

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 13, 2016*



### APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016

[Sixth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

**1.30 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Good afternoon everyone. This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee shall now resume. The documents referred, hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 81(2) and (8). The estimates containing the details of the financial requirements along with the Appropriation Bill have been referred to this committee for consideration.

The documents before the committee therefore, include the:

*Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditures, Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, Draft Estimates of Development Programme* and the Appropriation (Financial Year 2017), Bill 2016.

In accordance with Standing Order 85(1), the consideration of the clauses of the Bill will be postponed until after the consideration of the Schedule which lists the Heads of Expenditure to be approved. The Heads will be considered in the order submitted by the Leader of the Opposition.

Our proposed work schedule as we agreed yesterday, Members you are reminded that the committee agreed to meet each day from 10.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. or for so long thereafter to consider a minimum of eight Heads of Expenditure. Of course, today is the exception as it relates to our commencement time with the minimum

of eight Heads of Expenditure still applies for today's meeting.

The Leader of the House has submitted a request to move the Ministry of Tourism from day four to either day three or day five. However, as we said yesterday this will require shifting a Head from either day. And have you all agreed?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, thank you very much for this opportunity. I have spoken with my counterpart on the other side and I would like to indicate that the Ministry of Tourism will move to day three and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs will move to tourism's, day four, position which will be on day four and it is agreed. Thank your very much, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. And just to recap the procedure. Hon. Members, you are reminded that the procedure for each Head of Expenditure shall be as follows:

1. The Head and the amount to be appropriated will be announced by me as Chairman;
2. The Minister will then be given the option to make a brief opening statement;
3. The Chairman will then propose the question that the sum proposed stand part of the schedule;
4. For each Head of Expenditure I will call the Sub-Head followed by the Item.

I will not call the Sub-Items. Discussion can ensue on the Item called or the relevant Sub-Item and clarification sought.

Once the committee moves to another Sub-Head, questions from a previous Sub-Head will not be entertained. I will repeat the procedure for Development Programme. Once this is concluded I will then put the question that the sum stands part of the Schedule. This procedure will be repeated for each Head of

Expenditure.

You are reminded, hon. Members, that in accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in the Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. I would also like to remind us, as a matter of courtesy, that we have invited accounting officers and technocrats to arrive at specific times in the day, so we will really have to manage our time very efficiently to accommodate the arrival of the various technocrats. Okay?

So, Minister of Finance, are you ready? So, according to the Schedule set by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the first Head is Head 18: Ministry of Finance. We are dealing with recurrent.

The sum of \$5,837,994,660. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Finance—sorry—Chairman, the Ministry of Finance is charged with ensuring that all other government Ministries and departments receive their budgetary appropriations and allocations. We are also responsible for debt service. We have a partial responsibility for the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer as it relates to collective agreements, terms and conditions. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah. That is no problem, I am just saying that. And we have some state enterprises under our control, most notably Caribbean Airlines, the Securities and Exchange Commission, TTMF and various other state enterprises which are contained within the estimates. We are also responsible for the Financial Intelligence Unit, Customs and Excise, Board of Inland Revenue, Central Tenders Board, National Insurance Board and a number of other government departments and agencies.

*Question proposed:* That Head 18 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon, Members, the sum of \$5,837,994,660 for Head 18,

Ministry of Finance is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; 001: General Administration.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, could the hon. Minister indicate under Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure what is the reason for the difference between the revised estimates of 2016 and the estimates of 2016. There is a big different there, and then there is a further decrease on the estimates for 2017. It is under Personnel Expenditure, 01, on page 74. If the Minister would be kind enough to explain the difference between the estimates, the revised estimates and 2017 estimates?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, Madam Chairman, you will recall that the hon. Prime Minister at the beginning of the year had asked for each Ministry and department to cut its expenditure by 7 per cent. And if you look at the estimates, starting at page 75, you would see that it is across the board, it is virtually every item. Look at it, you will see. For example, overtime for monthly paid officers in General Administration was reduced from \$9 million to \$3 million and so on. Sorry. Nine thousand to three thousand and so on, the decrease is everywhere. It is just that we tried to be as conservative as possible and tried to contain expenditure. But it is all there in the documents; you can see page 75, page 76, et cetera. You see where the decreases are. It is not anything specific, it is a general reduction.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you are indicating that Personnel Expenditure obviously is paying for salaries and wages for personnel within with Ministry. So, from your

estimation in \$434 million in 2016 the estimates, you actually spend about \$59 million less according to your revised estimates in Personnel Expenditure, \$434 versus \$375.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. He is talking about something specific. Madam Chairman, through you, could you just repeat which one of the Sub-Heads you are speaking about?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure, Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sub-Head 01—

**Hon. Imbert:** Right.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—page 74.

**Hon. Imbert:** Seventy-four?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, under Ministry of Finance Head 18.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. But 74 is just a summary. The details start on page 75.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. Sure. I have not reached there, but I was just asking you if the reduction in Personnel Expenditure from \$434 million which was your estimate to \$375 million which is your revised estimates, if what you were saying is a reduction—is it of 7 per cent across the board or other reductions in Personnel Expenditure?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. No. No. What I said was that the Prime Minister gave a directive that each Ministry and department should make their best effort to reduce expenditure by 7 per cent across the board while preserving jobs. Some Ministries would have been able to cut more than 7 per cent, some Ministries would have been able cut less than 7 per.

In our case we were able to reduce Personnel Expenditure from \$434 million to \$375 million. So we were able to reduce Personnel Expenditure by about \$59

million as you have pointed out. But the reductions are shown on all the pages, page 75, page 76, page 77, everything is there in terms of the original provision and the revised provision. I will give you an example. In terms of Customs and Excise we were able to reduce overtime significantly, so we were able to get a saving there. So to tell you, I mean, I would think it is at least 100 items. If you look at it you will see we had reductions across the board in various things. It is all part of the general drive to contain expenditure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On that same page, hon. Minister, well I understand that your Personnel Expenditure has been reduced, does that mean that there were jobs that were—regular jobs on the monthly paid staff of wherever or overtime jobs or part-time jobs?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. The reductions would have been in the filling of vacant posts, in overtime and things like that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. I know I just have a minute or two.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. No problem. Go ahead.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well the same page, the overtime monthly-paid officers, I see have been reduced by \$22 million. That is the monthly-paid officers.

**Hon. Imbert:** Which page are you one?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The same page, 74.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is the summary.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, but—

**Hon. Imbert:** You should not be looking at that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No. No. Well the hon. Chairman has indicated if she moves away from a Head she would not come back.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. No. No.

**Madam Chairman:** If you all need clarification, the summary page, I would

really like to request that Members look at the other pages and not the summary pages because the details where your questions really emanate are in the other pages.

**1.45 p.m.**

What I said is, and I think I will assist by calling the page. Okay? We are on Head 18: 01: Personnel Expenditure, 001: General Administration, which is on page 75.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But, are you skipping out 01, Madam Chairman.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, because 02 and so on come afterward.

**Madam Chairman:** 01, which you would have seen on your summary page is replicated on page 75.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was looking at the macro-picture before going into the micro-picture.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, with all due respect, if you look at the macro-picture, if you look at page 75 and the first thing you see, 01: Personnel Expenditure and then you go to 001: General Administration, it is the very said figures in the macro-picture on the summary page.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, all right, if that is the policy we will go along with it, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair, on 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, page 75, can the hon. Minister indicate—there is an increase of \$100,000, and what is the number of persons employed at the Ministry as at September 30, 2016 to account for this increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** Could you give me the exact line Item, please?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** 01, page 75, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah, but under that you have 001:

**Madam Chairman:** That is the one. She is under 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Hon. Imbert:** 01, 001, 01.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, I am.

**Hon. Imbert:** And you want to know what is the reason for the increase of \$100,000?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, and what is the number of persons employed at the Ministry as at September 30, 2016?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay, the expenditure in 2016, \$20,900,000 on salary. The expenditure in 2017 has been estimated at \$21 million, just \$100,000 more. It is simply an estimate. We could have put \$20,900,000. It is just an estimate. There is no material difference between \$21 million and \$20,900,000.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central, I believe you had a question?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** You did not answer the other part of the question.

**Hon. Imbert:** What is that?

**Mr. Singh:** The number of persons employed in the Ministry.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, well I cannot give you that now. I would give you an undertaking to give that as soon as possible. Yes, I cannot tell offhand. Maybe by the end of today I can tell you. So, I can ask my technocrats now to tell me how many people work in the Ministry. It is no problem.

**Mr. Singh:** Minister, I was just trying to assist you so you could complete the answers to your question.



**Hon. Imbert:** I am afraid I do not have those numbers at the tip of my fingers.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chairman, if you would indulge me, I know you told us that we are on page 75, but if we look at 01: Personnel Expenditure on the summary page, on the specific item vacant post it indicates that the 2016 estimate is \$6,120,000; and then in the 2017 estimates it says \$180,000. Now—

**Hon. Imbert:** You are looking at the wrong page.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Sorry?

**Hon. Imbert:** We are on page 75, where are you?

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, I am making a point, I am going to page 75. I just want to ask the question whether this dramatic difference on vacant posts represents some specific policy or position with regard to vacant posts, because they do reoccur under the other headings, and I just want to clarify what is the policy position on the issue of vacant posts that led to this dramatic difference in number.

**Hon. Imbert:** So, which page are you on?

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am on page 74.

**Hon. Imbert:** You gone back to 74.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central, while I understand the question, I am certain that you can ask it—I guess what you are trying to do is to prevent yourself from asking it under each sSub-Head.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, but if I get a clarification, Madam Chair, on what this dramatic difference means in terms of a policy position on vacant posts, then I might be clearer every time I see vacant posts and either a decrease or an increase.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so could I ask then if maybe you ask this question on the last Sub-Head with vacant posts. Okay?

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right, so I would get a chance to re-ask.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. If I can get further clarification from my colleague from the Minister of Finance as to how many posts are presently vacant? What is the clarification of the vacant positions? What is the estimated time frame for filling the posts? And what are the specific posts which are currently vacant? And what areas within the Ministry have vacant posts? I can put it in writing.

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not understand the question. Could you just repeat that, please?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Sure. In relation to the question following up from—

**Hon. Imbert:** Which line Item?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** The same line Item 08: Vacant Post, under 001: Salaries and Cola. If I can find out, please, how many posts are presently vacant? What is the classification of the vacant positions? What is the estimated time frame for filling the posts? What are the specific posts which are currently vacant? How many vacant posts—sorry, what areas within the Ministry have vacant posts? I know that the Minister would not be able to give me that answer now, but I would appreciate it sometime during the course of the finance committee.

**Hon. Imbert:** You are absolutely right. I cannot give you that answer now. I will try my best to give it as soon as possible.

**Madam Chairman:** 002: Budget Division, page 76; 003: Customs and Excise Division, starting on page 76 and flowing over to page 77. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On that page 76, under 003: Customs and Excise Division, there is a Sub-Item 03: Overtime, monthly paid officers with a decrease of \$22 million from the revised estimates to estimates 2017, could the Minister give us some

understanding of this decrease of \$22 million, does it include reduction of officers for Customs and Excise Division, because it is overtime monthly paid officers? Do you mean you are decreasing overtime from \$74 million to \$52 million? And if so, what impact would that have on the Customs and Excise if the overtime is reduced by \$22 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. In the first place it is impossible that it would involve reduction in staff. Because if you go higher up, you will see the salary figure in 2017 for Customs and Excise is higher than in 2016. And therefore the theory that this might involve loss of staff is baseless.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No.

**Hon. Imbert:** Coming now to overtime, if you look at the 2015 figure, under your stewardship, you will see that the overtime figure was \$52 million. If you look at the 2017 figure you will see it is \$52 million, so that must tell you something. And it should be apparent that what happened in 2016 is that we had to pay back pay. So that \$74 million figure in 2016 which represented a \$22 million increase over the 2015 figure, represents back pay, which we do not have to pay in 2017. And if you look at this, this is \$22 million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am satisfied with that, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** Could I finish speaking, I did not interrupt you when you were talking. There is a point I have to make here, that you were querying why we reduced personnel expenditure by \$59 million. Of that \$59 million, \$22 million of it is this back pay that we paid in 2016 which we do not have to pay in 2017.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, on the same matter of the overtime, has the Ministry done any analysis to determine why the Customs and Excise Division has such a consistently high level of overtime, \$52 million, and it seems to be, if you

say 2015, 2014 was not very different also? Why is it consistently high and has the Ministry done any analysis to determine why is this taking place, and whether in fact that there might be some inefficiencies involved in the entire manner in which the Customs and Excise Division operates? Also, you might consider instead of overtime, hiring personnel on a shift system which might actually reduce your cost of operations.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I think the hon. Member should know, customs officers are public servants. So, if I was to contemplate hiring customs officers on a shift system, I think I would have to have a chat with Watson Duke to see whether he would agree that public servants could be hired on a shift system. So, I do not think that is on the cards. But, I would certainly take a very close look at customs' overtime in the coming year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** One follow-up question. Madam Chairman, through you, what type of duties require this amount of overtime on the part of customs officers? What kind of duties require that?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, this is the beginning of this committee exercise, I am a little nonplussed. The Member was a Minister for five years, and it is inspection of custom goods, containers at bonded warehouses along the East-West Corridor, in Point Lisas, and in all the places that importers secure their goods under bonded arrangements or containers under seal that customs officers have to come and visit and inspect the goods. I would have thought you knew that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, through you, Madam Chairman, there have been reports that the amount of containers coming through the ports have actually decreased, which will tell you that there is probably less work to be done in terms of the checking of containers. The port authority in Point Lisas, I believe, reported that also, I saw on the newspaper. If that is so, you know, all I am simply asking

is, if you are seeing a decrease in the amount of work and you are seeing the same amount of monthly paid overtime. That is all I am asking, because I know that one of your objectives is higher productivity and efficiency.

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem. Madam Chairman, through you, even if I accept your statement that the number of containers coming through the port has decreased, I do not know that as a fact. The fact of the matter is, we have a lot of trouble in this country with drugs, arms and ammunition, and other contraband, and illegal items coming through in containers, and therefore I would not want to reduce the level of surveillance. Even if—let us assume that you are correct—there has been a reduction in the number of containers, that does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the work of the customs, because, they may wish to do it with more diligence.

So, it is not a simple matter. As I have said, I will examine the whole question of customs overtime, going into 2017, but there is no direct relationship between a reduction in the throughput at the port and the amount of hours that the customs officers work overtime. Because, under this new Government they may very well be doing much more thorough inspections of containers.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just to ask, following the question of my colleague to the Minister of Finance, does the Ministry have the required staff complement to achieve its goals and mission?

**Madam Chairman:** What Item are we under, please?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Same 003, 03.

**Madam Chairman:** Overtime.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am afraid—that question is a complex question, which cannot be answered just like that. I will take note of the question of the hon. Member, and make my best effort to answer it as quickly as possible.

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

**2.00 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Inland Revenue, page 78. The Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. In the context of the increased demands being placed on Inland Revenue Division, in the context of impending FATCA legislation and property tax, do you think that the increase of \$1.2 million is adequate? I am looking at Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances. Is it adequate to the new demands being placed on the Inland Revenue Division?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not possible to say at this point in time, Madam Chairman, but I can assure you that this will be an Item that will be under consideration at the time of the mid-year review, when we see how it works.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 77 under Sub-Item 02, Wages and Cost of Living Allowance. I see that there is a decrease of \$1 million. Has there been any restructuring at the Board of Inland Revenue? And if so, has there been a reduction in the staffing level and by how much?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, this is merely an estimate. There has been no reduction at the Board of Inland Revenue. This is Wages and Cost of Living Allowance. Wages, as you know, would be persons who are not monthly paid officers. There is no intention to reduce the staff there. In fact, there may very well be an intention to increase the staff. So we will take a look at this again as we go along through the year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, Wages and Cost of Living, Item 01. Mr. Minister, through the Chairman, it has been reported that there has been quite a high level of under-collection of taxes in the country; that the BIR has not been able to collect taxes and *The Economist* and others are predicting that only 40 per cent of taxes are collected. How do you propose using the same staff that you have

here, and given that you are not filling vacant positions, how do you propose to improve the collection of taxes at a time when we must increase the revenue in the country and I see no real increase here in the number of persons who will have to do this? What proposals do you have in mind?

**Hon. Imbert:** Through the establishment of a Revenue Authority.

**Dr. Tewarie:** A couple of questions, Madam Chair, through you. Under the question of Wages and Cost of Living, Item 02, again, there is \$1 million decrease. The Minister of Finance indicated that it does not necessarily represent job losses. Is the Minister saying that it is simply a reduction of the estimate but it does not affect the employees in the system? I just want to confirm.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. If we can go down then to Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts. We had in 2016, 800,000 estimate. We had no revision in 2016 and then we have estimates of 10,000 which would represent only 10,000 for vacant posts. I want to ask the question about the non-allocation of funds seemingly for all vacant posts and whether there is a policy at work having to do with vacant posts and whether I can assume that as we look at vacant posts throughout?

**Madam Chairman:** The Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. If you look at this Head as a whole you would see in the right-hand column that the overall allowance for salaries includes vacant posts with incumbents.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** This Sub-Item 08 is for vacant posts without incumbents.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Now, if you look at the 2015 actual turnout you would see that no money was spent in 2015. In other words, no vacant posts were filled without

incumbents. Similarly, look at the 2016. Outturn is the same thing. So we have a situation where in 2015 these vacant posts were not filled and, in 2016, vacant posts were not filled. Now, these posts are filled by the Public Service Commission, not by me, so that we have where for at least for two years and I am sure if you went back to your 2014 and 2013—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Probably so, yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** —you will probably see a dash there as well. So you see a series of years where contained in the Draft Estimates every year there is a provision for vacant posts which is not utilized. Because of being in this system for quite a while, I know that what people do, they know full well that this vacant post provision will not be utilized. So quite often you get a request for virement. In fact, at the end of the financial year, this year, going towards September 30th, I had piles of files on my desk from various Ministries, various Permanent Secretaries, making requests to vire and transfer funds from the vacant post provisions into something else: Goods and Services, Contract Employment, whatever.

So I think what we need to do and what we have done in this year, since it has been going on for years, so you have an allocation in this Head, never used, then used for another purpose. So it is used for a purpose which Parliament never intended. I think we decided this year since we need to cut expenditure that this is an area where we can control expenditure and find out what is going on, why these posts are not filled. Why year after year you have this allocation and it is not used. So this is an area that we have identified where we could save some money.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. I understand you clearly and I thank you for—

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay.

**Dr. Tewarie:** —giving the explanation, because what it basically says is that no longer would money allocated for vacant posts be able to be vired for some other



purpose.

**Hon. Imbert:** It would not be used for other purpose because the Parliament did not intend—

**Dr. Tewarie:** I understand you clearly.

**Hon. Imbert:** It would not be there, available. It would be used for something else.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I understand.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On that same point, Madam Chair, would the Minister indicate then, if there are so many vacant posts across the public service, does it mean that enough attention has not been paid to the filling of these vacant posts or have these vacant posts that, from year to year remain vacant, means then that they have been redundant? And if so, there is no need for rationalization of the personnel within the various Ministries so that we no longer keep going with vacant posts and vacant posts, from year to year.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I think I made it clear that these posts are filled by the Public Service Commission not the Minister of Finance or any other Minister for that matter. I can tell you, the other day I was asked to look into the hiring of Customs clerks and I discovered that people have applied to become Customs clerks and started the process for more than two years and the Public Service Commission has not yet filled those posts.

So, this is an independent commission appointed by the President over which we politicians have little or any influence. So that, of course, we will try our best to get, to ask the Public Service Commission to fill these important posts, but we, as Ministers, I cannot pick up the phone and call the head of the Public Service Commission and say: "Fill this post now." So that is the system we have inherited in our constitutional architecture. We do not fill these posts. They are filled by the

Public Service Commission.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I appreciate what you are saying, hon. Minister, but there is a methodology and a process whereby we can ask the Public Service Commission through your various Permanent Secretaries, through the Director of Public Administration to look into the, to work with the public service, because, as far as I understand, the DPA is the ex officio CEO of the Public Service Commission.

So there is a process whereby, if these positions remain unfilled from year to year and remain vacant, we must be able as a Government in terms of your governance to say, “well these positions are no longer applicable to our governance process in the various Ministries.” So therefore ask the Public Service Commission to throw out these positions rather than from year to year have them as vacant positions.

**Madam Chairman:** That is a statement, not a question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am asking him in the form of a question.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A form of a statement.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, on a serious note, for us to really manage ourselves efficiently if we could keep our sentences or our questions crisp. I know it is five minutes but crisp.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would the hon. Minister consider representation to the Public Service Commission for a rationalization of these vacant positions across Ministries?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I am just shocked, you know. The Member was a Minister for five years.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, that is why I am telling you this.

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not think that the hon. Member was able to get one single

vacant post changed in the establishment. We cannot tell the Public Service Commission what to do. And he knows that. So I do not think we need to detain ourselves anymore on that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Given that the Minister said earlier on that the way to deal with the revenue collection is through the Revenue Authority. Madam Chairman, I just want to ask the Minister, how long he thinks that this Revenue Authority will take to come into effect? And in the meantime, if we make the assumption and he agrees with my assumption that 40 or 50 per cent of the tax is collected on profits and income, we are only collecting about \$15 billion. It means that—what are you doing to then collect that other \$15 billion, given that the Revenue Authority is not going to come on as quickly?

**Hon. Imbert:** Let me see if I can answer that multipart question. I indicated in the budget statement that it is our intention to bring the legislation to establish the Revenue Authority to the Parliament early in this session. And we shall see where it goes from there, whether we get the support from the Opposition or not.

With respect to this figure that the Member is bandying about, about how we are not collecting 50 per cent of the taxes. That is an incorrect statement and a fallacious assumption. I had said, when I was expanding the number of items that are subject to value added tax that the experts had told us that our VAT efficiency ratio was 40 per cent. What that meant is that the range of items on which VAT was imposed was only 40 per cent of the potential number of items that VAT can be imposed on. It had nothing to do with the amount of tax that we collect and the amount of tax that we could collect. So I would really not keep talking about this 50 per cent. It is not correct.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no such study, there is no such figure. But with respect to

the Revenue Authority we will be coming to Parliament and asking for your support to establish the Revenue Authority. If you do not support it we will have to come up with other ways and means of improving revenue collection.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Treasury Division, page 78. Item 008, Investments Division, page 78. Item 009, Central Tenders Board, page 79.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I have a question. Given the Government's commitment to proclaim and establish the Procurement Regulatory Agency under the new legislation, what and—the indication this is going to be done during the course of this fiscal year, what is likely to be the implication of the allocation to the Central Tenders Board and for the incoming agency in this particular situation? I am asking a general question, I may have specific issues here.

**Hon. Imbert:** As I had indicated in the budget speech, it is our intention to fully operationalize the Procurement Act by the end of March 2017. This would involve the recruitment of a Regulator, the establishment of the procurement board and the establishment of procurement units in the various Ministries and also the publication of the rules and regulations.

**2.15 p.m.**

And as an aside, you will recall, hon. Member—because you were on the committee—we had looked at the tenure of the regulator and we had agreed, as a committee, to change the tenure from seven to five years to make it coterminous with the life of the Parliament, Prime Minister, present and so on. So we will be coming to make that adjustment to the Act—that very minor adjustment.

If we are successful—because as you will know, you had some experience with this. It is not easy to do this, but if we are successful and we are able to establish the procurement board and the procurement system by the end of March, then we will save about \$2.75 million which we could use to fill vacant posts.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 010, Valuation Division, page 79. Item 011 National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, page 80. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There is an increase of \$41,000 in relation to Salaries and Cost of Living, and so on. I do not know if the Minister could tell us how many matters are pending at the National Insurance Board Tribunal in terms of the numbers that are existing here, and whether the existing staff complement, and so on, is sufficient to deal with the existing backlog of matters at the National Appeal Tribunal.

**Hon Imbert:** I cannot tell you how many people are employed at the National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal today, but that is not difficult to determine, so I will determine it as quickly as possible. With respect to the efficiency of the National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, again, I would have to look at the number of matters that are before them and how many of them they have dealt with and the rate at which they deal with them. I would be able to get some information on that, I would think, within the next few days. But other than that, as you could see, this is not an Item that we have cut. We have, in fact, increased it by \$41,000 and it is simply an estimate. It is a rounded figure. What would have happened in preparing the estimates, the figure has just been rounded up to \$500,000. Okay?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I look forward to the information from the Minister.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Can I ask a question; I am just not sure? Can I ask a question on 014?

**Madam Chairman:** We have not reached there as yet, but I am now going to call 014.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. I will wait.

**Madam Chairman:** 014, Financial Intelligence Unit, page 80.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Again, I want to ask a question that has to do with the estimate of

allocation, \$1.7 million which is a slight increase but it includes in the notes, “Provisions for vacant posts with incumbents.” I think I have a recall—I might be wrong—that the Financial Intelligence Unit is a rather small unit and I want to ask the hon. Minister, in view of the importance of this unit, whether he feels the human capability he has in the unit is adequate?

**Hon Imbert:** Madam Chairman, if you look, the actual expenditure, in 2015, was \$1.3 million. We are planning to spend \$1.7 million in 2017, so we are spending more than under the previous administration. As to whether this unit is big enough and needs more staff, that is something that the head of the Financial Intelligence Unit would have to advise me on. So I would seek that information, but I am being reminded here by my hon. colleagues on my right, that we recently increased the number of auditors and investigators in the Financial Intelligence Unit, which is covered under another Head, “Contracted Employment”. But in terms of everything that has happened, in terms of the monthly-paid officers, which is what this Item refers to, and in terms of the increased number of contract officers, I would think at this time—because the Cabinet approved the increase in the number of contract officers based on a request coming from the Financial Intelligence Unit, and based on research and based on analysis. So I think with what is here and what is in the other place for contract employment, yes, we should have sufficient staff.

**Mr. Charles:** My question was in the context along the same lines, the importance of money laundering, counterterrorism, the fact that they had identified a number of suspicious transactions and they have not been able to follow through. Does the Minister have a sense of the ideal number of employees for the Financial Intelligence Unit in order to fulfil the mandate you have set for it? And how does that relate to the current establishment?

**Hon Imbert:** No problem. As I just said, Cabinet just approved an increase in the staff numbers of the FIU based on an in-depth analysis of its capacity and the demands on that organization. So I would say at this point in time, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** So you are going to give us the ideal establishment?

**Hon Imbert:** The increase in the—

**Mr. Charles:** Oh, the increase.

**Hon Imbert:** No, the increase in the number of people employed there in terms of, in particular, auditors and investigators, was based on an in-depth analysis of the requirements for that body, its capacity, et cetera. So I would think at this point in time they do have sufficient staff available to them.

**Mr. Charles:** So therefore we could have comfort that the FIU will function optimally in the context of these new additions that you have given, so that we should not hear anymore that they are under-resourced and that they cannot fulfil their mandate, given the importance of money laundering and counterterrorism.

**Hon Imbert:** I do not know where you are hearing that thing about the FIU being under-resourced. I never heard that. That is the bureau. That has nothing to do with this. That is a police unit. I have never heard that the FIU was under-resourced.

**Mr. Charles:** Under-resourced?

**Hon Imbert:** No. And the fact of the matter is, we have just approved an increase in its staff establishment. But I want to make the point that even up to today or yesterday, I was reading about the FIU. There is an article in the papers that said they reported X thousand suspicious transactions and there has never been a conviction for money laundering or whatever. It is something that we need to confront as a country, a Parliament, a Government.

We need to confront: is this the best model? Is it working? If you have all

these suspicious transactions that are continuously reported, all these stories about billions of dollars in dirty money and nobody is being brought before the courts, nobody is being charged, nobody is being convicted, is this the best model? Is it working? This is something that was established about seven years ago and we will—I can tell you that I am looking at the legal structure for this body to see whether it is in sync with what is done in other countries that have had success in terms of dealing with the crime of money laundering, and that will be addressed in this year, 2017.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In light of the statement that the hon. Minister made regarding the approval of vacant posts for this unit, will those posts be filled by the CPO?

**Hon Imbert:** No. Let me clear this up. This provision is monthly-paid officers. In order to improve the capacity of the FIU, we just, as a Cabinet, agreed to a number of additional positions which are contract positions, which deal with the whole question of vacant posts. While the Public Service Commission is taking its time to fill vacant posts, this is how it is done.

I mean, some of you all have been in Government—many of you—and you know that the way a government deals with this problem that the Public Service Commission will be taking three years, four years, five years, 10 years, to fill a vacant post, you have contract positions to address the same need and to deal with the same problem. So that is what we have done. We have, as a Cabinet, approved a series of contract positions to fulfil the mandate of the FIU while we are waiting on the Public Service Commission to fill the vacant posts.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Member for Tabaquite, do you have a question? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can you tell me if these



positions will be advertised, and what are the—

**Hon Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I have to have patience here, you know. It is the Public Service Commission that is recruiting the people; not me. So that the Public Service Commission will use their procedures which involve advertisement, interview, background check. It is not me. It is the Public Service Commission.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. I just wanted it clarified.

**Hon Imbert:** But “doh” ask me.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Minister of Finance. I know it is going to be a long day—

**Hon Imbert:** Come on, we just start.

**Madam Chairman:**—but, Members, let us try to use—[*Crosstalk*] Members, let us try to use—[*Crosstalk*]

**Hon Imbert:** But we just start.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, let us try to use the time effectively. Okay, can we go on to 017, Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency, page 81? Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I just want to get clarification. What does the Supervisor of Insolvency do, Mr. Minister?

**Hon Imbert:** The Supervisor of Insolvency deals with companies that have either declared bankruptcy or have indicated that they need to be under judicial management or in some form or fashion, they have a solvency problem. And, in fact, that individual who is a public officer appointed by your government is, in fact, looking at the insolvency of a particular company in the energy sector at this point in time. So that is the role. There is a whole legal framework that deals with it. It is under the bankruptcy legislation.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Therefore, following on what the hon. Minister said, I notice

that you have raised the Salaries and Cost of Living from \$220,000 to \$1.5 million. Is this because you are expecting that there will be more companies coming under the Supervisor of Insolvency and requiring his kind of services and inputs?

**Hon Imbert:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for—

**Hon Imbert:** I can explain, Madam Chairman.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, why?

**Hon Imbert:** You fill the entire unit with one person. So you have one person to deal with bankruptcy. That is an untenable situation.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So you are filling the positions?

**Hon Imbert:** We are now going to fill out this unit.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, since you are going to be increasing the complement of people in the unit, I notice on Item 16 you had an increase in contract employment, but your 17—

**Madam Chairman:** Item 16?

**Mr. Karim:** Under 017, Supervisor of Insolvency.

**Madam Chairman:** Under 017 on page 81? There is no 16.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. When you get to Goods and Services.

**Madam Chairman:** So, Member for Chaguanas East, would you want to hold your question?

**Mr. Karim:** I will.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, the Member for Tabaquite has already focused on the issue.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I will follow, if I have to, the question from Chaguanas East.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. All right. So 02, Goods and Services, 001 General Administration, which starts on page 81 and flows over to page 82. Member for Mayaro?

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Sub-Item 05, Telephones: I notice that there is a reduction in the expenditure by \$1 million which is extremely commendable knowing that that is one of the areas of abuse throughout all businesses in this country. Can the Minister describe what some of the measures that you plan to put in place to achieve this are? And two, is it part of an existing policy that you will be enforcing or do you plan to put a new policy in place in terms of both landline and cellular usage to achieve that reduction? Thank you.

**Hon Imbert:** The Ministry recently installed a new—I will have to call it a PBX—a quasi PBX—where we use sophisticated hardware and software to provide telephone lines and communication within the Ministry of Finance to the staff. This new technology has resulted in a considerable reduction in cost. So it is no longer the old wired system with a big cabinet down on the ground floor and you plug in lines and so on. It is a Voice over Internet Protocol system, which is much cheaper than your traditional telephone system.

**2.30 p.m.**

I am sure that my colleague in the Ministry of Public Administration would be also encouraging all of the other Ministries to use these new systems. I am being told by my colleague to my right that in the Government Campus this new system, this VoIP system, is being used. It reduces the cost of telephones tremendously because you are using the Internet for a lot of your communication.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will wait for the next speaker.

**Madam Chairman:** You will wait for the next speaker?

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, with respect to line Item 16 Contract Employment, and then 22 at Short-term Employment, you may not have the answer for us now, but would you give us the undertaking that you can provide us with the information in terms of those positions that would have existed in the financial year before the positions that would have been discontinued or expired; and what positions are being proposed for both line Items 16 and 22; the method of recruitment; and currently how many positions exist in this financial year under these two areas?

**Hon. Imbert:** I can give an answer but this is an Item that we are reviewing. It recently came to my attention a lot of returning scholars are hired in the government Ministries, and I am speaking now specifically for the Ministry of Finance. It recently came to my attention that a lot of returning scholars who have to work out their scholarship by employment in the public service are hired under short-term contracts and not on long-term contracts or in public positions.

I really would want to try to migrate these people out because a lot of them—I mean they are bright because they got scholarships. So they start off that way, being very intelligent and so on—have expressed a desire to work within the public service, and in particular in the Ministry of Finance, and I would like to keep a lot of them. So we will be making an effort to migrate these people who are currently on short-term employment into long-term contracts and into public service positions.

So whereas I can give you an answer, it would not be a fixed response because I am reviewing this at this point in time and I may change the allocation in this particular area as we go along.

**Madam Chairman:** You still have another question, Member for Princes Town?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes. Madam Chairman, I just want to go back to one of the

questions that I raised, just to get an undertaking from the Minister that we will be provided with the information regarding positions that have expired or been discontinued from the last financial year to now.

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem, you will get it, but what I am trying to tell you is that it is in a state of flux because, as I said, these are young bright people and I would like to keep as many of them as I can, but not in this uncertain type of employment where every three months your contract expires, you have no pension, you have no vacation, all this sort of thing. It is not acceptable.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 0213 Maintenance of Vehicles. What accounts for the decrease of \$195,000 in the allocation? First question.

**Hon. Imbert:** Efficiency.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So can you advise how the vehicles are currently maintained?

**Hon. Imbert:** I can tell you going forward we will be very prudent, very efficient, and we will try our best to reduce the cost of maintenance and also to reduce any unnecessary maintenance and repair cost.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is there a company that currently maintains the vehicles that you can name, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** There will be different service providers for different vehicles and so on, and we are disposing of some of the older vehicles so that the newer vehicles would not require the level of maintenance as the older vehicles would require. So there is nothing mysterious about this. We are seeking to save costs. We are disposing of the older vehicles and the newer vehicles will not require as much maintenance as the older ones.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And for the newer vehicles is there a procurement

process?

**Hon. Imbert:** In the public service there always is. I mean, this is an Item that would come within the purview of the Permanent Secretary who has a one-million-dollar limit as you should know and there are rules. You have to get a number of quotes, the thing must be transparent and so on. I cannot tell you what the plan is for the maintenance of vehicles. It is not something that has attracted my attention. We are talking about just a hundred thousand dollars. I am assuming that my Permanent Secretary will do this properly in accordance with the rules.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance —Buildings. There is a drastic reduction by \$8.1 million, can you explain that reduction please, and identify the buildings, if you can?

**Hon. Imbert:** Just a second. As part of the overall thrust to cut expenditure, we have provided only for priority repairs and routine maintenance.

**Miss Ramdial:** And the answer to my second question. I see buildings so can you identify these buildings? Which buildings?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is General Administration, head office.

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay. Thanks.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister. I had indicated to him previously that line Item 17—I noticed that the training budget was drastically cut in spite of the fact that you did indicate and give a commitment to increasing the capacity of the unit, is there any reason why this drastic cut?

**Hon. Imbert:** Which unit are you referring to?

**Madam Chairman:** We are in 02.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, I am there.

**Madam Chairman:** 001.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am trying to figure. He said I gave a commitment to—which

unit?

**Mr. Karim:** In response to the question from the Member for Tabaquite.

**Hon. Imbert:** But which unit are you referring to?

**Mr. Karim:** Supervisor of Insolvency.

**Hon. Imbert:** This is General Administration.

**Mr. Karim:** But are we not on page 81, and No. 17 training?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is General Administration.

**Mr. Karim:** Goods and Services.

**Hon. Imbert:** I understand, but you see what is bothering me, the Member was a Minister. If you go over the page you will see Budget Division has a provision for training as well. This is only for General Administration, the people who process the payroll, the people who file the letters and so on. This is not for the Insolvency Unit. You should know better than that.

**Mr. Karim:** What I am saying is that there is a significant cut and I am asking that question.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is not what you said.

**Mr. Karim:** I did say that.

**Hon. Imbert:** You change the tune now.

**Mr. Karim:** I started with that premise. It was cut by—look it right there, man—\$276,300 and that is the question I am asking.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, let me just deal with this. Firstly, this is 02 Goods and Services, 001 General Administration which is the general staff in the Ministry, not the Insolvency Unit, and this is for training of the general staff in the Ministry, the typists, the file clerks and so on, and we have put an allocation of \$50,000 and if during the year we need to supplement the training vote we will. But this has nothing to do with the Supervisor of Insolvency. Nothing!

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chairman, I just want to go back to 21, Repairs and Maintenance Buildings. In 2016, the Minister's estimated original figure was \$5.1 million. The revised estimate in 2016 went up to \$10.1, \$5 million above, could you explain what caused that additional \$5 million in the 2016 revised estimate?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, my predecessor managed to live in a building without air conditioning for five years. Somehow I do not know how he did that because every now and then we had to shut down the Ministry of Finance and send the staff home because the air conditioning system was not working. So we have rehabilitated the air conditioning system. We no longer have shutdowns in the Ministry of Finance and the staff work 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. every day now, unlike the past where you go home half day most of the time. So that is what that is.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and it relates to the same Sub-Item 21. It was \$10 million revised estimate and it is now \$2 million in 2017. I note that the Government has a problem with maintenance of its physical assets, its buildings, the President's building, et cetera. I know you spoke about priority repair, but could you give us some assurance that the Government will be mindful of the need to maintain the physical assets in a state that maintains the value of the property?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. The fact of the matter is, we did a lot of capital maintenance in 2016 and we do not anticipate that type of problem in 2017. So we have reduced the allocation as part of the overall move to cut costs, but if it becomes necessary, of course, we will. One of the things that I am very particular about is that I hate the idea of staff in a Ministry not having proper working conditions and the building not being maintained and so on. So it is a particular peeve of mine that all government buildings should be properly outfitted, properly maintained and so on. So the answer is yes, you have my assurance.



**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, through you, on Item 8: Rent Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage. I notice you have a provision of \$15.370 billion for rent and lease, can you give us an idea of where are these buildings; how many buildings or properties are being leased or rented and the monthly cost of each one of these buildings; and whether any of these buildings are in fact empty? In other words, have you done an audit to see whether they are all being used, or whether any of these buildings are empty?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, what I do know is under your Government you rented an empty building for three years which we are not doing. I do now believe, I am advised by the Permanent Secretary, that all of our buildings are occupied.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can we get a list of the buildings and the status of the renters or the occupancies, sorry, and the cost of each one?

**Hon. Imbert:** Could you just go back? You want the buildings, the cost of each one—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rambachan:** The cost of rental or lease cost of each one of the buildings, their location, and whether they are occupied or not occupied.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is what you want to know.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** That would be covered in the 2017 estimate of \$15.3 million?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. I will get it to you as quickly as I can.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I wanted to explain why I asked that question, but it is not necessary.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, I want to go back to the issue of Item 16 Contract Employment, and I want to ask it in the context in which the Minister explained and I understand and I am very clear about that, in which basically vacant posts are

not being allocated funds because you do not want the money to be diverted elsewhere. The contract employment is not larger than it was, so that there is a decrease. I understand that, but does this mean that in terms of contract employment the policy of the Government will be to continue with contract employment in order to address its need in a significant way?

**Hon. Imbert:** We have been grappling with this whole issue of contract employment for some time. In fact, a committee reported recently on rationalization of contract employment in the public service. I think it is a bit too early for me to give you the kind of answer that you are looking for in terms of do we need all these posts and so on. So I would think that we do at this point in time but we are constantly looking at it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. On the matter of short-term employment where you talked about the scholarship winners and migrating them to permanent jobs, I want to indicate to you that some of that had been successfully done. I think the Minister of Planning and Development could indicate it. It was not as successful as I wanted it because we would have liked to have had more. The process is just too long, but some of that was successfully done in the Ministry of Planning and Development and I want to say that I would support that position.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thanks for the support, but what line Item are you on?

**Dr. Tewarie:** This is 22.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 81.

**Hon. Imbert:** So you are supporting the move to migrate?

**Dr. Tewarie:** To migrate scholarships winners to permanent jobs.

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. Okay, no problem.

**2.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister,

with respect to line Sub-Item 34 on page 82, the University Graduate Recruitment Programme, we see an allocation of \$1 million. Can you give us an undertaking whether or not it is Government's policy to make this an annual programme in that we will see additional funds being added as the years go by with respect to increasing the amount of university graduates that will be part of the programme one; the areas that are being targeted in your particular Ministry because I observe in several other Ministries, a similar programme will exist, two; and what will be the criteria used for the selection of these persons to be enrolled in the programme?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, the programme was not implemented last year because of budget constraints. There is another Item also that we were not able to implement because of budget constraints. This University Graduate Recruitment Programme is really intended to recruit the brightest and the best. That is the focus of it. It is not an arbitrary thing, not to just recruit any graduate from UWI, for example. It is focusing on people with first-class honours and so on. To give you the criteria now, I cannot tell you now, I can just give you an idea of what I have just said. That it is intended to recruit the brightest and the best, and to try and encourage them to come into the public service. I do not know what further details you would like from this.

The typical salary is about \$9,000 a month so you are looking at a little over \$100,000 a year so you could hire about 10 of these people. What is intended with this is that you get the best students out of UWI, for example, and you put them into the areas in a Ministry which are aligned with their core competence. So for example, in the Ministry of Finance, we would be looking to hire economists and accountants and people with those sorts of skills. In the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, one would be looking at petroleum engineers and people like that and so on. In Public Administration, perhaps someone with a human resource

background and so on.

So that the intention of this programme is to recruit the best graduates of our local system and put them into a Ministry to work in areas of their core competence. It is not designed, for example, to just arbitrarily employ somebody to do something that has nothing to do with the core function of the Ministry. That is all I can tell you at this point in time. We were not able to get it going in 2016 because of budget constraints, and I am still fleshing out the programme for 2017.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Can I follow up? The follow-up question is that I understand it now to be a merit system but what would be the process of recruitment?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well it will be, for example, if you are taking people with first-class honours, you would ask the University of the West Indies to give you a list of first-class honours graduates and that would be the pool from which you would recruit people, then you go through the process of interviews and psychometric testing and that sort of thing.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That should be through the public service system or some other kind of system?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, these are contract positions.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Contract, okay.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, to the Minister, when this was first spoken of was on page 72 of the 2016 budget and as you admitted it, nothing happened.

**Hon. Imbert:** I confirm. "Doh like that word admit." [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Karim:** Do you intend to maintain the amount of people and the Ministries?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, we had planned last year to hire 20 people and in recognition of the financial realities that we face, I have now brought it down to 10 per Ministry.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Now, tell me, you have been speaking about UWI graduates in the main, does it mean that you are going to select only from accredited

institutions?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, at this time, we are just looking at the University of the West Indies. We will only expand it to the University of Trinidad and Tobago but we would not go beyond that. I can tell you that as a fact. It will be, we would start at UWI, we may expand to UTT, and I have heard the Member for Naparima say COSTAATT. I am not sure I would want to go down the road of COSTAATT yet in terms of first-class honours because you are looking for first-class honours graduates. You are looking for people who have really done well.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, I am sure if you are looking at—my take on this is—and if I may suggest—that the priority will be for local institutions that are at the university level and you have, in addition to COSTAATT, another one.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, but we are starting with UWI first, we may expand it to UTT and so on.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, again, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, you have indicated that because of the cuts last year that you were unable to fulfil this promise in the budget presentation. Seeing that \$1 million has been allocated for this year, do you foresee that if we have continued drops in revenue, that this programme can be removed at any time?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, because I think this is a very important programme. You would be aware of the scholarship programme whereby graduates who attain first-class honours are entitled to get a scholarship to go to a university of their choice abroad or a university aligned with our development needs, and it is part of that entire framework where you really want to reward somebody. Two things you are trying to do: reward the person who has excelled and also you are trying to encourage people who have achieved excellence to come into the public service and lift the level of capacity within the public service. So yes, I would want to

continue this programme indefinitely. Okay?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just a question concerning the request for first-class honours persons to be put forward by the university. Will there be a mandate to the university to not submit names of persons who may be first-class honours students but who may have achieved the age of 50 years and over?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, these are recent graduates. There may be some graduates who are 50 years old who just came out of university but that would be a very small number. I am not thinking along those lines at all at this point in time. This is for recent graduates. I would not put an age on it. You mean, the typical person I am thinking of is somebody who is 22, 23, who has just graduated with first-class honours.

You see, this is for people who have never worked in their life. Somebody who is 50 years old, by and large, that person would have been employed at some point in time in their adult life. This is designed to deal with the person who has just got a degree, done extremely well, but cannot get a job. So that really, a 50-year-old would hardly qualify because they would have been employed or might even be employed at this point in time as opposed to the youngster who has never been employed. Okay?

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, to the Minister of Finance. Sub-Item 28, Other Contracting Services. In the Minister's—and I consider the Minister a man with detail. In 2016, his estimate was \$101,500,000 and tremendous savings have been made throughout the year and he has now estimated \$3.6 million for 2017. On the explanation part, you have an analysis of what makes up the \$3.6 for estimated for 2017. My question is what would have caused for this amount in the first estimate in 2016 of \$101,500,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, this is really an overflow from your administration. When I came into the Ministry of Finance, I was shocked to learn that the previous Attorney General had commanded the Ministry of Finance to pay legal fees for a number of matters. There was one particular matter where the Ministry of Finance was commanded to pay \$1 million a month to some lawyers in England. I have put a stop to all of that. This is just a follow-through from this crazy system where the AGs would have hired people to do all sorts of things and then tell the Ministry of Finance pay, so we are not doing that anymore. Every Ministry stands on its own two feet and the Ministry of Finance will no longer be paying legal fees for extraneous legal adventures from other Ministries.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow up to his answer, Madam Chair. So then are you saying that some of these expenditures were then removed to other different Heads?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, some of them are no longer required. These were feeding lawyers. A million dollars a month, you think that makes sense for something that went nowhere? An investigation that achieved nothing.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister, with respect to Item 37, Janitorial Services, I see you have been able to decrease and cut the expenditure by over \$2 million. Can you give an explanation for that antiquated decrease?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well again, this is part of the overall need to cut expenditure. It is something that we will have to keep under review, whether we can actually do it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yeah, I was just asking, you know, with respect to whether this will affect the services.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, obviously if it affects the cleanliness of the building, we will have to deal with it. Okay?

**Dr. Bodoë:** And just as a follow-up, Minister. Is there a system for procurement of janitorial services?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, my understanding is that most of our janitorial services are provided by MTS but it is something we need to look at, because I would not want to reduce the level of service. It is just part of the overall drive to—

**Dr. Bodoë:** I was just concerned. Thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On Item 34, University Graduate Recruitment Programme, I know that you have been talking about first-class honours students from the University of the West Indies. It seems to me that we have a programme in place that once you get a first-class honours degree, you are entitled to do postgraduate studies—scholarships at the expense of the State which means there would be no incentive for that person to enter a programme like this when he may wish to continue his studies. It would seem to me that in developing this programme—and this is just advice—that you do this in collaboration with the University of the West Indies and other tertiary institutions.

One of the problems that a former principal of UWI said, indicated that that programme, it encourages the best and brightest to study abroad and this was inimical to the development of a research capability at UWI. So I am just saying, perhaps you could work this programme with them so they get on-the-job experience, go back to UWI and that will augur well for the next generation of leaders.

**Hon. Imbert:** There are always a number of different sides to those arguments. Our people do need to get exposed. It is not the best thing if you are doing a number of degrees, especially if you are doing postgraduate work and I am speaking from experience here. It is always best to get exposure. I did my first degree at UWI, my second degree at the University of Manchester and I would not have wanted to do it otherwise because you get to see the world, you get exposed to different cultures, different technology and so on. The point you are making is



very relevant, that this encourages people to go away and there is a brain drain out of UWI so that it affects our research output. Completely valid. But again, you always want to encourage people to go and broaden their horizon. So it is something that you just have to look at in context.

But I would also say that not every scholarship winner wants to go away and do postgraduate work, you will be surprised. A lot of them just want a job, they do not want to go on to do a Master's degree and a PhD and that kind of thing.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002: Budget Division, page 83. Item 003: Customs and Excise Division, pages 83 to 84.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sub-Item 15 Repairs and Maintenance - Equipment. I notice there is a drastic cut of \$12.5 million on the repairs and maintenance of equipment. With such a cut, is it that you have recently bought new equipment or is it that there is a totally different programme in place for the maintenance of equipment?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. The Government is in the process of arranging for the operationalization of four mobile container scanners. And if you look lower down under Sub-Item 28, under Other Contracted Services, we are shifting the cost of maintenance of these items of equipment out of this Sub-Item into the other Sub-Item 28, so it is simply a reallocation. So that the operational cost of the container, examination stations and the scanners is going to be covered under Other Contracted Services rather than under Repairs and Maintenance. Okay? So, that is why.

**3.00 p.m.**

I am not sure even if this is correct that we did in fact spend \$13 million in 2016, on these scanners. So this may be a typographical error. What I am told is that the maintenance of these scanners is now coming under Other Contracted Services.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Following on the explanation from the hon. Minister, in fact

then there should be an increase under Item 28, in terms of if you are shifting the repairs and maintenance from 15 to 28, but 28 has a significant—If you look at page 84, what the Member for Tabaquite asked you and you gave an explanation that that is no longer under that heading, Repairs and Maintenance but shifted to Item 28. Then there should be an increase in the expenditure on Item 28, if you shift the expenditure from there to there. But you have a decrease in expenditure under Contracted Services of \$8 million.

The question is, under Customs and Excise, when you are looking for better border control, as you have here, an IT Unit, container examination, container scanners, you are decreasing your expenditure there by \$8 million. Could you explain why you have a decrease of expenditure of \$8 million, when you want to improve Customs and Excise?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, all of that is one question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** “Yuh couda just ask why de figure lower?” That is all.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, why?

**Hon. Imbert:** Because you have different things that happen in different years. You have different items of equipment. You have different costs. The cost of maintaining the scanners is now going to be much less. We are having assistance from international agencies. You have items that no longer require expenditure. Things change from year to year. We are spending money on different things.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 16, Contract Employment. There is an increase by \$1.6 million. Can the Minister say what contract positions will be created for this increase of \$1.6 million?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 83.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is just an estimate. As you can see, it is a round figure, \$2.5 million. This would have been based on requests coming out of the Customs and Excise Division. To tell you exactly what that is for, I cannot tell you now but I can find out.

**Miss Ramdial:** So you will give an undertaking to give us?

**Hon. Imbert:** Pardon.

**Miss Ramdial:** There is an undertaking to give us the listing?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, yes.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, with respect to contract employment in Customs and Excise of that amount of contract labour kind of weird for what they do?

**Hon. Imbert:** I would get back to you on that. I would just find out from the Budgets Division what that is all about.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Inland Revenue Division, pages 85 to 86. Item 005, Treasury Division, page 86 to 87.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chairman, Inland Revenue Division.

**Madam Chairman:** You are a little slow on the draw.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well I was still reflecting on the answer.

**Madam Chairman:** That is why, if Members will notice, we changed the format. I am giving you the page. Okay, so let us—we are in Treasury Division.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I really wanted to go on the Inland Revenue Division.

**Madam Chairman:** We are at 005, Treasury Division pages 86 to 87.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I mean, with all due respect, I know you have set the rules and I admit that I was slow, but I mean the Inland Revenue Department is an important department.

**Madam Chairman:** No, and I really do not mean to either. I also want to give

you all due respect too. And, therefore, I mean nothing by it, but we have to press on it. It is 3.04 and we have eight heads to do and already the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has been here for some time. So hopefully, we would get a chance to answer it. Item 005, Treasury Division, pages 86 and 87. Item 008, Investment Division, pages 87 to 88.

**Mr. Lee:** I see the Minister in line Item on page 87 Other Contracting Services, could you give an answer why that increased to \$42 million this year, an increase of \$40 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is the consultancy services that will be required for all of the public offerings. For example, the public offering for the divestment of 20 per cent of FCB, for the divestment of TTNGL, and so on, all the items I listed in the budget. We want to make sure that we need to hire auditors, accountants, lawyers, make sure we get it right, to make sure there is no insider trading, no corruption, no manipulation, no collusion, as has occurred in the past under the previous administration. So that is what that is for.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, therefore, on the very 28, what is the procurement process that is going to be used in order to hire these consultants?

**Hon. Imbert:** We would be doing it in accordance with established procedures.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And may I ask what are those established procedures?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is in the Central Tenders Board Act. It is in the public domain. Go and read it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I would like to follow up on that. The issue I want to raise here is Item 28, again, Other Contracted Services which, in this particular case, is \$40 million, and when we look at the other areas, and I have raised it a couple of times, we see that the Contracted Services and Other Contracted Services are quite a substantial part of the allocations in this budget, and a number of people have

raised the question of the manner in which these services are going to be procured, et cetera.

And the Minister himself made a comment, basically suggesting that things were not done appropriately in the past and that he wants to make sure that they are done appropriately. I think the number and amounts, the number of times Contracted Services appears in the Ministry of Finance, and as we will see in the Ministries, it is all over every Ministry, and the way they keep coming up, it is something that warrants some concern, and I simply wish to flag the matter as an issue that we must monitor to determine whether in fact this is value-for-money focused appropriations.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure, I can answer that. This primarily is to guide the divestment to make sure it is done properly. And I am not suggesting anything. There was corruption in the FCB IPO. That is not a suggestion. That is a fact, and I do not want that to happen under this administration. But what I want to say is that let us take an example of the TTNGL public offering or the further public offering. The price that the TTNGL was floated at was \$20. TTNGL is now a little over \$23. So there has been a capital gain of about 18 per cent, from what I last saw.

One of the things we have to be very careful about when we float that item in particular, when we put out a public offering for TTNGL, is what price to put it at. Because if you just shift it by \$1 the State could earn an additional \$200 million, so that I am certain that once we procure the right people, that we will get the most out of this divestment programme. We are going to try and raise about \$4 billion from divestment in 2017. The sum of \$40 million is just 1 per cent of that. And if for 1 per cent of the total we can make it \$4.2 billion, or \$4.4 billion, I think it will be well worth it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, I agree with you; the conclusion of what you are saying.

Since you raised the issue of the disposal of shares, I wonder if I could get clarity from you, based on what you said in the budget reply yesterday, in which you basically said that the shares are not going to be limited to the existing shareholders, but will be opened up to the general public.

**Hon. Imbert:** I want to reiterate that. I thank you for the opportunity to allow me to clarify that matter. The percentage that would be made available to existing shareholders may be no more than 10 per cent and we also have another decision to make. If you have a special category of existing shareholders to whom you allow 10 per cent of the total, let us say FCB is 20 per cent we are divesting, so that will be 2 per cent of the total shareholding of FCB that would be available to existing shareholders. You then have to make a decision whether, if somebody avails themselves of that category, an existing shareholder gets shares based on the fact that they are an existing shareholder, out of the 10 per cent. Should they also be allowed to come again and try another bite at the cherry under individuals or under companies?

I can tell you something now about the Phoenix Park IPO. One of the reasons why the proceeds of the Phoenix Park IPO rolled over into 2017 is that we discovered that people were coming at this IPO in multiple ways. People were using companies, using their personal name, changing up their name. In one case we found a particular individual had tried to access shares in the Phoenix Park IPO in six different ways, and we stopped that and we made a policy decision that you could only get one, one bite at the cherry and I can assure you, when we are doing this divestment, we are going to put very stringent controls and balances in place to ensure not only transparency but equity.

Because the objective is to make sure that as many people as possible—because what other investment is outside there where you could get 18 per cent

capital appreciation and a healthy dividend? I understand the dividend is 6 per cent. In fact I am kicking myself now that I did not participate in TTNGL because it was not a very popular IPO. There was a lot of “mauvais langue” about it coming from, I think, from the Member for Chaguanas West, I think. The fact is, how many other investment opportunities are outside there? There are not very many. So we want to allow people with small sums of money, people on fixed incomes, people with savings, little savings, and so on, to get the maximum participation from these IPOs. It is all going to be out in the open. I am not hiding anything. It will all be transparent for everybody to see.

**Dr. Tewarie:** You are confirming there would be widespread participation?

**Hon. Imbert:** Total widespread participation by John Public, not ultra-elitists like the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, for the Tenders Board, page 88 to 89. Item 010, Valuation Division, page 89; Item 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, page 90; Item 014, Financial Intelligence Unit, page 90 to 91.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the Minister of Finance. Again, when we look at the Financial Intelligence Unit and the importance of this institution to the operations of our monetary systems in Trinidad and Tobago, the fact that the FIU can share information with fellow FIUs abroad and the importance of that in dealing with money laundering, I am seeing again a consistent decrease in the moneys allocated, \$186,000 with a total of \$2.4 million less and this seems to me to be inconsistent with the continuous talk we hear from that side about accountability, transparency and money abroad and we will deal with them.

**Hon. Imbert:** If you look at it very closely you would see the big area of reduction is in short-term employment.

**Mr. Charles:** Training in 17.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah, but look at short-term employment, \$1.9 million out of \$2.4 million. So, 75 per cent of the reduction is in short-term employment. Really, short-term employment has been abused in the past and it is really not suitable. So to hire somebody for three months and then at the end of the three months they have to go home and they have to reapply to be employed. This is something we need to eradicate from the system. So it is all part of our general drive to move away from short-term employment into long-term contracted employment and then eventually into permanent positions.

**3.15 p.m.**

**Mr. Charles:** If we look at Item 17, Madam Chair, Training, one would have thought that with the new thrust, we would be trying to get them First World best practices, et cetera.

**Hon. Imbert:** They are also accessing assistance from abroad in terms of training. I have done quite a few approvals recently, and a lot of the training, the travel, their hotel accommodation and whatever is paid for by overseas agencies. So, you know, it is not as straightforward as it appears.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 017: Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency, page 91.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, just out of pure curiosity, Sub-Item 23, Fees, is being introduced as a new Sub-Item. Could you shed some light seeing that it is a new Sub-Item, what these fees are?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, as I said the Supervisor of Insolvency is dealing now with an energy-sector company that either filed for bankruptcy or has gone for judicial management, and there are a lot of complex issues, legal issues with respect to bankruptcy, and the precedence given to creditors and so on. One of the jobs that the Supervisor of Insolvency has, one of the responsibilities is to make sure that the



winding-up of a company is done properly, and that illegitimate payments are not made, and that all the creditors are paid in the order of priority, and assets are not dissipated and stolen and sent overseas and so on. So that the Supervisor of Insolvency has asked for legal support, and that is what that is all about. That is to engage lawyers to assist.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration, page 92.

**Dr. Tewarie:** One question, on the issue of vehicle purchase, is the Government going to promote a policy of—what do you call it?—greener vehicles, CNG or hybrids. I mean, is this an active policy of the Government?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** 002, Budget Division, page 92; 003 Customs and Excise Division, page 92; 004, Inland Revenue Division, page 93.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The question I want to ask is not identified in any line Item here. I cannot do it.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. 005, Treasury Division, page 93; 008, Investments Division, page 93; 009 Central Tenders Board, page 94; 010, Valuation Division, page 94; 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, page 94; 014, Financial Intelligence Unit, page 95; 017, Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency, page 95; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman?

**Madam Chairman:** This is 001, Regional Bodies, page 95.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the hon. Minister indicate this Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility? Is that an annual payment?—and that is to cover insurance for which countries? How does Trinidad fit into that Item No. 12 of \$23 million for that area?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 95, Sub-Head 04: Item 001: Sub-Item 12.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, you have to forgive me. You would think these hon. gentlemen were never in Government. This is hurricane insurance for Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** You paid it for five years. How you could ask me if it is an annual payment?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, the question—

**Hon. Imbert:** You do not want us to insure for hurricane?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, I was not the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Come on, man.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That would be a repository of the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** So, you do not know that we are insured against hurricane, earthquake and—so you do not know that?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, I do not know. I am just asking. If I knew I would not ask you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member! Member for Caroni Central, has the answer been—have you gotten your answer?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, I have not.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is annual payment. It is only for Trinidad and Tobago, and it is for catastrophes such as earthquake and hurricane. It was paid for the five years of the PP Government. We are simply continuing to insure against catastrophes. We cannot insure against the UNC.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hold on. Hold on. Is that part of a group insurance—

**Hon. Imbert:** “If da’is wah yuh asking.”

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—with other Caribbean islands that we are part of? It is a

Caribbean, Caribbean signifies the Caribbean. So where are we positioned in Trinidad and Tobago in that? Come on.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I just am shocked. This would have come to Cabinet. It is a regional insurance facility that each island in the Caribbean avails itself of. It is a group policy and each country pays for the risk associated with its territory. So we are not insuring Dominica. We are not insuring Jamaica. We are insuring Trinidad and Tobago under the ambit of the Caribbean Group Policy.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you indicate how many countries are involved in that group? And what percentage we pay for that insurance, whether it is 23—

**Hon. Imbert:** We do not pay a percentage.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Listen nah man”—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—is this 23 million a percentage of the entire grouping? It appears to—

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not know how to get across to the hon. Member?

**Hon. Members:** Be humble first.

**Hon. Imbert:** How can I be, when you all paid this for five years? Come on. Madam Chairman—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I would not be here asking.

**Hon. Imbert:**—let me explain again for the third time.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** The Caribbean has a facility which provides insurance cover to countries in the Caribbean for catastrophes. It is called the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility. Each country pays a premium as part of that global arrangement, depending on their population, depending on their size, depending on whether they are in the hurricane belt or not, depending on whether they are prone

to earthquakes and other catastrophes. And, therefore, this payment is a payment that the actuaries have determined, based on the risk profile for Trinidad and Tobago, our geography, our propensity for earthquakes, for hurricanes, for tropical storms and all other catastrophes. Each country will have a different premium. It has nothing to do with a percentage. We are not paying for anybody else, if that is what you are trying to say.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you have given that answer before?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, no. I could not.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Instead of being so rude?

**Hon. Imbert:** I could not have given it before. He knows!

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, what is the maximum limit of the coverage that we get? You know if you buy insurance, you buy \$1 million or—

**Hon. Imbert:** I will get that information for you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right, thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Treasury Division: Contribution to the Caribbean Development Bank, could the Minister provide for us a profile of the loans that we have outstanding, at the CDB, because I see we have increased our capital contribution?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay, but I would have to seek that information from—

**Mr. Singh:** Yes, yes, subsequently. I do not expect you to have that.

**Hon. Imbert:** I know, but I just want to tell you something, that the CDB is under the purview of the Ministry of Planning and Development. So I will have to get that information from Ministry of Planning and Division. All we do is pay the contribution, but the question of loans and how many loans there are, that is a Ministry of Planning and Development matter.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I was going to ask something on the next, which is Inland Revenue.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, so we will get there. 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 96; 003, United Nations Organization, page 96; 004, International Bodies, page 96—97; 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 97; 007, Households, page 98.

**Mr. Lee:** Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Item 10, Support for the Acquisition of Housing. I noticed in 2016, \$6 million was expended and then another \$6 million is estimated. Could he add some clarity, what that Head is about?

**Hon. Imbert:** Just one second. Okay. My understanding is, but subject to clarification, you know that TTMF and so on offer preferential interest rates to persons who fall within a particular category, so that if your income is a certain amount, and the value of the property that you are purchasing is at a certain level, you qualify for a 2 per cent mortgage, and then you go up to 5 per cent mortgage and so on. These are subsidized rates. So that my understanding is, but subject to clarification, this is to provide the subsidy to the banking system, when they provide these subsidized interest rates, but I will get clarification on that for you.

**Mr. Lee:** And just add another question to it, when you get—

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure.

**Mr. Charles:**—the clarification is, who determines who qualifies and—I know there is criteria, but who makes that decision?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, no. Everybody qualifies. Once you meet the criteria and you can satisfy the lending institution in terms of your ability to pay, you have a steady job and all that sort of thing, everybody is eligible for the 2 per cent and the 5 per cent, once you fall within the criteria.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sub-Item 06, Food Price Support Programme. I suppose, Mr. Minister, this refers to the food card programme?

**Hon. Imbert:** Where is it? What page?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Page 98, sorry, 007:06.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And, Mr. Minister, through you, Madam Chair. We heard that 13,410 cards were pulled out of the system, if my figures are correct, but I still note that your revised estimate for 2016 did not change from the estimate and it remains the same in 2017. Are you predicting or looking forward and saying that more people are going to need food cards in the country, given that you have already taken out 13,000 food cards?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, these are just estimates. If you look at the numbers you will see they are identical. You would see that the 2016 original was 288 million; the 2016 revised is 288 million, and the 2017 is 288 million. So this—

**Dr. Rambachan:** So—

**Hon. Imbert:** Could I finish, please? This is obviously a line Item, where the necessary level of depth has not yet arrived because there are three different types of estimates. You have the initial estimates, revised estimates, which is a projection based on trends and then actual, when you are closing off the accounts for the year, which is at December 31st. You then would see what it would be.

So it is quite likely that the actual for 2016, may be less than 288, and it would mean we will have to make adjustments to the 2017 expenditure. Remember this is just an allocation, okay? They may not spend this amount of money, okay? So there is no plan as far as I know, unless, maybe the Minister, when we deal with that Ministry, could help in this matter to increase, you know, in any significant way, the number of persons on food cards. I do not think so. I do not know, but I do not think so.

**Madam Chairman:** 009, Other Transfers, page 99.

**Mr. Lee:** Under Item 15, Government's contribution to the Children's Life Fund,

\$30 million estimated in 2017. Am I safe to say, Minister of Finance, that \$30 million will be contributed to the Children's Life Fund this year?

**3.30 p.m.**

**Hon. Imbert:** That is simply the provision at this point in time. For example, in 2016 if you look at the original estimate it was \$30 million, and there was no expenditure, because there was no request from the Children's Life fund for additional funds, because they had enough money in the fund. So that we have a provisional allocation of \$30 million. They may use \$20 million. It is difficult to say at this point in time. It is based on requests coming out.

**Dr. Lee:** It is provisional.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, it is an allocation, but an allocation and an expenditure are not the same thing. Okay?

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just Item 32 for my edification or the edification for those of us on this side. The G. Pan Patent.

**Hon. Imbert:** Where is this?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 99.

**Mr. Charles:** Page 99. The revised estimate was \$500,000 and the estimate is \$5 million for 2017. Are we buying it out or—?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Are we finished with the other Items?

**Madam Chairman:** We are still under Inland Revenue.

**Mr. Charles:** All right.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, can you help me here? What I am supposed to answer?

**Madam Chairman:** We are answering the question of the Member for Naparima.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Charles:** Just clarification.

**Hon. Imbert:** I would deal with it. I was hearing stereo, you know, from so and from so.

**Madam Chairman:** The stereos are directed to me. Sub-Item 32.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I do not know what is that, is it a quadrophonic? [*Laughter*] Yes, the person who holds the patent, this will be Prof. Copeland, or jointly holds the patent with Trinidad and Tobago, has told me that we are spending a lot of money. The country has been spending a lot of money on patents for the G Pan in a number of jurisdictions which, in his opinion, are not entirely necessary. So, you will observe that only \$500,000 was spent in 2016 out of an original allocation of \$5 million. Now, that is a revised estimate. The actual may be a million or something. It is an Item that we are looking at.

No, we are not going to be buying out anything. In fact, we may be reducing the number of jurisdictions in which we are paying for patents for the G Pan, because what he has told me is it is not necessary. A lot of these areas, they do not have any interest in this Item, so we are just wasting money. Okay? So this is where we may achieve some savings in 2017.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Now, Minister, under Inland Revenue Division, Item 15, now that you have that allocation of \$30 million, but you indicated that you had no request for expenditure, could you tell us what might be—if you do not have it now—can you tell us what might be the current balance, assuming you have this additional allocation of \$30 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** You have lost me, you know.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. I just want to know what the current balance is, when you add the \$30 million to what you have.

**Hon. Imbert:** I understood the first part, what the current balance is, but you cannot have a current balance if you have not put the \$30 million in yet. What you



are asking me is, what will the balance be?

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, when you add the allocation.

**Hon. Imbert:** That would not be the current balance.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, I mean, to date “nah”, if you want to say so. Based on this allocation, Minister, all I am asking you is what you met and when you add what you are allocating, what is the figure?

**Hon. Imbert:** You would like to know, if we take the current balance and add to that current balance the proposed allocation of \$30 million, what the future balance would be. That is what you want to know. I will find out for you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have three short questions, so maybe I would just ask them. The first one, the Caricom Development Fund—

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute please, Member for Tabaquite. One Minute. Member for Caroni Central, is your question under Inland Revenue?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, Member for Tabaquite, we will come to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay, sorry, sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** I just want to finish page 98.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The question under Inland Revenue is really, has the Minister allocated adequate funding for Inland Revenue? As I look through, I get worried, because if we are to take the Minister at his word that Inland Revenue will be the chief agency under the FATCA legislation, now that he has agreed to make certain changes, then it seems to me that the demand on this institution will be quite significant. I am just asking the Minister, if he is satisfied that the allocation for Inland Revenue is adequate?

**Madam Chairman:** That is under 007 Households.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, you know, if we continue like this, we are

dealing with page 98, 007 Inland Revenue. 09 and 15—09 is Daily-Rated Workers and 15 is the Children's Life Fund. That question comes out of space. It is not related to these line items at all. We cannot continue so.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, what the Minister is saying is true. I can see that.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well then, do not do that.

**Dr. Tewarie:** As you realize, I missed my cue on this issue, and I tried to get what I think is a reasonable answer for a reasonable question.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I will answer it if you will allow me to answer it.

**Madam Chairman:** Please.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you very much. Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you Madam Chairman. You have moved on page 99?

**Madam Chairman:** We are now at 009 Other Transfers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, on the same Children's Life Fund—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chairman, with respect to the Caricom Development Fund, the estimates for 2016 was \$65 million, and it moved to \$135 million under the revised estimates. Could we get some kind of explanation why this quantum leap? It is further moving to a projection of \$140 million for 2017.

**Hon. Imbert:** Just one second. Okay, I would have to get back to you on that. I, myself, am a bit concerned about the level to which Trinidad and Tobago is called upon to contribute to these regional funds. This is not like the catastrophe fund, by the way. This is something that is designed to assist the other territories and I am concerned about it, but this would have been agreed at Heads of Government over the last several years. So there would have been a series of contributions that would have been agreed to the Caricom Development Fund in tranches, you know:

2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and so on. It is difficult to get out of these things once they are agreed to, but I am very concerned about the amount of money that Trinidad and Tobago is called upon to contribute to these Caricom entities and funds. **Dr. Gopeesingh:** I just had one question, additional question under the Children's Life Fund issue which is—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, we are at 009, page 99.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, I had my hand up.

**Madam Chairman:** I am so sorry. Member for Caroni East, we are at 0—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was begging to ask the question all the time.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, we are at 009, Other Transfers. I am really sorry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, I have a question then. What is the First Citizens...Indemnity Calls—that \$60 million was allocated in 2016 and under revised estimates there was no expenditure on it, and it is being brought back in the 2017 estimates?

**Madam Chairman:** Could you just—this is 28, Sub-Head Item 28?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, that is part of the arrangements that would have been done throughout your five-year administration. That is part of the CL Financial bailout. Remember, FCB took over CMMB and a lot of the liabilities. So this is just a fund that is there or a responsibility that exists if FCB makes the call on the Government to deal with any losses that they may incur out of taking over that portfolio.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I saw in 2016, you had an allocation of \$20 million under Clico and it was not used. Is there a reason?

**Hon. Imbert:** Which line Item is this?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry, 26, 009, 26.

**Madam Chairman:** Colonial Life Insurance Company.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, obviously. Obviously, we did not use it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So there is no need to use it.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, obviously.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 11 Infrastructure Development Fund. I see an increase by a little more than \$1 billion. Can the Minister give some clarification as to the reason for the increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** Which Item is this?

**Miss Ramdial:** Item 11.

**Madam Chairman:** Under Sub-Head Treasury Division.

**Hon. Imbert:** Why we increase that?

**Miss Ramdial:** No, not why.

**Hon. Imbert:** So, what is the question?

**Miss Ramdial:** Can you at this time identify the projects that would account for the increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** They are all in here. [*Book in hand*] That is one of the things your leader double-counted. This 2.6 million—

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay, thanks for the answer.

**Hon. Imbert:** Everything is in here.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thanks for the answer.

**Madam Chairman:** So we will deal with that under IDF.

**Hon. Imbert:** They should not have made her write that speech, you know.

**Dr. Lee:** Thank you Madam Chair, I guess I will open up Item 17, GATE. In 2015, the actual was \$650 million. They did not have any means test, any age group discrimination.

**Hon. Imbert:** Correct is right.

**Dr. Lee:** And in 2017, you estimate \$600 million, a \$50 million decrease.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Lee:** But you have now included a means testing, and you have now included “no one over the age of 50 would be allowed to get GATE.” The question is, based on the figure of \$600 million, could that allocation not meet the demands of what is required for the year 2017?

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not understand.

**Dr. Lee:** You do not understand the question. Let me put it this way. In 2015, \$650 million met the entire nation’s need for GATE.

**Hon. Imbert:** In 2015.

**Dr. Lee:** In 2015, \$650 million. In 2017, your allocation is \$600 million, a drop of \$50 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** Correct.

**Dr. Lee:** And then you have included, within your budget for 2016/2017, a means testing, one, and anyone over the age of 50 would not be allowed GATE.

**Hon. Imbert:** Correct.

**Dr. Lee:** I am asking a question, based on the \$600 million, could you not have better policing or quality control and not have the means testing and the discrimination of the age over 50, because a \$50 million drop is not significant in the scheme of things of \$650 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** Firstly, your question is based on a false proposition. There is no age discrimination. For example, when I go to get a driver’s permit, I have to be 17 years old, and to get a Senior Citizen’s Grant, I have to be 65 years old and to be a member of the Senate I have to be 25 years old. So the proposition that it is discrimination is a false proposition. It is merely a policy. However, I am very hopeful that we can actually spend less than \$600 million in 2017.

And with respect to your question as to whether we should not have a means test and better policing, the answer is no. Why should somebody who is earning \$200,000 a month be entitled to free tertiary education? The time for that kind of freeness has got to come to an end. So, we are putting in a means test so that only those who cannot pay for it would get it. But the rich people can no longer access tertiary education. That is what you want? Do you want somebody earning a million dollars to be able to get free GATE? That is what you want? That is not happening.

**3.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I am happy that the Minister has taken that position.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, I know you would agree with that.

**Mr. Singh:** I did not agree with it, but I am happy you took that position. The Betting Levy Board, I see you have transferred it, an allocation of \$68.22 million in 2016, and it has gone to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, but it has an allocation now of \$82 million. This is the sport of kings. Why are we supporting that with an increase of \$14 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** But why are you asking me that? There is no increase here. There is no increase on this line item.

**Mr. Singh:** There is no increase, but you say this is transferred.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, then why are you asking me? Why are you asking me about something that does not exist on this page?

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute, please, Minister of Finance. Member for Chaguanas West, I think your question will come under the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

**Mr. Singh:** We will come back to it. I will not forget it, because there is a \$14 million increase.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Caricom Petroleum Fund, there was an allocation estimate of \$100 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** Which line Item is that, please?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 19; and as we are on that, I will ask you about 27 as well. There was an allocation of \$6 million for the Hindu Credit Union. Both have not materialized under your revised estimates; in other words they are telling us from the revision nothing has been spent. Could you give us an explanation? Are we contributing to the Caricom Petroleum Fund still or not, and are we going to settle the issues for the Hindu Credit Union in 2017, because only \$575,000 has been allocated?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, you will have to excuse me. That gentleman has been a Minister for five years, and he knows that we do not contribute to the Caricom Petroleum Fund if the price of oil is less than \$50. He knows that. Why is he asking me these questions? So the answer is, because you know that we do not contribute to the Caricom Petroleum Fund when the price of oil is below \$50, and you know that the price of oil has been lower than \$50 for the last year, and you know that the budget is based on an oil price of \$48, you know why we are not contributing to the Petroleum Fund.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You said \$48 for under the budget. Is it \$48 or \$50?

**Hon. Imbert:** You do not know that it is \$48? “But yuh get up and tell meh it too high.”

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** \$50 under the budget.

**Hon. Imbert:** But even if it was \$50, it is still below.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So what is it? Is it \$48 or is it \$50?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, there is a question with respect to Sub-Item 27, the Hindu Credit Union.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, this provision is actually an increase of \$575,000. Are you

complaining about the increase? The 2017 allocation, are you complaining?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, no.

**Hon. Imbert:** You are good with that?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** There was allocated \$6 million in 2016 and nothing was paid.

**Hon. Imbert:** Because there was no requirement to pay anything. This is based on people who make applications, who qualify under the \$75,000 limit or over the \$75,000. There was nothing to pay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, you have answered it. One more question on the same page 99, under 50. The East Port of Spain Development Company Limited, you had allocated \$12.245 billion and nothing was spent, it would seem, on it. Could you give an understanding of why, what happened?

**Hon. Imbert:** Nothing was spent because nothing happened.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So your Government did nothing for the East Port of Spain Development Company Limited?

**Hon. Imbert:** Not in 2016, and in 2017 this will come under another portfolio, and you will see a lot of action in East Port of Spain in 2017, I can assure you—plenty.

**Mr. Charles:** On the Item 23, the Caricom Development Fund, I will be grateful if the Minister could itemize the areas of support that we give in this Fund and in other Caricom institutions like the Caribbean Development Bank, UWI, et cetera.

**Hon. Imbert:** I could only deal with one Item.

**Mr. Charles:** Could you itemize for the Caricom Development Fund? The reason is that often when we talk to our Caricom colleagues, the question is always we benefit, and we are not in a position to talk about all the areas in which we support Caricom that are not tied in to the balance of trade and those kinds of issues.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will most gladly provide the information. Thank you very much



for that question.

**Mr. Karim:** Could the hon. Minister just remind us, Items 40 and 42, transfers to state enterprises, Sugar Manufacturing Company and Caroni (1975) Limited.

**Madam Chairman:** We are still on Sub-Item 009. [*Crosstalk*] One minute, please. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre; Member for Tabaquite we are on 009.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, Item 011.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, 009.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Member for Princes Town, 009. Therefore I expect all those questions are exhausted; 011 Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, I just want to repeat the question for the hon. Minister. Items No. 40 and 42, if you could remind us what the allocations are for, Caroni (1975) Limited and the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited.

**Hon. Imbert:** Certainly. Cabinet by Minute 409 of February 25, 2010, agreed to the closure of the Sugar Manufacturing Company, and agreed that the Divestment Secretariat of the Ministry of Finance take the necessary action and divest the assets of the Sugar Manufacturing Company. The Ministry of Finance is required to provide funding to meet the cost of closure. The company ceased operations on April 30, 2010, and funding was provided to meet the cost of closure. However, the winding-up is still in progress because it is a very complicated matter. A lot of legal issues have to be dealt with, so that the Sugar Manufacture Company has requested the sum of \$4 million to meet its recurrent expenditure for fiscal year 2016/2017. Do you want the breakdown? You want to know how much for salaries, how much for security?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, you can tell us and how many persons in that.

**Hon. Imbert:** I cannot tell you how many people, but the allocation for salaries is \$420,000; security \$1.5 million; ground maintenance, \$900,000; audit fees, \$115,000 and so on, a total of \$4 million. They are still winding up the company.

Similarly in 2003, Cabinet agreed that Caroni should remain as a non-trading company to manage all current and long-term debts of the company, and Caroni (1975) Limited has requested the sum of \$16,198,000 to meet its obligations for the next fiscal year. It will include \$5 million for salaries, \$2 million for utilities, \$2 million for legal fees, \$1 million for maintenance and so on, and so on, adding up to \$16 million.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, if he cannot give it to us now, I will certainly like to know how many people are employed in the Sugar Manufacturing Company and Caroni (1975) Limited, that equals to that wage bill.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, you will get it.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, Item 26, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited. In 2015, the actual expenditure was \$1.2 million with the transfer; 2017, an estimated \$46.8, a \$42 million increase. Could the Minister clarify what is the reason for this increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is a subsidy to TTMF on bonds and their IDB service fee. In 1998, Government agreed that TTMF would source the sum of \$100 million tax-free bonds, backed by a government guarantee. The Government agreed to subsidize the cost of borrowing of the \$100 million, to a maximum of 2.45 per cent. The bond was paid off in 2015. In 2000, the Government agreed to another \$200 million credit facility from the National Insurance Board on behalf of TTMF, to support long-term financing of various government programmes, in particular squatter regularization and housing development.

TTMF is also facilitating current housing policy, which includes the subsidized interest rates I spoke about previously, the 2 per cent and also the 5 per cent. So that the subsidy payable to TTMF is determined as follows: the cost of borrowing plus 2 per cent minus the weighted average rate of return on the mortgages and the cost of \$200 million tax-free housing bonds.

The reason why there is an increase is because we have agreed to change the property values and the income qualification ceiling, so we anticipate an increase in 2017.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister, with respect to Item 79, Caroni (1975) Limited Settlement of Claims, I have the most amount of cane farmers in my constituency, and I know that there have been a lot of claims coming from both the cane farmers and former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. I see a figure of 2.5 being listed under a new Sub-Item 79. Hon. Minister, do you not think that is a low figure considering the amount of settlements and claims, and whether or not the Ministry has been in touch with Caroni (1975) Limited to have done an assessment of the number of claims that are currently outstanding, separate and apart from the pension plan?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is only dealing with the pension plan, nothing else but that. This line Item only deals with the pension plan. It does not deal with anything else.

**Mr. Padarath:** I understand that, Minister, that this has to do with the pension plan. What I am asking is that there are other claims before Caroni (1975) Limited.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, but that would not come under this line Item. I understand your question, but it is not covered under this line Item.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item No. 23, Agricultural Development Bank. I notice that in

2015 the actual amount allocated was \$75 million, but in the 2016 estimate it went down to \$25 million, and the revised is \$25 million, and now you are going up to \$95 million, an increase of \$70 million in 2017, page 99. What is this \$95 million going to be used for that you have allocated here for the Agricultural Development Bank?

**Hon. Imbert:** Agriculture is a major area of diversification. The increase in allocation to the ADB to allow them to lend to farmers to improve production is evidence of the Government's commitment to farmers. What more you want me to tell you? We are giving farmers more money.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** This is going to be loans to farmers?

**Hon. Imbert:** What else would it be? It is the Agricultural Development Bank which lends money to farmers, so it is for farmers. What else could it be?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No disrespect, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** No disrespect either.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But a lot of farmers go to the banks and they complain about the difficulty in getting loans, and the bank told them that they did not have money. So I am making it clear in my mind and the public's mind that this money is for loans. That is all I am asking. I am in a farming constituency, by the way.

**Hon. Imbert:** So now if a farmer approaches you, you can tell them that within the budgetary allocation \$95 million for the ADB for farmers.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair, line Item 68, page 100. I see an increase of \$9.1 million to the International Financial Centre. Can the Minister explain the reason for that increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** What is the problem?

**Miss Ramdial:** Can you explain the reason for the increase of \$9.1 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** We are hoping in this year—the TTIFC was created, if my memory

serves me right, around 2009; it really has not fulfilled its mandate as an international financial centre. It was supposed to attract foreign banks and foreign institutions to Trinidad and Tobago to set up branches or back offices here in Trinidad to service Latin America and other parts of the western hemisphere. It really was not very successful. We have changed the board and I am hopeful that in 2017, we will start to see some results from the TTIFC in terms of achieving its mandate. So that is why we have the additional allocation there.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, my colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East, would have dealt with the issues that I wanted to raise.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Item 50, East Port of Spain Development Company. There is no allocation for it, and I heard you say that there would be a lot in East Port of Spain under a different Item. Could you indicate what that Item would be if it is a new Item, a new heading for East Port of Spain?

**4.00 p.m.**

**Hon. Imbert:** Sorry. I was asking my PS a question.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Sorry. Item 50, East Port of Spain, there is no allocation there.

**Hon. Imbert:** Correct.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And you indicated in a response to the Member for Caroni East that there will be a lot happening in East Port of Spain, but under a different Item.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I was just asking the question, which Item that would be and is there a role for the East Port of Spain Development Company?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well this activity will now be dealt with by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and it will be up to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make recommendations as to how we go forward with the development of East Port of Spain. Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. Okay. So Item 014 Loans to Other Governments, page 100. [*Crosstalk*] And there is nothing there. So Members, can we now go to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies? Page 100, 004 Statutory Boards.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Current Transfers?

**Madam Chairman:** Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, I just wanted to ask a question about EximBank equity injection. I wanted to find out—

**Madam Chairman:** We are—Member, sorry. We are at Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies 004 which starts at the bottom of page 100.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, Chair, you are just too fast for me.

**Madam Chairman:** No. I have waited. I think I have really waited, you know, and I am so sorry. Okay? Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the Minister just give us an explanation—

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister give us an explanation of the reason for the decrease in Taurus Services?

**Hon. Imbert:** What?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Taurus Services.

**Hon. Imbert:** Where is that? Where are you?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 101.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am on page 100 together with the Chairman, I am on page 100.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Next page then.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates*

*of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies* and of the *Tobago House of Assembly*. 07, the National Lotteries Control Board, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration. And just so that everybody could catch up page 127. Page 127 and we are on the book *Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies*. [Crosstalk]

**Hon. Imbert:** He on a different book, you know. [Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, we are under Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the details go on to—and if you go to the other book, right?—page 127, 07, National Lotteries Control Board, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services page 127, 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item No. 62? They are asking a lot of—

**Madam Chairman:** Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

**Dr. Rambachan:** There has been a lot of commotion in the public space about the use of money by the National Lotteries Control Board and the way money was used helter-skelter. Has a policy been put in place in order to regulate that, to curb that kind of spending? Because some people, I understand, have been relieved of their jobs as a result. What has the Government done to ensure that we do not have a repeat of that kind of thing?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am tempted to tell the Member to ask himself. However, having not succumbed to that temptation, we have put in place a policy to prevent the type of reckless squandermania and abuse that took place in the National Lotteries Control Board under the previous Government. And I am hopeful with this new policy where donations will go to those who need it rather than being given to everybody and friends and family and whoever, people who work there and so on,

I am very hopeful that the new policy going forward will be a model of probity, integrity, transparency and overall goodness.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, through the Chair, money from this NLCB goes into the sport and culture fund. Am I right?

**Hon. Imbert:** Which line Item are you on?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sixty-two, again.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah. “But what that have to do with that”?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well I want to know whether money continued to be contributed to the sport and culture fund.

**Hon. Imbert:** Could you, please, tell me about Item 62? What that question has to do with that?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The question has to do, I want to know whether moneys—

**Hon. Imbert:** Which line Item?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sixty-two.

**Hon. Imbert:** That has nothing to do with that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. Can you advise me where I might find that?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. We cannot. Go and look for it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I see nothing is being contributed from NLCB [*Crosstalk*] sport and culture fund.

**Hon. Imbert:** I can speak to you about Item 62. You want to ask a question on 62? I will answer that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** You are welcome.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and through you to the Minister. In the context of our current financial circumstances, could the Minister justify, under



Item 27 Official Overseas Travel being increased by nearly a million dollars?

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you very much for pointing that out. I will take a look at that. That has to be an error.

