and/or active maxi taxi owners and 15,000 registered and/or active taxi owners who have been adversely affected economically by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/011/11 - NIPDEC - Repayment of \$1.542Bn. Fixed Rate Bonds - PURE - \$27,173,973

The sum is required to enable National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC) to repay a \$1.542Bn. Fixed Rate Bond secured for the implementation of the PURE Programme.

04/011/18 - National Helicopter Services Limited - \$20,480,247

The sum is required to enable the National Helicopter Services to meet its debt obligations to September 30, 2020.

04/011/20 - NIDCO - Charter of an Inter-Island Passenger Vessel - \$87,713,662

The sum is required to meet the cost of the Time Charter as well as the operations of the Jean De La Valette for the period May 16, 2019 to September 30, 2020.

04/011/21 - NIDCO - Ship Management Services for Inter-Island Ferries and Water Taxis - \$25,102,263

The sum is required to meet the cost of ship management services with respect to the MV Galleons Passage and Water -Taxis.

04/011/28 - NIDCO - Operation and Maintenance of the M.V. Galleons Passage - \$58,906,359

The sum is required to meet the additional expenditure in respect of the purchase, delivery, commissioning, berthing, operation and maintenance of the M.V. Galleon Passage for the period August, 2018 to September, 2020.

Head 65 - Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

Recurrent Expenditure - \$35,374,200

04/001/01 - Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) - \$9,525,400

The funds are required to replenish the allocation which were vired to treat with an urgent commitment under the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations which is now necessary to enable Government to meet its financial obligation to the Secretariat to the end of the year.

04/003/01 - United Nations Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund - \$15,141,100

The funds are required to meet the shortfall on the original provision to ensure Government's commitments are met to the end of the financial year.

04/003/04 - United Nations Peacekeeping Operations - \$10,707,700

The 2020 allocation was utilized to pay outstanding contributions for the years 2016-2018. Additional funds are now required to facilitate the 2019 and 2020 contributions.

Head 70 - Ministry of Communications

Recurrent Expenditure - \$17,650,000

01/001/01 - Salaries and COLA - \$1,900,000

The sum is required to facilitate the payment of increments and acting allowances due to monthly-paid officers.

02/001/05 - Telephones - \$400,000

The sum is required to process payment for bills on hand for fiscal 2019/2020 and outstanding previous years.

02/001/10 – Office Stationery and Supplies - \$500,000

The sum is required to purchase additional office supplies for the Covid-19 Pandemic meetings and information sharing sessions.

02/001/21 – Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings - \$600,000

The sum is required to upgrade the accommodation at the TIC Building which is aged and to ensure compliance with current building codes and the OSH Act.

02/001/43 – Security Services - \$600,000

02/001/62 – Promotions, Publicity and Printing - \$7,000,000

The funds are required as there were additional expenses associated with the televising and information sharing sessions as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

02/002/12 – Materials and Supplies - \$600,000

The funds are required to purchase foreign water marked paper and regular printing paper for the Government, replenish stocks and supplies to facilitate the printing of special documents for the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

02/003/43 – Security Services - \$300,000

The funds are required to meet current and past payments with regards to monthly contractual agreements.

03/001/02 – Office Equipment - \$250,000

The sum is required to upgrade computer equipment inherited from Government Information Services Ltd.

06/004/53 – National Library Information System - \$5,500,000

The funds are required to supplement the 2020 allocation to facilitate operational expenses of the Library to September, 2020 and pay outstanding bills from fiscal 2019.

Public Sector Investment Programme (P.S.I.P) - \$12,626,000

09/005/06/A/004 – Strategic Redevelopment of T.T.T - \$12,626,000

The sum is required to pay outstanding amounts from fiscal 2019 on a contract for the upgrade of equipment at Trinidad and Tobago Television (T.T.T.).

Head 78 – Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

Recurrent Expenditure - \$581,794,321

02/001/16 – Contract Employment - \$6,560,769

The sum is required to enable the recruitment of additional staff to fill vacant positions within the Ministry. These positions include Business Operations Assistants, Information Systems Specialists, Database Information Specialists and Senior Research Specialists.

04/005/31 – Contribution to Non-Profit Institutions - \$10,327,400

The sum is required to provide additional financial support to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) to enable meals (lunch and dinner) to be provided to the homeless during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/007/02 – Senior Citizens Grant - \$242,083,944

The sum is required to supplement the 2020 Senior Citizens Grant allocation to cater for existing beneficiaries and meet new expenditure associated with the increase in number of senior citizens accessing the Grants.

04/007/03 – Social Assistance - \$171,000,000

The sum is required to supplement the 2020 allocation under the Social Assistance Programmes to provide additional support to existing beneficiaries and assist with income support to families which experienced loss of income as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/007/04 – Urgent Temporary Assistance - \$50,000,000

The sum is required to provide additional funds for rental assistance to families where an income earner's employment was terminated, curtailed or income was reduced as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

04/007/08 – Disability Grant - \$101,822,208

The sum is required to supplement the shortfall in allocation in 2020 under the Disability Grant as a result of the "top-up" to existing beneficiaries and to cater for new beneficiaries.