**Mr. Charles:** It has to be an error.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah. I “cyar” support that.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Charles:** Will the Minister then come back or provide information and give us the undertaking that—

**Hon. Imbert:** I am giving you an undertaking that under this Minister there will be no frivolous overseas travel by the National Lotteries Control Board. And if in fact the provision has been increased, that is an error which would be corrected by this Minister. Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, through to the hon. Minister. Minister, line 43 Security Services. Could you give us an idea of what would account for an increase of \$539,000?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. Now, you have to understand something, we do not allocate expenditure to the National Lotteries Control Board. They give us money. So that—but this is part of the exercise allowing the Parliament to scrutinize what is going on. I cannot at this point in time, but I am seeing what you are picking up, that there is an increase for Security Services. Now, if you look at the 2016 estimate, the original, it was \$1,993,000. So that the 2017 has been put back to where the original was, the actual or the revised for 2016 was 1.4. So I will get clarity on this. They probably do not need more than 1.4. So I will look into that. Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, just for some clarification with respect to something the hon. Minister just said. He had indicated that these figures would have been provided from the relevant agency and so on. Hon. Minister, just for my clarification being new, is it that these figures when provided to the Ministry of Finance are taken wholesale and provided to us in this package?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well if you look at the bottom line, okay, on page 127 you would see that the 2015 actual expenditure was \$67 million, then 2016 estimate was \$62 million, then the 2016 revised was \$56 million and the 2017 estimate is \$60 million, so there has been an overall reduction. We do not query every single line item, but one of the purposes of this exercise is to pick up things like this. And now that you have highlighted those particular items, I will query that. But we do not interrogate the figures in that manner.

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

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Chair. I am looking at line 66, hon. Minister, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions and I am seeing there is an increase in excess of \$1 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** Where is this? What page?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Line—[*Crosstalk*] And again, in light of the economic circumstances I am just looking at that, such a large increase.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. I am very grateful to hon. Members. Thank you. I will certainly be speaking to the National Lotteries Control Board to see that we do not waste any money there in 2017. [*Crosstalk*] Pardon.

**Mr. Padarath:** All statutory bodies and Ministries, it totals to about \$216 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will certainly be taking a much closer look at the National Lotteries Control Board now that you have brought up all of this.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Minister, you might also want to look at line Item 28, Other Contracted Services which approximates an increase of about three-quarter million.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure. I will just give a general undertaking that I will look at every single increase. Okay? Every single increase. Now the fact of the matter is that the overall increase, if you turn the page, the 2016 estimates—well, look at the 2016 estimate was \$2,239,000 and the 2017 estimate is \$2,284,000. So the difference is small, but I will go and drill down every single Item to see where savings could be achieved. Because we cannot ask Ministries to cut expenditure and let an agency like this get away. Okay?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You may need to look at Item number 86 in terms of Administrative Fees—

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure:

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—a value of \$32 million—

**Hon. Imbert:** I see it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—in addition.

**Madam Chairman:** But I take you, Minister, to have said that you will look at all.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. I am going to look at all. I am very, very grateful—including grateful to the Member for Caroni East— for their interventions on this line Item. Thank you very much.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 128, 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 128, 007, Households, 009, Other Transfers page 128.

Hon. Members, we will now return to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Sub-Head 07, Debt Servicing page 101. So we are going

back to the other book. 001, Interests Local Loans, page 101. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister of Finance, line Item 23, Caribbean Airlines Limited. Is this a new debt that will be incurring in 2017 of \$23.5 million? It is an interest?

**Hon. Imbert:** Do you really want me to answer that?

**Madam Chairman:** It is interest on loans.

**Hon. Imbert:** You really want me to answer that?

**Mr. Lee:** Yeah. Why not?

**Hon. Imbert:** You sure.

**Mr. Lee:** Umm hmm. I was not there.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. When the PNM Government demitted office, Caribbean Airlines had a billion dollars in the bank. Your Government spent that entire billion and then mortgaged the planes belonging to Caribbean Airlines thereby sending the airline into penury and virtual insolvency. And now it is incumbent upon the Government to rescue Caribbean Airlines from the catastrophe that you all created in that entity with your reckless spending. So we are taking over the loan because they had to mortgage the ATRs that they “buy the planes with cash that the PNM leave” and then mortgaged the planes to pay for the operating expenses, and they cannot survive. So we now have to take over this loan. You sure you wanted me to answer that?

**Mr. Lee:** Yeah. Why not?

**Hon. Imbert:** They bankrupt the company.

**Mr. Lee:** “Nah man”.

**Hon. Imbert:** A billion dollars in cash. “Yuh” squander it.

**4.15 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** 009: Interest on Overdraft.

**Hon. Imbert:** You put a CEPEP to run Caribbean Airlines, what you expect?

**Madam Chairman:** 011: Principal Repayment, Local Loans, page 102. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I have an answer to one of the questions asked of me earlier, can I put it into the record?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please.

**Hon. Imbert:** This is with respect to the number of persons employed in the Ministry of Finance. The total is 2,833 persons, comprising 1,488 officers, and 205 contract persons, 161 short-term employment. Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so we are now at, hon. Members, the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 53; 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 53 to 55. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Item 045, could the Minister just briefly describe what is meant by Whistleblowing Technologies?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 53, 045, Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** You see the reason why I am hesitating, this is a very sensitive matter, you know. [*Laughter*] I want to protect whistleblowers. This might be a national security matter. So, Madam Chairman, since we want to protect whistleblowers—

**Hon. Member:** Say you do not know.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, you know I very well know. Since we want to protect whistleblowers, I think I would defer this answer until later on in this finance committee where I would seek advice from the Attorney General as to whether I

can disclose the technology we will be using to help whistleblowers.

**Mr. Al Rawi:** No.

**Hon. Imbert:** Do not disclose?

**Mr. Al Rawi:** Do not.

**Hon. Imbert:** So, I am told not to disclose. So, I am afraid for national security reasons I cannot disclose this.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I will accept that answer. Item 059, Implementation of the Property Tax Regime. Question to the hon. Minister, since it is such a large allocation of \$25 million, is this implementation a technology implementation, or is it a combination of both human and technology at that cost? Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** Both. You see, you have to populate the valuation rolls. I am told only about 40 per cent or 45 per cent of all the properties in Trinidad and Tobago are on the register. So there are about half the properties that are not listed and they do not pay any tax at all. This is one of the problems with this whole thing. So, this is to populate it, so to send field agents out to go and inspect properties, to do valuations and so on, and then to create the database or to improve the database of properties in terms of their physical description. I do not know if you have seen the Property Tax Act?

**Mr. Paray:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** You have to look at the number of rooms and the type of properties. So, this is to create and improve the databases, and also to do field inspections of properties and valuations. That is what that money is for. You cannot do it any other way.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Minister. Just a final question on that, and this is a general observation in terms of administrative services. There are a lot of IT-type

projects that are listed, and the question I want to ask is, are these projects going to be done in-house through the Ministry's IT unit or do they plan to go to like one of our units like iGovTT or external, to move these projects along?

**Hon. Imbert:** A lot of it would be external. For example the upgrade of the integrated global payroll system and the integrated human resource information system. This would be external, but these things are so desperately needed it is not funny. In terms of processing payroll, for example, when we were doing the arrears, the back pay, we could only do it once a month. Our current system is so antiquated we could only process salary payments once per month. I wanted to do it in mid-month and I could not, because the technology is so antiquated. So, this is something the country desperately needs and it will be outsourced, yes, to expert consultants and contractors.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, the development programme here is—we see a significant increase from the revised estimate of \$33 million to \$115 million, \$116 million almost.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Most of it is going into upgrading of information technology in Inland Revenue.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, \$54 million in the payroll system in the human resource information system, and \$25 million in property tax. About \$80 million of it is going into those two items.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. All right. So, a lot of it then is upgrade of systems, right?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Now, the development of the integrated financial management information system, will that integrate the financial systems across the Ministries?

Is that what it will finally do?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is two things: payroll and HR.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is all?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. All right. Well, I do not suppose I could ask you under this Item.

**Hon. Imbert:** You would be surprised, I might answer.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The issue that you have here, Sub-Item 043, Development of State Agencies Performance Monitory Information System, I guess it is a monitoring system. I just wanted to understand what it was, I have a line—"explain"—next to it.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is the monitoring information system, and that is really to improve the capacity of the Ministry. We have to monitor 53 state enterprises and an equal number of subsidiaries. For example, just a simple little thing like going through the Minutes of meetings is quite tedious, so this is to improve the capacity of the Ministry to monitor procurement, to monitor industrial relations, human resources, everything in the state enterprise, that is what that is for.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam. Through you to the most humble "Lord of the Treasury". Mr. Minister of Finance, are you aware that last year questions were asked and you did in fact answer about the Whistleblowing Technologies, and on that occasion it was said that it was to purchase IT applications and so on. The question we are asking now is that, did you spend the \$2 million? Was it spent on IT applications, or books, or papers? We do not want to know the inscription code or the password, we want to know: did you spend it? What did you spend it on? You did not revise the estimate, and you have asked



now for a further \$1 million to expend. That is the issue. It is not a national security issue with great respect.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I do not know what document the Member is looking at. We did not spend any money.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The draft estimate.

**Hon. Imbert:** We did not spend any money in 2016.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So you did nothing with the technologies for worker—for what?—Whistleblowing Technologies. You spend nothing and you did nothing. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Member:** We want to know.

**Hon. Imbert:** Because I still will not tell you what the technology is.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But, you do not know because you did nothing.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am not going to tell you. [*Laughter*]

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members—

**Hon. Imbert:** You must be careful, somebody might borrow some money—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members. Minister of Finance! Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of—

**Hon. Imbert:** The whistles will blow—

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance!

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 18 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Members, may I suggest that we take the break now. When we resume, we resume with Head 40. And remember that we do not leave until we finish a minimum of eight. Thank you very much. Excuse me Members, we will return at 5.00 p.m.

**4.24 p.m.:** *Committee suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Committee resumed*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you everyone, kindly have a seat. The Standing Finance Committee meeting is now resumed and we move on to Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$939,826,500. I shall now invite the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Hon. Members, I now invite the Minister.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Madam Chairman, thank you for affording me this opportunity to afford this honourable House the information of the plans of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for fiscal year 2017.

We are all aware that the energy sector of Trinidad and Tobago is experiencing one of its most challenging times as a result of falling oil and gas prices, declining production levels and the resultant impacts of shale oil and gas production on this country's access to the USA markets for LNG, ammonia and methanol. This is clearly not a time to bury our heads in the sand. The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is actively seeking to boost exploration and development activities by reviewing proposals of existing operators and evaluating data with the objective of issuing a competitive bid round. Priority will also be given to concluding discussions with Venezuela on the supply of natural gas from cross border and/or across the border reserves.

In Fiscal 2017, the Ministry will continue to focus on institutional strengthening within the local energy sector. This will include the strengthening of the Ministry's regulatory and monitoring functions with regard to the licensing regimes for retail marketing stations, petrochemical plants, pipeline operations and LPG storage and handling, plus monitoring of the quarrying industry. We

maintain our commitment to transparency and governance of the extractive sectors, through the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and we propose to include the mineral sector in future reports. We will pursue capacity building in the local energy sector through strengthening our local content policies, as we move towards the drafting of local content legislation. Another key focus area for the Ministry is the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

To this end, the Ministry intends to expand its outreach programme to schools and communities, with particular attention to rural areas. Additionally, as the first step in our effort to attain our stated target of 10 per cent electricity generation from renewable sources, the Ministry will be working towards the establishment of a waste-to-energy facility at the Beetham Landfill. It should be noted that the greatest asset available to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is its human resource. We cannot successfully navigate these turbulent times without strengthening the skills base within the Ministry. Currently, 308 persons are employed at the Ministry. Of this total only 137 are public officers, while the remaining 171 positions comprise contract and other short-term service providers. The Ministry has engaged the Personal Management Consulting Division, PMCD, in several discussions, and a proposal on the restructuring of the Ministry will be submitted before the end of this year.

Madam Chairman, in closing I would like to indicate that of the \$917.88 million allocated for recurrent expenditure, some 88 per cent or \$801.72 million is earmarked for the payment of the government share of the fuel subsidy. The remaining 12 per cent or \$116 million is allocated for the Ministry's operations. With respect to the development programme, \$23.5 million was allocated under Part A, and \$70 million under Part B, the IDF.

Madam Chairman, I thank you.

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

*Head 40.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 40 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$939,826,500 for Head 40: Energy and Energy Industries is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, and we are at page 295, Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001: General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**5.05 p.m.**

**Dr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I listened to the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in her opening statement, she talked about human resource being their greatest asset. In Sub-Head 001, General Administration; Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, the actual expenditure for 2015 in that Head was \$37,011,693; 2017 estimate is \$24,100,000. That is about approximately \$13 million decrease. Could the Minister explain or could she tell us what was the number of employees employed as at September 30, 2015 as compared to September 30, 2016?

**Hon. Olivierre:** I do not have that exact number but I can provide that in writing. However, I can tell you that the total number of persons currently employed, as I just indicated in my opening statement, is 309. However, the bulk of these are not persons in the established positions. Although the numbers have reduced, we do have bodies and most of them are really engaged as short-term service providers and contract employees.

We have 137 filled establishment positions, with 131 vacant positions with

67 of them with bodies inside. So all of the salaries would not be reflected in this line because the number of persons are contract employees.

**Dr. Lee:** All right, let me ask another question in that respect, Madam Chair, through you. Is a \$13 million decline from 2015 to the estimate for 2017, what would have been the cause for that decrease? Were people sent home? Were they attrition? Could you explain what would have caused that decline in the salaries and wages?

**Hon. Olivierre:** You are comparing the 2015 actual with the 2017 estimate, but if you look at the comparison with the 2016 revised estimate, there is actually an increase projected for 2017 as opposed to the 2016 revised. However, that significant increase—the quantum in 2015, that would have been accounted for, that would have been the payment of salary arrears due to the finalization of the collective bargaining agreement.

Unlike most of the other Ministries where arrears were paid in fiscal 2016, arrears for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industry were paid in fiscal 2015. So that is why you would have seen that drop between 2015 and 2016.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; pages 296 and 297.

**Dr. Lee:** Madam Chair, through you, Sub-Head 02; Item 01, Travelling and Subsistence. Could the Minister give a reason why there was a \$1.5 million increase in that Sub-Head, in Travelling and Subsistence?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Because it is our intention in this fiscal year to fill a lot of the vacancies that are not currently filled by the permanent public officers; once we fill those vacancies you will see an increase in this particular line Item. And that actual applies to the number of increases in the previous Sub-Head, where you would have seen increases in cost of living and the allowances to monthly officers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Item 28, Other Contracted Services. There is an increase of about \$13 million from \$17 million to \$30 million. Could you give us a little elucidation on that?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes. Now, a number of Items are actually projected for this particular line Item and the truth be told, the Ministry had actually requested \$79 million but we only got \$30 million.

Some of the Items that fall under this Sub-Head would include things like the Ryder Scott Audit that we do annually, work on the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan and the Bilateral Oil Spill Contingency Plan which we worked jointly with Venezuela. There are regular contracts that we would have instituted, a marine affairs for the finger printing of oil samples in the event of oil spills which seemed to be occurring more frequently than we would like; there are contracts with CARIRI.

So there are a number of contracted Items in here and we do not expect that this allocation is, in fact, adequate to meet—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Enough. Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, I want to ask a question in relation to the contracted services and in connection with the suppression of expenditure for the vacant positions. Is that something that is also being pursued in your Ministry, which is to say, I saw no allocation here for the vacant positions, but you have contracted services?

**Madam Chairman:** Member we are under Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 296 and 297.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Well, the Minister of Finance would have addressed the issues of vacancies, but I can tell you that we are actively in the process of trying to fill all the vacant positions that we have.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, so your strategy is to fill your vacant positions.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes, and we currently—well, as I said in my opening remarks and we do intend to bring a Note, we are in discussion with PMCD and we are seeking to get approval for us to fill all our vacant positions. I indicated that 55 per cent of our staff—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Is contact.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes, is contract.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes. Right. And you are proceeding also on that track to contract more workers?

**Hon. Olivierre:** We want to fill vacant positions with public officers as fast as possible.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My question was on the Item 28, Other Contracted Services, so I will—

**Madam Chairman:** You, okay.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Will the hon. Minister kindly give us some additional information or explanation in terms of the increase, Item 08, Rent/Lease, which has increased by \$3.6 million?

**Hon. Olivierre:** As you may be aware, the Ministry has an office in south. The current location that we are at is really inadequate, particularly, the storage of some of our records. So, we are currently in negotiation for another location; so we plan to move. This other location would be larger, a larger space amount, so the cost will be greater. However, the per unit cost, we will achieve significant savings in that.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you.

**Dr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, Item 11, Books and Periodicals. In 2015 and 2016 the amount hovered around \$700,000 or \$750,000. This year you estimated \$2.5 million in books and periodicals, a \$1.7 million increase. Could the Minister state, what is the cause for this heavy estimate of books and periodicals?

**Hon. Olivierre:** The bulk of our expenditure here is for online subscriptions. However, we did have some arrears that we have not paid in the previous year due to the amount of releases we would have gotten. So that is why we have the additional funds.

**Dr. Lee:** That is a lot of arrears, a lot of arrears.

**Hon. Olivierre:** And in the case of a number of the subscriptions, there have been increases in the cost.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** My question was just answered.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just following up back on the question from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. In those periodicals, do you have any specific industry subscription that are specialist in any way that would be of such a high value? And if so, what is the benefit in terms of the capacity that is being built in the Ministry based on the cost of those subscriptions? Thank you.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Thank you. Well the price range of many of our online subscriptions ranged from US \$15,000 to over US \$55,000.

In some of the cases, these are used for working out the actual contact prices that we use in determining some of the payments that the companies owe to us. So those would be subscriptions like plaques markers, and these are required because our contracts—the price in terms of our contracts are based on these price marker values.



**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Contract Employment, again, Item 16, the Minister said that they were trying to fill all the vacant positions in the Ministry. Do you have difficulty filling those positions because the salary levels in the Ministry are at variance with what you get in the private sector? Are you being raided by the private sector?

**Mr. Singh:** You have to watch what you use in the Parliament.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you very much. Well, personnel raiding is a different thing to financial raiding.

**Madam Chairman:** If there is a haemorrhage today, private sector.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Actually in personnel language it is called raiding.

**Madam Chairman:** But remember we are trying not to use certain words. Just as we are trying not to do certain things.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Well the public service has tried to implement some initiatives to try to keep their technical resources. So certain positions within the Ministry do get a special technical allowance. However you are right, there is some degree of haemorrhage of staff. However, in this particular situation where there is some amount of job loss from the private sector, that haemorrhage of staff has impacted on us significantly in this particular fiscal year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** One more follow-up. What is the average differential in salaries therefore between your contracted workers and your people who would have filled the vacant position?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Well, the contracted workers generally are paid more than the public servants because they would not be afforded the same plan—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Same 10 per cent, 15 per cent.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Now, the salaries that we pay to contracted workers are determined by CPO on an individual basis. So, for each person that we engage in a

contract we would send the particulars to CPO, their CVs and the CPO will make a determination on what their appropriate salary should be.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I have a couple of questions, one on the Graduate Recruitment Programme. Is your approach to this, I note in the budget every Ministry has this allocation. Is your approach with regard to this also going to be to recruit on the basis of merit aligned to the requirements of your Ministry? Is that what it is?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Well I must say that all Ministries will be utilizing this same approach. There is consistency across the board.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So there is a governmental policy on it.?

**Hon. Olivierre:** There will be.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. And the approach is merit?

**Hon. Olivierre:** We have not employed anyone as yet under this programme so we are awaiting guidance on the policy.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. Okay.

**Hon. Olivierre:** It is a consistent approach across all Ministries.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Second question, and it has to do with Janitorial and Security Services. I see increases in both areas. It is not an extremely large increase, but I am just asking if these are areas in which there are deficiencies in service that you need to address?

**Hon. Olivierre:** No, the reason we have increases in these two areas is because they come together, because the MTS will be providing both of these services for us, because of, we will be moving into—we anticipate that we will move into the new offices in San Fernando which is a larger space, so certainly the amount of security and the area to be covered by janitorial services will increase. We are also pursuing setting up an office in east Trinidad to accommodate our field crew. So once that is on board I will certainly require additional janitorial and security

services.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. When we had this discussion with the Ministry of Finance, the hon. Minister of Finance indicated, and I am here on the aspect of the University Graduate Recruitment Programme. You did indicate to us that the intention is to give priority. In fact he said he is only considering graduates from UWI, to some extent UTT and we asked him to consider other universities in Trinidad and Tobago. But because of the peculiar nature of your sector, your Ministry, which really requires, in some cases, the best practices and the current knowledge of universities abroad, will you be willing to consider taking graduates from universities where we do not have the resident programmes in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Well, I will have to be guided by the policy that would be applied for all Ministries.

**5.20 p.m.**

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will wait for the next page when you come there, Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to—on the University Graduate Recruitment Programme, you have a lot of returning scholars with open additional scholarships and they are looking for jobs in particular in your area. So I would think that from your input into the policy, since it is not yet formulated, that should be a priority requirement because the country invested in their education and certainly we would want to be able to utilize them in an area that is as important as that.

**Hon. Olivierre:** I certainly take your point. I have actually been asking the OJT office at least for all the graduates that apply with them who have qualifications that fit into the Ministry. I have requested that they would send them to the Ministry and we have gotten a few. But there is also the Energy Professional Associate Programme which, again, targets persons who have specific qualifications that are targeted to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. A question to the Minister, and this is based on a general observation across the General Services line Items. I notice there is not a heavy reliance, as it is listed on the Items, on IT. I am not seeing a spin for it. Knowing that the Ministry is in such a critical area now where things like GIS software for the mining opportunities and management, and issues around gas monitoring volumes like floclal and so on, and I am not seeing any type of IT infrastructure requirement as we go forward. Is there a reason for that, Ma'am?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes, I can explain. Now, IT expenditure is encompassed in line 28, Other Contracted Services. This is why I indicated we had requested \$79 million, but we only got \$30 million. So we have to cut and contrive.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay. So the answer is yes, there will be a fair amount.

**Hon. Olivierre:** No, but it is within—Other Contracted Services is where our specialized IT infrastructure would reside. That is where the expenditure is taken from.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Chair, and to the Minister, line 62. What actually is being promoted with Promotions, Publicity and Printing and what is really the objective to be achieved?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Thank you for that question. Now, there are several things that the Ministry would need to inform the public about. Now, in terms of renewable energy, we have a separate line Item in the Development Programme that deals with renewable energy promotions. But general information, sharing things like when we release information from the Ryder Scott reserves audit, there is a lot of publication that we have to do. When persons make applications for minerals licences, these would have to be published. So there are various publications that we are required to do as a course of informing the public of our activities.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 297, Item 001, General Administration.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 297.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, we note that your subsidies in 2017 have reduced considerably to \$813 million and in 2015—

**Hon. Olivierre:** What line?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister, are we at—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 04.

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are at 040, 001, Regional Bodies.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. At page 297?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. The 2015 subsidy was approximately \$4.6 billion. That was onerous, and now you have a subsidy still of \$813 million. So there is a savings over the two years of approximately \$3.8 billion from the subsidies. I think that is in the right direction. But have you done a scenario

planning if the price of oil—in terms of the price of oil fluctuating, how much your subsidies might be? Because I know this is just an estimate. Your PS is there.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Well, the particular line Item to which he is referring is actually on page 298, 007 Households, 01. This is where the subsidy really resides.

**Madam Chairman:** So anybody else on Item 001, Regional Bodies? Item 004, International Bodies, page 298?

Item 007, Households, page 298. Member for Naparima.

**Hon. Olivierre:** No, well, I can respond to his question now, if you would permit me.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So Member for Caroni East, this is where your question resides?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Households.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes, so if I may respond. Now, you would have noticed a drastic reduction in subsidy from 2015 going to 2016 and 2017. This would have been because of the drastic fall in the price of oil and also because changes in 2016 would have also have been impacted by the partial removal of the subsidy which we would have implemented in the last fiscal year. Now, what we have discovered is that for 2016, the actual component of the subsidy which the Government would have been responsible for, was in fact \$262 million. The total amount that is listed here included an arrears from the previous year which would have built up. So the total that we paid in 2016, the \$1.0 billion included \$252 million in arrears from 2015, plus a subsidy—government component of the subsidy before 2016 of \$462 million. So our efforts at incrementally removing the subsidy has, in fact,

paid off handsomely in the savings.

The estimate that we have for 2017 is based on the \$50 WTI price and what we worked out the government contribution to be for this year would be \$686 million once the oil price stays around \$50. The difference between \$686 million and the \$801 million—\$120 million—is on additional subsidy which would come into play once the Caroni Gantry facility becomes operational. There would be an increase in the filling and handling charge for operations at the Caroni Gantry facility. Currently that charge is one cent per litre and that would be increasing to 11 cents per litre once that facility comes on stream by the end of the year, we expect.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thanks for that wonderful explanation. The reduction of 15 per cent on the diesel, how much in terms of dollars would that account for, from your calculations?

**Hon. Olivierre:** I will have to get back to you with the full calculation, but bear in mind there would have been two 15 per cent reductions over the period 2016 to now.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Could you enlighten us with the facts with respect to the subsidy? Are we paying subsidies on premium gasoline at this moment—regular, diesel and/or LPG?

**Hon. Olivierre:** LPG, yes. Regular and diesel—premium and diesel, to some extent. Currently there is nothing on premium, but super and diesel; yes.

**Mr. Charles:** A follow-up question. In the calculation of the subsidy, do you take the ex-refinery price, customs duties, VAT, transport, wholesale margin, retail margin and price at the pump? I just wanted to find out if in the calculation of the subsidy you include the customs duty and VAT to find

out the true level of the subsidy by the State. Does it factor in the customs duty and the VAT?

**Hon. Olivierre:** All those factors are put in when we determine the price at the pump. So we have all those—the refinery margin and all those things are put in when we determine the price at the pump. So we would compare that with what the market price is to determine what the subsidy is.

**Mr. Charles:** So it is possible—and this is just for clarification—that the true cost to the State, if you exclude customs duties and VAT, we may be, as we stand, in a surplus position with respect to regular and diesel.

**Hon. Olivierre:** No.

**Mr. Charles:** Not at all. Okay.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is a follow-up question in a sense that—which is that, how ultimately will this affect the consumer, first of all, and how does it affect the margins at the pump for those actually selling the gas?

**Hon. Olivierre:** How ultimately does what affect the consumer?

**Dr. Tewarie:** The removal of the subsidies, and the way it affects consumers at the pump.

**Hon. Member:** What line Item is that?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Oh gosh, you know what Item. Do not try to be political.

**Hon. Member:** Same Item.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is the same. I am just trying to raise the issue of the consumer impact and I am trying to raise the issue of the margin at the pump which have become issues because of the subsidy issue. It is not a political issue, it is a real economic issue.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Now, the margin at the pump has not become an issue because of the subsidy issue. The margin at the pump has been a fixed



number that the Government has maintained for well over 12 years now. The margin has not changed. So when we determine the price at the pump, we keep that fixed margin constant. So there is a fixed wholesale margin, there is a fixed retail margin. What we would do is we would determine what oil price we will peg the price at the pump at. We determine that price and when we apply the margins then we will get actual price. The subsidy does not impact on the margins.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Do you have any intention to change the margin?

**Hon. Olivierre:** We are currently reviewing the complaints that the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries would have received from the petroleum dealers. So we are reviewing it, but it is not just the subsidy matter, but it is also things like the green fund levy and the unemployment levy—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes. It is the taxes that are added.

**Hon. Olivierre:**—that impact on the dealers. But we have not interfered with the margins at all. So whenever the price goes up, the margin is constant, so the wholesale and retail price would go up at the same amount to keep a constant margin.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And how do you think it affects ultimately a household?

**Hon. Olivierre:** That sounds like a nice economic analysis project, so as soon as we get the graduate trainees, I can have one of them work on that.

**Dr. Lee:** We are on 009, Madam Chair?

**Madam Chairman:** We are still on 007.

**Dr. Lee:** No, I will wait till—

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

**Mr. Singh:** My question was answered with respect to the petroleum

dealers and the margin.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Back on shortfall on subsidies. You just said price at the pump. The dealer margin is based on the price the consumer pays or another price?

**Hon. Olivierre:** The dealer margin is the difference between the wholesale price and the price at the pump, and that margin is fixed. It has been for the last 12 years. It is about 12 cents a litre, depending on the product.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And that 12 cents—if I am paying \$1 for a litre, for example, so they get 12 cents.

**Hon. Olivierre:** If you are paying \$1 for a litre, that means that the dealer bought it at 12 cents less than \$1.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay, fine. That is what I wanted to get clarified. Secondly, what now at this point in time is the difference between what the consumer pays at the pump for diesel and regular gasoline and what it really costs you to produce and supply?

**Hon. Olivierre:** So what you are asking me is what is the extent of the subsidy on diesel?

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is right, yes.

**Hon. Olivierre:** That depends on the particular market price of diesel at the particular time. However, we would have set—in determining the current price at the pump for diesel, we would have used a particular price of oil, Well, it would have been based on a particular WTI price, and that would have been based on, well, the price that we set—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Now, if you use your \$50, what is it now? Because you had to be using a figure to come up with this subsidy.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Well, I cannot give you the individual number for each

product, however, we would have set the price based on, well, with some reference to the budgeted oil price that we use.

**Dr. Rambachan:** In terms of how you decided on this subsidy here then that you are predicting.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Right. So you are trying to determine how we calculated this number?

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am trying to determine if I am paying \$2.98 to \$3.00 for a litre of diesel, is it costing you \$5.00 or \$6.00 or what? What is the difference in the subsidy you are still giving?

**Hon. Olivierre:** In the case of diesel, I think we are currently paying about one-third of the actual cost of what it should be. So the price that you are paying—but it depends on the particular oil price in the given month.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, but you made an assumption of an oil price—

**Hon. Olivierre:** We would have made—so in putting this estimate into the budget, we would have had to, using the mix of fuels, the different volumes that we expect to be sold over the year and based on what we estimate the price would be throughout the year, we would make a calculation then.

**5.35 p.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** How much is the Government subsidizing diesel by now and regular gas, per gallon or per litre, or what?

**Hon. Olivierre:** I can give that detailed information in writing, but with the various calculations—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** But I would really like to get it because—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member, the Minister said you will get it in writing.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, and it is a follow-up and it is not a political. It is just as a citizen of the country. Would you be able to supply to this House the price at the

pump today, the breakdown in terms of how the different components are added on so that we could have an idea of the ex-refinery price, the customs duty, the VAT, whatever inputs go into that so that we could make an informed judgment?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yeah, we could provide it to you.

**Mr. Charles:** Thanks.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers. This is page 298.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister of Finance, under 009, Sub-Head 07, the Natural Gas Export Task Force. In 2016, you had an allocation of \$2 million, you did not use it; in 2017 the estimate is \$2.5 million, the question is: what is this allocation being spent on?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Now the Natural Gas Export Task Force, you noticed that there was no actual expenditure in 2015. So this particular body has not been functioning. However, Cabinet has approved the creation of an energy task force. So it would not be limited to natural gas export, but an energy task force. So the allocation in the 2017 estimate would really be for the operation of that energy task force.

**Mr. Charles:** Follow-up question, Madam Chair. Who would sit on this energy task force committee?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Would you like—a list of members here, I can supply that in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 03: 011 Environmental Indemnity to the PowerGen Company of Trinidad and Tobago. This Indemnity is related to the 1994 Agreement, the purchase of PowerGen, the generation capacity. Now that we have mothballed the Wrightson Road plant, how long is the remediation process—1994. “Do not be foolish, nah man.” That is 1994. The 1994 Power Generation

Agreement entered into with PowerGen, there is the remediation that is required. There is a projected cost of this environmental remediation of that Wrightson Road site.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Now, because of the extensive work that has to be done—now, a plan is still being developed, so they are still working out exactly all the exact elements of the cost elements that would apply to this.

**Mr. Singh:** So this allocation is to do what?

**Hon. Olivierre:** This is a provision in the event that anything needs to be extended. So every year this provision has been put in and if you notice in 2015 it was not used, 2016 there is nothing in the revised estimate. So it is an indemnity provision that we have to maintain. When that expenditure arises at least we will have the allocation for it.

**Mr. Singh:** So you have not yet put in place a plan to complete this remediation costing?

**Hon. Olivierre:** PowerGen is currently developing that plan. The facility was only shut down at the end of last year, but some aspects of it still remained functional for intermittent periods and a final decision has not been made on whether or not that facility may be repowered. I mean that decision can still be made.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. I see that there is a line item the Establishment of Quarries Authority and 2016 estimates \$1.572 million, nothing in the revised estimates, and then it comes back for \$1 million estimate in 2017, could you elaborate on the status of this Quarries Authority and what is happening?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes certainly. The issue of more effective and efficient monitoring of the quarries industry is something that we are currently working on.

The Ministry is in the process of preparing a draft Bill, the Miscellaneous Provisions Illegal Mining Bill which would look at increasing the monitoring of the industry. So depending on what we decide, we may or may not choose to go with a quarries authority or we may choose to strengthen the Minerals Division within the Ministry itself. So that provision is there in case we decide to go with the quarries authority, but that firm decision has not yet been taken.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, can you indicate in line number 04, that is, Transfers to State Enterprises 04, Equity Injection - ALUTECH Limited, with this figure that you have here \$661,000, is that an indication that there would be no further injection into this company?

**Hon. Olivierre:** This company currently has a warehouse and equipment. So the moneys that have been expended here have been to maintain the warehouse with the highly sophisticated equipment that have been in storage for some years. The actual line in 2015, there should have been—the fact that there is nothing in 2015, that seems to be an error because moneys would be expended to maintain the rental of the warehouse.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So the figure has to be adjusted accordingly?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Pardon?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So the figure has to be adjusted accordingly? Is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Olivierre:** I am not sure what you are asking.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me handle that. The estimates come in two forms, you have the yellow book and a blue book. So when you do the closing of accounts that is the final figure and that will be published in a blue book which you will get in the middle of the year. So any adjustment will appear in the blue book.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Developmental Programme*, Sub-Head 09 Development Programme: Consolidated Fund Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 128.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Item 003 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiatives. The 2017 estimate is \$18 million, could you give us an appreciation of what you intend to do with this sum of money?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Oh, certainly. We do intend to focus heavily on renewable energy in this fiscal year. As I indicated in my opening statement, we will be continuing and with some expansion of our renewable energy in secondary schools programme. We will also be looking at the renewable energy in the communities where we will lighting the car parks of community centres; we also plan to extend it into lighting some recreation grounds as well. You will also note that we are embarking on a waste-to-energy facility. So there will be some expenditure used here in terms of engaging a technical consultant to assist us with that. There is Caricom Energy Month which will be in November, so the Ministry has several initiatives to increase the public awareness of energy and energy efficiency.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, madam Chair. Just a follow-up question in that category, that Head. This renewable energy of \$18 million you talked about, is it a caravan that is going throughout the country to different schools or the different communities?

**Hon. Olivierre:** We do not intend to spend \$18 million on public relations, I would have indicated specific things. So installing solar PV cells in schools, I mean we are projecting doing 21 schools in this fiscal year at the cost of about \$100,000 per school. We are looking at solar PV lighting in community facilities estimating about \$1 million a venue, doing about 10. So that is going to be \$10 million/\$11 million. So the communications campaign really is a small aspect of

it, but Caricom Energy Month certainly will involve a great deal of outreach. We will be going to Tobago, we will be engaging secondary school students and primary school students. We will have a competition and some other activities.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, again. In relation to the energy efficiency initiatives and so on that the Minister has just spelt out, and taking into consideration that there is a project that I do not know if it has been mothballed and in this \$18 million estimate for 2017, could you shed some light on what will become of the environmental visitor centre at the Couva/Preysal Interchange, which as I traverse as the Member of Parliament, I see a number of solar panels and lighting facilities and so on, so I would like to know what is the status of this?

**Hon. Olivierre:** That initiative is not something that the Government is viring funds for. That is a project of the National Gas Company.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, just coming back to Item 003 under Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiatives. Looking at our drive for diversification and understanding a bit about the creation of solar panels and the pushing off of renewable energy into our homes and so on, the fact that we have two important critical components that are required for a manufacturing industry in solar panels, very, very close by in terms of our electric arc furnace that is sitting down in the old ArcelorMittal plant and the abundance of silica in Guyana, has there been any conversation around the Ministry looking at opportunities in those areas to develop new industries to push our diversification drive into renewable energy, and to be able to push those things out into our homes and then up the islands as a producer and distributor for those types of items?

**Hon. Olivierre:** I can tell you that the National Energy Corporation is looking at a project for the manufacture of solar PV cells.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, just a line Item, Public Buildings on the same



page 128. There is no allocation for any of these areas of tank construction and so on, nothing has been allocated to it and most of these are in Tobago, any rationale for that?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Okay. I will treat with ones that are in Tobago first and then I will come back to the previous ones. These are all new projects that were proposed by National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited. The reason there is no allocation for it is because these projects are at project concept stage and NP has not yet conducted full engagement with the Tobago House of Assembly.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is only conversation so far?

**Hon. Olivierre:** There has been a conversation within NP, but I have asked them to engage the Tobago House of Assembly. Now if I may address the first one, 002, which is the Installation of a Mobile Pump Tanks at La Ruffin Fishing Depot, this is a project that was initiated under the previous administration, where Cabinet approval was sought for the installation of an above-ground fuel tank at La Ruffin Fishing Depot in Moruga to service the fishing vessels.

Now, the design of this project, the tank which was constructed was designed for regular fuel. However, it was subsequently determined that the fishing vessels no longer use regular, they use super. So the tank itself, because of the design, the design specs were for regular so the tank cannot be used for super because of HSE and other concerns. So although this was constructed and paid for by NP, the Ministry has not refunded these moneys because the facility really was badly designed and it is not yet operational.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Will the Minister indicate with respect to 003 whether the Ministry will be partnering or supporting any of the tertiary institutions; and if so, which one and what programmes with respect to renewable and also energy efficiency initiatives?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Sorry, with respect to which line Item?

**5.50 p.m.**

**Mr. Karim:** No, I was saying that I just wanted to get a sense in terms of renewable energy whether you would be supporting any initiatives with the tertiary institutions. For example, I think you are much aware of what we did at UTT as well. And if so, which one?

**Hon. Olivierre:** No, of course. Well, the Ministry normally collaborates with UWI and UTT in our renewable energy initiatives. So for example, what we do with Caricom Energy month, we do engage UTT in the outreach and the solar house that is at the Point Lisas Campus. We do have visits to that, so we engage the tertiary institutions.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 007 Environmental Policy Grant Project, \$3 million. I would like to find out what is that Environmental Policy Grant Project.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes, so the European Union has provided a grant for us for the rehabilitation of quarry lands which have been spent. An allocation had to be included in the estimates but it is really funding from the European Union to rehabilitate quarries.

**Mr. Singh:** So they are going to remediate the scarred landscape in which the quarry is currently—

**Hon. Olivierre:** A portion of it. So in conjunction with the Conservator of Forests, the Ministry will identify a suitable area of spent quarry for rehabilitation for replanting of trees and we are hoping to be able to sequester 264 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from this rehabilitation initiative.

**Mr. Singh:** Excellent. The EITI, Item 005, what projects you have under that for that allocation or is it a subscription?

**Hon. Olivierre:** Now, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, one of the main things that they do is prepare an annual report which reconciles the payments made by extractive industries against the payments received. But in addition to that, there are some outreach initiatives that the EITI would engage—well there are various communities that are involved in the extractive industries. They would have held sessions in Tobago last year, in Sangre Grande and various areas, and so informing persons of the new regulations with the mineral sector and one of the initiatives that they will be embarking on now is they are expanding their reporting to now include the mineral sector.

So as part of that, we have to increase the capacity amongst these mining companies. Many of them do not necessarily know what reports they should be taking and their issues with the measurements. So they are currently doing a small-scale project in looking at—informing some of the operators on the type of record-keeping that they need to have to be able to report on the sector in the future.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Members, can we go on to Infrastructure Development Fund, page 309 of the same book, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 309.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, in lieu of the opportunities in the energy industry in Guyana and so on, and the widening of the Panama Canal recently to allow for much larger cargo vessels, the positioning of Galeota port terminal phase 2 project, I notice that there is a \$40 million allocation in this next fiscal year—Is the Government looking at engaging or continuing that project that was started in the last administration?

**Hon. Olivierre:** The reason we have an allocation is because we intend to continue with the development of the port.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Economic Infrastructure, the estimate is \$70 million. Could the Minister identify what are the development sites there for this \$70 million?

**Hon. Olivierre:** The \$70 million is for the entire total line Items.

**Mr. Lee:** Correct, yeah. Well then, under the new port facility, the \$30 million—sorry—what sites?

**Hon. Olivierre:** The allocation for the industrial site, this really pertains to the Union Industrial Estate with the development that was required for the Mitsubishi-Massy DME Plant. But this \$30 million, we envision, would facilitate the relocation of the residents. There are some residents from the area in Square Deal that still have to be relocated in the creation of the buffer zone.

In terms of the port facilities, again, well it is the operationalization of the Galeota port and there is some additional work that needs to be done at the Brighton port. This, of course, is not the entire expenditure that is required for these projects but it is anticipated that the state enterprises under which these projects fall will have to fund a great detail of it from their retained earnings.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Chair. The dredging of the Sea-lots Main Channel and Turning Basin, I see that there is no allocation for that and I recall that at some point in time, the LPG ship was running aground or at least had some problems reaching NP at Sea Lots.

**Hon. Olivierre:** Yes, now we do acknowledge that there is an issue with that Sea Lots Main Channel. Now, what the estimates have shown is that in order to alleviate those problems, you would need to dredge about 600,000 cubic metres of seabed.

Now, under the last administration, a contract was given out for about \$44 million to dredge just 400,000 metres cube which really would have been

insufficient to achieve the objective. Some work was done which would be—you would see the actual payments that would have been made in 2015. That would have represented the mobilization cost and some project management cost. However, the quantum of work that was done, there was some uncertainty into the amount, so a bathymetric survey was subsequently conducted within 2016 which showed that about 79,000 metre cubes were moved. Now, we are still trying to confirm that amount but we recognize that the scope of work for the original contract really would not have achieved the objective that we were seeking to get the required depth. So that contract really, I believe has been certainly suspended, if not terminated, but it is being reviewed, so this is why there has been no allocation.

**Mr. Singh:** But the need is still there for the turning basin.

**Hon. Olivierre:** No, we recognize that the need is still there but the contract that was given really would not have satisfied what was required, so we really could not continue with that particular contract.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 40 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister, thank you PS and other officials of the Ministry. We now move on to Head 17, Personnel Department. And just so that, Members, while the technocrats get their seats, we are going to page 71 on the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

*Head 17.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head 17: Personnel Department, \$58,137,000. I will now invite the Minister of Public Administration and Communications to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As you know, the Personnel Department

is the central human resource management agency with a primary focus on the management of the employment relationship in the public service. In particular, one of the department's main functions involves determining or advising on the determination of pay and other terms and conditions of employment for various categories of employees in the public sector.

In the public sector proper, on the basis of provisions contained in various service Acts and in order to determine pay and other terms and conditions, the department is mandated to engage in consultation and negotiation with the unions and association representatives, officers and employees in the civil service, the teaching service, the protective services, the central government and the Statutory Authorities.

I would just like to state that in terms of the central human resource management agency, that falls under the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications and in terms of the negotiations with the unions, that responsibility falls under the Ministry of Finance. Thank you.

Before I take the questions, I would just like to remind Members that the allocations fall under the general direction of the budget where we are dealing with a cut in expenditure, lower revenues, so there will be cuts in the various Heads under the Personnel Department.

*Question proposed:* That Head 17 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$58,137,000 for Head 17, Personnel Department is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 71, Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and through you to the Minister, I take note of the fact of the general trend but still, Minister, I am looking at 01 Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance with a cut of \$500,000 and in respect of that, could you indicate the number of persons employed at the Personnel Department?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I would not be able to give you that figure offhand but I can provide it subsequently; actually I got, 177.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay, thank you. And if so, would this decrease have any impact in terms of the number of persons employed for 2017?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Actually, the decrease did not have anything to do with that. It had to do with arrears, most of which were paid in the previous financial year, so this is just to take care of the balance.

**Dr. Bodoë:** It is a decrease of \$500,000?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. The bulk of the arrears was paid in the previous financial year so that the amount owing this year would be reduced.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I see, thank you. Just as a general question in relation to the expenditure of \$14,500,000, could the Minister indicate, perhaps, what are some of the deliverables you would be expecting in 2017 from the personnel department based on the Item of expenditure?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, the department is responsible for formulating policy in terms of human resource management; coordinating the implementation and review of the performance management and appraisal system in the public service; managing the employee performance in Ministries and departments—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Bodoë:** All right. Minister, I was just—maybe any specifics in terms of any particular project so perhaps we could come to that later on.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yeah.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just following up on the Member for Fyzabad, the Minister

indicated \$500,000 arrears, could you clarify what these arrears were for?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Pardon? No, there is a \$500,000 decrease.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, but you said that it was in relation to payment of arrears, if I am to be guided properly.

**Hon. Cuffie:** The arrears related to the implementation of the new agreement with the Public Services Association.

**6.05 p.m.**

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, bearing in mind the amount of vacant positions in the public service, which the CPO has to deal with, and the number of vacant positions with incumbents and without incumbents, do you think that it is not necessary to increase this salaries and cost of living allowance and get more personnel to help the CPO Department to complete that process because too many positions are vacant with incumbents and too many positions are vacant without incumbents? Could you comment a little on that to neaten up that area? The CPO is a hard-working department but they need a lot more help.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I understand the challenges faced by the Minister of Finance and we will work with what we have been allocated.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to ask the Minister, is the Personnel Department adequately staffed?

**Madam Chairman:** What Item?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Item 01.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Could you repeat the question, please?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am asking if the Personnel Department is adequately staffed.

**Hon. Cuffie:** That is a difficult question to answer. What I can tell you is that we make the best with the resources that we have been given.



**Madam Chairman:** Sub-head 02, Goods and Services, page 71, Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to Item 08, Minister, rent, lease, office accommodation and storage, I see the estimate of \$14,500,000. Would the Minister be able to provide a list of the properties or how many properties are leased or rented and the monthly cost of each of these properties?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I can provide that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Does the Ministry intend to rent or lease any additional space during the coming year?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, as you would recognize, we were paying \$1 million a month for accommodation that was never entered into. In the last financial year we got out of that arrangement, and given the financial situation now I think we will be treating with the accommodation that we now have. We will be utilizing that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Just one more question. Has there been any comparison made between the renting/leasing arrangements, as opposed to the purchasing of buildings for accommodation?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I am not sure that is a question for the personnel division. We can discuss that when we discuss the Ministry of Public Administration and the Property and Real Estate Division.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, are we down to 16, Contract Employment?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. Given the importance of the Office of the CPO to the collective bargaining process and to the Minister of Finance too, we see a reduction of the 2016 revised estimates was at \$4 million and it is now, for 2017, \$2.5 million. Could you elaborate on the employment implications, and so on, and

whether persons at the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer, have they been sent home or what is happening out there?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I am sure, Member, you would recognize that it is this Government's policy to reduce contract employment and transition to full-time employment. So, this anticipates that we will be going into that direction.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, that means how many contract officers at the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer stand to lose their job? Could you clarify that in numbers?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I do not think you heard me properly. What I said was they will be transitioning from contract to full-time employment. So they would not be losing their job. They would be gaining a job.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** How many are there, in terms of the number of persons who will be employed would be increased, 5, 10, 15 officers within the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer?

**Hon. Cuffie:** As soon as I get that information I would make it available to you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So it is a work in progress?

**Hon. Cuffie:** It is a work in progress.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Just to follow up on that question, Minister. Could you indicate or do you have an idea of the proportion of contract workers to permanent employees in that department at the current time?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Twelve per cent of the employees are on fixed-term contracts.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 73, Item 001, General Administration, page 73. Sub-head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 73, Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 004, International Bodies, page 73.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-head 09, Development Programme. Consolidated

Fund, page 51, Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 51.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you to the Minister. With regard to Item 036, the conduct of a job evaluation and compensation exercise for the civil service, can the Minister indicate where this project has reached?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, the project is ongoing. There were some initial difficulties. Now remember we are dealing with 1,500 posts, 33,000 bodies, in terms of the civil service. We needed to classify all of them. There was also an issue with the form of IT support that we required and the use of cloud services. That has been worked out. So now we are, at least three months ago, we have started actively working on the project.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Any idea, Minister what will be the total cost of the full implementation of this project?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I have the total cost here, \$62.1million. I have to add that the original cost was \$150 million and as a result of eliminating waste, mismanagement we have been able to cut it down to \$62 million.

**Dr. Bodoë:** With that new cost, Minister, can you give the country the assurance that the same benefits will accrue to the country from the public service?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I can.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister state when this job evaluation exercise will be signed off with the Public Service Association?

Secondly, with respect to the conduct of a job evaluation exercise in respect of the Prison Service of Trinidad and Tobago, in 2016 there was an estimate of \$4 million, only \$40,000 was spent in the revised estimate of 2016 and given the importance of the prison service to the entire judicial system, and so on, I see that \$2 million has been allocated for the estimates of 2017. Where are we with this job evaluation exercise, in relation to satisfying the Prison Service Association?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Okay, those are two compound questions but I would take them in order. The first one, we would be completing the exercise in the civil service 24 months after it is initiated.

In terms of the second one—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Twenty-four months after—

**Hon. Cuffie:** The project lifespan is 24 months after it gets going.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Give us the date in the context of the 24 months, December 01, 2018; January 31, 2019.

**Hon. Cuffie:** No, I do not have a date yet.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You do not have a date?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No, I do not have a date and there is a reason why I do not have a date. It has to do with the consultancy that was required to effect the programme and it did not, it had to be terminated because of the problems that were encountered. So when we resume, then I can say it would take 24 months after that.

In terms of the prison service, some of the issues in the prison service relate to the problems with the civil service exercise. So that, once that is taken care of and it is now with iGovTT, we are trying to find an ICT solution that can work for both agencies, then we can say it would start. [*Interruption*] Let me finish here.

The other element to the prison service is the fact that there are 173 posts and 4,612 bodies, and in the prison service there are officers who do not perform core prison service functions. So there is a need to get all of that streamlined before we actually embark on the prison service exercise.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, Minister, you are telling us that there is no agreement between the CPO and the Prison Officers' Association, in the context of, or in relation to the comparator's issue and so on? So the exercise really has not been

signed off and it has not started? Is it what you are saying?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No, that is not what I am saying. I did not mention anything about comparators.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, well if you understand the whole process of job evaluation, and so on, before it moves forward there has to be an agreement between the employer and the recognized majority union, and so on.

**Hon. Cuffie:** We have passed that. There was agreement with the union and the CPO. The issue is not agreement. The issue was the ICT solution to effect the job evaluation exercise.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, so this exercise will be completed, in relation to what date and time?

**Hon. Cuffie:** As I explained earlier, the prison authorities need to do a restructuring exercise, in terms of the officers that are employed. There are prison officers who do not perform core functions, Madam Chairman. There are drivers, there are cooks who are prison officers. So we need to do a classification exercise there.

Now, this whole exercise was embarked upon because the two associations that represent prison officers felt that with the move to restorative justice, they needed a new job evaluation exercise to classify prison officers. So, it will take some time but we are on it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to Item 037, Minister, the Development of a Knowledge and Information Management System, I see an allocation of \$2.3 million in 2017, as compared to what was spent in 2016. Can you explain the reason for the increase?

Secondly, do you expect that this increased expenditure will increase the efficiency of the department and, if so, how?

**Hon. Cuffie:** This is an ongoing exercise. As you know, the Personnel Division has a lot of files, but they are all in paper and this exercise, what it seeks to do is to convert the records that are paper-based into an electronic format. So it will take some time but it is in progress.

**Dr. Bodoë:** How long do you expect it to take?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Until the end of fiscal 2018.

**6.20 p.m.**

**Dr. Bodoë:** All right, just one last question, Madam Chair. I have noticed, and this seems to be a trend throughout all the Ministries, with regard to the Employee Assistance Programme, and I see that there has been no allocation here in 2017. Do you want to explain, Minister?

**Hon. Cuffie:** That was for the start of the project, and that project was started and completed. So that is why you would not see any allocation for it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So there is an Employee Assistance Programme?

**Hon. Cuffie:** At the Personnel Department and for all the Ministers. The central location is the Personnel Department.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Right, and that does not require any ongoing expenditure? Is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The project is completed and we are going on to the next phase, and they will get back to the Ministries to get resources for that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I see. So there will be ongoing expenditure on this programme?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I just wanted to be clear. This is a programme that assists employees who might be having issues and so on, in the work place?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 040, Implementation of a Sensitization Outreach Programme for HR Practitioners. Is this programme for all HRs throughout each Ministry?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. It is for across the public sector.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Do you know how soon it is supposed to start?

**Hon. Cuffie:** It has started already.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** It has started?

**Dr. Bodoë:** A new project there, Minister, on Compensation Administration Framework for the determination of Remuneration Packages for contract employees. Do you want to just tell us briefly what that project is about?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. Actually, that is a project that makes me very happy, having once worked in the public service. If you know how it operates, that you may start a contract in the public service today, and you would get your terms and conditions a year after or two years after, and this is a project that seeks to end that. So that you will be able to get your contract very soon after you start, the terms and conditions.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 038, Conduct of a Job Evaluation Exercise for Offices within the Purview of—I take it that is the Salaries Review Commission.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes it is.

**Mr. Charles:** I get the sense though, from what I have heard from the Prime Minister, and particularly with respect of MPs and others who fall under the purview, that we are in a holding stage now, not looking at an increase in salaries. So the question is, \$4 million at this stage, given our economic circumstances. Should we be spending that kind of money when we know that the Government will not be in a position to, you know, to—

**Hon. Cuffie:** Actually, Madam Chair, I am surprised at that question because the Members opposite participated in the consultation that was done with the consultant, whose fees are mentioned here. It is an ongoing exercise. They have been meeting with the Members of the Government and all MPs. It is just part of that ongoing exercise, and it has been budgeted for this year.

**Mr. Charles:** So all I want is, you agree it is a priority to the extent of \$4 million should be allocated at this time?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$58,137,000 for the Head 17—

**Mr. Singh:** Did we go to the end?

**Madam Chairman:** Well, there is only one Item, you know. This is Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, okay?

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 17 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, PS and the technocrats from the CPO's Department. Members, while the other technocrats come in, we go on to Head 12, Public Service Appeal Board. We are at page 52, of the recurrent estimates.

*Head 12.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head 12, Public Service Appeal Board, \$2,900,000. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement, for a maximum of five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** I would not exercise the option, in the interest of speed and efficiency.



**Madam Chairman:** We are indeed grateful.

**Hon. Imbert:** You are welcome.

*Question proposed:* That Head 12 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,900,000 for Head 12, the Public Service Appeal Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure, under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*; Page 52, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chairman, I just will like to ask, through the Minister of Finance, if he can get a number of employees that are employed with the Public Service Appeal Board?

**Hon. Imbert:** Total number?

**Mr. Lee:** Yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** Seventeen.

**Mr. Lee:** Seventeen, thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, Madam Chair, can the Minister indicate about how many matters are before the Public Service Appeal Board now?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get the precise number for you, but it is in the region of 15.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Fifteen?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah, but we will get the precise number for you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. That is good enough.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Good and Services, page 52, Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 53, Item 001, General Administration.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 12 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I wish to thank the technocrat from the Public Service Appeal Board for her attendance and assistance. Head 48: Ministry of Trade and Industry. While the officials take their seats, Members we are at page 335 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

*Head 48.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 48 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Head 48: Ministry of Trade and Industry \$193,379,335. I will now invite the Minister of Trade and Industry to make a brief opening statement, for a maximum of five minutes.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The primary responsibility of the Ministry of Trade and Industry is to develop globally competitive businesses, expand exports, particularly in the non-petroleum sector, attract and facilitate investment and ensure consumer protection and empowerment.

Based on the *Draft Estimates of Expenditure* for 2016—2017, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has been allocated \$211,775,135. Of this amount \$137,000,835 is allocated for recurrent expenditure and \$40,870,000, is allocated under the Development Programme. With this allocation, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to intensify its efforts to achieve the following goals as part of its 2016—2020 strategic plan.

- Goal 1, diversified and competitive businesses;
- Goal 2, increase investment;
- Goal 3, expanded and diversified regional and international trade;
- Goal 4, enhance protection and empowerment of consumers;
- Goal 5, transform the Ministry of Trade and Industry performance and service delivery.

In fiscal 2016—2017, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to improve its efficiency and strengthen its institutional capacity. Accordingly, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will embark on a sectoral strategy and an institutional strategy. The sectoral strategy will focus on the non-petroleum sector, placing priority on competitiveness and economic growth. The institutional strategy will focus on the institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and its key affiliate agencies. This strategy shall emphasize the development imperatives of good governance and service excellence.

During fiscal 2016—2017, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will be pursuing 13 projects under its development programme, but the primary focus will be on the development of the new economic zone at Moruga, of which we expect the preliminary designs to be completed soon; continued development of the creative, maritime and yachting industries, and continued enhancement and expansion of the services of the Single Electronic Window; and also penetration of particular markets, including Cuba, Panama and our diaspora markets as well.

Additionally, we at the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to look for ways and means by which we can improve on our efficiency in the management of our recurrent expenditure. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you hon. Minister. Hon. Members, the sum of \$193,379,335, for Head 48, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure, under the following Sub-Heads and Items of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 335; Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, Chair, Item 23, these Salaries - Direct Charges, what do they represent, please?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Salaries are for particular persons, but in this case you will notice that there was a reduction, and that is because someone who occupied the position of State Counsel 1, that person was previously in a contract position. So this is why there would be the variance in the amount, and they have now come back to the establishment, and, sorry, there is the increase that you are seeing now.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 335.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, Madam Minister, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, how many inspectors are there now in this Weights and Measures Inspectorate?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** There are only four.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Four?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rambachan:** They are supposed to do all the markets, all the groceries across the country?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No, but you have to remember with regard to Weights and Measures, some of the functions are now being done under the Bureau of Standards, because of the introduction of the Metrology Act and so on, and all that comes with it. So as it is, you would find that this department eventually will be weaned off, and most of it will be done by the Bureau of Standards, but as it is, there are four people right now.

**6.35 p.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** I do not know when last an inspector has gone through the Chaguanas market, you know.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Well, I will certainly take that concern.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, I am serious. I am very serious.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes, I will take that concern.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, page 336. Item 004, Research and Planning, page 336. Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit, page 336.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Minister, what is really being done by your Ministry with respect to consumer outreach and the protection of consumers? There are a lot of consumer complaints that you hear on the radio all the time and so on and so forth, you know, about unlabelled products, products that are smuggled. People are buying drugs, for example, that are not approved by the drug authorities here and so on in Trinidad. What is being done to protect the consumer through this protection unit? I think this is a serious unit.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** It is. The role of the Consumer Department is far-reaching, but there are some powers that you think they have that they do not have. *[Laughter]* So, for instance, you raised the point about smuggled goods, and we are aware that there are, in fact, smuggled items on the grocery shelves. I think perhaps of cigarettes, because we have had complaints about cigarettes and the Chinese and the writing is in Chinese as well. So that the requirements are not met with regard to the tobacco Bill. So that is an item that should not be there, but they are not empowered to remove items from the shelves; that belongs to the Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division of the Ministry of Health.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is where I am heading. Is there a connection between your own division and other divisions and agencies of Government that will allow them, based on the information you have, for them to go and take that off the shelves? You are right. And I want to name one product for your interest, which is honey.

Honey is being brought into the country and affecting our beekeepers and their production.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Honey ought not to be brought into our county but, at the same time, we collaborate and we work very well with the Ministry of Health Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division, and our officers are out there as well monitoring prices. When they do observe any items that are not supposed to be on the shelves, we do, in fact, bring it to the attention of the Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division as well.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But through you, Madam Chair, then I want to ask the Minister or ask her, to go to the Chinese groceries, the proliferation of Chinese groceries across this country, and look for the number of cigarettes that are marked with Chinese and are being sold in all of these groceries. Why are they not being seized, because that is unfair competition to the local producers?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I take your comment.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me deal with that, Madam Chairman. In the budget speech, you would have heard me talk about increasing the enforcement capability of Customs and Excise in terms of contraband cigarettes, and it is something we intend to move on very aggressively. Having increased the taxes on cigarettes that could encourage smuggling of contraband cigarettes, and we will be moving very aggressively in 2017 to deal with the smuggling of cigarettes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And honey.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** But I would let you know as well, you raised the question of labelling and, again, the whole question of labelling is under the purview of the Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division. But to let you know that we are looking at the introduction of a new consumer protection Bill and a new consumer policy as well, which would again look after the interest of the consumer in greater detail.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you will agree, Madam Minister, we cannot wait for that legislation, we have to act now.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Not at all. We are acting.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. When the Government took the decision to—and it has to do with the Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit—when the decision was taken to restore VAT on 7,000 items that were previously zero-rated, there was supposed to be the establishment of a VAT hotline, and also the introduction of the recruitment of—I do not know how many—officers to monitor the variation in prices and so on. Could the hon. Minister, in the context of this protection unit and outreach programme indicate to this committee, what has become of the VAT Hotline Unit; how many complaints she has received and how many complaints have been dealt with; and how many officers are being recruited to this unit?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** The VAT Hotline was established. The VAT Hotline is still in place. The same time, the officers, eight of them are employed to go out and to look at the prices and look at supermarkets and so on and do investigations, generally. Eight consumer officers are on the road.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** How many complaints have been made?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I would have to send that to you.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, to the Minister. Do you work in collaboration also with the Ministry of Health with respect to generic drugs that come in and sometimes you see that the directions are given in Spanish?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Minister, is there any consideration being undertaken by your Ministry in terms of the number of large international corporations that are bringing things into the country where we have large imports, sometimes to the

detriment of the local business sector, and the amount of foreign exchange that goes out of the country as a result of these large corporations, and you know which ones I am talking about? I do not need to mention them today. Is there any consideration at all, bearing in mind the large influx of foreign exchange that have to go out with these? Is there any consideration from your Ministry of Trade and Industry to deal with that matter?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Member, I am not sure which line Item you are under now.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Consumer items. Let us take PriceSmart.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I think, Member—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, we are under Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No, no, no. I think you have gone beyond that. I am sorry, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Anything else under Item 005? Therefore I move on to Item 006, Communications, page 337. Okay. Sub-Head 002, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 337 to 338.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister, I have noticed that there has been a decrease by \$2.3 million with respect to contract employment. Similarly, with the Minister of Finance, which I had asked earlier, I would ask the same thing of you, if you could indicate to us: what positions have now become redundant or expired or have been discontinued within the Ministry that would indicate why there has been a decrease? Whether or not you could provide us with what positions would now become available in the new financial year with respect to contract employment? I know you may not have these things at your fingerprints right now, but if you could also expand on, as I said, the positions, the recruitment practice, what contract positions are expected to be



created in the new financial year, the criteria. How many new persons were hired on contract for the fiscal year 2016?

But, more importantly, at this stage, if we could have an idea of why this decrease has been made up by 2.3 with respect to whether or not contract employment has been discontinued in some instances or whether or not contracts have been expired and that is why we are seeing a decrease here. But also if you could give us the follow-up with respect to the financial year 2016/2017 of what we can expect, the areas, because I know further down when we go into—

**Madam Chairman:** One minute. We are still under Item 001, General Administration, Member for Princes Town, and we accept that all of this information will have to come in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, please.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you so much. Anybody else under Item 001, General Administration? Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 339.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Page 339 or 338?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, weights and measures, at the top of page 339.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, page 339.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is the area, Madam Chair, I want to ask the Minister. Under Consumer Affairs Division, is there any consideration by the Ministry on the issue of the importation of a number of foreign products by large companies and the efflux of foreign dollars?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I think we are under 003, Consumer Affairs Division. Could you direct me to exactly what you are asking?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, you are looking at salaries and cost of living allowances. Are you going to staff your Ministry to do some research?

**Madam Chairman:** Just a minute please. Member, 003, Consumer Affairs Division. Maybe you could assist by just giving us the Sub-Item number.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I have to find the line Item for it. I would come back to it.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Research and Planning, at page 340.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I think that is the area the hon. Member wishes to ask. In your Research and Planning Department, are you going to engage in any kind of planning activity for the reduction of the foreign exchange output that takes place with the purchase of foreign goods in our marketplace, whether there is going to be a “buy local” programme that will allow that the foreign exchange bleeding that is taking place will stop?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Just direct me to what particular line you are speaking of?

**Mr. Singh:** Research and Planning.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Item 01 or 65?

**Mr. Singh:** 004.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** 004? Are you referring to which Sub-Item, 01 or 65?

**Mr. Singh:** To the Head.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** But you have to tell me which Sub-Item you are looking at.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Expenses of Cabinet-Appointed Bodies. Can Cabinet not appoint bodies to do that research? [*Laughter*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members, I know we need a lil relief, but let us—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman, this is a serious issue. I am sure it touches you as it touches all of us.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, your question has to be framed within the context of the Item or Sub-Item that we are looking at.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is there any consideration for the Ministry of Trade and Industry, under Item 004, Sub-Item 65, for Expenses of Cabinet-Appointed Bodies

to establish a Cabinet-appointed committee to look into the importation, large importation of consumer items by large companies?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Well, I think you will have to be more specific there. I cannot respond.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are evasive. All right. I want to know about PriceSmart.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** But can I tell you what it is for, the particular line?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, go ahead, answer.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** It is for a biosafety committee to deal with GMOs and so on. That is what that particular line is about.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But can you consider appointing a Cabinet-appointed committee, another one, to look into this matter?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Your request is heard.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** My request is what?

**Hon. Member:** Heard.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are you going to consider it? Can you go to Cabinet and ask Cabinet for its consideration?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** It will be considered.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. I will hold you to that.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection, page 340. Item 007, Freedom of Information Unit, pages 341 and 342. Sub-Head 03.

**Dr. Tewarie:** 007?

**Madam Chairman:** Freedom of Information Unit?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Proceed please.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. Based on what we see here for the allocations, for which no allocations have been made basically, Minister, through you Chair, does that

mean that you do not have a Freedom of Information Unit?

**6.50 p.m.**

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That unit is no longer under the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Is it not my understanding that most Ministries have such a unit? The reason I asked is because when we looked at the Ministry of Finance, there was no allocation either for a Freedom of Information Unit.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Speaker, it raises a compliance issue. Under the Act you have to have a compliance—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** What we have is an Officer who would deal with such matters.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So a freedom of information request can be engaged by your Ministry? **Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Oh, definitely.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001, General Administration page 3422.

**Mr. Singh:** Vehicles 01 is minor equipment. There is no allocation for the purchase of vehicles for the new year. Is it that you have already purchased new vehicles instead of foreign-used vehicles?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** All our requirements are currently met by the vehicles which we have. We are being very prudent and we are not just going to be buying vehicles just to have another new vehicle. We do not need any at all.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Freedom of Information Unit, page 343. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Page 344, Item 001 Regional Bodies, page 344. Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies, page 344. Item 003 United Nations Organizations, page 344.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I would like to know from the hon. Minister, what value are you

getting from those contributions being made to the United Nations IDO? What is the value that this country is getting from this contribution that we make annually, close to \$400,000? **Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** You would imagine the nature of our Ministry, we do a number of technical studies through UNID, the one that is very valuable to us.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can we have a list of the studies that have been done in the last three years as a result of this?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, International Bodies. Item 007 Households. Item 008 Subsidies. Item 009 Other Transfers.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, you would recall that I had raised under 003 Betting Levy Board. I had raised the issue in the Ministry of Finance because there is the transfer of the Betting Levy Board to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. First I would like to find out the rationale for that.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will help you. It is in the law. There was an error made in the gazetting of the responsibilities for the Racing Authority and also the Betting Levy Board. In the law it states that it is the Minister responsible for industry, so when they were doing the gazetting they gazetted those two departments under my name, but that was erroneous and that has been corrected.

**Mr. Singh:** There has been a significant allocation increase to the Betting Levy Board, almost \$14 million increase from the allocation last year. I would like to find out the justification for that in the context of our straitened economic circumstances.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** You would understand what has been happening, and it is probably from the 1970s or so. The law requires that 50 per cent of the intake of the Betting Levy Board from, for instance, the betting pools, racing pools and so,

would go towards the Consolidated Fund and the other 50 per cent would remain with the Betting Levy Board for administration and also for the administration of the expenses of the TTRA. Successive governments have allowed this to happen—and this is through compelling arguments being made by the Betting Levy Board—which is that they would make an entry into the Consolidated Fund for the 50 per cent which was due to the Government, but that the 50 per cent would be returned to the Betting Levy Board. So this has been going on since the 1970s.

However, between 2012 and 2016 nothing like that ever happened. No transactions ever took place under the last Government from 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, so there is an accumulated amount there now. So every year it has been increasing; the figure is now \$85 million. So it is there to satisfy the law, but of course it is a matter that has to be dealt with and certainly the Ministry of Trade and Industry, along with the Ministry of Finance, would be looking at that outstanding matter.

I think once the new gaming laws come into place, and we expect that to happen pretty soon in this fiscal year, we would see a different picture with how these matters are handled with regard to the Betting Levy Board and even the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority. It is just that there have been no exchanges since 2011 so that is an accumulated figure there.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, if you look at line Item 19 and line Item 23 under Other Transfers, with respect to line Item 19 Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation, there has been a decrease with respect to close to \$1 million. Then you look at line Item 23 Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company, close to \$3 million. When you look at these two areas, one with the Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company, dealing a lot with

diversification and looking at the creative industries, could you give a justification as to why there would have been a cut by about \$3 million with respect to line Item 23?

**Madam Chairman:** One minute please, Member for Princes Town. I will allow the Minister to answer.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** You want me to look at line Item 19? Let us take 19 first.

**Madam Chairman:** Only a question has been asked for 23 thus far.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** He also asked for 19.

**Madam Chairman:** He has not asked the question, he made a statement.

**Mr. Padarath:** If you want to give both at the same time, I am fine with it.

**Madam Chairman:** Is it the same question?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** With regard to 19, the single electronic window, this would be for salaries and operational expenses. The actual salary figure for 2016 would be \$1,836 million, we feel that the amount that has been allocated is quite sufficient to cover that. Some of the operational expenses as well will be carried over on to the loan under the Development Programme, and we will speak about that when we come to that. That loan is for US \$25 million, but certainly the figure that is here we find it sufficient.

**Mr. Padarath:** Line Item 23.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** With regard to line Item 23, we are very concerned about how this company is structured and we are therefore looking at streamlining operations. You would know that there are four boards involved with this, the way it was set up. So there is Creative TT, Film TT, fashion TT and music TT. With all of those boards and board members, the board fees alone for this company is \$1.3 million which is quite astronomical, given what this company is set up to do,

and given the amount that they actually spend. So a new board is in place. We are looking at streamlining the operations.

We are concerned about the future of it, in that this is an extremely important industry that is targeted for diversification. So that, again, you would hear us speaking about it, once we streamline the operations, but again we cannot carry the expense of all of those four boards and, therefore, we will be looking at that. Again, the way it has been structured with regard to having very several general managers for each industry, we cannot carry that.

**Mr. Padarath:** So you are looking at cutting out some duplications?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Certainly, and you are right about that. The operating cost is way too high, but it is an industry that is extremely important.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Speaker, through you, a couple of questions. As you yourself observed, Minister, some of the institutions under your charge are really important, given our foreign exchange challenge and our export need. So you have ExporTT for instance; you have the Trade Facilitation Company in Cuba; you have Coalition of Service Industries; you have Creative Industries, and I just wondered, with the kinds of allocations that we have there, whether you think that this is going to make a difference in terms of the export thrust? I know you have structural problems like you mentioned with the boards, but these institutions are really critical for that, for the export.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I agree with you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is your answer?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I agree that these institutions are really important. You would appreciate, you called a number of institutions for which there is no bearing here for which we are addressing right now.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is here under those line Items.



**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** So you are talking about CreativeTT and I addressed that already. Which line are you referring to?

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is 01. Then you have the Trade Facilitation Company in Cuba, then you have Coalition of Services, then you have Creative Industries Company and, of course, you have InvesTT which is the other side, bringing investment here.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I did, in my opening statement, speak to the significance of all of these industries and their importance in terms of the diversification efforts of the Government and also its contribution to earning foreign exchange. I did speak to that. We do consider all of these institutions critical, hence the reason why we must always keep in mind the full rationalization of them all and their particular objectives, to ensure that they are in fact met, but, of course, with the required efficiencies that are a must, given our economic circumstances.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So can we then expect an increase in non-energy exports supported by these institutions during the fiscal year ahead?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Those are the objectives that we are working towards; those are the targets that we have in mind.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, one more question; 06 Venture Capital Incentive Programme, I see no allocation for that. Does that mean that that programme is now defunct? I do not have a problem with it, I am just asking.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That was closed in 2015.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So it is out, okay.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Under 26, the National Academy for the Performing Arts Hotel, I see that there was an allocation of \$2.5 million in 2016 and, in fact, it was revised to \$850,260, and then in 2017 it is down to \$500,000. Could the Minister account for this reduction in the revised estimates of 2016, and advise us as it relates to

what the allocation of \$500,000 is for 2017 and what are the future plans for this hotel?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** The current allocation is to meet with current repairs. The intention, Government has in fact taken a decision to outsource the hotel operations. You will see soon advertised an RFP, Request For Proposals for operators for the NAPA hotel.

**Mrs. Guyadeen-Gopeesingh:** Line 08, could the Minister kindly elucidate as to with respect to what actually is being traded between Trinidad and Cuba? I am not sure if I understand what are the operations of this Trade Facilitation Company in Cuba. Can you clarify? **Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That trade operations office has been set up directly for that: to facilitate trade between Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba. But to encourage further trade with both countries, and we are very pleased with the operations of the office. There have been increased exports to Cuba since that office has been set up.

**7.05 p.m.**

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** So, what are the products that we have really exported?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Sorry?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** What are the products we have exported to Cuba?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** There is a list of products and I could have that sent to you.

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

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Including food, cosmetics.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sacha cosmetics.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Sacha is there. You are right. But I can always send a list to you, but it includes, food, cosmetics and other items. In fact, there is a large trade mission going there at the end of October.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** And perhaps we could also get the revenue earned, when you have given us that list, the revenue earned to our country.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Well this will be private sector persons exporting and I cannot disclose that. I would not have any idea of their revenues.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town, are you okay? Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, Chair. The hon. Minister would accept that if we expend money in an area we expect to get, at least, equivalent value or greater value. In the analysis of the \$8 million, well firstly \$.8 million spent in 2016 by ExporTT as financial assistance given to them, and also in terms of the, there is one more, InvesTT where we have spent \$6.3 million. What kinds of returns have we gotten from InvesTT for the year 2016? And what kind of returns have we gotten from ExporTT? What new markets have ExporTT penetrated or developed or where there has been success? You do not have to tell me here today, but maybe there is a report, maybe something we can get. But I am concerned about spending money with these organizations like TIDCO, for example, and we do not get equivalent increase in tourism or tourists or what have you. I am very concerned about this.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay. I can tell you. If you read the *Review of the Economy*, for instance, and you go to the back of it, you would get in detail what each of the subsectors are in terms of exported items. It is right there.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I have read it.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** If you look at it, food and beverage, I think, is about \$4 billion in exports alone, that sector alone, but it is all detailed there by subsectors at the back of the *Review of the Economy*.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad page 346; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises page 346. Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004, Statutory Boards page 346. And of course we are changing the books now. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** We have started the new one?

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004, Statutory Bodies. We are on page 346.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Where are we going now?

**Mr. Paray:** My question was already asked. Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? We are on Statutory Boards currently.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah. Yeah. [*Crosstalk*] No. I have it.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*: 44, Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards; Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure page 431; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 431; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration, page 432; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 432 ; 010, Other Transfers Abroad page 432; 45, Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 437; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration 437; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration, page 437; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households page 437; 009, Other Transfers, page 438.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, page 150; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure page 150; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services pages 151 to 152.

We now move on to the Infrastructure Development Fund which is at page 321. Item 5, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services page 321.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair—

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the hon. Minister indicate to us what has been the expenditure so far on the InTech Tamana Park and what percentage of work has been completed on it?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay. I am going to help you in—I guess you are asking the total figure. And if that is what it is, I will have to give it to you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If you can? If you can?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** But we have spent in this fiscal year just approximately \$24 million on civil works and electrification as well. And I am pleased to say that the first phase will be completed next week actually, next week Friday. And the first phase of the park will be opened for tenanting.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And do we have any understanding of the cost of it?

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sorry. Do we have any understanding of the cost of that first phase, and how much do we owe so far on it?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** How much we owe?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. Whether we are up to date in the payments for it?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** We do not owe anything.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. And what is the cost for the phase one?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Phase one, I think money spent on the Tamana InTech Park would be in the vicinity of \$1 billion.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** One billion dollars. And what percentage of work from the estimated contract you think has been completed?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** All of the work—the work is almost completed and, in fact, I have said to you by mid-October the first phase will be ready for tenanting.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is there a second phase?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** There is a second phase, but I think the focus will be, the Government must focus now on tenanting the park before we move on to further development works.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And that first phase would have cost close to a billion?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Well it would be more than the first phase, it would have been the entire Tamana Park. And again, I would want to give you the particulars in terms of the numbers. I would have that forwarded to you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. We appreciate that.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Is Sural a potential tenant for the Tamana InTech Park?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Sorry. No. There are no tenants right now and there are no proposals before us.

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

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. They identified here 276 as Development Works on Industrial Estates, but in the presentation by the Minister of Finance in the budget, he indicated that some of these industrial estates will be up for sale or for private/public partnership. Can you enlighten us a little bit on what is happening there?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes. And the Minister of Finance did in the budget presentation, let me acknowledge, indicate that there will be some divestment of property in e TecK. E TecK owns a number of assets including estates, industrial estates, populated estates and also land as well and some other buildings as well. We looked at an evaluation and I would think that it is in the vicinity of \$1½ billion to \$2 billion. Now the modalities of this proposed divestment have not yet been worked out. The Minister of Finance has just made the announcement, but certainly a team would be looking at it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So is the idea to offer these to private sector investors, is that the idea?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That is the idea. That is the proposal.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to understand clearly. Now, is that true also for the Wallerfield Industrial and Technology Park or is there an attempt to bring private sector in partnership with Government in that?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** The Wallerfield Park, Tamana InTech Park does, in fact, fall under the rubric of e TecK. It is owned by e TecK.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes. I know that.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** And the Ministry of Finance will—divestment committee and there are other agencies involved will sit down and assess which of these assets will be put out for divestment.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So this is not—this particular park, the policy issue is not settled on whether you are going to go that way of the other industrial parks?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** As I said, the modalities have not been worked out and I cannot tell you which of the parks will be put up for sale.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. And one final thing, the Vanguard Hotel—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Which is now the Magdalena.

**Dr. Tewarie:**—Magdalena, I see no allocations for it. I just wanted to understand the relationship between the State and the hotel.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** The relationship, it is owned by the State and we have had—let me say that there is no allocation for it, but we have had to support it and make some injections of capital, as we went on, for different works and this has come from e Teck.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do you have any idea—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. But there is no—is it that there is going to be an injection if needed, but there is no allocation provided? Is that it? I am just trying to understand, you know, because these are important.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Let me say to you, as I said, let me clear it up. We have, in fact, made some working capital injections and that had been done by e Teck, but we have also taken the decision to find a long-term operator and that is what is primary at this time.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** We are going out to find a long-term operator.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. So I want to understand—doing this by way of getting your confirmation on a summary. The industrial estates are marked for divestments to the private sector and initial assessment of its values is about \$1½ billion.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I said to you that I believe it is between \$1.6 billion and \$2 billion and I say so on the basis of a valuation which had been done in 2011.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. No. I am not quibbling about it.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No. No.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am just trying to understand the policy clearly.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah.



**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So that will be divested to Wallerfield Industrial Estate and Technology Park. There is no policy decision on that?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So we do not know if, in fact, it is going to be addressed either for divestment or for public/private partnership and the Vanguard hotel you are looking for basically a partner?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That is right. We are in the process of looking, of finding a long-term operator.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I understand. I just want to understand clearly.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, just let me come in here. [*Crosstalk*] Just let me come in on this point.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Let us see if we can get some further clarification from the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** If you read the budget speech we are going to divest, the plan is to divest 50 per cent of the industrial estates currently owned and operated by e Teck, which is all of them. So we have—we may divest part of Tamana or we may not, but we are going to divest 50 per cent of the entire portfolio.

**7.20 p.m.**

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, but part of that, I am not trying to be difficult, I just want to understand something.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am not trying to be difficult either.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right. The normal industrial estates that we have, whether O'Meara or whatever those are, those are up for private—basically for giving the private sector the opportunity to invest in them, is that right?

**Mr. Imbert:** We are going to sell them.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Eh?

**Mr. Imbert:** We are going to sell it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right, okay. So, they are going to be available for purchase? But the position on the e TecK related parts, you are saying are not clear but you are going to diversify 50 per cent?

**Mr. Imbert:** All of the parts are owned by e TecK, including Tamana. They are all under the rubric of industrial estates. Everyone. We have not decided which ones of them we are going to sell. We may sell part of Tamana, we may not; we may sell Trincity, we may sell La Brea, we may not. It is a question of raising funds. That is the issue.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I understand that that is one aspect of it.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, that is the aspect of it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, that is the aspect of it for you, with all due respect, Minister, but there are other considerations in the divestment of assets as you know. So I want to be clear on the policy, that is all.

**Mr. Imbert:** The policy is to try and raise some money.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That is it.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is it. Okay?

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is your policy.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I just wanted to make sure that I heard right, what the Minister had said, when he was asked by a colleague, about 10 answers. She said that—

**Mr. Singh:** Do not go back there. What you going back there for? Not to go back there.

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members! Members!

**Mr. Singh:** “Doh go back there. Doh go back there”.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You were not listening to me, I drop it.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In view of the movement of Trinidad Hilton in Tobago—Hilton in Tobago to Vanguard, to Magdalena, could the hon. Minister indicate what has been the total investment by the Trinidad and Tobago Government in the whole transitioning from Hilton, to Vanguard, to Magdalena over the period of time?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** The Ministry will forward that information through the Parliament to you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We look forward to that very eagerly.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 48 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Maybe Members would like to take a break now for half an hour?

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, no, no.

**Madam Chairman:** Well then I will expect your cooperation.

**Mr. Singh:** You have that from the Opposition, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** I did not point to any particular Member. Now Members, by agreement we are now going to take Pensions and Gratuities followed by the Auditor General, and then we will take finally for the night, unless Members wish to work a little longer, Ministry of Planning and Development.

**Mr. Singh:** No, because then we would have completed our quota.

**Madam Chairman:** Your minimum quota.

**Mr. Singh:** The agreed quota.

**Madam Chairman:** The agreed minimum quota. [*Crosstalk*] Head 20: Pensions and Gratuities. And while the technocrats take their seats. [*Interruption*] Members! Members! We had a little light moment, let us get back to business, please. Okay, and can we go to page 120, we are looking at the *Draft Estimates of*

*Recurrent Expenditure.* Head 20: Pensions and Gratuities, \$110 million. 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:** I can assure you it would not be five minutes. This line Item is self-explanatory. It deals with pensions and gratuities, and all of the Items are a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund with the exception of Item 10, which is the only Item we have to appropriate, everything else is a direct charge. And Item 10 is Gratuities to Technical and Professional Contract Officers. Gratuities for contract officers, essentially.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, “ah done”.

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

*Head 20.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 20 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** The sum of \$110 million for Pensions and Gratuities, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 120, Item 007, Households, page 120 to 121. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sub-Item 10, Gratuities to Technical and Professional Contract Officers, an increase from \$50 million to \$110 million. Could the hon. Minister of Finance indicate what that Item is for, and what is the reason for the increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** There was a backlog of contract gratuities which could not be settled in fiscal 2016, we are carrying forward arrears of about \$30 million, and we have increased the allocation to make sure that we settle all of the contract gratuities which have been finalized and ready for payment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, thanks.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is it, no more questions?

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 20 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** We now go on to Head 02: Auditor General, \$44,372,000. I will now call upon the Minister of Finance to exercise his option to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you. Madam Chairman, I think we all know what the responsibilities of the Auditor General are, and I would not want to detain this session any further.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you so much, hon. Minister.

*Head 02.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 02 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$44,372,000 for Head 02: Auditor General is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items, to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 5; Item 001, General Administration, page 5.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, and to the hon. Minister, the Auditor General has complained that he is devoid of the necessary personnel to fully establish his department. Would the Minister care to comment whether he needs to increase this emolument aspect, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance area?

**Madam Chairman:** So, we are under 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, because the Auditor General has complained bitterly about

lack of staff.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised that the Auditor General's Department will soon be strengthened by a further 50 officers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Very good. Very good. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Imbert:** Look at the estimates very carefully, you see an increase of salaries \$2.5 million, General Administration \$3 million, and so on.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Three million will cater for 50 additional officers?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, we will deal with it as we go along. If we need to supplement in the mid-year review we would.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would that bring the complement to an acceptable level, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. The establishment is 300, they currently have 200, so this will take them up to 250.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. Well, at least you are making an attempt.

**Hon. Imbert:** No more questions?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I would just like to say on the increases, not just in personnel expenditure but the general increases across the board for the Auditor General, I think it is commendable that the Minister of Finance made these things possible.

**Hon. Imbert:** I would like to say I paid particular attention to this department when I was doing the allocations. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Auditor General has the ability to divest some of his auditing exercises to the private sector, is there any area here that there is an allocation for that, for the Auditor General to work with the private sector?

**Madam Chairman:** Would that be under General Administration, or would that

be under Sub-Head 02?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 002.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, if you can hold your questions please, Member for Caroni East? Item 002: Tobago Services, Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair, line Item 08, Vacant Posts, I see that there are no allocations, can the Minister explain why?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 5.

**Miss Ramdial:** Page 5, line Item 08, Vacant Posts.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is not correct, there is an allocation.

**Miss Ramdial:** Vacant Posts?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, \$800,000.

**Madam Chairman:** Tobago Services, 002.

**Hon. Imbert:** Oh, Tobago Services.

**Miss Ramdial:** Yes, Tobago Services, 08.

**Madam Chairman:** There is no allocation there.

**Hon. Imbert:** What you have with Tobago?

**Miss Ramdial:** I asked you a question.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will make appropriate arrangements for any vacant post in Tobago that are required to be filled. It just has five people over there. *[Interruption]* The Auditor General is telling me they just employed five new people for Tobago, and we will make the approximate arrangements.

**Miss Ramdial:** Certainly.

**Mr. Singh:** Just a follow-up on the fact that you have five persons there, so it means that therefore the THA Auditor General's Report is dated back to 2007—

**Technocrat:** 2008.

**Mr. Singh:** 2008, so we can expect—the last Auditor General's Report was 2008,

so that therefore we are in 2016, so you have an eight-year backlog, will this five persons be, especially in light of the Prime Minister's directive, that they must submit the annual reports in a timely fashion, will your five personnel allocation, will that be sufficient to deal with the issue?

**Hon. Imbert:** What I am told is that the Auditor General will be doing the 2015 accounts of the THA this year and working backwards.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, I could live with that.

**Hon. Imbert:** To bring things current. Are we still on this or we have gone to 02?

**Madam Chairman:** We are not in 02, we are still on Item 002, Tobago Services. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You are on page 6?

**Madam Chairman:** We are on page 5.

**Hon. Imbert:** You can go on page 6 if you want.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, we are going on now to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 6. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Under Other Contracted Services, we see an increase in the estimates to \$4,257,500, could the Minister give a breakdown of this in relation to what the increases in expenditure are for, and also whether a list of firms have been engaged for auditing services?

**Mr. Imbert:** I took out my Limacol, you know. [*Holds up bottle of Limacol*]  
[*Laughter*]

**7.35 p.m.**

**Hon. Imbert:** The question, Madam Chairman, the question that was asked by the Member for Caroni East had been answered by the Member for Couva South. That money is to outsource auditing services. And obviously they would be procured in the normal manner using the procedures in the Public Service Regulations, Central



Tenders Board and so on.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could the Minister give us a list of, in terms of the outsource services and so on?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. This is going forward. They have not procured them yet. I cannot give you a list that does not exist.

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

**Mr. Singh:** On Goods and Services?

**Madam Chairman:** We are on Goods and Services, Item 001.

**Mr. Singh:** I am on Sub-Item 27, Official Overseas Travel. Hon. Minister, does this amount of \$600,000 allocated, which is a nominal increase of \$195,000, is that to allow for the auditing of all the overseas missions? Does it incorporate that?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not for all, it is for some, but that is what it is for.

**Mr. Singh:** For what?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not to audit all of them—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, but those that are—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Imbert:** We do not need to audit all of them in one year, but that is what it is for.

**Mr. Singh:** The cyclical audit.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is what it is for, the audit of overseas missions.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, because as we expand we need to deal with that.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah.

**Mr. Charles:** Back to Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services. The sum is \$5 million allocated for 2017. Am I correct in my understanding that the Auditor General Department, you do audits on all state enterprises?

**Mr. Ali:** No.

**Mr. Charles:** Not on all? You outsource?

**Technocrat:** No.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no. Could I just—it is done in accordance with the governing regulations, the governing law. The Auditor General does not audit all. They would audit THA, for example, and others. But the Auditor General does not audit state enterprises.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** State enterprises contract their own auditors with the approval of the Ministry of Finance and the auditor's report comes here, to the Parliament, to go to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. Because I found the sum not enough.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, it is not for state enterprises. Okay?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, to clarify. In fiscal 2016 the Auditor General did not spend any moneys at all on external auditing firms to assist with the work of the Office of the Auditor General. Is that so?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, but how can you make a statement like that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am asking.

**Hon. Imbert:** There is a figure there. Are you not seeing it? Seven hundred and forty-two thousand. How could you make a statement like that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I have a list of the firms that were used and the purpose, the audits that they were required to do?

**Hon. Imbert:** You just said there were none.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I also ask that the Minister in presenting this, giving his assurance, could also indicate whether any of the firms so sourced had any conflict of interest with an existing Cabinet Minister?

**Hon. Imbert:** But you said there were none. Okay, you said there were none, but

now that you are saying there are some I will address those issues that you have raised.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Tobago Services, page 7. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 8; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 8.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I can answer a question asked by the Member for Oropouche East.

**Madam Chairman:** About conflict?

**Hon. Imbert:** There was absolutely no conflict of interest, none whatsoever.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** He knows that.

**Hon. Imbert:** And he knows that. They hired Deloitte, I am told.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** But what does he mean?

**Hon. Imbert:** “He chooking” Ernst & Young. He is afraid to say it.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 001, Regional Bodies, the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I just—these various bodies, did they provide training for the staff of the Auditor General and the opportunities for training or do you have a different component for that?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, the Auditor General has mentioned something to me. I remember now from my days when I was Chairman of the PAC, they used the UK institution, the National Audit Office of the United Kingdom, which is a very sophisticated audit institution. Those who have been members of the PAC, they would be aware of that.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Item 004, International Bodies.

Hon. Members we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development*

*Programme*, Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, we are changing the books. Consolidated Fund, page 2; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 2.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Chairman:** I want to thank the Auditor General for his assistance.

*Head 02 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. Can we go on now to the Ministry of Planning and Development, Head 67.

*Head 67.*

**Madam Chairman:** And while the hon. Minister and technocrats get to their seats, Members for your guidance we are on page 433 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Head 67: Ministry of Planning and Development, \$343,924,700.

I will now invite the Minister of Planning and Development to exercise her option to make a brief opening statement, not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as hon. Members are aware, the Ministry of Planning and Development leads the development planning process in the country and is central to public policy formulation and the operations of the public sector.

The Ministry's work revolves around providing strategic direction and developing the national policy framework to guide socio-economic, spatial and environmental development over the medium to long term.

In effecting this mandate, the Ministry serves as the focal point for Trinidad and Tobago's engagement with several multilateral agencies including the IDB, the UN and the EU. The Ministry is also a central agency in the annual budgeting exercise with responsibility for determining the priority projects that comprise the Government's capital programme to advance the growth and transformational

agenda. The core institutions placed under the Ministry work integratively towards a system of results-oriented planning that is based on sound data and information.

Madam Chairman, as at September 2016, the Ministry's staff complement was 701 persons and of this amount 79 persons were on contract, with an additional 79 persons on short-term employment.

The estimated recurrent expenditure for fiscal 2017 is \$287,783,700 which is an increase of \$33,698,700 over fiscal 2016. Current Transfers and Subsidies account for the largest increase in recurrent expenditure.

The development programme estimates for fiscal 2017 is \$56,954,000. The major projects under our development programme are: the restructuring of the CSO; the establishment of a planning unit in the CSO for the conduct of the 2017 population and housing census; the conduct of the agricultural census; the Global Services Offshoring Promotion Programme, which is a loan with the IDB; the development of the San Fernando waterfront project; infrastructural development at the CDA and in the Chaguaramas area; the establishment of an integrated public management information system and the preparation of the completed vision 2030 strategic plan and its implementation.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 67 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$343,924,700 for Head 67: Ministry of Planning and Development is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We go to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 433; Item 001, General Administration, page 433. The Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to raise a question on Sub-Item 08. The Minister of Finance had mentioned that in many cases in his Ministry and perhaps as a policy, the issue of vacant posts without incumbents would not be funded. But I see in this particular instance, and in some others, the funding has in fact been increased. Can you explain a little bit Minister, through you, Chair, what is happening here?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, in the case of the Ministry of Planning and Development, our intention is to follow the six-year strategic plan and the intention is to fill the vacant posts that we do have on the books. So that is why we have an increase in the figure.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. So your approach is to fill the vacant posts?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes. Because the Ministry has suffered for quite some time because of lack of staff and we are making every effort to ensure that we have staff in order to get the Ministry up and running effectively.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chair, and through you, the Minister. Looking at the figure, the Revised Estimates, that is Sub-Item 01, \$16.6 million in 2016 and it was increased by \$375,000 to \$17 million. Giving the sense we are getting that there is need for institutional capacity building in that institution, do you think this figure of \$17 million is adequate to the challenges you face in the type of people you need to recruit and keep in that Central Statistical Office?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, we do. And we are also moving to the National Statistical Institute. So we do expect that that will be sufficient at this time in order to do that.

**Mr. Charles:** The intention is for this staff to be allocated, sent to that institution

or would they operate side by side?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Well initially they would have to operate side by side, but the team that is working on making sure that we transition to a National Statistical Institute, we are looking at how the staff will be dealt with. As a consequence of that, we have somebody from the PSA on that team.

**7.50 p.m.**

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Coming back to 08, Vacant Posts, can the hon. Minister indicate how many posts are presently vacant and what is the classification of the vacant positions? And of course, what areas within the Ministry have vacant posts? I do not think that I would get that now, but if I can get it in writing I will appreciate it. Thank you.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** No. You will have to get that in writing. Sorry, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I undertake to give you that in writing.

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Salary and Cost of Living, I notice, of course, it has just gone up by \$375,000 and, Madam Minister, you know, people are concerned about the length of time it takes to get plans approved and sent on to the health department in regional corporations. Is anything being done to speed up the length of time at the level of—

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Is this under this Head?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, I am looking for a specific Town and Country, but I did not see it, so—

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** There is. You would see later on—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Urban planning?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes. Regional and Urban Planning.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. I wondered about that. Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on to Item 003, Technical Co-operation, page 433? Item 004, Central Statistical Office? Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division, page 434. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I thought that is where it came, I was not just too sure. I am so accustomed to Town and Country Planning. And here you see it very well, you just have an increase of \$40,000, and the Government has set an objective of increasing construction in the country and yet there is a long delay—a very long delay. If you do an analysis you will see how long it takes from the time a plan is placed at Town and Country to the moment it leaves to go to the other agencies, and it is not before five months, sometimes six months that you get back your plan from the regional corporation in the whole line. What is being done in order to fast-track that, get it going quicker so that, you know, people can get jobs and construction can start?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** In many instances, the plans—at least 40 per cent of the plans—take the requisite time which is two months in order to get the response from the Town and Country Planning—two months, 40 per cent. The remaining—there is another 30 per cent that takes that five-month time that you have spoken about, and the other 30 per cent takes a little longer, and in many instances it is because all the requisite information has not been given at the time. So we have been doing staff training in order to make sure that the staff understands what they have to do. We have also brought in a number of the planners who used to be there before, on contract, to assist us, to help to expedite the process.

Right now, we have also established a complex facilitation team which is headed by the Minister of Planning and Development and includes Town and Country Planning officers, staff from the Ministry of Works and Transport, particularly the Drainage Division, highways. We also have the EMA—the



environment division in the EMA has someone that comes in, depending on the type of plan. And as I said, it is complex, especially for complex plans.

What is also happening is, we are doing a review of the PAFD Act, the Planning and Facilitation of Development Act. So we are looking to see what type of staff complement we will need. And, of course, with the local government reform, it will mean that simple plans will be done by the regional offices. So we are moving in that direction. So we are anticipating that that time will be decreased considerably.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So in the context of speeding up things and getting the whole decentralization process going with local government, is it possible even at this stage to delegate that authority to the regional corporations so they can deal with simple plans?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Well, we cannot do it before they actually have the capacity and authority to deal with simple plans. But, of course, you must know that simple plans do, in fact, go to the regional corporations for some level of approval. But it would make no sense to actually—of course, we have the regional offices of Town and Country Planning but it will take a little time. But as I said, the time limit has increased. The time has, in terms of the numbers that we do get completed within the two-month period, that number has gone up.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** You are welcome.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Could I ask when will the Planning and Facilitation Bill be fully proclaimed? I know it is partially proclaimed now.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** What we have done, we have a team headed by Dr. Armstrong that has been working on it, looking at the concerns that we have as a new Government. We had some concerns with regard to some of the clauses and

that team has recently reported and I will now be sending their report to the Cabinet. So I anticipate within short order it will be done. But we may have to do some amendments so that will come back to the Parliament.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit, which is at page 435. Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division. Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001, General Administration, pages 436 to 437. Item 002, Library Service Unit. Item 003, Technical Co-operation. Item 004, Central Statistical Office. Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division.

**Dr. Tewarie:** What page are we on?

**Madam Chairman:** We are at page 439. Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit, page 440. Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division, page 440 to 441. Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division, page 441.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 442. Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Library Service Unit. Item 003, Technical Co-operation. Item 004, Central Statistical Office, page 443. Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division. Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit. Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division, page 444. Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division, page 444.

We move on to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 444. Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organisations. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chair. 003, Item 12, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I was wondering whether the Minister has an idea when will we be ratifying the climate change treaty that was agreed in Paris and

signed in New York earlier this year?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Member for Naparima. As the Member for Naparima knows, Madam Chairman, before we ratify any agreement we must see what the implications are for the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago. There are some climate change implications that we have to do a careful examination of. One of those, in particular, is with regard to the reduction in the carbon footprint and emissions. And in order for us to determine how quickly we can get that done we have to do a study to determine what our current rate of emission is and how soon we can get those emissions down, particularly because we are a small country but we are highly industrialized. So we have to look at that, in particular.

But I will indicate that with the COP 21, there is a clear indication that governments will get assistance, both technical and financial, from UN agencies and other agencies and countries in order to facilitate these kinds of changes that are anticipated in the COP 21 Agreement. Trinidad and Tobago has signed this Agreement and we have signed on to what we anticipate will be in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago, but we also have to look at how we get it done, and that is what we are in the process of doing now. So we do not have a time, but as soon as we do the studies and come to a conclusion, then we will be able to give that indication of a time. But if I am not mistaken, I think we do have a time of—the outside date is 2025. So we do have—in order to reach certain minimum—

**Mr. Charles:** To ratify?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Not to ratify, but in order to reach the goals that have been set. So we have to make sure that we can meet at least that outside date.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes. I think the goals are 2025, but—

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, 2025.

**Mr. Charles:** Ratification is open to—

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes. So it means that we have to submit our implementation schedule. So that is what we are working on now.

**Mr. Charles:** I think you are correct.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** I know I am correct.

**Mr. Charles:** But Bahamas has signed—has already signed and ratified, so has Barbados, so has St. Lucia.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, but what I am indicating to you is, we are very different from our Caricom neighbours because we are much more industrialized than they are. In addition to that, there is also the issue of introducing renewable energy; there is also the issue of recycling and things that have not yet taken hold in Trinidad and Tobago. So we are definitely moving in that direction, but for us, it is a different time frame from our Caricom neighbours.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister. Madam Minister, in reference to what you have just indicated, could you give us an idea whether or not the Ministry itself, under your leadership, has established a work plan with respect to the time frames in terms of the studies being done or undertaken in terms of an actual work plan; whether the Ministry has considered that or they are engaged in putting together a work plan?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** We are in the process of doing that.

**8.05 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** So Item 004 International Bodies. Item 005 Non-Profit Institutions. Item 006 Educational Institutions, page 446.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, through you, CARIRI, the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute, gets an average of \$33 million a year and this year it has been cut by \$1.5 million. How satisfied is the Minister with the performance

of CARIRI? I noticed recently in the fish kill matter you had to seek overseas testing of the fish. What is the level of satisfaction of the Minister and the Ministry with the performance of CARIRI as an industrial research institute?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** I must say that we are quite satisfied that CARIRI is moving in the right direction. You mentioned the fish kill, I would like to indicate that CARIRI did the requisite tests. However, there was a level of disbelief that had been engendered by other, well Fishermen and Friends of the Sea, in particular. So in order to make the fishermen and the public more comfortable with the results of tests, we decided to send the samples overseas. It was not an indictment on CARIRI, or the EMA, or the IMA.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Because I have a high regard for CARIRI myself.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** In fact, CARIRI, EMA and IMA very early did the requisite tests, but Fishermen and Friends of the Sea, in particular, threw a damper on the results of the tests, and as a consequence of that, we thought in order to restore the confidence of the public in CARIRI, and EMA, and IMA—  
*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** And in the fish.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Well not in the fish, but in order to restore the confidence of the public, and in order to restore the confidence of the public in the fishermen who are saying that their fish is safe, we needed to send it overseas.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, I just asked that question but I want to just make my point clear eh, I have every confidence in CARIRI as an institution—  
*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** I hope so.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah, I do—and I really wanted to hear your view because I respect CARIRI a lot over the years as an institution.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, and may I say, Madam Chair, if I am allowed, may I say that CARIRI has developed an international reputation for competence and they have been doing very, very good work.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Very good work.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007 Households, on page 446.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to raise the vexing matter of the settlement to cane farmers. As you can see in the document here allocations were made in 2016 for \$103 million and because of continuing public disputes, the issue was resolved it seems, from the Ministry's point of view, by reducing that allocation to \$48,300,000. The issue of the settlement of \$103 million was done by the process of consultation, agreement, Cabinet decision and execution of part of that contract. By what methodology is the Minister now coming to the Parliament with a reduced allocation and engaging the farmers in a manner which requires them to sign a new contract in order to receive the funding? I would like an explanation to that.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much for that question. Madam Chairman, as you may be aware, this matter has been ventilated quite often in the public domain. The current administration has indicated that the sum of €8 million is the amount that is going to be paid to the cane farmers and it will represent the final payment to the cane farmers. And as such, to date, 14 of those cane farmers have already come to the Ministry and received their payment, and thus far that payment has been a total of \$623,543. We have said quite clearly that this Cabinet can pay the entire amount that the EU has given, which is €8 million, which amounts to approximately TT \$57 million, and that is the amount that we will pay.

Madam Chairman, the cane farmers from 2007, they have received in excess of over 200—200,000? No. From 2007, the cane farmers in terms of land, in terms of—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is not correct. Do not mix—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member! Member!

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, if I may be allowed—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member! Member! I think what we should do is allow the Minister to complete and then you may pose another question to either have her elucidate a little more.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is fine.

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

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. From 2007 the cane farmers agreed to receive cash, land—over two acres of land each—training, special incentives from the Agricultural Development Bank, and that has been quantified at over \$200 million. That was paid to each cane farmer, and at the time that was the final settlement.

In January 2015, the previous administration indicated that they would pay the cane farmers a further hundreds of millions of dollars and it was to be paid in three tranches. Tranche one which amounted to—and I think a total of over \$25 million was paid to the cane farmers and then tranches two and three. The tranches two and three were to be in the sum of over another \$100 million and that was not paid. When this administration took office, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Planning and Development, and the Cabinet, indicated that €8 million was left from what the European Union had said would have been transition payments for cane farmers, and we said that the final payment will be that €8 million which is just over TT \$57 million, and that is the decision of the Cabinet, the current Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Is the Minister asking a cane farmer who comes to receive the money that your Cabinet has indicated is the amount to be disbursed, does that

person have to sign a new contractual arrangement to receive it?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, may I just take some advice from the AG, please? Thank you.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Madam Chairman, if I could just put on the record so far, as Attorney General I have received threatened litigation which has gone, as far I am aware, further, and I wonder whether this line of enquiry, particularly insofar as it is being pursued by Gerald Ramdeen, who is a frequent Senator on the part of the Opposition, is bordering on sub judice?

**Mr. Singh:** No, no. Anything bordering sub judice people can threaten. The fact of the matter is it is not sub judice.

**Madam Chairman:** A question has been asked, I do not think we ascribed any ill intent to the Member for Caroni—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Tewarie:** Not at all, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:**—Central, but it is up to the Minister to answer the question in the particular way.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chairperson, I am neither trying to be difficult, nor create a problem, nor to politicize the issue. This is—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Member, just let me—because I want to say that I did not make my statement in any facetious manner.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Before we close, I will make a statement with respect to today. So let us continue in the last final minutes that we have in the spirit in which we have proceeded.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The reason I am asking the question is because the expectation of the farmers based on an agreement reached by Government by negotiation, just as you would in a trade union/Government or trade union/employer situation, was



that they would receive \$103 million. That decision has been changed by Cabinet decision, but without any prior negotiations to legitimize the Cabinet decision. A Government cannot arbitrarily make a Cabinet decision to violate an existing negotiated settlement, and that is why I am asking the question on behalf of the cane farmers who need to be assured that they are receiving justice in this matter just like any other sector of the population.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Madam Chair, I am compelled, therefore, and I am grateful for the Member's explanation. It was a very clear rationale offered. Unfortunately, it sails now squarely in terms of inviting a response, the content of which we know can be elicited from the *Hansard* record and taken to court, and I would advise that the hon. Minister is not in a position, bearing in mind the specifics of the question, to now answer that question because it is the very subject of the exchange between parties who are in the course of litigation, or in the pre-action process which moves to litigation as a prerequisite.

**Madam Chairman:** And as I say, I do not ascribe any ill intent to the Member. Are there any other questions under 007?

**Dr. Tewarie:** No. All I would ask is that the Minister honour the payment that her Government is willing to make without the violation of the rights of the individual cane farmers, and that they at some point reconsider whether it is appropriate for a decision reached by Cabinet decision after legitimate—  
[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Member.

**Dr. Tewarie:**—consultation and negotiations.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I think we heard you and in terms of what we are considering here. You know, I have heard your plea, but in terms of what we are considering here I think we would have exhausted that issue.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, I would ask that the Minister reconsider, Ma'am.

**8.20 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, thank you. Item 009, Other Transfers, page 446; Item 010 Other Transfers Abroad, page 447. Sub-Head 06, page 447, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004 Statutory Boards. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue*—[*Interruption*] Okay, sorry, Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** On the Chaguaramas Development Authority—[*Interruption*] Yes, it is the final Sub-Item 49. I just want to ask why no allocation was made here and simply limited to the PSIP in which I know you made an allocation.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you, Madam. There has been considerable improvement in Chaguaramas in the efficiency of their rental collections and a major reduction in legal fees.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Has the increase in rental collections had anything to do with the revision of leases and the number of leases that have been given?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** No.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is not correct, you know that.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Members, we will now move on to *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. We now go to the relevant book. 02 Institute of Marine Affairs, Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 481; 001 General Administration, page 481. Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, 001 General Administration, pages 481 to 482; Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, 001 General Administration, page 482. We have the book? Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001 General Administration, page 482; Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007

Households, page 482. Board No. 49 Chaguaramas Development Authority, page 490. Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, 001 General Administration, page 490; Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, 001 General Administration, page 490 to 491; Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 491; 007 Households, page 491.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Could I raise an issue here which has to do with the—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, if you would just permit me, and Member for Caroni Central maybe this might be what you might want to raise. In oversight on page 491, I did not call Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, 001 General Administration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just wanted to raise an issue, a simple issue, Chair, and to satisfy the Minister of Finance in the form of a question, is there no action to continue on the pension contribution for the Chaguaramas employees?

**Madam Chairman:** And this would be under what Sub-Head?

**Mr. Imbert:** What line Item is that?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Current Transfers and Subsidies.

**Madam Chairman:** So that is Sub-Head 04, page 491.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am just asking, it is not a trick question or anything, I just want to know.

**Madam Chairman:** So we are under Sub-Head 04, Sub-Item 01 Pension Contribution.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chair, I would like to indicate that the money was released for this already and that is why it is not—it would have been paid this year. It would have been paid off this year.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So no more is required?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** No, not at this time.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I understand, I appreciate it.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, as we move on, so that we are now at Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, on page 491, 007 Households and we move on to 009 Other Transfers at page 491.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme* and we are going to page 191. Of course, we are changing books. Sub-Head 09 Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 191; Item 001, Pre-Investment which is at pages 191 to 193.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, I just want to raise the issue of the development of the San Fernando Waterfront Project. I see the allocation for it and therefore, I recognize the intention, and I just want to know what would happen in this project this year, and whether it continues to be conceived as a project in which the private sector would be central to the development of San Fernando.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The answer is yes?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 194; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 195 to 198.

**Dr. Tewarie:** What page are you on, Madam?

**Madam Chairman:** We are on Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 195 to 198. Anything in-between there, we will consider.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to raise something under 009 Economic Infrastructure.

**Madam Chairman:** Oh, we have not reached there as yet.

**Dr. Tewarie:** 004. I think it was before. Yeah, we passed it.

**Madam Chairman:** We have passed it. Item 004 Social Infrastructure, pages 195 to 198; Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 199 to 203.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to raise one issue here on the Item 024 under 005.

**Madam Chairman:** Strategic Plan for Chaguaramas Development.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, and I just want to ask if the master plan that was prepared by the Chaguaramas Development Authority is being reviewed or what can I understand by the allocation under this Item?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, it is being reviewed.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The existing plan is being reviewed?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** The 2015 master plan is being reviewed in the context of the previous 1974 plan. It is being reviewed.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Do you realize that this plan was done in 2014?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Well, it is called the 2015 master plan, yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, that is what I mean, it was finished.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** But you are reviewing it in the light of the 1974 plan?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, we are, because the 1974 plan reflects the original use for which Chaguaramas, as a national park, should have been put. We are reviewing the 2015 plan in the light of that and in the light of the leases that were signed just prior to the election.

**Dr. Tewarie:** You realize, hon.—

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** The 2015 plan is not an approved plan because it was not brought to the Cabinet nor was it brought to the Parliament according to the CDA Act. According to the CDA Act, for a plan for CDA to be the plan for CDA, it has to be approved by the Cabinet and it has to be approved by the Parliament. Neither of which was done with the 2015 plan. As a consequence of that, we are reviewing that plan in the context of the CDA Act, the 1974 plan and the plan for development according to the development requirements and priorities for the

CDA.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, may I pose a question? Are you aware that a plan for the country was brought to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and that Chaguaramas as a part of Trinidad and Tobago was covered in that, and that document was brought to Parliament for the entire country after extensive two-year consultations in the country?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** The CDA Act requires that a plan for the CDA is done separate and apart from any plan that you may do for the country of Trinidad and Tobago. The CDA Act is very specific and it indicates that if a plan is done for the CDA, for Chaguaramas, that plan cannot be subsumed by a National Spatial Development Plan. The CDA must be treated separately in accordance with the legislation. The only plan that subsists for the CDA is the 1974 plan because it is the only plan that got Cabinet approval and parliamentary approval.

**8.35 p.m.**

The National Spatial Development Plan cannot override the CDA Act, and so the plan, that 2015 plan, cannot be subsumed under any national plan because the Act is very specific.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay Members. Members, I now move on to another topic. I do not think the number of times we repeat this will change the scenario. Anything else under—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Tewarie:** But Madam Chair, could I just briefly respond?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central, I think all of us seated here have understood the different positions coming from you and from the Minister of Planning and Development. I am of the view that the issue cannot be resolved in what is before the committee. So I invite you, if there is another matter you wish to raise under Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 199 to 203, you

can so do.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Would you permit me to say one sentence?

**Mr. Imbert:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, please. I am in charge here.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Doh be impatient nah.”

**Madam Chairman:** Okay?

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just wanted to—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** No, no. Seriously, I know we are all tired. It has been a long day. Member, I do not want to really, you know, circumscribe anybody's right too much.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** But, you know, we have a specific mandate here, and it is with respect to asking questions on the estimates. I think we have all been allowed a certain amount of latitude, but, you know, I really would prefer. I am sure the question you want to ask you would have many other opportunities in this session to ask it in the right place.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just wanted to say that the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. I thank you so much, Member.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is a general principle.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, okay. Can we go on?

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chairman, I know it is late in the day but sometime closer to the church is further away from God, but I have been trying to catch your eyes.

**Madam Chairman:** I am so sorry.

**Mr. Singh:** At page 202, Establishment of the Economic Development Advisory Board, I see there is an allocation of \$500,000. That is the estimate for 2017.

Okay.

With respect to—I have no question I just want to make a comment, if that is—no, no, no, I have no question on that. [*Interruption*] No, no, no.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, we may have to have resort to what is in that little package. Please.

**Mr. Singh:** I find it a confining amount, is this \$500,000 for fees, stipends, what it is it? [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Members, okay. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** She is answering the question that I asked, whether it is fees, stipends for the Economic Development Advisory Board.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** No, no, it is not for that. It is for us to conduct two studies, which is the green scoping study and also the importance of carnival study.

**Mr. Singh:** I am not clear. I mean maybe it is late in the night, but the establishment of the Economic Development Advisory Board has nothing to do with the Farrell board?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yeah. It is the same board. But remember things like fees or anything like that would not come under development programmes.

**Mr. Singh:** So this \$500,000 is something else.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** It is to do two studies.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, I am fine. The second question, Madam Chair, at 006, at page 203, the Establishment of the National Parks and Conservation Authority, how far advanced is this process, Madam Minister, through you Chair?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Member for Chaguanas West, we are still in the process of determining which model will be best for Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Mr. Charles:** I would not ask the question, because you had jumped from page



200 and I just wanted to just find out about this idea about the codes for the homes for the elderly, because I am 67 and I am very much interested in what is the next stage. What could we expect? It is important. It is page 200 and it is 059. If you could just clarify what we could expect.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, can I indicate that we have already had a meeting where we have met with the stakeholders, with regard to this particular standardization of the codes. The Ministry of Planning and Development has been spearheading this and it is to ensure that we care for the most vulnerable in the society. So Member for Naparima, you will be well taken care of.

The draft standards have been completed and upon the inputs from—we will be having four stakeholder consultations and we have had the final consultation and the standards are to be submitted to Cabinet for approval. Upon receipt of approval from the Cabinet, we will be having a communication programme where everyone will be made aware of exactly what those codes are.

May I just make the point that there are homes for the elderly in existence but a number of them do not follow any particular standard and we have to be very careful with that, because sometimes our elderly are not being properly taken care of.

**Mr. Charles:** Minister, if you think of this in the context of increasing employment. There are a number of Trinidadians abroad who have reached the age of 70 and 80 and whatnot and they are looking to come back home.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yeah.

**Mr. Charles:** But when they do the environmental scan there is nothing here.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** You know, there are some homes. I must say there are some homes that have been doing quite well. But I think the objective is to standardize. Just in the same way as we did with the Children's Authority and we

were able to standardize the homes, we want to do a similar thing with the homes for the elderly. So Member for Naparima, as you head down there we will be do our best for you.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay Members, Infrastructure Development Fund, page 340, Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 340.

**Mr. Forde:** Same book?

**Madam Chairman:** Same book, page 340.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Did we complete 201?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, I have. Member for Caroni Central, anything on page 340? Okay Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 341.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 67 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I think this is the end of the business for today, having completed the minimum eight. I want to thank all Members for their participation, their cooperation and the degree of civility. This Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Friday, October 14, 2016 at 10.30 a.m.

Thank you very much. Have a good night. Reach home safely.

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

## UNREVISED

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, October 14, 2016*

### APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016

[Seventh Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

**10.30 a.m.**

UNREVISED

**Madam Chairman:** The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will be resumed.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Madam Chairman:** Before I call the next Head, may I just advise Members that the hon. Faris Al-Rawi, MP for San Fernando West and Dr. Fuad Khan MP, Member for Barataria/San Juan, both requested leave of absence from the Standing Finance Committee Meeting. In the case of hon. Faris Al-Rawi, from October 14<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and in the case of Dr. Fuad Khan, Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan, from October 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016. So their absences are noted.

### APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016

*Head 22.*

**Madam Chairman:** As we commence, we go to Head 22, Ministry of National Security, \$3,145,704,523. I will now invite the Minister of National Security to make a brief opening statement of a maximum of five minutes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of National Security is among the largest and most complex public sector organization. It is the arm of Government of Trinidad and Tobago which has primary responsibility for ensuring and maintaining security of its nation, its people, its territory and its national interests; primarily responsible for the maintenance of law, order public safety and defence against aggression, management of disaster preparedness and relief, monitoring and control of the flow of persons into and out of the country. Madam Chairman, it is, in fact, the area of public policy that is very important, in terms of money, resources and manpower. It evokes as much interest and as much controversy, but it is one in which you will hear almost daily, in the print and electronic media.

The staff of the Ministry include paramilitary, military and civilian personnel on the establishment and on contract, who are assigned to nine primary divisions as follows: General Administration, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service, Immigration Division, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force and Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science.

Additionally, there are 15 specific mandate units as follows: Citizenship and Immigration, Work Permit Section, National Drug Council, Citizen Security Programme, Office of Law Enforcement Policy, Anti-Money Laundering, Combating the Financing of Terrorism, Military Liaison Office, HIV/Aids Coordinating Unit, National Mentorship Programme, Counter Trafficking Unit, Probation Services, Penal Reform and Transformation Unit, Life Guard Services, Strategic Services Agency, Transnational Organized Crime Unit.

You can see that it is a very complex Ministry. Of the budgetary package of \$53.4 billion, the Ministry of National Security has been allocated \$7.68 billion or approximately 14.5 per cent. As the primary organization responsible for security within the country, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service received the largest share of this budget, and understandably so, this year is no different. Once this budget is passed, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service will be allocated approximately 39 per cent of the overall Ministry of National Security's budget.

Within the current challenging economic climate, with a substantially diminished national pie, while the size of allocation is important, what is more important is that the allocation is used wisely. Therefore, a great deal of emphasis will be placed on enhancing the use of technology, within the operations of the Ministry of National Security to ensure that there is no waste, and ensure that the

budget allocation is used effectively and efficiently to ensure that the safety and security of the nation, its people, its territory and its country. Madam Chairman, I thank you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 22 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$3,145,704,523 for Head 22, the Ministry of National Security is comprised of moneys, proposed for expenditure under six Sub-Heads, to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, this is at page 123, Item 001, General Administration, page 123.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would the hon. Minister indicate whether this increase of \$294 million approximately, proposed, whether that is for arrears of salaries for the personnel expenditure area? You have an increase of \$294 million over 2016, could you give an under—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The figure includes arrears of salaries to be paid out in 2017.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And that is approximately how much?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I do not have the exact figure, but I can provide that for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And what areas of the national security would that be for arrears?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That would be arrears for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service. So fire, prison and defence force.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do you have any idea of the approximate amount, close to it, out of this \$294 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No I do not, but I can provide that for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, okay. Thank you. If that is not the entire area within the \$294 million, what are the other areas covered in that \$294 million increase?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That will be normal salaries. So salaries in addition to the arrears.

**Mr. Charles:** If we look at 0—in the summary of expenditures, we see there is nothing allocated under Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers. Are you saying that it is not for the public officers, but for the—at the page before, 122.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We no longer use that Vote. The arrears are included in the other Vote, 01. So arrears are included in 01. So that Vote is no longer used.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, I just want to remind us that our agreement yesterday is that we would look at the details and not the summary, because—and it did not start with the Member for Naparima. Your question led from an earlier question. So that if we look at the details, I guess the answers we really want would come out of the details, rather than looking at the summary, because those as we saw just now, those could be a bit misleading, okay? All right. So we are on page 123.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to get from the Minister, because he pointed in the direction of settlement of arrears being part of this \$294,627,960. The arrears that are being referred to reflect what, a full and final settlement of all outstanding moneys owed to public officers?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, can I ask what line Item on page 123?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Under Personnel Expenditure, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, that is the general Sub-Head.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 001.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes. So which line Item are you looking at—01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances? Is that what you are looking at?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No. I am looking at 01, Personnel Expenditure, where there is an increase of \$294,627,960.

**Madam Chairman:** And that is really a summary figure. That is the aggregate figure.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, based on the question that was posed by my colleague, the Member for Caroni East—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, you know, maybe I directed my conversation up here, and maybe it did not reach to you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, it reached me, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** So we really are abandoning that style. So if you show us a line Item, you can ask your question. So maybe you might want to ask it under 01.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair, in relation to what was divulged by the Minister of National Security, I am just seeking some clarification, if this will reflect a full and final settlement of all outstanding arrears to officers within the law enforcement agencies of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It would involve all that is processed and without errors, to all agencies within the Ministry of National Security.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 002, Fire Service, page 124.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chair. Just for information, there is an increase of \$76.8 million in salaries and cost of living allowance. Does that mean that the fire service is recruiting additional personnel, or is this a case of increased payment or a situation with arrears? If you are increasing personnel, the follow-up question to that is going to be, can we look forward to the Mayaro Fire Station being fully staffed and operational?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It includes the arrears plus various promotions that would take place during 2017, which means there will be increase in salaries. It also includes the absorption of roughly about 117 auxiliary firemen into the mainstream fire service. There are roughly about 131 consequential promotions, as a result of the senior promotions throughout the fire service.

With respect to the Mayaro Fire Station, you would have heard mention in my budget speech that the fire station would be handed over by the end of this month, and arrangements are being made to have the necessary Cabinet approval, for the staffing of personnel and equipment accordingly

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, on item 002:01, Salaries and Cost of Living, in 2015, the actual payment was \$218,708,000, and in 2016, the budgeted figure was \$545.8 million. However, \$331.8 million was paid in the revised estimates for 2016, which showed a gap there of \$214 million, that is the gap. Now, I note that you have estimated just an increase of \$76,800,000 for 2017. How do you explain then this gap because if the gap relates—I do not know, I am asking—to back pay and other things, how then do you relate that gap of \$214 million to the \$76.8 million? Is it that you are not paying all of the arrears, or what have you, in 2017?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, let me assist the Minister of National Security. We had originally budgeted to pay 100 per cent of the back pay in 2016, but then when we had the revenue shortfall, we had to adjust that to 50 per cent in 2016 and 50 per cent in 2017. So that is why you see the reduction from \$545 million to \$331 million. The \$331 million would include the 50 per cent that the fire officers would have gotten in 2016. And, therefore, there is a similar figure going forward, with an addition for the other Items that the Minister is talking about. So this is as a result of paying half of the arrears that were originally contemplated, and this



would follow for everything, for all of the entities.

**10.45 a.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** Understood. But, \$214 million, that is the difference that was not paid in 2016.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is a lot of money.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry?

**Mr. Imbert:** The back pay is a lot.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You know, I know that. But I am saying you did not pay \$214 million, and this year you are only increasing it by \$76.8 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, no. How do I explain this? The \$408 million, it will allow for the additional 50 per cent.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The difference between \$408 million and \$331 million is \$77 million. Right? But the original amount, the difference was \$214 million. Okay?

**Mr. Imbert:** So, what you are saying is that you expect to see a figure higher than that?

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am not expecting to see anything. All I am trying to establish is whether you are really paying off all the arrears in 2017—

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—or whether arrears are also being carried forward.

**Mr. Imbert:** No.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—to 2018.

**Mr. Imbert:** No.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the fire service could expect all their money in 2017.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have written them to that effect.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** And the police and all of the protective services. Okay.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just trying to—because the Minister indicated about consequential promotions and so on taking place in the fire service and moving officers from within the auxiliary into the regular fire service complement and so on, if the Minister has at his disposal: how many vacancies that are existing within the regular complement of the fire service? How many within the auxiliary unit and what are the plans to fill these vacancies and so on from within your Ministry of National Security?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I do not have those figures, but I can make them available as soon as possible.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And also, Minister, whilst you do not have the figures, are you, from your end, able to satisfy us from the point of view of when these vacancies will be filled and so on?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Within 2017.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** All?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** All. Most of the vacancies. Most of the vacancies will be filled in 2017.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And there will be public advertisements and so on to that effect?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Of course, that is how we do business. We advertise and people will respond to the advertisements.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Not for promotions. Of course, promotions stay within the fire service. I hope you understand that. Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, Madam Chairman, in relation to the auxiliary fire unit, auxiliary fire officers, do they work full time or are they just called out? How do they work and how many auxiliary fire offices there are in Trinidad?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Auxiliary fire officers are part-time fire service officers.

Some may work for extended period of time. I cannot give you the figure as to how many there are but, again, I can provide that for you, but their terms and conditions are really they are part-time fire officers.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, at page 124.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, the increase of \$47 million approximately for the Prison Service, under item 01, is that similarly a reflection of the arrears that would need to be paid to the Prison Service Officers, half paid last year and half will be paid this year?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, and you will see it throughout the Ministry of National Security. Those who would have been paid would have been 50 per cent and the remainder this year.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So the rest of the money, \$47 million, is the approximate arrears for the—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, that is not the arrears, but the arrears will be paid as part of it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. Then, could you explain Item 12, Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers? I see nothing has been allocated. Is this because it does not exist and it has been subsumed?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is under 01.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** In reply to the question of the \$47 million increase, are you saying that the public officers' back pay is included there?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is included in the allocation, the total allocation, not in the increased figure. It is part of the overall allocation. So, arrears will be paid out of the 2017 estimate of expenditure. It is not that \$47 million is for arrears. The arrears are part of the entire allocation.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** With due respect, there must be a line Item where it is allocated and, if it is not here, I do not know if I can ask that you point us where, but there must be an allocation somewhere within these estimates. So if it is in the overall, it must still have, with the greatest of respect, you must still have a line Item which reflects that it is being allocated.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is under 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. That is where the arrears are being paid.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** We are under 01 for the Prison Service, for example, which is at—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Page 124, 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 004, 01, with the \$47.3 million here, and you indicated that this was not for the arrears. That is what I picked up just now.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I said it is part. The arrears will be paid out of this 2017 estimates.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** For the prison officers' back pay.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Would the Minister be kind enough to indicate how much of this is to be utilized for the back pay?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I cannot give you that figure now, but I can provide it later on. I did not differentiate between the arrears. So I could give you the figure with respect to the prison. I can provide that for you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Just one more question, please. So this \$47.3 million would include back pay for prison officers. What else would it include, the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Would it be for this additional increase? Is it that we are going to hire more officers?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It will include some level of promotions within the prison

service and some bit of recruitment also. That is what the increase will cater for.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, I want to come back to 004, 01, because it is similar to what I asked under 002, 01, because I am not getting a very clear understanding of what is happening here. \$664 million was allocated in 2016 in the estimates, and when the estimates were revised, \$454 million was the revised estimate. That leaves you a gap of \$210 million. One would expect that under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance that is what you would have salaries and cost of living, and not any other kinds of Items. You might have had increases in wages.

Now, in 2017, you are allocating \$501 million which is \$47.3 million. Now, if you are telling me, as the hon. Minister of Finance said, that in 2016, 50 per cent of the back pay was paid, that more or less was \$105 million. But I am not seeing you allocating \$105 million in increases in order to ensure that all of the back pay will be paid. If it is that in their salary negotiations there has been an increase in wages, that amount would also be reflected in the \$501 million. So, I cannot understand how you are telling me that all of the back pay will be paid when I am not seeing the quantum of allocation in 2017 to accommodate that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, let me handle this. You are on 004 and 01?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** If \$454 million was sufficient to pay salaries and 50 per cent of the back pay, then surely \$501 million which is more will be sufficient to pay salaries and the remaining 50 per cent of the back pay. .

**Dr. Rambachan:** Then how did you arrive, Minister, at \$664 million to allocate it in 2016?

**Mr. Imbert:** That would have been an estimate, but when the payments are audited and actually paid, the actual figure was \$454—[Crosstalk] Madam

Chairman, I do not know what is going on here. I am speaking to the Member for Tabaquite. I am not speaking to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members.

**Mr. Imbert:** We paid—

**Madam Chairman:** Members. Please continue.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you. Member for Tabaquite, we paid 50 per cent of the back pay and we paid the salaries and wages that totalled \$454 million. So, this year, all things being equal, the amount required would be \$454 million, but we have given \$501 million. So that would cover salaries and the remaining 50 per cent of the back pay, plus an additional amount for other expenses which will occur in 2017. Okay. The \$664 million was an estimate, but what happens is, that when you audit the figures, the people may have indebtedness for example, to the State in terms of loans or whatever—all sorts of things, unpaid taxes whatever. When you audit it, you get the actual figures, then you get the figure of \$454 million is what we got here.

**Dr. Rambachan:** This question could have been solved very easily if the hon. Minister would have been able to give us what was the quantum of back pay that was owing.

**Mr. Imbert:** He is going to give you that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And once you have that, we will be able to calculate.

**Mr. Imbert:** But he is going to give it to you, okay. **Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Can the hon. Minister indicate how many persons are currently employed with the prison service and how many persons do you anticipate it will be increased by, new hires? Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide you with that information at a later date.

**Madam Chairman:** Do you have the answer?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Four thousand, two hundred and sixty.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Can you repeat that? And how many persons do you intend to employ, new hires?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide you with that information.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Regiment, page 125. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. 005, Sub-Item 05, Government's Contribution to NIS is being decreased by \$289,850 and also Sub-Item 31, Government's Contribution to NIS decreased by \$9 million. Given that NIS has increased its payments, that is my understanding, what possibly could explain this drastic decrease of almost \$9.3 million in contributions to NIS, particularly if you have an increased staff?

**Mr. Imbert:** The answer is, it is just an estimate at this time. You see, it is a round figure.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah, but your revised estimate was \$29 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** Correct.

**Mr. Charles:** Which means you actually paid that last year.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is an estimate.

**Mr. Charles:** So the estimate is below. There must be a justification for the reduction.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is an estimate.

**Mr. Charles:** So, it just came out of the blue, Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not an exact figure. That is the answer. It is not an exact figure.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chairman, whilst I appreciate the Minister of Finance saying that it is an estimate in relation to Government's contribution to the

National Insurance System and so on, I would hate to think that the Minister of National Security being a former Chief of Defence Staff and so on, on the retirement of officers that when they go to verify their contributions, they find that their contributions are in disarray—they have not made their full contributions and so on—simply because we are relying on projected estimates in relation to the national insurance contribution.

**Madam Chairman:** So, you want to ask the hon. Minister?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Not to rely on estimates, but to be more clinical as it relates to the contributions of law enforcement officers from a national insurance point of view.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Madam Chairman, if there is a need—and I can assure you that the personnel who work under the Ministry of National Security will not suffer—we will vire money accordingly into the appropriate Vote to ensure that the appropriate amount is paid out.

**11.00 a.m.**

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Items 23 and 24 under Salaries and Allowance, Direct Charges. There is an increase of \$56 million under Salaries - Direct Charges and \$72 million under Allowances - Direct Charges. Do these reflect the arrears as well? What do they really reflect in the first instance, the \$56 million and \$72 million as Direct Charges, Salaries and Allowances?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Could you repeat the question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Items 23 and 24, Salaries, you have Direct Charges, there is an increase of \$56.2 million, and under Allowances - Direct Charges there is an increase of \$72 million. Just kindly give us an explanation of that increase.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** It represents the arrears, that is, increase in rates, salaries and allowances, promotions and recruitment.



**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would you proffer a little idea of what the arrears would be for these regiment workers?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide that for you later on, but I can tell you that it includes arrears and also, while we have estimates for 2016 we now have the actual figure. So there is a better understanding of what can be paid out.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you would not have any direct information what are the components of the arrears in the \$56 million and \$72 million?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** It includes, as I said, salaries and allowances as a result of the new rates and, of course, promotions and recruitment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And arrears as well?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Like my colleague previously, what is the total complement of the regiment in terms of personnel?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The strength of the regiment stands at 3,081 persons.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is all together?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** That is the regiment, the army, the land-based element of the Defence Force.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Does that include those in the senior positions?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** It includes the rank and file of the regiment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give an understanding to the House as to the breakdown of the personnel in terms of those who are at a senior level and those who are at a lower ranking level within the Defence Force?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** I cannot give you that breakdown now, but it can be provided in terms of the establishment of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment, with respect by ranks and numbers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Item 006 Coast Guard, which is on page 126. Item 007 Immigration.

**Mr. Karim:** I think my colleague from Siparia, MP, wanted to ask a question on coast guard.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Coast guard 006.

**Madam Speaker:** I think it is so unfortunate, Member for Siparia—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You went so fast, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Speaker:** —we set yesterday a certain—I will try and slow down, but I am sorry we are at 007 and this is at page 126.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I am on page 126; but I just heard coast guard, the next thing I heard was immigration. We are not computers.

**Madam Speaker:** I am sorry, but I will try to adjust my timing hereafter. 007 Immigration.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, 01 Salaries and COLA. You had a substantial decrease of \$11 million. Could you indicate to us what that represents. The follow-up is: how many persons are employed in the Immigration Division and how many are you short in your complement by?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide you the numbers with respect to the total amount of persons in Immigration and the shortages. I do not have that information now, but I can provide it for you. With respect to the decrease, what has happened here is that Immigration personnel are subjected to the Public Service Commission and there is a long tag line between persons coming from the Public Service Commission into the Immigration, and that is one of the reasons—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under Sub-Item 03 Overtime under Immigration. You have \$10 million for overtime and \$42 million for salaries. So overtime is 25 per cent approximately of the salaries. Then in the other areas, coast guard, there is no

overtime and then you had an overtime in prison service of \$85 million. What is responsible for this amount of overtime in these areas? Is it that you do not have the amount of heads or personnel and then people have to double up? And it costs more to pay overtime than bring in personnel through the normal route? What is the intention of the Ministry of National Security to cut this amount of overtime and reduce it substantially? One is \$85 million and one is \$10 million; that is \$95 million in overtime alone.

**Madam Speaker:** Is that on page 126?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 126 is \$10 million. So I am asking in the context overall from the Ministry of National Security.

**Madam Speaker:** And we are dealing with individual Sub-Heads and Items.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Based on what you are saying, Madam Speaker, I will confine this to the \$10 million, but draw reference to the other areas of \$95 just in two areas of the Ministry of National Security.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The overtime with respect to Immigration has to do with shortages, and the shortages have to do with the length of time that the Public Service Commission recruits the personnel for the Immigration Division. It takes a very long process and therefore the shortage is as a result of the staffing complement of Immigration. Following this point in time there is an order of merit list, for instance, at the Service Commission which is being processed to post people into the Immigration Division, and we are waiting on that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would you work assiduously to try and reduce your overtime?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** We are working assiduously to get the Public Service Commission to recruit the necessary personnel for the Immigration admin.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Who recruits your personnel in the other areas like the prison service, et cetera?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** We are dealing with Immigration now.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, you are a Minister.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The prison service advertises.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And who does the employment?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** We are on the item of Immigration, we have passed that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Evasive Minister; you are evasive.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Chair, my colleague answered the question, I will go on to the next line Item.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, just to clarify under 01 the issue of salaries and cost of living allowance. Mr. Minister, there is a decrease. Are there any outstanding arrears owed to Immigration officers?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** A minimal amount.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** A minimal amount means how much?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** I cannot give you the figure, but I can provide it for you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** But we would like to know from this end how much and when it will be fully settled and so on.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** It will be so provided.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, can you tell us or give us an idea, maybe you do not have it today, as to how many immigration officers in fact have been recruited, and I will stick to the 2015 and 2016 in the books here, in the last two years in this country? How many immigration officers are under training now and what is the gap? In terms of the human resource requirements, what is the gap in terms of the number of officers and the position of the officers as they exist? In other words, in what areas are we understaffed and by how many?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** What I can provide for you, which is a follow-up from the last question, is that the establishment of the Immigration stands at 405. The

actual strength right now is 365, a shortfall of about 40 officers. In terms of your question with respect to where they are in the structure, I will have to provide that for you at a later date.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, given that you have a shortfall of at least 40 officers, how is this affecting the performance of the Immigration Division in controlling the existing ports of entry outside of Piarco and Port of Spain, like Cedros, Kings Wharf in San Fernando, Pier I in Chaguaramas and the ports at which other people are beginning to come into the country at this point the time? How are you dealing with that situation where you have 40 officers short?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The management of the Immigration Division looks at that situation and assigns people accordingly; strengthens various areas such as Cedros and Chaguaramas when the need arises, because there are certain patterns especially in those outlying ports. So when there is a requirement they strengthen Cedros, for instance, when there are sort of movements from Venezuela to Cedros, Chaguaramas likewise. So it is based on the management by the Chief Immigration Officer, she assigns personnel accordingly to strengthen them.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just again, based on the numbers that are being provided by the Minister in terms of the shortfall and so on, Mr. Minister, how is this impacting on the average citizen's waiting time in relation to getting what was called the new passports and so on—the waiting time? Because people have been complaining at my constituency office that when they go to immigration offices they are being told to come back three months, four months and so on, and sometimes when they want a passport expedited for emergency travel they are experiencing tremendous hardship?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** As much as possible the Chief Immigration Officer using the staff, and that is why we have the allocation in terms of overtime, so that staff

are, in fact, working around the clock, especially to facilitate the distribution of passports and applications for citizenship, applications for permanent resident, work permits, et cetera. So that they are, in fact, increasing the staff by way of overtime at times. You would realize within recent times the immigration offices have been opened on a Saturday to facilitate citizens, applications for passports and citizenship, et cetera.

**Madam Speaker:** Item 008 Probation Service, this is on page 127.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, I notice there is a decrease in line 01. Is the Probation Services Department adequately staffed?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** At present we do have vacancies for about 13 personnel, and that is being processed at this point in time.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How many persons are employed?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** In total? Presently we have 34 probation officers, five community service officers and 15 clerical officers, a total of 54 persons at the Probation Department.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Will the hon. Minister be working assiduously to increase the personnel, in light of the fact there is an increase with the youth offenders in our country?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct. In fact, the recruitment has to do with staff to the Juvenile Court project for 2017 going forward.

**Madam Speaker:** We go on to Item 009 Forensic Science Centre, page 127, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Given reports that at the Forensic Science Centre there are bottlenecks in terms of the challenge we have with solving crime and the shortages of qualified staff, how does one explain a decrease of \$1.3 million in the allocation for salaries and cost of living allowance? One would expect that this would be a

priority area for increasing allocation?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Some of the staff are, in fact, paid under contract as we will go down later under contract employment, such as the pathologists for instance. They are under contract employment. What this gives us here is actually an estimate with respect to the increase in the regulars, what you call the permanent staff in the Forensics Centre, so that can be adjusted accordingly.

**Mr. Charles:** So therefore we can look forward to an increase?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** As the need arises, yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the hon. Minister indicate how many forensic pathologists we have at the Forensic Science Centre?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** We have three forensic pathologists presently.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And their salaries are included in this?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** No, they are contracted employees.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many ballistic officers we have within there?

**11.15 a.m.**

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We have five officers working on the Integrated Ballistics Information System.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do you think that is enough, bearing in mind that you take sometimes three years before you can get true outputs from the ballistics division in terms of solving the crime scene in terms of the ballistics? We understand sometimes it takes up to three years to get that before the court. If you have that amount, do you think it is necessary therefore, to increase that amount to reduce that waiting time from three years to less than a few months?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We are monitoring the work processes and we will adjust them or increase them as necessary.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Does this salary include the new custodian of the Forensic

Science Centre?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. It does not. That again would be a contracted employee.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Mr. Minister, through you, Madam Chairman, we all know that the detection rate for crime is very low in the country and these salaries that you have here seem to just reflect business as usual. Have you considered or done any kind of analysis to determine the range of new skills and abilities that will be required in order to improve the detection rate in the country and to speed up justice in the country by this supportive forensic centre? And have you done such a study or is anything included here at all or are we business as usual with the same people and the same positions?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is a combination of activities with respect to increase in the detection rate, not only through the Forensic Science Centre, but by way of the police service themselves. So that there is serious Special Evidence Recovery Unit, the capacity for that which is almost akin to dealing with, for instance, weapons. They do the first preliminary tracing of weapons before it goes to forensic for deeper training. So we are building the capacity in the serious Special Evidence Recovery Unit and also, trying to build the capacity at the Forensic Science Centre. But there are other activities being pursued by the police service to improve the detection rate including training and developing crime scene investigators and so on. So there is a number of activities really to target the whole aspect of improving and increasing the detection rate.

**Dr. Rambachan:** One follow-up?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.



**Dr. Rambachan:** You would agree, Mr. Minister, that is exactly what has been done from year to year and yet the detection rate continues to fall or varies. So that are you—I guess, are you agreeing with me that we have really not done anything to deepen the investigative process at the level of the Forensic Science Centre with the new skills and abilities that people need in order to detect crime?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. I do not agree with you. I think that we are actually making an effort to improve it. And even the whole question of the DNA and the DNA custodian is part and parcel of that effort. So we are seeing a change in the way we do business. Right? So I am saying to you that there a number of efforts taking place to deal with the whole detection rate and evidence recovery and so on.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you have done no formal study on the new—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. I have not done any formal study.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister, we have seen time and time again several members of staff from the Forensic Science Centre including pathologists coming out speaking about the bottleneck, as my friend from Naparima spoke to, and this has really affected the work of the police service and also affected a lot of families, in that sometimes bodies go missing, sometimes the actual autopsy takes weeks before it is actually completed. Is there anything at this point with respect to restructuring the organization, that is the Forensic Science Centre, in terms of change management happening under your Ministry with respect to the Forensic Science Centre to increase its level of efficiency?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. And let me just correct one. There was no incident of a body went missing at the forensic, contrary to reports. We are, in fact, looking

at, one, looking at the infrastructural arrangement at the Forensic Science Centre, to the end where we are looking at moving, in fact, the exact location where it is right now because the present location does not give us the ability to expand. And so we are looking at a new site, acquiring a new site, a new location to expand the structure and also look at the different kind of institution within the Forensic Science Centre not only in terms structure, but in terms of staffing.

We do have—we have included the DNA unit which in fact we have to expand right now, and also the Integrated Ballistic Information System, there is also expansion in that in terms of looking for modern and newer technologies going forward to improve our sort of detection rate insofar as tracing of firearms is concerned. So we are looking both in terms of the infrastructural development and also technology advancement within the Forensic Science Centre.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, with all due respect, we have heard time and time again some of these promises being made. Would you be in a position at this time to give us a timeline with respect to whether or not these facilities have been identified in terms of going forward over the next fiscal year? And if so, if you can give us some details? You may not have the information at your fingertips, but it would certainly be useful for us. I know that the hon. Attorney General during the piloting of the Family and Children Division Bill he had spoken about some of these facilities to increase the efficiency. And here we are months later and we are still speaking about it. So if you can give some timelines that will be very useful in knowing that some of these plans and projects will actually come to fruition over the next financial year.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We have already—we are looking at two parcels of land right now in terms of acquisition. We have not decided which one, but we are

looking at the advantages and disadvantages that they would provide for us. In terms of timeline, we will be acquiring, at least, the property next year, the design phase and so on and starting the project hopefully by the end of next year. But again, it is all based on the timeline for acquisition and design and so on.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A follow-up to my colleague from Tabaquite, could you give us an idea of the amount of personnel in the Forensic Science Centre?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The establishment of the Forensic Science Centre stands at 62. There are 21 vacancies.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do you have any idea of the breakdown? If you can just give us the details.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sorry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A breakdown, if you have any details.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are actually 83 posts in the establishment. Out of that there is a breakdown of 62 bodies in the establishment and 21 vacancies, giving you the total of 83.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give us a breakdown of the 62 in terms of ballistic officers?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. I do not have that breakdown, but I can provide it for you in terms of the various posts. I can give you the posts and their—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And my last question: is there any area within here, any line item that would give us some comfort in terms of the requirement of the Forensic Science Centre to do the DNA typing of all security service officers which is under the law? Has that been completed or still incomplete?

**Madam Chairman:** We are under forensic 009?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. Yes, Madam Chairman.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The question of the DNA is being processed. It has not started, but it is being processed right now.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And that is why, Madam Chair, I asked the hon. Minister, is there any area under the financial aspect that could facilitate an expeditious completion of that requirement.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. That is catered for under the Goods and Services Vote.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And what the timeline you expect to complete the DNA?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Within—during the fiscal year 2017 it will be pursued.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

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

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, through you, to the Minister. The Forensic Science Centre usually deals with murders after the fact and basically dead bodies. Is there any structured relationship with the police that would allow the Forensic Science Centre to deal with kidnapping cases?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I am not following your question. Could you give me a little more explanation?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Usually the Forensic Science Centre deals with a crime after the fact and generally in the case of kidnappings what you have is, it takes some time before either the resolution or something very negative happens. Is there any way—is there a structured relationship with the police in the course of their investigation of a kidnapping that they would play a role, the Forensic Science Centre in it?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is a working relationship. There is an exact nexus between what the police service does and what the Forensic Science Centre does. With respect to kidnapping in particular, the Anti-Kidnapping Squad of the police

service deals with kidnapping, but also there is always coordination between what happens between the units, between the Anti-Kidnapping Unit and not only for the Forensic Science Centre, but other agencies. Because, I mean, when you look the incidence of crime it touches on a number of different areas, so cooperation and collaboration takes place within the units so affected in national security including the Forensic Science Centre.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Has the Forensic Science Centre the capability, the technical competence, et cetera, the structured organization to do that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. It does.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 021, Lifeguard Service page 128. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, over the last year we have had a series of drownings especially on the east coast. And in reference to Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, can you identify whether, first, what is the current complement of lifeguards that we have deployed on our nation's beaches? And if there is a shortage in your estimation, what is that number?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The current establishment of lifeguards stands at 201. There are roughly 130 lifeguards and 70 maintenance workers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many beaches they cover?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They cover the nine beaches throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Or 12 including Tobago. Sorry.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, could you advise if the complement of lifeguards is adequate? That is my first question and based on it I will ask another.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is always room for improvement, but in terms of

the adequacy, with respect to the areas that are being patrolled, they have proven to be adequate.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I beg to differ in terms of being adequate based on the beaches that have been identified and, of course, the number of incidents that have taken place. And with that I am a little bit concerned as to the decrease in their salaries in 01.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, so the question?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** What I am asking, will the hon. Minister be reviewing the number of lifeguards that are currently patrolling our beaches?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There will always be continuous reviewing, not only of the strength of the lifeguards, but on some of the beaches that are assigned right now. Because you realize, of course, that and the Member for Mayaro mentioned it a while ago, some of the incidents that took place were in fact areas that were not patrolled by lifeguards.

So we are reviewing that because there are areas where people frequent that are not being patrolled by lifeguards. So in terms of an assessment, we will definitely be looking to see whether we can expand the amount of areas to facilitate bathers who do not normally. While we encourage them, we encourage the citizens as much as possible to use the areas that are patrolled by the lifeguards, but most of the incidents took place where there were no lifeguards patrolling. So we encourage citizens, at least, to use the areas that are under the control of the lifeguards. And, of course, follow their instructions. But we are going to look at it in its entirety.

**11.30 a.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The lifeguards were removed from Ministry of Tourism and placed under Ministry of National Security. That is fine,

so you have to deal with that reality. But, having regard to the nature of your organization, I am told by the lifeguards that they are so low down on the ladder that they cannot access the management of the Ministry. So, I just thought I would bring that to your attention. Because they moved from a situation where they had easy access because of the structure of the tourism Ministry to the national security Ministry where they are, in the hierarchy of things—

**Madam Chairman:** The question is?

**Mr. Singh:**—they are so low down. So, what are you going to do so as to improve the accessibility of lifeguards to the structure and hierarchy of the Ministry of National Security?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is no one in the Ministry of National Security or no department that is low down. There are no stepchildren or anything within the Ministry of National Security. [*Laughter*] They are all part and parcel of the Ministry of National Security family, and in fact there is one of the deputy PS that lifeguards fall under with equal amount of attention throughout the agencies.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, I will follow-up.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Item 015, Cadet Force, page 128, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. To the Minister, I am looking at Sub-Items 01, 02, 04 and 29, and I am looking at all these decreases in expenditure, are you comfortable with an organization like the cadet force that plays a pivotal role in putting our young, in particular males—well, you know it is male and female now—into a pathway that would lead them to become productive citizens? And I am just questioning the cost in the allocation here, when we look at the increased expenditures in other items like the prison service and whatnot.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** While you may see some decreases there, based on the

thrust of the cadet force to expand its remit. As that expansion takes place money would be vired accordingly into the vote.

**Mr. Charles:** So again these estimates are just figures, just thrown out?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, is there an area within that cadet force—well, whether it is salaries, wages, et cetera—that you can dedicate to assisting the Ministry of Education in expanding the cadet force within schools? During our time we increased from 32 schools to 42 schools, and we found difficulty. Can you—and the Minister of Education, I am sure will want more cadet force within the schools—put an area there to focus on expanding the cadet force within our schools? That is absolutely necessary.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is a focus right now by way of the Cadet Force Advisory Committee and the Commandant of the cadet force to increase the amount of schools that participate in the cadet force exercise. So, there is an exercise right now for those schools.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Following from my colleague for Naparima, if you are cutting the wages, and salaries, and so on, as you have done, where would you get the personnel to implement those issues when you cut the amount of personnel?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** As I mentioned a while ago, as the cadet force continues to expand, the appropriate money would be vired into the vote accordingly, as they expand.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, are you giving a commitment, hon. Minister, to work swiftly to help the Ministry of Education increase the cadet service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will continue to look at the remit of the cadet force, a unit that plays a very important part in discipline of the young people of Trinidad and Tobago.



**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I recognize the contribution of the cadet force in terms of students and school development, and recently we were advised of a unique project which we were promised will be expanded to other areas, that is in the Laventille area, the SIP, the School Improvement Project, can you tell us how many of the secondary schools, of the totality in that area, there are, and if all of those schools do have a cadet force? And, if not, do you intend to ensure there is an expansion of all the schools that will be available to access the cadet force?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would have to provide you with those figures at another time. But, however, I can tell you that the intention is to include almost—if we can do it in all the schools in Trinidad and Tobago with a cadet force unit, because we believe that that in itself allows the young people in the secondary schools to be placed in a sort of disciplined environment; at the end of the day they will contribute in our own fight against crime, and the movement of the young people from deviant behaviour and so on.

**Mr. Karim:** As a follow-up, may I also ask if you—I am sure you are saying all, but I want to make a special request for those in the Enterprise area, in the enterprise improvement project.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They would also be included in the ambit of all, certainly.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 016, Air Guard, page 129; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 129; Item 001, General Administration, pages 129 to 130. Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you very much, Madam. Under 08 related to Goods and Services, General Administration, I note that the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, and we would like to find out how many properties are leased or rented, and what is the monthly cost of each of these properties?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will certainly provide you with that information at a later time. I do not have it at this point in time.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** If I may continue, please.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes you may.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** How many storage spaces are rent/lease, and what is the monthly cost of each of these?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would also provide you with that information.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Does the Ministry intend to rent any new office accommodation, under the same Item?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Not under the same Item, and not at this time. There is no projection.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Under this line Item, no?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Can the Minister kindly explain what accounted for the increase in the allocation for this Sub-Item from \$11 million in fiscal 2016, your revised numbers, to \$12.8 million in fiscal 2017? Eleven million to \$12.830 million under 08. 2016, \$11 million to \$12.8 million, 2017?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This was based on the rental of one property for three units in the Ministry, the anti-money laundering and CFT unit, the cybersecurity and the Citizen Security Programme.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you. Under the Item relating to contract employment—but before I get there, under rent/lease vehicles which is 09, Rent/Lease Vehicles and Equipment, I note that there is a \$25 million—well, in fact a \$60 million increase with respect to renting and leasing vehicles, the \$60

million is to come in provisional for 2017. Would the Minister kindly tell us what may account for this increase of \$60 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The bulk of this figure has to do with the closed-circuit television camera system. We have increased the camera system by roughly 800 cameras over the last fiscal year, and it has to do with the rental associated with the closed-circuit TV.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Associated with the TV.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, associated with the CCTV, that is the bulk of the expenditure there.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay. And in 2016 there was a \$25 million increase over 2015, your revised for 2016 is at \$25 million. Would that be for CCTV cameras as well?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The bulk of the expenditure is based on the increase of the cameras as we go along. For the last year we had an increase of about 800 cameras.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** In 2015?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** In 2016.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** In 2016, fiscal, and what is the proposal for fiscal 2017, please? How many more we intend to get with the \$60 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I cannot give you the exact, but we intend to increase our coverage throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, and there are still some areas that do not have coverage, so we intend to increase the coverage, and that is where the bulk of the expenditure would take place.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Would the Minister be kind enough to tell us whether this is contracted out? And if so, to whom, for the provision of the CCTV?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The bulk of this is to the Telecommunications Services

of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** TSTT?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Under, 16, Contract Employment, again, there is an increase over the 2015 fiscal to \$34 million, a \$10 million increase there by the revised for 2016. Would the Minister be kind enough to give us details with respect to that increase?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** For which?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Contract Employment. This is for fiscal 2016, there was an increase of about \$10 million, for Contract Employment, would the Minister be kind enough to tell us—maybe it might help us, first the Minister indicates well there were X number in 2015 and that additional \$10 million was used for, plus Y, maybe we could start with the numbers. Would the numbers increase to account for this increased \$10 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide you with those figures at a later time.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Sure. Then when we get into next year, well this new fiscal year, it goes down to \$18 million, so, again, it would have been increased from this I am reading. From fiscal 2015 to 2016, and then it is dropping down by \$16.3 million. Minister, perhaps, how many persons were employed on contract in 2015, in fiscal 2016 and proposed to be in 2017?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide you with the information.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** That may give us an idea.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Certainly.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And if you will be kind enough also Minister to provide the category of workers so employed on contract?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Will do.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The different categories that would have been employed for these moneys?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sure.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And finally on this Item of 02/001, General Administration, line Item No. 19, which deals with Official Entertainment. I note that there is a big increase in official entertainment, the actual number for 2015 was less than a million, \$991,000. It was estimated in 2016 that you would spend just about \$1 million, but the revised estimates now says in fiscal year 2016, which is a completed fiscal year, \$4 million was actually spent. What accounts for this increase for the revised estimate, and then I see it is being dropped again to less than a million in the new fiscal year? So, what accounts for the increase from \$991,000 actual in 2015 to \$4 million in fiscal 2016 for official entertainment?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The actual expenditure for 2016 was in fact \$1 million. Although that was the revised estimate, the actual expenditure was in fact \$1 million. Hence the reason why you would see the projection for 2017 being slightly less than a million dollars. So, the actual expenditure was in fact a million dollars.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** For 2016?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** A million dollars for 2016. While the revised estimates says \$4 million the actual spend, the actual expenditure was in fact \$1 million.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So, this revised estimate is wrong?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, that is an estimate.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Sure, so the estimate is wrong?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, I did not say that. Those are your words, I did not say that.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Well, Minister, the estimate is saying that your revised estimates of \$4 million, are we now saying that we spent \$1 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, actual expenditure was \$1 million.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Was \$1 million.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is right.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay, same way you are saying it is not correct.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister just to take line Item 16 a “lil bit” further, if you would be kind enough to provide us similarly with this request being made to other Ministries of the positions that have been discontinued, positions that were suspended, positions that had expired from the area of contract employment during the fiscal period 2015/2016?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They will be so provided.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You said that you placed 800 cameras in the last year throughout Trinidad?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is it possible for us to know—and I am not asking for street names, but for example I am very interested in finding out how many cameras were placed outside of Port of Spain? For example, Chaguanas, or Couva, or other areas?

**Hon. Member:** Arima.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Arima? That is one thing. Secondly, are we sure that all of these cameras are operational, especially the cameras on the Beetham Highway, are those cameras operational? And thirdly, do you have any issues with the quality of resolution of these cameras in terms of the visuals that are fed back to the main centre?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Generally I would say that cameras are placed

throughout Trinidad and Tobago. I may be able to tell you by region, but I would not definitely point out exactly where the cameras are. I mean, you could see the cameras, but again, I cannot tell you exactly where they are, because there are other situations that we have to consider, of course, and the technology that we are adopting is quite good. There is always room for improvement, because as you are well aware technology improves as we go along. The cameras are monitored 24/7, and therefore produce the kind of output that is desired.

**11.45. a.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** One more question on the very Item 09, Vehicles and Equipment. Now, the police service does have its complement of vehicles and over the years I could recall in that five years about 500 vehicles were provided while we were in office. Now, in this Vehicles and Equipment, Rent/Lease, are there vehicles here that are rented for undercover operations? And if so, how many vehicles are rented for undercover operations? How many exist now in terms of being vehicles leased for that, and how are the suppliers of these vehicles chosen to supply these vehicles?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Let me just draw your attention that this is General Administration we are under, eh, 001—General Administration.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay, so it would not be here. I will get back to you with police.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, Madam Chair. The question was asked by the Leader of the Opposition.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. Can we go on to Item 002, Fire Service, page 131?

**Dr. Rambachan:** You said Fire Service?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes. Item 002—

**Dr. Rambachan:** General Administration.

**Madam Speaker:** We are finished with General Administration. We are now on to Item 002, Fire Service, page, 131.

**Dr. Rambachan:** [*Inaudible*] 36, under General Administration—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I said Item 001, General Administration, pages 129 to 130. I took questions—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, I will accept your ruling but I was trying to catch your attention, because there is an extraordinary expenditure there, of \$68 million, revised, that I wanted to know what was that extraordinary expenditure for.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. Item 002—I am so sorry. Fire Service, page 131.

**Mr. Charles:** 002, Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, \$15 million, an increase of \$9 million. Perhaps the Minister could enlighten us as to what is the cause of this increase and what procurement procedures are in place to ensure—where these buildings are and who are the landlords?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Presently the Fire Service is looking at facilities to rent with respect to the conditions at the Fire Service Headquarters, and also with respect to Chaguanas, to some extent. Additionally, the fire station at Point Fortin is in a state. So they are looking at areas right now. So the process has started to get these temporary rental accommodation while we construct the new fire stations for the respective areas.

**Mr. Charles:** But in respect of Point Fortin, there is no allocation for rebuilding, and I see no allocation for the headquarters or Chaguanas.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, there is for building. You may be looking at the wrong place with Point Fortin.

**Mr. Charles:** There is.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is. There is.



**Mr. Charles:** We will get to that.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In relation to 37, Janitorial Services, I see that in 2015 it was \$1,328,886 and it moved to \$4.8 million in the 2016 Revised Estimates, and there is a further projected increase in 2017 for an additional \$1.2 million. Could the Minister give us a breakdown of what is happening there, and what is accounting for this?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That has to do with the new fire stations that will be coming on stream, so there is an increase in janitorial services.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, in terms of the Chaguanas Fire Station—I am under Item 12, Materials and Supplies, and I hope that it is going to be accommodated; or under Repairs and Maintenance or under Extraordinary Expenditure. My question is based wherever it fits. The fire service, the trucks now, have to pass through a very narrow street and come into the town to get out of the town of Chaguanas to fight fires, when, in fact, they could get access to the highway where there is a big gate, and less than a quarter mile from that they can turn on the highway to come down the highway to go south. Is there any provision here to accommodate those lights and so on, that will allow the vehicles, rather than using those very narrow roads and taking longer to get out, to get on the highway immediately from the Chaguanas Fire Station?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is no allocation for that but I will take your suggestion on board and pass it on to the Chief Fire Officer.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, I just want to tell you, with your permission, that the response of the fire service in Chaguanas has been that there are old vehicles there blocking up the road and when I was there I made provision and I cleared up that place where you open up on the highway, and nobody has moved to do it. And therefore the population suffers by the longer time the vehicles are taking to

get out of the fire station.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Noted. Thank you very much for your contribution.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** There is an increase of \$11 million under Uniforms. Could the hon. Minister give an explanation for this?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The increase has to do with the replacement of expired uniforms, suits, et cetera and recruitment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just replacement and new—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Replacement and, of course, new recruits.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That has nothing to do with any proposed new uniforms for the—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Not that I am aware of.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Item 22, Short-Term Employment. I see an increase by half a million dollars. There is a note that says: "Includes provisions for Fire Wardens." Can you indicate what categories of employee would constitute short-term employment? And if you also look at Line Item 16, Contract Employment has only been allocated \$252,000 which is much less, or almost less than half of short-term employment.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The short-term employment here refers to fire wardens.

**Mr. Padarath:** Purely fire wardens?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. They are employed during the dry season when they are—at that period—during that period. So it is really short-term employment. So it pertains to—the bulk of the employment here, they are, in fact, the fire wardens or fire guardians.

**Mr. Padarath:** Can you indicate how these fire wardens are selected? Are there persons on the establishment that are brought on as fire wardens? Or is it that you outsource in terms of advertising and so on?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The positions are advertised and people respond to the advertisement and selected accordingly.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at Sub-Item 17, Training, \$1 million. I am looking at Janitorial Services, Item 37, \$6 million; Promotions, Publicity and Printing, \$3 million. Is the Minister comfortable in terms of the prioritization that training in the fire service is being accorded the priority that it deserves?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The allocation under Training, if there is an increase or there is additional training, money could always be vired into it. But this, in fact, gives us a starting point to deal with training, both internal and external training.

**Mr. Charles:** In respect to Item 08—and I did ask before—the \$15 million, could we get an idea—would the Minister care to enlighten us as to the procurement procedure that would be used to identify the landlords? And if they have done that already, the names of the landlords?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This would be done through the Property and Real Estate Division so there would be transparency with respect to that.

**Mr. Charles:** So it has not started as yet.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. That is what I indicated a while ago.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 002, 13, Maintenance for Vehicles. Would the Minister be kind enough to tell us who currently maintains the vehicles? Under the fire service, Line Sub-Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, is it done in-house or is it done externally?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is done in-house by the fire service engineering department.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So this money is for the engineering department, this \$12 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It includes parts and services—parts and repairs.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, Line Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services, we see an increase by \$1 million. Could you give us an indication of what these Other Contracted Services would entail?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It includes the installation of fire hydrants throughout Port of Spain, I think. Not, I think, I know that Port of Spain is one of the first areas. Having done their review of the state of the fire hydrants, not only Port of Spain, but throughout Trinidad and Tobago, there is an exercise that will be undertaken in 2017 to replace and install new fire hydrants.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, I am happy for the explanation. In light of the Mayaro Fire Station coming on stream, similarly, would this Other Contracted Services deal with some of the infrastructure needs in Mayaro?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The contracted services will be done wherever it is required throughout the fire service—in whichever station that it is required.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, thank you again. Minister, Line Sub-Item 36 Extraordinary Expenditure, an increase by \$30,000. Could you indicate again what would entail extraordinary expenditure?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Extraordinary expenditure includes things like burials, fire service officers who may have died during the time of service. So it includes burial to a large extent.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 002, Line Sub-Item 23, Fees. Could the Minister care to indicate the reasons for the increase in this allocation, and what exactly is it used for? What services do you pay these fees for?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The fees here include such things like the renewal of driver's permits for fire officers who drive the service vehicles and so on.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And the reason for the increase?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is an increase in the—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** In the fees?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:**—the consequent increase in terms of the recruitment and, of course, the establishment of the fire service with respect to drivers and so on. So there is an increase in the allocation; the increase in terms of the heavy T drivers. Because of the increase in recruitment, they are increasing the positions. Additionally, because of the other fire stations coming on board where there is an increase in staff, therefore there is an increase in drivers, increase in vehicles, heavy T and other types of vehicles. So licensing is required for them accordingly.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister did indicate that the—I am dealing with Sub-Item 17, Training. You did indicate that that \$1 million allocation is subject to change depending on the training procedure.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Does the fire service have a training policy? And who gets—what is the procedure? What is the process? What is the priority for which officers are trained? And do they get—I know that there is a two-year, I think, COSTAATT training course together with others. Is there any training at the level of tertiary education? And are there any limits per fire officer or officer in the fire service? In other words, is there an overall macro policy that guides training?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes there is a training policy in the fire service that allows for training from the entry level throughout to the senior position. So there is development training, there is individual training and, of course, there is, what you call, collective training that takes place throughout, including tertiary education.

**Mr. Charles:** Could you tell us how many officers above the rank of FSO have been trained at the tertiary level consistent with this policy?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide you with that. I do not have that information at hand but I certainly can provide you with that.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**12.00 noon**

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004 Prison Service, page 132.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 40, I see there is an allocation of \$16 million for Food at Institutions. Is this the amount that is spent in order to feed the prisoners at the different institutions? Is this reflected of that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is the allocation that is used for meals and so on for the prisoners and prison officers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And prison officers. How many prisoners are fed, on the average, with this \$16 million for the year?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The prison population right now stands at about 3,600. I can get the exact figure, but I know it is about 3,600-plus right now. I can give you the exact figure, but I know it is about 3,600-plus I am sure.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. So if you take \$16 million and you divide it by let us say—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** But you cannot do that.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—400 days, you are spending \$44,000 a day on the average to feed the prison population, and with 3,600 prisoners you are therefore spending about \$13 per prisoner per day? Is that realistic?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** What is the question?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The question is: I am wondering how you are feeding 3,600 prisoners, plus your prison officers, with \$16 million, \$40,000 a day, for 44,000 if

you divide by 365, and when I worked it out it is about \$14?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is all a question of managing the resources, understanding the economy, understanding the situation I am sure, and therefore, within the prison we also have some attempts in terms of vegetable growing and husbandry and so on taking place. So that also supplements.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the prison officers themselves are also beneficiaries of this. They are fed three times a day also?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, no.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, I am asking a genuine question, please.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Prison officers are fed when they are on duty. It is not three times a day. It all depends. But the bulk of this is for the prisoners.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Item 43, under Prison Service, Security Services. It said substantial amount, what does that represent? Does that represent things like transportation of prisoners, et cetera?

**Dr. Rambachan:** It does represent transportation of prisoners from the prison to the various courts throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Item 28 Other Contracted Services. Does that include the “justice on time”? And if so, what is the cost to the prison service of supplying that transport of prisoners to the—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** “Justice on time” is the one I just answered with respect to “Security Services”, moving the prisoners from the prison to various courts.

**Mr. Charles:** Right, and what is the cost of that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This one here is actually in terms of sanitation services and so on. The one that you referred to, 28 Contracted Services. So it is sanitation contracts and so on; waste disposals and so on.

**Mr. Charles:** Just to be clear, the “justice on time”, the cost of it is how much?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That comes under Item 43 that was raised a while ago.

**Mr. Charles:** And that is \$46 million we spent on the “justice on time” annually?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is right.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005 Regiment, page 133.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Similar questions with respect to line Sub-Items 08 and 09, which deals with the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, and Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment. So through you, Madam, to the hon. Minister, the question will be how many properties are leased/rented, and from whom; and the procurement process that may have been used to lease and rent these properties under 08 and, of course, similarly 09 for vehicles and equipment? So a breakdown of the Sub-Items under 08 and 09.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide you with the information.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Charles:** Prison Service?

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are at Item 005 Regiment. Member for Caroni East are we at Item 005?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. Sub-Item 40, Food at Institutions for the Regiment, is it \$40 million? Do you have a sole caterer, or do you have many caterers; and how do you procure for the provision of that \$40 million in food?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The Regiment provides and prepares their own meal.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 005, looking at Sub-Item 40 Food at Institutions, and unlike the one for the prison service where it remain constant because of prudent management as the Minister has indicate, would the Minister be kind enough to tell what happened here, the reason for the decrease in allocation for this by \$7



million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Again, given the economic state of the country—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** It was not as good as for the prison.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is a question of managing the resources effectively and efficiently. There has been cut throughout the Ministries including the defence force.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Minister—I am sorry, Madam, through you—you know, the answer sounds really nice and so on with a bit of humour, but seriously I would ask again if you would kindly indicate why it is that you are now cutting this by \$7 million? Why? Is it that there is going to be less people being fed; is it that you are using a different system of procurement; or you are using different suppliers and so on? What does it mean? And to follow up with that, what oversight mechanisms does the Ministry have in place with respect to value for money for this Sub-Item?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is definitely a question of reducing the kind of waste and mismanagement so that the defence force, they are forced to—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And that is a very laudable thing. If you could kindly tell us exactly what is being done, or to be done, to cut out the waste, the corruption and the mismanagement.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And that is definitely handled by the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commanding Officer of the Regiment, so that in managing the resources they were taking a very—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** It is very nice to say the words, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Words are also action-oriented. So I tell you, when I say that they will take the necessary—they will do so to be prudent managers of the

resources available to them during this fiscal year, as we all have to.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam, can the Minister kindly give one example of a specific action which has resulted for this? Minister, this has not happened yet you know. This is your proposed for fiscal 2017. So really all these things will not count. Again, I ask: what oversight mechanisms, through you, Madam, if it cannot be answered now?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** One of the mechanisms that will be implemented throughout the defence force is with respect to joint purchasing of items across the coast guard, the army and the air guard, as opposed to individual purchase, and that again will lead to a reduction in cost, economies of scale and so on. So there are different measures that are being adopted. Again, prudent management.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Minister. You see, do not let the Member for Diego Martin North/East mislead you to become facetious like him. That is a proper answer and I thank you for it.

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members, this is a very big Head and for us to be able to complete what we have to do today, I would really like us to complete this Head before we go to lunch. So lunch is dependent on what time we finish this Head. Member for Caroni East. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, with great respect, you cannot intimidate Members. You cannot. You cannot with great respect to you.

**Madam Chairman:** It was not meant to intimidate. It was for us to be efficiently managing our time.

**Mr. Singh:** If not intimidate, deny.

**Madam Chairman:** Deny lunch? Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, in the context of this macrocephalic Head, I want to ask Sub-Item 60 Travelling. Would the hon. Minister indicate this travelling of

\$10.7 million for the year, what does that entail for the Regiment? What type of travelling is that, accounts for \$10.7 million expenditure for the Regiment? Item 60.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That includes travelling allowance for members of the Regiment. As part of their increase of salary, there is also an increase in allowances. So their arrears also catered under this vote.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What about the component of travelling of high/top officers abroad and so on, where is that inclusion here?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, no, no. This is purely home to duty travelling which is part of the terms and conditions of members of the defence force including the Regiment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, and there is no provision here for the external travelling?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It does not come under this vote. This is actually home to duty travelling.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Following up on Item 40 again, Food at Institutions, the Minister is saying that waste, corruption, mismanagement is what he is cutting off. In 2015, the amount spent was \$39,072,000. Under your watch in 2016, are you saying that there was \$928,000 more waste, mismanagement and corruption?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, I will not say that.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line 23, what does "Fees" here represent?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This represents brokerage fees, customs fees, association fees, et cetera—association and professional bodies and so on.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006 Coast Guard, which is at page 134.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am asking about the Food at Institutions, Sub-Item 40 again.

In 2015 the expenditure of \$16.87 million, and in 2016 there is a revised estimate expenditure of \$28 million which is approximately close to \$12 million, what would account for that over-expenditure, waste, mismanagement, corruption? Could you give us an idea what accounts for the \$12 million increase in expenditure for food for the Coast Guard?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** During 2016 there was an increase in operations especially under the maritime side, which meant that people were out to sea much more, and in addition the Coast Guard was also involved in land-based operations together with the Regiment. So they had an increase in operations in the maritime environment which meant that people were working much more, and therefore, there was an increase in that allowance.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. So now if there is a cut of \$10 million, you are coming back to \$18 million, does it mean then that you are cutting back your external offshore type of patrol—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, no. Not at all. It means that we now have to exercise a little more prudent management. As I mentioned a while ago, part of the strategy going forward is to have the joint purchasing across the defence force that will reduce the kind of expenditure, but we will not cut back on operations which, of course, is our point—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you are admitting that there was no prudent management in 2016? It means that there was not proper and prudent management in 2016 if you—yeah. *[Interruption]* That is unacceptable.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 37 Janitorial Services, in 2015 it was in fact \$809,401 and then it moved to \$2 million in 2016, and I see a further movement projected, for an additional \$2 million, to \$4 million in 2017. What is accounting for that, Mr. Minister, this drastic increase?

**12.15 p.m.**

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The contract with MTS was being reviewed and so there is a projection going forward with respect to the janitorial service for 2017.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** “Ah doh follow yuh.” You said the contract was being—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** With MTS.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—with MTS was being reviewed for what purpose?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And the projection that there will be an increase in cost for 2017 with respect to Janitorial Services.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So there is an increase in buildings to be cleaned or what is this accounting—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The cost of services and there are also some arrears to be paid that were brought forward from the last fiscal year.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So there are arrears in this figure here?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are arrears also.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** How much are the arrears?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can provide you with that figure, I do not have it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Mr. Minister, you said that the increase in 2016 to \$28 million from \$16.8 million was due to the number of operations you had on the sea, external operations on the sea.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And land.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And land. But these operations, increase in operations is due to the fact that you had available to you, the Damen vessels and more vessels that had been acquired under the previous administration and that you are now using them more extensively on the sea.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Operations are not due to vessels, they are due to threat environment, due to what is happening in the environment and therefore, we

increase the operational tempo and we use whatever is required to conduct the operations.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And were those vessels available to you then?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We will continue to use whatever is available to do the operations whether on land, sea or air.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And did it include the new vessels?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It includes all the vessels in the coast guards, all the assets.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Coast Guard, page 134. Item 007, Immigration, page 135.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 43, Security Services, \$16 million to be spent in fiscal year 2017. Does this include the “Justice on Time” and if so, has the Ministry done a cost-benefit analysis in terms of whether it should provide its transportation or rely on private agencies? And lastly in terms of that question, who is the fortunate contractor who gets the “Justice on Time” contract? \$46 million and possibly \$16 million here if at all.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The increase in Security Services has to do with the Immigration move to the new building on Richmond Street.

**Mr. Charles:** It does not include transportation of detainees?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, no, Immigration does not get involved in transportation of detainees.

**Mr. Charles:** All right. Would you be in a position to give us the name of the contractor for “Justice on Time”?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It includes courier services also. The name of the contractor, I can provide that for you, I do not have it here.

**Mr. Charles:** Right, thank you. Item 36 Extraordinary Expenditure, \$1.6 million,

that increased by \$600,000. Could you give us some clarification?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The bulk of that has to do with repatriation of personnel from the detention centre.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. And Item 08 Rent/Lease, \$12.9 million, an increase of \$1.9. One would have thought that in cutting out—\$2 million. One would have thought that in cutting out waste, mismanagement and corruption that you would seek to curtail cost in this cost item Rent/Lease. And the follow-up question is, what procurement procedures were used and who are the landlords?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** During fiscal year 2017, we intend to reduce the amount of rental as we fully occupy the new immigration building so this is in fact a projection. With respect to the landlords, I will have to provide you with that information.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. But if you intend to use the new building, why is there an increase in the rent? One would expect that as you move to the new facility that the building that you were renting, that rent would not occur.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** As we move to the building, as we continue to move, then, of course, the demand for rent would decrease. But additionally, there is also a move in San Fernando to move from the present facility which is in a state of disrepair to another rental facility in Lady Hailes Avenue in San Fernando. So that is, again, another rental. I will provide you with the landlord facilities and so on at a later time.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, through you, to the Minister, Sub-Item 16 Contract Employment, again, we have a fairly substantial amount here and under Other Contracted Services 28, again, we have a fairly substantial amount, and I just want to understand what kind of contracted services we are talking about in

Immigration.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This has to do with services provided by MTS, for instance, Rentokil and waste disposal.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That would be contracted services. What about employment?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Employment has to do with the employment of business operation assistance. In the main, it has to do with employment of business operation assistance.

**Dr. Tewarie:** But what does that mean, really, in terms of employment of people because it is not listed as Contracted Services.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is Contracted Employment. That is what you are dealing with, 16, right?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, so Contracted Employment means not the contracting of individuals in employment but of a service. Is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, the service is under 28 Other Contracted Services.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, I understand that.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** But under 16 are individuals who are under contract.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah, well that is what I am asking. What kinds of jobs because immigration officers—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Those are like receptionist and so on or business assistant.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, administrative support.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Administrative, yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. And also the issue of Security Services for Immigration. What is that meant to be? How does it work? I am just trying to understand in relation to the immigration rule.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The Security Services are with the move to the new



building, for instance, on Richmond Street.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right, so you have to put security officers?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We had to put security in place for that.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I understand, okay, fine.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, just coming back to line 36, Extraordinary Expenditure, how many persons were expatriated for that period?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide you with that figure.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. And the second question, line 51, Relocation of Overseas Staff, can you expand on what relocation of overseas staff, what it entails?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That has to do with immigration attaches at the various high commissions and embassies abroad. There are times when they have to relocate with respect to change of duties and so on and change of locations.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. So I notice there was a decrease. Is it that we will no longer have—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is an estimate. There will always be some kind of relocation depending on the situation or—that is something that is always monitored, it is an estimate.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 16, under the Contract Employment, that \$6.5 million, does that only include BOAs or does that include any contract for immigration officers?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, not immigration officers. Immigration officers are dealt with under salaries and so on. It is based on other contracted employment that becomes necessary within the Immigration department.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On line 17, hon. Minister, Training, has Immigration got a training policy and the persons who are

trained, what system you have in place so that if they are given tertiary education, and it is paid by the State that they return to Immigration? What do you have the place? In other words, it is mandatory, do they return to Immigration or can they go elsewhere?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Immigration has a training policy that allows training for immigration officers at various levels. You would have seen recently where we had an awareness training, courtesy training, professional training, for immigration officers positioned at Piarco and so on, at points of entry. So there are development training, individual training, and at times, collective training throughout.

With respect to persons proceeding on training, there is a national policy that provides that if the Government pays for your training, you are “binded” in a certain way and that falls also under immigration officers if they are exposed to training.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With training, since we have an increase of \$400,000, training also impacts upon the level of productivity. Can I ask whether that has led to a reduction in the time from filing to issuance of the passport and in that regard, can you tell us what that time is like now?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The training has, in fact, shown improvement, for instance, at the immigration officers at the airport based on the recent training that they received. In terms of processes and the way in which we do business, training has also been done there. But in terms of the evaluation, I can give you the results of that with respect to the timeline that it has taken.

There has been some improvement in the time taken from application to receipt of passport. There has been some improvement in that and we continue to improve that as we take advantage of the new environment and the new building

that we have occupied. You will find that there are more facilities being in the new building that allow us to speed up the transaction and the application process.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, as a follow-up, can you tell us what is the status of the backlog? How many passports or what is the quantity that we are looking at and the time that you will take to address that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide you with that but I can say that now it takes roughly about six weeks from the time of application to receive your passport. If it is expedited, I think we can process it within a two-week or three-week period.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chairman. I just notice a line Item 99 Employee Assistance Programme, I know that the Minister probably will not be able to indicate in detail, but I notice that there is an increase in the allotment, and I hope this is not indicative, the allocation, of underlying problems that may be impacting upon the staff at the Immigration that may be related to being overworked or understaffed and so forth.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Noted but it is a question of making the services available.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No, absolutely, I do agree. I am just hoping it is not a serious underlying matter.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Minister, with respect to line Sub-Item dealing with Short-Term Employment, line Sub-Item 22, there has been a meagre increase if you look at the comparison with respect to contract employment. I just want to get a sense from with an allocation of just \$110,000 for the Immigration Division, what categories of employment would this be? Would it be administrative? And how would that really affect in terms of following on the point of the Member for Chaguanas East with respect to the backlog at this time?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** These are, in fact, short-term employments where the immigration officers would bring in graduates for instance, for short-term employments to deal with the backlog in various areas to support the immigration staff, the permanent immigration staff. So from time to time, they will use that opportunity or that avenue to bring in graduates and so on who can fit almost immediately into the system that will lend support to the immigration services where there are backlogs and so on. That is the avenue that seems to—

**12.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, if you look at the allocation of \$110,000, this backlog situation has been ongoing for the past few months. Really, the question is, when you look again at the comparison with contract employment, and you are indicating that graduates are being used to assist in the backlog, alleviating the situation with respect to the backlog, this really is a meagre allocation if you are dealing with that specific point.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Bear in mind that we can always vire money, depending on the need as it arises, into the Vote.

**Mr. Padarath:** But at this time, Minister, you see no need for it, that there should have been an increase with respect to the current situation that we are faced with in the Immigration Division, that there should really be an increase in this area, compared to contract employment, if you are saying based on what you had just indicated to us, that graduates are being used to assist in the alleviation of the backlog, with respect to passports?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You have to bear in mind that that is also in conjunction with the expectation of the vacancies being filled by the Public Service Commission. So that can happen almost as we speak, at which time we have to use the short-term graduates almost simultaneously. So if we have the persons

come from service commission then, of course, there can be displacement. So you have to actually monitor it as we go along.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 43, Security Services, in 2015 you had an actual expenditure of \$6,185,236 and it has moved to \$16 million in 2017. Could the Minister give us some details—what has caused this drastic increase?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Madam Chair, I know I answered that question already with respect to the new buildings. I do not know if the Member heard me, or wants me to repeat myself, but I know I answered that question already.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. I think maybe now is a very opportune time for the suspension for the lunch break. [*Interruption*] No, in light of the question it says something about all of us. Okay. So, Members, we are suspended for lunch. We will be back at 1.30 p.m.

**12.32 a.m.:** *Meeting suspended.*

**1.30 p.m.** *Meeting resumed.*

[*Chairman: Mr. Esmond Forde*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, good afternoon, Members, as we resume the finance committee meeting this afternoon. Well the necessary protocols have already been set out by the substantive Chairman, and we will like to continue in the same vein.

Before we broke for lunch, we were on Item 007, Immigration, which is on page 135 of the *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* for the Financial Year 2017. Any further questions on that item? If not, we will move on Item 008, Probation Service of the same book, page 136.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Just to ask on line 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. I am enquiring whether this line will assist probation officers going out to schools and other institutions, as a

preventative measure, because I know this was, in fact, practised when the probation services—when they were under the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. I just want to know if the practice is going to continue, because it played a very important role during that period?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That will not be under that line Sub-Item.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is it a line Sub-Item?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is yes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** All right, great. Thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I am looking at Sub-Item 05—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member. Member, please, please. Members.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 05, Telephones and this must be a mistake. You have—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Sub-Item, Sir?

**Mr. Charles:** Line Sub-Item 05. In these stringent times to be doubling telephone from under \$300,000 to \$600,000. It must be a mistake.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is an estimate, but remember that we are expanding the probation system into different offices. So there is a plan to expand it where we are right now throughout the courts, but it is an estimate that can be adjusted accordingly.

**Mr. Chairman:** Continue on?

**Mr. Charles:** Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation, given the fact that in the budget address, my leader spoke about the 1 per cent getting all the benefits. I see an increase in rent by \$1.5 million and perhaps you can again tell us the reason for this, and who is the beneficiary, so that we could have a macro idea of the amount of money that is going in rent to the 1 per cent.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We are presently renting offices in San Fernando and

Port of Spain. I will provide you with the names of the persons from whom we are renting.

**Mr. Charles:** And the reason for the increase.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Of course.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 009, Forensic Service Centre, page 137.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair, Item 61, Insurance. I noticed in 2016 there was no expenditure. Now, there is an estimated expenditure of \$600,000. What is the reason for this?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I did not hear the last part.

**Mr. Lee:** Item 61, Insurance, Minister, this year 2016, in the revised estimate there was no expenditure, and in 2017 there is an expenditure estimate of \$600,000, could you enlighten us?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** In this year going forward, the plan is to insure the building that we are presently occupying. There is no insurance—actually it is the contents of the Forensic Science Centre, which we know are very expensive.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Materials and Supply—

**Mr. Chairman:** Number?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Twelve. There has been a complaint by one of the forensic doctors there—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Pathologist.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—pathologist, that he does not have proper storage and the materials and so on and supplies to classify bones and what have you, and they are scattered all over the place in boxes and what have you. I am sure such a thing can affect the determination of cases. And, therefore, I am asking why have you, in the light of his public complaints, cut the expenditure from \$1.5 million to \$800,000, and his complaint just came about less than 60 days ago?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This actually address more operational supplies, but let me also add to your question that I mentioned a while ago that we are building both the—we are looking at both the infrastructure of the Forensic Science Centre, so that part of the move—because we realize that there is a cramped space right now. So that part of the move is to relocate the Forensic Science Centre, that is going forward, and I described that a while ago, so I will not repeat myself. But in term of the material and supplies, there are more operational supplies that are procured under this Vote. Again, there is always the flexibility as we go forward, supplies, if they diminish then we can always vire money into that Vote to continue the procurement and keep the levels up, which would also address the storage and so on.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 010, Fire Service (Tobago), page 138.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair, 010, Fire Service Tobago, 03, Uniforms, there is a sharp increase by \$3.4 million. Minister, am I to understand that this may also include new officers to be hired?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is actually replacement of expired and deteriorated uniforms.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item No. 011, Prison Service (Tobago), page 139; item 012, Life Guard Service, page 139 and goes across to page 140; item 013, Immigration (Tobago), page 140, item 014, Defence Force Headquarters, page 141.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Chair. I am looking at item 06, there is a significant increase in the estimates for water and sewerage rates, from \$226,800 to \$2,840,000, an increase of 2.6 million. Is there an explanation for that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is due to arrears coming forward to this fiscal year.

**Mr. Singh:** Oh, so I see arrears, significant arrears. I think, Minister of Finance,



this indicates a problem that exists within the public sector, that they do not pay their water rates because you cannot cut them off. So what happens is that perhaps you ought to, as a way of moving forward, put something, a memo or something that extract your rates up front, rather than at the end of the period. [*Interruption*] “Yuh go cut dem off?” All right. No, but it happens, because I recall from my own experience, you have to take a Note to Cabinet to get Ministries to pay their water and sewerage rates. They do not pay it. They will pay their telephone rates, because they will get cut. They will pay their electricity rates, because they may get cut off, but water rates? They do not.

**1.40 p.m.**

**Mr. Imbert:** So, the solution is to cut them off.

**Mr. Singh:** I leave it entirely in your hands, just my word of advice.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you Chair. Line Sub-Item 40, Food at Institutions, there is a sharp increase of \$2 million for 2017. Can the Minister give some clarification?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is due to an increase in personnel at the Defence Force Headquarters, roughly about 400-plus persons, increase in strength.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item 015, Cadet Force, Page 142, and I recognize the Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Chair. Again, and I just want to make the general point, I see an overall cut from \$6.4 million to \$5.1 million in expenditure on the Cadet Force. I would ask that you reconsider in the context of the fact that this plays an important role in preventing our citizens entering crime and reducing the incidents later on.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I, too, also recognize the important work being done by the Cadet Force. As I mentioned before, there is always the possibility that we can

vire money as the development of the Cadet Force goes forward.

**Mr. Charles:** So, in the mid-year review, we will expect to see an increase in the Cadet Force.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It all depends on what is happening in the Cadet Force as they expand and so on. We will adjust it accordingly.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item No. 016, Air Guard, and I recognize the Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to just raise matters with respect to Sub-Items 15, 17 and 96. 15, Repairs and Maintenance – Equipment has a significant increase of \$9.2 million, and if we can get an idea as to what that is. I am not sure whether the equipment—I know in some cases the equipment refers to other things just apart from office or operational equipment.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That, in fact, refer to generators, ground-power units and so on.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. And with respect to training, there is a \$6 million estimate for 2017 for the Air Guard.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And this has to do with training at the Air Force Academy, another aviation institute, but more international in nature.

**Mr. Karim:** Outside of—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Outside of it, yeah.

**Mr. Karim:** Do you mind telling us in what areas of the training that we are engaging this pilot/engineering?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It will involve in a combination of pilot and engineering.

**Mr. Karim:** I suspect the 96, that increase—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That has to do with, there has been an increase in time spent in the air of the aircraft. We intensify the air surveillance patrols and so on.

**Mr. Karim:** I do not know if I could ask a related question.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And, therefore, there is an increase in the amount of fuel.

**Mr. Karim:** But with respect to the increase in fuel, is it possible for us to get an idea as to the equipment complement, that is in terms of the air, helicopters and so on? Or if you have Cessnas like the LC126?  
**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are four AW39 helicopters and two Cessnas.

**Mr. Karim:** All operational?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** All of which are operational right now.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. And the age? You might not be able to give it to me now.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The Cessnas are about 23 and 24 years respectively.

**Mr. Karim:** And do you intend to continue with those?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No—well, we are going to use them as much as we can, but we are, in fact, looking to see what we can procure, because they are aged fleet. We know that they are very aged fleet and we have had them for quite some time. They have reached a stage now where their maintenance cost is very large because of the age of the fleet and therefore we are, in fact, looking to see an adequate kind of replacement.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you. Minister, Sub-Item 61, Insurance. The 2015 actual was \$1.5 million or \$1.6 million, and the estimate for 2017 is \$11.6 million, 2016 revised estimate was \$10.1 million. Could you enlighten us?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is the increased cost in insurance for both the fixed wing and the rotary aircraft.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item No. 017, Immigration Detention Centre, on page 144. Item No. 018—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have seen no line Item within this 017 for any repair or improvement to the Immigration Detection Centre.

Could the hon. Minister—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** If you look at Sub-Item 21.

**Mr. Chairman:** 21, Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, do you think that will be sufficient, bearing in mind what we have been seeing about the standard of care for these people in the detention centre?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They did do some work in the last fiscal year, and, therefore, this will allow us to continue the repairs and so on to the building, and if there is need for anymore then we will vire money accordingly.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So are there any efforts to improve the environment for the detection of these?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We try to make it as comfortable as possible to ensure that their surroundings are adequately staffed and prepared.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** As we are on that, could you just indicate if you have the information, how many people are there now within the Detention Centre?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It fluctuates almost every day, so that I have to give you that in writing and the particular day in question. What I can give you is, as of today, we have 208 detainees: 168 males and 40 females.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And you will have the breakdown for the countries from which they originated?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can provide you with that.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** The Member for Caroni East just asked the question for the nationalities.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item No. 018, Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves), page 144 to 145, and I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West. Sorry, the Member for Chaguanas East, sorry.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, with respect to the VDF, I notice that there is a reduction, a decrease of \$1 million in uniforms. I am asking this in the context of the size of the VDF. Do you propose to increase it? Are you satisfied with the amount of persons in the VDF? That relates to Sub-Head 17, where you have an increase in training. I just want to know how many persons are in the VDF currently and are you satisfied with that complement?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Presently, we have the established strength in the VDF. Of course, let me tell you that in the volunteer reserves you have the permanent staff and you have what you call the part-time staff. With respect to the permanent staff, we have an establishment of 24 officers and 197 other ranks, but the posted strength right now, the existing strength, seven officers and 182 other ranks. There is a vacancy right now on the permanent staff for about 17 officers and 15 other ranks.

**Mr. Karim:** As a follow-up. Minister, the VDF, are they also engaged in crime reduction strategies?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, they are. They are involved in support together with the regular members of the defence force in a number of key areas.

**Mr. Karim:** So wherever you are going to establish another base or bases—I notice one in the central area—will they be part of that complement for the strategy?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is possible, but operational authority really resides with the Chief of Defence Staff who determines how he appropriates his forces according to. He may determine the reserves might be there or he may not, depending on his staff and complement.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, page 145. Item 002, Fire Service, page 146. Item 004, Prison

Service. I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under Item 004, Prison Service, Other Minor Equipment, that \$3 million decrease, you have not inserted anything. Where is the money allocated for the jammers and grabbers and the improvement within the prison service to prevent the telephone conversations and so going on. Is there any line Sub-Item there under Prison Service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The jammers and grabbers have already been procured and are, in fact, in operation right now. Any maintenance for that will come under maintenance, but not under this Sub-Head. But they are actually up and instituted right now.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item No. 005, Regiment, page 146. Item 006, Coast Guard, page 147. Item 007, Immigration. Item 008, Probation Service, page 147. Item 009, Forensic Science Centre, page 148. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Can I preface my question with a little statement. The hon. Prime Minister seemed to have been very pleased with his visit to Jamaica of the Forensic Science Centre under the auspices of the University of the West Indies as well. Is there any area here that any improvements could be made on any of these line Items which would give support to improvement in terms of the technology in the Forensic Science Centre?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The visit that you mentioned had to do with the establishment of a DNA bank and DNA custodian. So, you will not find it under this Vote. I mentioned a while ago that we have in fact started. We have hired a DNA custodian. We are in the process of setting up his area of work and the DNA lab is already set up and working in the Forensic Science Centre.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, is there any intention of this Government to utilize the expertise in Jamaica to have shared cooperation so that the Forensic Science

Centre here could be improved?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The thing is, we are looking at all options and, ofcourse, we have looked at what has been developed and established in Jamaica and we are looking at all others and then we will come to conclusion of which is the best fit for Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Regiment, page 146. [*Interruption*] I am sorry, my apologies. Item 010, Fire Service (Tobago), page 148. Item 012, Lifeguard Service, page 148. Item 014, Defence Force Headquarters, page 149. Item 015. Okay, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, 015. Thank you Chair. Just to underscore the fact that at every point the Cadet Force comes up there is a cut, and I just want to register that concern. I know your answer and I trust that you will act in the interest of the next generation of leaders of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that comment. Item 016, Air Guard, page 149. Item 017, Immigration Detention Centre, page 150. Item 018, Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves), page 150. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 001, Regional Bodies on page 150.

**Mr. Rambachan:** IMPACS, the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security. This \$14 million or \$13.74 million that we are contributing to IMPACS, what percentage does this represent of the contribution made to IMPACS by the Caribbean countries?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I do not have that figure, but I can get that for you because all the Caribbean countries do contribute, and this is our portion of our contribution. But I could get the percentage for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is there anything else beyond this that we contribute by way of other payments? For example, the building, and security of the building. Do we

contribute anything other than this?

**1.55 p.m.**

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** We also pay for the rental of the building that IMPACS currently occupies in Port of Spain. As you know, although it is a Caricom body it is based in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004 International Bodies, page 151. Item 005 Non-Profit Institutions, page 151. Item 007 Households.

**Mr. Paray:** Minister, looking at Items 04 and 05, looking at the massive decrease in the allocations, taking note that we do have a problem with youth and youth delinquency in the country at this moment, do you think it was a wise move to deepen that cut that it has gone so deep, to cut so deep in terms of that youth component of the programme?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The programme presently has funding to take it up to at least the mid-year review by which time, based on that review, funds will be vired accordingly. We understand the benefit of the programme and its contribution to youth development and youth delinquency and so on, but given the economic situation we have to do it almost like a step by step in support of finance.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 13 Criminal Injuries Compensation. Firstly, what does that programme do and could you explain the cut of \$1 million, given the revised expenditure of \$2 million in 2016?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Criminal Injuries Compensation—out of this vote money is paid out to the families of those service personnel who died based on



illness, especially those who are victims of crime. Persons who are victims of crime that is where the payment comes from in terms of immediate relief.

**Mr. Charles:** Do you expect a decrease this year, and if so why?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Again I can say that this is an estimate and if there is a requirement that what is estimated here has been reduced, then other moneys will be vired into the Vote accordingly.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Chairman, I want to go back, making reference to Sub-Items 04, 05 and 06. Number one, with 04, with this budget cut of almost 50 per cent, would the hon. Minister indicate to us the number of trainees in the CCC programme, and how much you expect this reduction to impact on the number of persons who will not be able to access this programme and also the effect on staffing?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The CCC programme operates in two cycles per year and it is an average between 1,000 to 1,200 participants in the programme. There is a cycle going on as we speak. I cannot give you the exact figure, but I am just giving you the ballpark figure that is in the programme right now. This will not drastically affect them because there are enough funds at least for this cycle as we go along.

**Mr. Karim:** We could debate that, because when you cut like this it will have an impact on the availability of financing for the trainees.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** I do not have the figures for the MiLAT right now, but I can get it for you. I know we have about 184 cadets right now.

**Mr. Karim:** Just to confirm, how many centres do you have for MiLAT

currently and where is it?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** MiLAT is in one area, the former teachers' college in Mausica. It is a residential programme.

**Mr. Karim:** This cut, what do you expect will happen in terms of the intake for MiLAT trainees?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** It would be minimal, because again there is enough to take it through, at least the mid-year at which time we would again look at the situation and vire funds accordingly.

**Mr. Karim:** One of the things I would like to ask through you, Chairman, is if we could get something in writing as to the articulation, after the trainees would have gone through the academic training, the level of success and where they would have gone to, as a tracer study to know the success story.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Certainly, and we have done that. We have that information that I can provide for you, because we have done some after MiLAT study to see where the students end up, plus the success rate with respect to a number of passes. We do have it. We have the progress report that I can make available to you that gives you a whole breakdown of both CCC and MiLAT programme.

**Mr. Karim:** Just again 06, if you could give us an idea of what this NYS is about.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** That is the National Youth Service. This was, in fact, a concept but it has never been operationalized. What it was, if I recall, it was trying to put all the youth programmes under an umbrella, included in that was a

National Youth Service where you almost have people volunteering into a youth programme, that is apart from the CCC and the MiLAT and so on, to bring a different kind of training, a different kind of life skill development, a different kind of discipline, but that has never been implemented.

**Mr. Karim:** Is it the intention to do in this fiscal year?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** It is under review now because we have to look at all the youth programmes that are taking place right now, so that is just one that we were looking at.

**Mr. Karim:** I will be happy to have information on the National Youth Programme.

**Dr. Tewarie:** A couple of questions. We have about 300,000 people who are between the ages of 15 and 13, would fall into—

**Mr. Chairman:** I am not hearing you clearly.

**Dr. Tewarie:** We have about 300,000 people who are between the ages of 13 and 15 and some of them would fall into categories that some of these institutions absorb. When you total them, and I know you would not have the exact figure, how many are we talking about? Are we talking like 50,000, 40,000 or so?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Are you referring to all the youth programmes?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, under National Security.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** No, I do not have the figures, but I am sure we can do a tabulation for you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** If you can provide that I will be very grateful. The second thing

I wanted to ask, is there a bridge between some of these youth programmes and recruitment in the military and police, and that includes the Cadet Force? Is there any such bridge?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The bridge, of course, is there, that they would have developed certain kinds of training alongside, but it does not make them automatically qualified for those places, so they still have to go through the examination process. Of course it would help because they would have gone through that quasi-military environment, the discipline and so on in the MiLAT programme, life skill training in CCC. So it would help them but it does not mean automatically they are going into this group. It will enhance their resume.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, line 11, 007, Mentoring Programme for Youth at Risk. One-third of the allocation was actually spent on mentoring youth at risk. Can you account for this drastic drop in spending?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** Could you repeat your question?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** One-third of the allocation was actually spent on the mentoring programme. What has accounted for this significant drop in your mentoring programme?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The programme, in fact, is being evaluated now. The life of the programme, it has reached a stage where an evaluation was done recently, and I am presently awaiting the report of the evaluator as to how we proceed with the programme. What has happened over time, the amount of mentees in the programme had reduced considerably, and therefore the evaluator has been given the task to look at the programme, see its effectiveness

and see how best we can shape it going forward.

**Mr. Paray:** Minister Sub-Item 09, clearly the school discipline initiative never blossomed into a full-fledged action plan. Again, taking into consideration the proliferation of indiscipline that seems to be happening in the schools, is there any other programme that your Ministry is having some sort of joint effort with the Ministry of Education to achieve that? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** The central focus of the school discipline programme has been shifted to the Ministry of Education supported by the Ministry of National Security, so you would find that under the Ministry of Education.

**Mr. Paray:** Who is the Minister?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Civilian Conservation Corps, hon. Minister—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** One second.

**Mr. Garcia:** Mr. Chairman, I need to get some power here. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] It is clear that the Member for Mayaro does not understand anything concerning education, for him to make a statement—[*Crosstalk and interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, you would need to make a statement, but I will prefer that you temper it a little bit please. We are at committee stage. You need to assist in answering the last question?

**Mr. Garcia:** Yes, because the Member for Mayaro was really very erroneous in his statement.

**Mr. Chairman:** I need an answer, Minister. Just give me an answer. Do not

make reference to—

**Mr. Garcia:** Thank you very much. Am I being allowed to provide an answer? [*Crosstalk*] I already dealt with you, Member for Mayaro, do not let me have to deal with you again. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** I will move on at this time. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Civilian Conservation Corps, hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 04, our understanding is that the amount of trainees to mentees are top heavy, and they constitute a significant percentage of the funding when the amount of trainers you have per trainee is very high in terms of cost. Could you give us some comment, how many trainers you have in the programme and the value of the trainers—the cost for the trainers versus the cost for the trainees?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** I do recall you asked that same question last year, but I will provide the answer for you. I do not have the breakdown right now, but I will provide the answer for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Minister of Education would have probably wanted to say that they have the Citizens Security Programme, they have the Learning Enhancement Centres. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us move on, please.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the MiLAT programme, the Minister did indicate that there was only one location at which this programme was being delivered, at Mausica. The question is: do you have intentions to move to other locations apart from only one in north Trinidad?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** No, not at this point in time. The MiLAT programme

as you are aware is a residency programme and so, given the turnover of the programme and given the location, right now it satisfies the requirement. If there is a need to then we will do so, but not at this point in time.

**Mr. Karim:** Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up. The data shows that 50.6 per cent of all the unemployed people in this country are between the ages of 15 to 29 years old—50.6 per cent of all the unemployed people in Trinidad and Tobago. The question is, if that is so, when you have programmes like these where there is a need for it—for example, you talk about lack of accommodation, if you look at the YDACs, for example at Presto Praesto and Chatham, you would see that there are dormitories that are empty. The question is, can you make use of these to expand the programme?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Dillon:** There are other plans to utilize— [*Interruption and crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, please.

**Mr. Cuffie:** Minister, would you say that the MiLAT programme is aimed at a particular segment of the society, so that it is not aimed at the unemployed generally? So is it that where it is located is more amenable to the catchment that you are looking for?

**2.10 p.m.**

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The MiLAT programme targets—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, please let us hear the Minister explain.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The MiLAT programme targets the youths at risk throughout Trinidad and Tobago. All right? There are people from Point Fortin in the MiLAT programme so therefore, it is across Trinidad and Tobago. And the

fact is that the location right now was based on the ability for it to staff because it was the former Mausica Teachers' College and therefore, it was easy to improve that environment to accommodate the MiLAT as a residential programme. The location has nothing to do with individuals because again, you are targeting the youths at risk wherever they are in Trinidad and Tobago. There are people from Tobago in the MiLAT programme and so on. So it is across Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Mr. Chairman, forgive me. I just want to—my friend from Moruga/Tableland made a comment which I consider very unkind and very untimely [*Crosstalk*] and let me just say, he was saying, I want to repeat his words, that the category to which I made reference, 15 to 29 years old, is absurd. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Francis:** It is absurd.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members.

**Mr. Karim:** He is repeating again.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, listen. [*Crosstalk*] Members.

**Mr. Karim:** I told you, I said to this House in my contribution, Mr. Chairman, when he talked about non sequitur which is Latin, it does not follow. I said to him, you are confessing, ignoratio elenchi, ignorance of the art of refutation. And I will repeat that again. This is a document put out by the Ministry of Finance. I am quoting from this document. In case my friend from Moruga/Tableland does not know, in 1986/87 there was a category within this same category, 15 to 29, that had a very high percentage of unemployment, hence the reason why the YTEPP programme was developed. [*Crosstalk*] I just want to correct my friend. This document it says, *Shaping a Brighter Future, Review of the Economy* and it is a relevant category.



**Dr. Francis:** Mr. Chairman, if I might respond?

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, no. No response. No response. Members, we are in the Standing Finance Committee. We would have completed the budgetary debate already. We are now in the Standing Finance Committee and we would like to proceed. We have a certain amount of items to complete before the evening is out. We are now moving to Item 009, Other Transfers and I recognize the Member for Princes Town, page 152.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, can you indicate how did we arrive at a difference of \$179,221,000 between the 2016 estimates and 2017 estimates? You see, when you look at the 2016 revised estimates you had SSA \$76 million, you had NOC at \$92,265,000, you had NSTA at \$8 million which brought us to a figure of \$176,265,000. But you see in 2017 a figure being given in terms of the increase at being \$179,221,000. And when you subtract the 2016 revised estimates figure from the 2017 estimates, you get a figure \$78,956,000, but in the books I am seeing \$179,221,000. Could you point us to where that additional \$100 million is in the estimates for the Ministry of National Security with respect to the SSA?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The allocation under the SSA includes both the allocation that previously would have been under the National Operations Centre and the National Security Training Academy.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, it still does not answer the question. How did you arrive at an increase of \$179,221,000 when you minus the 2016 estimate figures with the Revised Estimates—sorry—2016 figures Revised Estimates with the 2017 estimates? It would have given you a figure of \$78,956,000. The books are reflecting an increase of \$179,221,000 when in fact it should have reflected

\$78,956,000. So I am asking, where did the \$100 million come from with respect to this being reflected as an increase of \$179,221,000?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You have to recall that Strategic Services Agency was, in fact, restructured and you are aware of that because it came to Parliament. And therefore, part of the restructuring has to do with a restructuring in terms of both staff and infrastructure. So we have, as I said before, the NOC and the NSTA together with the restructuring that took place and therefore, the increase accounted for that restructuring exercise.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, the figures are not being reconciled when you look at the difference between the 2016 Revised Estimates and the 2017. The numbers in the books are either wrong, which you will have to admit, if you do the calculations you will see that it is a wrong figure reflected here in the books. That is why I am asking you to indicate to us, where did this \$100 million increase come from?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Bear in mind that you are dealing with the estimates. Right?

**Mr. Padarath:** Revised Estimates of 2016. This is—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You are dealing with the estimates.

**Mr. Padarath:** This is a big jump from the actual to what is being reflected in the books. It is \$100 million more when you look at the figures.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I am not too sure if your maths are correct, you know, because I am—

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, Mr. Minister, I am not sure that your maths are correct because \$100 million—

**Mr. Chairman:** Address the Chair.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is at page 152.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Chairman, again, through you. The question we are asking is how did they arrive at an increase by \$179,221,000 for the period 2017 when you look at the 2016 Revised Estimates when it would have been disaggregated in terms of the SSA and NOC and NSTA with the 2016 Revised Estimates for SSA being \$76 million, with the NOC being \$92,265,000 the NSTA being \$8 million which brings you to a total for Revised Estimates for the national security with respect to the SSA being \$176,265,000 as being the Revised Estimates totals for these three entities during the period 2016.

Now when you look at 2017 figure we are given one total figure of \$255,221,000 which reflects an increase with respect to the books at being \$179,221,000. However, when you minus the \$176,265,000 from the \$255,221,000 you are supposed to get a figure of \$78,956,000. The book before me the *2017 Estimates of Expenditure* is reflecting \$179,221,000. So Minister, if you cannot see that there is a huge disparity in those numbers.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You are you adding up the 2016 figures under NOC and—

**Mr. Padarath:** And NSTA and SSA.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Why are you adding up those figures? Why are you adding up those figures from 2016?

**Mr. Padarath:** Because that is what gives you now the total for what falls under this SSA.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That cannot give you a total of increases. It is not an automatic transfer of what you had in 2016 and becomes your increase in 2017. That does not dictate your increase for 2017. That does not dictate your increase for 2017. It does not. [*Crosstalk*]

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

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me assist.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You cannot. I now follow what you are saying.  
[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Imbert:** The allocation under Head 02, Mr. Chairman, could you compose—

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, the Minister of Finance will clear up the matter.  
Proceed.

**Mr. Imbert:** If Members would simmer down. The allocation under 009/02 for the Strategic Services Agency for 2017 does not contemplate the same scope of responsibilities, duties or resources in the three agencies that you have added together. There are more responsibilities, greater resources being allocated to this agency in 2017. It is not simple arithmetic. Whatever work that was done by the three agencies in 2016, the new agency which has absorbed all of them is doing all of the work done previously plus more in 2017. Okay?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman. If you would give us the undertaking to give us an explanation by you having taken the time to reflect on the figures because the figures are not adding up. We are not satisfied with that explanation from the Minister of Finance with respect to these numbers. The numbers are not adding up.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I need to clear this up.

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

**Mr. Imbert:** You cannot add the money spent in 2016 on these three agencies Strategic Services, National Operations Centre, and National Security—what is the third one?—Training Agency. You cannot add the money spent by those three agencies and assume that that would be the money that would be spent by the Strategic Services Agency. It is a completely different agency. The agency has

been modernized, revamped, expanded and so on. It is apples and oranges. You cannot do it that way.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, thank you very much. I just have one question that is on 009/02, Strategic Services Agency. And I wanted to know if there is any percentage of the increase in allocation of \$179,221,000 designated for surveillance equipment?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That I cannot provide to you. I would not provide that in terms of security reasons. How much was provided for—

**Dr. Tewarie:** No. All I am asking is, is there any percentage—1 per cent, 100 per cent—anywhere in-between that is allocated for surveillance equipment? The answer to that could not be a national security.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. The answer to that is no. I cannot provide. I cannot give it to you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, I want to emphasize that I asked a question having to do with what the allocation here was for and simply asked if any percentage was for surveillance equipment, and the answer and response of the Government was that they refused to answer.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Chair. With respect to the Transit Police Unit, I see that there is a significant decrease of \$4 million. Could the hon. Minister explain that? And I have three other questions in that same—

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Again, the estimate is that the \$10 million will take us through, at least, to the mid-year review and if there is a need to do that, then we

will vire money accordingly.

**Mr. Singh:** Similarly, Chairman, the Anti-Money Laundering/Terrorism Compliance Unit, you have a—and this is supposed to be one of the focal areas of the Government in fighting transnational crime, there is a significant reduction, out of \$1.7 million in the Revised Estimates in 2016, you are down to \$1 million.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Again, the line Item allows us to utilize what is required and if there is any further need we can vire money by the mid-year review into this account.

**Mr. Singh:** Line Sub-Item 23, Chairman, Community Comfort Patrol Programme has been reduced significantly by \$48.5 million from—so could you give a rationale for that significant reduction?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. An evaluation is being done on that Community Comfort Patrol Programme and there is an intention to phase out the programme and replace it with an adequate institution.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Line Sub-Item 10, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, ODPM. There is a sharp decrease by \$16.7 million for 2017 estimates. Can the Minister explain why?

**2.25 p.m.**

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Some of the Items were procured in the last fiscal year, high-valued items, and therefore going forward if the need arises for further equipment then again money would be vired into the account.

**Mr. Charles:** My question was already answered.

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, line Item 21, Minister, is the NSTA going to be disbanded in this fiscal year? I noticed that there is no allocation in 2017.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** If you look at Item 02 on the paragraph you would see

that it has been incorporated into the Strategic Services Agency.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you, Chairman. Just a point of clarity from the Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** No. Point of clarity?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, on a statement he made, a question. Minister, you have said before and you have said today that it is the intention of the Government, the policy intention, to phase out the Community Comfort Patrol, why is there a need to do an evaluation if you have taken that decision already?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I think you heard me say that there was an evaluation done, and based on that there is an intention to do it. I said it one before the next, I did not say it one after the other. Evaluation first and then.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Is it possible for Members to get a copy or an executive summary of the evaluation?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, it is not.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item No. 17, the Morvant/Laventille initiative, the 2016 estimate was \$11.3 million and they revised it down to only \$3.5 million because almost \$7.8 million has not been spent. So, on one hand—and they are further decreasing it in 2017—the Minister of Education together with his team are trying to do the Laventille-led initiative, and on the other hand you in security are downgrading the Morvant/Laventille initiative. What is the rationale for you downgrading it, and the Ministry of Education is lifting it, and how one initiative resides with another initiative?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Some of the initiatives have reached the end of their lifetime. For example, Hoop of Life is no longer being continued, and therefore there is a reduction in terms of the allocation.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, are you not thinking about any other initiative other than the Hoop of Life?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are new initiatives taking place, but not along the lines as done before.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, you have abandoned the initiative for Morvant/Laventille?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You are saying that, I did not say that. I said that some of the initiatives have reached their lifetime, I did not say all. There are other initiatives that are on the ground that are running, so do not put words in my mouth.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Your figures reflect that you have abandoned the initiative.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Those are your words, not mine.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, prove me wrong.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 57. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 57 to 62. I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, Item 015, construction of the coast guard facility at Galeota, is this a continuation of some sort of maintenance on the existing facility, or is this construction of a new facility in Galeota?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is continuation of an existing facility.

**Mr. Paray:** Just to continue on Item 019, purchase of vessels for the coast guard, you may well be aware that that facility in Galeota has not had a permanent vessel assigned there for many, many years, can we look forward in terms of this line Item in purchasing that we may see a vessel stationed in the Galeota facility, knowing that considerable amount of moneys would have been spent in terms of



berthing facilities in the new Galeota port, and the constant request from the Mayaro police for support in terms of some of the porous areas on our borders on the East Coast there. Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Item 019 with respect the purchase of vessels to coast guard, that includes interceptors, and of course based on the commanding officer's concept of operations, I am sure Galeota would be included.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Simple question, I just wanted to know, Chair, if 019 represented the \$12 million, purchase of a new vessel that has not yet been acquired?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** If it represents what, sorry?

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is for the purchase of a new vessel not yet acquired?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They are new vessels, new inceptors.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Multisectoral, Sectoral and other Services, page 62 to 64.

**Dr. Moonilal:** We finished that already. Chairman, you were on page 57.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes. Just a couple questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, hold on. I said Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 57 to 62. That is what I said.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, we are still there.

**Mr. Chairman:** And only the Member for Caroni Central showed his hand.

**Mr. Imbert:** Exactly.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, Members, please. It is now 2.30 p.m., we are still on the first Ministry for the day, so please let us keep focused so that we can ensure that we

finish the work of the country for the day. So now Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, Social Infrastructure, could I ask my question?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East, line Item?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Social Infrastructure, I can ask two or three questions one time, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** What page are you on?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Pages 58, 132 and 136. Could the Minister indicate the nature of what construction works at Camp Cumuto and refurbishment works at Camp Cumuto this money entails? That is my first question. Could I ask—?

**Mr. Chairman:** One at a time, we will take it one at a time. Minister.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** One second. Line Item 132, Construction Work at Camp Cumuto, completion of the married officers' quarters at an estimated cost of \$2.2 million; completion of the warrant officers, staff sergeants and sergeant mess. Those are the two projects.

**Dr. Moonilal:** At 65 there is an \$18 million estimate for base infrastructure, I was concerned with Felicity, what is envisaged for Felicity? What are you going to do in Felicity in the coming fiscal? And Forest Park, my colleagues would want to find out.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** During the fiscal year 2017 the main focus would be on camp La Romain while preliminary work in terms of site survey and so on will be done at Felicity.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Preliminary work at Felicity?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Site visit and—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Basic design and so on.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:**—basic design and so on.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. At 172, there is the establishment of a readiness training army learning centre, you have no estimate for that, or is it the—I have not seen an estimate, is that something on your agenda for this year? And at 049, if you can just tell us something about this flying training device facility, what that entails? It is a new project.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Could you say the line Item again?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I was looking at 049—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 049 on page 58?

**Dr. Moonilal:** On page 59.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just about the middle of the book.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 049, got you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What is this flying training device facility? It is a new project.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is a new project, it is a simulator.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. I am looking at pages 61, 191, and I am asking if the Minister of Finance is setting up his colleague by not having any allocation for the construction of a Point Fortin fire station?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You would see allocation for Point Fortin under a different Sub-Head.

**Mr. Charles:** We will come to it?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is an idea.

**Mr. Charles:** Second question, page 63, upgrade and expansion of the MYPART programme.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Page what? Sorry.

**Mr. Charles:** Page 63, Upgrade and Expansion of the MYPART programme.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, we are now on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and it goes from pages 62 to 64. So, Members please identify if you have any

questions.

**Mr. Charles:** The line Item is 054.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 054, Upgrade and Expansion of the MYPART programme. MYPART no longer falls under the Ministry of National Security.

**Mr. Charles:** Which Ministry?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is under education.

**Mr. Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 279; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, from pages 279 to 281. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 281.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 22 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank you, Mr. Minister, but I know you do not have far to go. But I would like to thank your technocrats for being here with us for the morning and part of the evening. Thank you.

We now move on to Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, \$2,928,530,000. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of no more than five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I will defer to the Minister of National Security.

*Head 64.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 40 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,928,530,000 for Head 4: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now

proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 406. And I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance there is an increase of \$353 million above the 1.07 in 2016. Could you give us an understanding of that increase for \$353 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It includes the arrears to be paid out in fiscal year 2017.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We keep hearing that along the line for the entire day, could you give us an understanding of how much arrears—within that 353, how much is the arrears within that, and how much for the other areas? We heard that in every other area for the afternoon. Same answer.

**2.40 p.m.**

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, same answer. I will provide the breakdown for you, disaggregate it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So your colleagues cannot help you, the police service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide the disaggregated amount for you. The arrears are included in the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But the people who are listening, hon. Minister, will want to have an idea—what is the amount that the police service is being owed? And if you say \$353 million, are they owed the \$353 million or are they being owed \$50 million or \$70 million? Where does the Minister of Finance come in?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The people are more concerned that the money will be paid in 2017 and that will happen.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, the Minister of Finance should give us an understanding of how much money has to be paid?

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you kindly ask a question instead of making a speech.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am asking the Minister of Finance, how much money has to be

paid to the police officers in 2017 under this Vote?

**Mr. Imbert:** For what?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For the arrears.

**Mr. Imbert:** Eight hundred million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Eight hundred million? Are you being facetious? [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, please, you got an answer.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Where is that \$800 million included in this?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is there.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Where?

**Mr. Imbert:** Two point five billion, \$2,459,289 billion. You are not seeing it?

**Hon. Member:** He “extempoing”.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “You extempoeed there man”. This is serious business.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, Mr. Chairman. I will not answer any more questions from that gentleman if—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Who is the gentleman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member. Please quote him by his correct title.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Who is the gentleman? I want respect from the hon. Minister. I am not a gentleman inside of here. I am the Member for Caroni East.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, Member for Caroni East. [*Desk thumping*] I heard you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** He is rude and obnoxious. He is always rude and obnoxious.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, we have to—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** He is always rude and obnoxious.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Obnoxious.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, if it offends the Member for Caroni East to be

called—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Your language is always offensive.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, one at a time, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, if it offends the Member for Caroni East to be called a gentleman I will no longer do so.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are a Member in this House.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, okay. So you are not a gentleman, no problem.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am a gentleman.

**Mr. Imbert:** So, Mr. Chairman—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, one second, please! Both Members, please!

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am a better gentleman than you are.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, please. All right.

**Mr. Imbert:** Now, let me clear this up.

**Mr. Chairman:** You have answered the question on the—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I want to clear this up. I was asked two questions. What is the amount of the arrears? I said \$800 million. I was then asked, where is it? I said in the \$2.45 billion. I was then asked, are you being facetious? No, I am not. I am answering your questions.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance indicated that—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member! Member!

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** What is your—is it a new question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is confusing. The answers given by both of them are confusing.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, Member, Member, the Minister of Finance gave an answer.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. The explanation given by the Minister of National Security under the \$353 million, he said that the arrears are included there.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, no. I never said it is included in that figure of \$353 million. I said it is included in the estimates for 2017.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, I asked you, the \$353 million, what does that reflect?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is included in the estimate for 2017.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What does it reflect? You said part of the arrears is inside there. I will leave that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just wanted to know, what is the complement of—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Sub-Item, Sir?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Related to the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. What is the complement of police officers, not all staff in National Security, but the complement of police officers in the police service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You want to know the sanctioned strength?

**Dr. Tewarie:** The strength, yeah.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The actual strength of the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service stands at 6,702.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the Minister. The increase of \$353,000,000—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Line Sub-Item.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. The increase of \$353,060,700, does that represent the—what does that represent, the



full and final settlement to the police officers?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The 2017 estimates include the arrears that we paid out to the police officers.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And that will be fully paid off by 2017?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes!

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister of Finance said that—

**Mr. Imbert:** You are going to ask me the same question too?

**Dr. Rambachan:**—that the amount owed is \$800 million. Am I correct?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes!

**Dr. Rambachan:** If I assume that all the increases that you have listed here, under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, \$353 million, even if I take the overtime and say that you have extra overtime to pay for monthly, as well \$53 million, and I take the allowances of \$95 million, all I am getting is \$601 million. Right? So that if I consider that all the increases that you put there are due to police officers then that does not equate to the \$800 million you are saying is provided for in this sum of—that you have put here. I am not seeing it. I could be wrong, please explain it.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, Members opposite are making the same mistake over and over. Contained within the 2016 Revised Estimates is an element of back pay. So some was already paid last year and more will be paid this year. So you cannot do the simple arithmetic that you are doing.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You said just now, right, when the question was asked, and let us be fair to each other. You said that the outstanding amount now was \$800 million. That is what you said.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And I am just trying to equate this \$800 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not an increase.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am not saying it is an increase.

**Mr. Imbert:** The only increase it would be, would be an increase over the amount paid in 2016. So if you pay \$400 million in 2016 and you have to pay \$800 million in 2017, then the increase is only \$400 million, not 800.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you did not say that.

**Mr. Imbert:** I did.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, you said owed 800—

**Mr. Imbert:** You understand now? You understand now? Right.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Naparima, Members.

**Mr. Charles:** I do not have the data here but at the budget presentation I—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Sub-Item.

**Mr. Charles:** I am talking about Sub-Item 04—

**Mr. Chairman:** Allowances—Monthly Paid.

**Mr. Charles:** Right, Allowances—Monthly Paid Officers. And I was making reference to the fact that in Miami there are 21 police officers per 10,000 in population. In Trinidad and Tobago we have 65 police officers. We have three times the number of police. And I am asking that in the context of the monthly paid allowances being \$153 million. And the question I am asking, has the police service done an exercise in terms of the optimum police size compared to cities and jurisdictions our size? And is it better for the police to hire staff or allocate overtime as they do? And the final part of that question is, what are the components of this overtime and can this be remedied by a managerial decision? Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, let us hear the Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** When you look at the sanctioned strength of the police

service which is roughly about 7,884, the actual strength is 6,702. There is a shortage about 963 officers. So therefore, and again when you match that against the operational tempo of the police service right now which means that they are heavily involved in operations throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, there is a requirement for persons to work extra hours and so the overtime aspect comes in.

Now you touched on another area and I would say to you that one of the initiatives that will take place in 2017 is, in fact, a manpower audit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. That, again, will bring the fit that you are talking about.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, Sub-Item 08, Vacant Post-Salaries and COLA There is an allocation of \$30 million and you said here these are vacant posts without incumbents. Does that mean that there would be employment of new police officers that would be equivalent of the \$30 million? And if so, you just said that you are now doing a manpower audit. So how have you come—if it is for employment of new police officers, how come you have made that decision when the audit is still ongoing?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The new police officers have to do with the sanctioned strength. It is not an expansion of the police service because remember there are attritions, there is retirement, there are people who leave the police service, so you have to continue the recruitment exercise, you cannot wait until the manpower audit to do that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure, I understand you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** So therefore what you are seeing here is to fill the gap of those kind of activities, those who have retired, there are attritions, people who leave the police service. So you are not going beyond your sanctioned strength.

You are only making sure that you—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So those would be personnel employed to bring you to the level of the 7,884.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And you are 963 short.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So is your thinking that you will want to fill the vacancies, the 963 that are—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We have to continue with the present reality.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, that is fine, that is fine.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman. You said that there are 6,702 active bodies now in the force?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would use actual strength.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Actual strength. So actual strength means that if we have a physical conflict we can get 6,702 officers.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. On any one shift, how many police officers are actually working on any shift?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** What shift are you referring to, because remember the police service has nine divisions. They do not work on the same shift. It is depending on where you are you work differently. Then you have the Special Branch, you have the branch and department, somebody working in Mounted Branch, somebody working in Canine, transport—there are—it is not one shift that is throughout the police service. So it depends on where you are working.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You want to tell me what you want and I could—

**Dr. Rambachan:** In terms of the police service as a whole, on the average, how many policemen are working on a daily basis, actively? It cannot be 6,702 because you have people on leave, people on sick leave. How many policemen are actually available to the public on a daily basis?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And that would vary. That of course would vary almost on a day-to-day basis. You might have an average, but, of course, it will vary from time to time. You would not have a fixed figure. It would vary. But if, you know, we can provide you with that on a particular day, I can give you the average and probably provide you with that later on. Because as I said, it would vary given the dynamic nature we are talking about, given the operational environment.

So one day for instance, let us say we have an operation targeted for central, we will employ a number of different policemen who were naturally, would have been off on that particular day. So on that day you may have a spike because of the operational requirement. The next day they may not have intensified operations and such, so therefore there would be a reduction in the numbers. So it would change on a particular day.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can I say on a normal day?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** How do you describe a normal day? I can give you an average. I can give you an average of what it takes, of what today looks like but I—you know. And even, you know, throughout Trinidad and Tobago—

**Dr. Rambachan:** You see there is a belief in the population that while we have this strength that you talked about, that less than half of these policemen are really available and are working on a daily basis, right?—of the 6,702—and that is why the response of policemen is so slow at times to crime. I can tell you, in Chaguanas if you do not follow-up it takes you sometimes up to six hours to get a policeman to move from the Chaguanas Police Station to Ramsaran Park to

investigate a matter. I am telling you that.

So I think the public has a right to know how many policemen are available on a daily basis actively working. And I agree, people must be on leave, people are sick and so on and so forth. And is it really 50 per cent or as my colleague suggesting with what he has, about 1/3. So while we have 6,700 policemen and we actually have about 2,500 working at any point in time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, the Minister would have already answered the question, so I would like us to move on. I would now like to go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, Police Service (Trinidad) and we are on pages 406 and 407.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am looking at Sub-Item 17, Training; and many years ago I was involved with the COSTAATT as a lecturer. And there was a programme where police officers would come in to be trained I think for two years and they got an associate degree. What I found is that most of them were about to retire and I am asking that you just look at that programme to bring in people at an age where they can contribute afterwards. But most of them were retiring at 55 because they had not reached the age of Assistant Superintendent to retire at 60.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They still access the programme and we will look at that. Thanks again.

**2.55 p.m.**

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item Number 16, Contract Employment. Could the Minister indicate that \$50 million estimate which is a decrease of \$11 million from last year, what does that involve? Contract employment of whom or for what?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** In the police service there are three categories of contract employment. You have the Cabinet-approved contract employments, so people there would have been employed in places like the Criminal and Problems

Analysis Unit, the Information Technology Unit, Corporate Communications, for instance. You have also the two-year contract which falls under the Commissioner of Police, like the business assistants, and so on—support staff. And then you have the short-term contract again, which falls under the Commissioner of Police. So there are different categories of contract employment within the police service.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And these are employed by whom, hon. Minister? For instance, the Criminal—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I think the one that you are referring to is under the, what I call the Cabinet-approved contracts, and as I said, those are people in the CAPAU, IT, Corporate Communications and so on. Those are the contracted employees.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So those are Cabinet-appointed—Cabinet—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:**—approved contracts—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Approved, but appointed by whom? Who does the employment, the Permanent Secretary, CPO?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The police service.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The police service. The Police Service Commission or the police service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They have an interview panel that handles that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is under the Police Commissioner?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The police service, that is right.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And that, therefore, you have \$50 million in contract employment under the Police Commissioner.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Same Item, Item 16. If it is Cabinet-approved and the

Commissioner of Police appoints, that means then that the Commissioner of Police has approval to employ people—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** On a contract basis.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—on contract for \$50 million—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Based on Cabinet authority.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—yet still the service is in such disarray.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sorry?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yet still the service is, by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that comment, Member, but you want to come to the question, please?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But the Commissioner of Police has \$50 million to employ people where he can get the cadre of personnel. We are not seeing the improvement that is required.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, the question is, you said that there is a committee. Which committee does the appointment? Is it just a committee appointed by the Police Commissioner?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. Through his Director of Human Resource—is directed by the Police Commissioner.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is a sad state.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Chair. Goods and Services, page 406, Line 08—

**Mr. Chairman:** Your mike is on?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Sorry. Line 08—

**Mr. Chairman:** What page?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** 406, Rent and Lease Office Accommodation. I am



seeing there is an increase of \$5 million. Could the Minister be kind enough to let us know how many properties have been rented and what is the monthly cost, and if at all you have weighed the cost-benefit analysis to purchase instead of renting?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are presently 22 buildings being rented by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, including sites and car parks, storage space, et cetera.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under Line Item Number—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, Member, Member.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure, when you finish.

**Mr. Chairman:** You have a continuum, Member for Oropouche West?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** I was just wondering, the third question, hon. Minister, if you have really compared the cost to rent with respect to purchasing, if it is more beneficial to purchase than to rent.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is an ongoing assessment that will be continued by the Commissioner of Police in terms of his decision-making, whether to rent or purchase.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Line Item 99, Employee Assistance Programme. Does the EAP provide the only form of counselling for our officers? Or is there another line Item provided for counselling?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** In addition to the EAP they also outsource some. Depending on the assessment, some of it is outsourced and there are also social workers involved with the police service who also offer assistance.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Are the officers, do they find this—is it an easily accessible programme for them?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** From all reports, yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, thanks.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A training programme under line Item 17, would the hon. Minister indicate whether that allocation is for training of in-house—police officers who are within the service already, or is it training for recruits, or is it training for both?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is training for persons who are in the service already, not for recruits.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** On the matter of training, 17—

**Mr. Chairman:** Same training?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes. Has the police service done an analysis of where its critical needs are in terms of skills for personnel, especially in terms of crime detection? And have they tailored their training programmes to reflect that element in their training?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, they have.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Has that been recent, or has it been a continuing process? And if it has been continuous, why is it that we are not getting the result in terms of the improvement in the detection rate?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is continuous and, therefore, we continue to build the capacity to get the kind of results that we require in terms of the increase in detection rates, that is the sort of—the remit for training and identifying the necessary training, the necessary individuals, the necessary units to increase. As I mentioned before, it is just not the police service alone; working in tandem with the other agencies like the Forensic Science Centre to build the capacity for detection.

**Dr. Rambachan:** While I agree with that, Mr. Minister, have you done an analysis to see whether the kinds of persons you are putting through the training

for crime detection, whether, in fact, you have done an analysis to see whether the potential that they have for that kind of work is suited to them, and whether there is a match between that potential and the training that will be provided so there is maximum advantage taken of the training so that we get the results? Because, you would agree that we are not getting the results.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That analysis is an ongoing managerial aspect of the Commissioner of Police.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles. I knew in the past that that was a reason for police not being able to respond. Does the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service have quantifiable measures, like a response time? If I were to call the Mon Repos Police Station and report something home, an incident, is there a standard response time, say 30 minutes or 20 minutes, that a citizen could have some comfort that there is some target that he could wrap his mind around, in terms of performance targets?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, there is a response time, but again, a response time would always be situationally determined, because one could never tell what is happening in any one day. So there is a response time, but of course it will be determined by the situation and the specific time and place.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. Could you tell us then, under normal—on a normal time, a normal day, normal consideration, what is the response rate?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Again, that will vary from geography to geography—

**Mr. Charles:** San Fernando.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Which one of San Fernando stations you are talking about?

**Mr. Charles:** Mon Repos Police Station.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Mon Repos to which area? Where are you talking about?

**Mr. Charles:** I live St. Joseph Village.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** St. Joseph Village? I would say the response time would be 10/15 minutes if you live at St. Joseph Village from Mon Repos Station.

**Mr. Charles:** All right. So, therefore—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** On a normal day, all things considered.

**Mr. Charles:** On a normal day, all things considered.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** So our citizens, on a normal day, all things considered, it should be 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Between Mon Repos Police Station to St. Joseph Village.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the hon. Minister give us an idea—give the country an idea—of how many recruits are trained annually—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The same 17 under Training. How many recruits are trained annually and what is the exodus at an average on an annual basis from the service.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The annual intake of recruits varies. All right? You want to narrow one particular year, you questioning? Because, I mean, the intakes vary in size in any one year.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. If you could give an idea for the last two or three years, if you have the information.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would not have the information for the last two or three years.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would the Commissioner or your assistant know, or the other Ministers of National Security?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can give you 2016, which is the last year. In 2016 we trained 158 recruits.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And what is the normal exodus at an average from service, annually?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide that to you in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So nobody knows from your—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We could give you an average.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. I would tell you when I was Minister of Education there was an exodus of about 400 teachers on an annual basis. So I expect that you, as Minister of National Security—

**Hon. Member:** I wonder why? [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members. Go ahead, Member for Caroni East. I am listening.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We will move on to Item 002, Police Service in Tobago.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I want to ask one question on Line Item Number 37, Janitorial Services. There is a \$48 million allocation for janitorial services. Who does the janitorial services?

**Mr. Chairman:** 37, page 407.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is it MTS or is it—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is MTS.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** MTS, all right.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Police Service, Tobago page 408.

Sub-Head: Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, Police Service, Trinidad, and we are still on page 408.

**Dr. Rambachan:** How many vehicles do you propose to buy for that \$15.4 million in 2017?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sixty-five vehicles.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And you bought approximately 75 in 2016?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** About 116 in 2016.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And those would have been therefore cheaper vehicles, given the average price. So you are buying a higher level vehicle—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Not necessarily. The cost of vehicles may have increased.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. What is the current size of the fleet of vehicles available for the police? How many vehicles are available for the police now?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We have 1,320 vehicles operational—working right now.

**Dr. Rambachan:** 1,320 operational.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And how many are non-operational and are in the garages?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We have about 337.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Of this 337, can you say how many—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And 100 are under Board of Survey right now.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** One hundred under Board of Survey.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That was the question I was going to ask you. So the other 237, on the average, how long are they taking to go through the process of repairs before they come back serviceable on the road?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Again, it is based on the type of repairs that are required. Some may need minor repairs, some may need major repairs, so the time would vary, depending on the situation of the vehicle.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is VMCOTT still repairing vehicles for the police service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, VMCOTT is still repairing vehicles—VMCOTT together with some of the suppliers. So some of the vehicles in warranty will go back to the agents and so on.

**Mr. Karim:** Chairman, Thanks. Minister, with respect to the question from the Member for Tabaquite, what percentage will you say are being repaired through VMCOTT as opposed to the private sector?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I think the older vehicles would be repaired by VMCOTT. The newer ones which are still in warranty would, of course, still be repaired by the manufacturers. So roughly about 20 per cent.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you still having the problems of getting vehicles out of VMCOTT in a very reasonable time? Because there was a matter where it was realized that if a vehicle went into VMCOTT it went into the graveyard. Has that changed or has VMCOTT improved on its delivery?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I have been informed that there has been some improvement in terms of the time vehicles turn around in VMCOTT.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, I hope that is true, because if you go to VMCOTT in south in order to get your vehicle washed—because they have a facility they offer—and you experience the kind of customer service there, as a person getting in there, or even—I tested their system to try to get an alignment done on my vehicle. I will tell you that the customer service is very poor at VMCOTT in San Fernando, and I hope that that is not a reflection of how they are treating their main customer, which is the police service. Because I saw a lot of vehicles just parked up there in the yard waiting to be fixed that day and I wanted to enquire. I tried to do some personalized research to find out in preparation for this.

**3.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 04 Current Transfer and Subsidies. Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 409. Item 004 International Bodies, page 409. Item 005 Non-profit Institutions, page 409.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, can you state with this

\$500,000 increase to the police youth clubs, does that mean we are going to have more police youth clubs; and if so, can you kindly tell what is the amount currently and where do you plan to expand?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are right now 115 new clubs throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and the plan is to expand them. We are looking first of all at the communities that are at-risk, but the plan is to expand them throughout. If we have a youth club throughout Trinidad and Tobago, it will service us in good stead.

**Mr. Karim:** Is it possible you could give us a list of what exists and where you propose?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sure we can do that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005 Non-profit Institutions, page 409. Item 007 Households, page 410. Item 009 Other Transfers, page 410.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For Police Academy, could the hon. Minister indicate whether that is the training—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, Sir.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 02. 009, 02. Trinidad and Tobago Police Academy, \$10 million allocated to it for 2017, the revised estimate last year was \$10 million, what is the function of that academy?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** As mentioned there, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Academy is based in the Police Barracks St. James and they handle training for police officers within the police service. It is a different level of training, both at the individual and collective level.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** At different levels of the police service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Different levels of the police service, of course.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, you would remember I had questioned you on a training Item under a previous area and you indicated that there was training there



as well. There was a Vote for training there. How does that Vote for training there relate to the Vote for training here? How do you know where to put the allocation and where to put the trainees and so on? There is one Vote there and there is another here.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I am trying to recall which one was that. That was not under police, was it?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That was line Item—yes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It was under police?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is under Administration. What I mentioned to you, those are the ones who—you asked with respect to either recruits or those who are serving, and I told you that training was for those who are in the service.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Those who were in the service? And this one is for the recruits?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon, Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09 Development Programme, Consolidation Fund, page 179, and we go to Item 004 Social Infrastructure and from pages 179 to 181.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Chairman. I am looking at page 180 because you said we are covering a number of pages. 041 Establishment of Police Youth Club Facilities. I know we just did the youth club and we increased it by \$500,000. Given again the important work that is done by the police youth clubs, do you think it is wise to decrease the expenditure in that critical area like the cadet force that deals with the young people?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I did not hear the last part of your question.

**Mr. Charles:** Do you think it is wise, in the context of problems we face with

young people, to reduce the expenditure on Police Youth Club Facilities, and I am drawing reference to a constant cut in things like MiLAT, the cadets and youth clubs.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is merely an adjustment that some of these are transferred under recurrent expenditure because those that are up and running will be transferred under recurrent expenditure. So there is funding otherwise.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah, but this is for facilities, that is for recurrent expenditure and facilities deal with offices and places where they can meet.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And there is an increase in facilities at Cunupia and Maraval for this year.

**Mr. Charles:** On page 181, 004 Establishment of the Police Management Agency, 005 Establishment of a Police Service Inspectorate and 006—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, we have not reached to that page as yet.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Chairman. My question from page 180, 038. Could I ask the Minister—this deals with the Establishment of New Facilities for Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch—exactly where are these new facilities; is it the facilities at Port of Spain? And as the Minister is responding, there was a policy decision taken some time ago for the Highway Patrol Branch to be located temporarily at the Brian Lara car park in Tarouba, has that decision been rescinded; and finally are there any proposals in the coming year for the establishment of a Debe police station that had been requested for several years? To the Minister of National Security and not the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member!

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** With respect to the use of the Brian Lara Stadium, that was never implemented and there is no intention to do so going forward. With

respect to the traffic facilities and Highway Patrol Branch, the Commissioner of Police has in fact asked for the Ministry of Public Administration to look to help secure/locate suitable facilities for the Highway Patrol Branch and they are in the process of so doing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And you will look into it.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, page 180, line Item 050 Expansion of Facilities for Homicide Cumuto. I read through the entire book, went into your PSIP, and I did not see what was stated in your budget statement where Manzanilla Police Station was in fact going to be constructed. I did not see that in the estimates and I also want to find out how soon will the expansion start on the facilities for the Manzanilla Police Station and I am also making a request for a police post at Tamana. Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Police stations reside under IDF. We will come to that just now. Police stations under IDF, we will come under that just now.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I had asked on the same line Item, Expansion, when it was going to actually start. The Expansion of Facilities for Homicide Cumuto, that is 050, page 180.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is going to start in this fiscal year, and Cumuto here is in the area that police currently occupies.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am on page 180, line Item 048 Establishment of Juvenile Booking Stations. Can you tell us what this is about and where are they going to be located?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is with respect to the juvenile court project, where in each police station they will have an area specified for juvenile booking. That is separate from the general police stations and we have done some already. We have

installed in some police stations already. We have to do some more. That is including with the juvenile court.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. In 2016—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, please.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 004 Establishment of a Police Management Agency, 005 Establishment of a Police Service Inspectorate and 006 Establishment of a Community Safety Partnership. These things were enunciated previously in 2016, and I see in 2017—well, the revised estimate for 2016 nothing was spent—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, excuse, Member, which page are you on?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Page 181.

**Mr. Chairman:** No Member, we have not reached that page as yet.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You have not reached there yet?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we are now going to that. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Before you go there, the Establishment of—041 on page 180 Establishment of Police Youth Club Facilities and we see an estimate of \$800,000 for 2017.

**Mr. Imbert:** We dealt with that already.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us hear the question first, Mr. Minister. Go ahead.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could the Minister give a breakdown of how this would be allocated or spent?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The question was asked and I said that Maraval and Cunupia in terms of establishment of the youth club facilities.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, Member, we will now go to Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 181, and do you still have a question there?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The idea of a police management agency and police service inspectorate, have these things been abandoned in terms of the transformation of the police service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, they have not been abandoned. The initiatives which have moved from conceptual to policy stage, and they will be dealt with again financially in the mid-year review.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In the mid-year review?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, line Item 003 Transformation of the Police Service. With the transformation of the police service, would it continue to collaborate with the Ministries such as Health and Social Development and Family Services with regard to street dwellers?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, in terms of the transformation there will be continuing collaboration with the various entities including those you mentioned.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Chairman. Hon. Minister, line 042 Outfitting of Indoor Range in Aranguez.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 04?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** 042, Outfitting of Indoor Range in Aranguez. In the 2016 estimate there was \$2 million allocated, can you kindly state what is the status of this indoor range in Aranguez? Page 180.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I thought you moved from that, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West, you are going backwards on us there. No, we have passed that page, Member.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Oh, I was trying to get your attention.

**Mr. Chairman:** The precedent has been set. Let us proceed.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 355, Item 004 Social Infrastructure, page 335.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In this area Social Infrastructure, I am at page 335, may I suggest—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Line Item, Police Service, 001 to 008. There are no estimates 2016/2017 for I think about eight Items here, the police stations of Brasso, Arima, Maloney, Piarco, Cumuto, La Brea, Moruga, Oropouche. Could I recommend to the National Security Minister, through you, just effect whatever you have to do, remove them from the book? They have all been built and completed by the Partnership *[Desk thumping]* so we should just take it off the books.

My question on the other three, you have the Besson Street, the St. Joseph Police Station and the Maracas/St. Joseph, could I ask the Minister—these are projects I believe under UDeCOTT—what is the final estimate for construction of St. Joseph, Besson Street and St. Joseph/Maracas; and how much money was spent during fiscal 2016 from the revised estimates because they were all revised downward? So I imagine that work had not been done to the extent budgeted. How much was spent and what percentage of works needs to be completed on these three stations that were outstanding as of September 2016?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide that to you in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** In writing he said?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, I will.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, sure. I look forward to a good read.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Page 335, I just want to ask the Minister

if he will kindly consider, again, the construction of the Enterprise police station?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Noted.

**3.25 p.m.**

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 018, the St. Clair Police Station, I notice it is no longer on the books. Is there going to be no construction of any St. Clair Police Station?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, there will be a construction of St. Clair Police Station, not on that site.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But there is nothing allocated for it under the estimates.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So it will be next year's consideration or is it midterm?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And could you indicate what is going to be done with the site where the base foundation was already put on in St. Clair Police Station and what has happened to that?

**Mr. Imbert:** I will answer that. The intention is to engage a public/private partnership and the advertisement has already gone out for a hotel at the site of the existing Ministry of Agriculture and the car park, the site in the back which was the original site for the St. Clair Police Station will be incorporated into the new compound for the hotel.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So what has happened to the \$5.2 million that has been spent on the base foundation already for that police station?

**Mr. Imbert:** It has been spent.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, you paid debt so you are going to throw that away.

**Mr. Imbert:** It has been spent.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, proceed.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. With line Item 015 Construction of the Manzanilla Police Station, two things I would like to ask. One, when the construction will begin and two, I notice there was not anything with community policing, will there be a community policing attached to the rural communities in?—I am asking for my community of Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The Manzanilla Police Station is at the design stage right now and so it would be tendered by UDeCOTT. It is at the design stage right now. Community policing has been instituted throughout the police service. It is a philosophy that has been throughout the police station, community policing, so it is not dedicated to a community police unit as such.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 64 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I thank you for your time. Mr. Commissioner and your technocrats, thanks for coming.

*Head 03*

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, we will now move on to Head 03, the Judiciary, and we shall proceed immediately. Head 03, Judiciary, \$331,740,100. I will now invite the Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. As we are all aware through the concept of the separation of powers, the judicial arm, i.e. the Judiciary, plays a very important part and role in the separation of powers. One that is recognized by this administration and respected more importantly by this administration.

The Judiciary has been promised by this administration full financial autonomy. I am pleased to report that in the last year of Government, considerable discussion has taken place between the Judiciary, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs aimed at ensuring that this



process to this handover towards financial autonomy takes place. Over the past year, there has also been considerable rebuilding of the relationships, as well as ensuring as best as is possible into these times of financial austerity that the Judiciary is provided with the resources that it requires. There will always be a need for more resources but it is something that we respect and we intend to continue working along with the Judiciary to ensure that they accomplish financial autonomy in the shortest possible time frame.

*Question proposed:* That Head 03 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$331,740,100 for Head 03, Judiciary, is comprised of money proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 11, Item 001, Judiciary Trinidad, page 11; Item 002 Judiciary Tobago, page 12. Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, Item 001, Judiciary Trinidad, page 13 to 14.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, could the Minister advise, in all the other Heads, the electricity has been going up, but I noticed in Item 04, there is a decrease of \$1.3 million and also Item 05 Telephones, there has been major decreases. Could you enlighten?

**Hon. Young:** This is an Item that will require review over the period from now until the mid-year review. It is a hope and an intention to try and reduce across the board the amount of consumption of electricity. But we have already indicated to the Judiciary that this is something we would be very very prepared to have conversation, discussion, and in mid-year review, we will come back to Parliament.

**Mr. Lee:** Minister, Item 11 Books and Periodicals, I notice a drastic decline.

Given the business of the day of the Judiciary which I consider very critical, I see an estimate of only \$1 million, a drop of \$4 million.

**Hon. Young:** This is, again, something that is under review. We are looking at it very closely and we are having conversations with the Judiciary. Of course, if the Judiciary requires an allocation, a virement of more money towards that Item, it will be done.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, line 12, Materials and Supplies. I am seeing there is a decrease of \$300,000 and earlier this year, there were several problems with respect to when you had to probate the will, a grant was issued and there was no paper to type the grant so it took us at least eight months to get a grant issued from the probate court. So I was wondering, having this decrease of \$300,000, if this will further affect the probate division.

**Hon. Young:** Well, again, the probate division would fall under the administration of the Judiciary and we have already indicated to the Judiciary that where there may be shortfalls, because of course, we are trying to cut expenditure, we remain open to have conversation and to provide the necessary resources, so we would certainly hope not.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, thank you very much, Chair. Contract Employment, 16. There is a fairly significant figure of \$57,450. Can you explain what that is if you know and secondly, could you tell me if any of those resources are going to be allocated to addressing the issue of backlog?

**Hon. Young:** Well, again, as you all would all know and as I tried to indicate at the outset, the Judiciary is autonomous, the Judiciary is in charge of its own administration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I appreciate that.

**Hon. Young:** I am certain and through conversations with them over the last year,

they are aware of the backlog situation. I know they are working assiduously towards the reduction of the backlog and there are going to be calling upon practitioners to participate in the reduction in the backlog as well because that has to be a working together.

On the contract employment side, over time, there has been an increase in the use of contract employment and this is not something—I mean when you look at 2015, you would have seen it was \$58 million, we are now down to \$57 million. So it is something that is just a continuum of employment to staff the Judiciary.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Does that include judges and magistrates?

**Hon. Young:** No, that would not include judges. It is support in administrative staff.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 27 Official Overseas Travel. Does that travel include—

**Hon. Young:** Sorry, where are we?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 27. Does that include the Chief Justice travel as well that has been cut by \$500,000?

**Hon. Young:** This is the official overseas travel for the Judiciary. The Chief Justice is the head of the Judiciary so it would include any travel associated with the hon. Chief Justice.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So now it is only \$500,000 for the travel?

**Hon. Young:** Well, as you all are aware, I mean with these Items, if there is a need to vire money, it will be done because you would see—he will do it in consultation with the Minister of Finance.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings. You have a cut of \$3.6 million in terms of that and yet, you have Magistrates' Courts that are in a very dilapidated state or where the conditions for work are subhuman. You had the extent to which the Chaguanas court had to be closed down and people put—

**Hon. Young:** Yeah, well there has now been a new one open.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah, with its limitations as you described. But given the extent of the refurbishing of buildings required and the need, like you just said, to increase productivity of backlog of cases and have longer working hours, have you taken into consideration what has to be done with these buildings before you made this cut?

**Hon. Young:** Again, as we have said throughout the discourse over the last few days and as it is recognized by definition, when you look up in the upper left hand corner of the page, you will *Draft Estimates of Expenditure*, so by definition, these are drafts, they are estimates. We are having conversation with the Judiciary. We are attempting to cut down the level of cost. But once buildings—because we agree with you—require proper maintenance, repairs, et cetera, it is something that should be prioritized and we will work along with the Judiciary to ensure that it is done so there can be a proper dispensation of justice.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The Judiciary has the responsibility for repairing their own buildings. Am I right?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you satisfied that the Judiciary or the personnel attached to the Judiciary has done a good job in terms of the management of maintenance and repairs of buildings?

**Hon. Young:** I think, by and large, the answer is yes. But you know as with most government buildings in Trinidad and Tobago, there is still some margin of room for improvement.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, have you ever visited the Siparia Magistrates' Court?

**Hon. Young:** I have.

**Dr. Rambachan:** To see the extent to which that building has deteriorated and lawyers and so on and people in the public service are supposed to be working there.

**Hon. Young:** So what is the question? The answer is yes, I have visited.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And you are satisfied that people should continue to work in those conditions and you have cut—

**Hon. Young:** Again, as I said at the outset, the responsibility for the administration, the maintenance of these buildings, et cetera, falls under a separate arm called the Judiciary, and I am certain that the Judiciary is aware of the necessity or the areas that need improvement and they will work towards it.

**3.40 p.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** You are familiar with the personnel who work in that arm, in terms of their level of skills and abilities to handle maintenance? Do they have, for example—

**Hon. Young:** That would be called interference in the Judiciary.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—people trained in construction and maintenance management?

**Hon. Young:** As I said, we leave it up to the Judiciary to do a good job, and to continue with their maintenance and repair programme. If there is any assistance the Government can do, it stands by ready and willing to do so.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Judiciary Tobago, page 12; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, Judiciary Trinidad, pages 13 and 14, Item—

**Mr. Charles:** Page 14, Sub-Item 98, could you just enlighten us in terms of how is this Overseas Travel Facilities, different from the Official Overseas

Travel, Sub-Item 27 on the previous page?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, I can. You may be familiar with the terms and conditions for judges and judicial officers, and that would be the line item directly in relation to their individual terms and conditions. So you know what the terms and conditions are, and they are allowed a certain amount of judicial contact a year.

If I may, Mr. Chair, just to go back to what the hon. Member for Tabaquite was raising a short while ago, I am informed that with respect to Siparia, there are actually two pieces of land the Judiciary owns, that they are looking at the construction of new facilities there.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That would be a long time down the road, knowing that the pace at which justice works in this country.

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

**Me. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. On page 14, 37, Janitorial Services, in 2015 approximately \$9.2 million was spent, and in 2016, \$10.5 million. We see in 2017, \$6 million. Could the Minister shed any light as it relates to this drastic drop in relation to janitorial services?

**Hon. Young:** I would not use the term “drastic”, but again as I have said throughout, we are working along with the Judiciary to reduce expenditure. If this is a line item that they require additional funds, towards the mid-year review we will deal with it at that time.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I hope we are not short-changing the cleanliness of the facilities and so on, under the—

**Hon. Young:** I do not understand the question.

**Me. Indarsingh:** Well in terms of the drastic drop.

**Hon. Young:** I do not understand the question, but okay, point noted.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 43, Security Services, could the Minister indicate—that security service entail what, and which organization or which firm—if he feels free to do so—provides those security services for the Judiciary?

**Hon. Young:** The largest service provider of security services to the Judiciary is MTS. For some of the smaller out of the way, more rural courts, they may use different service providers there. And again, it is an item that the Judiciary has looked at with respect to an attempt to reduce expenditure.

So, for example, as a Government we have mandated, we have gone out, for example, the Ministry of the Attorney General is moving right now. We are trying to reduce the cost by having conversations with the service providers. So it is the same thing. If again, we are not going to allow there to be any drop in security services. So if there is a requirement at mid-year, we will address it then.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Judiciary Tobago, pages 14 and 15, Item 003—

**Miss Ramdial:** Yes. Thank you, Chair. Through you, Minister, line 16, Contract Employment, I see that there is an increase of \$1.2 million. Can you give us an undertaking to give us a list of those positions?

**Hon. Young:** Give you a list of what?

**Miss Ramdial:** The Contract Employment positions—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you are on Judiciary, Family Court, Item 003.

**Miss Ramdial:** Sorry, sorry, sorry, yes, my mistake.

**Mr. Chairman:** I was now going to call it. All right. So it is Item 003, Judiciary, Family Court, pages 15 and 16. Proceed, Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you. Again, Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, an increase by \$1.2 million, can you give some clarification?

**Hon. Young:** That is actually to cover the cost of the existing contacts.

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay, thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, Judiciary Trinidad, page 16; Item 003, Judiciary Family Court, page 17; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, page 17; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 17; Item 009, Other Transfers, page 17.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sub-Item 03, Mediation Board of Trinidad and Tobago. Could the hon. Minister give an—it is an extremely good and important thing. Can you give us an idea of the target or the target group, for the Mediation Board, who you target to train, or is it an open training programme nationally?

**Hon. Young:** As the Member may be aware, you are right, as part of the alternate dispute resolution process, that has been quite successful in resolving litigation in Trinidad and Tobago, as opposed to going through a full trial, the cost associated with a trial. Under the Judiciary they had introduced a mediation board that has been doing a very, very good job. So this is the funding for that mediation board to continue its work, and we continue to wish them success, because it really has had a very good success rate in persons resolving their matters.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Who is the target?

**Hon. Young:** The target audience is persons involved in litigation, who come to the court, and what the judge or the magistrates would say is, “Look, rather than going through a full trial, would you consider putting yourself into a mediation process with trained mediators”? Those who accept, there is a good rate of success with it, and it frees up the court of tying it up with trials.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many years it has been in existence? About how many



people would have been trained?

**Hon. Young:** I am told for at least five years. It has been around in operation for the last five years.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And about how many—

**Hon. Young:** How many cases have gone through?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, how many people have been trained in it and so on?

**Hon. Young:** How many people have utilized it?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, cases and—

**Hon. Young:** This is actually the board and part of its process is the certification process, et cetera. So we do not have those numbers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do the litigants have to pay any fee if they have to go into this? No?

**Hon. Young:** Apart from the fees of their lawyers, et cetera?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The Mediation Board certifies who would be the mediators.

**Hon. Young:** Correct, by its training, et cetera, et cetera, but they also have the programme of mediation. There has been a pilot project especially.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 4 and 5.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister, Item No. 016, Lay Magistrates Pilot Project. I noticed in 2016, there was an intention perhaps to execute this project. Now, knowing that there is such a backlog in the Magistrates' Court, is that an Item that is no long being pursued?

**Hon. Young:** Actually no, this is something I am intimately familiar with. One of the—as we know, there has been certain—I do not want to use the word

“issues”. The criminal justice system, there can be improvements to the criminal justice system. So one of the initiatives the Government was considering was the introduction of a lay magistrate system, such as what operates in the United Kingdom, and has been quite successful, in the United Kingdom, but, of course, this falls under the Judiciary.

So when we came into office last year, we put it as a line Item. We put a figure there in case we were able to—after conversation with the Judiciary—really persuade the Judiciary to pursue it. That conversation is still ongoing. So we maintained it as a line Item. As you are aware now, we can always—if the Judiciary decide to pursue it, we can vire money to it, but if you do not have a line Item, it disappears.

**Mr. Lee:** A new question?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we are on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

**Mr. Lee:** Line Item 017, Minister? Establishment of a Juvenile Court of Trinidad and Tobago, \$5 million. I saw it came from the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. Could you enlighten us what is the—you know, the idea behind this juvenile court? Where will it be established, you know any—

**Hon. Young:** As you would be aware, over the last session there was a suite of legislation, a package of legislation dealing with various amendments to pieces of legislation, dealing with children. So the vision is to have a pilot project and a court, the same way the Family Court was very successful, and is moving out of the stage of being a pilot project, to do the same for the children, and to have a court that is specific for children, and, of course, key persons would be trained. Because when you are dealing with children in that environment, it

would be a different type of training, and you would treat the claimants and the defendants differently. So it is to establish and it actually came under the Tenth Parliament. The vision is to have a specific court to deal with children, recognizing that they should be dealt with differently.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you. Minister, Item F 011, Expansion of the Rio Claro Magistrates' Court. Can you give an indication of the timeline, in terms of the execution of that expansion/refurbishment, and how long it may take?

**Hon. Young:** Sorry, I missed. Which line Item?

**Mr. Paray:** F 011, Expansion of the Rio Claro Magistrates' Court, page 5.

**Hon. Young:** All right. What had happened is, there was an initial estimate and there was some level of dissatisfaction with that estimate. So what is happening now is the Judiciary is going to go back and engage NIPDEC, and this amount here is to go through the process of getting the architectural drawings, because as you would be aware, courts are very, very different in how they are structured for security reasons and these types of things. So this is to get the ball rolling and to ensure that it can move on.

**Mr. Paray:** So this is just plain architectural designs, drawing concept and—

**Hon. Young:** Well, it is the architectural designs, the recruitment and retaining of consultants, et cetera, to get the process started.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay.

**Mr. Charles:** Deputy Chair, Item 014, Development and Implementation of a Corporate Brand for the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago. What exactly is that?

**Hon. Young:** It is a redesign of the services that are intended to be offered by the Judiciary.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay, and Items 003, Development of a Customer Care in the Nation's Court Buildings. What was the expectation that—

**Hon. Young:** Well, I think, as you would be aware if you have ever been to any of the court systems, especially Magistrates' Court, the Family Courts, et cetera, there is a great level of interaction. At the lower levels, the administrative levels of the court and there is always room for improvement, to deal with the customer care, because people by definition going into a court system, will have a level of anxiety, et cetera. So it is really—I think, they do a very, very good system now, especially with the courts in Port of Spain, the Family Courts, et cetera. So it is really to keep the initiative going and to provide training, et cetera, for the customer care officers.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Chairman. Hon. Minister, line 020, Provision of Accommodation for the San Fernando Family Court. I recall the hon. AG said that there will be a family court at Fyzabad, somewhere in Fyzabad. I am looking through this and I am not seeing any allocation for the family court in Fyzabad. Could you enlighten us on that?

**Hon. Young:** Well, there is going to be established, again it is the Children's Court in Fyzabad, but that is under grant funding from the American Government.

**3.55 p.m.**

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you. Minister 013, Construction of Judges and Magistrates housing in Tobago. Can you tell us where you are with this project? Has it been started as yet in terms of design plans?

**Hon. Young:** I am happy to announce that the initial designs have been completed, and what they are looking at now is going out for public tender,

through a proper competitive tender procurement process and the award of a contract to build courts in Tobago for our colleagues.

**Miss Ramdial:** Minister, line Item 015, Construction of an official residence for the hon. Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago. Again, I am seeing an estimate of \$2 million. Can you give us an update with respect to that project?

**Hon. Young:** As you would be aware, there has always been a residence, an official residence for the Chief Justice in Tobago and, unfortunately, it was allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. The designs have been completed now. NIPDEC is working on it, and they are looking to begin the construction after competitive tender process.

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

**Hon. Young:** Sorry, Mr. Chair, if I may just correct the record. I am actually being corrected. It is whilst there is a judicial residence in Tobago, this is actually for in Trinidad. So it should not have said Trinidad and Tobago, it is for Trinidad.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you okay, Member for Couva North? So now we go to the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair, just to the Minister, under 023, if you would care to elaborate on the establishment of the Drug Treatment Court.

**Hon. Young:** As you will be aware, they have established, over the last year and a half, a Drug Treatment Court, so this is the continuation of the programme in other areas of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And when you say other areas, I am not too clear.

**Hon. Young:** The Judiciary will decide on the other areas that they are now going to have Drug Treatment Courts in Trinidad and Tobago. It is in south right now. So we do not want to just monopolize in south.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni East. Okay. We will then go to the Member

for Pointe-a-Pierre. Pointe-a-Pierre is okay. We will now go to Member for Oropouche West.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you Chair, hon. Minister, line 009, Provisions for accommodation for the San Fernando Magistrates' Court. In light of the conditions that attorneys have to practise in San Fernando Magistrates' Court, do you think that \$2 million is sufficient to be allocated to refurbish that Magistrates' court?

**Hon. Young:** A building has been located, and this is really to get the redesign of the building. Because as you would be familiar, as I said a short while ago, courts require very, very, specialized plans and designs and planning purposes, so this is to get that exercise done.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Is it at the same location, the existing place or is it a new?

**Hon. Young:** No, it is a new location.

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Hon Minister, line Item25, the refurbishment and expansion of the Siparia Magistrates' Court. I know in the past when we have had to deal with the refurbishment and expansion of Magistrates' Courts, elsewhere in other areas of the country, there has been disruption in terms of the service. Do you anticipate that such a similar situation will occur with the Siparia Magistrates' Court, the jurisdiction having to be held elsewhere in another facility or another court?

**Hon. Young:** Member for Princes Town—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, address the Chair, please.

**Hon. Young:** Sorry. Mr. Deputy Chair, to answer the hon. Member for Princes Town's question—and he always looks after Siparia, which is why I am smiling—the answer is no, because I said a short while ago, they have identified some parcels of land to build the new court on, so that will not disrupt what is taking place in the current court. We are looking after Siparia as well.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Family Court in Fyzabad—

**Hon. Young:** What line Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Family Court.

**Hon. Young:** I am not seeing it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You mentioned there is supposed to be a Family Court in San Fernando.

**Hon. Young:** I did not mention that, it was your friend to your right.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is there going to be a Family Court in Fyzabad?

**Hon. Young:** There is going—I just answered that, correct. Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do you know who owns the land where the court is going to be?

**Hon. Young:** I am not seeing this as a line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** The line Item, Member? Line Item, Member.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 020, Provision of accommodation of Family Court.

**Hon. Young:** I do not know if my friends can read on that side. I understand it has been a long day, but 020 on mine says, Provision of Accommodation for San Fernando Family Court, corner of Lord and Paradise Streets, San Fernando. So, again, I am a bit confused.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Has it been shifted from there to Fyzabad?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, Members.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is the same Item? Has it been shifted from there?

**Mr. Chairman:** The line Item you are referring to is 020?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Has the location been removed?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, has the location been removed?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** We are asking and we have a right to ask.

**Hon. Young:** No, it has not been moved.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So there is going to be no Family Court in Fyzabad?

**Hon. Young:** I do not know where this—I am answering a question line Item 20 about San Fernando and Lord and Paradise Streets, San Fernando.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, we need to move on.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, we need to move on. It has not been identified as a line Item. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Young:** But I answered that already. I answered your friend.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members, we go according to the line Items, according to here. I am hearing what you are saying, hon. Member, but we are going based on what is before us.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In the absence of no line Item, it means that there is no Family Court.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, no. That is the ruling. That is the ruling. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 270, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and other services, page 270.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 03 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank you Minister, and I thank you technocrats from the Judiciary. Have a good evening.

*Head 04.*



**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we now move on to Head 04, Industrial Court, \$20,799,800. I will now invite the Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, as we should all be aware, the Industrial Court is a very important court in Trinidad and Tobago. It is recognized by law, and under a specific Act, the Industrial Relations Act. As a court of superior record, it functions under a president and has two divisions: the Essential Services Division and the General Services Division. It is a court that has functioned very well under the tenure of the previous presidents and the current president, and one that is respected in the industrial relations climate in Trinidad and Tobago.

They also have under their purview courts in San Fernando as well as in Tobago—or, they had sittings in Tobago, rather. The Industrial Court continues to function and to pay yeoman service in the industrial relations climate in Trinidad and Tobago, and it is something that the Government fully supports.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$20,799,800 for Head 04, Industrial Court, stand part of the Schedule.

*Question proposed:* That Head 04 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$20,799,800 for Head 04, Industrial Court is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head details: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 19; Item 01, General Administration, page 19; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 19; Item 001,

General Administration, pages 19 and 20.

The Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I was waiting for you to finish, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002. Member, you cannot wait for me to finish, you know. Item 002, South Office, page 21.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I wanted to ask the question on 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, and I was waiting for you to finish, to pause.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Item 001, General Administration, page 19 and 20. Proceed hon. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. Under 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, Minister I see a decrease of \$1,680,000. Does that reflect that of vacancies within the judges at the Industrial Court in terms of the decrease in salaries?

**Hon. Young:** First of all, there is no decrease in salaries, and there can be no decrease in salaries. Secondly, the answer is no. What will happen is at the mid-year review and between now and the mid-year review, we will continue to monitor it, have discussions with the Industrial Court. This was one of the attempts at a reduction in expenditure, but if it is something that they require virements to, we will indeed do so.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just for clarification, are there any vacancies existing at the level of judges within the Industrial Court?

**Hon. Young:** The answer is yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** How many?

**Hon. Young:** The answer is five.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Five judges. Is the office of the Attorney General moving towards filling these vacancies?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In relation to the essential services division, are there any vacancies, well, related?

**Hon. Young:** What line Item are we on now? What is the question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am speaking in the context of vacancies and vacancies have implications in relation to salaries and so on. You said that the Industrial Court is a very important court in the field of industrial relations in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Young:** Is it a statement or is it a question?

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, hold on. Members, he has five minutes. Members.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** If you want to suppress me, I will—

**Hon. Young:** I have no desire to suppress you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, as the Chairman, I will determine whether you will be suppressed or not. Proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am simply asking, whether it is the acting AttorneyGeneral or in whatever capacity, I am simply asking: is there a full complement of judges—

**Hon. Young:** But I answered that already.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—of the essential services division?

**Mr. Chairman:** And the answer is five, he said.

**Hon. Young:** The answer is no.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much.

**Hon. Young:** You are welcome.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, I see a decrease by—

**Hon. Young:** Which page?

**Mr. Padarath:** Page 20. I see a decrease by \$1.5 million. Can you indicate to us what would have accounted for—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, we are now moving on to—

**Mr. Padarath:** Or, sorry. You are still under—I thought you had moved on to page 20.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, you have a question where?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, Mr. Minister, you just said that there will be no cuts in the number, in terms of workers under Salaries and Cost of Living and so on. Right? There will be no cuts.

**Hon. Young:** I did not say that. I said there cannot be any reduction in terms and conditions of the judges.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. But the salaries of the judges are direct charges, so it is not reflected in that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which line Item, Sir?**Dr. Rambachan:** Line Item 23, Direct Charges. That is different to line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Right?

**Hon. Young:** Yeah.

**4.10 p.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you are saying that this is a draft estimate and you pointed to draft estimate. Several times during the day we heard that, draft estimates, where we asked why the amount was smaller rather than what it was the last year. I hope that this is not—I want to ask: is this a way that the Government is suppressing the real budget and expenditure in the eyes of the public by masking this and saying that we are going to review it in the midterm budget?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am assured of that?

**Mr. Imbert:** How many “noes” do you want?

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am not sure. I mean, I take your answer on the basis of truth, that you are speaking the truth, but when you continue to say all the time that we are going to review it in the midterm budget, it would appear to the average person who needs to understand this that you are suppressing the real amount of the budget and, therefore, you are showing the lower budget for the sake of satisfying the public rather than what the real expenditure of the Government is.

**Mr. Chairman:** No further questions? Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Deputy Chair, could I ask the goodly Minister, based on the fact that he told this meeting that there are five vacancies or five judges short in terms of the quantum of the Industrial Court, how is this impacting on the delivery of judgments and how many cases are existing at the court, at this point in time, in relation to workers awaiting timely delivery of judgments?

**Hon. Young:** I do not see how that question can be answered. That is a supposition. He is assuming first of all that there is some effect on it, et cetera. I am not aware of any effect.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I could probably refer you to the speech of the President of the Industrial Court at the opening of the term.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, page 19. Item 001 General Administration, pages 19 and 20. Item 002 South Office, page 21. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 21. Item 001 General Administration, page 21.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09 Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 7. Item 005, Multisectoral and Other Services, page 7.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 04 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister, thank you technocrats from the Industrial

Court. Do have a good afternoon.

*Head 38.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 38 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Young:** The Environmental Commission plays a very important role in the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to providing an authority, recognized as a superior court of record, for persons to go and raise any concerns they have with projects and any environmental concerns that they have. I was fortunate enough during the course of my practice to appear there a few times. It is an extremely competent court that is made up of a number of different professionals, not only judicial officers, engineers, those who are versed in environmental matters, et cetera. They function as every superior court in a very efficient manner, and maybe somewhat underutilized but still they play a very important role and position in the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. It is something this Government encourages and wishes to continue supporting.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I almost forgot to welcome the technocrats and senior executives from the Environmental Commission. Welcome.

Hon. Members, the sum of \$7,052,400 for Head 38 Environmental Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head details, Sub-Head 01 Personal Expenditure, page 278. Item 001 General Administration, page 278.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. It is my understanding, Minister, notwithstanding your statement of the importance of the Environmental

Commission, that since May the Environmental Commission has no commissioners and that therefore it is not functioning. What is the Government going to do with respect to the appointment of the Environmental Commissioners?

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you have a line Item?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes, Sub-Item 01 Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. So if there is the non-appointment, certainly it will impact upon that.

**Mr. Chairman:** I just needed to be sure.

**Mr. Singh:** My question to you is: when will the Environmental Commissioners be appointed?

**Hon. Young:** It is something that we are looking at. We are moving towards the appointment of the necessary set of commissioners. I would like to assure the public at this stage that the commission continues to function, because as you would be aware there is a registry, there is staff taking complaints, et cetera, the documents are being processed, et cetera.

**Mr. Singh:** I agree with you, there is a process taking place, but the adjudication is not taking place.

**Mr. Chairman:** Comment or question?

**Mr. Singh:** It is a comment.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you do not need a response?

**Hon. Young:** It is a statement. No, I am not responding to that. That is soapbox.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services. Item 001, General Administration, pages 278 and 279.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Items 62 and 66.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 279, Line Item 62.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Promotions, Publicity and Printing; Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions.

The hon. Minister in his statement said that the work of the Environmental Commission is not well known in the public. Since they spent \$600,000 in 2016 or \$1.1 million, what has been done to really improve the understanding of the public and the appreciation of the public as to the role and function of this Environmental Commission, so that it could be used more often by people with complaints?

**Mr. Young:** Actually when you see that increase—and I am glad that you drew attention to it—over the last budgetary period, what has happened over that period—and maybe it is because you spend a lot of time in here and not in front the television—they have actually increased their profile through a number of television programmes, a number of educational programmes on the television, radio, et cetera. So they have actually had an outreach programme, and they have also gone to the more rural areas of Trinidad and Tobago where development may be taking place, to inform the public of what the Environmental Commission does.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you for that, because maybe I missed it, although I listen to a lot of radio and look at television a lot.

**Hon. Young:** I am told it was on all the stations.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But would it not be more targeted and effective if, for example, the Environmental Commission were to contact Members of Parliament in their particular areas, whose offices are littered with a series of complaints that could be dealt with by the Environmental Commission, and that these people could be invited to a meeting to meet with the Environmental Commission where they would have an opportunity to exchange ideas, and the appreciation of the work of the commission would be greater.

**Mr. Young:** Actually what we should do first of all is recognize that it is a court of superior record, so it cannot have that outreach programme. The Judiciary is not going to go out there, the Magistrates' Court, and say this is what is going on.



**Dr. Rambachan:** Not to solve the problem.

**Hon. Young:** Correct; so what we maybe need to do as MPs is when persons come to us with their complaints, direct them towards the Environmental Commission.

**Mr. Singh:** Deputy Chair, under 02, 08 Rent/Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage. Hon. Minister, it is my understanding that the current lease has been terminated and the Environmental Commission is on a month-to-month basis, and that the current facilities have been regarded by the staff and others as small and cramped. I want to know, having regard to the fact that it is a superior court of record, what appropriate accommodation would be put in place for this environmental court?

**Hon. Young:** Well as the Member of Chaguanas West and those on the other side should be aware, this is a matter that actually took place since 2013 and nothing was done from 2013 to 2015. What we have been doing now is having conversation with the Environmental Commission to see how best that can be alleviated.

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to respond. I think it is not that nothing was done, they were looking. My understanding is that they had a location and then another government agency took that location. So it is not that nothing was done.

**Hon. Young:** You all allowed another government agency to take preference over them, but they are not going to have that problem now. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Singh:** The fact of the matter is Government is a continuum, you continue to look so as to allow the proper accommodation to be put in place for the Environmental Commission.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members on both sides.

**Hon. Young:** We will fix.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you have another question, Member for Chaguanas West or can I move on to your colleague, the Member for Caroni Central?

**Dr. Tewarie:** A simple question, Chair, through you. Under 02, 001 General Administration, is the Environmental Commission, the management of it, engaging the issue of its role in the proclamation of the Planning and Facilitation Bill?

**Hon. Young:** As you would be aware, the parent legislation you just referred to has not as yet been proclaimed.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is partially proclaimed.

**Hon. Young:** Okay, so let us talk about the partial proclamation. The partial proclamation done on the eve of election was really for the appointment of officers and nothing more. So the answer is the Environmental Commission has nothing to do with that, but they have studied the legislation and they are preparing themselves for the implementation of the legislation.

**Mr. Singh:** Under Sub-Item 28, 02 Goods and Services, Other Contracted Services, it is my understanding that currently the accounting department of the Industrial Court looks after the accounting of the Environmental Commission. In many instances I am told the staff receive their salaries late as a result. I think that there is need to make some kind of adjustment under Contracted Services so as to facilitate the proper payment of staff on time.

**Hon. Young:** I am actually informed that that is incorrect from the point of view of receipt of salaries late. But you are correct, the parent accounting body is housed with the Industrial Court and there is a sub-accounting part for the Environmental Commission. Over the years, and maybe it fell under you and that is why you have so much knowledge of it when you held a previous portfolio, but there has been a movement of the Environmental Commission from various Ministries.

**4.25 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to correct the hon. Minister.

**Hon. Young:** I said “maybe”. I do not know.

**Mr. Singh:** If you look at the *Gazette*—

**Hon. Young:** What is the question?

**Mr. Singh:**—it did not fall under me. It fell under the Office of the Attorney General.

**Hon. Young:** Okay. So Anand Ramlogan did not do it. Sorry.

**Mr. Singh:** He is your good friend.

**Hon. Young:** That is actually defamatory. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head, 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 280. Item 001, General Administration, page 280.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 117. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 117.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 38 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, at this time it is 4.26 p.m. we will break for tea and we will resume at 5.00 p.m.

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

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

[*Chairman: Mrs. Brigid Annisette-George*]

**Madam Chairman:** The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is resumed and we are at Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, \$252,999,100. I will now invite the Minister in the Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

*Head 23.*

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs in September last year became an entity of one with the merger of a previous Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of the Attorney General. And I am happy to report to the wider public of Trinidad and Tobago that after a year under the transitioning of the PS and a number of other Deputy PSs who ably assisted her, we have come to, I think, a very good point in the merger of these two Ministries into one.

And I am happy to report as well, today, that after a very extended period of time, the move from the Cabildo Chambers and other buildings by this Ministry is taking place today, Legal Affairs Tower at the Government Plaza. So after all of those of years of the Government Plaza being completed and in a state of readiness, we have finally made the transition across and we have achieved that in the space of a year. And that is something that the—[*Desk thumping*] I would like to commend the Permanent Secretary and her staff for because they have really gone over and above. This Ministry will continue to serve the public especially through the legal affairs side, the company's registry, the land registry and other areas and we will continue to serve the public of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$252,999,100 Head 23 Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 154; Item 001, General Administration, page 154, Item 00—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Could I ask a question, Madam Chair?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Under Salaries and Cost of Living, 01, the actual expenditure in 2015 was \$26 million plus. In 2016 the estimates were \$22 million plus. In 2016, the *Revised Estimates* are \$19 million plus and then the estimates for 2017 are \$39 million not \$20 million more. I see the note in the explanation section about vacant posts with incumbents, but can you explain to me, is this going to be a series of new hirings or is it to confirm people in posts that already exist?

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Through you, the first point is that, as I said at the outset, is a merger. So what existed in legal affairs comes across.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Hon. Young:** But then to answer your question and in particular the note in the explanation column, it is that we are making a very, very conscious effort and drive to get those who exist because it is really legal officers, it is lawyers in the Chief State, in the Solicitor General's, et cetera, to get those who have been contract employment—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Confirmed.

**Hon. Young:** Correct. Confirmed through the Judicial and Legal Service Commission including lawyers at the Director of Public Prosecutions Office confirmed into the permanent part of it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** But part of it is also because of the bringing together of the—

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Law Commission, page 155; Item 003, Equal

Opportunity Commission, page 155; Item 004, Legal Affairs, page 156; Item 005, Law Reform Commission, page 156; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office, page 157; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 157; Item 001, General Administration, pages 157 to 158. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Page 157, Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, an increase of \$800,000. In view of the fact that, I understand you said, you are moving into the Government Plaza, what would account for that significant—

**Hon. Young:** What it is, is yes, we are moving into the Government Plaza, but it really means the giving up of a couple of smaller buildings. But, of course, there is a rental arrangement with moving into the Government Plaza, it being 22 storeys. For example, today we have moved out of Mode Alive on Frederick Street which is only a couple storeys, so of course you lose that rent. You no longer have to pay that rent, but there has been an increase in moving into a 22-floor building. So that is what it is.

**Mr. Charles:** So technically it is not a rent, it is an accommodation expense?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Law Commission, page 159; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission, pages 159 and 160; Item 004, Legal Affairs, pages 160 to 161; Item 005—excuse me, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Page 161, Contract Employment, Sub-Item 16, 161. Oh, sorry. Yes. There is a decrease in the contract employment. Is this because they are moving, the merger?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Mr. Charles:** They are moving over to the permanent establishment?

**Hon. Young:** Well first of all, you see this is under the legal affairs section. So yes, there will be some movement over to the permanent establishment. What we have also sought to do over the period of time is your reconciliation of the needs because you have now merged two Ministries into one.

**5.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just as a follow-up, you said Minister that there is a merger and there have been—

**Hon. Young:** There is a joining of two.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Right, and there is some movement of employees from Legal Affairs into the Office of the Attorney General, how many employees have been moved over, and how many employees have lost their jobs?

**Hon. Young:** First of all no, that is not what it is. What you are doing is you are merging two former Ministries, it becomes one Ministry. It does not mean that the staff who are in Legal Affairs now move to become the staff in the Attorney General's office. They are two very specific roles, different roles and that type of thing. So, there has been a minimal reduction of staff, but there has been a merger.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** When you say a minimal, could you quantify?

**Hon. Young:** Well, as you would recall in our budget presentation—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You see I am tracking labour statistics.

**Hon. Young:** Yes. So, as you would recall in our budget contribution last year when we came in, and I think it came up in the budget contribution this year, for example, there were over 200 ghost employees in Legal Affairs under the former administration. So, by reduction of those 200 employees who, when I say “ghost” it means they did not exist. We did an audit, we went to look for persons who were being paid and cashing their cheques, but nobody in the establishment knew who they were. As I say this was under the former PP administration, so we as a

responsible Ministry now got rid of those persons. So, it is really the reductions of the ghosts.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** If I could just ask some follow-up questions, because you said that you were able to track 200 ghost employees, and there were a number of cheques that were cashed, could you provide to this meeting the value of those cheques that have been cashed? The list of the names of the people who these cheques were made out to? And what judicial remedy that you are seeking?

**Hon. Young:** First of all what I would like to say is, we reduced the number from over 400 to 169, and then what we did as I indicated in the budget debate, is we have particularized all of those items, including the provision of the documentary evidence. For example, in the form of encashed cheques, that has been passed to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and in particular the Fraud Squad, and therefore the fact of the matter is there is an active police investigation ongoing. So, I do not want to provide that information, especially to this House in light of the fact there is an active police investigation going on.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** But, you say, through you, Madam Chair, this is very important information that I have been hearing about for more than 13 months, and I think that as a Member of this House and this meeting, I should be privileged enough to be provided with such information, because I want to assist the—

**Madam Chairman:** But you also know—Member, in the interest of time you know, therefore, even if you are so privileged, this goes out elsewhere. So, if there is a question I would allow you a question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So if the police has it why we cannot get it?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am guided, but I am not satisfied with the information.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. All I need, with respect, you see that cast a cloud on a



number of professional people and people of integrity, myself included.

**Hon. Young:** You were not in the Ministry.

**Mr. Charles:** I know, I am part of the Opposition. All I would like to know is the date that you forwarded this information to the police? So, I have a little comfort that it is not talk, but there is action following the talk. So, if you could forward us that date that you gave it to the police?

**Hon. Young:** I cannot because it was done under cover of letter. It would have been in October last year, we will get the exact date that it was sent.

**Mr. Charles:** Good, so we could be sure that something happened.

**Hon. Young:** Correct, but as I did say in the budget debate, we are not in charge of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Mr. Charles:** We understand that.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Law Revision Commission, which is at page 162; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office, page 162; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution, page 163; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, which is at page 163. Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Law Commission, page 163; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission, page 164; Item 004, Legal Affairs, page 164; Item 005, Law Revision Commission, page 164; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office, page 165; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution, page 165. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 165; Item, 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, there is an allocation of close to \$49 million, could you give us—what are those expenses and to whom? Or, which institutions?

**Hon. Young:** Just give me one second.

**Mr. Charles:** No. problem.

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chairman, through you, Member for Naparima, like you, and I have just sought clarification. If you look underneath you would see like 01, Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, and then you go down. So, what it is, is really Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, you turn the page is the Police Complaints Authority, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, so it is particularized thereunder.

**Mr. Charles:** It is particularized.

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** And thank you for that clarification. With respect to 01, Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, is this the body that provides legal advice to low income people?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Mr. Charles:** And if that is the case, that it is important in terms of equity and whatnot in the society, why would there be a decrease given what we suspect is increasing poverty and increased need for this service?

**Hon. Young:** I think what has happened over the last year in particular, there was a particular trial—I would not want to get into the specifics, but it was quite a high-profile trial that attracted quite a large expanse of defence attorneys. That was a one-off, so to speak, so that attracted a higher intake of income to fund the defence of that trial, so this reduction is not expected for the reasons that you have articulated to affect the provision of defence counsel to those who are less fortunate in our society. If it does, we have told the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority to come to us, let us talk about it.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I know sometime aback there was a conversation to have legal aid extended into some districts through the regional corporations, I think, is that something still on the drawing

board?

**Hon. Young:** It is something that the authority has been looking at. The truth is, with the current economic environment it is not something that has been particularized at this stage. But, there is a recognition on our part for the obvious reasons that there needs to be consideration of a mechanism to facilitate those in the rural areas, and in particular those who are less privileged in the rural areas, for it to be easier for them to access this. So, it is something that active consideration is being given to.

**Mr. Padarath:** Other transfers, Ma'am.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just with respect to the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority Minister, has there being any decision taken to slash the fees of attorneys?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Sure?

**Hon. Young:** As far as I am aware, no.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Households, page 165; Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, with respect to line Item 02, Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, can you indicate whether or not there has been a review? I know that from several sectors of the population there has been continuous clamouring for a review of the work done by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and especially with regard to increasing the sealing in terms of compensation. Could you indicate at this point whether or not over the last year any active review has been undertaken with respect to some of these concerns raised by professionals in both the judicial and legal services?

**Hon. Young:** Yes. The answer is yes, it is something that is on our radar, consideration is being given to it. Of course, it will mean a policy decision.

**Mr. Paray:** So that right now it is being actively considered?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Padarath:** That we can expect some sort of public notice in terms of what this Government's policy or what are the recommendations going forward with respect to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Just a quick question, Chair, to the Minister. We have two items here under Other Transfers, 01 and 04. One says, Police Complaints Authority, \$17 million; and the other one says Police Complaints Authority Direct Charges, and that is \$1.4 million. The direct charges are for salaries, is that it?

**Hon. Young:** It is actually for the provision of attorneys.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Provision of attorneys?

**Hon. Young:** To assist the—

**Dr. Tewarie:** And \$17 million is the operating budget?

**Hon. Young:** Correct. Correct, and if I may, Member for Princes Town, and you did not ask the question, but just to make it clear, why for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, through you, Madam Chair, there is nothing. It is actually being transferred to the Ministry of National Security.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I know you just indicated to the Member for Caroni Central that it is operations, but can you expand "little bit" more about the rationale for the allocation of \$17 million for 01, Police Complaints Authority?

**Hon. Young:** That is the amount of money that is allocated to the Police Complaints Authority for them to function on a—in a nutshell—a day-to-day basis,

so it will cover all of their administrative expenses, all of their running expenses, et cetera.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Was there an increase?

**Hon. Young:** This has remained the same.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. Okay, great. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 166.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Consolidated Fund, page 66; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 66 and 67; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 67 and 68; Infrastructure Development Fund, same book, page 270; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 270. Hon. Members.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 23, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, and your Permanent Secretary, and the other technocrats.

Can we go on now to Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal, and while the Ministers and the technocrats take their seats we are at page 527 of the Recurrent Expenditure Estimates.

**5.25 p.m.**

*Head 75.*

**Madam Chairman:** I now invite the Minister of Finance or is it the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General?

**Mr. Imbert:** I will defer to the Acting Attorney General.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. I now invite the Acting Attorney General to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we are

dealing now with the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, a body created by statute and a body that every developed country should have dealing with complaints with respect to discrimination and the failure to provide equal opportunity.

I have heard it bandied about within recent times in the society about discrimination on the basis of age. So I think this is an opportune moment to put on the record that the legislation as currently drafted and as currently in place does not provide for anything with respect to discrimination of age. And those who continue to proffer that and maybe some even in this Chamber should refrain from trying to attempt to mislead the public.

Nevertheless this is a very important body. It is a body that I suspect over time will begin to pick up and deal with a lot more issues. I am happy to report that I think there has been an increase over the last five years of claims before it and they are disposing of these claims in a most efficient manner in the last five years.

*Question proposed:* That Head 75 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,829,300 for Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 527; Item 001, General Administration, page 527.

Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 527; Item 001, General Administration, pages 527 and 528. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Sub-Head 02. I am looking and seeing, hon. Minister, a decrease in almost every line Item. Is this indicative of a general de-emphasis of this important institution?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Charles:** So therefore, how do you justify books and periodicals, a drop of \$55,000, and I suspect that has to do with research and keeping abreast of developments. [*Crosstalk*] I am being disturbed by the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Young:** Sorry. Yes, Madam Chair, through you. Member for Naparima this body is going to be in close consultation with the Office of the Attorney General and we have told them that if there are any items that arise, for example the one you have just pointed out that need to be relooked at, then let us have the conversation and deal with it.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Sub-Head 02, Item 001, Sub-Item 08. I observed that there is no allocation for Rent/Lease-Office Accommodation and Storage. Can you give a rationale for—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Young:** Yes. What happens, the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs pays that directly for them.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Just for clarification. You talked about a close relationship with the Equal Opportunity Tribunal and the Office of the Attorney General. Ought there not to be an arm's length relationship? I am just asking in the context of the fact that they may have to adjudicate matters which you have an interest.

**Hon. Young:** From the point of view, yes, the Attorney General in law will be the defendant for civil claims brought against the State. So, yes, let me thank you for the opportunity to clarify. When I say a close relationship it is on the administrative side so it would be the administrative side, the Permanent Secretary and her support staff having direct contact and link. For example, the same thing with the police service, the Police Complaints Authority, so they will liaise directly

with the Permanent Secretary and her staff, the accounting staff, et cetera.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment. I see there is a reduction. Does that mean that the Office of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal is adequately staffed?

**Hon. Young:** Sorry, I did not hear the last part.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Does that mean that the Equal Opportunity Tribunal is the office adequately staffed?—as a result of this reduction.

**Hon. Young:** Yes, there are 22 members of staff there and with this line Item, again, it is a draft and it is an estimate, and the question is if it is insufficient to continue with the current staffing arrangement, arrangements will be made to vire money.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How long, if a matter comes before the tribunal, how long will it actually take, in terms of staffing and so forth? What is the length, the period of time that you would have a matter—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Young:** I do not think that question ties into the staffing arrangements. It will really depend on the type of matter and if there is a settlement of the matter along the way, et cetera. But the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, normally within the space of a year, if it goes through the whole process, there is a resolution.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Are we on page 528.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, we are doing page 527 and 528.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Contracted Services, I would just like to find out, you know the Equal Opportunity Commission made a recommendation for a certain amendments to the Act. Is that matter before the Law Reform Commission or are contracted, are expert in the area?

**Hon. Young:** I am not understanding. Are you asking me whether the Equal



Opportunity Commission before making certain announcements sought and obtained legal advice under the Contracted Services line Item?

**Mr. Singh:** Or whether they have in fact gone further than that, utilized contracted services to get those amendments in a form that it could be brought into legislation.

**Hon. Young:** I am being asked quite correctly not to mix up the tribunal and the commission.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 529; Item 001, General Administration, page 529.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 75 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you Minister, thank you technocrats.

*Head 09.*

**Madam Chairman:** And while we await the situation of the technocrats and the Minister, page 45. Head 09: Tax Appeal Board, \$4,538,500. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to exercise his option to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** It will be very brief. The Tax Appeal Board has the jurisdiction to hear and determine appeals from decisions of the Board of Inland Revenue, specifically, objections to assessments and other decisions of the Board of Inland Revenue.

The Tax Appeal Board is appointed by the President, the members, and it is headed by a Chairman who shall be an attorney of not less than 10 years standing. And the other members are appointed by the President from among persons as appeared to the President to be qualified by virtue of their knowledge, experience in law, commerce, finance, industry, accountancy, taxation or the valuation of

property.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you completed, Minister?

**Hon. Imbert:** "I done."

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

*Question proposed:* That Head 09 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,538,500 for Head 09: Tax Appeal Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 45; Item 001, General Administration, page 45. Member of Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. In the context of the need to reduce expenditure, one. The context of the significant number of government buildings available to accommodate government departments, why are we continuing to see significant expenditures on rent and lease accommodation? So the question is, is there any thinking of housing these, the Tax Appeal Board in a government-owned premise?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, just one minute. We are at Item 001, General Administration. Are you talking about rent?

**Mr. Charles:** Sorry, I thought we were at Sub-Head 02.

**Madam Chairman:** No, not as yet. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Does the tax appeal have its full complement of adjudicators?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I wanted to ask, the Tax Appeal Board I suspect, operates now on the basis of the current functions of Inland Revenue. If the mandate of Inland Revenue were to be extended in any way or for any reason, would the role of the Tax Appeal Board also cover such new mandates?

**Hon. Imbert:** The Tax Appeal Board has jurisdiction over appeals coming out of assessments with respect to income tax, corporation tax, employment levy, petroleum tax, stamp duty, Water and Sewerage Act, Customs Act, value added tax, Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Duties, financial institutions, Tourism Development Act, et cetera.

The purpose of the board is to act, well, as its name implies, it is an appeal tribunal. So it is an entity that persons who are aggrieved, the assessment by the taxation authorities, can appeal to. So whether we have a Revenue Authority or we have a Board of Inland Revenue or anything else for that matter, once that entity whatever the entity is, whether it is Inland Revenue or Customs or whoever, imposes a tax persons are entitled to appeal to the Tax Appeal Board.

So, yes, if the Revenue Authority replaces the Board of Inland Revenue and takes over the function of assessment of tax, then persons would be able to appeal to the Tax Appeal Board. Okay?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In that context, I just want to ask—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Imbert:** I thought you said you were going home.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** *[Laughter]* You are my friend. If you will be kind enough to give us a little idea of, it might be security matters, I do not know, but how many cases are before the Tax Appeal Board at the moment?

**Hon. Imbert:** Would that be your last question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Not for you.

**Hon. Imbert:** You did promise me that you were going home, you know.

[*Laughter*] I cannot trust you at all.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Doh say that, come on.”

**5.40 p.m.**

**Hon. Imbert:** The total number of appeals based on the information I have—total number of appeals allowed in the period 2015 to 2016—70. The total number of appeals dismissed—18. The total number of appeals struck out—27. The total number of appeals withdrawn—10. So you had 70 appeals allowed and 35 others either dismissed, struck out or withdrawn, making a total of 105 matters that were dealt with in the period 2015 to 2016.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If I may be permitted to ask my friend a last question?

**Hon. Imbert:** “Yuh promise meh.”

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, it is a little thing we have by the side. [*Laughter*] How long would an average matter take before the Tax Appeal Board for its resolution, approximately?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I am quite surprised to learn that the Tax Appeal Board deals with matters within a month or two of them being filed. The appeal process takes about three days and then a decision is rendered within another month or two. I am quite surprised to learn this. I think we are all surprised to learn this—very quick.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you see the importance of asking the question?

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. All right. [*Laughter*]

**Madam Speaker:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 45, Item 001, General Administration, pages 45 and 46.

**Mr. Charles:** I had asked the question about rent. I think you know where I was going. Specifically, would you consider a lease/rental option?

**Hon. Imbert:** Just hold on. Could you just give me the page again?

**Madam Speaker:** 08; it is on page 45—02, 08.

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no mystique in terms of where the Tax Appeal Board would be housed, and I can assure you that if suitable government-owned accommodation becomes available, we would place them there. Okay?

**Mr. Charles:** Fair enough.

**Mr. Karim:** Just a quick one. Sub-Item 16, 02, 16. How many persons are employed on contract at the department?

**Hon. Imbert:** Five.

**Madam Speaker:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 47, Item 001, General Administration, page 47.

Hon. Members we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*: Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 15; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 15.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 09 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

I would like to thank the technocrats from the Tax Appeal Board for attending. Therefore, the Standing Finance Committee is now suspended to Monday, October 17, 2016 at 10.30 a.m. I wish to thank Members—*[Interruption]*—the Schedule has been set by the Leader of the Opposition and the first will be the Ministry of Health. We are reminded that the Ministry of Tourism comes on that day in substitution for the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. Okay?

So thank you very much, Members, again for your participation and in

spite of the high degree of probing, we have conducted the people's business in a generally civil and cooperative atmosphere. Thank you very much.

**5.44 p.m.:** *Standing Finance Committee Suspended.*

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, October 17, 2016*

### APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016

[Sixth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

**10.30 a.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will be resumed.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Madam Chairman:** Before I invite the Minister of Health I would just ask hon. Members to note that Mr. Rushton Paray MP, Member for Mayaro, has requested leave of absence from today's meeting, and his absence is duly noted.

### APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016

*Head 28.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head 28: Ministry of Health, \$5,506,381,330. I will now invite the Minister of Health to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the vision at the Ministry of Health is to, as far as humanly possible, be a people-centred, caring, proactive institution that assures certain standards of care to be achieved through sound and effective leadership, evidenced policy making, effective planning,

monitoring and evaluation and collaboration with stakeholders.

The Ministry's priority areas for 2017 include:

- a renewed dedicated comprehensive focus on addressing the burden of non-communicable disease;
- strengthening of the maternal and child health service delivery model of care;
- effective appropriate and compassionate care of the elderly with a focus on promoting healthy ageing;
- protection of an unobstructed equitable access of care to our vulnerable populations;
- improved modern paradigm for the delivery of mental health services;
- ensuring a safer and healthier environment through strengthened environmental health policy and expansion and mainstreaming of dental services in the RHA and the community.

So whilst I have enunciated the vision, the reality is a little bit different, Madam Chair, because it is no secret that there are a number of challenges facing the effective, efficient and adequate health care of services in Trinidad and Tobago, and there are some unmet needs. It is no secret, Madam Chair, that this country has been plagued over the years by chronic drug shortages. We have an unacceptable situation as far as maternal health is concerned. We have an unacceptable situation where, as a Minister of Health, I inherited 14,000 reports to be read, which is untenable.

So whilst we have a vision to be in a certain place, there is a gap to be closed between the reality and achieving that vision. In doing that, we are going to address certain areas in terms of human resource management, health

infrastructure; we are going to address the issue which is chronic as far as provision of medicines and essential services are concerned. But the centrepiece of the Ministry of Health moving forward has to be a focus not on treatment post-diagnosis but a focus on preventative medicine. And that is where I urge the population to get behind the Ministry of Health in its NCD policy.

Madam Chair, I thank you for the opportunity.

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

*Question proposed:* Head 28 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$5,506,381,330 for Head 28, Ministry of Health is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, Draft Estimate of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and of the Tobago House of Assembly, and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 308; Item 001, General Administration, page 208.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, Minister. This question relates to salaries and COLA and I note an expenditure of \$33 million would have been spent in 2016, and a similar estimate for 2017. My question—and I am just trying to get an overview in terms of the staff in the Ministry of Health. I know this is General Administration, but can you, Minister, indicate how many staff would have been covered by this personnel expenditure?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Member. The number of positions in the Ministry of Health is as follows—and these are positions—permanent establishment, 1,316 which covers General Administration and vertical services. Permanent



establishment as regards institutions, which would be the RHAs, hospitals and health centres, 452. Contract establishment positions, 263. Daily-rated establishment positions, 431, giving you a grand total of 2,462.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you. I also note, in looking at the 2015 actual expenditure, that there was a decrease in expenditure of almost \$10 million less in 2016 and projected going to 2017. Minister, can you indicate what was the reason for this decrease and whether any jobs would have been affected?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No jobs were affected. There were no layoffs, there were no firings. That had to do with the clearing of arrears and we do not anticipate to have that quantum again.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Minister.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, you said that there 2,472 persons—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Two thousand, four hundred and sixty two.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Whatever—employed in the health services.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** In the Ministry of Health.

**Dr. Rambachan:** In the Ministry of Health. In the *Draft Estimates of Expenditure*, the establishment figure given for 2017 is 3,367 down from 3,376. But let us use the 2017 estimate. What is the difference? Is it that 900-odd persons are vacant positions? How do you explain this difference between what is on the establishment and what you are reporting there?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. So the establishment, let me remind, is 1,316. However, in that figure there are some vacancies. The number of vacant positions—without people—is 242, and these are positions we are seeking to fill. Under contract establishment positions where we have 263, there are 215 vacancies, newly approved, which we have to fill. So that could account for some of that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, but I am saying to you, the documents provided, right—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Draft Personnel Expenditure, you have a list of all the positions of the establishment and it is reporting here 3,367 persons on page 181 of the document. Right? But you are saying—and now you are calling a number of vacancies.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So while you have 2,462 you are reporting, it is much less than that. Right?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Right.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But what is this 3,367 persons—positions, sorry.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** These are positions, hon. Member, that were transferred to the RHAs which have not been abolished, so the RHAs are still being effected as Ministry of Health staff. Remember you had a transitioning of staff from Ministry of Health to RHAs, so we are still going through that process from 1994 to now.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So this book is wrong?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I would not say the book is wrong—

**Dr. Rambachan:** But this is a serious question—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:**—but I am giving you an explanation.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—because the public can be led to believe that there are 3,367 available positions.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Honourable—but the book is not wrong because the positions are still there on paper. Okay? So the book is not wrong. The positions are still there on paper.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So after all these years, this process of transitioning these positions and cleaning up the thing has not been done.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is right. And that would have been also the situation

between 2010 and 2015. So we are now taking ownership of the problem—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, please, I am not concerned about 2010 to 2015.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And we will solve the problems.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I think that is insulting every time you say that because that is a very crude and irresponsible defence.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, let us really use our time efficiently. In terms of the question, I think the question has been answered, I think you really wanted to understand why such a figure and to reconcile it with the figure that the hon. Minister has given. Do you have a follow-up question?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The bigger question is, given what I have read here and what the Minister is saying, how many vacancies are really there in the Ministry of Health now?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. As I said, on the permanent establishment, of the 1,316 positions, there are 242 vacancies; on the contract establishment where there are 263 positions—some of these are newly approved—there are 215 vacancies, giving you a total of 457 vacancies, and we are taking all steps to start to fill those vacancies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is of the one thousand—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, of the 457 vacancies that exist.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Out of two thousand—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Out of—sorry, let me go over. Of the permanent establishments, there are 242 vacancies; on the contract establishment there are 215 vacancies, giving you a total of 457 vacancies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. Good. Of how many persons—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Of 2,462, and we are taking all steps via advertisements in the papers—a clear, transparent process—to start to fill these vacancies by people

with the correct qualifications and the ambition to work in the Ministry of Health.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in regard to those 457 vacancies, can you indicate the categories in which these vacancies would be?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. So some of the categories are—I will give you some of the major ones because you have some vacancies of one person. Do you want the entire list?

**Dr. Bodoë:** No, no, no.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. Principal Medical Officer of Health, Epidemiology, 1; Medical Director, Health Programmes and Technical Support Services 1; Adviser, Institutional Medicine, 1; Epidemiologist, Non-Medical, 1; Entomologist, 2; Occupational Hygienist, 1; Senior Dental Surgeon, 1; Dentist, I, 12—six permanent and six temporary; Dental Lecturer, 2; Dental Nursing Instructor II, 1; Dental Nursing Instructor I, 2; Dental Nurse, 23; Dental Assistant, 23; Chief Nursing Officer—

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sorry, Minister. Perhaps you could provide that in writing just in the interest of time?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I would gladly—yes, sure.

**Dr. Bodoë:** But just out of that, just as a follow-up: is there any major category, for example, that stands out in those vacancies?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes. We have some Medical Officers I. We have 19; Community Health Nurse, QPCC, 18. So those are some of the ones that will jump out and grab you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, for the period under review, 15/16, can you indicate how many of the contract positions were not renewed?

**Madam Chairman:** Might I just suggest, Member for Chaguanas East, if you could hold your question. Contract Services will come under Goods and Services and we are still in 01, Personnel Expenditure.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, I was just responding to the categories that he indicated. But I could return to it.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, it was based on a question that had come from under Personnel Expenditure.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. If you could take note so you could remind me of it.

**Madam Chairman:** Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Good morning, Chairman and good morning colleagues. Good morning, Minister. These positions that you just enumerated for the Ministry of Health, the vacancies, they are being filled by whom? Is it the Public Service Commission that fills those vacancies?

**10.45 a.m.**

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Most, if not all of these positions I have called out are being filled by the Service Commission Department.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I could understand the difficulty. Yeah.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to line Item 14, Minister, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, can you indicate in 2016 what were these committees and their membership? And I see there is also a projection for 2017, could you give that information likewise?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, could you get that in writing? You want the membership also of the committees, not just the committees?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Well the committees and—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** And the membership.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And membership.

**Madam Chairman:** So Minister could you undertake to give that in writing?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Of course.

**r. Bodoë:** Moving on to line Item 29. In terms of the Overtime for Daily-Rated Workers, and if you were to add to that the wages and COLA, we are looking at an expenditure of about \$3,538,800, can the Minister indicate how many workers would have been responsible for this overtime? And just to give an idea of what services are provided by these workers and where.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So the daily-rated establishment which this will apply to will be 431, which I called out earlier. So to answer part of your question, 431. As to what they do exactly? I could provide that to you in writing.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** But most of it I understand will be for insect vector and the thrust with Zika and so on.

**Dr. Bodoë:** That is important because I want to come to that later on.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, Item 14 Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committee, would you give us a little indication the names of the committees—  
*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Member—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That was asked already.

**Madam Chairman:** No, that was asked and there is an undertaking for it to be given in writing, the names of the committees and their membership.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004 Vertical Services, page 209.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Chair, again with regard to line Item 01 Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, I note an expenditure of \$49 million in 2016. Minister, I know we have spoken about the number of employees but I am just trying to break it down

here now in terms of the vertical services, can you indicate how many employees would have incurred this with expenditure?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** How many employees in the vertical services, that is what you are asking? I am getting the information for you, hon. Member. So it will be part of the 2,462 that will be included in there. So vertical services will be included in the 2,462. So if you want a breakdown of vertical services—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Bodoë:** No, just the total number in vertical services so I will have an idea.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So my information is 971.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Nine hundred and seventy-one. Because I have a few questions with vertical which will probably bring out the other answers. I also noticed that compared to the expenditure in 2015 that there was a decrease of almost \$20 million in 2016, can you, Minister, explain what was responsible for this decrease and if jobs were lost by this measure?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No. No jobs were lost, but this would have been due to the payment of arrears. So I can guarantee you that no jobs were lost.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you. With regard to the same line Item, I note that you had indicated that you would be establishing a directorate of women's health and I note that your plans for 2017 indicate an increased emphasis and maternal well-being, have any provisions been made for the establishment of a directorate of women's health in this allocation for 2017?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Member, the position and the remuneration for the directorate of women's health will not fall under this line Item.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you indicate where that will fall, Minister?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It will fall under contract employment.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the Minister give us a little idea of what are your vertical

services?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. So vertical services are those services which were never devolved to the RHAs. There are services under the direct control and administration of the Ministry of Health that tend to be national in scope. So there are 22 vertical services and they are as follows:

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well the larger ones.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well they are all large.

Public Health Inspectorate;  
Trinidad Public Health Laboratory;  
National Surveillance Unit;  
Emergencies Services and Disaster Preparedness Unit;  
Pharmacy and Drug Inspectorate;  
Chemistry Food and Drugs Division;  
Insect Vector Control Division;  
Veterinary Public Health;  
National Blood Transfusion Service;  
The Queen's Park Counselling Centre and Clinic;  
The Hansen Disease Control Programme;  
The National Tuberculosis Control Programme;  
The Occupational Health Unit;  
The Expanded Programme on Immunization;  
The Health Education Division;  
The National HIV/AIDS Programme;  
The Medical Library Services;  
Nutrition and Metabolism Division;  
Dental Services;



Population Programmes Services;  
Mental health; and lastly No. 22  
Tobacco Control.

It was a comprehensive list of all 22 vertical services.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, hon. Minister.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I am just combining Items 01, 02, Minister. Looking at the expenditure for salaries and the wages and cost of living allowance, and you have already confirmed that the employees of the Insect Vector Control Division come under vertical services, can you specify the number of public health inspectors by category—because I know there are different categories—and the number of health control officers again by category?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. I am trying to source that information for you now. Member, I do not have that at my fingertips, but we can provide it for you. Oh sorry, we do have it. Sorry.

Director Veterinary Public Health - 1;

Director Veterinary Health Assistant - 3.

**Dr. Bodoë:** If you can give me the total, Minister, I will be fine.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Total figure? I will have to provide that figure for you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** For the public health inspectors and the health control officers?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, because I have the aggregate. Your specific question, I can provide it to you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure. And also where they are deployed. I also was wondering whether these officers would have agreed deliverables on an annual basis because I know they are travelling officers and so on; and furthermore what steps would be in place to ensure that the targets that are set by these officers—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure, we will get that for you, Sir.

**Dr. Bodoë:**—in writing?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Minister, through the Chairman, two questions and I will ask the first one first, the Pharmacy and Drug Inspectorate Division. We continue to see a lot of drugs on the shelves and you go and ask for the drugs and it is all written in Spanish, there is not even English writing on the boxes of these drugs, how are these drugs being allowed to come into the country, being sold in total Spanish that the people cannot read and interpret; and whether those drugs are being approved by the Pharmacy and Drug Inspectorate?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is an excellent question and let me answer that in a very holistic manner. Since 1981, when I became a pharmacist, I have been raising this issue. What started off as a suitcase trade with drugs coming in suitcases is now a flourishing trade, not only in drugs but in cigarettes and every other commodity where there is high demand for. And I would say this now, the increased taxation on local cigarettes is going to give rise to more so-called suitcase trade in cigarettes. So we have a problem at our ports of entry.

What we are doing is trying to beef up our drug inspectorate at ports of entry, but they are not there seven days a week, 24 hours a day. What we do is try to seize these things after the fact and also at a port of entry when they are there, but we have an issue to address with Customs at our ports of entry to make sure not only drugs, but cigarettes and everything else that come into this country are duly licensed and approved by their regulatory bodies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So Minister, are you saying that these drugs that the public has access to—and are consuming—are drugs that may not necessarily have passed stringent checks at a properly operating Pharmacy and Drug Inspectorate Division?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That possibly exists. As I say, I raised it many times since 1981 when I became a pharmacist.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So then, Minister, RNDs inspectors, who are supposed to visit pharmacies, are they lapsing on the job; are they visiting? Do you have a roster of how these visits are made and which pharmacies have been visited? And as I say that also, Minister, what are these inspectors doing to ensure that people who own pharmacies and operate pharmacies have licensed pharmacists while their business/enterprise is opened during the day?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That issue is being addressed not only by the drug inspectorate, but also by the Pharmacy Board. My information is there is a shortage of officers. The strategy we are employing is to have now collaboration between public health inspectors and Chemistry Food and Drugs to leverage resources, and that is what we are trying to do to address the shortfalls until we have an adequate number of inspectors. But, again, hon. Member for Tabaquite, as I keep saying, there is a lot of personal responsibility. As a pharmacist you take an oath to do certain things and not do certain things, and it should not be that everything in society should be punitive. There should be some degree of ethics and morality in what we sell to the public. There is a role to play for ethics and morality, there is a role to be played by law enforcement.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you agreeing with me that the pharmacy sector is therefore highly unregulated in several aspects?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I am agreeing with you that as a whole many sectors of our retail trade are not properly regulated.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am dealing specifically with the pharmacy sectors—  
[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I will agree with you.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—because, like you, I am concerned about—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I will agree with you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The second question I had to ask has to do with the dental services. Minister, are these dental services available to rural communities through the health centres; and if so, is there a roster where these dentists go out and actually provide services through these centres?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The short answer is yes, they are available. However, in reviewing my first meeting with the Dental Association pointed to some flaws in the Dental Act which stymies the development of professionals within the field not only dentists, but dental nurses. So I got a document just recently, two days ago, from the Dental Association, which I will now take to the LRC to have the Dental Act modified and modernized because what we need is more resources in terms of personnel and some equipment. But the dental services is one of these vertical services that the Ministry retains. There could be a case for the dental services to devolve to the RHAs and that is something that we might look at.

**Dr. Rambachan:** May I ask you one question? I was trying to get dental services available at the Brothers Road Health Centre and I was told that I could only get that through the Eastern Regional Health Authority because that health centre came under them. You are telling me now that this is a service that you have retained in the Ministry of Health. So what does a Member of Parliament do to ensure that his community gets these dental services when there appears to be a conflict of who is in charge to actually give the instructions for these dentists to be available? This is separate now from your law and so on because you do have professional dentists available at the Ministry of Health.

**Madam Chairman:** Ministry of Health, before I allow you to answer that. Member remember we are going under Sub-Items here. I have allowed you a certain amount of—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rambachan:** These are listed under medical services.

**Madam Chairman:** I know. I know and that is why I said I have allowed a certain amount of latitude concerning the pharmacy and drug and so on, but you know the questions are becoming wider and wider, and while they may be of importance and relevance, I do not want us to stray too much from what the objective of this exercise is. Okay? As I said, there are opportunities, I am sure, for you to do your examination at other times. Member for Caroni East.

**11.00 a.m.**

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, being a pharmacist for almost 35 years, you had mentioned at one time that the pharmaceuticals within the CDAP programme needed a review. In that context, where does the National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol and the Central Drug Advisory Committee and Formulary/Essential Drug Committee, do they fall in under Vertical Services or they fall in under government-appointed committees? Those two committees which look after the revision of—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The Central Drug Advisory Committee is a Cabinet-appointed committee so it would not fall under Vertical Services and it is functioning.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Repeat that for me.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The Central Drug Advisory Committee is a Cabinet-appointed committee and it is functioning.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And what about the national formulary committee?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Also functioning.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, would you consider those two committees be actively brought back into functioning again so that a lot of the drugs that are under the CDAP programme, which I am sure you understand and acknowledge, would be reviewed and better functional and more effective drugs be put into the programme?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well, your original premise is incorrect when you said to make them function again. I have stated clearly twice that both committees are functioning.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, might I just ask please, if you could direct the committee to the line Item.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is under Vertical Services. That is what I was asking—

**Madam Chairman:** From what I recollect, I think I heard the Minister say Cabinet-appointed committees.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Those are not Vertical Services, those are Cabinet-appointed committees.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, I was asking under pharmacy and drug, whether they fell in that because that was—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And I said they are Cabinet-appointed committees therefore they do not fall under Vertical Services. I do not know how else to say it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You just gave the answer, Minister. I asked the question, you just gave the answer.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Members. Anything else under 004, Member for Caroni East?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No.

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

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, before we leave Vertical Services and I come back to Insect Vector Control and I am sure that we, perhaps, could answer this question under Goods and Services as well, but I do not want to leave Personnel Expenditure. And in view of the newspaper article in yesterday's *Sunday Guardian* by Anna-Lisa Paul of 392 pregnant women affected with Zika and four affected unborn infants. I just wanted to find out from you whether you

believe that the staff employed in the Insect Vector Control Division is giving you value for money, that is the first point. And the second point is whether you need to increase the number of staff in that department.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. So to answer your question directly, the staff in Insect Vector is, in fact, giving me value for money because up until September 2016, they have visited and treated 529,897 houses. That is a phenomenal rate of production. So I am quite comfortable that they have gone beyond the call of duty to treat 529,897 households. Of that, number of direct inspections under the new yellow fever regulations are 2,000 and number of notices served 250. That is a dramatic increase as to what obtained previously.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you indicate the areas that these inspections took place?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** All over Trinidad and Tobago, especially in Counties St. George East, West, Central, and Victoria where the majority of cases come from.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Small counties, it could have come from all over, of course.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** But I am telling you, the resources, if you look at the 80/20 Rule, 80 per cent of outcomes are generated by 20 per cent of activity. Pareto's Principle.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure, thank you. Just one more with regard to the chronic non-communicable diseases and again, I note your emphasis on that.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Under what line Item, Member?

**Dr. Bodoë:** It will be under Vertical Services and it relates to Personnel Expenditure as well. Are you able to provide the figure in terms of what kind of expenditure would have gone into public health education with regard to interventions?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I do not have that detailed figure with me but I can surely provide it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Is that something we can look at to provide in writing?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Vertical Services, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Do you have provision in Vertical Services for a relationship between the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sorry?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** In Vertical Services, I am not too sure because you went through your various listings pretty quickly, so I just wanted to know. Do you have a service there that works directly with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services or is it under another line Item?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Member, as you would know, there is always cooperation between Ministries where there needs to be. I can assure you that the Ministry of Health supports its sister Ministries and vice versa on any issue that is of national importance. You may not see it in a particular line Item but that cooperation is always there. Was there a specific line Item when you were Minister?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am referring to these—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, was there a specific line Item when you were the Minister?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am sorry, I thought I was supposed to be asking the questions.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, based on your advice on Vertical Services, I will withdraw my question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, are you saying the Insect Vector Control



Division visited over 500,000 plus households in the country?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is the information I have as of this morning.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** With 1.3 million people, 500,000 plus households.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is the information I have from insect vector this morning. Some of that could also be repeat visits because you do not visit just once. Some of that could be.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you will be able to tell us then how many households in the country?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** If you want that information for repeat visits, we can surely get that for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So we can get an idea of how many households had repeat visits.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** We can get that for you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005 North West Regional Health Authority

**Dr. Bodo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And if I just for the interest of convenience, I just want to ask a question that relates to this expenditure across the four RHAs because you have 05, 06, 07 and 08, and if we look at that expenditure for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, we are looking at a total figure of \$72,310,750. Some of this information may have been provided already but I am asking if the Minister could provide a list by category by workers paid by the Ministry of Health but deployed at each RHA. And perhaps, Minister, you could provide it in writing.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Bodo:** But the point I really wanted to make was that there seems to be some sort of dichotomy in the reporting relationships between the workers who are paid by the Ministry of Health and deployed by the RHAs. I will give you an example.

For example, you might have a vehicle that belongs to the North West RHA driven by an employee of the Ministry of Health, something happens to the vehicle, the responsibility is not there, the reporting relationship. The other example is you might have an attendant employed by the Ministry of Health, deployed in RHA hospitals. So there are some issues there. I do not know if that is something that you are aware of and something that you would want to address.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It is certainly something we could look at now that you have raised it.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough—as my colleague had just indicated, we have four regional authorities, if you would be kind enough to give us an understanding of the personnel, particularly medical personnel and nursing personnel, in the various regional health authorities? So we would not have to ask the question repeatedly.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. Okay. At the North Central Regional Health Authority: Primary Care Physicians I, 32 Cabinet-approved posts; Primary Care Physicians II, 12; Senior Specialist PCP II, 0; Specialist Consultants, 112; Registrars, 115; House Officers, 431. North West Regional Health Authority: Primary Care Physicians I, 26; Primary Care Physicians II, 5; Senior Primary Care Physicians, 0; Specialist PCP II, 0; Specialist Consultants, 55; Registrars, 55; House Officers, 225. South West Regional Health Authority Cabinet-approved posts: Primary Care Physicians I, 39; Primary Care Physicians II, 29; Senior Primary Care Physicians, 5; Specialist PCP II, 0; Specialist Consultants, 94; Registrars, 100; House Officers, 314. ERHA: Primary Care Physicians I, 0; Primary Care Physicians II, 5; Senior Primary Care Physicians, 0; Specialist PCP II, 7; Specialist Consultants 25; Registrars, 31; House Officers, 76.

Board-approved posts: North West Regional Health Authority: Primary Care Physicians I, 14; Primary Care Physicians II, 4; Senior Primary Care Physicians, 0; Specialist PCP II, 0; Specialist Consultants, 28; Registrars, 21; House Officers, 69. South West Regional Health Authority, board-approved posts: Primary Care Physicians, 1; Primary Care Physicians II, 0; Senior Primary Care Physicians, 0; Specialist PCP II, 0; Specialist Consultants, 16; Registrars, 25; House Officers, 146. Board-approved posts for Eastern RHA: Primary Care Physicians, 0; Primary Care Physicians, 0; Senior Primary Care Physicians, 0; Specialist PCP II, 0; Specialist Consultants, 5; Registrars, 11; House Officers, 37.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You could give us, while you are there, the nursing personnel, just the senior SRNs?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sorry?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** While you are there, under the four regional authorities, can you give us an idea—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Registered nurses?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, may I suggest that that be given in writing, please?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** If you so desire.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, just a broad picture of how many SRNs we have in each one. That is a short question.

**Madam Chairman:** But it is for all four and actually we are on Item 005.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah but instead of asking the question, Madam Chairman, four times for each one of these, I just ask a broad question now.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, do you have the information?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Let us see if I have that information here for nurses. Yes, I can provide it, if you so desire, as an oral answer. But this does come under another line Item but let me provide it in writing, Chairman.

**11.15 a.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** It is lengthy.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It is lengthy.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** But I do have it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The SRNs alone?

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, this is—*[Interruption]*

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** —critical and important.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, you are getting the information. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Can I get it today?

**Madam Chairman:** We are in Item 005.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Can I get it in writing today?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I am no longer recognizing you. Member for Chaguanas East, Item 005.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We have a shortage of nursing personnel and—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member, please, you are allowed as many interventions as you wish. I am now recognizing the Member for Chaguanas East. Item 005, page 209.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much. Minister, the numbers you just called out for the various categories, those are people who are in the job?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Let me clarify?

**Mr. Karim:** No, just to make sure. I want to make sure that those are people—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, those are the posts approved. I said that distinctly. They were Cabinet-appointed posts and board-appointed posts. If you want the filled and vacancies, I have it here.

**Mr. Karim:** That I can take in writing, the shortage.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Mr. Karim:** For all the categories.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I have it here and I will provide it to you in writing.

**Mr. Karim:** Thanks.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, page 210.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, could you tell us how many SRNs are in the North Central Regional Health Authority, under the heading: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances? How many SRNs are in there?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So, hon. Member, line Item, we are on Head 006 and line Item 001, Salaries and COLA.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And you are asking me specifically about RNs?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Let me explain how this goes. This line Item refers to Ministry of Health, public officers at the RHAs, not the direct employees of the RHAs hired by the RHAs. So you are posing the question under the wrong line Item.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** This is the line for salaries for the NWRHA.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Of Ministry of Health, public officials working at the RHAs, which I gave earlier.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, you did not give anything about nursing, Minister.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No. What I am saying, the specific question you are asking about nursing, I am being advised it falls under another line Item.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you direct us, which is the line Item?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well, I am being asked to answer something on 01, and I am pointing out to you that the question being asked under 01 should fall under another line Item.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But what is the other Item?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And it is your responsibility to ask the question under the correct line Item.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But what is the line Item?

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** We could possibly look at current transfers and subsidies. But that is your responsibility.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I was looking at 009 when you reach there, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** We have not reached there as yet. Item 007, Eastern Regional—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just wanted to enquire, through you, Chair, of the Minister, does the Couva Adult and Children's Hospital fall under North Central Regional Authority, South West or Vertical Services? I just wanted to enquire.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Could you just repeat the question, please, hon. Member?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Could you indicate whether the Couva Adult and Children's Hospital falls under either North Central, South West or Vertical Services?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It does not fall under Vertical Services. As a matter of fact, when I was looking into the whole issue of the Couva Children's Hospital that issue was so muddled as to be unbelievable, I do not think it falls under any line Item and if you could point me to the line Item, I would gladly answer your question. We are on 007, Eastern Regional Health Authority and there is no way

on the earth a facility in Couva could fall under the ERHA.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Health, maybe I should guide you. We are under 006, North Central Regional Health Authority.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, this is why I ask.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** 006, North Central?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** This is recurrent expenditure. The Couva Hospital, which is not opened, was never opened, does not fall under, to the best of my knowledge, recurrent expenditure.

**Madam Chairman:** For any of the Regional Health Authorities.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So when you opened it on August 14, 2015, I do not know what line Item you would have used to operationalize Couva Children's Hospital.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I do not know what question the Member is answering. I simply enquired where it was located. I got my answer. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, 007, Eastern Regional Health Authority, page 210.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 007, line 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, there is an increase. Could you indicate whether you will be employing more persons? Would you be granting persons who are—vacant posts it is under with incumbents, are you going to be providing contracts or can you account for the \$200,000 increase, please?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** This has to do with the absorption of officers throughout the public service to be employed in the RHA.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** In Eastern?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** In Eastern, correct.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How many persons do you anticipate?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I cannot give you that figure right now. It is an allocation and

we will employ as we see fit over this fiscal year.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is there a shortage currently in the Eastern Regional?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Currently, there are 23 public officers at the RHA. So we are trying, I am being advised, to absorb them into the RHA. So this allocation is to handle that.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that the hon. Minister indicated that the public officers are now being absorbed. Therefore, you would have the two tracks that currently take place in the Regional Health Authority that is part of the problem in the sector.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is part of the long-term objective. Yes, you are right.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, we go on to Item 008, South West Regional Health Authority, page 211.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, you gave us some information as to the number of positions in consultants, registrars, house officers, and then you gave us some other information on board approved. I would just give you a little example. You said consultants 94 and then board approved 16. Could you help us differentiate what you mean by X amount there and board approved X amount?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Member, I am being advised that the question you are asking is better posed under current transfers and subsidies.

**Dr. Bodo:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. With regard to 008, Minister, I note in 2015, an actual expenditure of \$28 million-plus and in 2016, \$22 some, close to \$6 million less. Can you explain that difference? Would that be in keeping with positions going back to the RHAs.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure, so this refers to Ministry of Health—same thing for Eastern. It refers to Ministry of Health public offices in the Regional Health



Authority. It also have to do with the fact that the majority of arrears paid in the last fiscal, based on the last set of negotiations.

In addition, as I said, the absorption of Ministry of Health people into the RHA system. And if you want to get the actual number of public officers so affected, it would be 115.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay, thank you. So you are just confirming that does not reflect any losses in jobs?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Absolutely, not.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, the expenditure of \$942,200 in 2016, and then \$550,000 in 2017, can you tell us how many staff are employed in this unit and what was the reason for the decrease?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay, I would try to get that information for you. I do not have that on my fingertips.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And by category as well.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Ma'am, I wanted to ask a question under 008, but you went past.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, thank you. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 212, Item 001, General Administration, page 212 and 213.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You had asked me to redirect this question at this time. Minister, Item number 16, page 212.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, contract employment?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes. I had asked whether if you could indicate to us how any positions were not renewed.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay, so let us see. Okay, so a complete answer for you goes

like this: In fiscal 2016, the majority of persons were employed on short term, as the six-year contract staffing plan was not yet approved. I can report to you and this nation that I have been successful in getting the Ministry's six-year plan approved by Cabinet. What we are going to do is this: the number of Cabinet-approved positions will be 263. Of that, 48 person are currently employed so we will be employing more as we go along.

Current short-term employees are 53 and those were those who were willing to accept short-term employment. In this, you must include foreign recruitment. So as of now, foreign recruitment, there are 348 persons. From Cuba we have 273; St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 29; St Lucia, 19; and Grenada, 27. Specialist consultants, we have 1; registrars 27; primary care physicians, 3; pharmacists, 9; radiographers, 26; ultra stenographers, 3; biomedical engineers, 8; and RNs with different specializations, 261.

**Mr. Karim:** Minister, just a follow-up. Could you give us an explanation of the \$4.2 million decrease?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The decrease, we will look for surplus funding under short-term and then we could also look to the mid-year review, if need be.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister, hon. Minister, with respect to the university graduate recruitment programme.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item, Sir?

**Mr. Padarath:** Line 34. Could you indicate whether the Ministry has identified with speciality areas, or would be looked at, with respect to this particular programme?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure, and I have that information for you, because we looked at it just this morning. As you know, hon. Member, in the year 2000 we started the Diploma in Medicine Programme. Sorry, I misinterpreted your question. This

university graduate programme for \$1 million is being managed by the Ministry of Finance and the Minister of Finance already gave a very comprehensive answer as to how we will be recruiting these university graduates. It will be, and I will reiterate what the Minister of Finance said, based on merit to give the best and brightest some exposure in the public sector and some work experience.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you Minister, however the question was whether or not the Ministry, meaning the Ministry of Health, had identified the speciality areas with respect to health care or in the health sector, with respect to this particular programme.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** There will be a line to the Ministry of Health's core deliverables. I can assure you of that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, with respect to line Item 05, telephones, on page 212.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I see in 2016 an expenditure of \$4.6 million was incurred for this Item, but you propose to reduce this to \$3.2 million in 2017. Can you indicate how you propose to save this reduction?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. We will do that by proper monitoring and management of the use of phones. We are putting in place control mechanisms including codes for officers to use external lines. So it is part of a management strategy to reduce the use of phones and also to put in codes so we could monitor the use of these phones. Also there was a slight reduction in VAT. So between all those measures we think we are on the way to realizing that saving of \$1.4 million.

**11.30 a.m.**

**Dr. Tewarie:** It was a question I had in mind in relation to the University Graduate Recruitment Programme. I am happy to hear that the programme of recruitment for health would be merit based, but I note that the Minister on several

occasions—and I hope that he will not respond in an angry manner about this.

**Madam Chairman:** Nobody is angry here, just ask the question.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Nobody is angry here.

**Madam Chairman:** Please—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Please do not—

**Madam Chairman:** Nobody is angry here please, Member for Caroni Central. You ask your question.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I will ask my question, and it has to do with the fact that on many occasions—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members!

**Dr. Tewarie:**—the Minister of Health indicated that in relation to the Couva Hospital, the Children's Hospital, that the graduates from UWI do not meet the specialist requirements of that particular hospital. So I was wondering since there is no line item here for Couva in any of the NRHAs, or in the Vertical Services line, and the Couva Hospital, Children's Hospital was mentioned in the context of the 2017 budget fiscal year, and mentioned in the context of public/private, if anything has been initiated with regard to recruitment for that particular hospital.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. And I will—are you finished, Sir? Okay. Let me state for the record that the Couva Children's Hospital, so named, is the second children's hospital to be built in Trinidad and Tobago. The first children's hospital is the Wendy Fitzwilliam Paediatric Hospital, located at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex.

As far as the second children's hospital we have said ad nauseam, and in the budget by the Minister of Finance that we are going out for expressions of interest for a public/private partnership. It will be premature at this stage for me to state what type of specialities, and who we are going to recruit from the University of

the West Indies, until we have that public/private partnership model in place.

I can assure you, hon. Member, and the rest of the country, that the Couva facility will be used and redound to the benefit of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It will be opened, but it will be opened under a public/private partnership and, therefore, it will be premature at this stage to say which university graduates we are going to hire.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to Item 08, the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, again the Minister could provide this in writing, just the properties rented, for what purpose, from whom and the details of the rental cost per property.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I have the information now. It is not long. I can give it to you now.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. Buildings rented by the Ministry of Health: our head office, Corner Park and Edward Street, Port of Spain, \$454,634.63; Park Plaza Buildings, St. Vincent Street, \$108,987; J. Sack Records Management, El Socorro, \$41,195; Sacred Heart Building, \$203,550; City Drugs, Port of Spain, which we are moving out of, \$71,300; the Gym, Park and Edward Streets, \$15,552; and the last two, Trade Zone Complex Records Management, \$18,814, and the last one, Pan America Health Organization, \$154,288; and Chemistry/Food and Drugs on Frederick Street, \$103,500. So that is a comprehensive list of all the buildings and their rentals, rented by the Minister of Health.

**Dr. Bodoë:** No, that is fine. Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was directed by the Minister, when I asked the question about nurses—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item, hon. Member?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It comes under Goods and Services.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Right.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So I am asking you, you directed me to Goods and Services. I am asking you the question now. Under Goods and Services, how many nurses are employed—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which specific line Item, hon. Member?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, you have 16, which is contract employment and you have 22 which is short-term employment.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I had indicate, hon. Member, that that should come under Transfers and Subsidies. We have not yet reached there. I do not know how else to say it, Chairman.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Can I ask on Contract Employment, are there any nurses employed under Contract Employment in this area here, in Goods and Services?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Under what?

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Item 16.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Under Sub-Items 16 and 22.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Under Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, my information is that will account for foreign nurses.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** \$130 million for foreign nurses?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Part of it will go to foreign nurses, not all.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. So could you give us the differentiation, what part is for foreign nurses?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I will certainly get that detail for you in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, line Sub-Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, there has been a decrease by over

\$468,800. Can you indicate whether or not the maintenance of vehicles are done in-house or whether or not they are outsourced and if, by whom?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. Before I answer your question, hon. Member, I will just go to the previous question from the Member for Caroni East. There are 261 registered nurses with different specialities, under that, to give you the figure, the salary figure, I will have to get that for you, right?

To answer the hon. Member of Princes Town, vehicles are serviced by a combination of VMCOTT and the local distributors for whatever brand of vehicles that we have.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just to the hon. Minister, for absolute clarity, I heard the Minister speak a minute ago, could you tell us what year was the Wendy Fitzwilliam children's hospital constructed?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, under what line Item?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** What line item is that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am just responding to the statement he made to clarify.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, Member, Member, I am certain that you will have an opportunity to ask that question in another context.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ma'am, when he replied, I put up my hand immediately—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member, that reply was within the context of an answer, a specific line Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But you went to other people—

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

**Madam Chairman:** All right.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—and left me.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central. Okay. We now go on to Item 004 page 213.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Under Item 39, Drugs and Other Related Materials and Supplies—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sub-Item 39?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah. In 2015, Drugs and Other Related Materials, \$617.3 million. In 2016, it was cut and the amount spent was \$109 million less. Now you are coming with \$760 million in 2017. Now, there were vast complaints by the population about a lack of drugs and the availability of drugs, and you gave several reasons about C40 and the system and you blamed the entire Ministry for the shortage of drugs. Is the reality that you really under- resourced the financing of drugs, and it was not really the people problem, but the fact that in the budget you under-resourced the amount of money that was really required for drugs?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. To answer your question one must admit as I did in my budget debate, where I referred to drug shortages going back to 2014 and the identical drugs which were short in 2014 were also short in 2016. The problem is not underspending. The problem is that the Ministry of Health abandoned its role to monitor its contract partner NIPDEC, in the procurement of drugs. I place the responsibility squarely on the Ministry of Health, for abandoning its monitoring and evaluation of its contract partner NIPDEC. In addition—

**Dr. Rambachan:** How did you discipline, therefore, what you are therefore describing as errant public servants who engaged in a process of deep mismanagement?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It had nothing to do with errant public servants. It had to do with the lack of a department within the Ministry of Health that dealt with this issue. I have since put in a department whose sole responsibility is to monitor and evaluate not only its contract partner NIPDEC, but all its contract partners like GMRTT, to make sure they are held to the standard of performance that they are



contacted to. [*Interruption*] So it had nothing to do with any public servant being errant or inefficient. Let me say that clearly.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, that is contrary to what you said publicly about the quality of the public servants and the way they were managing—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I never—

**Dr. Rambachan:** We will go back to the newspaper record.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Please do.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is, Member?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The question here is, why did you under-source, under-resource, the amount of money that should have been put in here, knowing what the drug demands were?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Let me give you an example, 40 per cent of the drug budget is spent on oncology drugs alone. When I asked for the data to project what we need for oncology drugs, you know what I found out?—that the cancer registry which is supposed to generate the data to help us project the demand of drugs, consisted of one person and a half of a computer. Every time we try to interrogate the software to get data, the system would shut down.

My solution is bringing in a registrar for the cancer registry, and giving them new equipment, that has been done, because garbage in, garbage out. If you start with wrong data to project the number of cancer patients we have, the type of cancers and the type of drugs we need, in the quantities that we need them, and when you need them, you cannot adequately purchase the drugs when and where they are needed. So my solution is management and providing leadership for the drug-procurement process, starting with the whole issue of oncology drugs which has bedevilled this country for years and we are going to fix that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, you have just said and you have confirmed that the

management of the health services at the level at which it has to be managed, with a top executive are deficient, and you must take responsibility for that.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Because they have not been populated.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you agreeing that there is deficient management at the level of the executive of the—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** There are deficiencies in persons, a number of persons, you are accusing the civil service—

**Dr. Rambachan:** If they were doing their jobs, Minister, with due respect, if they were doing their jobs, you would not have those shortages.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, are you going to ask a question? Okay, can we go on to the Member for Caroni East?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Notwithstanding all what the Minister said, you allocated only \$508 million in 2016, that was your estimate. Your revised estimate is the same budget. It is \$109 million less in the purchase of pharmaceutical. Why was that so?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Do not forget that when we recognized there was a need for additional spending on drugs, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago authorized an extra \$245 million to purchase drugs. A large slice of which went in to paying bills which we inherited, which were not paid for over a year and a half and two years, that is the reality, and the balance went in to purchasing drugs. So the allocation at the end of 2016 came up to where it should have been.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So that extra money that you said was given by Cabinet, is that part of the revised estimates of 508 or is it in addition to the 508?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It was in addition.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Sub-Item 17, I see there is no allocation for training. Minister, can you give an explanation?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** All our training for the fiscal year 2017 is going to be done under General Administration. So we are going to do a lot training, but a lot of it is going to be done in house. We have capable people, contrary to what the Member for Tabaquite is saying, to train people.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, earlier I had asked about the allocation for the directorate of maternal and—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** What line Item, Sir?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Well, that is exactly my point. You had indicated that that would come under Vertical Services, but I am not seeing—

**11.45 p.m.**

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I indicated earlier, I answered this question already that that funding would be met under Contract Services under General Administration.

**Dr. Bodoë:** All right. Thank you. Can I be so bold as to just go back and ask: how much has been allocated?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The exact figure?

**Dr. Bodoë:** The figure?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I do not have that figure with me, but we can certainly get it, but it would be subject to negotiations between the Ministry of Health and the CPO, based on qualifications and so on.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Just one further question, Madam Chair. Could you indicate how soon you expect this position to be filled?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** There are negotiations ongoing between the Ministry of Health and persons placed on the merit list after the interviews were held.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you give me a closer answer, Minister?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The process of engaging the number one person on the merit list is ongoing. I cannot give you an exact date, but we are pursuing it

aggressively, because this is a position that is critical to maternal and child care.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And I agree with you Minister. Nice words, but give me a figure, give me a date.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I cannot give you a date at this point in time. I have no control over the Chief Personnel Officer as you rightly know.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am talking about Item 39. Since the Minister has indicated that he has not solved the plethora of management problems with respect to the cancer registry, et cetera—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, I said I have solved it by bringing in a registrar and giving them proper equipment. So the issue of management and the cancer registry has been solved.

**Mr. Charles:** So, therefore, on the basis of what you are saying that we can expect that the issue or shortages with respect to cancer pharmaceuticals will not exist in the fiscal year, 2017.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** All things being equal, and assuming there are no global shortages of any particular drug, we can look forward to a more stable and consistent supply of drugs moving forward.

**Mr. Charles:** I have a related follow-up question. I found that in the constituency of Naparima when there are shortages of drugs, people turn to alternative remedies. I am noting, and I think we all are aware of the plethora of alternative remedies, naturalized herbs, colon cleanser, et cetera. Does the Ministry see itself as having a responsibility to monitor these advertisements, correct them if there is misinformation being supplied, so that the health of vulnerable people, particularly rural communities, is protected?

**Madam Chairman:** Would you like to put that under Item 62?

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah. That is under drugs and I am dealing with when drugs are

not available.

**Madam Chairman:** Would you like to put it under Item 62?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, item 62.

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

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So the question is?

**Mr. Charles:** Does the Ministry of Health see itself as having a responsibility to counter the misinformation in terms of health remedies that arise because of the inadequacy of the Ministry to deal with that problem?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The issue that you have raised is one which has to be addressed, not only by the Ministry of Health, but you have to remember that the licensing or the importation of these supplements—and there is a grey area in the law which the last Minister of Health was trying to solve. There is a whole grey area, because many of those supplements do not fall under regulation, do not have to be approved by Chemistry Food and Drugs. That is a grey area that we are now looking at, and I agree with you, we do have a responsibility to look at it.

**Mr. Charles:** All right. So we could look forward to some kind of remedy during the next fiscal year? Because, I am telling you, there are a number of people—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The remedy is legislative. So I cannot sit here and tell you that the legislation—because your Minister of Health predicted that it will take three to five years to bring the legislation to deal with this issue. It is a grey area in the law, and we are actively looking at it.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, I just wanted to get a straight answer in terms of you indicated that part of the reason or one of the reasons—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Could you tell me which line Item you are referring to?

**Mr. Karim:** I am on 39.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** 39? Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** You indicated that part of the reason for the shortage or the insufficiency of appropriate drugs was the fact that the Ministry did not have an M&E unit, which you have now put into action. Given that that unit is now enforced, and given that you have now \$251 million increase in the allocation, I am sure the public would want to know, and my question on their behalf is: by when will we be able to see where the adequacy of drugs would be able to be disbursed to members of the public?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The adequacy has already begun, because we are importing drugs every week under that emergency funding of \$245 million. Orders were placed as early as May, June, July and those drugs are coming in almost on a weekly basis. So there is a lot of relief currently in the system. Some of those drugs are coming in October where there are shortages again, and some in November. We are now placing orders under the new fiscal year. NIPDEC, I understand, has already written to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health to seek the confirmation of funds. Once we do that, we then seek the confirmation from the PS Finance, so NIPDEC can start to place their orders as soon as possible.

**Mr. Karim:** So, by what time do you think or when? I know you cannot give a specific day and month and so on, but tell us. Many people are in the institutions as we speak now and they are not able to get the appropriate drugs. By when will you expect this matter to be significantly addressed?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** By the end of the year most of these shortages should be addressed. However, on a week-by-week basis, more and more drugs are coming into the country for things like oncology for other treatment options like mental health. Let me just say this. There is a worldwide shortage of a drug called Modecate, which the mental health facilities depend on. I brought this to the

attention of the country as early as February, and this was confirmed by the *Express*. So, there are certain drugs that there is global shortage of. For example, morphine. There is a global shortage of morphine. Once there is no global shortage or regional shortage of any drug, I am saying that we are putting all systems in place to make sure once a drug is being manufactured and there is no global shortage, we can have it in Trinidad and Tobago

**Mr. Karim:** Well, I am just happy to hear that you are saying that by December 31, 2016 that many of these issues will be addressed. I know that you are talking about specific shortages in unique cases, but if you do not get these drugs to these people, you will have much, much more demand for mental situations.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** But hon. Member—

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse, is that a question?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Member, there is more to treating with drug shortages. When the Drug Advisory Committee makes a recommendation, for example, I got a request from a newspaper to say why there was a shortage of a particular brand of insulin. When I investigated it, it had nothing to do with a shortage of insulin. It had to do because the Drug Advisory Committee recommended a different type of insulin which is actually better than what was being used, but because patients get attached to a certain brand, and then you switch them, they claim drug shortage.

There is another drug called digoxin 0.125 per cent. I was getting calls, why is this drug short? It is not that the drug was short. The drug was recommended by the cardiologist to be taken off the formulary because it was causing cardio toxicity to patients. So we have to understand when we talk drug shortage, what we are really speaking about.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It arose out of an answer that the hon. Minister gave. He said that all training will be done in-house. My question to him, I see in the allocation the training cost is \$11 million: is that the cost of the training in-house?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** There will be no direct cost to in-house training as we will utilize in-house personnel.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no. In your answer you indicated that all training will be done in-house.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It will be done under GA, General Administration.

**Mr. Singh:** But there is a cost associated with that and an estimate of \$11 million. Are you telling the country and telling us now that that figure is not a figure that will be utilized?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So what I understand is that nursing training is done from there, but other training would be done in-house.

**Mr. Singh:** I just want for my purpose, my clarity of thought that the \$11 million is for nurses' training and a nominal cost is associated with the in-house training from that Vote.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I would just reiterate the advice I am getting, is that all training will be done under GA?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through line Item 12, Materials and Supplies—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which page, Sir?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Line Item 12 on page 238. I am just thinking that is the right line item, but I am referring to your promise of providing special facilities at the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line item, Sir?



**Dr. Bodoë:** Line item 12. I am wondering if that additional expenditure would have come under this Item, and if you could indicate what exactly is in place at Mount Hope for the referral—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Under line Item 12?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yeah.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Materials and Supplies?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yeah.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And your question is?

**Dr. Bodoë:** The question is: what exactly is in place and how much expenditure there has been for the provision of that special unit at Mount Hope to look after the Zika-positive pregnant women? I refer to that just because in yesterday's newspaper—and I trust I am wrong about this and if I may quote just one paragraph saying that:

Praising—and I do not want to mention the doctor's name—for her dedication to the patients and the public at large, one senior medical official said: Dr—and I would leave the name out—performs scans on her personal ultrasound machine on a cupboard outfitted with a single mattress in a very small space.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Member, to save you from yourself, we are dealing with 004, Vertical Services. This is Materials and Supplies under Vertical Services not Mount Hope Hospital.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I am just taking the precaution, Minister.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Could you direct a question for the line Item you have identified as I save you from yourself under 004, line item 12, Vertical Services.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Minister. I am just taking the precaution, because I was not sure where the allocation would be.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is obvious.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And, of course, if I get to North Central RHA what—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And that is where you need to raise it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I just wanted to be sure that I did not miss the boat. Thank you. I will raise it again.

**Dr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through the Minister and maybe the Minister of Finance, under line Item 39, Drugs and other Related Materials and Supplies: is there any correlation between the shortage of drugs that we have been experiencing and the issues that we have been having with foreign exchange and how as a Ministry can we have any sort of priority in ensuring that the proper foreign exchange is granted to the necessary suppliers?

**Mr. Imbert:** The answer to the first part of the question is no, so the second part does not arise.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line 39, Drugs and other Related Materials and Supplies, the first question. There is an item stating from the Montreal Gazette, that Modecate is no longer prescribed. Can you confirm that and if it is so, is there an alternative drug that would be brought into the country?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, there is a second-line drug which we are bringing in. So the answer to your question is yes.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, with your quest to make the cancer registry much more efficient, which is situated at the complex, do you have any appreciation of the fact that even if you make that registry efficient, there is still a weakness in terms of reporting of the cancer cases by the medical personnel dealing with cancer at a national level? What steps are you going to take to ensure that there is

reporting of every cancer case, because at the moment it is not, it is just that you cannot know? Are you going to take measures for doctors and nursing homes and hospitals to report on these cancer cases to the national cancer registry?

**12.00 noon**

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is an excellent question, Member for Caroni East. It is something which came to my attention when I paid a visit to the St. James facility. They were telling me there that they have absolutely no research capability and they have no data collection capability. Arising out of that, I took a decision that under the NCD programme that we are going to launch, there is funding available to start projects on that same issue you have raised. I have given the commitment that we are going to start a programme of trapping data and trapping information for all types of cancers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** May I be permitted—my 28 years of experience in gynaecology, since 1988 I have been trained in cancer in gynaecology—28 years now. Would you say that the time has come for us to put it in legislation so that every case of cancer can be reported to the National Cancer Registry? I would like to support you on that, and to ask you to consider that as an amended piece of legislation.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I thank you for your support and I will look forward to working with you collaboratively on this project. I thank you for your support.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, under Head 39, you had indicated earlier that drugs were coming in week by week and so forth, to assist in alleviating the problem. Could you confirm whether or not those drugs were being solely sourced by NIPDEC or is there another supplier?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Under Head 39 Drugs and other Related Materials and Supplies, it also includes vaccines. As you know we had to bring in vaccines for

yellow fever, influenza and all of that. So what is being purchased with those moneys are both drugs coming in through NIPDEC, drugs coming in through the Strategic Fund that PAHO runs, but also vaccines. For instance, we have 50,000 doses of flu vaccines landing in the country on October 16th which would have been sourced through PAHO, so it is a combination of PAHO, vaccines, drugs, PAHO Strategic Fund and NIPDEC.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Just to confirm: NIPDEC, PAHO and—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And the PAHO Strategic Fund.

**Mrs. Ramdial:** Minister, line Item 37 Janitorial Services, there is a sharp decrease there by \$237,500. Can you give some clarification with respect to that?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes; what we are going to do is make greater use of our in-house cleaning services, and we are re-negotiating our contracts with our external suppliers.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, line Item 21 Repairs and Maintenance—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which number, hon. Member?

**Dr. Bodoë:** 21—can you indicate which buildings are going to be repaired under this programme and what will be done in 2017?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** This has to do, hon. Member, with our general repairs and maintenance at most of our vertical service buildings. We have serious OSH problems in our buildings at Barataria, Penal, Siparia and Point Fortin. We are going to NIPDEC I believe it is to start to undertake some serious emergency repairs to these buildings, which were not paid attention to for the past few years. I thank you for that question.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005 North West Regional Health Authority, page 214. Item 006 North Central Regional Health Authority, page 214.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Travelling and Subsistence, this is 006. There was a sharp increase

there, Minister, under 2016 for travelling and subsistence of almost \$700,000. Is there an explanation for that?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, again, this relates to employees being absorbed once again from the Ministry into the RHAs.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007 Eastern Regional Health Authority, page 214. Item 008 South West Regional Health Authority, page 214. Item 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, page 215.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, in terms of the expenditure of \$1.8 million—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item Sir?

**Dr. Bodoë:** 009, I am just looking at the total figure there. I am asking if you could list the interventions undertaken in 2016 and the number of patients, the numbers of lives that would have been impacted by this expenditure, by the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention unit?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I would have to provide that to you in writing. I do not have those details.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, could you give the country an awareness of where these institutions for drug abuse prevention are located, in terms of the national area, because there are so many areas of drug abuse that the country is crying out for prevention programmes and treatment, et cetera.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you asking an item under sub-Item 08?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, it is a general item.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item, hon. Member?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well 009.

**Madam Chairman:** Which sub-Item? Unless you are coming under 08.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, 08, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate your support.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the hon. Minister indicate the institutions and the areas?

**Madam Chairman:** The situations of the leased buildings?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So 08, hon. Member, good question, has specifically to do with the secretariat of NADAPP, which is based I believe on 63 Abercromby Street, and that is what those moneys are earmarked for.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are there any other allocations for the institutions dealing with drug abuse?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** What line Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The same thing, the same Rent, Lease—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, 08 has solely to do with the renting of a facility for the secretariat for NADAPP.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I think you fully understand and appreciate the question I am asking you, and it would be honourable if you do not try to divert from the—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I do not think that is necessary. You asked a particular question and maybe that answer is not what you want, but you need to point to the line Item that you want.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 08 again Accommodation—can he indicate where is the accommodation at a national level for patients suffering from drug abuse?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Madam Chair, line Item 08 under Head 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention is to rent the secretariat at 63 Abercromby Street. If the Member wants further details as to other satellite centres, I would provide that to you, hon. Member, but it does not fall under this. If you want information on other centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago, I will gladly get that for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well I think there might be only two, so why can you not give it now?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Because I do not have it. It does not fall under 08.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Health, that will be provided in writing?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

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

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Because it does not fall under 08.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is sad that the Minister does not know.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 216. Item 001 General Administration, page 216. Item 004 Vertical Services, page 216.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Page 217.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, page 216. Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 217. Item 001 Regional Bodies, page 217.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, with regard to the allocation, the transfer to CARPHA of \$12 million—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Line Item 09.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you perhaps try to quantify the benefit the country would have received from this allocation in terms of the number of tests, seminars, public health awareness and so on? Further to that, and this is in regard to Zika especially, if you can also confirm that every pregnant woman is being tested at the public antenatal clinics for Zika, and can you also confirm how long it takes for the test results to be made available?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** You are asking very technical issues about the operations of the Caribbean Health Agency, and I will try to answer as many as I could. So this is the quota contribution that Trinidad and Tobago pays to CARPHA. The value of CARPHA to Trinidad and Tobago and the region cannot be estimated. They provide excellent service in the areas of public health. They are the go-to agency

for everything, from Zika, possibly tuberculosis and everything else. They are the guardians of the region's health.

As far as Zika and maternal testing are concerned, I will reiterate that every pregnant woman that we know of in the system is tested for Zika, and that test is done at CARPHA. Those who present with symptoms for Zika.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, I just want to be clear. Is it only if they present with symptoms?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is the information I have from CARPHA, once they are symptomatic.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Because I just wanted to make the point, if I may, Madam Chair, that many of the pregnant women are turning up Zika positive, by the screening test without symptoms. Perhaps it may be something that you want to consider.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** We have said publicly, when we had a meeting with all agencies, that CARPHA is the only registered lab in Trinidad and Tobago with the sensitivity to give a positive test for Zika.

**Dr. Bodoë:** That is fine, Minister, I was just seeking clarification as to whether you might consider testing all pregnant women, regardless of whether they are symptomatic or not.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is something we can look at and work with CARPHA, but I cannot give an undertaking now. I will certainly speak to CARPHA.

**Dr. Bodoë:** The length of time it takes to get back the test results, the average time?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Let me just say that CARPHA's cost to do one test is close to US \$300—for one test, and that is why a few months ago CARPHA took the decision that we would be treating and testing pregnant women and not be testing people like myself who may have Zika, because resources are limited and



CARPHA's protocol is to put resources where they would have maximum impact and, that is, pregnant women who present with symptoms, the elderly and children under five.

**Dr. Bodoë:** The pregnant women, I am not saying the entire population.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, if the Minister is saying that CARPHA will test all pregnant women—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I said they will test all symptomatic pregnant women.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You indicated in the Parliament here that there are women with Zika who present with no symptoms whatsoever. There are approximately 17,000 pregnant patients annually. Is CARPHA able to test these patients, if not, what advice are you giving to the pregnant patients who cannot be tested by CARPHA and do not even know that they have the Zika virus but want to be tested? What advice and where will you send them to have this test done? Minister, 17,000 women are pregnant annually and a little more; those who have live babies are 17,000. What advice do you have as the Minister of Health for testing these patients?

**12.15 p.m.**

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I had a conversation with Dr. Hospedales just this morning on that matter and other similar matters and we are trying to work out the funding to do just that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, we have two Members of Parliament who are gynaecologists and we are besieged—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. What do we do with the pregnant patients who come to us who require testing for Zika and we do not know where to send them and

what to do with them?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** We have said publicly, send the samples to CARPHA. I am trying to work with CARPHA, as we speak, to not only treat symptomatic pregnant women, but asymptomatic ones. I had that conversation just recently.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, United Nations Organisations, page 270. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would the Minister indicate if the International Atomic Energy Agency, that is line Sub-Item 01, has concluded its investigation into the over 200 patients who have accused the Brian Lara Cancer Treatment Centre of overdosing them with radiation therapy? Has that been completed?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** On becoming Minister of Health I engaged PAHO to do just that, not only the International Atomic Energy Agency. So I engaged PAHO to do just that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have had one year as a Minister of Health, has that investigation started and where it is? Can you give us a status report?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** PAHO did their assessment, I think, around February or March of this year. They went to both private suppliers of radiation therapy, the Brian Lara Cancer Treatment Centre, Southern Medical Centre, and they also visited the St. James centre, and based on what they found at that time, they gave all three facilities a clean bill of health.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you have that report available to the nation, if it is possible?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I would certainly check with the Cabinet—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Because there are scores of—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:**—and once I have Cabinet approval—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—cancer—I have a lot of cancer patients still who have been burnt and they have had cardiac toxicity as a result of the radiation onto their chests, some have died. Could you give the country an awareness of what has happened to the 200 patients who had been given radiation beyond the dosage? This is not good enough. I am a cancer specialist. These patients come to me. I am a gynae-cancer specialist. I deal with breast as well.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I believe that question was asked in another way.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No. We do not have the appreciation of the answer. These 200 people, many of whom have died, their families are asking questions. What is the result?

**Madam Chairman:** And, Member, I would say in terms of the details of the type of question, it does not fall under this examination and I am certain you will have an opportunity to get that response at another time.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. We will ask it under another—

**Madam Chairman:** Item—Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to the allocation to WHO and we know they are a very important partner in health. I am looking at the increase—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item, Member?

**Dr. Bodo:** That would be 02.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** 02.

**Dr. Bodo:**—WHO regular budget, under 003, United Nations Organizations?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodo:** Yes. I am looking at the increased allocation in 2016 of \$4,244,520

and I see we have come back down to \$1,680,000 in 2017. Can you give an explanation for that?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Just assist me, Member. We are under 004—

**Dr. Bodoë:** Right.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:**—on which line Item? [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** 003.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Oh. 003. Sorry. World Health Organization.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Just under—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes. Okay. That is the payment of quota contribution and funding will be sufficient based on what we paid in the year before. That is what I am advised. If you look there was a serious fluctuation between the 2016 estimates.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yeah. That is—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Right. So based on what we paid—

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yeah.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:**—I am advised that this figure is going to be enough.

**Dr. Bodoë:** All right. But I was just wondering whether that additional figure in 2016 would have brought any particular programme or value to the health sector or not necessarily.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hold on.

**Hon. Member:** It is an overpayment.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Not necessarily. It might be—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** These are contributions, I am being told, that we make to WHO to advise us on a variety of things.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I am aware of that, Minister. I just wanted to know if there was

anything special in 2016 that would have—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I can find out for you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** That is what I am asking.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No problem.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005 Non-Profit Institutions, pages 217 and 218.  
Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, I would just like to ask, through you, of the hon. Minister, under 005, Sub-Items 01 to 19—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:**—there are no allocations. And these involve Non-Profit Organizations. I just wondered what was happening. I saw that there—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. That is an excellent question, Member, and what I can tell you, these Sub-Items are paid under another line Sub-Item which is line Sub-Item 20 which you will see following very, very soon.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So look out for it under line Sub-Item 20.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Further to the answer just given by the hon. Minister, the Non-Profit Institutions in 2015, the last administration gave approximately \$17 million for these 19 institutions or organizations and in 2016 you had a reduction of \$5 million approximately. The requirement for these to be very successful require funding. Why were the allocations for those 19 organizations cut by over \$5 million for these 19 Non-Profit Institutions including Living Water, Lupus Society, South Cancer, et cetera? Five million was cut?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes. One has to be cognizant of the fact that the economic

situation, with oil at a price of \$50, does not obtain on what we were able to do with price of \$124, it would not obtain now. There are going to be some cuts, but if you would look at some of the critical areas like drugs, we are spending more on drugs. We are asking all persons to get on board. I can tell you, the Autistic Society will receive \$300,000, Breastfeeding Society from \$250,000 to \$200,000. I am being open. Everyone has to share a little bit in the burdens that we are now facing. The Cheshire Disability Services will receive \$50,000; the Christ Child Convalescent Home will receive \$613,000; the Cotton Tree Foundation, \$1.063 million; Diabetes Association, \$150,000 and the list goes on. So we continue to support, but all of us have to share in this time that we are in.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In those six that you just mentioned, none of these is included in the 19 that are under this line Sub-Item.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Sub-Item, Sir?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Sub-Items that you have given support to those that you mentioned. But I am speaking about the 19 Sub-Items under the Non-Profit Institutions which you have not—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** They are all under line Sub-Item 20 which I indicated earlier.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** If you look line Sub-Item 20.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. You gave the answer that there is reduced economic—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—burden. All right. I accept that.

**Madam Chairman:** Item—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 22. I want to go on to Sub-Item 22, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Item 22?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Now I will come to the question under Sub-Item 22 which is the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention. The \$3 million that is being allocated, could he indicate if there are centres within the nation that this money will be spent on and where are these centres for drug—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. My information is this line Sub-Item is specifically for funding programmes such as Eye on Dependency radio programme. So it is based on educational outreach. I give you the undertaking, if he wants physical structures, I will get that information for him.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You see, Madam Chair, I am asking him because people listening who have families that require drug abuse prevention and help, they are at a loss as to where in this country can give that. So I will appreciate a quick answer from the Minister on that.

**Madam Chairman:** What the Minister said, if he has the information—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And if you would look under line Sub-Item 20, you will see Rebirth House which we support is a place to go for drug treatment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. That is one.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I think Serenity Place is also one. Oasis is another one. So we are supporting outreach centres under line Sub-Item 20.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Good, Minister. For the sake and the benefit of the national population, it would be nice if you, as the Minister, tells the population where

these centres are and where they can go?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And if you look, again, HEAL, Helping Every Addict Live. We give them a subvention of \$120,000; Trinidad and Tobago National Council on Alcoholism, we give them \$150,000. So there are all these satellite agencies which we support in the whole issue of drug addiction. Whether it is drug addiction for alcohol—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you for the—along the painstaking questioning that I had to eventually come to the answer.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** But, Member, it is under the appropriate line Sub-Item which I indicated to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, again, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, you would recall we are dealing with Non-Profit Institutions, not one in particular, but if you would indulge me—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Mr. Padarath:**—just for a few minutes on a point of clarification. You would recall that around 2008 an abandoned unit at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex was refurbished with the Just Because Foundation that deals specifically with paediatric cancer. I know a lot of work has been put into it. Can you indicate—I know that an application is before the Ministry with respect to receiving the NGO status by the Ministry as being recognized. Can you indicate, at this point, what is the status of that application in light of the Just Because Foundation?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Excellent question. I am happy to inform the hon. Member for Princes Town that the Just Because Foundation has been allocated \$240,000



in fiscal 2017 to continue the excellent work that they do. And I have personally visited them and they have my full support to continue the excellent work.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Minister, under Non-Profit Institutions—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—you said, I understand very much the cut in the allocation. However, one of the biggest contributors to deaths in Trinidad or one of the biggest problems that we have to deal with is, in fact, NCDs and in this case diabetes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes Sir.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But I am asking this question because you said you allocated \$150,000 only to the Diabetes Association which does a tremendous job across this country in terms of informing people about their diabetic health and so on. What criteria, therefore, do you use to come up with the distribution of this \$13 million or \$12 million among these institutions so that you have adequacy and you have some kind of prioritization in terms of those organizations that really require the funding for the depth of the work that they do like the Diabetes Association, like the Down Syndrome Association? And may I just tag onto that; what is happening to the application of ADHD foundation also?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. My understanding of the quantum of subventions will be a combination of what the particular NGOs would ask for, what the Ministry can afford. In the case of the Diabetes Association, I want to comfort you that out of the NCD plan for which we have US \$51 million loan from the

IDB, the whole issue of diabetes in Trinidad and Tobago will be well funded as far as behaviour change is concerned and the Diabetes Association will be called upon to play an integral part in our NCD plan.

So the funding that you see for the Diabetes Association will be significantly enhanced, not by giving them more direct money, but by having the NCD plan roll out nationwide. Because as an NGO they can only do so much. They need the help of the Ministry of Health for a national rollout. So that is what we are going to do as far as the Diabetes Association is concerned.

As far as the ADHD, I cannot say that the Ministry of Health has yet approved anything. I will find out where it has reached in the Ministry as to having them approved as an NGO to receive a subvention.

**12.30 p.m.**

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, in light of the question that the Member for Tabaquite asked on the line Item 20, the criteria in terms of distribution, was there any consultation with the institutions before making a decision to cut the funding?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Consultation is a—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, let me intervene here. I noticed hon. Members opposite are asking the Ministers in the various Heads and Ministries why they cut the allocation. They did not cut anything. With respect to this Item and all similar Items, this is the funds that the Ministry of Finance has made available to the Ministries and the Ministries then allocate within the budget that they are given. They have not done this. It is the overall Ministry of Finance doing the budgetary allocation. So, the Minister cannot tell you why he cut this and why he cut that. What would have happened is that the Budget Division would have given his

Ministry an allocation for this particular Item and he is now required to distribute inside of there.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You cut it. Why you cut it? Why did you cut it?

**Mr. Imbert:** Now I could have easily stayed quiet and allow you to ask every Minister why they cut, but I think we need to put an end to this. The Ministers cannot answer that question.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Answer the question, if there was consultation, please with the various—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** On a case-by-case basis. So, if there are cuts I would certainly communicate that with the relevant NGOs.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, through you, I just wanted to find out, in terms of alcoholism and drug abuse, do you have an estimate of what size of population we are talking about?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item, sir?

**Dr. Tewarie:** This is Item 22.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I can get those details for you from NADAPP. You want specific details as to number of persons—

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to know how many we estimate as tending towards alcoholism and those that are involved in drug abuse.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay, I will endeavour to get that to you, sir.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, similarly with my line of question with respect to the Just Because Foundation, I have had the fortunate pleasure of meeting with members of the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago, and I know that they have expressed publicly some dissatisfaction with respect to the response that they have gotten from the Ministry of Health in terms of the research into autism. And I know on a previous occasion when this matter was

raised in this House you had given the undertaking to take a look at that in terms of the autistic society and the support that can be given in terms of research and development into the particular issue, and not only that but also the treatment of it, seeing that right here in Trinidad and Tobago not a lot of research has been done, one, and there are not many institutions to deal with a lot of the symptoms that are associated with autism. Could you at this point indicate what is the relationship with the Ministry and the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago in going forward, and if there is a work plan in terms of getting to where we want to be?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** As far as research is concerned?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Any organization that wants to do research and wants the Ministry of Health to be involved, writes to the Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Health. The Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Health has been non-functional for an eternity. I am now re-establishing the Ethics Committee at the Ministry of Health so that the Autistic Society or any other NGO who wishes to do research can now make their application to the Ethics Committee. The Ethics Committee was defunct, non-functional, we are now correcting that, so that research can be conducted, but we have a problem that we need to be aware of, which I was alerted to. A legal issue. If it is an agency, like the Autistic Society conducts research and the Ministry of Health pays for it, I have been informed that the issue of intellectual property ownership comes into play. Who owns the data? Who owns the intellectual property? So, in reconstituting the Ethics Committee, I also have to solve that legal conundrum there. But what I can tell you is under this Vote the Autistic Society will receive \$300,000 for their excellent work.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister just as a follow-up, could you give us a timeline with respect to this Ethics Committee being formulated and active?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Right. The problem with the Ethics Committee that I am looking at is getting suitably qualified persons to serve on it. I have approached several people and a few of them have declined, some have accepted. So, I hope to have this settled by the end of this, not fiscal year, calendar year, so that applications could then be made, and if we can do it we will do it. But we have to reformulate the Ethics Committee.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Households, page 218. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 007, 01, Medical Treatment of Nationals in Institutions, \$75 million, could you give us an idea as to what that involves in terms of the institutions, public, private and what kind of medical?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure, excellent question. As I said in my opening statement, although you may have a vision for the Ministry of Health, I admitted that there is a gap between the vision and the reality. The reality is there are long waiting lines at hospitals for certain types of surgery. We have a lack of operating theatre space, surgical services are not always available, surgeon availability, et cetera. One of the things we are now doing, and I spoke about this in the budget debate, we are now relying more and more on in-house surgery, and I gave the example of cataract surgeries where I showed that in the period January/June 2016 we are doing a lot more surgeries in-house than farming them out to the private sector. However, this Vote is to handle things like certain eye surgeries, prosthetics, external radiation treatment co-payments to like, Brian Lara Cancer Treatment Centre, Southern Medical and other services deemed urgent and necessary that cannot be performed in the public system in a timely manner. So this vote of \$75 million is to handle things like that.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, and follow-up, Minister, is it possible to get a list for the 2016,

\$75 million, in terms of the institutions and the type of medical care that was attended to?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure, I can make that available to you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Madam Chair, I want to know whether you would indulge me just to go back to 23 and 25 under NGOs, because I believe it is something that is of national importance. I did try to catch your attention before.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, you know, we have been trying to follow a particular type of format—

**Dr. Bodoë:** I am sure the Minister will want to answer this.

**Madam Chairman:**—and it is really unfortunate, I am looking at the time, and in terms of the clerks, and the public servants, and the technocrats, I think we have to be somewhat considerate. Okay?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Madam Chairman, I do have an answer for the Member for Chaguanas East, if you would permit me to give it, I will be happy to. The procedures: we did 131 iodine whole-body scans, we did bone density scans, pulmonary function test; 131 iodine thyroid scans, behaviour therapy, certain blood investigations, chromosomal analysis for Down Syndrome, cochlear implants, hyperbaric treatment, inferior vena cava filters, lung volume and gas transfer, and the list goes on. So, I could provide you with the list at a later date.

**Mr. Karim:** And the amount given to each of them.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure, will do.

**Madam Chairman:** So, we have completed 007, I suggest we take the lunch break now. We will resume with Item 009. And we will come back here at 1.45 p.m.

**12.39 p.m.:** *Committee suspended.*

**1.45 p.m.:** *Committee resumed.*

**Madam Chairman:** We now resume the Standing Finance Committee meeting. We are at Item 009, under Sub-Head 04, page 219. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would just like to get some information, if you could—give us the state of the emergency ambulance service. I see you have an allocation of \$126 million. In view of the fact that there have been concerns raised in very many quarters about the efficiency, the response time of the ambulance service and the state of readiness of these vehicles?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** On assuming office—and I agree with the hon. Member—the GMRTT response was not what it ought to have been. And I said when we were examining the issue of drugs that the Ministry of Health abdicated its role in providing monitoring and evaluating systems over its contract partners, and I quoted NIPDEC, and I did mention GMRTT. In establishing a monitoring and evaluation department within the Ministry to look specifically at our major contract partners, I could tell you that the efficiency of the ambulance service has increased dramatically. It is not perfect as yet. But, because we are paying close attention, and we actually go out now, that team actually visits GMRTT to do audits, and the response time has in fact improved, and the number of complaints you are getting from the general public, if we are honest, has decreased significantly, but we continue to do the work to get them to move optimally.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, can I continue? With respect to each of the RHAs if you are subdividing them, what is the optimum number of units for each of these RHAs? And what is the current strength of the number of units? Do you have it?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I do not have that with me now, but I can certainly get that for you. I think that is important information, so I would endeavour to get that for you, sir.

**Mr. Karim:** But, in your view do you think that there is a shortage of the amount of units that can respond to each RHA?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** There is, in my view, a need for more ambulances, and that in fact is happening as we speak. In my meetings with the head of GMRTT, a few months ago, he indicated a roll-out of new ambulances which are currently being fabricated in Trinidad and Tobago. So, new ambulances are going to come on to the system, but we have to make sure they comply with the regulations.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister just a follow-up to this, I do not want to jump yet to 07, Other Transfers. But I just wanted to make the National Emergency Ambulance Services Authority allocation of \$2 million—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item, sir?

**Dr. Bodoë:** That would be 07. I know we are talking about RHAs but it relates to the ambulance service, if you could link the two and what really is the function of that authority and where is it at the moment?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The function of the authority is to oversee the operations of all ambulance services in Trinidad and Tobago, inclusive of, as I understand it, GMRTT, to also have some input into the fire ambulance service, and the emergency ambulance service, and also the ambulances being owned and operated by the individual RHAs. So, it is an umbrella body overseeing ambulance services in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And just as a follow-up, Madam. And just for the purposes of accounting, I see that the emergency ambulance service is under the RHAs, is it going to be procured under one particular RHA, or is it going to be—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sorry, which line Item, sir?

**Dr. Bodoë:** We are going back to 01, Regional Health Authority, and that would be (i), I am just wondering why it is linked under RHA as opposed to the Ministry



of Health?

**1.50 p.m.**

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hold on, let me just converse, Sir.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And the question is whether it would be procured through a particular RHA?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. I am told it is under a general RHA Vote and not under individual RHAs.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And that would be the explanation?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay, if I may, Madam Chair, with regard to the, at the Aides to Nursing Programme, which is (vi)—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I see you have \$32.4 million allocated. I would want to enquire as to the status of this programme—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Bodoë:** How this money will be spent in 2017 and how many people will be employed under this?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** As you know the Aides to Nursing Programme was a programme designed to put more bodies on wards. The Aides to Nursing Programme had three tranches. A certain level of training was supposed to have been done with each cohort. My understanding, which is borne out by the actual research, is that the training for cohort one actually went very well.

However, the training for cohort two and three did not progress as it should have. As the programme comes to an end we will re-evaluate the programme to see how it could fit in into the nursing landscape. And some of the successful people will be taken back to become PCAs and whatever and hopefully transition

into the formal nursing programmes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I would just be curious, Minister, were there any reasons as to why the training for tranches two and three was not as well as tranche one?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well, when I came into the office in 2015 I enquired, it was just a lack, and again it goes back to the role of the Ministry in having oversight of all of these things. As far as I can tell, we did not have the people at the Ministry to really oversee and to make sure the training was in fact done, and this is something we are now trying to correct. The programme is now coming to an end, so we would re-evaluate the programme to see how best it can fit in.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So this \$32.4 million allocation will be for exactly what then?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** This will be to finish pay off the existing cohorts.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So as we speak, there is no guarantee that the programme will be continued. Is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** What I am saying is that the Aides to Nursing Programme, while having laudable aims, goals, and objectives, needs to be re-evaluated to see if in fact it adds value, because there are pros and cons to it and I have had many reports from the nurses who have to managed this programme telling me it takes away too much of their time in providing nursing services and management to be training the Aides to Nursing Programme. So that is part of the re-engineering of the programme that we are going to have to look at.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And just for the public information, Madam Chair, any idea when a decision will be taken on this, as to whether it would be retained or not?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I think a decision could be made within six to 12 months.

**Dr. Bodoë:** If I may, Madam Chair—[*Interruption*]

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, I have a few questions under this Sub-Head 01 to

the right of the page. Can I go through each one—you want me to go through them individually?

**Madam Chairman:** Please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Roman numeral (iv), Paediatric Cardiac Surgery. Hon. Minister, we had a sharing of programmes with international hospitals helping and international consultants coming down to help in paediatric surgery cases at Mount Hope. Do you think that this \$2 million, what will this cover and are you going to connect back to these institutions and doctors who have been assisting in the past with the paediatric surgery?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Number (iv) as I understand it is \$2 million which will go to Caribbean Heart Care, I believe, to provide paediatric cardiac surgery. We have no intention of stopping that programme or stopping any relationship with our partners abroad. As a matter of fact, we need to encourage that transfer of technology and transfer of learning. So I can assure you that any programme to partner with external sources will be continued.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, thank you, I am glad that it is continuing. Item (v) is within my field.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The screening, I am glad you are continuing to give the support to the Cancer Society, but is there any contemplation, since you said that you are doing some visioning for the Ministry, for a more widespread screening for cervical cancer, because only 6 per cent of the patients are screened on an annual basis and the same patients come back for screening, and for breast cancer.

I think the time has come for increased screening with mammography, because above age 40 a woman should be screened every two years and up to age 50 every year. But we do not have that facility. Could you consider somewhere

along the line that you start that programme because you know breast cancer is the number one killer for women with cancer and cervical cancer is the second. So the time has come, we did not do it as well as we should have done it, but the time has come for us to do it in a more aggressive manner.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Member, you have zeroed in on something that is near and dear to me and that has to do with women's issues. I do not want to sound Trumpesque, if I say there is no bigger advocate for women's issues than myself. I would tell you this, I fully agree with you that we as a society and a country we have not paid attention to screening for both cervical cancer and breast cancer—  
[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And prostate cancer.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And prostate cancer. The good news is—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And colon cancer.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes. And the bad news, first, is that very often when we catch it as, you know, we catch it at stage two, stage three and stage four. Under the NCD plan funds will be allocated to do exactly what you are recommending. And we are working with our NGOs, for example, the Family Planning Association which does yeoman service in cervical screening, but they are underfunded, under resourced. So part of that funding under the loan we are taking from the IDB is to start that exact initiative that you are talking about. And I look forward to your support in this.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. I just want to proffer that you set up a team to look at a national health screening programme from your Ministry and to get in other stakeholders.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So that you will have an understanding what is going on at a

national level.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And hon. Member, what I can tell you, just yesterday, Sunday I believe it is, as part of what you are talking about we had a workshop at South West Regional Health Authority for radiologists to start to interpreting mammograms. So we are boosting up our capacity to read these reports.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We should put some in the health centres and so on—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, soon as we roll out.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, I dealt with that. The Emergency Ambulance Service—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Ambulance service, yes, Sir.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The committee which you tried to put a lot of licks on and so on—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which committee that I put licks on, Sir?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The committee helping the Ministers.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, please, a question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. The emergency health ambulance service is hampered by the response time in the Accident and Emergency Department to transfer a patient from an ambulance into the emergency department. Can you give us any idea, whether you have looked into it—that will reduce the amount of time wasted?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. One of the first things I did, and I must thank now the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine. On becoming Minister of Health when I had this plethora of complaints about ambulance times, on the advice of the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine, the hon. Prakash Ramadhar, I paid several spot visits, unannounced visits to accident and emergency rooms across Trinidad and Tobago, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex in particular, Port of Spain General Hospital and San Fernando General Hospital. And the problem was not the number of ambulances. You know what the problem was?—that the

Accident and Emergency Departments did not have trolleys to transfer the patient from the ambulance gurney onto a trolley.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you bought some more?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I immediately ordered the North Central Regional Health Authority and South West Regional Health Authority to purchase more gurneys and that has made a dramatic increase in efficiency so now the ambulances do not have to wait 45 minutes and one hour as occurred before. They can transfer their patient from the ambulance gurney onto an accident and emergency gurney. And therefore the turnaround time at the A&E's is now down to 10 to 15 minutes in a lot of the cases.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well the committee we had, we had—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member, is there a question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, last one. The committee we had, we have held that and we instituted measures. The legal settlement of \$20 million—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The legal settlement of?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Twenty million.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you comment on that?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. That is an allocation in case any of the Regional Health Authorities are sued by former CEOs or anything like that as is happening now for whatever transgressions would go in their favour. So it is a general fund for legal settlement.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** To come or do you have part of that for paying in the past?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hold on. I do not have those details but I am told every year we get an allocation for this.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And is it used up or—?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Not entirely as I understand it. It depends on what claims you have.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. I want to go back to Emergency Ambulance Service, Madam Chairperson. Minister, in terms of the ambulances the contract you have with GMRTT, is it a fixed price contract or do you pay per pick-up or per call?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It is a five-year contract which was signed just before the last election in September 2015 and I believe it is a fixed contract. That is my understanding.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, good. Do you have any idea as to how many ambulances, working ambulances as supposed to be provided by GMRTT on a 24-hour basis in view of the requirements for the contract and whether they have been providing those ambulances as required under the contract? What percentage thereof.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. When I looked into this contract some months ago, the actual complement of ambulances on the road at any particular time, available to go on to the road, was somewhere between 25 and 30, which was not in keeping with the terms of the contract.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So let us stick a pin there. So then are you paying GMRTT a quantum of money and they have been failing to provide the required ambulances and therefore they are receiving money that they should not receive?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is the part of the problem with the contract that was signed in September—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** And what are we doing Minister to recover it?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Let me tell you what the contract value is. It is a five-year contract at \$30.8 million per year. And I have insisted that GMRTT get their ambulance fleet up to par. And they have committed to me that they are doing so,

as I said earlier, more and more ambulances are going to come on show.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, I was dissatisfied with this matter with GMRTT, even as a Member of the last Government. I was dissatisfied. And I think that GMRTT owes the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago money for failing to provide the service and the number of ambulances. And no Minister or no Ministry could continue to go on paying \$30 million a year and they are not fulfilling the contractual arrangements.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Dr. Rambachan:** That question, what are you doing about the situation, (a), and (b), do we have moneys to recover from GMRTT?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. I have an updated figure and the picture is actually worse than I just said. It is not \$30.8 million per year. It is \$30.8 million per quarter.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is right.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And when I looked at the contract I immediately sent the contract to the Office of the Attorney General for the attention of Minister Stuart Young to look at. Because the concerns you are raising I flagged them and the Office of the Attorney General would advise me.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You see, Madam Chairperson, I want to ask the Minister this. Are you aware that the promise that they have been making to supply the new ambulances and bring the fleet to the required amount have been made for the last two years?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I am told that their ambulances are under construction. But the bigger issue is are we getting value for money with the contract. And the issue you have raised is an issue which I flagged and as I said it is under the consideration of the Office of the Attorney General.



**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, through you Chairman, are you prepared to continue the waste, corruption and mismanagement in the Ministry of Health in this regard?

**Mr. Young:** I think the Minister has already said, it has been sent to the Office of the Attorney General. We will review it and we will take what needs to be taken, the steps that need to be taken to deal with it in the public's interest as we have been doing throughout.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, if we can go, through you, hon. Minister, sorry, if you could go on to Sub-Item 06, Children's Life Fund Authority. Minister, could you give us an indication over the last year how many applications have been made to the Children's Life Fund? How many of those applications have been successful and I know I have had previous conversations with you with respect to the pool of institutions that the Life Fund deals with in terms of sending children abroad for the life-saving surgeries. What is the status of that research that you had mentioned to me in terms of increasing the—[*Interruption*].

**2.05 p.m.**

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Member, Line Item, 06, Children's Life Fund, has nothing to do with surgeries—how many applications. It has to do with the general operating cost of the CLF. That is what that Line Item is about.

**Mr. Padarath:** I understand that, Minister.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** If it is you want information not pertaining to this Line Item, I would gladly provide that for you. We have nothing to hide.

**Mr. Padarath:** Great, thank you much.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Just yesterday in the *Express* you would have seen somebody praising the Children's Life Fund for coming to their assistance in providing a liver transplant surgery. It continues to operate.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you give us a little idea as to the Vacant Posts, (vii), for \$30 million, what that involves? And also, while you are at it, the fifth largest allocation from (i) to (xii), is Item (x), Other, for \$10 million. If you can give us an idea as to what that \$10 million Other involves.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** You are on Line Item 07?

**Mr. Karim:** I know it is easy to say a contingency and so on, but is there any specific category or categories to which Other will mean? We know what Other means in accounting, but I just wanted to know whether you had any—

**Madam Chairman:** We on to 01? 009, 01 in the Explanation, the Roman numerals.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Oh, sorry. That has to do with contingencies for trade payables.

**Mr. Karim:** And you can give us an idea as to—is it a contingency for the future, or do you have that being allocated for trade payables?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It is there for trade payables.

**Mr. Karim:** That you would have incurred.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, for what we would have—

**Mr. Karim:** For the future.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** In 2017.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. And then the one I asked about the Vacant Posts, \$30 million, what posts do you envisage that would take up that amount of money?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. Let me just confer here. This has to do with vacancies that will arise in any of the RHAs.

**Mr. Karim:** I will ask the question, eh; I just want to make a comment on it. The experience has been—and mine, being responsible for the former tertiary education Ministry—that there are many persons who are coming to us, and to me too, who

are qualified—MBBS, doctors, and registered—and are begging for work all around at doctors' offices. Can you tell us how many doctors you are short of and whether, in fact, you have any indication as to how many have been applying to the Ministry or the various regional health authorities to satisfy that shortage that you may have?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Mr. Karim:** So the question is, number one: what is the shortage, and how many persons you know are looking for jobs? Because we have some information as well.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. We must not use the term “doctors” as a catch-all phrase. There are shortages at different levels. So, for example, at the level of the House Officers, the total number of posts is 1,298. Those are posts. The number filled is 1,194, which means there are 108 vacancies or 8 per cent unfilled. All right? The RHAs are currently in the process over the last couple of weeks and the coming weeks, to interview people, to interview doctors, to fill these 104 House Officer vacancies.

**Mr. Karim:** You are saying that throughout all the RHAs, you only have this 104 vacancies, for all?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** For all. That is the information I have.

**Mr. Karim:** And have not been filled?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** And are you aware of the—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Of House Officers.

**Mr. Karim:** House Officers, yes. And are you aware as to how many have applied—qualified and applied—and have not been able to be placed?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That, I do not have on me now, but I am assuring you that the

NCRHA is currently pursuing filling those, because the funds allocated for the new fiscal year, as soon as it becomes available, they will be filled. North West, Eastern and South West, interviews have been done and they are filling within two to three weeks.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I refer to Item 01, (xii), Legal Settlements.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Charles:** And I know you explained that this involved instances like CEOs suing the Ministry of Health. Does it also include citizens of Trinidad or patients or their families who have problems with malpractice activities with the Ministry? And in which Vote is that captured and how much was involved in this current year?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** My information is, yes, what you are suggesting is captured under Legal Settlements.

**Mr. Charles:** Well, would you be in a position to tell us in what areas do these legal activities arise from, in what institutions in Trinidad?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It will be across the board in all the RHAs.

**Mr. Charles:** Because this would provide an idea of where we have problems in which institutions and in which areas of medicine.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Agreed.

**Mr. Charles:** So would you be in a position to provide that information?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Of course I can.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** With regard to Line Item 04—I am coming down here now—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** North Central Regional Health Authority?

**Dr. Bodoë:** North Central Regional Health Authority, and the allocation there of just over \$1 billion, Minister, and I am hoping that this is the right line Item. You spoke about the provisions being made for the special unit proposed for dealing with Zika-positive pregnant women.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It is not, but I will answer you. This line Item, hon. Member, has to deal with meeting the arrears to employees of the RHAs and their monthly subventions.

**Mr. Bodoë:** I am aware.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Right? So I will answer your question which you are burning to ask, about Mount Hope. We worked with PAHO and the head of Mount Hope is bring in more resources which arrived in this country over the weekend, in terms of sonographers and equipment, and I can tell you they have been deployed and employed as of this morning to do additional sonography testing—so both machines and personnel.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay. That is from PAHO. There is no allocation here from the Government for that.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well, it comes out of our PAHO vote.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. I see that you have an allocation under 01, Regional Health Authority.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** With respect to (vii), Vacant Posts, \$30.075 million, that, in itself, is a total allocation to cover all the vacant posts existing at the respective Regional Health Authorities?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So that in itself will give you the opportunity to hire how many people?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well, the number of vacancies are like this: for Eastern, the information I have is that there are 435 vacancies. Is that correct? Am I calling the correct figures? Let me just make sure I am giving you the correct figures. If I do not have the exact figures here I will certainly get them for you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And also under (iii), I see you have an allocation of \$2 million for Community HIV Programme. Could you provide some details on what this entails?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** A lot of this has to do with public education in the battle against HIV-AIDS. A lot of it has to do with public education.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So it is being done through what, the district health facilities? What?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** District health facilities, and there is also a programme called Rapport, which is an outreach to educate the general community about HIV-AIDS and how to avoid it.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** All right. And I see under 07, a National Emergency Ambulance Services Authority.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** 07, Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could you provide us with a status report on this authority?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes. The authority is working. The authority is established and is working.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** What is it doing?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** They are supposed to provide oversight over—I answered that a long time ago.

**Madam Chairman:** That was answered before lunch. And in the interest of time, that was answered, Member for Couva South, before lunch.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** All right, Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? So do you have another question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** So can I take the Member for Chaguanas West?

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The School Help Programme; audio test, hearing aid service and eye glasses, do you have some kind of empirical data to inform that so that as a Member of Parliament I could get a sense of the exposure of the children in my area, meaning that, who suffer from a deficiency in these areas?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. I do not have that information with me, but it is something I could provide to you in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** The second question. This interest payment on this \$500 million loan, I see it is designated this way: \$4.5 million, North West. What was this money utilized for?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. This money was utilized—it is actually an RHA subvention for the period August/September, 2016, for both salaries and trade payables. The reason for it was part of the original subvention for fiscal 2016 for August/September, 2016, was utilized to meet obligations for the first part of the 50 per cent arrears. So we had utilized some of that to pay arrears, so we had to finance our obligations for August/September, 2016 financial year.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, under line Item 05, South West Regional Health Authority—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And I will just refer to a *Newsday* article—today's *Newsday*—"Pregnant Women and Babies in Danger". Can the Minister confirm whether, in fact, there is no full-time anaesthetist present at the Point Fortin area hospital and whether arrangements are being put in place to cover that deficiency?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Just for elucidation, this line Item 05 is to meet the balance of arrears to the employees of the RHAs and monthly subventions. But to answer your question, the anaesthetist at Point Fortin broke his leg, as you well know, and we have since assigned an anaesthetist to Point Fortin so that article is not entirely correct.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay, thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Minister, although you have provided under Item 01, Regional Health Authorities, Sub 12, Legal Settlement for about \$20 million—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—does the Ministry or the RHAs have medical malpractice insurance for the doctors?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I think individual doctors have their own malpractice insurance. I could be guided otherwise. Hold on. Let me just check.

**Mr. Young:** Let me assist here. When litigation is brought against any RHA, the RHA, through the Ministry of Health, would normally approach the Ministry of the Attorney General if they require assistance with the assignment of counsel to help in the defence of the matter. If a litigant is successful against the State, that is, against the RHA, those settlements are normally paid from the Comptroller of Accounts via a fund set up there for settlement of all Orders made against the State. And to answer your question, I think the answer is no. There is not any specific malpractice insurance set up.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So that a medical person—doctor—working in the hospitals, can be sued directly also.

**Mr. Young:** Correct.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And therefore that doctor is thrown to the wolves.

**Mr. Young:** It would be sued in their name as an individual and that doctor would



be held—if that doctor is held liable, that liability is in their own name and their own personal liability and that would not attach to the State.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Although they are working on behalf of the State.

**Mr. Young:** Correct.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just a follow-up on that. Minister, are you aware that previously all doctors who worked under the Ministry of Health, before the RHA was transferred, the Attorney General was the person responsible for the settlement of all matters related to doctors. Why the doctors now working with the RHAs, when sued, have to pay the individual claims for themselves? Why can the Attorney General's department or the State not cover them when they are working within the RHAs for the State?

**Mr. Young:** Well, that is not necessarily so. It will depend on the circumstances. Prior to RHAs, according to the Constitution, all civil actions brought against the State are brought in the name of the Attorney General. So prior to RHAs being in existence, all of the medical practitioners would have been agents of the State and litigation would have been brought against them, as agents for the State.

**2.20 p.m.**

Now, with the development of RHAs and a separate piece of legislation, it is still the RHAs who will be responsible, but it up to litigants and claimants to bring the action against them personally and it would depend on the circumstances and the defence run by the RHA and the doctor together. There will be circumstances, for example, where the RHA will put in the defence for the doctor, but there may be circumstances where a doctor or a medical practitioner was acting outside of what we used to call in law, a frolic of their own and acting outside of their ambit.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That continues, Minister. You realize that the insurance for an obstetrician is nearly a quarter million TT dollars. So pretty shortly you will not

have any obstetrician within your health service because the insurance for us, as obstetricians to practice, is \$256,000 per year, just in obstetrics and gynae. So therefore pretty shortly in the hospitals no obstetricians will want to work because they will have to pay quarter million dollars' insurance.

**Mr. Young:** Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, what is the State—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Young:** Well let me tell you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** This will affect the outcome of maternal and childcare.

**Mr. Young:** I have actually been involved in malpractice suits as well as in your field and on the defence side. So I am very familiar with it, and it is something that the medical fraternity, really in my opinion, needs to take a proper look at. They have been talking for years of coming up with their own self-insurance scheme and I think that is something that needs to be pursued. If you are acting as an agent of the State and even as a doctor practising under the RHA system, it does not mean you carry personal liability. So let us get that clear. It will be on a circumstantial and a case-by-case basis.

If you are acting—and as you would know the Bolam test—and you are acting within what is recognized as the reasonableness and what an expert in that area would have done at the circumstances, the RHA is not going to just cut you loose and say, “Look, you stand on our own”. So first of all it would depend on the claimant bringing an action against you, but if you are acting as the agent of the RHA you will be covered.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, you see any time a doctor is subject to that proposition there, anything could happen to them and at any time they could be sued for anything. So all right, I just want to bring that to his attention. But I want to ask under Vacant Posts, out of the 1,194 posts that have been filled as house officer,

hon. Minister of Health, how many of these are held by non-nationals?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Oh, that I would not have that at my fingertips. It is something I can get for you, Sir.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Your team would not know?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sorry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Your team behind you would not know?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, Sir.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line 09 School Health. I know my colleague had requested on how the programme will operate, but I am asking how will the programme be administered; whether you will be utilizing NGOs or institutions that are familiar with either audio or hearing or eye service?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** On the issue of audio testing and hearing aid services, we do employ the services of DRETCHI. So the answer for you especially as the audio testing is concerned, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Back to 01, (xii) Legal Settlement. I am just trying to be clear in my mind. You had indicated the claims for medical malpractice would out of this Vote. I think I heard the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West indicating that there is another Vote which handles this.

**Mr. Young:** What I suspect this line Item is, if I may help assist the Minister and subject to correction, this would be the cost associated with defending the legal claims, et cetera. As I indicted at the outset, what can happen is when the RHA approaches the Ministry of Health for assistance, the Ministry of Health may approach the Attorney General's Office for assignment of accounts; if it is an external counsel they will have to be paid, et cetera. But once there is a judgment against the State, that is covered the route I indicated, so through the Office of the

Attorney General. However, if it is against the RHA and the Attorney General's Office is not brought in, it may very well come from this fund.

**Mr. Charles:** So can we, for the interest of the population, get a figure on how many claims were settled for medical malpractice in what areas, and against what institutions?

**Mr. Young:** The only proviso I could see to that—I am the Minister would assist if he can—is as you may be aware in settlements—if they are not court orders—there may be some element of a confidentiality clause. So that is the only reason I could see that information not being provided. If that does not exist, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on now? 010 Other Transfers Abroad, page 220. Sub-Head 06 Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 220; Item 004 at page 220.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure for Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. So we have gone on to a new book. We are at page 161. 14 Princess Elizabeth Home for Handicap Children, Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 161; 001 General Administration, page 161.

Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, 001 General Administration, page 161. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 161; 001 General Administration, page 161. Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 162; 007 Households, page 162.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 06 Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 87. Item 004 Social Infrastructure, pages 87—89.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister. I

am at 002 on page 88. I am seeing here structural assessment of the Port of Spain General Hospital at a figure of \$11 million. It is a new project. I just wanted some information on what exactly is proposed to do with this \$11 million and to ask the Minister, if the Minister is aware that there had been other studies, conditioned surveys done of the Port of Spain General Hospital? In fact, structural assessments of the Port of Spain General Hospital have pointed to the integrity of several buildings there and indeed I understand there is one block there that is a block that is believed technically to be very vulnerable to collapse. So that there have been studies done on the structural integrity of the buildings already and condition surveys, and I am wondering whether this is not another waste of money, so to speak, when several studies have been done already? So if you could explain the \$11 million that you propose to spend.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. Hon. Member, I am glad you asked this question because it is a tragedy and travesty that this issue was not dealt with before. The PAHO report into the structural integrity of central block was actually a desk report. It was not actually a structural investigation. We are going to get a proper second opinion on the structural integrity of the existing facility and the findings of that will guide the Ministry on the way forward to the redevelopment of Port of Spain General Hospital—let me finish the answer please—and part of that \$11 million, if it is we have to do work on the facility we will have to decant the existing patients to another ward and equip another ward or wards, and this is what this \$11 million is going to be used for.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So could I understand you that the \$11 million is not for a structural assessment of the Port of Spain General Hospital—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, I said clearly—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:**—it is to decant in the event that you have to, moneys will be used

from this vote.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Member, I said clearly two things. One, it is to get a second opinion on the structural integrity. I said that clearly and to point the way forward on how to rectify the problem and also to deal with the decanting.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So I just want absolute clarity. So the money here, \$11 million, is for a second opinion and contrary to what is stated in the line Item it will also be for relocation.

**Madam Chairman:** But Member, you got an answer. I think you asked that question twice and it was answered twice, and you are just repeating exactly what the Member said in terms of second opinion.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On the same page, Minister, 002 Special Programme Treatment of Adult Cardiac Disease.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** 002.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Under Other Services.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay, on page 88. Right. Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Special treatment for cardiac disease Just for the \$12 million spent in 2016, can you provide the type of procedures and the cost per type of procedure; the number of patients who benefited from each type of procedure?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** A lot of this, hon. Member, had to do with interventional cardiac—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yes, I am sure. I do not expect you will be able to give me—so I am just asking and the institutions which provided the procedures, and the average waiting time for a patient who would have had to access this procedure.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. I will get that to you in writing.

**Dr. Bodoë:** If I could just go on, Madam Chair, to 03 which is a similar enquiry,

with regard to the renal dialysis special programme. Again for that \$18,767,001 spent in 2016, if we can get a list of the institutions which provided these services; the number of patient/treatment cycles per institution—because some patients will go more than once—the total number of patients who benefited; and again the average waiting time for renal dialysis in Trinidad and Tobago for such patients.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. I can tell you offhand the number of patients who benefited is roughly around 700 and all the institutions are approved by the Ministry of Health, but I can get you that list.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure. I would appreciate that.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No problem.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 007, the waiting list for surgery and I see a significant increase from \$10 million in 2015 to \$21 million estimated in 2017. Could the Minister give us some idea of the current state of the waiting list; the types of surgery involved; and what can the population expect in terms of waiting times given this kind of expenditure?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So the types of surgeries involved are cataract surgery, radiology, joint replacements, cardiac interventions, neurosurgery, hernia repairs, prosthetics and any other procedure deemed necessary by either the Chief Medical Officer, the Permanent Secretary or the Minister.

**Mr. Charles:** Could you give us an idea of the waiting times in at least the four highest?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. I will endeavour to get that information to you, Sir. I do not have exact times.

**Mr. Charles:** And do you have a target to say like, if a patient goes to the San Fernando General Hospital he would get a cataract operation within two months, three months, a year, six years?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The waiting time for cataract surgeries, hon. Member, has come down dramatically, as I indicated in my budget debate, as we try to do more of these things in-house. But specifics for waiting time for each one, I can get that to you, Member.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay because what we want to do is to have a quantifiable idea to measure the benefits of this expenditure. Rather than saying we will reduce the waiting list in X—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Agreed.

**Mr. Charles:**—we will say we will get it down to one month. I think the population will look forward to that.

**2.35 p.m.**

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you. To the hon. Minister, 005, Tissue Transplant, what exactly does this entail and does it form part of a burns unit?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Does it form part of a—?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** For burns, for patients who have suffered burns and so with tissue transplant. Can you enlighten us with that?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sorry. This tissue transplant has to deal mainly with the initiative for kidney transplants and I think to date, we have done about 150 kidney transplants. So this vote is not for burns but mainly for tissue transplant under the National Organ Transplant Unit based at Eric Williams.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 010 Community Outreach Family Medicine Programme

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** What page?

**Mr. Padarath:** We are on page 88. Again, line Item 010 under Other Services, Community Outreach Family Medicine Programme. Can you give us an idea on how this programme functions? By the name itself, community outreach, what are



the target areas that are being looked at and what sort of services would be provided under this type of programme?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. Hon. Member, under this programme, for 2016, it had to deal with the procurement of a mobile blood unit to go into the communities for members of communities to donate blood. So that will be done. Going forward in 2017, these moneys will be used for a dental upgrade programme in the primary health care centres.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sub-item 001 Medical Equipment Upgrade, Minister, could you just indicate to us what that medical equipment upgrade is going to be and where is it going to be situated?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** You are going back. Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** No, page 88, 001.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Medical Equipment Upgrade, we had purchased under the NWRHA: 12 CTG monitors, we procured instruments for eye operating theatre, pathology lab. For ERHA: three ambulances. For South West: six portable X-ray units and ultra sound units, lab equipment. NCRHA: portable ventilators, procurement of lab equipment for Eric Williams and going forward, we have other new equipment to procure for service delivery areas such as operating rooms, wards, clinics, health centres, diagnostic services.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you. You have indicated that the [*Inaudible*] machine is going to be obsolete and you are going to be bringing in a new linear accelerator. Where is that in this line—?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** It is under a new line Item, hon. Member.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And could you give us an idea of the cost of that new linear accelerator for treating cancer—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I cannot give you that cost as yet. There was an allocation to

actually do the proprietary work for that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, thank you. Just one more, Madam Chair. The renal dialysis, \$24 million, you have partnered with private sector to do renal dialysis in north and south: 100 patients, I believe, in north and 100 in south. Where are you in relation to that and would this \$24 million be incorporated as part payment to settling that and so on?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well the figure I gave for dialysis is around 700.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That you are doing now?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That we are doing now currently.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. So that 100 from north and 100 for south will be incorporated in that new renal dialysis centre, in those two centres? You know what I am speaking about?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, the new centres. All right, I understand where you are coming from now. This Vote for renal dialysis is not for the construction of new centres, it is to pay for ongoing dialysis services, re: 700 people at the approved centres.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right, but when these two kick in, do we expect them to start this year?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No, the construction was stalled for many years and we had restarted construction at both north and south.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And last question on dialysis, do you have an idea, an estimate, about how many patients requiring dialysis on an annual basis? I know you are providing care for 700. How many people require dialysis—?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I will have to get that for you but the burden of NCDs is increasing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is very high, it is about 4,000.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 90.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Minister, I am seeing here at Item 234 Hospital Refurbishment Programme and an estimate of \$40 million. Could I ask what would be the \$40 million spent on which would be the priority in terms of refurbishing?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Excellent.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Before you say it is an excellent question, let me ask the next part of it, it may not be that excellent. And whether or not the Ministry will be paying the CEPEP contractors who worked on refurbishing the hospitals over the past two years and to ask you, Minister, whether you are aware that on coming into office, when you went to Mount Hope to open the ward there and praised the good work, it was really the good work of CEPEP in refurbishing the wards at Mount Hope?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** An excellent question.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** For 2016, we supplied a medical vacuum pump for the operating theatres at Port of Spain; we procured a UPS system for St. James; supply of equipment at the main kitchen for St Ann's; electrical works upgrade at St. Ann's; at ERHA, insulation of medical gases at ward 4; south RHA, renovation works at the Point Fortin Health Centre.

But what is really key moving forward for under hospital refurbishment, again, it was a travesty and tragedy that the last South West Regional Health Authority Board paid no attention to the maternity wing at South West. This administration, this Minister of Health, and this South West Board have allocated funds for the building of a modern maternity wing at the San Fernando General hospital, so that is part of where the funds are going to be used. North Central Regional Health Authority, completion of refurbishment of wards 18 and 20 at Eric

Williams Medical Sciences Complex. So those are some of the reasons why we have this Vote.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But my question on payments to CEPEP contractors building 18, 19 and 20 of the third floor at Mount Hope, you opened it with great praise and it was the CEPEP contractors.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, we are awaiting the contracts with the service providers to process payment and that is what we are currently waiting on. The procurement process for that left a lot to be desired and we are trying to fix it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I just wanted to clarify a point, if I may, Chair? With regard to the maternity services, I just wanted to indicate to the Minister that consideration was given to the maternity department but there was the need for the patients to have access to the new teaching hospital and that would have been the reason why the work was delayed.

**Madam Chairman:** Where are we? What Item, Member?

**Dr. Bodoë:** With regard to the Hospital Refurbishment Programme.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, point noted. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 293.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Early Construction Management Cost - RHAs. What is this about?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** What page?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 90.

**Mr. Singh:** Page 90, 242 Early Construction Management Cost - RHAs. There is no allocation but what is that about?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Or, yes. This line Item is no longer relevant as the Ministry is funding these under "specific projects". So this line Item is really no longer relevant.

**Mr. Singh:** A follow-up question, Madam Chair. So when will the early construction management cost of the Chaguanas hospital facility be put in place?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Chaguanas hospital or the Chaguanas Health Centre?

**Mr. Singh:** Well, the Chaguanas health facility.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. My information from NIPDEC is that they want to relook at this project and that is where that project is now, but we are committed to building the project.

**Mr. Singh:** It is the fastest growing area in this country, you know, Chairman.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I concur with you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, line Item 250 Health Services Support Programme which is a new project, can you give us some light on that?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. This is all part again, Member, of the NCD programme. So this HSSP is designed with a focus on preventive health care and to strengthen the delivery of primary health services to deal with challenges being experienced in the health sector. Part of our remit coming into office was to strengthen primary health care so a lot of this is used there.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you indicate how long it will take for this programme to roll out or be completed?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** This programme has a five-year life cycle to be rolled out starting in the last quarter of 2016.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ma'am, I am going on to page 293, are we there?

**Madam Chairman:** No, not as yet.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, well then keep me in mind.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 90, Minister, under line Item 250 Health Services Support Programme, could you tell us where the support programme from Johns Hopkins

University on the diabetes programme and the cardiac programme, where are they located now? Because they were the health services programme from Johns Hopkins training people in cardiac care and the diabetes programme. There were two programmes with Johns Hopkins.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I am getting that information for you. My information is that programme was funded under MTEST through the former Ministry of Tertiary Education and it does not fall here.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, in terms of the support services programme, could you indicate to us what is happening with the three floors that were allocated to the San Fernando Teaching Hospital, please?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. First thing to realize is that that is a misnomer. The San Fernando hospital is not a teaching hospital. There are students from UWI there but no teaching takes place. If you are referring to the top three floors currently under UDeCOTT's control, we are trying to manage that situation between UDeCOTT and the Ministry of Health to get access to it.

**Mr. Karim:** Will there be any consideration for teaching of medical students at that facility on the floors that—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That is something I am actively looking at.

**Mr. Karim:** Is it correct so say that one of the floors out of the three has now been taken and allocated to the human resources department of the South West Regional Health Authority?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I am not aware of that. But that has nothing to do with the HSSP loan.

**Dr. Moonilal:** On this very area—thank you very much—is the Minister saying that the floors, the ground floors at the San Fernando Teaching Hospital, the

Chancery Building, that those ground floors with classroom facilities and lecture room facilities, they are not there for the purpose of teaching or education?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I said it was a misnomer to call the facility a teaching hospital because although there are students and they may have facilities for teaching, no teaching takes place and further, that does not under fall line Item 250 Health Services Support Programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And would the Minister tell us why no teaching is taking place at a teaching facility?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** You need to ask yourself.

**Madam Chairman:** Member. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 293, Item 004, Social Infrastructure. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On page 90, you did not go to G which is Equipment and Vehicles, Purchase of a Linear Accelerator.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 293, Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you. Madam Chair, I have five questions in this area. Could I ask all five one time?

**Madam Chairman:** No, I suggest you ask them one at a time, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. First, I want to ask the Minister, the actual for 2015 is \$423 million; the estimate for 2016 was a bold \$616 million revised down by over \$200 million to 402 and your 2017 estimate is \$261 million.

**2.50 p.m.**

I wanted to ask specifically: why the revision downwards and how much money exactly was spent in 2016, if we are to realize what was spent, when \$616 million was available and you revised downwards less \$200 million? What was actually spent that the Ministry of Finance will now estimate you at \$261 million? My first

question.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hon. Member, the simple answer is this, many of those projects in 2016 were at a very advanced stage of completion—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Oh, thank you.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:**—and significant payments were made in 2016. Therefore, the same quantum you would have needed in 2016 will not be required in 2017.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Great. Thank you very much and you are most welcome. The other question relates to the Arima Hospital. I can go there. Could you give us an update on what exactly is happening with the Arima Hospital? Has the Government awarded the contract? This is, I believe, a loan facility with the Chinese Government. What stage of construction are we at and when do we expect construction to be completed?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The Arima Hospital, the allocation this year, in one of the line items is \$70 million. Work continues at the Arima facility.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Work continues. Minister, on the Arima facility, it is a loan arrangement with the Chinese Government, what is the \$70 million for?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, to the Member for Oropouche East, the loan arrangement was not finalized prior to the election. There are all sorts of issues with it, including the absence of a proper framework agreement and this has become very complicated. As a result, the Ministry of Finance has decided to fund the continuation of the construction out of general revenues until we sort out the hornet's nest that you left for us.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Does the Minister have a timeline when the hornet's nest would be sorted out, given that you claim you are cash strapped? You are using money from the Consolidated Fund from the Treasury and you are yet to finalize the arrangements with the Chinese Government, for which loan financing is available



for this project.

**Mr. Imbert:** You did not finalize the arrangements. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has to resolve the framework agreement with the People's Republic of China, which you did not. It is very complicated.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, I do not have a timeframe.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I would ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs at a later time about this matter.

**Mr. Imbert:** You do that. You do that.

**Madam Chairman:** You would be allowed a further—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Moonilal:** You would come back to me.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, yeah.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, good, good.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 003, the construction of the national oncology centre, \$200 million was estimated to be spent in 2016 but your revised estimate showed that only \$25 million was spent. What happened there? Was it your decision not to continue? Why was there a slowing down of work on the oncology centre during that year? It is the intention of the Government not to continue it?

**Mr. Imbert:** I would answer that. As you should know, hon. Member, your Government made a complete mess of this project causing the termination of the construction contract with Bouygues, causing a renegotiation of that contract, causing the contract to be converted from a construction contract into a design and build contract, leaving another unholy mess for this Government to unravel. So we are now at a situation where the project was not advanced during your tenure, because you made a mess of it and we now have to unravel the legal and contractual mess you have left for us. And if you want a time frame. There is

none at this point in time.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, you are obstinate.

**Madam Chairman:** Members. Member for Caroni East, please.

**Mrs. Newallo Hosein:** Hon. Minister, can you shed some further light on 007, construction of the Sangre Grande Hospital, why was only \$1 million allocated? That is the first question.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes, this is to finalize the user brief to inform how we are going to tender for this project.

**Dr. Moonilal:** On a related question.

**Madam Chairman:** One minute please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** A related question, which is not part of my original questions. The Sangre Grande Hospital, could the Minister just direct us to the report or study which recommends the construction of a Sangre Grande Hospital and what bed capacity is being recommended by the technical report that speaks to this matter?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And that is why I said we are going to look at the user brief, which encompassed all of that. But one just has to walk through that facility to know that you need a new facility there.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, so I will accept that. You just walk through the hospital to know you need a next hospital.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche, I believe you have another question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes. Could I go on?

**Madam Chairman:** Please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, thank you. The same series of questions concerns the Point Fortin hospital, the status, and particularly in this matter Minister of Health, I want to ask the outcome of any attempt in the last year to renegotiate this contract and to change the original scope of the contract with the contractor in Point Fortin. Could

you give us an update as to what work is being done, whether the contract has been renegotiated, whether the scope has indeed changed and whether there have been implications for costing of this facility and when can we expect the completion of the Point Fortin hospital?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Just to go back briefly to flesh out the Sangre Grande issue, part of the decision to build a new Sangre Grande Hospital was coming out of the Welch Report.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Welch Report?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The Welch Report actually recommended that. I just reflected on that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So it is not to walk through the Sangre Grande Hospital.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** The Point Fortin hospital, completion date is March 2018, and there was no renegotiation.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Did the scope change, in terms of the bed space and capacity of the Point Fortin Hospital?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** To the best of my information, the scope remains the same.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay thank you. Another question. Just for the record Mr. Minister, could I just ask about the Sangre Grande Hospital, have you found a location as yet? Have you identified the lands which will be used for the Sangre Grande Hospital?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Not as yet.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Not as yet. Okay, thank you.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** We are in the initial stages.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. The children's hospital, could I ask the Minister, just for the record, if the Minister has made any official visit to the Couva Children's Hospital in the first year in office?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Which line Item are you referring you, hon. Member?

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Couva Children's Hospital, \$18 million.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Have I paid a visit? The answer is yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, can we go on? Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 294.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 28 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I would like to thank the Minister, his Permanent Secretary and other technocrats. Have a good evening. You all are relieved.

*Head 78.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head, 78 Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and while the technocrats take their seats and the Minister, Members we are going on to page 568 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, \$4,755,638,165. I will invite the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The main aim of Government's social sector policy is to reduce poverty and improve social justice with the objective of achieving a more stable society.

In this regard, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services mandate is to address the social challenges of poverty, social inequality and social exclusion and to provide a safety net for the nation's poor and vulnerable.

The Ministry's focus in 2017 will continue to be on developing, implementing and administering programmes and services to enhance the quality of life of vulnerable and marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, the

elderly, poor and indigent, socially displaced and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The imperative for the Ministry during 2017 will of necessity be doing more with less, for even as Trinidad and Tobago is forced to adjust to the straitened economic circumstances the Ministry continues to have a sacred responsibility to the poor and vulnerable.

As we address the issues of social inclusion, social development and social empowerment we at the Ministry will therefore be guided by four parameters: duty of care, quality of care, living within our means and correctly determining need.

The Ministry has received an allocation of approximately \$4.8 billion, which is approximately 9 per cent of the budget and we know that the total allocation to the social sector is just about 20 per cent, which is in keeping with international standards for social sector expenditure and is a clear demonstration of Government's commitment despite the economic circumstances to safeguard the nation's vulnerable. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 78 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,755,638,165 for Head 78, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and we go to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 568, Item 001, General Administration, page 568.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01,

Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, I notice there is a significant decrease in salaries. Can you indicate what is the reason for the drop?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, in 2016, the Ministry would have been required to make arrears of salary payments and that would have accounted for approximately \$3 million. So that is what would have been responsible for that great increase, and in 2016, we would have spent approximately \$15.4 million. So if you look at the estimate for 2017, it is in keeping with that amount.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So, therefore, it does not reflect staff being not brought back through contracts or being dismissed?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, this figure has nothing to do with staffing.

**Mrs. Newallo Hosein:** And line Item 06, remuneration to board members, can you indicate why was there such a decrease in remuneration? Was it that any of the boards were disbanded?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, what has happened is that this allocation has not been utilized over the last two years and this does not relate to payment for the public assistance boards.

**Mrs. Newallo Hosein:** That is it?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo Hosein:** And the 08, vacant posts without incumbents, I remember you stated in your budget statement that there were 130-something-plus persons that received Cabinet approval. Will that request come in in this 08 at all? I see you have \$800,000.

**3.05 p.m.**

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No. This does not relate to contract employment. This is specific to do the establishment, public officers.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And will you be hiring anyone in those positions?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We have asked the service commission to proceed with advertising and filling these vacancies. So we await feedback from them.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So they were already advertised for?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Well, we have asked them. I am not sure if they would have already advertised.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am aware that they were advertised and that a huge number of requests did come in, and it is being processed by the Ministry not by—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, this is not contract positions that the Ministry treats with.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No this is not contracts positions I am referring to—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** So these are being handled by the service commission not by the Ministry.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** On a point of clarification, the Minister said that these are posts within the establishment, right? How many vacant posts are there—that are going to be filled, and what is the classification and so?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** There are currently 50 vacant posts. Would it be okay if I give you that subsequently, because I have it here, but it is quite a number?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. So the \$800,000 will cover all these vacant posts on the establishment?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We expect that it would, given that they would be filled on a phased basis.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** A phased basis? Okay.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Would the shortage of staff create the services to be diminished in any way or affected?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No. We do not expect that to happen, because what

the Ministry would have done, we have utilized contract employment or short term in the interim.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** But, Madam Chairman, through you, hon. Minister, I do believe that the services have been restricted in many ways because of a lack of staff.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I do not agree.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** It is not my opinion. It is what is happening on the ground.

**Madam Chairman:** Ma'am, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you gave a position, the Minister does not agree. Do you have another question?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** We could go on from there. One more question, on this line Item. Number 14, Remuneration, Members of Cabinet. Could you advise why there was a drop in the estimates? Is it that any of the committees were stopped?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** There is not a drop in the estimates, but what has happened is that there are 17 committees, 14 of which had not been functioning over the last two years or so. These are the Regional Social Human Development Councils that are supposed to operate under the Poverty Reduction Unit. So that is why you would see that the actual expenditure would have been approximately \$43,500 and that the allocation is the same.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Would the hon. Minister submit in writing, the various committees that were non-functional, please?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes, that will be submitted.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Social Welfare, pages 568 and 569; Item 004, Gender Affairs Division, page 569; Item 005, Child Development Centre, page



570.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Is it that I understand that a number to these child development projects went across to the Office of the Prime Minister? Is it that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services are providing the salaries of those institutions that have gone across to the OPM?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This Item deals with the Interdisciplinary Child Centre at Couva. We would have requested that it would have also gone across to the Office of the Prime Minister, but it has not happened as yet. So this is why provision is made here for it in the budget, but all of the other Items related to children would have gone to the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is there any particular reason you requested that this particular Item remain with you?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No we did not request that it will remain. It is just that it has not to be transferred to the Office of the Prime Minister just yet.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. Thanks.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, National Family Services, page 570; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 571; Item 001, General Administration, pages 571 and 572.

**Mr. Padarath:** Ma'am, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister, I have seen a decrease under line Item 16, General Administration, with respect to contract employment, and it has been a cut of \$4 million. Can you indicate to us—and I know you may not have the information at your fingertips, but if you can provide us with the positions that would have expired, positions that would have been discontinued, positions that would have become redundant since you have become Minister, that would account for the decrease in the \$4 million over the last

financial year? What you project will be those in this coming financial year?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, we have not projected any changes per se to the contract employment. We have a number of positions. We have 839 contract positions, 667 of which are vacant and 172 which are filled. We have not proposed any reduction in those numbers.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay, Minister, but then how do you account for the calculations, for the cut in \$4 million?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The initial amounts allocated in 2016, \$4.1 million of that would have been with respect to Gender Affairs, and Gender Affairs has since gone under the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay, all right. Madam Chair, through you, to hon. Minister. As we are on the issue of employment, line Item 22, with respect to Short-Term Employment, this is a huge decrease of over, what is close to \$18 million. Can you give us an idea again, in terms of what positions are being discontinued, what positions have expired from the last financial year, that we will see similarly in this financial year being discontinued or expired or restructured?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** What was supposed to have happened is that there was a projection that a number of these short-term positions could have been converted to contract. So we would have made the request for the necessary allocation; however, we have not seen it reflected here.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Okay? So, the amount that has been allocated, if we continue with the number of short-term employees we currently have, would not be adequate and it would be necessary for us to have some sort of allocation adjustment at the midterm review.

**Mr. Padarath:** But, Minister, based on your own assessment what you have just

indicated, it seems that your Ministry is severely under-resourced in terms of personnel. In that case then, how do you manage over the next few months before the mid-year review, in terms of providing these services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** On the contrary, the Ministry is not currently under-resourced, what is likely to happen, at the end of six-month period, we may need to have a further injection of revenue, but at present, we still have the numbers that we have been working with.

**Mr. Padarath:** Certainly. Minister as you would appreciate especially coming in as a new Minister, that sometimes in the public service, things take a little bit longer to get to where you want it to be. If you are saying that within six months, when we come to the mid-year review, that some of these things will be determined, will be sorted out by then, really, I think, that is putting the cart before the horse, in that you are hoping that these things will come to fruition, that you will be in a better position then to deal with the administrative issues, when it comes to the human resources but, in truth and in fact, that in itself will take you some time as well, because then you would have to go through—

**Madam Chairman:** The question is—

**Mr. Padarath:**—in the short term, Minister, what is your plan going forward with respect to your human resource capital within the Ministry?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Member for Princes Town, as I indicated previously, we would have made a request for allocation to cover the numbers that we require. During fiscal 2016 we would have spent approximately \$34 million. We have been allocated \$17 million, and that is why I would have indicated that by the midterm review, we would be seeking to have an adjustment. Obviously, we would not wait until then, we would already indicated what our needs are and we

will continue to pursue them.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein :** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with the reduction in contract and short-term employment, could you tell me if—how many field officers were impacted upon in this reduction?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Which reduction?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** With the decrease of short-term employment—the allocation as well as, the contact if—how many field officers were, in fact, affected by this decrease?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, as I would indicated before, we have not reduced our numbers under this General Admin. We have not reduced our numbers. Where the reduction has taken place is in the budgetary allocation, and that is why I would have indicated there is going to be need for an adjustment at the midterm review, if we continue with our current numbers.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So, therefore, the figure of 400-plus persons that you indicated in the 2016 budget, where you indicated that the staff, there was over—the Ministry was overstaffed by 400-something-plus is, in fact, incorrect, if it is that you are adequate to this day.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I believe you asked a question under Short-Term Employment?

**Mr. Newallo-Hosein:** Yeah, that is Short-Term Employment.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, and an answer was given with respect to that. So that I am not sure that the question you are asking relates to that at all. I will now take the Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair, through you, No. 8, Rent/Lease Office Accommodations and Storage, there is a sharp decrease by nearly \$7 million can you give clarification for this please?—08.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** What would have happened, this allocation in 2016 would have provided for One Alexandra Place, because in 2016 it was anticipated that the Ministry would have continued in occupation at One Alexandra Place. We stayed there approximately for two months and what would have happened, we would have made provision for—I think it was approximately \$6 million to cover the rental for that 10-month period. So that is why there is that sharp difference.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Hon. Minister, you said that you will go back to the midterm budget to review the number of persons you will want. So is it that you are really projecting that you will need—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, I will stop you because I have been sitting here; I have not heard the Minister say so.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. Minister, are you understating the real budgetary requirements of your Ministry, by not reflecting what is the true amount of money you will have throughout year? Because I noticed it is a consistent pattern in other Ministers where every time we ask a question, they say, “We are going to go back to midterm budget and there it will be raised”. Are you understating what the real budget is? I do not think that—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Member for Tabaquite, I sat here earlier today and I would have heard the hon. Minister of Finance indicate, that Ministers would not have made reductions in their budgets. They would have provided estimates and the Ministry of Finance would have made the adjustments. I did not underestimate.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, the Ministry has taken a deliberate strategy, would you say, to understate the budget and, therefore—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, I would not allow that question to the Minister of Social Development and Family Services.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line 40. I am seeing \$800,000 is allocated. It is a new Sub-Item. What does this entail, hon. Minister, and what institutions are targeted, and what are the criteria used to supply food to these institutions?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This allocation is intended to provide three meals per day to 100 persons that are housed at the Piparo Centre and New Horizons.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair, I just want to return to Items 16 and 22, Contract Employment and Short-Term Employment. With the reduction under Short-Term Employment, with the decrease of \$17,982,000, what does this mean, that any units or divisions of the Ministry have been disbanded or will now become defunct?

**3.20 p.m.**

With respect to contract employment, I am just trying to clarify how the Ministry is operating with a reduction of \$4 million, is there any worker or numbers of workers who would have been dismissed at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, in terms of these two line Sub-Items, as I indicated before, with respect to the contract employment, \$4.1 million was budgeted last year for gender which is no longer under the Ministry.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** That falls under line Sub-Item 16?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** 16.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, as a result of that, the gender division being no longer there means that your wages have been reduced by \$4 million?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes. And in terms of the short-term employment, as I would have indicated, in terms of general admin, we have not reduced the short-

term staff there. This provision is what was approved at this point in time for the Ministry. We recognized that given our numbers, we would need to adjust this at some point and we would have indicated that that is likely to happen in the short term.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, job cuts are coming at the Ministry?

**Madam Chairman:** Member. Member for Couva South, I have been extremely patient. The particular question you have asked, I have sat here and I have heard it asked three times.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chairman, I have been very patient too.

**Madam Chairman:** And so have I been. I think my patience is exhausted. We have a lot to do, and I would ask people to kindly pay a little more particular attention. Okay? Maybe what you want to be answered is not what you are asking. I would allow you to ask what you want to ask, but you have to frame the question.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, I will be very patient.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, the line Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease: are new premises for the Ministry included in this estimate at all?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, it is not.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Will it be in another line Item for where the head office is?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I think it is under the Development Programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Division of Ageing, page 572. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Did I? I did not ask [*Laughter*] but since I am on the floor, and I will come to it later on the next page, so I want to reserve the right on section four.

I get the sense that there is something against the senior citizens of this country. Could you just clarify? There is no allocation. Is it allocated somewhere? I am pointing to 002.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, the line Item number?

**Mr. Charles:** 002, on page 576. Can I take it that this has been—okay? All right. I jumped. I am old and sprightly. [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chair, if I might just interject here please, in direct response to the Member for Naparima. Naparima, when I spoke on the homes for the elderly, I gave the undertaking that this Government will take good care of you when you need to go to a home.

**Mr. Charles:** You see, but I do not trust you. [*Laughter*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members. I think we are all now sufficiently awake. All right. So can we go on?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, again, line 16, Contract Employment, there is a decrease. I am just wondering going now to 05, Telephones, if there is a decrease—well, I would assume that there is going to be a decrease in staff: why is there such a huge increase in telephones, almost five times higher?

**Madam Chairman:** Is this on page 572, Item 002, Division of Ageing, Sub-Item 05, Telephones?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** What is proposed, we have asked—we are looking at bringing on inspectors, inspectors one and two, and we anticipate that there is going to be an additional need for the use of the telephone, in addition to which in 2016 when we started off, the Division of Ageing was housed elsewhere, and they are also looking to get new accommodation. So we anticipate they are likely to need additional telephone resources.



**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. The inspectors, will they come under line Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes they would.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Although there is a decrease?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes. In 2016, we would have spent approximately \$900,000 and we have been given an allocation of \$900,000, and we anticipate that this should be sufficient to take us through.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Gender Affairs Division, page 574.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Page 573.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, but I stopped and I waited and I saw nobody. Oh, I am sorry. Item 003, Social Welfare, page 573.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment had a very large decrease. Could we get some information as to why that is so?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** During 2016, we would have had 115 persons employed on the biometric project, and that project was placed on hold, as a result, we would not have had the need for the 115 persons going forward.

**Mr. Karim:** Through you again, what is the status of that project, Minister?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** That project is currently on hold. We are reviewing the project going forward as to whether it makes sense, particularly given our current economic circumstances.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** On the same—following on the question of my hon. colleague, Madam Minister, how does the Ministry propose to be accountable for how persons spend their moneys if we do not have a system in place to do so?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I do not understand the question, sorry. How does the Ministry intend to account for the spending of state funds through grants if there is no accountability? Because you have a direct deposit system in place, you

cannot determine if persons are buying food or anything like that. So if you remove the biometric card: what is the accounting system in place?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, the card is still being utilized by approximately 24,000 persons. It is just the 3,158 persons and the additional 4,555 whose cards have been on hold for the last two years that we are currently paying by cheque or direct deposit. Given our economic situation and given the need to ensure that persons continue to receive food support, we had to resort to that method of payment. So, it is not that it is the Ministry's intention to not assist persons in ensuring that they purchase food, but given the situation, it was the best option available. This is intended to be a short-term measure. It is an interim measure. We are currently actively pursuing the utilization of a new debit card system that would extend to all persons.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Two questions: one on Fees. You have a fee here of \$6 million, and I am wondering what are these fees for? Secondly, the amount of \$160,000 for training, it is not about the amount, but a lot of constituents of mine in my constituency actually come to the office crying, because of the manner in which they are treated by some of the officers—one particular officer whom I now believe you have transferred. I want to know what kind of training is being given to the officers so that when they go out—I really mean it. They come and they cry. You know, I wish could state the name of that officer here in this Parliament.

**Madam Chairman:** But we know you would not.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I would not. But I am telling the Minister—and this is a very serious situation—your officers are sometimes uncouth, they are unfriendly and sometimes they start from the point of view of—

**Madam Chairman:** The question is?

**Dr. Rambachan:** What are you doing to train and retrain and sensitize these

officers to their jobs?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** In terms of the fees that are stated, these are fees paid to the National Insurance Board, because they are responsible for the cheques.

PTSC: all persons over age 60 are provided with free transport—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South. Excuse me, excuse me. Member for Couva South, I feel this information might be something that might pique your interest. Member for Couva South. Continue please Minister, I am sorry.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:**—and TTPost for the distribution of those cheques. In terms of training, as I would have indicated in my budget contribution, we recognize that while our suite of benefits are excellent, the service provided at times is not of the best quality, and so we are embarking this year on introducing a customer care quality service programme throughout the Ministry. The first persons to be targeted and trained are persons that interact directly with the public.

**Dr. Rambachan:** One follow-up question. If an elderly person who is in receipt of a pension happens to be invited by a family member to visit Canada or the United States, and the officer comes and looks at the passport and says: “You have travelled and, therefore, I now have to verify whether you should continue to get your pension.” Is that reasonable? And the person stayed for a month overseas.

**Madam Chairman:** Under what Head are we?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under the Head of training. Because they are trained to do evaluations. Is it a prejudicial evaluation? This happens, this happens.

**Madam Chairman:** So what you are asking really is the sort of factors that go into the evaluation for qualification?

**Dr. Rambachan:** And whether these are being applied arbitrarily. I mean, anybody could invite their grandmother or somebody to come overseas, and you come back and you say, but somebody report you and say: “You know this person

travelled.” They did not pay for the ticket, the ticket was sent to them and everything, and yet you take away their pension or you withhold their pension. I think all the Members here have examples of that.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, there are policy guidelines that we operate by, and persons in receipt of the Senior Citizens’ Pension, when you leave the country, your pension is placed on hold. When you return, your payments are reinstated.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, I never knew that.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, through you, to the Minister. Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment. In view of what you said Minister about the biometric card and a number of people being basically sent home or being displaced, and given the reduction here in the allocation of about \$5 million, how many people are we talking about who have been sent home?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The numbers that it would have been reduced by is 115. But I think it is important to understand that the biometric project, the intent was never to employ those persons permanently. It was to have the project up and running. Okay. So this 115 is not that they were displaced or they were sent home. The period for which they were employed would have come to an end.

So you would have had them leaving in two tranches. In June, the main aspect of the project came to end, and those who remained would have been those who would have been supporting those who have been transitioned into the system. Given that the project is now on hold, when their contracts came to an end, they would not have been renewed.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I may be wrong, but I think I heard you also say that this does not mean that other people will not be hired on short-term contract? Am I correct or no? I wanted to ask you if the people who have been sent away now will be

reconsidered in any rehiring of people on short-term contract. This is what I wanted to ask you.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Persons are normally hired on short-term to fill a need. For example, if somebody goes off on leave, maternity leave. What happened over the last period was abnormal, in the sense that short-term employment was utilized to fill positions that would normally have been filled by persons on contract, but the definition of short-term employment is really intended to be for three months, maximum six, for a specific period to do a specific task or fill a specific need.

**3.35 p.m.**

So, once the Ministry has those needs it would look to persons, and your first course of action should really be persons who would have been employed before who understand the Ministry and understand the system, if you need them for a short period of time. In terms of contract positions, we have advertised those positions externally and they are all free to apply.

**Madam Speaker:** Item 0040 Gender Affairs Division, page 74. Item 005 Child Development Centre, page 574.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, line Item 17, Training, with the Child Development Centre for what you have here in Couva, would this be adequate and that is why there is a decrease?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I believe it would be adequate.

**Madam Speaker:** Item 006 National Family Services, page 575.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, can you again explain 01, the decrease in travelling and subsistence allowance? How will it impact upon employees who would need to travel or would they not need to travel?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** In 2016, we would have paid arrears on travelling and subsistence, so that would account for the decrease here, because we do not need to pay that this year.

**Madam Speaker:** Item 007 Disability Affairs Unit, page 575.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, if you would indulge me with respect to the Disabilities Affairs Unit. I note that the programme that existed prior to you becoming Minister with respect to children afflicted with cerebral palsy, has been removed. It has been a contentious issue. My question really is whether or not the Disability Affairs Unit has been undergoing, under your tenure, any change in management with respect to any research that has been done in terms of what are the conditions that most affect persons that apply for disability?

I have seen recently that one Independent Senator who is disabled himself indicated that the Disability Affairs Unit under the Ministry seems to not be providing for the actual needs, in terms of the amount of persons affected with cerebral palsy. Would you be in a position at this time to indicate whether or not your Ministry through this unit is going through that change management process to actually do the research to see which areas of disability most affect persons in Trinidad and Tobago?

I know in my constituency in particular, I have spoken to you on several occasions, and you have been helpful with this, but I am particularly looking at the areas of cerebral palsy in terms of what is Government's policy in terms of assisting children especially in dealing with cerebral palsy, but also looking at the change management aspect of the Disability Affairs Unit in terms of targeting the areas that really need more specialty attention.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** What I can say to you, hon. Member for Princes Town, is that the Disability Affairs Unit continues to do a lot of research into all

aspects of disability. I have not of myself seen a report specific to cerebral palsy, but I know it is something that we have been looking at because we have met with both associations and, based on some of the submissions they have made, we are looking at it with a view to how do we move forward. In the interim the Ministry makes provision for the Special Child Grant and so in that way at least those children have something that covers them currently.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, are we under Sub-Items 01, 10, 11, 15, 62 and 66?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Mr. Padarath:** Just a follow-up to the Minister's comment. Minister, could you indicate whether or not the Ministry, in its current dispensation, is preparing a work plan with respect to identifying some of these research methods and mechanisms that you have identified, in collaboration with some of these organizations? A work plan and schedule, and if there are timelines in terms of coming up with a work plan and actually putting it into effect?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes, work plans are being developed by this Disability Affairs Unit and our Social Investigation Unit.

**Mr. Padarath:** Would you be in a position to give us some sort of guidance in terms of timelines that you are looking at? As you would appreciate it is important that we look at timelines in terms of delivery.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The work plans are supposed to be completed by the end of next month and the work plans span one year.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, I heard you indicating that you met with the cerebral palsy organization, could you tell me when you met with them, please?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** It is difficult to give you specific dates, but I can provide you with that subsequently.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Sub-Head 3 Minor Equipment purchases, page 576, Item 001 General Administration, page 576. Item 002 Division of Ageing, page 576. Item 003 Social Welfare, page 576. Item 005 Child Development Centre, page 577. Item 009 National Family Services, page 577. Item 007, Disability Affairs Unit, page 577.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I know that the Minister at some earlier occasion indicated that there were problems with the unit in Carlsen Field, I believe, having to do with cerebral palsy—or was it a Disabilities Unit there—and that some renovations or some adjustments had to be made. But I cannot remember you ever giving a date for when it could become functional. Do you have an idea?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** That comes under Development Programme, but apart from that because of the number of problems encountered, it is difficult to give a date at this point in time. Currently we are awaiting the approval of the city corporation and the Town and Country Planning before we can move forward. In addition, the Ministry of Works and Transport would have also raised issues with the structural integrity of the building. So we needed to go through all of those processes before we could commence some of the remedial work that needs to be done internal to the building.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is not likely to be done in this fiscal year?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Fiscal 2017, yes most certainly. We were hoping, we thought we would have been able to complete it by the end of calendar year 2016, but given all that was encountered that is not possible. But we expect to have it operationalized during this fiscal.

**Madam Speaker:** Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 578. Item 003 United Nations Organization. Item 005 Nonprofit Institutions.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Chairman. To the hon. Minister,



notwithstanding assurances of a future good life given to me by the Member for Arouca/Maloney, I get the sense everywhere I turn with respect to senior citizens that it is not a priority in your Ministry. In the previous page on the Division of Ageing there was nothing for vehicles, et cetera, and when I look at Item 28 Senior Citizen Homes, I see a cut. This will not significantly affect our budgetary fortunes, but you cut it from \$1.2 million to \$1 million. Item 29, Senior Citizen Centres, you cut that from \$3.5 million to \$3 million. Social programmes for the ageing, you cut that by \$1.8 million. Item 32 Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme, I understand this is where young people would interact with the senior citizens in order to have a partnership that would lead to a better life.

If I were to say that based on—and I know you have to make cuts—where you cut is indicative of where your priorities are, where your interests are—when I wrote Common Entrance in 1962, there were 38,000 people writing, now it is 16,000 persons writing, which means that the birth rate is dropping and the number of senior citizens is increasing. Why do I get the impression that you do not care for the senior citizens?

**Madam Speaker:** The question is if your impression is correct?

**Mr. Charles:** Well, if my impression is correct, based on the cuts, and what is to give me an assurance that these cuts are not reflective of a particular predisposition?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member for Naparima, that is totally incorrect. I would have taken great pains in my budget contribution to seek to convince this House that this Government is a caring Government. We have to take everything within the context of our current economic situation and do more with less. So our approach has been, based on what we would spend in 2016, we would at least maintain that level or a little more. In 2016 we would have spent \$956,000 on

senior citizens' homes. We have allocated \$1 million. In terms of the senior citizen centres, we would have spent approximately \$300,000—

**Mr. Charles:** Sorry, \$3.5 million, senior citizens' homes.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Sorry, we spent \$3,006,000—we are still at \$3 million.

**Mr. Rodney Charles:** No, you spent revised estimates 2016, \$3.5 million.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I am speaking in terms of what we would have actually spent.

**Mr Charles:** I thought revised estimates is what you actually spent?

**Madam Speaker:** Remember when there is a closing of the accounts.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** So, in 2016 we would have spent \$3 million approximately on senior citizen centres and we have budgeted \$3 million. In terms of the social programmes, these programmes are intended to build awareness. What I would have found is that, for example, we are having a programme on the Brian Lara Promenade to build awareness about senior citizens, and you can spend upwards of \$400,000; we need to do it differently. So we are going to be adopting different approaches that would not require as much expenditure, but we going to continue to ensure that we build awareness among the citizens in terms of ageing.

**Mr. Charles:** Your Ministry has a policy on ageing?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes it does.

**Mr. Charles:** The only thing I am seeing is that there is going to be a classification of homes for the elderly. Is there anything that the senior citizens can look forward to in terms of tangible deliverables based on these expenditures?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes, in terms that they are going to continue to be provided with access to the senior activity centres. Those who need to be housed in senior citizen homes will continue to do that. In addition to which we continue

to provide the free transport on the ferry and the boat to Tobago and in terms of the public transport. So we have not cut any of those provisions.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, am I correct in reading that the allocation for nonprofit institutions would be \$9.5 million?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Non-profit? No that is \$14 million. At 31?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** At 00502, I am just reading the total.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Sorry, you are over on page 578?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes I am. Does that mean therefore that there is going to be a reduction for assistance towards these institutions? Were these institutions at all called in to have a meeting to discuss the way forward?

**Madam Speaker:** Could you particularize which institutions you are referring to?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** From 03 to 24.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, the other social programmes referred to here are not the NGOs. These programmes are in terms of, for example, under our poverty reduction programmes where we have the MEL programme and we have the training for the seed grant recipients. It also deals with the operations of the New Horizon facility and the Piparo facility. In terms of hosting symposiums, for example, like for NGOs and HIV, it has nothing to do with the subventions to our NGOs.

**3.50 p.m.**

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So therefore, the \$9.5 million would provide for conferences or—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:**—training, stuff like that?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes. And, for example, when we host things on the

Brian Lara promenade. That is what this deals with.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Can you—okay, therefore—advise what is the line Item 31 on page 579?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Okay. Thirty-one treats with the NGOs.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And can you identify the NGOs, please?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Currently, there are 25 NGOs and if you wish I can send that to you subsequently because it is an extension—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Sure. Is it that you have determined already what they will be allocated?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Based on Cabinet approvals that we have for all those NGOs, we already know what the figures are.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. There is a concern for one of the NGOs—I am trying to find it here—but I know that the Blind Welfare has indicated that they have not received anything and I think it is reflected here in your—

**Madam Chairman:** Item number?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:**—Item.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Blind Welfare, Madam Chairman, I believe would come under the Statutory Boards and Others, but at this point I can state categorically that that is an incorrect statement that they have not been provided with any allocations.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Well, I am only reading what it is I am seeing here, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, I think the Minister has directed you to the right place that one should look at. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on page 579, Item No. 32. Hon.

Minister, you would agree that we are experiencing an aging population in Trinidad and Tobago, but I noticed that you have a cut of \$300,000 in this. I just wanted to ask the following: number 1, how many persons are involved in this Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme? What are the criteria to engage in this programme? And what is the stipend that these adolescents receive?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, could I provide you with that subsequently, please? I do not have that here currently.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. All right.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Educational Institutions, page 580. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much. Minister, just a quick one. Adult Education Programme, I know where this was previously. Can you indicate, what is the impact of this \$288,000 increase? And if you can give us a sense to the centres that are involved and the programmes? If not now and you want to put it into writing or if you have the answer readily available.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Okay. I would prefer to put it in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am fine.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. I would just like to know, how many persons are receiving senior citizens' grant in Trinidad and Tobago at this point in time? Also, under Social Assistance, how many persons benefited from \$430 million in 2016 and would benefit from the \$418 million? Also, the Urgent Temporary Assistance, what is that for?—maybe you would want to put that in writing.

You know, for what purpose is that used?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, may I be permitted to stop you? We are still at 006, Educational Institutions.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry. I thought we left that.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? So can we go on now to 007, Households? And therefore, your questions will be entertained here.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But I do not need to repeat the questions?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Repeat them?

**Madam Chairman:** No. It would be entertained under 007.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah. And also under the disability grant: how many persons benefited from this disability grant in, say, 2016 and what was the average amount they received? The average, I am talking about for each person, but the average per person that would have been given in that grant?

And finally, I am very worried about the small amount of money allocated to the payment of Registrars of Birth and Deaths. I know that it is a stipend, a small stipend that is given to people, almost like community service. But I want to tell you that it is a lot of work involved to register a death or a birth and a lot of documentation to fill out. If you have had to go through the experience, you would recognize what I am speaking about. And they have to keep the records there. You have to turn in the records.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, under the Payment of Fees for the Registration of Unregistered Births, Item 10?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, 7, Payments to Registrars of Birth and Deaths.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** There is just \$11,250 allocated there throughout the country, and I am asking: why it is so low and I am asking why it cannot be raised?—if it is a question—

**Mr. Young:** Let me assist the Minister with that last question. The Registrar of Births and Deaths actually falls under the Registrar General, which falls under the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. So I would like to suggest that this is probably an old line Item that has not been corrected. So we will check you back. But we do cover those expenses.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure. Yeah. And my final question is: how many persons benefited from the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Payment Programme and whether there is a policy? I would like to receive the policy, as well as the similar question for the people's card?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** In terms of the senior citizens' pension, as at the end of September there were 90,800 persons in receipt of that pension. In terms of the disability grant, 24,058 persons, and in terms of the public assistance grant that you would have been referring to as urgent social assistance, sorry, it would have been 25,906 families.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is social assistance?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And urgent temporary? You have Social Assistance Urgent Temporary.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Urgent Temporary Assistance covers, more or less, a wide range of grants.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Fire and so on?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes. For example, education assistance,

prosthesis, all of these things. So I can send you that detailed information subsequently.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Dr. Rambachan:** People's card? You can send that? Sorry. What is the people's card? Apparently that is something that came about in 2016.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The people's card, this is in terms of the biometric card, what is reflected as the people's card, this is with the biometric card. Okay? And in terms of the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, the allocation here is really to pay for the training for the developmental aspect of the programme. Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I have a couple questions. The first one: I noticed that, Madam Minister, you said the senior citizens' pension, but in fact it is registered here as Senior Citizens' Grant. Can you—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** It is registered here—the Ministry of Finance chose to record it here as Senior Citizens' Grant, but the legislation provides for senior citizens' pension.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Madam Minister, the full amount of both lines 03 and 04 were utilized, \$430,330,000 million and there was a decrease. Can you indicate why there would have been decreases? Is it that you anticipate that persons would not require assistance for both social and urgent?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This is another instance, hon. Member, where the Ministry of Finance would have made these allocations.

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



**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just on a point of clarification because I am looking for the line Item here and you can probably guide me, Madam Minister, as it relates to Urgent Temporary Assistance. Does funeral grant fall into this particular line Item?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes. It does.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And what really bothers me, right, because—and probably the issue will continue to crop up from time to time. What is the qualification for a funeral grant? And I have been faced with numerous concerns from constituents and so on, that in sometimes people's period of grief and so on, when they seek the assistance of the Ministry's personnel and so on in the relevant district, they are faced with a lack of empathy and so on and they are left in further grief when they seek the assistance of the Ministry's staff in relation to qualifying for a funeral grant.

**Madam Chairman:** So is the question about the qualifications, about the lack of empathy? Which one is the question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** About the qualification, Madam Chair?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, in terms of the funeral grant, it really relates to poor families who are unable to bury their loved one.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Is there any financial limit or qualification and so on, because constituents are left confused when they go to these offices.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** It is usually in terms of the clients that we would serve. However, what I can do, I will send you the details, in addition to which the Ministry there is a department within the Ministry where we have staff that are prepared to come to each MP's office to train their staff so that they will be better able to attend to their people. It is very serious.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, coming back to Disability Grant, \$465 million was allocated in 2016 and \$465 million was, in fact, spent. But there is a reduction and I would like to know if it will impact upon any person who is, in fact, receiving a disability grant currently?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, we are at Item 08.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** But there is an increase.

**Madam Chairman:** Is it 08 we are on?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes. Sorry. There is an increase. Sorry. Yes. I am asking because of the fact that there are a number of persons coming onto the system because of the fact, recently I read in the papers, Madam Chair, of a woman who had been impacted negatively in an accident and she was denied. And there are so many accidents that have happened within a short period of time and persons were impacted negatively with Zika virus and so forth with the children. How will it impact upon, if it is you have such a narrow increase in the disability grant being allocated?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We anticipate that this would be sufficient to meet the needs and I think it is important to understand and recognize that you are paid the Disability Grant when you are deemed to be 100 per cent disabled.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Number 11, the Target Conditional Cash Transfer Programme which is the food card. Can you tell me what it is you plan to do with this programme? I do not see anything, an increase or anything. It is just \$1 million.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This is in terms of the developmental component of the programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** What it is you plan to develop?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The programme provides for, in addition to providing persons with food support, we seek to help develop them so that they come out of that state and become self-sustained.

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

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line 09, Assistance to National Heroes. How many national heroes were assisted in 2016 and in what form does this assistance take?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We would have assisted 47 persons in 2016, and it takes the form of a monthly payment and we can send you the criteria for determining the quantum.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers, page 581. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 02, National Social Development Programme, there is an allocation of \$50 million for 2017. Is this the comprehensive National Social Development Programme or does it have other components elsewhere because I know that under the utility sector, you have the National Social Development Programme for extension of pipeline for part of the potable water network or electricity? What does this incorporate?—just for clarification.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This seeks to assist the poor and vulnerable in terms of house wiring, sanitary plumbing, house repairs. Okay?

**Mr. Singh:** A continuation of that programme.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** So, yes. And as you would have indicated before,

there are other Ministries that also have similar programmes and similar grants.

**4.05 p.m.**

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, I do believe that underutilization of the full amount here allocated in 2016, could you indicate if it was as a result of the fact that there were no field officers to go out and assess the various homes and the requests?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, hon. Member. What had happened, we were reviewing this entire programme, because there are aspects of the programme—as was just raised by the Member for Chaguanas West—that are covered by other Ministries, so we were reviewing it with a view to should we retain it or should we carry over, for example, the parts that treat with water to WASA, and the parts that treat with electricity to public utilities. So that would have impacted what was happening, because we were reviewing the programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Have you reviewed it as yet, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** In light of the fact that the programme still remained with the Ministry and we had received application, we processed those applications that we would have received, and these payments were effected and we have a number of commitments going forward.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** But do you have the necessary field officers to conduct the necessary analysis?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I have not been informed otherwise, in addition to which we have advertised the positions within this unit. It would have been out in the press recently.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How many positions are you looking at? How many positions are vacant and how many positions are currently occupied?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Just give me one minute, please. Sorry, I do not want

to keep back the proceedings, I am having a little difficulty.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** That is okay—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Oh, look it is here. Okay, sorry, we have 27 vacant contract positions under NSDP.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** “Uhhmm”, you have vacant and how many occupied, they are currently employed?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Two.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Nice, thank you.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Actual bodies. What would happen is that the others would be there on short-term, so it is not that there are no bodies.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How many on short-term then? How many bodies do we have short-term?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I do not have that exact figure, but I can send it to you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** That is okay. I appreciate that. Thank you.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on 01, the GAPP Programme. As a Member of Parliament very often when I make request I find it difficult to get persons to assist these elderly people, can you tell me from your database what is the excess of your demand over your supply? And by how much you are short? Because clearly you are short of the amount of persons who can give this—the caregivers that is—so I would like to know, the question is, well two parts; number one, what is the figure in terms of the excess of demand versus supply? And secondly, what mechanisms are you putting in place to address this shortage?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We currently have approval for 600 caregivers. At this present time all 600 are not utilized. The difficulty you may be experiencing, or generally is that these persons are found in different geographic areas. So, if

there is a high demand, let us say in San Fernando, we may have utilized all of the persons in San Fernando. So what we are doing, we are reviewing the programme now to see where the greatest needs are, because we need to target the numbers in terms of the geographic locations and where the needs are.

**Mr. Karim:** Is it possible for us to have a sense as to where this deficiency is by regions, if you so allocate it? So we would be able to advise on suggestions to assist.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Sure, as I said we are currently working on getting that data, so as soon as I have it I will provide it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Hon. Minister, you said you had 600 approved positions, 600 caregivers?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Caregivers, yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Do you have 600 physical bodies?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes, we do.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You do? Okay. What criteria are used to allocate a geriatric adolescent partner to a particular citizen? What criteria do you use?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** In the normal process we would get the request, this has to be somebody who needs the assistance either because they are physically incapacitated, and we tend to try to determine whether the person can assist to cover the cost. Where they are unable to we cover the total cost. Where the individual is able to assist to cover the cost or can cover the cost, that is how it operates.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, you are applying some forms of means test?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What is the average cost if you cover the full cost for one such geriatric adolescent helper?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I am sorry, hon. Member, could I give you that subsequently, please?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But can you say what they are paid on the average? One person paid on the average per day?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Two thousand, five hundred per month.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Two thousand, five hundred per month. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 06, page 581, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004, Statutory Boards, page 581.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. Now on to another book, page 525, 15, Trinidad and Tobago Association for Retarded Children, Lady Hochoy Home, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 525, 001, Lady Hochoy Home, North, page 525; 002, Lady Hochoy Home, South, page 525; 003, Penal Day Care and Training Centre, page 525, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 525; 001, Lady Hochoy Home, North, page 525; 002, Lady Hochoy Home, South, page 526; 003, Penal Day Care and Training Centre, 526; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 526, 001, Lady Hochoy Home, North. Member for Chaguanas West, I am sorry.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I just wanted to indicate that I see as a trend, Madam Minister, that there no increase whatsoever even in the administrative costs on materials in all these organizations. Is there any kind of contingency that will, perhaps, operate at the midterm in order to facilitate that? Because things have increased and the pressure—so I thought that maybe there is need for some kind of flexibility rather than this kind of Procrustean approach where it remains fixed.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, as we proceed during the year that is a matter we will bring to the attention of the Minister of Finance once it becomes necessary.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Lady Hochoy Home, South; Item 003, Penal Day Care and Training Centre, Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 527; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers. We are moving on to page 533; 41, Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 533; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 533; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration, page 533; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007, Households, page 534; 009, Other Transfers, page 534; 42, Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 540. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** On the issue of the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association, Madam Chair, are there any outstanding moneys owed to the monthly-paid and daily-paid employees?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, there are not any outstanding moneys. We just paid a total of \$3.1 million in arrears.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** All right, for what period may I ask?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** 2015/2016 period.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 540; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration, page 541; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 541. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We are on to another book. Sub-Head



09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 259; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 259 to 261. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, page 259 line Item 044, can you identify where the social displacement centres will be?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This is in terms of the centre that we intended to establish on Queen Street. However, the structural integrity assessment was done of the build and the Ministry of Works and Transport would have deemed the building structurally unsound, so we were not able to proceed with the construction of that centre, and the outfitting.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, but you said the establishment of social displacement centres, so I was asking where?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Given the fact that we were unable to construct a centre at Queen Street, we are looking for an alternative location.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Do you intend to dismantle the current structure and utilizing the property that was identified originally for the Street Dwellers Programme?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** A decision has not been taken with respect to what we are going to do with the building, because there are different options open to the Ministry.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Has the Minister at all met with key stakeholders in providing a way forward?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Given that we have not made a decision, and we are not in a position to indicate where the alternative site is, we have not held such discussions with the stakeholders.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister line Item 036, Establishment of a Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Facility at

Piparo, there have been a lot of issues regarding this facility, can you give us an idea of what is happening now with respect to the work that is ongoing at this facility?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I am not sure what issues you are referring to Member for Princes Town, because the Piparo Centre is one of our great success areas in that we have had a number of persons who would have graduated out of the programme. This money that we have allocated in terms of constructing a walkway around the pond, because we are setting up a tilapia pond for the centre, and we are also going to construct a new guard booth, redesign and outfit the old administrative building, so that is the work that needs to be done there. But I am not aware of any issues that adversely impact that centre.

**4.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, I am happy for the explanation because I should have been a little bit more clear with regard to the issues. But when you spoke about the walkway and the construction of the guard booth and so on, Piparo falls in the constituency of Princes Town and I know for a fact that there have been problems with respect to persons enrolled in the programme. They are coming out of the communities and so on, getting themselves involved in some activities that probably they should not have been involved in, but I know for a fact that members of the protective services have met with me on several occasions and some of these issues still arise. So I am happy to hear that there would be a greater emphasis in terms of securing those within the facility. So I am happy to hear about that.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Sub-Item 076, Establishment of Social Services Centre in Point Fortin. Is this to replace the sub-office in Cedros?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No. No.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Are we going to keep Cedros?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes, we are.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is it going to be reopened?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** It has never been closed.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** With all due respect, Madam Minister, I have visited and I have been told that it is closed. And I have been given the reasons why.

**Madam Chairman:** So Member, do you want to ask the Minister to verify whether it is open?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, please.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Madam Chairman, I do not need to verify if it is open. The centre is open. Initially the centre was open on specific days during the month. So if it was being open on a Friday and you went on a Wednesday you would not have met anybody there. We have since sought to put systems in place where we can have the centre open on an ongoing basis.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you, Sub-Item 096, Development Centre for Persons with Challenges. I see there is an allocation in 2017 of \$4 million. What is the nature of this and what does it really, in fact, do? What are the challenges we are seeking to address?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This is in terms of the centre at Carlsen Field, National Enrichment Centre, that I would have spoken about before where we would have had a number of issues where the building was not built to the design brief, it could not accommodate, it was not built for the purpose it was intended. In addition to which, we subsequently discovered that the statutory approvals had not been received. So we are now in the process of having those approvals granted and then we are going to do all the remedial work and outfit the building.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Sub-Item 112, the Street Dwellers Rehabilitation & Re-Integration Project. Could you expand on that project please?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This refers to what we call Riverside Car Park. This large allocation has to do with the fact that we need to do an entire overhaul of electrical system and do a facelift of the building. So we are going to be spending approximately \$3 million on the electrical overhaul and outfitting of the building and the balance is to paint and renovate the building.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is the Hon. Minister planning to decommission the building while you are in fact doing the work and relocate persons? How do you plan to do it?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, our project people have indicated to us that that is not necessary and we have been working around the persons who are currently housed there.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 261. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 365; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 365.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 78 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you Minister, PS and other technocrats.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Madam Chairman, I would like to indulge you for one minute please. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the staff of the Ministry for all of the work they would have been done to prepare us for both the budget presentation and this afternoon. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

*Head 39.*

**Madam Chairman:** We are now going on to page 282 of the *Draft Estimates of*

*Recurrent Expenditure.*

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

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Public Utilities has been in existence since the commencement of the public service. Over time it has consistently adapted to the evolution of our nation and to changes in its portfolio. This arm of Government is charged with the management of policy development, underpins the utility sector and provides strategic oversight of agencies in this sector in respect of the management of their operations.

The utility sector is comprised of a complement of three state enterprises, four statutory bodies and two departments of government which are responsible for: delivery of water, electricity; postal, meteorological and telecommunication services; the management of wastewater and solid waste removal services; the provision of regulatory services for the water, wastewater and electricity sector; the provision of janitorial and security services for the nation schools and government entities.

The Ministry's main strategic objectives are to provide effective and efficient leadership and governance to the utility sector; ensure that the utility sector is more than customer-oriented and technologically enable to provide efficient cost-effective quality service to the national community; to collaborate with the state enterprises and statutory bodies comprised the sector; to ensure that they practise prudent financial management with the view to becoming financially viable.

At this time the Ministry's staffing complement, inclusive of two departments of government under its purview, is 354 employees; of this figure, 181 are establishment staff, 173 are contract employees.

The Ministry of Public Utilities and its state agencies that comprise the sector provide the foundation upon which the national community rests, especially in the area of industry and commerce. Having regard to the importance of the utilities of the national community, the Ministry has embarked upon a programme with enhanced monitoring and evaluation of the agencies to ensure that the efficient provisions of services with timely implementations of projects within budget.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 39 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,867,909,500 for Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 282. The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you, Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts - Salaries & COLA (without incumbents). There is an increase of \$400,000 in this area. I would like the Minister to provide us with certain data: how many posts are presently vacant? What is the classification of the vacant positions? What is the estimated time frame for filling those posts? What are the specific posts which are currently vacant? How many vacant posts are catered for under the Sub-Item, Vacant Posts?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** There are 429 posts in the Head Office. A total staff of 354, of which, 173 are contract workers, 181 establishment. There are 75

vacancies: establishment has 23 and contract 52 vacancies. And we intend to fill these vacancies as soon as possible.

**Mr. Singh:** Minister, could you give us an appreciation of the nature of those vacancies?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** There are 10 positions, technical meteorological service. The skills are expected to be filled by the Service Commission Department within the next fiscal year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, is it that you cannot get people with the qualifications to fill these jobs or is it that the service commission is taking long to fill these jobs? Because we have so many graduates out of the University of the West Indies looking for work. Why is it that we seem, not only you, you know, all the Ministries seem unable to get people into these jobs and there are so many vacant positions in the Ministries?

**Madam Chairman:** And you are only asking with respect to the Ministry of Public Utilities?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah, yeah.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We are depending on service commission for filling these posts.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can you not fill them on a contract basis in the meantime?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Some of the posts are contract posts and some are—  
*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can you not go to Cabinet and let Cabinet give you permission to employ people in positions, contract, in these jobs so that at least, you know, you get the work done and you get people employed rather than graduates are frustrated coming out of the university and they cannot get work.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We intend to address that. If you look at Sub-Item 34

you will see there is a University Graduate Recruitment Programme for which \$1 million is allocated.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no. Just one minute, please. Thank you, hon. Minister. Member for Tabaquite, we are under Item 001, General Administration. And I think all of us are quite aware now that these talk about the posts under the establishment.

**Dr. Rambachan:** It says here, includes provision for vacant post and incumbents.

**Madam Chairman:** And we know that these belong to posts on the establishment. Okay. So, anybody else under Item 001, General Administration. The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see that you have no allocation for Cabinet-Appointed Committees for 2017. Could you give an indication as to whether or not—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** What Head is that?

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Item 14.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, Sub-Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committee. None. You have no Cabinet-Appointed Committees?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** No, none at the General Administration.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Meteorological Services. Oh, you have not reached there as yet.

**Madam Chairman:** Very anticipatory. Item 002, Meteorological Services. The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chair, could you give us an indication of the number of persons employed in the Met Services and whether there are any vacancies and what talent pool that you have in those vacancies required?



**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That information I will have to get back to you with.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate, page 283.

**Mr. Singh:** Similar question, Madam Chair, for the Electrical Inspectorate. So many persons—how many vacant positions and what is the kind of positions that are in fact vacant and the qualifications required?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I will have to get that information back to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Most specifically, in San Fernando, how many electrical inspectors are there in the division now and why does it take such an inordinately long time to get an inspector to come and inspect a building?

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

**4.35 p.m.**

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** No, again, I will have to get that information.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, the reason why I asked those questions is because the electrical inspectorate is supposed to inspect a building every year, and if you get an electrical surge and your appliances are damaged, T&TEC hides behind the fact that you have not been inspected on an annual basis and you are not in any way compensated for this damage to your appliances. So it is clear that there is a compelling need to deal with this inspectorate. But I am of the view, Madam Chair, that you cannot deal with it within the public sector too, and I want the Minister to seriously think—there was a move to get private sector involvement in this sector with a view to getting that—fulfilling the requirements of the law.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Mr. Singh:** And I want the Minister to contemplate that in his ruminations as to change in the sector.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** We will contemplate it.

**Mr. Singh:** Very well.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Government Printery, page 284.

**Mr. Singh:** A similar question, Madam Speaker—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** The Government Printery is no longer under the Ministry of Public Utilities.

**Mr. Singh:** It is under Communications.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, General Administration, page 284. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 285, Item 001, General Administration, pages 285 and 286. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 08, Rent/Lease, I see an estimate of \$5.8 million. Would the Minister indicate to us where this property is, who is the landlord and what is the reason for the \$300,000 increase?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** The rental of that office is One Alexandra Place at \$675,000 per month, and that is the amount required in addition to this annual—this year.

**Mr. Singh:** The additional amount?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes. Prior to this, we occupied at Elizabeth Street. This is a new premise that we have occupied and that is the increased cost for the year.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Under 16, Contract Employment, there is an increase in the 2017 estimates by \$3,400,000. Could the Minister provide us as to a breakdown of the number of persons who would be recruited under this contract employment and what are the criteria that will be used to increase the contract employment in his Ministry?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** This is as a result of a retention of positions under the Ministry's six-year plan—Cabinet Minute for 2015—and the filling of vacancies

for the establishment of the Ministry of Public Utilities.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just as I said, how many new positions will be filled, could the Minister provide us, and what will be the process as it relates to filling of these vacancies?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Some of these posts came from the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources that was absorbed into the Ministry of Public Utilities, and advertisements would be placed in the papers for the vacant posts.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am still trying to find out the relevant positions, whether it will be five of this, two of this, one of this and so on, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** That information could be provided for you at a later date.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And what will be the qualifications and the criteria and so on

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Most certainly.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Item 53, Refunds to WASA re Water Improvement Rate. Firstly, I would like to understand what is this refund to WASA? And secondly, whether this amount of \$240 million which is recorded here for the first time in 2017—there was nothing before that—is included in the \$1,697 million subvention that WASA also gets—whether it is additional.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Under the waterworks and the water conservation, WASA received, on behalf of the Government, payment for water improvement to the supply of industrial and commercial rates, in particular to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. So this money is involved in the payment to WASA for the water used by the industry.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the industry pays this to WASA and WASA refunds it—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes, to Government.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Pays it to Government and Government refunds it to WASA.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** To WASA, through public funds.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But Government receives it from the commercial enterprises.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Commercial enterprises.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is this amount of money included in the \$1.697 billion that is the subvention to WASA?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** No, this is not included in that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So then you add this to that?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes, we do.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So it is more \$2 billion WASA will be getting subvention in this year?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Back to Item 08, the Minister indicated that the monthly rent was in the vicinity of \$650,000? Did I hear him correctly?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Six hundred and seventy-five thousand.

**Mr. Charles:** Six hundred and seventy-five. Well, if you multiply that by 12, it means that the estimate of \$5.8 million is inadequate to the figure you stated. That would put it at approximately \$8 million.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** I am not following you.

**Mr. Charles:** I suspect it is a typographical error.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** We occupied this building from the first of August so we adjust during the mid-year review.

**Mr. Singh:** Item 22, Short-Term Employment. There is a decrease in the short-term employment from \$2.6 million in 2016 to \$1 million. How is that going to impact upon the operations of the Ministry of Public Utilities?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** That is the amount allocated to the Ministry of Public Utilities by the Ministry of Finance and we will adjust to be able to work with it.

**Mr. Singh:** What is the purpose of the short-term employment then? What field you provide that facility, through you, Madam Chair?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** We will get this data back to you.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I notice that there is the Street Lighting Programme. Could the Minister give an indication of whether this is payment to T&TEC for the Street Lighting Programme? Or is this \$75 million in 2017 estimate, which is an increase of \$5 million from 2016, the listing of the areas that will be so provided, if a new facility is going to be provided?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** The National Street Lighting Programme is an ongoing programme that is, more or less, about 99 per cent of the grid is involved and this will be just for the allocation for the year.

**Mr. Singh:** Allocation for what, for the continuation of the programme, the completion—Minister, I know a great deal about this programme because I started it in 1997, so I just want to know whether or not this is a completion.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** It is just a continuation of the programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, the street lighting, have you designated areas that you would be focusing on, or it is just going to be as the need arises?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Well, the programme is being adjusted. For instance, T&TEC is going on to possibly a changing in the type of bulbs, going to LED lighting. Right? So it is an ongoing programme. There are some pilot projects being done throughout the country in terms of the new bulbs that are more cost-effective. So therefore, it is an ongoing programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Have you identified any of these projects in the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes, definitely. Based on the requests from

councillors, requests from the corporation, yes, we will address these areas.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Are you trying to say that it must come through the corporation, or can a Member of Parliament send as well?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes. Whenever you all send requests to me, I act on them speedily. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Street Lighting Programme deals with lighting of recreation grounds and so on.

**Madam Chairman:** Is it a question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yeah, well, based on the response from the Minister.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** The Street Lighting Programme plus recreation grounds programmes, yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, with this increase in \$5 million, could the national community be reassured that there will be no hiccups as it relates to the lighting for Ram Leela for the next year forthcoming?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** If, as needed, we would make representations to the Minister of Finance to include any additional cost in the upcoming year. In terms of the Ram Leela—because I realize that you keep raising this issue—on September 23<sup>rd</sup> a request was made for grounds to be lit in terms of the Ram Leela. On the first week at 9.10 p.m., there was nobody in the facility and the lights needed to be adjusted—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I asked the question—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** On Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> at 9.10—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I asked the question: could the Minister give us a reassurance that there will be no hiccups for the next year?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, maybe if we are a little patient, we might get to the end of the answer which will deal with everything that you want to

know.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Do not forget Ram Leela and cultural organizations—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South—

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—they want to be reassured.

**Madam Chairman:**—and all Members, if we just need to be reminded, we are now at the third item of business and remember we intend to complete at least 8.00 p.m., at whatever hour we complete that. So it means that, Member for Couva South, your question has been answered.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I just want to be reassured.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** T&TEC will be providing the electricity necessary for the Ram Leela [*Desk thumping*] as we have always.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you advise whether you will be—in addition to the street lighting project, if you will be looking at putting down the new infrastructure for street lighting? Will that include that as well, as opposed to just, more or less, rehabilitating?

**Madam Chairman:** On which Item are we?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Item 42.

**Madam Chairman:** Is this not Recurrent Expenditure that we are on?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Yes, Recurrent Expenditure.

**Madam Chairman:** So, Member, maybe you could reserve your question for the correct category.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, will do.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Met Services, pages 286 and 287.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister through you. Item 16, Contract Employment, could you give us a sense of the nature of the contract employees? Secondly, Training. I notice that there is a decrease in training and

this is an area in which there is significant need for training. Because of its nature with international and regional organizations, could you give an explanation for this decrease in training?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** At this point in time, I would furnish you with that information.

**Mr. Singh:** For both questions?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antione:** Both questions—in the future.

**Mr. Singh:** Now, the third issue, Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, the point I am making, Madam Chair, through you, is that the Meteorological Services interact and interrelate with a series of regional organizations and international organizations, and I see there is a reduction to \$50,000 in their overseas travel.

**Madam Chairman:** Reduction?

**Mr. Singh:** An increase. An increase of only—well, you had none for 2016, so what you have, 2017, \$50,000. So a very minimal amount for official travel.

**4.50 p.m.**

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** As the need arises, in the mid-term review if there is any need for additional funding we will make a request to the Ministry of Finance.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005 Electrical Inspectorate, page 287. Can I skip Item 006?

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, an increase by \$215,000, Minister, can you clarify?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Rental of office in Arouca pending negotiation for an increase in the rate, and the south office. This is the reason why there was an increase.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, to the Minister. Item 16 Contract Employment. There is an increase by \$445,000; could you give us an



appreciation of the number of contract employees, the capacity in which they serve?—because it seems to me that there is beginning, in my mind, to get a kind of revolving door, people retire and come back. So let us get an appreciation of that to fill this need in the electrical inspectorate through the establishment.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Since December 2015, 18 electoral inspectors were employed and I will give you a breakdown in any future allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006 Government Printery, and for reasons explained before, can we skip this and go on to Item 007 General Administration at page 289?

Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 290; Item 001 General Administration; Item 002 Meteorological Services. Are you under 005 Electrical Inspectorate? Item 006 Government Printery; Item 007 General Administration, page 291. Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 291; Item 001 Regional Bodies; Item 003 United Nations Organizations; Item 004 International Bodies; Item 007 Households, page 292.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 06, the UAP, can you advise—I know that in a subsequent release there was an indication that 125 persons were identified who would receive the newly formatted—

**Hon. Member:** One hundred and twenty-five thousand.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** One hundred and twenty-five thousand persons, yeah—and I am asking would this UAP impact upon those persons at all?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That is UAP?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Utilities Assistance Programme.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We arrive at there yet?

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

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** We are at page 292, 007, 06, Utilities Assistance Programme under Households.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I want you to shed some light on that please, Minister.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, could you repeat the question?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** During your budget debate you had indicated that there will be a 25 per cent rebate, I believe it is, and—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** No, this is not the same thing. That was a provision of the budget, a 25 per cent decrease in T&TEC bills, but this is not part of the Utilities Assistance Programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So this would not. Would this programme that you have here, would you continue with it, or would it work in—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** They will work in tandem.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:**—collaboration with also the Ministry of—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Social Development.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:**—Social Development, yes. So would one of the Ministries be removing their programme, or will it maintain each?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** They will maintain each.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Wonderful. Thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could you give us an appreciation of what are the elements that you have currently under the Utilities Assistance Programme?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We have a bill assistance where we assist people who qualify in terms of payment of their water and sewerage bills. We also have a water tank assistance. People who are not part of the water grid, we provide them with water tanks. We have assistance in terms of solar power. If somebody is off of the electrical grid and it is not cost effective to bring power to them, we provide

them with solar panels. Those are part of the Utilities Assistance Programme.

**Mr. Singh:** Could you give us an appreciation perhaps in writing, subsequently, of the beneficiaries of this programme and the areas that they are located.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Most certainly.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I have a question in relation to the utilities assistance. Through the RIC, is it likely that utility rates are going to move upwards; and if it does, how it is going to affect some of those programmes; or have you not gotten to that point yet? I realize I am asking you something that is projected, and I am not trying to be problematic. I just want to understand.

**Madam Chairman:** You are asking if utility rates went up.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, RIC I know has made recommendations for increase in utility rates and that will be addressed as at some point in time. Either it goes up or it will stay the same, or whatever. But I just want to know how will that affect what is essentially a new policy to try and supplement what exists already in terms of support for households that cannot meet their requirements.

**Madam Chairman:** Under Utilities Assistance Programme?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Both T&TEC and WASA have applied to the RIC for rate increases to examine their rates. Trinidad and Tobago right now—how should I say—we are under some of the lowest rates in the world.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am aware.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Whatever adjustment is made, whatever decision is made by the RIC in conjunction with T&TEC and WASA, we at the Ministry of Public Utilities will adjust to suit to make sure that those who are less fortunate in the society do not come out adversely in terms of any increased rates.

**Dr. Tewarie:** If there is a recommendation to increase, the Ministry will go along that and address the issue of those unable to meet their obligations, right?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, you are asking two questions and I really think the Minister could only speak in terms of the Utilities Assistance Programme. So if you are asking him a supposition, you are not asking him about RIC, you are asking him about if there is an increase, what the Ministry will do—

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is correct.

**Madam Chairman:**—that I will allow.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** The Ministry will continue to look after the interest of those who are less fortunate in the society.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, is there a range in which anyone can apply whether it is for water tank or solar system and so forth? Is there a ceiling in which that you can?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** There are certain criteria that you have to satisfy and we send out people to—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is this public information, the criteria?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, it is public information. You could go to the Ministry of Public Utilities website and get that information.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. And for persons who do not have access to computers because we are dealing with—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Well, during the last year the Ministry of Public Utilities has been going out to the consumers. We are visiting them both in terms of in the constituencies as well as in terms of the regional corporations. So we have been going out and meeting with the citizens and explaining to them the benefits of the Utilities Assistance Programme.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, great. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009 Other Transfers.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister under Other Transfers, line Item 04, the TTPost. In your original estimate for 2016 was \$55 million, the revised estimate went up to \$76 million, a \$21 million increase—could the Minister state what was the reason for that increase during the mid-year in 2016?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Page and line Item?

**Madam Chairman:** 009, 04, page 292, Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That will be settlement of the arrears, 50 per cent.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, to the Minister. Items 02 and 03, Water Resource Management Unit, I would like to find out what is that unit; does it have anything to do with the integrated water resource management strategy? Secondly, 03, the Waste Recycling Management Authority, what is the status of that body and where is the legislation at in bringing this entity into being?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We are in the position of creating the water resource authority. We have gone to a consultant to assist in that area. This would involve the separation of the water resource management from the water transmission and distribution in terms of the water resource management authority. In terms of the Waste Recycling Management Authority, funding is to be used/approved by National Water Recycling Policy as a subset of the overall national—

**Mr. Singh:** Waste recycling.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:**—integrated solid management policy. It is all part of our process that we are going through.

**Mr. Singh:** Minister perhaps I was not clear in my question. My question is that you have a line Item for a Waste Recycling Management Authority. It is a process by which there have been significant consultations and that thereafter there is a new entity to come into being, it requires legislation and my question was: what is the status of the process currently?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I said we are in process of involving a consultant that would go out and do in terms of the stakeholders and have consultancies throughout the country in terms of carrying this process forward.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. I have a question on 09.

**Madam Chairman:** Last question on 09 then.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, through you, to the Minister. There are a series of loans, for example, repayment of loans to the National Gas Company which is \$322,070 and an addition of \$5.592 million; then you have the T&TEC loan repayment of a loan to re: Cove Power Station; repayment of a bridging loan; repayment of eight-year-old bond facility; repayment of 14-year-old bond facility and you have significant sums. Sixteen and 17 is a new Sub-Item, but I want to know whether line Item 13, will that cover all the debt to National Gas Company?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Certainly not. Will not.

**Mr. Singh:** How much is owing beyond the payment of this \$322 million for 2017?

**Mr. Young:** It is being quantified, but it runs well over one and half billion dollars.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Could the hon. Minister provide that in writing—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We will provide the information for you.

**Mr. Singh:**—so we can get an appreciation?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Certainly.

**Mr. Singh:** And the repayment of the loan to Cove Power Station at the end of this payment—*[Interruption]* re: Cove Power Station, line Item 14—when this is repaid, could you give us an appreciation of the exposure that how much is the loan? We are paying \$54 million this year in the estimates, an increase of \$101,000, at the end of that payment what will be our exposure in terms of the

additional loan facilities?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, the loan is US \$76 million, repayment commenced in 2010. We have had two payments totalling \$8.1 million and \$54.2 million.

**Mr. Singh:** Could you put that in writing for us? I will appreciate it.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Certainly.

**Mr. Singh:** And similarly the 16 and 17, the repayment of the bond facilities which are two new Items. What are those bond facilities for?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** The \$1.6 million for TGU is an eight-year and a 14-year-old bond.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. So that was the money used to purchase the interest in TGU?

**5.05 p.m.**

**Mr. Young:** I suspect what these Sub-Items are, you would recall in the last five-year period, the declaration and the settlement of the dividends from T&TEC to TGU, the payments from T&TEC to TGU, so TGU can then pay dividends.

**Mr. Singh:** So they took the bond and they paid TGU?

**Mr. Young:** Correct.

**Mr. Singh:** So it is one hand to the next?

**Mr. Young:** Correct.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes and those are guaranteed loans by the Government.

**Mr. Singh:** Good.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises, page 293.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, the Solid Waste Management Company Limited on Sub-Item 02, you have an allocation of \$75 million and that just seems to be the general recurrent expenditure. Now that you are increasing the facilities for the

workers at the Beetham dump, does it take into consideration that or—  
[*Interruption*] Yeah, I know it has development. So does the recurrent remain the same? There is no expansion in the recurrent here.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Not at this point in time.

**Mr. Singh:** And MTS similarly. There is an increase of \$4.6 million. Does this increase incorporate the new wage agreements?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yeah, this includes the arrears owed to the workers.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, I mean I do not know if you would allow me, Chair, but given what we have here under Other Transfers and then there are Transfers to State Enterprises and so on and given the amount of debt, given the prospect of increased revenues to address some of these issues, and given the policy on subsidizing those who cannot meet the requirements of payment. Is the Government clear on what, you know, policy measures they are going to take in relation to the utilities sector, in this particular case, under your charge as Minister? And I am talking here about electricity and water. It has implications for other things such as TSTT but I would not bring that into it.

I mean is there clarity on that? You have debt on the one hand, you have loan repayments to meet. You have the prospect of making electricity and water rates reasonable in terms of the global situation and in terms of the losses and then you have a policy that has to do with subsidizing those who are not able to make it. I mean, is there policy clarity on all of these things?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, there is. There is policy clarity in terms of water. We are creating the water resource authority in conjunction with WASA. In terms of T& TEC, we are, again—matters are before the RIC in terms of dealing with the new rate increases, and there is intention in terms of WASA to go into metering of residential, commercial, industrial facilities to deal in terms of increasing the



revenue of both WASA and T&TEC, so that they will no longer be dependent on the Government for all subventions.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, but that ultimately is going to have an impact on all consumers eh.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** It will have.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the Minister, I saw that you said that you will go into metering. I want to just indicate that you can only meter if you provide water and that therefore, if you are going into metering, whether it is smart metering or manual or digital, you will have a problem if you are not providing the water throughout 24/7 in the whole system. So that therefore, your goal really ought to be to move from the 73 per cent, 74 per cent, which you inherited 24/7 to 100 per cent and then bring on your metering programme.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Water for all.

**Mr. Singh:** Right and then you meter.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Noted.

**Madam Chairman:** So Members, might I suggest that we take a suspension now and return at 5.30 p.m.

**5.10 p.m.:** *Committee suspended.*

**5.30 p.m.:** *Committee resumed.*

[*Chairman: Mr Forde*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Good evening Members, we resume after our brief tea break. Item 06 Current Transfers to Statutory Boards & Similar Bodies, page 293; 004 Statutory Bodies, page 293.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Chair, after that rushed tea break. There is a reduction by \$452,475,000 of the transfers to the Water and Sewerage Authority. Could the Minister explain that through you, Mr. Deputy Chair?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, that is arrears paid to—the \$433 million. Plus we had a reduction in staff due to the excellent work in the Water and Sewerage Authority of \$40 million and reduction in overtime of \$15.9 million. That is what adds up to \$452 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. Water And Sewerage Authority, Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 197; 001 General Administration, page 197; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 197; 001 General Administration, page 197; Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 198; 001 General Administration.

**Mr. Singh:** 002 Goods and Services, are we there? Water Trucking, I see there is a reduction in Water Trucking by \$1 million. Could the hon. Minister explain that reduction?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Could you give me the Sub-Head?

**Mr. Singh:** It is line Sub-Item 68.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That was a Ministry of Finance's adjustment that we would have to adjust ourselves to do it.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, with the reduction in line 68—and I want to come to 69 after—will this reduction impact upon communities like Cumuto/Manzanilla that sometimes require truck water on a regular basis?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** No, it will not impact on that. We will adjust to make sure that all communities are dealt with equitably.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And on Sub-Item 69, the Road Reinstatement, would the North Oropouche Road be included in this estimate here?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Sure. Is the work in North Oropouche Ministry of

Works or repair work being done by WASA?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Well, WASA is, in fact, laying pipes on the North Oropouche Road all the way down and I know that there was a commitment to—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, then there will be a—the services up there.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** But the commitment was there so I need the commitment from the line Minister.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 198; 001 General Administration, page 198; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 198; 007 Households, page 198.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. There is a series of matters of interest on various loans. I know that the—and facilities from dealing from the settlement of claims to 02, 06, Interest on Overdraft, 07 Principal, 09 and 12, 13, 14, 15—a series of interest on loan repayments. Could the hon. Minister provide for us a listing of those loans, the purposes of those loans and when the principal will be repaid? I do not expect him to have that available but we will want to get that because we will get a sense of—and it goes on to the other page, Sub-Item 56.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, we have your commitment to provide the information in writing?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, you do.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, thank you. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Consolidated Fund, page 119; Item 003 Economic Infrastructure, pages 119 to 122; Item 004 Social Infrastructure, page 123.

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to know what page because sometimes when we look

through the fine—I am at page 119.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Item 003 Economic Infrastructure, pages 119 to 122.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay good. Yes, page 119, National Street Lighting Programme, I see that there is a reduction in the allocation from \$6 million in 2015 and 2016 to \$1 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item 581, hon. Minister. A reduction there.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, this is for the installation of 150 and 250 street lights, associated fittings and replacement of the electricity poles. The reduction in cost, it is an ongoing programme and we will adjust to suit in terms of the continuation of the programme.

**Mr. Singh:** Yes. What exactly is Item 583, Development of Disaster Preparedness Capabilities in T&TEC? An allocation of \$2 million.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** T&TEC purchased 10 mobile generators to be used in the case of national disasters or in case there is a breakdown in electricity that they can go and provide electricity to the immediate area.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. I just want to get a sense of how the Minister is thinking. There is a generator licence programme that you sign all the time and that there is a cost, a fee, associated with that when you sign it and that perhaps is another element of disaster preparedness—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** No.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, let me explain—because when the private sector has generating capacity, when T&TEC goes down, it is a disaster for them. They have that available.

**5.40 p.m.**

Could you provide for us the quantum of moneys that is collected on an annual basis from the generating licences generated by that process where you sign off

and provide licences to various elements of the private sector? Put that in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, you would provide that in writing?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** So how many generation licences you have and what is the cost of that and the annual fee that is associated with that?

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, so we have that commitment to produce in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Lighting of parks and recreational grounds, you have \$2 million in 2017. In the context of the crime that is taking place and the high levels of crime and we are not seeking to blame allocation here, but a lot of communities utilize the recreational parks and grounds. In my own constituency you have two grounds, Youngsters Ground and Green Park in which the luminaires, the lights are very, very poor. So that, therefore, there is need for upgrade in those matters and we have written to T&TEC on this matter so I would expect some activity. But I think that, Minister, as you seek to manage your entity, perhaps, this is an area in which you can place much more focus.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, I will.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 581, in the National Street Lighting Programme, I have found that in my constituency they have been stealing the light bulbs. I understand, I have been told, that contractors come and remove them in order to put into their own development. Is there anything—and it has been brought to the Ministry's attention—in place to prevent this theft of street lights, because it is impacting really negatively upon the community?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** The lights that T&TEC puts on the poles have serial numbers, so they can be traced. That is one way of finding out if any contractor is

utilizing T&TEC lighting by other means, but there is no security system to police all the street lights that we have throughout the country, in terms of people going up there and taking out the bulbs.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, I know it is a serious cost and that is why I thought maybe there was something that would be—I mean, seeing that we are moving in technology at such a fast rate.

Coming to line Item 598, illumination of public spaces, I am seeing that there is nothing assigned there. Is there any reason why? Is it absorbed somewhere else?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** In terms of the illuminating of public spaces, we are revising the policy that would result in a more strategically-located illumination of the spaces. Again, T&TEC is looking at the changing of the light bulbs, going to LED. So it is being reviewed to deal with that. So the reduction in cost is something that we would be able to adjust to.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 595 T&TEC renewable energy initiative. The thrust of your Government has been stated you want to move into renewable energy as well. It seems from that allocation there is not enough initiative on the part of T&TEC to move into that renewable energy aspect. Can you comment on that?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** This is in conjunction with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. So this, we would be able to adjust as the year goes on.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** From T&TEC's perspective you would not have any major development programme for renewable energy but you would leave it to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** It is in conjunction with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries that has \$15 million allocated.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So your contribution is nominal in that aspect?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Nominal, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, do you want to comment?

**Miss Olivierre:** Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you would recall when you examined the allocation for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, we have \$15 million put into the PSIP specifically to deal with renewable energy and we did identify ways to energy as the first measure that we would be doing. So, the bulk of the expenditure on this would be coming out from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Chair. I have two concerns: 5, line 1 additional transmission, infrastructure to move power from TGU to national grid. There is a revised estimate of \$20 million. My concern is at 2017, there is an estimate of \$3 million. My concern is that the movement of that power into the national grid from TGU is very important and whether the allocation of \$3 million is sufficient. Just hold that question.

The second question, with respect to Item 597, expansion of generating capacity in Tobago at \$40 million, I know that it is the new 20-megawatt diesel generator at the Cove Power Plant, \$40 million. I would like to find out, Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you: the current provider of those power plants Wärtsilä, there is a series of litigation and T&TEC has a problem with that provider. I hope we do not make the same mistake again in that area. And whether the Minister is aware that there are certain litigation concerns that T&TEC has with the provider Wärtsilä?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We are aware that T&TEC has problems with Wärtsilä but they have put it out to tender, in terms of the power generation in Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** And the first question with regard to line Item 591, is the \$3 million estimated, is it sufficient, with regard to—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes it is sufficient because it is a work in progress. Gandhi Power Station, in Siparia, Penal, the ring-road is to come on stream as part of bringing the power from TGU onto the national grid. So it is a work in progress.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Just dealing with the power requirements, Minister, I brought it to your attention in the debate in paragraph 224/225 of the Public Sector Investment Programme. You said that the generating capacity will increase from 1400 megawatts to 3000 megawatts in 2018, and I thought that you might want to correct that because, obviously, it is an error.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I would look into it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Noted. Member for Couva South, you still have a question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Sir, I do.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. With respect to lighting of parks and recreational grounds, and so on, could the Minister tell us what is his Ministry's policy in relation to going forward with this particular issue? For example, there are three grounds in Couva South: the Beaucarro Recreation Ground, the Esperanza Recreation Ground and the Windsor Park Recreation Ground, you could advise us probably going forward. What is the policy and the approach in lighting of these grounds?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** The Projects Division of the Ministry of Public Utilities works in conjunction with T&TEC and when a request comes they process it and they go out and they do an examination and, based on the cost, et cetera, a decision is made with respect to the lighting of parks and recreation



grounds.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just a follow-up, because I heard you indicate, Minister, that when a request comes in that you would acknowledge it, and so on.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, I do.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, I have written to you on behalf of the three grounds that I referred to and up till now I have not received an acknowledgment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The closure of the Power Generating Unit on Wrightson Road in Port of Spain.

**Mr. Chairmaan:** What line Item, hon. Member?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 591, Additional Transmission Infrastructure to move power from TGU to National Grid. Where would that generation be taken up now, in terms of that having been stopped on Wrightson Road? Now, are you just not bothering with that amount of kilowatt that would have been generated from there or you are now going to service the Port of Spain area, and so on, with something from the grid?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** As you are well aware, TGU provided more power than T&TEC could have used. So the closure of the PowerGen plant at Port of Spain in no way affects the power that comes from TGU. What we are concentrating on is how we get that power onto the national grid. The opening of the Ghandi Power Station is one area of bringing that onto the grid. The loss of PowerGen at this point in time would not affect the electricity output in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But would it put the northern area into high risk if the plant down in south, for some unfortunate reason, ceases to produce the electricity, whereas in the north here that power-generating unit could have continued?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We are creating redundancy with power lines both at

Bamboo and in terms of Barataria, so that the power will be able to come into the northern area.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. With respect to the Power Generation facility, PowerGen at Wrightson Road, Minister, do you have a sense of the cost of the environmental remediation required for that plant?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** PowerGen falls under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, not under the Ministry of Public Utilities.

**Mr. Imbert:** And not just that. I think we have gone through this before, Mr. Chairman. We are still undecided as to what we are going to do with the Port of Spain site.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. But Minister, you will recall that in 1994, those turbines were very old. It was contracted to be replaced but they were refurbished and you are dealing with very old, inefficient—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not, maybe I gave the wrong impression. Let us be kind to you, rather than you misunderstanding. Either we would rebuild a brand-new plant at the Port of Spain site or at some other location in north Trinidad. Okay? The intention is not to try to repair the old machines.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.

**Mr. Imbert:** Correct. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] “He doh know. He just come.”

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Follow-up. All that machinery that is existing at the moment will become scrap metal pretty shortly if nothing is done to it. What will happen with that site? Would it be left as an eyesore being left to—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** You are making your own comment, hon. Member.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am asking what will happen to it.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me answer that. I said, now for the third time, the Government

has not made a decision as to what it is going to do with the location of a power plant in north Trinidad, but under no circumstances would we be attempting to reuse the old scrap iron at Colville Street. Okay? So that has to be disposed of. Okay? For the third time. Do you want to hear it for a fourth time?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Page 120, Members.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the hon. Minister, Item 003, Postal Code and S42 addressing system. There is an allocation of \$1 million. What is the status of this coding system?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That is giving Trinidad a zip code like internationally. A pilot project was done in Arima and I think Point Fortin and it is a work in progress.

**Mr. Singh:** My question to you is: when will the zip coding of the twin island of Trinidad and Tobago, with a population of 1.3 million, be completed?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** The completion date is September 2017.

**Mr. Singh:** I have a question on the—have we procured the automated sorting machine for TTPost?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That is going out to tender.

**Mr. Singh:** I see that there is an estimate of \$3 million in 2016 and there is an estimate of \$1 million in 2017. Given the procurement rules of the public sector, is this sufficient to go out to tender on the basis of this \$1 million?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, it is sufficient.

**5.55 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** Dealing with page 121, Major Water Sources. Minister, could you give us an indication of whether the following projects at 002, Design and Construction of new a clearwell at El Socorro Water Works, whether that is completed; the construction of the Avocat Wells; the upgrade of the Carlsen Fields

Water Treatment Plant; the upgrade of Caura Water Treatment Plant; design and installation of the Guanapo Reservoir, all these projects from 02–018? Could you provide us with a sense of the status? I see 012—018 are new projects, so that prior to that, the status of those projects.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, could you provide the information, now? All right, proceed.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We can provide it in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** But I can give him—in terms of El Socorro Waterworks, the expenditure phase is complete and we are testing the commissioning of the waterworks.

**Mr. Singh:** That would have been in progress for quite a while?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes. In terms of Avocat, the allocation is keeping with the implementation plan. That is a work in progress. It is ongoing. In terms of Carlsen Field, the same is keeping with the plan. In terms of Guanapo Service Reservoir, that is being implemented. So to with Mount Hope Dip Station and in terms of Tobago. Tobago, Hillsborough, the—

**Mr. Singh:** “Nah yuh gone ahead you know, Minister, you gone ahead.”

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yeah, I went ahead, sorry about that.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, “yuh gone ahead”.

**Mr. Chairman:** So it is up to 018. Additional question, Member for Chaguanas West?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, with respect to this. The upgrade of the distribution system in Tobago, it is very amorphous. Could you give us a sense of what areas that this upgrade is going to take place? If you have it, you can provide it now, and—

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We will give you that in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Strategic priority, Santa Cruz Pipeline, I see that there is no allocation, 2017. I take it that that project is completed?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Close to completion.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you okay, hon. Member?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah. I am fine.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 018, I see it is a new project for a booster station, but I do not see anything formally for a booster station for Tamana Hill. I understand that has already been approved and everything. Can you shed some light, please, on what will—when it will be, in fact—booster, the booster at Tamana Hill. I am not seeing it here. I am seeing a new one, a new line Item for Calvary Hill. It is not my constituency.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you created your own line item? [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No. I just—we are talking about the booster. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Booster? Minister, you care to give her a quick response?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I will have to get that information. It is not a line Item.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** He did not cater to answer that question today, Member.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. On behalf of my constituency, thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The Minister spoke about the desilting and rehabilitation of Hillsborough Dam in Tobago. Minister, just by way of history, there has been an allocation for this desilting for over two decades, in the vicinity of between \$1 million to \$10 million on an annual basis. So that—I want to know the desilting is absolutely necessary. Just by way of history, we attempted to work with the THA with a view to bringing about this desiltation of this dam. You have to do it in the rainy season whilst there is sufficient water in

the system, so as to allow for production.

**Hon. Member:** THA will work with that.

**Mr. Singh:** Well, THA was working with me, but they had a financial issue. So the point I am making is that how you intend to achieve this desiltation of Hillsborough with an allocation of \$8 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, we are now on page 122, line Item 002, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** The intention is to purchase equipment to do the desilting of Hillsborough Dam in house, and that equipment will also be used to do desilting in other dams throughout Trinidad as well.

**Mr. Singh:** And the \$8 million is sufficient for that?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** For this fiscal year which continues into the next fiscal year, then we will seek additional funding.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The upgrade of the Maloney Water Treatment Plant, what is the nature of that?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That is an ongoing maintenance dealing with the present plant. There was an IDB loan to upgrade the plant, but it was felt that the cost did not allow for—it was not cost effective to do upgrade of the plant. So that money was transferred to the Cove in Tobago, and this is just to maintain the plant that is in existence in Maloney at this point in time.

**Mr. Singh:** My recollection—and you could guide me, Minister—it was for the Maloney Wastewater Treatment Plant, and that the bids that came in, came in some US \$19 million higher than the moneys allocated for the Maloney Wastewater Treatment Plant, and it was necessary to go back to the IDB and to go back to the Government, with a view to getting additional moneys. What are you telling me? You are saying that on this line Item, that the moneys were transferred to the Cove, with the IDB and this upgrade of the Maloney Water Treatment Plant at \$500,000

is what is taking place?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yes, that is an error on my part, between the wastewater plant and the water treatment plant. This is the Maloney Water Treatment Plant which is just the \$500,000 is just to do maintenance as the case may be, get chemicals as the case may be.

**Mr. Singh:** I am here to guide you, you know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that clarity, Minister. Member for Chaguanas West, your mike is still on. Do you have another?

**Mr. Singh:** I am gone ahead.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 123; Item 0—are you on 004?

**Mr. Singh:** I am on 004, C, Welfare Services, 02, Resident Electrification Assistance Programme. Are you on the same?

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, page 123.

**Mr. Singh:** There is an allocation of \$2 million for the Residential Electrification Assistance Programme. I would like to find out the number of persons accessing this programme, and the criteria for accessing this programme on an annual basis?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, could you provide that information?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I will have to provide that information for him in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, hon. Member, it will be provided. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 124—126. Member for Chaguanas West, identify the page.

**Mr. Singh:** I am at page 124 and I am at 045, Establishment of a Water Resource Agency, and there is an allocation of \$8 million. Could the Minister indicate—and I have several questions to follow, subsequently on various line Items, Mr. Deputy

Chairman. Eight million allocation, what is this money going to be used for, and if the Minister does not have that information, could he put it in writing, please?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I cannot give you the breakdown, but that is to separate the Water and Sewerage Authority from the Water Resources Authority. As I said, we have hired a consultant, in the process of hiring a consultant to do public consultations, as we move towards dealing with the water management of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Singh:** Can you provide the details of that consultancy, so that terms and conditions—so we can get an appreciation?—because if it is \$8 million is going to produce paper we have a concern.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Well, the \$8 million is not just only to produce paper. It is the acquisition of land and the construction of accommodation on 10,000 square foot building, with staff, transition plans, and enhancement of the monitoring works. As you would realize, there would have to be a transfer of resources, a transfer of both material resources and human resources from WASA to the Water Resources Authority. So the \$8 million is what we are required to use during the course of this year, to bring this into being.

**Mr. Singh:** Could the, hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Deputy Chair, provide that in writing, so that we can get a cold, clinical appreciation of the allocation and utilization of this allocation?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Certainly.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** You have that commitment, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Singh:** Item 047, the Development of an Integrated Water Security Programme for Tobago, \$1 million. What exactly is this going to provide?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Again, we realize that Tobago because of El Niño has an extended dry season and drought conditions. So this \$1 million is part of the—



looking at water security for Tobago to improve the governance structure of the water sector and dredge the dynamics of water consumption, taking into account the range of economic activities. In Tobago we are going on a well programme to look to expand the wells for water. We are looking to bring in a desalination plant, plus we are looking in terms of the ground water, in terms of Courland and other areas that we—and the desilting of Hillsborough Dam. So we are looking at the entire water situation in Tobago, and we are looking at the security of water in Tobago.

**Mr. Singh:** My point, Minister, is that you could pay yourself \$500,000, because you just outlined the integration of the various elements to create this integrated water security. You have the desalination component. You have the bedrock drilling for the wells. You have the desiltation of Hillsborough. You do not need—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you do not need to repeat it, Member. Any question?

**Mr. Singh:** What I am telling you, you do not need to go that route. [*Crosstalk*]  
Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you satisfied?

**Mr. Singh:** Item 049, Development of a Water Supply, Drought Management Plan. Is this for Trinidad or Tobago, or is it for both islands?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Trinidad and Tobago, because we too are under the El Niño effect, not as severe as Tobago, but we are also having our water problems.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, and 051, Development of a Water Supply Management Plan?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** One is dealing with drought and one is dealing with the management of the supplying of water. We realize that distribution of water is a very serious issue especially in north-west and northern Trinidad, where the disruption of the old infrastructure, in terms of leakages as the case may be, is

causing hardships to citizens by interrupting their water supply. So this is dealing with a plan to ensure that the citizens get an adequate and persistent water supply.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay and then, of course, 055, Adopt and Implement Integrated Water Resources Management, \$1 million allocated for that.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** And you realize that is a new project that we are looking for the entire—

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, I saw a new project.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:**—integrated water—

**Mr. Singh:** Minister, I just want you to cast your mind back to 2004, a process that began in 1999 with DHV Consultants a Dutch company, and in 2002, it was put out for public comment, an integrated water resource management strategy. However, I have noticed this \$8 million, \$1 million, \$500,000, \$1 million, eight and two, 10, 11, \$11.5 million in various paper projects. I call them paper projects—it is intellectual knowledge translated into paper.

I would like to find out what is the procurement process for projects 45, 47, 49, 51 and 55? What is the procurement process that is going to be used, to get these various projects for the benefit of the utility sector?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** These would be done through advertisement, putting out for RFP's as case may be as necessary.

**Mr. Singh:** Could the Minister undertake to provide that in writing for us?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Definitely.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, page 125.

**Mr. Singh:** Could the Minister update us at Meteorological, under 003, Procurement of a Fully Configurable International Civil Aviation Organization Compliant Automated Airport Weather System? Could you provide us with the

status of this project?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That is being installed at Piarco right now, presently.

**Mr. Singh:** It should be completed by now. Is it completed?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** No, it is not completed as yet. It is in progress.

**6.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** But there is no allocation for 2017?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Well, all the equipment have been purchased already. It is just for the completion of the work.

**Mr. Singh:** I would like to find out—I am on page 126.

**Mr. Chairman:** 126 Members. Line Item?

**Mr. Singh:** Line Item, Sanitary Services, the Rehabilitation of the Gunapo Landfill Phase I, Construction of a Leachate Treatment Plant. There is an allocation of \$1 million. Could the hon. Minister give us an estimate in 2017? Could you give us an appreciation of the status of that?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** This is also under the IDF.

**Mr. Singh:** But tell me now.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** This is just a portion of the funds allocated for this project.

**Mr. Singh:** There is an allocation, Minister, through you, Deputy Chair, there is an allocation. I would like to find out: how far have we progressed with respect to this project or is it now going to start?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** This is an ongoing project that involves leachate pools and the processing of the leachate to be able to get back into the environment. It is a work in progress.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Deputy Chair, the Guanapo River, as you would know, is the principal source of the Caroni River. It has pristine waters, but for this Guanapo

Landfill—so, therefore, this leachate prevention from seeping into the water supply is critically important to the quality of water in the Caroni system, and also very important for the health of this population. So, I would really like to get an update in writing of the status of this project.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Certainly.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, you have that commitment, Mr. Minister. Right. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 305 of the same booklet. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 305 and 306.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I think that there is some repetition with what we have done with the Caroni South Trunk Main and so on. But with respect to major water sources, I would like the hon. Minister to indicate to us, through you Mr. Deputy Chair, what is the status of the Mamoral Dam as a major source of water? That too, historically, has been part of the PSIP Programme for over two decades and it is not mentioned in any way in this document.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That is not a line Item, so I would have to provide the information and details for you.

**Mr. Singh:** Just by way of your knowledge, Mr. Minister, there was a collaboration between the drainage department in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the Water and Sewerage Authority that because of the creation of this sinkhole that it would take something like 220-something million cubic metres of water and, therefore, it will prevent the flooding in the Caparo River Basin, but it also provides an irrigation component and a water treatment component out of this naturally occurring dam, and that was the project between drainage—WASA would do the treatment process. So it is something for you to look at.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that information, hon. Member. But we have the commitment, it will be provided in writing. Right Member?

Page 306, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 307.

**Mr. Singh:** I am at 306. [*Crosstalk*] I am being disturbed by my good friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am not too sure. I am not too sure about that. I cannot let that enter the records, Sir. Proceed, I will give you the opportunity Member.

**Mr. Singh:** Tobago Well Development, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, 010.

**Mr. Singh:** I would like to find out in what areas you are going to continue the Well Development Programme and whether it is the deep-water bedrock wells you are drilling.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I will have to provide that in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Provide that in writing?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Yeah.

**Mr. Singh:** Secondly, Mr. Deputy Chairman, the Rehabilitation of Scarborough Wastewater Treatment Plant, \$5 million. I would like to find out, what exactly is this rehabilitation? Is this merely a refurbishment of the Scarborough or is it dealing with the IDB grant where you currently only have 11—you have eight people connected to the Scarborough Wastewater Treatment Plant and you have 11 people outside of the plant, and we got an IDB grant funding in order to bring people into the Scarborough Wastewater Treatment Plant. So what is this rehabilitation? Is it a refurbishment? What is it?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** This project entails the refurbishment of the activated slot system at the Scarborough Wastewater Treatment Plant. The plant was designed to meet the requirements of water pollution.

**Mr. Singh:** To meet the designs of what?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** It is to improve the wastewater service in Tobago, which would positively impact on the wastewater discharge. So we are dealing with the activated slot system at the Scarborough Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum—my apologies. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 307. Just for the records, I needed to get that line in.

**Mr. Singh:** Not for the records, I have a question.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are going to it also? The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** The Sanitary Services, 002, the Phased Closure and Rehabilitation Programme of Landfill Sites and the Establishment of a New Sanitary Engineered Landfill, \$2 million. Could the Minister expand on this as to what is the phased programme, whether it incorporates Beetham and Forres Park or Guanapo? What is this phased programme? Or is it that you are going to have \$2 million to do an analysis and what is required to bring about the phased programme?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** We are looking at the three landfills, Beetham, Guanapo and Forres Park. The intention is to create in conjunction with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, a waste energy plant at the Beetham and they will become transfer stations eventually to have a state-of-the-art landfill at Forres Park. Guanapo, you are quite right, because of the leachate problem, would be a plant that would cease to exist in the future. So it is the beginning of the process that will involve consultancies, it would involve engaging the population in terms of looking at the landfill sites as well. Also, we are looking at recycling, the whole process in terms of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

We are looking at beginning recycling at the source.

Already there is a plant at Guanapo that is dealing with the recycling of the waste and separating the waste, but that is at the site. We now need to start at the source. So this is the beginning of a process that would see a total re-engineering of waste management in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Singh:** Just one more question, and I want to crave your indulgence, because it slipped me. The provision of water to LABIDCO for the Caribbean Gas Chemical Plant. What is the decision on that?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Are we going back to—

**Mr. Singh:** That is a national decision. It is important for the national community. It is line Item, 006.

**Mr. Chairman:** You went back to what page?

**Mr. Singh:** It is the same page, 006, Water Supply to LABDICO and Union Industrial Estate. How are you going to proceed on that?

**Mr. Chairman:** But Member, wait, one second. What page, please because you have gone back? What page?

**Mr. Singh:** It is page 305. It is the last question. It is an important national question.

**Mr. Chairman:** But you have been on top of things all day, Member.

**Mr. Singh:** Generally. I am 99 per cent right. It is important for the national community we answer that question. I have been trying.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, you care to give a feedback? You will put it in writing?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I will put it in writing for him.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 39 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank you, hon. Minister. I thank you Permanent Secretary and

all the other technocrats from your various organizations.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I would just like to thank the staff at the Ministry of Public Utilities and also at the various utilities throughout Trinidad and Tobago for their hard work in getting us ready for this budget. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. Thanks for coming. Do have a good evening.

*Head 61*

**Mr. Chairman:** I would now like to move on to Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. And as the technocrats and the Minister get into place, we would like to welcome the technocrats and senior executives from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Welcome. Also welcome to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, \$1,112,107,000. I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, thank you for the opportunity. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for the formulation and execution of Government's policy in relation to the housing and urban development sectors. The Ministry operates as facilitator in the implementation of these policies through its various units and affiliated agencies. The Ministry's core areas of responsibility include:

- Government subsidized housing;
- Monitoring and evaluation of housing trends and markets in the country; Home Improvement Grants and Subsidies;
- Regularization of tenure and housing for squatters, land settlement, and urban development.



The Ministry has two main units that provide direct services to the citizenry. They are: One, the Housing Policy Facilitation and Implementation Unit. This unit administers the Home Improvement Grant Programme to eligible persons. The Home Improvement Grant Programme provides a \$15,000 grant to successful applicants for approved repair works. And, two, the Programme Monitoring and Co-ordinating Unit which implements the Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme, a US \$15 million loan programme agreement between the IDB and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme's main objective has been to improve the living and housing conditions of low and middle income persons through infrastructural upgrades to squatter settlements, providing home improvement subsidies and facilitating incremental construction or purchase of affordable, quality housing.

**6.25 p.m.**

There are also eight affiliated organizations which are mandated to implement and promote the Ministry's policies, plans, programmes and projects. These are: Housing Development Corporation, Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, Land Settlement Agency, East Port of Spain Development Company Limited, Eastside Plaza and New City Mall.

Deputy Chairman, with specific regard to the housing sector, the Ministry and its agency's focus on increasing home ownership through the accelerated housing programme and the home construction subsidy. The Ministry also focuses on maintaining the country's housing stock through the provision of home improvement grants, subsidies and the HDC's Rehabilitation and Refurbishment Programme.

One of the Ministry's other main responsibilities is to improve the living conditions through infrastructural development, and this is done through the LSA and SILWC.

The Ministry's urban development portfolio, which is spearheaded primarily by UDeCOTT, focuses on developing urban centres in the context of economic and sustainable development.

Lastly, Deputy Chairman, the Ministry also spearheads the Urban Regeneration Project which is conducted through the East Port of Spain Development Company, East Side Plaza and New City Mall. Deputy Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity.

*Question proposed:* That head 61 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,112,107,000 for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 375. Item 001 General Administration, page 375.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, just to begin with a very minor question on Minor Equipment Purchases, 03, page 374.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we are on Personnel Expenditure, first of all, which is 01, page 375, Item 001 General Administration. Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, page 376. Item 001 General Administration. We are now on page 376. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 378. Item 001 General Administration, page

378.

**Dr. Moonilal:** If I could just get an appraisal in the expenditure on minor equipment purchases.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item number?

**Dr. Moonilal:** No. 03, page 378, the increase. There is an increase here of what appears to be \$885,000 plus. If we could just get an explanation of the reason for that.

**Hon Mitchell:** Thank you, hon. Member. If I could start with vehicles. There is an increase of \$670,000. The Ministry plans during this fiscal period to purchase two vehicles. Under Office Equipment, there is an increase of \$127,000. During this fiscal, the Ministry has plans to purchase a copier machine and a number of adding machines. And under Furniture and Furnishings, the Ministry has plans to purchase some ergonomic chairs.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 377 line Item 08, Rent/Lease, Office Accommodation—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, we have not gone to that page as yet.

**Hon Mitchell:** We are on 378.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I just ask if we are on page 376?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we are on page 378, Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:** My colleague was asking something on 376.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, we have adopted a policy approach on how we are handling the situation. I call the page, I look up, we identify and then we move on. We went through the procedure so we are now on page 378.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I will continue. I am at Current Transfers and Subsidies, Trinidad and Tobago Housing—

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now call that Item. Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 378. Item 009 Other Transfers.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am looking at 04, of course, Current Transfers and Subsidies, and looking at the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation. In 2015, we had an actual of \$319 million plus. There was an estimate in 2016 for \$565-plus million. The estimate was revised downward to \$423 million; that is, over \$140 million less, and the estimate for 2017 is, indeed, less, \$354 million. I am asking the Minister to indicate to us the reason for the downward estimation in 2016 by \$140 million; the reason why there was a downward revised estimate in 2016. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Chairman, I intend to address the Minister of Housing and Urban Development alone.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, Members. Go ahead, finish your question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am looking at 2017, a further reduction of \$354 million. My question to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development is the reason for the downward revision 2016, and I would like to get an estimation from him as to what percentage or what quantum of these moneys were actually spent. I would like also to ask the Minister on the same issue, if he can give us an account of moneys spent to pay large-scale contractors. A breakdown of the moneys paid to large-scale contractors in 2016, and I am talking about payment to contractors of over \$20 million. If he would give us a breakdown of the moneys paid for work, the bills paid, over \$20 million to large-scale contractors for fiscal 2016.

**Hon Mitchell:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Just to deal with the last question first. The payment to large-scale contractors, that is treated with under the IDF. This treats with the subvention, and really deals with the recurrent expenditure.

With respect to the reduction in the subvention this year, there is a present thrust across all of Government to reduce the recurrent expenditure. Under my management, the HDC is pursuing relentlessly operational efficiencies and effectiveness, so we have to make do with this amount of money.

**Dr. Moonilal:** A question in the same area. There was an estimate for the New City Mall and the East Side Plaza. This was a new Item included, I believe, in 2016. First \$5 million went to \$4 million and then you have a \$4 million again for 2017. Could you indicate whether any moneys from this provision on recurrent were actually spent for both 06 and 07?

**Hon Mitchell:** Eastside Plaza and the New City Mall came under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in 2015. Previously, it was under the Ministry of Local Government, I believe. With respect to the amount of moneys spent, in 2016, \$3.6 million was spent under the Eastside Plaza, and under the New City Mall, \$3.5 million was spent.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you. You are confirming that this was recurrent expenditure on both projects, 06 and 07?

**Hon Mitchell:** Yes, this is a subvention.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** My question incorporates the whole question of UDeCOTT and the principal payment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 01; 01 to 23. All these have interest payments and principal payments.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, Member, you are moving on again. Therefore, if we have exhausted that Item we now go on to Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises, page 379.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Chair, Sub-Items 01 to 23, there are a number of principal payments and interest payments. Would the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development be able to indicate what is being owed across from No. 1 to 23 in terms of what is principal payments?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, you could answer that question based on all the Items identified?

**Hon Mitchell:** It is very lengthy. I can provide that in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How much each one and where we have reached in terms of the payment?

**Hon Mitchell:** I have it here. I will provide it in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** The actual breakdown from 01 straight down to 23.

**Hon Mitchell:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** So that will be provided in writing, Member for Caroni East. Sub-Head 06 Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 380. 004 Statutory Bodies, page 380.

**Dr. Moonilal:** On the matter of the Land Settlement Agency.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, one second. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. 18 Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Administration, page 445.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The question, page 445, of course.

**Mr. Chairman:** We have the breakdown before us.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You are on Personnel Expenditure or you are on Goods and services or both?

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 445. 001 General Administration. Proceed, Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am on page 445 Goods and Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** No question on the first one?

**Dr. Moonilal:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, page 445.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Contract Employment, No. 16. Would the Minister be kind enough to give us, in writing, if it is possible the status of contract employment in the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, and to indicate those contracts that were not renewed during fiscal 2016, and for what purpose? Thank you.

**Hon Mitchell:** I will provide it in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 446. 001 General Administration, page 446; 54 Land Settlement Agency. Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 454; 001 General Administration on page 454. Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, page 454; 001 General Administration, page 454.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I repeat the question again to the hon. Minister, to provide in writing the status of contract employment at the LSA? Those contracts that were not renewed during fiscal 2016; the purpose or reason for nonrenewal of contracts at the LSA?

**Mr. Chairman:** That commitment will be in writing.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair; 43 Security Services, there is an increase of \$992,000. Deputy Chair, could the Minister provide an explanation?

**6.40 p.m.**

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

**Hon. Mitchell:** Where are you?—Security Services.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Security Services, 43.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on page 454.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Four fifty-four.

**Mr. Chairman:** And line Item 43, Security Services. You got the question, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes. This is for the contracting of police officers for demolition

and social survey exercises.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yeah. Demolition of what?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Demolition of squatter structures.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Chairman, I did not get—is the Minister telling this meeting that the LSA is now embarking on a demolition of people's homes?

**Hon. Mitchell:** I did not say that.

**Mr. Chairman:** For the record.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could you all clarify.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, okay. Member, hold on. Hon. Minister, for the records. Proceed, for the records.

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yeah. Demolition of unlawful structures, police security and for social survey exercises, as well as patrols for development sites to prevent squatters.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I follow up with—could the Minister commit in writing a list of structures and dwelling sites and their relative address demolished in fiscal 2016 by the LSA? And secondly, could the Minister also indicate whether the security services that will increase now would be also to secure lots of lands under the LSA that have been left abandoned throughout Trinidad?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Well they have not been left abandoned, but in the meantime we still need security services.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And the list of dwelling units and addresses, demolished?

**Hon. Mitchell:** I will seek legal advice on that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** From Imbert? [*Laughter*]



**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, please. Right. Sub-Head—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just to tie up this point that the Minister is saying that he will seek legal advice as to whether or not to indicate to the Parliament the identity of dwelling houses which have been demolished and more likely are not in newspapers.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, do you have a follow-up question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** No. I just want to clarify absolutely.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 43. I noted you indicated that Security Services included police officers. Are you referring to police officers in terms of the Ministry of National Security or are you referring to a private security firm that you are looking to procure?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Both.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. What is the procurement process for the private? And also, with mentioned having a shortage of police officers, would the police officers be able to handle the work load that you all have?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister?

**Hon. Mitchell:** I can provide the procurement policy in writing to you. With respect to whether or not the police would be able to handle it, the policy have been handling this for as far as I can remember. The police do engage in private policing exercises.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I do agree, but we have had a surge in crime. So I mean, things have changed dramatically from when we were in Government.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for your comment, Member. Member for Couva

South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see that there has been an increase to \$547,000—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item?

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—as it relates to line Item 62, Promotion, Publicity and Printing. Given the policy just enunciated by the Minister, is the Minister printing more publications and so on in relation to advising citizens that their homes would be demolished and so on?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Mitchell:** For clarification. It is unoccupied structures that are being demolished. This increase is for media advertisements for—it is an anti-squatting campaign.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** An anti-squatting campaign?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Minister of Trade and Industry knows about that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, page 454 still?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right? I am advanced, again.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Sub-Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 455; 001, General Administration, page 455; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 455. I recognize the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Under 01, Mr. Chairman, Contract Gratuities. There was a revised estimates in 2016 of \$5.5 million. Could the Minister provide a list of the persons who would have received this sum of money and the reason that they would have had to exit from the Land Settlement Agency? And I see a

sum of \$912,000 for 2017. As a result of this, again, the number of people who would have been dismissed in 2016 and what is the projected number of people who will be dismissed in 2017?

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

**Hon. Mitchell:** I will provide it in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Will be provided in writing.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just on a point of clarification to the hon. Minister. Persons have been dismissed in 2016 and will be dismissed in 2017?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, question, please. Okay. We will move on. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 455; 009 Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 165; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 165 to 167. We will start with page 165. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I noticed that there is new project here, 068, Orange Field Housing Development. I would ask the Minister just to tell us something about this new project Orange Field Housing Development? I have several questions in this area.

**Mr. Chairman:** Take them one at a time.

**Dr. Moonilal:** One at a time so that I can ask that. Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, Orange Field.

**Hon. Mitchell:** These are infrastructural upgrades by SILWIC, infrastructural upgrades to the development.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** And you are confirming that is \$1 million for infrastructural

upgrades in Orange Field Housing Development?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I go to Housing Estates?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. You can.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes. I notice, Minister, at 075, I just want to start, it is here, the actual in 2015 was \$9.9 million, the estimate was \$5 million, the revised was the same \$5 million and the estimate rose to \$15 million. Do you have a sense of whether any money at all was spent on this area in 2016 fiscal and why the increase of \$10 million for 2017?

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

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes. The money was spent and totally the vote was expended. The increase is because we have a lot more rehabilitation works to do during this fiscal.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I also indicate, Minister, that there are, under Housing Estates, there are several Sub-Items that have appeared before in 2015 estimates, and I speak here of such matters as: apartment complexes in East Port of Spain; refurbishment of electrical installation; remedial infrastructure work; apartment complexes in Port of Spain; park development and rehabilitation; refurbishment of basketball courts on HDC residential communities; retrofitting of HDC high-rise apartment buildings for health and safety.

Minister, these are Sub-Items in 2015, 07, 007, 207, 307, 74 are all left out of the Current Estimates. Is it that the Ministry in 2017 will not be embarking upon any type of upgrade and repairs to apartment complexes, to refurbishing sporting facilities, basketball courts, to retrofitting HDC high-rise

apartments, all which—many if not all, are in need of re-outfitting given the health and safety concerns in the aftermath of the Trou Macaque fire several years ago?

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Member. Hon. Minister?

**Hon. Mitchell:** I cannot speak to the 2015 estimates, but all those line Items that you just mentioned will be taken care of under this one line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, could I also indicate that by leaving it out as separate areas, you are also robbing each other of money, because you will never be able to account—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, Member. It is a comment not a question. So I need to move to your colleague, Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 232, Housing Grants. Would the Minister be kind enough—well first of all, 2015 had an expenditure of approximately \$25 million and 2014 your estimate was \$9.5 million. Could you indicate—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, I would like to hear the Member, please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** — to us, whether by writing, the housing grants per constituency across Trinidad and Tobago? How many grants were given across different constituencies, please? If you have any idea now, could you just give us a general answer to that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, you will provide it in writing?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many people would have benefited from it across different constituencies?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. It would be provided in writing. Member for

Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the Minister, Item 070 under Land Development, Tarouba Central Housing Development, \$2 million is estimated there. Could you clarify what is happening in that particular development?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes. Under Land Developments 064 to 080, these are upgrading works to these communities under the SILWIC, under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Hon. Mitchell:** Upgrading works such as box drains, pavements and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Just a couple of questions through you, Chair, to the Minister. I see from what you have here that the settlements programme is continuing 232, 233. I just wanted to ask the Minister if the—I do not see it listed here, I am not sure that it is elsewhere, the Arena Road project is on your list of projects.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, Arena Road?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Arena Road? That is under the IDB programme, but it is not listed here.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. It is scheduled? I am just asking.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Mitchell:** 8/002—I will get that for you in writing.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Follow-up question?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah. One more question. And the Residential Lots Programme, the Land for the Landless, this is continuing as a programme for this year fiscal 2017? I see you have \$5 million allocated for it.

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

**Hon. Mitchell:** There are ongoing works, the development sites. So that \$5 million will take care of those ongoing works. And to answer your previous question, the provision for that road is under 8/002 which is on the following page under Squatter Settlements Regularization.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 233, 234, I see there are surveys of squatter sites and the Residential Lots Programme. I do not know if I missed it or I have not come to it, but I do not see anything about containment which, I believe, is the original mandate of LSA, the containment of squatting.

**Hon. Mitchell:** I just spoke about containment. With respect to the security amounts.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Members, I know it is almost seven in the evening so let us keep focused so we do not—time is important.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Minister, I understand that you mentioned it from the security aspect, but there must be a policy aspect that goes with it and that is what I am referring to. I am just clarifying.

**Hon. Mitchell:** There is a policy.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West. Okay. Member for Oropouche East.

**6.55 p.m.**

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. To the Minister, as he spoke to the land—could the Minister give the commitment to the House that the Government will

pursue the Land for the Landless Programme and Policy?

**Mr. Chairman:** That is Item line 234.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Line 234.

**Mr. Chairman:** He made a statement on it earlier.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, he said that the money would be for land development, but I am asking the Minister to confirm that you have budgeted and you expect to spend \$5 million on the programme, confirm therefore that you will pursue the policy of the programme of Land for the Landless?

**Hon. Mitchell:** The policy of the programme of Land for the Landless is under review.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Oh, it is under review so there is no—

**Hon. Mitchell:** There is no commitment.

**Dr. Moonilal:** There is no commitment. That is fine. Could I ask a next question on the same area?

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Clearly there is no allocation for 086, Road Rehabilitation Works in Fenceline Communities, can I ask the Minister whether or not this suggests that the agencies have rescinded their board policy on providing support for fenceline communities where actions of the LSA/SILWC/HDC, and so on, have also damaged the surrounding communities?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Sorry, can you repeat the question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Road Rehabilitation Works in Fenceline Communities policy, which is a policy adopted by the respective boards in the Ministry there is no allocation for it, so I am asking you whether or not the Ministry is committed to the policy approved by the boards of the LSA/SILWC/HDC and others, to support communities in fenceline communities where the agencies of the Ministry have



done damage to the surrounding communities?

**Hon. Mitchell:** I am not aware that this policy was abandoned.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Under 078, in that greater heading Land Development I see that there have been specific sums which have been allocated, for example, to Orangefield, Tarouba and Bothers/Garth. With respect to 078, Upgrading of SILWC Housing Development, could the Minister be more specific as it relates to what this \$2 million has been allocated for?

**Hon. Mitchell:** This is an allocation to upgrade all the SILWC housing estates.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** All?

**Hon. Mitchell:** All. All the SILWC housing estates.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In what particular area?

**Hon. Mitchell:** With respect to drainage, with respect to sidewalks, with respect to their sewerage systems.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, could you provide me with a listing of the works that you expect to do in all the housing estates under the control of SILWC?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, you have that commitment.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Members, page 166, any questions before I move on?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 002, Squatter Settlements Regularization, would it be possible for the Minister to indicate where these settlements are and what is the nature of their regularization that you are spending approximately \$22 million on?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, you would need to provide that in writing or it is a short list?

**Hon. Mitchell:** La Savanne, Guayaguayare; Nurse Trace, Guayaguayare; Ramlal Street; Sunrees, Penal; Kangalee Street, Valencia; Gomez Trace, St. Mary's

Village, Moruga; Pro Village, St. Mary's Village, Moruga; Western Trace, St. Mary's Village, Moruga; Arena Site B and Arena Site C.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the nature of the regularization you are speaking about?

**Hon. Mitchell:** These are developments to Green Field and Brown Field sites.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, I was waiting patiently for the mention of La Paille there, but there was no mention of La Paille, and it is a community in which you already have existing squatter settlements there. The sugar industry welfare group came and met with the residents, there has been some measure of regularization, but it is incomplete and I would enlist the Minister's support with a view to promoting that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. On the same page 166, the Squatter Settlements Regularization, it is an issue—in 2016 there was an estimate of \$72 million. This was revised downwards to \$29 million of which the 2017 estimate is \$22 million, could the Minister explain why the Ministry revised downwards on this critical matter by what will amount to almost 65 per cent downwards? And this is pursuant to a loan arrangement with the IDB. This loan arrangement, I suspect, was signed in 2011 by the former administration that gives support to these programmes—is it that the Ministry and its agencies are not supporting these programmes and doing the work and expending the counterpart money so that nothing is happening?

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me deal with this. The Member for Chaguanas West asked a question, and now the Member for Oropouche East has asked a related question. There are two issues here. Firstly, this programme was funded by an IDB loan, which is coming to an end shortly, and what you see here is the remainder of the provision available under the IDB loan. So that deals with the allocation. But in

addition, I was very intrigued that the point made by the Member for Chaguanas West about the absence of La Paille Village from the list that the Minister read out. Because, that list of projects relates to constituencies that were represented by the UNC in the 2010/2015 period. And there is nothing in Diego Martin, for example. So that I want to tell this Parliament that this Government is going to revisit all of these programmes to look at the inequity that occurred over the last five years, and ensure that there is equity going forward, and a proper allocation to this Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** My question to the Minister—I ask only questions, I do not make comments on Minister of Finance—of Housing; Minister, are you aware that this IDB loan treats with squatter regularization—whether they are in PNM, UNC, “dah, dah, dah” constituency, and the political imperatives mean nothing—it has to do with where the squatter regularization is required? You are aware this is an IDB programme?

**Mr. Chairman:** Question, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am asking if he is aware that it is an IDB programme, and it has to do with squatter regularization policies where there are squatters.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I have 5,000, how many you have?

**Mr. Chairman:** And, Member, the question was answered. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Can the Minister give a rationale for the heavy concentration of the squatter regularization in Mayaro? He named about five squatter sites in Mayaro, is there a rationale for the heavy concentration there?

**Mr. Imbert:** Is you who select those sites.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Come on, come on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member.

**Hon. Mitchell:** I cannot comment. I do not have a rationalization for why—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could the Minister of Finance temper himself?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member! Members! [*Crosstalk*] The Minister of Planning and Development will shed some light on it.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Deputy Chairman, as was indicated before, this was a loan signed in 2012, and the sites were chosen at that time by the Government in place at that time, and those were the sites that were chosen. And I am sure the Member for Caroni Central will agree with me. Those were the sites that were chosen at that time. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Is that a question, is the Minister—

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, I am going to move on at this time. Page 167, any question on page 167?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, if I may.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You are making one rule for the Government and one rule for the Opposition.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, if I may, as far as I understand it, this is a committee of the whole House and so even though the Minister is the one being examined anyone could ask a question, anyone could answer the question. It is the Standing Finance Committee of the whole House, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am just saying that—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, one at a time.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:**—when in 2012 the loan was signed, the sites were agreed at that time, and, if my memory serves me right, the Government in place at that time was the Government of those on the other side. As I said, and the Member for Caroni Central agreed with me, that is exactly what happened. The sites were chosen by those who now form the Opposition. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to register—

**Mr. Chairman:** Your question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I could ask question alone?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member! Member, you would have had your opportunity to give your comments, do you have a question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, my question to the Minister of Housing. Minister, could you indicate the criteria for the selection of the sites?

**Mr. Imbert:** You picked them.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, could I answer that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** But I asked a question to the Minister of Housing.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** As the Minister of Planning and Development responsible for the IDB, the decision was taken by the former Minister of Planning and Development in conjunction with his colleagues in determining the sites at that time, and that included the current Member for Oropouche East, who was the Minister of Housing at that time.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking the Minister of Housing a question.

**Mr. Chairman:** We cannot continue to go—but it has been answered.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, no, no, I am asking the criteria for the selection of the sites that the Minister of Housing has—

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! Members!

**Dr. Moonilal:**—because we are being misled in the Parliament.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** By whom?

**Mr. Chairman:** The precedent has already been set whereby various Ministers have contributed to various questions that have been asked by various individuals during the course of the Standing Finance Committee. Now is not the first

occasion where it has happened. From day one other Members have been assisting their other Ministers in answering the various questions, so today is no different.

*[Dr. Moonilal raises hand]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you have a question, Member for Oropouche East?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Chairman, if I want to assist, can I assist?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you ask your question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, only Government Members—

**Mr. Chairman:** You make your comment and then you ask your question, so I will move on now to Item 005. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 005, Home Improvement and new Housing Subsidies Programme. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many of these home improvements were done in 2016? And could he, if it is possible now to give us an idea of the main areas or the main constituencies in which most of this housing subsidies programme was afforded?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just answered that question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No!

**Hon. Mitchell:** I gave an undertaking to provide it in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** To provide it in writing, yes. Okay, it will be provided in writing, Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 168. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Page 167, Social and Community Services, 167, Community Development. Could I ask the Minister please to provide in writing, on the matter of 002, Social and Economic Programme for East Port of Spain, there was an estimate of \$5 million, this was revised downward to \$700,000, could I ask the Minister to provide in writing what work, if any at all, was done in 2016 as far as

the Social and Economic Programme for East Port of Spain is concerned?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** They abandoned East Port of Spain.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, you will provide that in writing?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Through you, Chair, to the Minister. I had asked a question earlier to the Minister of Finance and he had indicated that East Port of Spain Development Company was under the Ministry of Housing now, and that the Minister of Housing would determine what role the East Port of Spain Development Company would play. So I just want to ask the Minister, I did not see it listed here, but under this Item 002, Social and Economic Programme for East Port of Spain—and you listed East Port of Spain as one of your institutions.

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes, correct.

**Dr. Tewarie:** What kind of role is the East Port of Spain Development Company going to play? And I see only \$5 million allocated here for East Port of Spain, so is there going to be another allocation for that—?

**Hon. Mitchell:** There is another allocation under IDF. Under 002, these are the soft projects, projects such as education programmes, training programmes, training in urban agriculture, community festivals, sport programmes, community engagement, in East Port of Spain.

**Dr. Tewarie:** East Port of Spain Development Company will do physical?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right, okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 326, Item—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Hold on, page 168. Yes, we were on 167, we now go to 168?

**Mr. Chairman:** So, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you have a question.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, Mr. Deputy, I had my hand up long time.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, but Members, come on, we call out the Items and we identify the pages. [*Interruption*] Proceed. Proceed.

**7.10 p.m.**

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Sir. Just want to ask one question, Item 002, Squatter Settlements Regularization and it is 011 Sector and Institutional Strengthening Programme. The data that was in fact collected for—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** What page are you on?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Page 166.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no. Member, Member, no, no. We are on 168. The Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Chairman, a question to the Minister on page 168, Item 020 and Item 021. There was a downgrade of the estimate from 2016, \$3 million to \$1.8 and \$2 million. Well they kept the same \$2 million as a Revised Estimate. Could the Minister commit in writing what work, if any, was done on the renovation to the New City Mall and the upgrading to East Side Plaza. Thank you.

**Hon. Mitchell:** I will provide it in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 326; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 326. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 327. The Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could the Minister indicate the matter of the support to industrial development initiative, the Invaders Bay Project. Has that been removed from the purview of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. Where is it incidentally?

**Hon. Mitchell:** In the Ministry of Planning and Development.



**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 328 to 329. The Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Question to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development again. Could you commit in writing because I think you had directed me here earlier, the moneys paid out to the large-scale contractors of over \$20 million in 2016.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Item, Sir.

**Dr. Moonilal:** We are at the Accelerated Housing Programme, Sub-Item 230. Could the Minister indicate in writing the quantum of moneys paid to large-scale contractors for outstanding bills for 2016, fiscal? Thank you.

**Hon. Mitchell:** Mr. Chairman, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, commitment in writing. Page 329, any question on page 329 before I move on?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Again, I am on the Accelerated Housing Programme. Could the Minister also indicate, because this is part of his housing initiative, I have heard, the issue of the public/private partnership. Could you also indicate to us whether now or in writing, has there been in progress in relation to the private/public partnership for home construction? One.

And secondly, why is it that the only public/private partnership projects started by the former administration, notably the Republic Bank project in San Fernando, why has work been terminated on the site? Could you give us an update on that please?

**Hon. Mitchell:** I will give you that update in writing. With respect to your previous question, yes, a considerable amount of work has been done and by next month we will turn the sod for our very first PPP project.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And where would it be and which private sector partner?

**Hon. Mitchell:** In Mount Hope.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What is the private sector partner?

**Hon. Mitchell:** The tenders have not, well, they are still evaluating the tenders.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So they are evaluating the tenders but you will turn the sod next month?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

**Hon. Mitchell:** The decisions will be made between now and November.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Fine, good, good.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I would like to thank you hon. Minister and also your Permanent Secretary and senior executives from your Ministry for attending. Do have a good evening.

*Head 62.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I would like to welcome the Permanent Secretary and also all the senior executives from the Ministry. Welcome. I will now invite the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts is focusing on building resilient, culturally rich communities. As such, we are focusing on three areas that make up the name of the Ministry, namely, community development, culture and arts.

With respect to community development our focus is on assisting communities to work together to form strong bonds, to solve common problems

within the community and to be resilient.

With respect to our focus on culture, we are looking at ensuring that we promote nationalism, patriotism within our citizens and nation building and we also promote the celebration of our diversity.

With respect to the arts, we are focusing on the discovery, exposure and development of artistes and protecting our tangible and intangible heritage. In order to promote and to fulfil our mandate the role of community-based organizations, community groups, village councils and so on, and of course the artistes themselves, are very valuable and we look forward and we encourage their support.

As we go into the examination of this budget, I want to thank the Ministry's staff for their hard work and we look forward with eagerness to achieving our goals, our objectives and our mandate in fiscal 2017. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 62 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$431,565,700 for Head 62: Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 382; Item 001, General Administration, page 382. I recognize the Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. Through you to the hon. Minister. Minister I understand that there has been some restructuring in the Ministry in terms of when the Partnership Government was there to where we are now under

this dispensation with respect to bringing several agencies back under the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. However, I see with these increases in terms of the amalgamation of the Ministry under this broad heading of Community Development, Culture and the Arts that there has been a reduction of close to \$6 million with respect to salaries and cost of living—an increase, sorry. No it is a decrease. A decrease of approximately \$5,990,000 on the Ministry's allocation for the fiscal year 2016.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We are on page 382?

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 382, General Administration.

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes. Could the hon. Minister indicate at this point, what is the Ministry's count with respect to the amount of employees? And could you explain to us the increase—sorry my apologies, the decrease?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Mr. Chairman, the increase of, that is under Item 01. The increase caters for positions that were transferred from national diversity as well as from the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism. They are all now grouped together in here so they would register a decrease in those areas that are still listed in these estimates. So that is an increase but it decreases in the other areas as the staff has been moved under the General Administration.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, do you have an idea of the total count under the Ministry now?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The total number of employees under the Ministry right now, 494. That includes both contract as well as establishment.

**Mr. Padarath:** Would you be able to be in a position to tell us how many are contract and how many are on the establishment?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Presently, we have 294 on establishment and 200 on contract.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Community Development Division, page 382; Item 006, Best Village, page 383; Item 007, Arts and Multiculturalism, page 383; Item 008, Culture Division, page 384; Item 009, National Diversity, page 384; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 385. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, I will start with Sub-Item 04 with respect to Electricity. There has been an increase of \$200,000. Could you identify what are some of the rationales for such a sharp increase by \$200,000?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** There has been some increase in the payments to the electricity company. In 2015 we would have expended \$491,000. In 2017 we intend to ensure that we pay some of the bills that have been outstanding and so that increase has been registered to allow for that to happen.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, the outstanding balances you have mentioned, are those balances from the year 2015?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I would not be in a position to state exactly when those balances would be.

**Mr. Padarath:** Would you be able to provide us that so we can get a better understanding of why we have an increase of \$200,000? Would you be able to provide it to us in writing in terms of a rationale?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** If so asked.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, that is a request Madam Minister, so—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Well, you have asked, so that means it will be done.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Thank you for your cooperation, Ma'am.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, remember we are on page 385 and page 386. I recognize the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage. The 2017 estimates of—it is a new Sub-Item. Could the Minister clarify this new Sub-Item and what the \$4 million is being spend on?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Mr. Chairman, through you, we have had a situation where we are going to have to relocate staff from the Jerningham Office. So in order to accommodate those staff members at new locations we have had to introduce this Sub-Item to cater for that rent.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could the Minister advise if this new office accommodation has been finalized? What are the terms of this arrangement and where this new housing accommodation has been found?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We have been assigned two areas. One at the Corner of Duke and Frederick Streets and one on Frederick Street itself. However, we are still finalizing those two areas with Pres-T and so we are not in a position at this point to give final rates, terms and conditions. But this allocation has been made so that whatever it turns out to be, because the move is imminent, we would have the funding to do so.

**7.25 p.m.**

**Mr. Padarath:** Deputy Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister—unfortunately, the Minister of Finance, I believe, has left the House, but I was hoping to draw to your attention, Madam Minister, line Sub-Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, and the Minister of Finance had indicated that there will be some curtailing of official overseas travel and also official entertainment, and I observe under your Ministry there has been an increase of \$400,000 on official overseas

travel, with a further increase of \$47,500 for official entertainment. I am hoping that the Minister, when raised with another Ministry, he said that this was a mistake and that, similarly, such increases would be treated as such—as a mistake. Or whether or not you would want to provide us with an explanation for why such a sharp increase. In a time when we are trying to curtail expenditure you have an increase of \$400,000 in overseas travel and \$47,500 on official entertainment.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** To the Member, through you, Deputy Chairman, this is an allocation—and I want to draw your attention to the 2016 Revised Estimates where though \$375,000 was allocated, only \$100,000 was expended and, therefore, we have been in line with the reduced expenditure and given this allocation, there is no indication—and this is no indication that we are going to expend that amount of money. We will, of course, be looking to reduce in all areas, our expenditure.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, we take no comfort in that, because the thing about it is at this point if you are showing—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, Member.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Is that a question, Deputy Chairman? Is there a question forthcoming?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, there is a question—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, the Minister answered your question. You have a follow-up question?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed, Member.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I know that the Minister has indicated that this may not be the actual expenditure for what will take place over the next financial year, and that is the reason why I made the comment that we did not take any satisfaction or comfort in it. But what I am saying is that there are several

other areas in terms of programmes that are geared towards young people; that are geared towards community development that have been severely cut and when you juxtapose that against your increase—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, could I ask, through the Deputy Chairman, that when we reach to those areas you identify where the cuts were made? Because at this point—

**Mr. Padarath:** Certainly, Ma'am.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:**—I have not seen that and therefore I have answered the question you have asked—

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, then I am not sure if you are spending this amount of time on your Ministry—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We have answered the question that you asked.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Hon. Minister. Line 34, can you kindly explain the rationale for this programme, the University Graduate Recruitment Programme?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The University Graduate Recruitment Programme is a government-wide programme that was instituted by the Minister of Finance, and this is our allocation under that programme for the graduates that will be allocated and sent to the Ministry.

**Mr. Young:** If I may add here, Mr. Chairman, you would see with every Ministry, there has been this allocation of \$1 million. It is a government initiative and a policy roll-out that we are doing.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Deputy Chair. 28, Other Contracted Services, I see that it has moved from \$1.8 million to \$2.8 million. Could the



Minister provide some additional information in relation to this increase, and what the \$2.8 million is being spent on contracted services?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I would like again to draw to the attention of the hon. Member that \$2.8 million is the allocation; it is not the expenditure, and under this area is where we would look at consultant services that need to be provided to the Ministry. We have a number of policies that are going to be rolled out and so on, and this is where we are going to look at getting our consultants, if necessary. This is the allocation that they would be paid from. We have the cultural policy, we have the community development policy, we have a number of Carnival studies and economic impact assessments and all of these will come from that area.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Member, a follow-up question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** A number of—you said policy roll-out. So how many—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Policy formulation.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Policy formulation on?

**Mr. Chairman:** What types of policy formation—that is the question?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I am going to repeat, through you, Deputy Chairman.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, repeat for my benefit.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I said community development policy, I said cultural policy, I said that we have also economic impact assessments to be done on Carnival.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, with respect to line Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment, you have an increase of \$100,000. Would you be able to be in a position to give us an idea of what type of short-term employment your Ministry engages in, in terms of what numbers of employees engage in short-term employment, and a basic idea of what type of positions are offered through short-term employment under the Ministry of Community

Development, Culture and the Arts?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** At this point we have 78 short-term employees. Many of them are in the national performing entities. That is the National Steel Symphony Orchestra, the National Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Theatre Arts Company and we are actually, in the Ministry, seeking to reduce our short-term employment as we move towards filling the contract positions that are associated with these entities.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, line Sub-Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles. We see an increase of \$100,000 in this area. Could you indicate to us whether or not these vehicles are serviced in-house and maintained in-house or is it that they are contracted out?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We contract out these services.

**Mr. Padarath:** Are these private entities or is it through the agency and VMCOTT, or private agencies?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Private and VMCOTT.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Would you be able to give us an undertaking of letting us know who is the current supplier in terms of the service for these vehicles?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** In writing we will provide it.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item number 002, Community Development Division, page 386. Item 005, Mediation Centres, page 387. Member for Princes Town, page 387?

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, you did not look up when you said 386 so I am not sure if you would allow us to go back to 386, but my hand was up.

**Mr. Chairman:** You sure about that?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. I will give you the benefit of the doubt. Go ahead.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, thank you. Madam Minister, with respect to line Item 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, there is an increase by \$125,000. Can you indicate to us what seminars, conferences and other functions your Ministry might be engaged in that would require a further \$125,000?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This involves consultations, seminars, stakeholders, staff, any training that takes place under the general admin area.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Minister, again, we see under Community Development Division, if you look at line Sub-Item 05, you would see a huge increase in telephones for \$500,000. Can you indicate to us why such a large allocation, an increase?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Once again, under this line Item, we want to ensure that we pay up any bills that may have been outstanding. We also, through this line Item, deal with community centres that may have phones; regional complexes and so on. Quite a number of them at this point need to be relocated and they also need additional phone lines and so this has been included to ensure that we have the allocation to deal with this increase.

**Mr. Padarath:** By \$500,000, Madam Minister?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** By \$500,000. That is what it says.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, if you turn to line Sub-Item 16 under Contract Employment, there has been a decrease by \$700,000. Could you indicate what positions or roughly an idea of the positions that would have been affected by these contract employment—decrease, sorry—and what would have contributed to such a large decrease in the area of contract employment under Community Development Division?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We would have to provide that in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** It will be provided in writing, Member.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, line Sub-Item 37, Janitorial Services. There is an increase of \$91,250. Again, if you can give us an explanation with respect to janitorial services being cut, why such a large figure and whether or not you would be—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** It was increased, Member. It was increased, it was not cut.

**Mr. Padarath:** Oh sorry, it was increased. My apologies. Why the increase in this area?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** As indicated, we do have a number of offices that need to be opened under the Community Development Division—regional complexes, administrative officers and so on—and they would require additional janitorial staff, and so that was put there to ensure that we are able to accommodate.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Madam Minister, line Sub-Item 43, Security Services, an increase by \$312,000. Can you indicate whether or not this is private security services or whether or not MTS provides these security services?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** That, I would have to provide in writing, Member.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. So you would be able to indicate to us who is the current service provider?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yes, in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** And the contract arrangements for those?

**Mr. Chairman:** In writing.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I am advised that we do not have one right now. This is in order to procure such services.

**Mr. Padarath:** And line Sub-Item 66 again, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions under the area of Community Development Division. There is

an increase by \$110,000. Can you indicate to us, what are the plans by the Community Development Division in terms of their work schedule that would necessitate an increase of \$110,000 in the area of hosting of conferences, seminars and functions?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The Community Development Division regularly holds meetings with the community groups, with stakeholders and also professional training and so on, for—and seminars—for the community development officers who work on the ground. And there is an increased need for more of these types of sensitization sessions, both within—internal—as well as external, to ensure that community groups are well sensitized with respect to their role within community development, and so this reflects this increased focus.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, in light of what you have just indicated, there must be a work plan or work schedule with the Ministry under this particular division that would give us a clear indication of what are the events, what are the series of seminars. The work schedule of this particular division would help to guide in terms of what is the mandate over the next year in terms of this public expenditure. Would you be able to be in a position to provide us with those work schedules from the Ministry which will help to guide some of the policy decisions; but not only the policy, but also the implementation through these conferences and seminars?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** You will have that as soon as it is possible. As soon as it is possible, Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town, you okay now?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Mediation Centres, page 387. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Sub-Item Number 16,

Contract Employment. We see there, there has been a cut—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, Sir?

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am trying to get the Members quiet so—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I am hearing you, Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Dr. Rambachan:** There has been a cut by \$1.1 million for contract employment. There are a couple questions I have to ask. Does this contract employment relate or refer to the actual mediators, or all staff, including the mediators?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** All staff. It refers to all staff.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Including those engaged in mediation?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Some of the mediation staff, yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. At a time when, you would agree that we have to improve community relations and find alternative ways to deal with disputes in communities, do you think it is a good thing to have cut the amount allocated here for mediation in communities—since you stated at the beginning of your intervention that one of your objectives is to foster greater community togetherness and community unity, and the resolution of disputes outside of the court system and in a very friendly atmosphere I think is something that we should promote. So I am concerned about this \$1.1 million and I would like to know, therefore, what staff has really been cut as a result of this \$1.1 million decrease?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No staff has been cut, Member. Under line Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services, that line Item is also used to ensure that we have enough mediators on staff.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And you would agree, Minister, that under 28, it has been cut by \$625,000?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, we are cognizant of our financial situation and

the allocations that have been put into the budget are sufficient at this time to ensure that we do not reduce the standard. We may not be able to increase it as much as we will like to, but there is no cut in the effect of the mediation staff on the communities that they get involved in.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, are these for the mediation centres?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yes, they are.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And would you be able to—in writing, you do not need to do it now—identify the mediation centres, please, throughout Trinidad and Tobago?

**Mr. Chairman:** Do we have your commitment, Minister?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I should direct the Member to the website. Yes, Member, we will deal with it.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, if you look at line Sub-Item 66, so far since we have started the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, again we turn to line Sub-Item 66 where we see another increase in another division. So far, all the divisions that we have covered under the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, have had increases in the area of hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions.

**Mr. Chairman:** And the question is?

**7.40 p.m.**

**Mr. Padarath:** The question, Madam Minister, is that there— probably I should ask this later down when we go to some of the areas that have been cut—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, well we will move on. We will move on.

**Mr. Padarath:**—but in keeping with what the Minister of Finance had indicated, we saw where overseas travel has been increased by \$400,000 and we are seeing—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town. Member for Princes Town, we will move on. You said you will have the question later on. Item 006, page 388; Item 007, Arts and Multiculturalism, page 388 and page 389; Item 008 Culture Division, page 390.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, with respect to travelling and subsistence under the Culture Division line Item 01, there is an increase of \$600,000, would you be able to be in a position to give us an idea why again such a large increase?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** There are number of positions that are to be filled under the Culture Division as we move from short-term into the contract positions which were created, and this is put there to ensure that we are able to meet the demands of the new positions that will be filled. There are also arrears that are to be paid.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, line Item 16 Contract Employment has been increased by \$1,320,000, could you give us an indication, or some sort of projections, with respect to contract employment under the Culture Division than you envisage over the next fiscal year?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** These are the positions for the national performing entities, the NTAC, the NSSO, the MPO, and these are the positions that we are seeking to fill at this moment.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Minister, No. 89 Cultural Programmes, I noticed that you have increased the expenditure by \$1.35 million, can you indicate what kind of cultural programmes are envisaged under this?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I want to thank very much the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Minister of Finance—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the comment coming for my



question—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:**—because I did not increase the expenditure. It was increased—

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, one second.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—is very, very insulting that a Member on that side can comment—

**Mr. Chairman:** What is the situation, Sir?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The first comment—I take it very sensitive because—

**Mr. Imbert:** It is a question or not? It is a question?

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

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me intervene here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, one second.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, I need to intervene because the allocation—no, Mr. Chairman, with due respect, I need to intervene because the Member has asked why this allocation has increased and the only person who can answer that is me.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you care to answer the question now?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, proceed.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have increased the allocations to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts because I think this is a very important area of national life. If you look at all the Items, each one has got a small increase because we need to focus on community development and culture. The Minister cannot tell you why the Ministry of Finance has decided to increase this allocation, and the cultural programmes will be respectful of our national diversity and will cover all facets of our culture including Carnival, calypso and Ramleela. Okay?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** And I express my gratitude to the Minister of Finance

for doing so.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Deputy Chair, the Minister has answered. I am satisfied with the answer, but I think it is getting very ridiculous when a Member on the other side can say I do not like the answer and making certain kinds of insinuations that I think are very unfortunate. Very, very unfortunate.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! Members, let us keep the decorum in order, please. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** The Member for Tabaquite picked up.

**Mr. Chairman:** So Item 006; Item 007; Item 009 National Diversity, page 391. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 392; Item 001 General Administration, page 392; Item 002 Community Development Division, page 392; Item 005 Mediation Centres, page 392.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 392?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, could you advise for 02, 03 and 04? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! I recognize the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla proceed.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Sir. Madam Minister, is it that you are going to be equipping new mediation centres that you have a—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yes, there are mediation centres that were new ones that will be equipped under this. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! Members! Members for Tabaquite and for Laventille West. Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And these are centres that are new, is it?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** There are new ones, yes, but this will also cater for the

existing centres.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. Okay. Thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006 Best Village, page 393; Item 007 Arts and Multiculturalism, page 393; Item 008, Culture Division, page 393; Item 009 National Diversity, page 394. Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 394; Item 005 Non-Profit Institutions, pages 394 and 395.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to 005, Item 15 Non-Profit Institutions (Culture Division), Minister might you be in a position, if not now and you can supply us, as to this reduction of \$10 million and what are the organizations that would have suffered that reduced amount of allocation?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This Item really is an Item under which community groups, artists and various persons involved in the cultural landscape apply for grant funding. So a reduction of \$10 million does not directly affect any one person. It just means that there is less grant funding available under this particular line Item.

**Mr. Karim:** It is possible that we might be able to get an idea as to the list for the last fiscal?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The list for the last fiscal is a very long list. On average, we have as many as 1,900 people applying over the course of three to four months. So is it that you want a list?

**Mr. Karim:** It is up to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I was going to ask the same question, Mr. Deputy Chairman on 05, Non-Profit Institutions, Community Development Division, where you have \$9 million allocated, how is this \$9 million distributed and who are the organizations that benefit from it?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** That line Item deals with the work of the Community

Development Division, it deals with the community education courses that are offered nationwide, it deals with community development days, it deal with other programmes of the Community Development Division. That is not a grant funding line Item.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. To the Minister, line Item No. 14 National Steel Symphony. In 2016 the revised estimate is \$5 million. I am assuming \$5 million, or thereabout, was spent in that line Item, could you state what sort of expenditure would have made up that \$5 million?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The money is the money that is used to pay the staff of the National Steel Symphony.

**Mr. Lee:** A follow-up. Could you provide—I do not know if you have it—a list of the categories who make up the steel orchestra?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** They are all Musician I's, I think. All Musician I's.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy. Hon. Minister line 06 Operational Expenses for Community Facilities, I see it is a new Sub-Item, and prior to us coming here we had the provision for telephones, janitorial services, et cetera, et cetera, what makes this line Item different to what was provided before?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We have an interim arrangement for community centres where we are instituting a pilot of 40 centres and it is using some governance structure in there, and there will be additional staff that need to be paid. So this is a different matter from the telephones and the licensing.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** You said it is a pilot project in 40, would you be able to submit in writing the 40 areas that you will be having this pilot project, please?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Certainly. We are looking at the programme, we are also reviewing, but we can provide you with the 40 that we initially plan to use in that study, yes.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, line Item 10, the Best Village Programme with a decrease of \$1.5 million, could you indicate what areas will be impacted with respect to the Best Village Programme?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** With respect to the Best Village we are undergoing a review of the Best Village. Over the years there have been quite a number of categories, some of them not well subscribed, but it does take from the Ministry with respect to putting on those different categories. So we are looking to revise that programme for increase impact and relevance, and in that revision we expect that though there is a decrease in the allocation it will not adversely affect the programme itself.

**Mr. Padarath:** Can you indicate, Minister, what are some of these areas that you speak of?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We are going to consult with our best village stakeholders at the end of this month, and after that consultation we will be able to fully explain to the national community what areas we are focusing on for 2017.

**Mr. Padarath:** So Minister in fact you are saying that there has been a decrease before there has been any consultation?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The decrease has come because of our national conditions, but understanding that even before we took the steps to ensure that we looked at the spend on the programme, and even this year we have been able to realize significant savings with just with respect to service providers and so on within the programme. And so, we do not anticipate a difficulty here at all.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, that is the point I was making earlier because you speak about savings and there has been a decrease by \$1.5 million here in the Best Village Programme, but at the same time under General Administration there is an

increase by \$400,000 with respect to overseas travel. So really it is not making any kind of sense.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Well Member, I do not know what your question is, but I will answer you and say this. Money has to be spent in a Government, it is where you spend it and how, and so there is no issue about putting more money in one area and not putting it in another.

**Mr. Padarath:** So therefore you are saying, Madam Minister—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, I did not finish. Member—

**Mr. Padarath:**—that Best Village Programme is not a priority.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:**—I did not finish. I did not finish. What I said to you at the Best Village Programme is that we have taken steps to look at how we spend money within the programme because there was a lot of money that could have been spent in different areas and a lot of savings that could have realized. And so we have started last year in ensuring that we have savings and going forward we will have savings again. So therefore the reduction will not affect the programme at all because, of course, Best Village as we know, is an iconic, long-running programme, very important to the entire society, and therefore, we are not playing games with Best Village.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, you are really defeating your own argument—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Is there a question?

**Mr. Padarath:** You are really defeating your own argument because we—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Deputy Chairman, is there a question?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town a question please.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you. Through you, Chair. Madam Minister, I know that your Ministry gives funding to the Tassa Association of Trinidad and Tobago but I am not seeing it here, can you tell me under which Head that funding comes from

to the Tassa Association of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The Tassa Association applies for funding like many other groups and that would be covered under Head 15. Sorry, line Item 15 Non-Profit Institutions (Culture Division).

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay. Just a follow-up question. The funding for this fiscal year, have you decided on that amount for them?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The Tassa Association applied for this year and received funding already.

**Miss Ramdial:** How much?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I will have to file that in writing. It is just an allocation.

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay, no problem. Once you can furnish that. Thanks.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Minister, through the Chair, Item 22 Ecclesiastical Bodies. In 2016 there was an allocation of \$1.5 million, but it seems that nothing was expended to these bodies.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** That has been moved to the Office of the Prime Minister. That is no longer at the Ministry.

**Dr. Rambachan:** There was no note here, that is why I asked.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, you have a follow-up?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure. Therefore, from Item No. 24, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Anglican, Muslim, right down to Item 39, are all those now under the Prime Minister's Office?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I would imagine so, yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You are not sure?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yes, I am sure.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, could you advise on the line Items 12 and 18, why there is no allocation for both line Items?

**7.55 p.m.**

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** They have moved to other Ministries. The Retirees, Item 12, is under the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services; and the Archaeological Committee, I am not certain where that has moved to but I am sure that they are no longer with the Ministry, hence the lack of allocation.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, line 13, Transformation Development Centres, what is the role and function of these centres?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** At this point, those centres function mainly as soup kitchens. They do meals daily to persons.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** And who do they target, Minister?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The less fortunate persons who cannot afford.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, line Item 19, just for my point of clarification, is this for the overall administration of the National Museum and Art Gallery?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006, Educational Institutions, page 395; Item 007, Households, page 396.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, line Item 08 Hosting of Cultural Camps, it is submitted as a new Item, \$1 million has been allocated for the hosting of these cultural camps. If you could give us an idea of what is the thinking behind it in terms of what are the main objectives; where do you propose to have these cultural camps, and what sort of outcomes do you expect by having these camps in some of these areas?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** These cultural camps have moved to recurrent from the



DP. These camps are where we partner, through the culture division, with different agencies that offer camps. The camps have to fall within a certain category. They have to look at our heritage, they have to look at the various arts, and so groups actually apply to be able to get funding for the cultural camps. The Ministry provides some and the group must provide some as well. They typically take place within the vacation, the July/August vacation and they cater generally to children and involve children in different areas of the arts.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Community Action for Revival and Empowerment, can you explain what that is about? That \$4 million.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This is a fund that gives grants for community groups who apply for grant funding under this line Item.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Grant funding for what?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** For any kind of community function. So typically, communities would want to have family days, they may want to do homework centres. Anything that solves problems in communities, this is where they would apply and from this funding is where we would assist.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, line Item 07, Support for Community Development, an allocation of \$3 million, again, can you give us an idea in terms of what would these moneys be used for when we speak about support for community development?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** These moneys are used to pay staff under the Community Development Fund which is a semi-autonomous programme of the Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 009 Other Transfers, page 396.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Item 02 Export Centres, Minister, can

you indicate to us how you plan to utilize that increase of \$2 million?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** That is used to pay the staff at the Export Centres around the country.

**Mr. Karim:** In that case, can you indicate what the increase in the staff is? Is it an increase or is that increased wages? Is it an increase in the number of staff or an increase in the remuneration?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** It is not an increase in the number of staff, so I will have to provide the exact explanation for that in writing for you.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, line Item 09, the National Philharmonic Orchestra, an allocation of \$1 million this year. Could you give us an indication—well, some background information in terms of how do you propose this National Philharmonic Orchestra going forward under your Ministry?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The National Philharmonic Orchestra exists as a group of premier artistes who play the instruments of a classical philharmonic orchestra and they operate part-time with the Ministry.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Deputy. Hon. Minister, can you identify 009, 06, National Days and Festivals, what is it about in terms of how the moneys are going to be expended? Thank you.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** That line Item is also a grant funding area where different community groups and so on apply with specific reference to celebration of our national days, our holidays and festivals, and under this line Item, they will be considered for funding.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Would that be for individuals as well?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No, under this Item, individuals do not apply.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is there any line Item where an individual could apply?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Individuals may apply under the Vote for culture where

they may be doing different things in the arts. So, for example, an author may apply and so on, that is where they will be entertained.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, 02 Export Centres, in 2015, the expenditure was \$22 million roughly. Question would be: how many export centres do you have presently right now? And the allocation for 2017 is \$7 million, would that be sufficient to run the centres that you have in place right now or there will be some rationalization about those export centres?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** There is a review of the export centre company that is happening at the moment and so we are ensuring that all staff that are employed are paid and so on, but the operation of the export centres company, we are presently reviewing with a view to rationalizing what they do.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, going back to line Item 09, National Philharmonic Orchestra, could you indicate to us what genres of music and their instruments that will be incorporated in this orchestra? Would it be representative of all of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The orchestra is an on-going concern and they play the usual instruments that you would find in a chamber orchestra: wind, strings, percussion.

**Mr. Padarath:** And would it be representative of all the cultures in Trinidad and Tobago or you are looking at specifically, at this time, a traditional philharmonic orchestra?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This is an orchestra that existed for the past seven years or so at least, so I am not looking to do anything different from what existed before.

**Mr. Padarath:** So no improvements? You are just keeping the status quo?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No improvements? It is a wonderful, very excellent

orchestra.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, I am asking, Madam Minister.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Obviously, Member, you may not have heard them and so I would want to tell you the room for improvement is very narrow, but we want to ensure that if there is such, we will ensure that their improvement in their skill will be done.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, fortunately, I have heard them and that is why I am asking some of these questions of whether or not there will be the incorporation of other—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** It is a philharmonic orchestra and there are certain instruments that go along with a philharmonic orchestra.

**Mr. Padarath:** So the answer is no?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Asking the wrong questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises, page 397.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you indicate whether there are any claims outstanding to be paid through the National Commission for Self-Help; and, if so, the quantum?

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, please.

**Mr. Karim:** Line Item 01, National Commission for Self-Help Limited.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Well, I would imagine that since their—traffic would be very high. At this point in time, I would imagine that there would be claims that they would be considering, yes.

**Mr. Karim:** Or you said travelling, I was not indicating that.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Travelling?

**Mr. Karim:** No, not travelling at all.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No, I am not talking about travelling, this is the national

self-help commission.

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yeah, so I am saying that their traffic is high in terms of the amount of applications they get. So at any one point in time yes, I would imagine there are outstanding claims.

**Mr. Karim:** All right. But do you have an idea as to the quantum of that—charged in terms of organizations who may have put in requests for assistance?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No, I would not have that.

**Mr. Karim:** Might you be able to give us an idea as to what that entails?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** As at all the outstanding applications at the National Commission for Self-Help?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, because I am aware, for example, in my constituency too, people would have submitted requests for assistance. They may have been given approval, they may have gotten the goods, but the supplier may not have been paid.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This particular line Item deals with the staffing at the national self-help commission.

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, but I am also asking a related question.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Well, you may want to ask that when we get to that line Item.

**Mr. Karim:** Sure, no problem.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-head 06 Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 397, 004 Statutory Boards, page 397.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and the Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly*. 20 Queen's Hall, Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 461, 001 General Administration, page 461; Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services,

page 461, 001 General Administration, page 461.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, with respect to line Item 28 under Goods and Services, can you indicate to us what Other Contracted Services would entail, seeing that we have had an increase of over \$100,000 in this area?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Other Contracted Services should relate to short—to people that they hire for—ushers and so on—different functions and events and the Queen's Hall is in very constant demand and always very heavily booked, so I would imagine that this increase is to ensure that they have adequate staff to deal with those events.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, we have seen a decrease by over \$1 million in this particular area. Can you indicate to us what positions have been discontinued or expired or what sort of restructuring is happening under the area of Contract Employment?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, I am not certain that restructuring is taking place but I will commit to provide that to you in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure. Again, Madam Minister, line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, there has been an increase by \$87,000 in this particular area. Can you give us an explanation of why there would be this projected increase in this particular area?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, it is one of the thrusts of the Ministry to ensure that information is disseminated to the public with respect to cultural offerings that are happening within our country. We have discovered that a lot of people do not know what is going on in our performing spaces and this would be an attempt to ensure that the Queen's Hall promotes their cultural offerings that are taking place at the venue.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 462, 001

General Administration, page 462; Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 462; 007 Households, page 462. 21 Naparima Bowl, Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure, page 467; 001 General Administration, page 467; Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, page 467, 001 General Administration, page 467.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, with respect to the Contract Employment, line Item 16, there has been an increase by \$85,100. Again, if we could get an idea of what sort of positions you are looking towards in the next fiscal year that would account for an increase by \$85,100?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, I know that they are seeking to fill some of their positions that are available. With respect to the exact positions, I would have to provide that in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, with respect to the line Item 22, again, with respect to employment, in this particular line Item, Short-Term Employment accounts for \$400,000 which is a rather significant number for short-term employment in an organization like this. Again, if you could give us an idea, you may not have it at your fingertips right now, I am sure, but if you can provide the information in terms of what positions they are looking at in terms of short-term employment and also, some sort of idea of the duration of these short-term employments as well.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Will provide in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Confirmation in writing. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, if you look at line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing again, it is a significant increase by \$54,400. Similarly an explanation for this, keeping in light with Government's thrust to keep down the areas of promotions, publicity, official functions and so on.

**8.10 p.m.**

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, I do not know that there is a—the answer is the same as for Queen's Hall. I do not know that the Government has a thrust to keep down publicity and promotion.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, the hon. Minister of Finance had indicated with a previous Ministry—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Well Member, you are asking me about this Ministry, so I am answering you on this one.

**Mr. Padarath:** A similar approach will be taken with all Ministries.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any other questions, Member?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, I answered that already.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any other question? Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment, Purchases, page 468; 001, General Administration, page 468. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, page 468; 007, Households, page 468; 22, National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 473; 001, General Administration, page 473.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. If you look at line Item 08, under General Administration, you would see a figure of \$5.5 million, an increase of \$562,912 with respect to rent, lease, office accommodation and storage. Madam Minister, would you be able to give us an idea of what this figure represents, in terms of rent or lease for the NCC?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Hon. Member, Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you, I will provide that in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Madam Minister, as we are on the issue of rent lease, I know just recently the National Carnival Commission has occupied a new facility. Is it that those facilities are inadequate to house all the divisions of the NCC?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I do not know that they occupied another staffing



facility. As far as I know it was storage. And, as I said, I would have to give the particulars of this particular increase to you in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Madam Minister, line Item 12, Materials and Supplies, a sharp increase of \$395,500. Again, what does this increase represent, in terms of materials and supplies?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I would supply that in writing as well.

**Mr. Chairman:** Confirmation in writing, Member for Princes Town. Another question?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mr. Padarath:** Line Item 16, Contract Employment, an increase by \$1,622,000, similarly if we can have an idea of what are some of these areas of contract employment through the NCC and again similarly the duration, positions that would have expired or have been discontinued, as well would be useful, in terms of whether there is a change management approach or whether or not this is simply just hiring additional staff.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Let me be clear, you want to know why there is an increase in the contract employment positions?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, we would like to have an idea of the increase with respect to the positions, whether or not there has been any restructuring, whether or not there has been any discontinuing of some positions, and so on, whether there is a change management approach, or whether or not it is simply just hiring some of the same positions again?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I find the question that is being asked is a very broad question on a very specific Item. And, therefore, I want to commit to providing the explanation for this Item. The broadness of that question

concerns me and I will provide the answer that is asked about the specific line Item, in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Certainly, Madam.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Another question on that page? Go ahead, Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, with respect to line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, another increase here of \$900,000. Again, if we can have an idea from the National Carnival Commission, in terms of how this allocation is to be used and what is the justification for such a sharp increase.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am certain that the reason for this follows the same thing. Rates have increased, gone up and so on, and it is important for any agency to ensure that whatever they do, people know that they are doing it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 474; 001, General Administration; page 474. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 474; 007, Households, page 474; 008 Subsidies, page 474; 009, Other Transfers, page 474.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Consolidation Fund, page 170; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 170; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 171 to page 173. Member for Princes Town, identify which page you are on, please.

**Mr. Padarath:** Page 171.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, line Item 004, the Establishment of Community Museum Services, an allocation of \$1 million. Again, if you can give us an idea of

what these community museum services will provide.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This \$1 million is provided to allow for the Ministry to be able to deal with quite a number of community museums that have mushroomed around the country and to ensure that we develop a policy of dealing with them and also of allocating funding or support to these community museums. There are quite a number. There is a Merikin Museum in Moruga. There is a museum in Toco and these museums are rich sources of community heritage and we would like to be able, and we intend to, ensure that we do support these museums in some way.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay, so this is support for those, okay. Madam Minister, as well, if you look at line Item 05, the Virtual Museum of Trinidad and Tobago, I know that this has been an issue that spent some time in the public domain, much conversation around it. There has been an allocation of \$500,000. Again, what are your plans really for this virtual museum of Trinidad and Tobago and how soon can we see something happening with respect to it coming on line?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The plan, the end game is to digitize the museum's collection. This \$500,000 is allocated to give us a start as we begin to do so. So we do not expect to complete the project in this fiscal but we do intend to make a start and set up the framework by which we can have this virtual museum.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure. Madam, if you look lower down and in keeping with this line Item as well I notice that there are some areas of expenditure, in terms of the Development Programme. Looking at information technology and in keeping in line with 05, the virtual museum of Trinidad and Tobago, are there other agencies within the Government that you are partnering with to absorb some of the costs that would be able to propel you further than where you would like to be, probably around this time next year, but in terms of partnering with some of these

organizations that can provide that information technology to you, while utilizing the same allocation that you have here, but allowing you to go further with partnering with some of these other agencies?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I am certain that the Museum Director has been exploring the options that are available and will make use of any services that will assist in this regard.

**Mr. Padarath:** But you cannot say at this time if there is any particular linkage or partnership that you have been able to develop for this?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Not at this time.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Madam Minister, line Item 010, Purpose-built National Art Gallery, an allocation initially in 2016 of \$1 million. Here we see in 2017, \$500,000, nothing having been spent in 2016. If you can give us, again, an idea of the Purpose-built National Art Gallery.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The National Museum is seeking to ensure that we have a building that is specifically designed and used to display all of the art in different exhibitions of the country, and so this \$500,000 is to ensure that we are able to retrofit a building that would be assigned. We are already in discussions with Pres-T to assign us a building and that is assigned so that we can do some retrofitting, and so on.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, could you say whether or not the much talked about Cazabon collection will be housed in this art gallery?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Most likely, it would be.

**Mr. Padarath:** Can you say at this stage, Ma'am, as we are on this line Item, where is this exhibition currently being housed, as we speak?

**Mr. Chairman:** Which exhibition?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The Cazabon exhibition?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The Cazabons, as you would know, in the National Art Gallery there is a Cazabon room and so some of them would be stored there and there is also storage that some of them would be in.

**Mr. Padarath:** Ma'am, are there any plans at this stage to procure additional pieces of the Cazabon collection?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I am not aware of any plans.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, Members, we are on pages 171, 172 and 173.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, with respect to line Item 033, the Establishment of the Ramleela Sites, Felicity—and I know Ramleela has featured in this House for the past few days, up to a few minutes ago—

**Mr. Chairman:** Come to the question, please.

**Mr. Padarath:**—but there is absolutely no allocation made here. When you look at different areas like the National Philharmonic Orchestra and other areas there have been allocations, but with respect to the establishment of the Ramleela site facility in Felicity there is absolutely no allocation here. Would you care to comment at this stage, in terms of what was the thinking behind this, in terms of at least giving it a start, but there is absolutely nothing happening in this particular area?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Similar to the festival facility, that was a project that we met in Arouca, similar to the one that we met in Sangre Grande, we have put these projects on hold because we simply do not have the funding at this time to be able to continue with them, and so they are on hold, pending the availability of funds.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you Deputy Chair, and to the Minister. Minister, I see under 003, the Establishment of a Sugar Museum, in 2016, \$500,000 was allocated and apparently none was spent, and I see that in 2017 it is projected that \$2 million

will be spent. Then I see, under 014, Sugar Heritage Village Archive and Documentation Centre. Are these two projects gelling or are they separate, and so on? Could you elaborate for me please?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** The Sugar Museum Project was a part of a much bigger project that was under the Ministry of Tourism which was also shared, in terms of allocation by the Ministry of Sport and the Ministry of Community Development at that time. The project was a very large undertaking. A lot of money was spent, but it was projected that quite a lot of money, more, would have been spent and it also involved quite a lot of the Caroni land in the Brechin Castle area. That project has been put on hold and I assume the Ministry of Tourism, which was the lead Ministry, would deal more with what is the situation with that project on a whole.

But the Ministry of Community Development, now the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, had responsibility for the museum and that part of the project is going to go forward and as such the allocation has been increased to ensure that we can establish the sugar museum and so that part of our history and our heritage will be kept alive and we will be able to, future generations, see that part of our history, and so we are going ahead with the sugar museum.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, will it be on the same compound of the sugar heritage village? I am trying to understand.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yes, we tried to understand as well when we saw that very, very huge expenditure in a project that had almost no future, but in rationalizing that, what we did was we said, yes, we would have the sugar museum that is already existing. Since it is already there, we would continue with that and it is the same thing. So that is why you would not see anything under the Sugar Heritage Village and so on. There is not much there. There is nothing there

because everything has been amalgamated under the sugar museum.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, going back to line Item 33, Establishment of the Ramleela Site in Felicity, I know that the Ramleela Festival in Felicity is one of the oldest in all of Trinidad and Tobago and, in keeping with the establishment of the site, I know a lot of work, preparatory work, had gone into it with respect to partnering with the Ramleela committee in Felicity. Seeing that we are in the period of Ramleela, has the Ministry provided any sort of allocation to the Ramleela committee in Felicity during this period, and if so can you indicate how much was granted to them?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I fail to see how that gels with the establishment of the Ramleela site.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, they have no site.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** However, yes. As is customary, the Ministry continues to support Ramleela and has provided and will be providing funding for the groups that have applied, yes.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, are you aware that Ramleela is now completed?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Yes, I am.

**Mr. Padarath:** So, you are actually admitting that Ramleela has come and Ramleela has gone and they have received no funding?

**8.25 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town!

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Member, you may not be au courant—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town!

**Mr. Chairman:**—could I just say and put on the record that the allocation of funding depends on the time of application. Therefore, it is a wrong thing to say that Ramleela has come and gone and no funding has been allocated, when you do

not have with you the facts about when the groups had applied.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, Madam Minister, I am giving you the opportunity to indicate to us what are the facts.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I am giving you the opportunity to know that Ramleela as is customary will be attended to.

**Mr. Padarath:** But as of today there has been no allocation.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Do you have a question?

**Mr. Padarath:** This is the question.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** What is the question?

**Mr. Padarath:** Has there been any allocation up to today, because Ramleela is now complete?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** There has been an application. There has been approval of funds, and the funds will be disbursed as soon as they are released.

**Mr. Padarath:** So there has been no allocation for Ramleela 2016?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, the Minister has answered already, we will proceed. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 174; Infrastructure Development Fund—[*Interruption*] Members, pay attention, please. I am not going back.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I had a lovely time at Dow Village last night.

**Mr. Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 331; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 331 and 332; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 333.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 62 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Madam Minister. Thank you Permanent Secretary and other senior executives of the Ministry.



*Head 08.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission, \$90,070,900. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement, not exceeding five minutes. Welcome.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will not take five minutes, Mr. Chairman. I think all of us in here, having contested elections at least once, would have some idea of the duties and responsibilities of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. If you look in the estimates, you will see increases in the allocation over last year, reason being, we have two elections in 2017. We have a local government election and we have a Tobago House of Assembly election. So by and large, the fact that we have those two elections in fiscal 2017, as opposed to no election in 2016, is responsible for the increases in allocations. Having said that, I hope there will now be no questions.

*Question proposed:* That head 08 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$90,070,900 for Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure, under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 40; Item 001, General Administration, page 40; Item 002, Election Expenses, page 40; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 41; Item 001, General Administration, pages 41 and 42; Item 002, Election Expenses, page 42; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 43, Item 001, General Administration, page 43.

Hon. Members, we will now move on the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidation

Fund, page 13; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 13.

**Mr. Karim:** Just a quick one. The upgrading of the electronic voter registration, what is the status of it? [*Interruption*] “Gawd, yuh wah me go back dey again?”—page 13.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 13, Item 005.

**Mr. Karim:** I just want to get an update of it.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is a continuous programme. You have to continuously update the database base, the registration system, election management system. It is fine—[*Interruption*] no problems, everything good.

**Dr. Tewarie:** In the upgrading of the voter registration system, does it take—does it address the question of—how does it address the question of people who have died? [*Crosstalk*] That is the first question I would like—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Imbert:** Just a minute, Member. Just excuse me. Mr. Chairman, the Member for Couva South is carrying on some kind of commentary down there. What is going on?

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not think it is affecting me on this side.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah it is affecting me, because I am trying to listen to the Member for Caroni Central, because I am sure his question is important, and [*Interruption*] I cannot hear over that noise from down there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Members, let us hear the Member for Caroni Central.

**Hon. Imbert:** “He going again.”

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva South, please? Member for Caroni Central, you have the floor.

**Hon. Imbert:** Repeat.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I will repeat. The question I am asking is that: how is the issue of people who have died, and need to be removed from the list addressed? The

reason I am asking that is not that—because it seems to me that there is some difficulty of the determining when somebody has, in fact, died from the list while you are doing the system.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. I am advised by the Chief Election Officer, that the Elections and Boundaries Commission receives a report from the Registrar General's Officer, Registrar of Births and Deaths every month.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Every month?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes and they use that to update the system, but as a precaution, they do field checks to ensure that the information is accurate. In addition, I am told that on a weekly basis they approach the Registrar of Births and Deaths in the district offices, to update their records. So it seems to be quite a systematic and you know, well-thought-out, well-functioning programme.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And this is institutionalized.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah, and I might say from my own personal experience, I noticed it has improved a lot in recent years. I have seen people who have died and within a month or two they are coming off the system, okay?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. Could I ask one more question?

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure, go ahead.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Which is that, in the case where people on the list have either migrated or have gone abroad for a long period of time, how is that issue addressed in the list, because there is no responsibility or obligation on the part of someone who has migrated who has gone abroad, to indicate to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, that they are longer here?

**Hon. Imbert:** You know, that is a complex question and it does not exactly tie in to this. However, I happen to know that when you do a national house to house survey, you clean the list comprehensively with respect to that matter, but the EBC

is doing its field checks from time to time, all the time to deal with those issues, okay?

But there is no comprehensive cleaning unless there is a house to house survey; there has not been one for some time. It is something I, in fact, discussed with—I had discussed it with them last year actually, and I am now being told they propose to do it next year. It has not been done for some time, but this would be a national house to house to remove, you know, persons who have left, persons who have moved, persons who have died, whatever, from the list, okay?

[*Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** When do you expect it to start and to complete? If it is possible you could answer that.

**Hon. Imbert:** It will be in the next fiscal year.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is what?

**Hon. Imbert:** So that would start from October of '17.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Can I ask on the same election management system? When a constituency becomes overpopulated or underpopulated, what is the reference point that you make to bring in another area into that constituency, whether you bring it from a particular point A, or a particular point B? Is any reference or criteria you—

**Hon. Imbert:** Now, Member, hon. Member—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Sir.

**Hon. Imbert:**—as opposed to hon. gentleman.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Buh yuh” said gentleman. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Imbert:**—you are really stretching it now. This line Item only deals with the voter registration. This is dealing with the data that is put into the system, not with the functioning of the Representation of the People Act. It is really stretching it to

get into that, on this line Item, okay?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, you see, it is the election management system, you know.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, yes, but you are really stretching it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And that is the management of the system of collecting the data and distributing the data.

**Hon. Imbert:** As you know, from time to time, the commission will look at the population of Trinidad and Tobago, would look at the movement and shifts of population and the growth of the population centres, and from time to time, the population in its own wisdom, will make a decision to redesign constituencies, recommend an increase in the number of constituencies, and that will come to this Parliament, as you very well know, for debate and approval by this Parliament.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, well, we will discuss when it happens.

**Hon. Imbert:** Exactly. So you are really stretching it to ask concerning this Item.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But you know the real—

**Madam Chairman:** Under Item 005, Consolidated—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You know why I am asking.

**Madam Chairman:**—Fund—

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not.

**Madam Chairman:**—Infrastructure Development Fund, page 274; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 08 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I wish to thank the members of the EBC and the hon. Minister.

*Head 35.*

**Madam Chairman:** Ministry of Tourism, \$80,829,371. I will now invite the Minister of Tourism to make a brief opening statement, not exceeding five minutes, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. For the sake of clarity, I just want to set out the mandate for the state agencies directly involved in our local tourism sector. The Ministry of Tourism is responsible for tourism policy development, public awareness, encouraging growth of the tourism sector, promoting stakeholder participation and monitoring trends in the tourism industry.

**8.40 p.m.**

Established in 2005, the Tourism Development Company, also known as the TDC, is the implementation arm of the Ministry, a special purpose state company, mandated to market our destination, develop our tourist products and to grow the sector.

Tourism development in Tobago is the responsibility of the Division of Tourism and Transport of the Tobago House of Assembly. Just like education, agriculture, works and all the other Schedule V matters, tourism development in Tobago, falls under the remit of the THA.

The THA is responsible for the formulation of specific policy and plans for the Tobago tourism sector, marketing activities, product development, tourist-market research and the provision of tourism information services as they relate to the island of Tobago.

*Question proposed:* That Head 35 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$80,829,371 for Head 35, Ministry of Tourism, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now

proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 267. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 267, Item 001, General Administration, page 267. Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 08, Vacant Posts. There is an allocation of \$500,000, an increase. Can the Minister give some clarification with respect to this?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Well, as you are well aware, Member for Couva North, vacant posts in the Ministry are filled by the DPA, and they are working diligently to do so.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head—Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can you just give us an indication, Madam Chair, what Cabinet-appointed committees you have now that are receiving \$50,000? What Cabinet committees are receiving \$50,000?

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head Item 14?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sub-Item 14 yes.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Sub-Item 14, Member for Tabaquite that is the Tourism Standing Committee for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Trinidad.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, at page 268, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair, line Item 16, Contract Employment. We are seeing a decrease by \$1.5 million. Can the Minister state how many persons are on contract at the Ministry at this time and also give a clarification with respect to the decrease in funding?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay, as it relates to contract employment, we have 51 people on contract at the Ministry—51 contract positions.

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay. And the decrease of \$1.5 million, can you give some

clarification with respect to that if you can and the positions if you do have that information?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay. We are working on increasing the efficiency of the Ministry. And, as you know, the Tourism Development Company is also under our remit, and what we found is some duplication of positions and soon. So that would be treated with.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I just wanted—and probably I was a bit distracted Madam Chair—this \$1.5 million decrease, how many people have lost their jobs at the Ministry of Tourism?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, you are on Item 16?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Nobody has lost their jobs at the Ministry of Tourism to my knowledge, Madam Chairman.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I want to refer the hon. Minister to Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. You had estimated in 2016, \$49 million approximately, but your revised estimate showed that you did not spend—this is your revised—at least \$20 million of that, and you budgeted now \$19 million. Could you give an idea as to your rationale for the reduction in the promotions since tourism really revolves around strong marketing strategies?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay. Thank you, Member. As you are well aware, and as the finance Minister would have stated earlier, I did not cut an allocation, the Ministry of Finance did so. However, we are in the process, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and even more specifically, the Ministry of Tourism, of doing our marketing in a more transparent and accountable and efficient and effective way.

So, obviously, some of the spending and the wastage and the mismanagement that would have happened before due to an improper or a policy



that was not robust, that would be cut out or that has been cut out. Obviously, we are not able to spend \$22 million on CPL like we would have done within the past five years—the kind of travel and the trips and the gigs overseas that used to happen before cannot happen anymore. The double-dipping in getting funding from sport, then go to culture, then go to other Ministries for the same event, that obviously cannot happen anymore, and we have to be more robust and more focused as to what we are doing.

There is also an increased focus on aggressive online marketing and a reduction in the amount spent on overseas travel. We are making better use of our overseas marketing representatives. As a matter of fact, we are in the process right now of reviewing the overseas marketing reps to make it more effective, more efficient and to cut out waste and mismanagement and to give the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago value for money.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** After all of that, what will be your main focus, let us say, what would be your main target or focus in your publicity and promotion?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** To not—[*Crosstalk*]—you know, that is true. We obviously cannot be using money under the number 62 Vote for spending on elections advertising or for programmes and projects that are in no way related to bringing tourists to Trinidad and Tobago. We have to have a more focused policy and a more focused way of doing things.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I heard you, but in your quest to remain focused, what are you focusing on?

**Mr. Young:** If I may assist.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** No, I do not even need assistance, because I would have said what I have said very, very clearly.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Take advice from the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, please, we do not want to be distracted. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was trying to get the answer, but I did not get the answer. **Dr.**

**Rambachan:** I want to find out from the hon. Minister, what impact has the cut on promotions and publicity, in particular, has on the rate of occupancy both in Trinidad and Tobago? What are the separate rates of occupancy for 2016 thus far in Tobago and the rate of occupancy in Trinidad given these cuts that have taken place?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Well, publicity and publications for the year that we have not entered properly yet, would not have had an impact on the figures past, because what we are discussing here today are the figures in going forward. Anyway I will give you the occupancy rates for Trinidad and Tobago. Our current figure shows right now for Trinidad, an average of 60 per cent like it has been for the past three years, and the same for Tobago has been around 41 per cent. For the months January through June, Tobago was showing about 38.75 per cent.

**Dr. Rambachan:** How much of that 38.75 per cent is due to local tourism traffic from Trinidad to Tobago? What is the real occupancy rate if you take foreign tourists coming into Tobago? If you separate local tourism, domestic tourism—Trinidadians going to Tobago hotels—from foreigners arriving in Tobago—without the Trinidad element, what would have been the occupancy rate with foreign exchange earning tourists to Tobago?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, what Item?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Same item 62, the impact of.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, we do not all want to be distracted.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I did not say anything.

**Madam Chairman:** I am hearing you. I am hearing your deep baritone. [Laughter] Member for Tabaquite, under what Item are we?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Follow-up, my question is on the impact of 62, Promotions Publicity and Printing upon hotel occupancy. I am trying to establish if you are spending this money, how much of the tourists are really coming from overseas, because one of the objectives of the Government is to earn foreign exchange compared to just the tourists going from Trinidad to Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So you want to know, the impact on this Vote on foreign tourists.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central—no East. I am also being distracted at this time. Thank you.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Madam Chair, Publicity Promotions and Printing, advertising the destination is very critical to the tourism destination. We are responsible for advertising and marketing the destination, and we assist stakeholders also in doing so. Stakeholders themselves, business owners, just like any other business, are also responsible for marketing their places of establishment.

The Member asked about domestic tourism, we executed the stay-to-get-away campaign for this July/August period and that had not been done since the year 2011, and it was a very successful campaign. What I can tell you is, domestically, trips for households between Trinidad and Tobago, based on our last survey in 2015 said over 152,000 households would have made domestic trips between Trinidad and Tobago for staycation or vacation at home purposes. So, yes we assist with assisting the stakeholders to market their properties, and also market their destination. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is a simple question really. How many tourists came to this country, let us say, how many tourists do you anticipate will come to this country in the year 2016? And as you look at your next fiscal year, what is your target?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, could you relate it to some item?

**Tewarie:** Well, it is related to the same 62.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** That is an interesting link but, Madam Chairman, we have an average or roughly 420,000 visitors by air per year and, so far, based on the figures that have been coming in, it looks like we are going to be roughly around 420,000 for this year 2016.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Are you upping the target for next year?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Of course. We anticipate, or based on our research and the work that we have been doing with other Caribbean tourism organizations, they would have recommended or forecasted 2 per cent increase per year. Based on the different consultations with the stakeholders from the standing committee and the Ministry would have consulted with stakeholders, and they have set a target of 500,000.

Now, we have not seen 500,000 a year arrivals since about 2006/2007. After the economic downturn in 2008 and then compounded by—in 2008, we have not seen 500,000 since. So, of course, we are hoping and working on reaching the 500,000 mark as we go forward and, hopefully, as we invest more and get stakeholders on board, because we are somewhat playing catch-up where you compare where we are in our development to the rest of the region, but we have much to build on and we are working diligently on that.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, the figure you had quoted indicating how many visitors we have had for the year, are those first-time visitors, repeat visitors local in terms of family? Have you been able to

differentiate it at all?

**8.55 p.m.**

**Hon. Cudjoe:** You are speaking about international visitors or the domestic stay to get away campaign?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Was it international that you had mentioned just now?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** When I mentioned the over 420,000?

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

**Hon. Cudjoe:** That is international arrivals. I do not have whether it is first-timers or the second time they have visited. I do not have the figures off the top of my head, but I can commit to providing that information to you in writing. However, I want to raise that in the past this country has not done a good job on collecting the records and doing the necessary research. We have Ministry calling CSO for figures and CSO calling Ministry for figures, or we are depending on CTO. I know the work that is being done in the Ministry of Planning and Development and also at the TDC to improve our research capabilities would go a long way. But you would be surprised, some of the simple data that is needed to plan the necessary policy and to make proper strategy is difficult to come by, and we need to get to a place of building our programmes based on findings rather than feeling.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I do agree with you, Minister, that to make informed decisions you must get the proper data. I do not know if you would consider—it is a question—under the previous Government we had actually liaised directly with the Ministry of National Security, Immigration, we got our figures, so we were a little bit more on target, if you would consider probably—if the Minister would consider—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Of course we would consider it, we already work very closely with

Immigration, CSO and all the other entities that are collecting data at this point. We have also embarked on a very robust data collection campaign. We are now working on the baseline survey, and we have at least about six other scientific research projects going on to keep us up-to-date with our information.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** This scientific research is it working in tandem with the CSO and whatever other agency?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Definitely, as I would have said earlier we are working in tandem with the CSO, and that information is also being provided to the standing committee which consists of other stakeholders and provided also to the stakeholder fora, so all the players could be on one team.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Are these independent bodies that you are working with? The scientific data, who is providing it?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The Tourism Development Company.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, page 270. Item 001 General Administration. Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 270. Item 001 Regional Bodies.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you, 001 Regional Bodies. There is a sharp decrease by about \$6.7 million. Minister can you clarify that, please?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** If you turn to the following page and see how it is broken down, these are subventions to the different regional bodies of which we are a part. There are subventions, for instance, for NAPA. As you know NAPA is no longer under the Ministry of Tourism, so we do not have to deal with NAPA, make subventions for NAPA anymore.

**Miss Ramdial:** Minister, before you go on, are there any other institutions or

organizations that have been moved from the Ministry of Tourism to any other Ministry?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Since I have assumed duties as Minister of Tourism, there are no entities that were under my remit on September 11th last year that have been moved. So the same entities that were under my remit on September 11th when I assumed duties as Minister, they are still under my remit.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003 United Nations Organization, page 271. Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises, page 271.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, through you, Chair; 02 Tourism Development Company, there is a decrease by \$7 million. Minister, can you clarify?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** We would have done a review on the Tourism Development Company and we are currently doing an HR review. There are some positions that I am sure will not be required as we move forward. There are some positions where, in the formative stage of the company, would have been relevant, that are no longer relevant.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We are on to a new book. Sub-Head 09 Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, Page 111. Item 003 Economic Infrastructure, Page 111.

**Miss Ramdial:** Madam Minister, 028 Establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Regulatory and Licensing Authority. It is a new project, could you care to explain what this is?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Madam Chair, through you. The establishment of the regulatory authority—Madam Chairman and members, as you are well aware, standards and maintaining a proper quality in the tourism sector is very important. We have right now a voluntary programme called TTIC where investigations and certifications

are done. We are the only country that claims to be serious about tourism where standards are voluntary, and we want to make this compulsory. In our interactions with the stakeholders, they would have said the same, and if we are going to say we are one-star, two-star, three-star, four or five-star, we have to ensure that we meet the very basic standards. This also helps to improve service quality so that tourism service providers are up to standard. For instance, just like in the UK, the taxi cab drivers have to constantly take different training programmes and remain certified to speak to the quality of the service that they are providing. Even the quality of the room stock ought to be properly regulated by certification and ensuring that we have the necessary standards, so that we are on par and on course with the rest of the region and our competitors.

**Miss Ramdial:** Minister, this \$500,000—exactly what is going to be established in this fiscal year with it?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Of course, the different consultations and the background work with TTBS, that is the Bureau of Standards that helps the TDC right now to establish the TTIC certification, along with engaging the different stakeholders and doing the necessary background work, doing research and interacting with the other stakeholders in the region that are versed in doing this, so that we can establish one for ourselves.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, line Item 019 Tourism Sites and Attraction Upgrade, the bat cave as well as the Fishing Pond Boardwalk, will it be a part of the tourism sites and attraction upgrade?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Thank you, Member. The TDC is conducting a site audit and the projects will be prioritized based on the available resources, readiness and the scope for development. As we interact with the different stakeholders, for instance, regional corporations, private and public stakeholders in every nook and



cranny, everybody finds a different area, a site and attraction that TDC needs to attend to, so we have embarked upon a site audit to see which ones are most ready to be worked on and how we are going to go about working on them. Some of them require serious and deep interaction and consultation with the regional corporations and community groups, to ensure that our development is done in sync and that everybody is on board in bringing forth the necessary development or the sites and attraction to a standard and a quality that is comfortable for, not just tourists, but the locals that own the product.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is 0279, 027 the baseline survey that you referred to?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** You are going back to the baseline survey?

**Miss Ramdial:** No, no, I am talking about what you just spoke about in terms of the—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** No, no, no, that is a site audit, not a baseline survey. The baseline survey, we interact with visitors and the different businesses on the expenditure and so on, but the site audit you go out to the different sites, see what is lacking, see what is broken, what needs to be fixed, what improvements need to be done.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, I am referring to 013 to 28, which relates to the approach to economic development of the tourism industry here. I am not seeing anything that speaks to the issue of sustainability. I just want to know how you are going to build that into your strategy for tourism to create a sustainable tourism industry.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Which line Item are you speaking about, Member?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Are we on 111, and under 01—well, 13 is Lifeguards, I know that that is not in it, but from 19 to 28 those represent things that you are going to do in terms of your approach, your strategy.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** What is the question, please, Member?

**Dr. Tewarie:** The question is: how are you going to build sustainability into your

tourism strategy, given all the things that your Government has been saying about the fact that you want to move towards sustainable development, and tourism would be part of that? I am just asking. It is not a trick question, I am just asking you.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Madam, I will try to answer his question in the most appropriate way. I am not even sure if he is sure what he wants to ask, but I will answer in the best way.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am very sure; make no such suggestion.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please. Member for Caroni Central, if you could ask the question in a—and then maybe based on the little snippets of answers then the bigger picture may evolve. I know it is late and everybody is tired, so we have to bear with each other.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah, I am bearing.

**Madam Chairman:** No, I said we have to bear with each other.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I will not tolerate insolence.

**Madam Chairman:** There is need for reciprocity.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** What he said, he does not tolerate what?

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am always reasonable, Madam. You know that.

**Madam Chairman:** I am not accusing you of anything, I am saying we.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I asked a simple question: are you proceeding on a track of sustainable tourism, yes or no, and if you are, what are the elements of sustainability in your strategy?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** No need to shout, Member. I hear very clearly. Madam Chairman, through you, I will go through each Item because he called it in a group. He went from 011 to 28.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, please just answer.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** I will answer each one. Sites and Attraction—we are engaging the different communities to develop the different sites and attractions. For instance, most of these attractions would have deteriorated over the years, so you are ensuring that the areas are kept up to standard; for instance, Manzanilla Beach, Vessigny and these different areas. I am going on now to the Cruise Tourism Initiative. For the year 2015 we would have had over a 50 per cent increase in cruise tourism, and not just that, over 50 per cent increase in the amount of money spent by cruise passengers that would have come to Trinidad and Tobago.

This year we welcomed 100,791 cruise passengers, and that is thirty-something thousand in Trinidad and seventy-something thousand in Tobago. But what is interesting about that is 85 per cent of the people on board came off in Trinidad and Tobago and they were able to experience the different sites and attractions. The TDC would have made different packages to take them out into the communities, to go to a pan yard, so that they could support other businesses to increase the multiplier effect of tourism.

The tourism baseline survey—I would have explained what the baseline survey is before, and that is dealing with research so that we can make more informed policy. If that is not sustainable—

Madam Chairman, through you again, I would have just explained the establishment of the regulatory authority. We would have had a tourism industry here for quite some time that is unregulated. We are one of the only, if not the only, tourism destination in the Caribbean that does not have compulsory regulation and compulsory licensing for the tourism sector. So that goes a long way for sustainability and maintaining the standards.

**9.10 p.m.**

When you go out to the international trade shows and you speak to

international counterparts and partners, they complain about the standard of our products here in Trinidad and Tobago from hotel to services provided.

And if you go over to the other areas that speak to sustainability, we are not on those line Items yet. So when we get there, if you call them I would ask or if you all of them right now, I can give it to you as you like.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am not satisfied with the answer, but I will give her the benefit of the doubt until she comes to another line.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Thank you. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman, I will ask you an easier question rather than sustainable development which is line Item 019. Where are we in terms of the Maracas Beach tourism initiative in terms of the facility itself and what is causing the flooding there now that will—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, could I ask you to hold that question until we reach there?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Until when?

**Madam Chairman:** We are still on Item 003. May I ask you to hold your question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure. Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Anybody else on 003? Okay. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 112 to 113, and I call on the Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. Go on line Item 019, the Maracas Beach Tourism Initiative, where we are with the improvement of the Maracas beach facility to ensure that tourism be a success there. And in the event of the latest episode of flooding, what comments do you have to make on that in terms of—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Madam Chair, I think the Member might be jumping the gun a little bit, because the project of which he speaks is under IDF, so when we get to that we will speak to that there are two different Maracas projects. This Maracas project that is listed here at 019 is a community initiative with the Maracas fishing village community and we would have worked on the jetty and the gazebo, the parking lot in that area and a walk-over bridge which we had done some sewer treatment repair and landscaping. You are talking about two different—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. When we come to the IDF.

**Hon. Cudjoe:**—so when we come to the IDF, we well deal with that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. One more on 011, the Incentive Upgrade of Hotel and Guesthouse Room Stock of Trinidad. Are you able to give us an understanding of how many small hotels that you have been able to upgrade?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay. The way the room upgrade programme operates is, properties that have rooms from one to five really, really small properties, they upgrade the room area, the kitchen area, the gym area, different areas of the hotel and they receive 25 per cent in rebate. Right? So they would submit their bills, as long as they meet the requirements and audits are done. And for those over five, I think, it is six to 150, you get a 20 per cent rebate on rooms that you would have upgraded. So it is an incentive programme to encourage the different stakeholders.

Now, for this fiscal year or should I say prior to December, I think, 27 or somewhere thereabouts last year, Tobago was not allowed to access this programme and now in this fiscal year, for the first time, Tobago is being able access this programme so that they could improve their—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well I was looking for that under an Item, but I did not see it. Could you direct us?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** That is 011 that you just called.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Umm”?—011 has only Trinidad, stock of Trinidad. I was looking for Tobago, but I am not seeing it.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Then it should be Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So it is a typo? A typo then. All right.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Dr. Moonilal:** There are a lot of typos.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line 023, Manzanilla Beach, can you just expand on how it is you intend to proceed with the improvement project?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** With the?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** 023.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The Manzanilla project that is one of the projects that we would have recently visited and work was done on car park refurbishment, upgrade of the restaurant, installation of seating and we would have repaired all buildings there. As we proceed in fiscal 2017 we intend to more upgrade work on the infrastructure. There are some significant issues dealing with the parking and we are going to do improvements of the sewerage treatment plant.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** This is to confirm; you have started already with the upgrade works?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And you have completed the restaurant. You have completed part of the car park, seating—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, that is what the Minister said.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I just want to confirm.

**Madam Chairman:** But, Member, that is what the Minister said. Do you have another question? Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, 043, Upgrades of Sites and Attractions. You have the 2017 estimate at \$2 million. Do you have a listing of these sites and attractions where work will be undertaken for upgrades or can you give us an undertaking to give that, if possible?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Well as I said before, as it relates to sites and attractions, we prioritize based on the readiness of the site. And one thing that plays a major role in upgrade of sites and attractions is the cooperation of the community. So we may set out right now, we are going to Couva North and we are going to upgrade a specific Item, but then you may run into an application on issue with the regional corporation or whoever owns the site or the communities may have an issue, so this is what allows you some flexibility. But the TDC along with the Ministry of Tourism gets together with the community organization, we do site audits and as it relates to readiness and the availability of resources and especially community buy-in. That is how it is done.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development, Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, you indicated your desire to have international standards and with respect to Item 031, Certification of Tourism Programme Operators, to whom is this programme conducted and the certification awarded?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Where are you? Which line Item are you on?

**Mr. Karim:** 031, page 112. Are we not there?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Page 112.

**Madam Chairman:** That is where we are.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay; 031.

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** 031 is TTIC.

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** It is maintenance of standards for tourism operators and it goes from taxi drivers to other service providers, even the different rooms. We work in collaboration with the Bureau of Standards that set the standards and the TDC works along with these stakeholders.

**Mr. Karim:** Who does the training?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** TTBS.

**Mr. Karim:** TTBS.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** And therefore they award the certification?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** No. TTBS works in collaboration with the TDC.

**Mr. Karim:** So awards the—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** You go out together and they do the different inspections, and if you go to some hotels you would see the certificate hung up on the wall. But it is voluntary. So the last time an extensive inspection and certification was done was in 2012/2013 and then it went in limbo.

**Mr. Karim:** I am getting somewhere to help you. I am just asking, who is the awarding body?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The TDC in collaboration with TTBS.

**Mr. Karim:** May I suggest that you consider, because you are looking at international standards and I will ask the question and maybe you will want to consider looking at what the Accreditation Council does since it is international reciprocity of qualification.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Right. As we move forward to strengthen our capacity in developing and maintaining standards, we are moving towards the regulatory authority and where it is no longer going to be voluntary, it is going to become



compulsory and I am sure all the stakeholders, private and public that has something to offer, we are going to collaborate and consult with them to make sure that we give Trinidad and Tobago the best that there is to offer.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 030, same book, Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 303. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Minister had referred us to the IDF for the Maracas Beach facility. There is no allocation here for 2017 for the Maracas beach facility and \$30 was estimated in 2016 and the revised estimate showed none was paid or none was spent. And then in 2017 there is no money allocated for that Maracas beach facility. Has the Government changed its thinking on the upgrade of the Maracas beach facility?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Member, if you pay attention to the report before us, if you look two lines you will see 010, Maracas Beach Facility Improvement Project.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, you have shifted the allocation from Maracas Beach Facility to Restoration and Redesign to an improvement project?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Matter of fact, I think that was actually renamed MBFIP under your Government, but this is where the allocation is. So whether you want to call it Maracas Beach Facility or Maracas Facility Improvement Project, the allocation is at 010 in the amount of \$51 million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. Could you give us an understanding of why the \$30 million that was estimated to be spent in 2016, nothing had been done with that to help with the further improvement?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** As you are well aware, the previous contract was stopped and we are now working in collaboration with other state agencies and Ministries to work on this project. We are working with NEDCO, NIDCO, sorry, and PURE to move forward with this project.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** My understanding is that a contract was awarded already.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** What is your question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What is the question? What has happened to that contract that was awarded and no money has been paid as far as that? And I know work has been done. And why?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Member, I would prefer if you check your facts because my knowledge is, a contract has not been awarded for the Maracas project. Work that would have been done on Maracas would have been remedial work to deal with some drainage problems that were occurring somewhere around June/July and some refurbishment, some remedial work to the sewerage treatment plant also. But the award for moving on with the contract has not been issued as yet, and NIDCO is handling and managing that project.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So if work was awarded for the drainage, et cetera, why is Maracas flooding if that work was completed?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Since I was a baby and even Adam was a baby, Maracas has been flooding like that. When the last contractor came off and we went on to Maracas, a sluice gate, as they call it, was removed or destroyed and that would have compounded the flooding situation. So it is based on rain and some natural stuff that happens at Maracas, even in your time, even before your time, since 2000/2002. And as I said before, the project has been redesigned. So, much of the changes made to the road, the way the road is going to be built and the drainage designs, all of that would be done in order to alleviate the flooding problems and some of the major issues that would have been experienced up at the Maracas site.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$80,829,371 for Head 35: Ministry of Tourism stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 35 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Madam Minister, Madam PS, and the other technocrats, thank you very much. You all are relieved.

*Head 13.*

**Madam Chairman:** We are now going to page 55 of the *Recurrent Expenditure* book. Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister - \$227,913.000.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Where is the Prime Minister, Madam Chair?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Stuart, you are now the new Prime Minister? [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members, let us please exercise a bit of discipline at this hour for us to get on with the business of the people. [*Crosstalk*] Members.

**9.25 p.m.**

I will now invite the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, as all in this Chamber are aware, the Office of the Prime Minister is the office that provides the administrative support for the Prime Minister who is the head of the Executive and in charge of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago in the current administration. The hon. Prime Minister is Dr. Keith Rowley, and he is ably assisted in dealing with specific parts of the portfolio falling under the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Minister Webster-Roy and by myself.

The Office of the Prime Minister is ably assisted by the head of the public service, the Permanent Secretary, Sandra Jones, and we are here at this late hour to do what needs to be done.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, for the last 23 Heads we had the relevant

Minister responsible, and this is a Head for the Prime Minister, is he in the jurisdiction? Why are we not having the Prime Minister here?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, as I understand it, this is the Office of the Prime Minister, as I understand it there are other Ministers in the Office of the Prime Minister. Are you saying you do not want to examine this Head? It is totally up to the Leader of the Opposition, and I guess you all represent her, whether or not you all want to proceed with this today.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We will proceed.

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

*Question proposed:* That Head 13 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$227,913,000 for Head 13, the Office of the Prime Minister is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 55, Item 001, General Administration, page 55; Item 002, Gender Affairs Division, page 55. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Sub-Head 01. I see a relatively small salary, can you tell me how many persons are currently employed in the Gender Affairs Division?

**Hon. Young:** Under the Gender Affairs Division we currently have—

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** In terms of bodies at the Office of the Prime Minister we have 224 posts made up of 179 bodies and 45 posts without bodies.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Could you repeat how many bodies?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** In terms of the Office of the Prime Minister, the complement we have, 179 with bodies and 45 without bodies.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right, so you are speaking in general as opposed to the Gender Affairs?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 16, Contract Employment, could you give us an understanding of how many contract officers—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, we are still on page 002, Gender Affairs Division.

**Hon. Young:** He could go ahead.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, well, I want to speed it up.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 56, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, line Item 16, Contract Employment, could we get an appreciation of the amount of contract officers within the Office of the Prime Minister?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, you can, 183. We have 80 positions vacant which leaves you with 103 that are filled.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are these 80 positions without incumbents?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. Could you give us a little appreciation of the various types of personnel within the contract employment, if you can?

**Hon. Young:** As you would appreciate having been there and interacting with the Office of the Prime Minister not so long ago, it is a very wide ambit. You would have persons in the media side helping with communications, persons driving policies, you would have persons in the Cabinet Secretariat, you would have the administrative side of staff. As it currently is we have the persons dealing with the Children's Authority and the Gender Affairs, et cetera.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that. Item 31, Madam

Chairman, if I can ask the expenses of Prime Minister's establishment, could you just—

**Hon. Young:** For which one, sorry?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thirty one. And while I am at it I will ask you on 43, Security Services. Expenses of Prime Minister's establishment, what is it? I do not fully grasp what that means.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** What is the question he asked?

**Hon. Young:** What is the question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give us an understanding and appreciation of what you mean by the Prime Minister's establishment?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Okay, Member, that is for the cost of goods and services at the residence, and it is currently being managed by the Office of the Prime Minister in collaboration with UDeCOTT to ensure value for money.

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

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** At the residence, yes.

**Hon. Young:** As you would see, you would see a decrease from \$21 million in 2015 when the current Prime Minister was not there, and we are now down to managing it, and the Prime Minister is currently residing at the residence for \$9 million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. Security Services, it has remained the same?

**Madam Chairman:** Item 43.

**Hon. Young:** The Security Services would have been the security unit set up to provide security at the Diplomatic Centre, at the residence and at the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give us an appreciation of what is happening with the security services? Because, our understanding is that some people were removed

from the position and were no longer functioning in that position and new people came in.

**Hon. Young:** Yes, I can. The Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago took a decision to return the security arrangements for the residence, the Diplomatic Centre and the Office of the Prime Minister to the law enforcement agencies of Trinidad and Tobago, and in particular the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and the TTPS, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. So, as a result of that, in returning the security arrangements for those establishments and the Prime Minister to the bodies that were set up originally to offer that protection at the expense of the State, it has meant a retrenchment in accordance with good industrial relations practice of the security services. That is a process and a procedure that is taking place over time to ensure there is a very smooth transition from the private security services before to the TTDF and the TTPS.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, but in the midst of that, I got an understanding from the hon. Prime Minister's last statement here that he did not seem to have confidence in even the system within now where you have people from within the TTPS and the government establishment, he does not seem to have the confidence, and you would remember that.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, is that question related to the security services and the figure we are examining here?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, in view of the Prime Minister's no-confidence or less confidence in the present state, is there anything that—

**Hon. Young:** The Prime Minister and the Cabinet continue to have the fullest confidence in the TTDF and the TTPS to perform their roles professionally.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I did not gather that from the Prime Minister's statement.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, with respect, 28,

Other Contracted Services, could the Minister elaborate under 43, Security Services; the Minister just in response to my colleague, the Member for Caroni East indicated that with respect to the security unit that there would be a number of workers/officers who were attached would be retrenched, they would lose their jobs. I am not seeing an allocation really where he said that good industrial practices would be observed, and how much allocation have been made to deal with a whole question of severance payment and so on?

**Madam Chairman:** Under Item 28?

**Hon. Young:** No, I think he is jumping to 43 as well.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Items 28 and 43.

**Hon. Young:** It is okay, Ma'am. At this late hour I will try to assist the Member for Couva South. Under Item 28, Contracted Services, as you would have observed under the tenure of the now Leader of the Opposition, then Prime Minister, it was at \$21 million, we have now reduced it to \$5 million for the next fiscal year. And this is really for contingencies, and this is for services that may be needed over the space of a fiscal year to assist in the administration and the proper running of any element of the Office of the Prime Minister with respect to the security services, I am a little confused as what exactly it is you would expect to see under the line Item, you are seeing here a budget of \$11 million.

What we are doing is we are dealing with it with the parting of ways with the security services personnel in accordance with the good industrial relations practice, and in accordance with their contracts. That is something that is going on. So, obviously the provision for any payments that need to be made to them in accordance with the Industrial Relations Act and other practices would be made under this figure of \$11 million. And what I would like to add at that stage is we have the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, and her Ministry



assisting in the provision of finding jobs for these persons in other establishments, and that has been going quite smoothly.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Employees of ArcelorMittal are still waiting.

**Madam Chairman:** Member! Member, we are under the Ministry of the OPM and Gender Affairs, Item 002, Gender Affairs Division, page 57.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Chairman, I have a question still under Item 27 on that same page before going a little further, Official Overseas Travel. In 2015 it was \$1.9 million approximately, and in 2016 the revised estimate is an increase of almost 100 per cent, to \$3.8 million, could you give us an appreciation of the rise in expenditure in the office of the Prime Minister in Official Overseas Travel from \$1.9 million to \$3.8 million?

**Hon. Young:** The actual expenditure from the Office of the Prime Minister for 2016 was actually \$2.4 million. So, it is not \$3.8 million, which is a revised estimate, and as you could see for 2017 it is based there at a million dollars. And as you would know and the country knows during the course of the last year the hon. Prime Minister did go on a number of official state visits tying in some very back-to-back visits. There was one from the United States of America, Washington to New York, to London, to Ghana, back to London, continuous meetings throughout. Meetings in Jamaica and other places, in rebuilding the image of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly with Caricom.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So in 2016 there was an increase, as you are saying now?

**Hon. Young:** Well, 2016 the actual expenditure was \$2.4 million not \$3.8 million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, an increase of about \$.5 million?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, an increase of \$500,000.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Gender Affairs Division, page 57, Sub-Head 03,

Minor Equipment Purchases, page 58; Item 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 58; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007, Households at page 59; Item 009, Other Transfers, page 59.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We are going on to the other book. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 17; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 17. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you indicate why 084 is itemized as a new project, 084 and 085? Is it that we do not have safe houses?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** We actually have safe houses, this is actually two new coming on stream, and it is the allocation to retrofit the buildings. We actually have five commissioned but I cannot disclose the locations.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I understand, I understand.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005.

[*Mr. Padarath raises hand*]

**Madam Chairman:** You are under 005?

**Mr. Padarath:** Item 004, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, with respect to the line Item that deals with the establishment of national children's registry, can you give us some sort of idea of what progress you have been able to make with this? I know the Attorney General had spoken later last year with respect to this project, can you give us an update in terms of what has happened since then to now with respect to having the

Children's Authority and other organizations now under the Office of the Prime Minister collaborating. I am sure some sort of progress would have been made with respect to the national children's registry, if you would be able to shed some light we will be most grateful.

**9.40 p.m.**

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Member for Princes Town, the actual design of the software package and so on, is 90 per cent complete. We are actually in terms of rolling out 45 per cent complete.

**Hon. Young:** So it is being designed and populated as we speak.

**Mr. Padarath:** Just a follow-up, hon. Minister. As these works are ongoing, could you indicate or give us some sort of time line in terms of, when it will be completed and whether or not the public will have access to this registry?

**Hon. Young:** That is a policy decision that will need to be taken at the appropriate stage.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, could you indicate whether or not these discussions and consultations with respect to this particular issue is ongoing or are you waiting to complete the registry and then—

**Hon. Young:** I think as we get closer to the time of completion we will address it.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Items 097 and 098. How soon would the policies be completed or formulated?

**Hon. Young:** These are works in progress. As you would see, the decision has been taken to focus on these policies and the Minister can give us some further details as to where it has reached.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is it being done also in-house or is it being done by NGOs and so forth?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** In-house and we also have the technical support from

international agencies. So most of the actual foundation work has been completed, it is just to draft the documents. We would have had consultations from under the last regime, continuous, and now it is just to draft the documents and put them together.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 18. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 276; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 276. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 277.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 13 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you PS and other technocrats from the Office of the Prime Minister. You all are relieved.

Hon. Members, the Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Tuesday, October 18, 2016 at 10.30 a.m. I thank you all. Reach home safely, have a good night.

**9.43 p.m.:** *Standing Finance Committee Suspended.*

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 18, 2016*

### APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016

[Sixth Day]

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

[*Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George*]

**10.30 a.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will resume. I will now call on Head 26: Ministry of Education, \$5,327,738,200. I will now invite the Minister of Education to make a brief opening statement not

exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Garcia:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is the intention of this Minister of Education and indeed the intention of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that within our school system quality education is delivered. If we are to achieve this objective we have to ensure that we have quality physical infrastructure, our teachers must be well trained, our students must be well disciplined and there must be a high level of parental involvement.

Towards this end, we have embarked on what we refer to as a School Based Management Model that will involve all major stakeholders in the school system, ably supported by our school supervisors and our curriculum officers and members of the Student Support Unit. These persons, these officers will be visiting the schools on a regular basis where they will be having discussions with our principals, our vice-principals, our heads of departments, our deans and our teachers, all in an effort to ensure that our objective is met.

In our school system today we have a number of challenges and I am sure as we discuss the details of our recurrent expenditure, some of these challenges will be brought to the fore, but I want to assure Members of this House and indeed members of the national community, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Education will do everything to ensure that our children are not short changed. In other words, we are going to stick steadfastly to our task of providing a high level of quality education to all our students. Thank you very much.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 26 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$5,327,738,200 for Head 26, Ministry of Education, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the

following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 187; Item 001, General Administration, page 187. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman, and good morning hon. Minister of Education and to all our colleagues and to those viewing and listening. Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

In 2016 we had an estimate of \$238 million, the Revised Estimate is 188, which is about \$50 million less. Could you explain, in terms of salaries, \$50 million less payment of salaries, what would have accounted for the \$50 million which were originally estimated to be paid in 2016 not being paid in 2016, approximately \$50 million.

**Hon. Garcia:** I am sure the Member for Caroni East would be aware of the fact that teachers and indeed other public servants were paid back pay for the last fiscal year. And this is the reason why you had that huge amount allocated last year. This year there is no need for fiscal 2017 to include that payment because teachers have already been paid their back pay. They have received their back pay and other increment allowances. And that is the reason why you have a reduction in expenditure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure, I see what you have, a reduction in 2017, but you had estimated that there is going to be an expenditure of \$238 million and \$188 million was paid. Therefore, was the back pay paid in 2015?

You estimated that you will spend \$238 million for salaries and wages and

so on, but you only paid 188. If you had to paid back pay, that would have been equivalent to 238, you had \$50 million less. Therefore, what you are saying, if you paid the back pay, it would be almost equivalent to the 238.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. The back pay was paid in 2015.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you. So therefore there was no need, when you budgeted 238, you budgeted with the expectation that you might have to pay a back pay but it was already paid in 2015.

**Hon. Garcia:** It was already paid in 2015, yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, thank you.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning as well to the Ministers, PS and technical staff. Will you be able to tell us how many persons are employed in the Ministry of Education? And subsequent to that, I would like to ask you with respect to Item 08, Vacant Posts. What are these Vacant Posts that you currently have to fill, the classification of them and the estimated time frame for filling these vacancies?

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay, in response to your first question, there are approximately 25,000 persons employed in the Ministry of Education and a brief breakdown of that would show that there are approximately 14,000 teachers and the remaining numbers would be the public servants.

With respect to your second question, you want to find out a bit about the staff complement, is it that?

**Mr. Karim:** The Vacant Posts.

**Hon. Garcia:** Oh, the Vacant Posts. There are a number of vacant posts in the Ministry of Education and at the moment, I do not have that information readily available, but I will make that available to you.

**Mr. Karim:** Sure.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay?

**Mr. Karim:** No problem.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning to everyone and probably the Ministers could guide me if I am jumping the gun. In relation to Salaries and Cost of Living and so on, the sum allocated, does it take into consideration the moneys owed to or the salaries that are payable to teachers at the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres?

**Hon. Garcia:** As we have been explaining over and over again, the early childhood education sector does not fall as part of the Education Act. However, those teachers are on contract. They do not have the security of tenure as our teachers in the primary and secondary schools. That is the first part of the answer.

The second part is, of course the Ministry of Education pays the salaries to those persons and—

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, would that be under General Administration?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, that should be under General Administration.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** If it falls under this particular Sub-Item, Mr. Minister, could you indicate because I have seen in the public domain and so on, early childhood education teachers protesting for their moneys and so on. Could you indicate to this meeting how many or how much moneys are owed for what period and when they will be paid?

**Hon. Garcia:** It seems as though you have an active interest in demonstrations.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Given my background, Mr. Minister, we both have a common background.

**Hon. Garcia:** I know of your background and I must say that given your background, you should have been more familiar with the fact that those early childhood education teachers—



**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman, why is this insult going on?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, I hear your complaint but I do not think a similar breach cures it. We will deal with it and hopefully we will get better with time. Please, Minister.

**Hon. Garcia:** Thank you very much for your protection. Yes, the salaries that are paid or the remuneration that is paid to those persons fall under contract payments. As I indicated earlier they do not fall within the ambit of the Education Act and therefore the salaries that they receive will be in the area of contract employment.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Ministers, Sub-Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet - Appointed Committees. I saw there was an allocation of \$1 million and it was not in fact utilized, and then you have an allocation of \$500,000. Could you indicate whether or not there are committees right now functioning, if it was disbanded?

**Hon. Garcia:** There is one Cabinet-Appointed Committee that will be functioning soon and that is what we refer to as LMEC, Learning Materials and Evaluation Committee. We hope to have other Cabinet-Appointed Committees in the not-too-distant future, like the National Advisory Committee on Education that has to be appointed by Cabinet. But for the moment it is just the LMEC committee that is functioning.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, the Personnel Expenditure, that entire amount, will that include, as you indicated there are so many thousands of teachers, would that include the gratuity and pension claims to teachers? For example, the \$2.5 billion—

**Hon. Garcia:** I have been informed that those payments, the superannuation payments will be made by the Comptroller of Accounts.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Can I ask a follow up question? With respect to, because it

will have to come or be advised by the Ministry of Education, the file will go from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Finance. How long does it take for someone who is retiring or has retired to be paid their gratuity and pension?

**Hon. Garcia:** That time frame depends on a number of things. There are some persons in the system who owe income tax and before their gratuities have been paid they have to ensure that whatever taxes are owed, those taxes are paid.

There is also a problem where a number of persons would present the information with respect to their impending retirement, fairly late, and again that is another cause for delay. A third cause would be a teacher who might be under some disciplinary charge or charges and that also would delay the payment. Therefore, it is difficult for me at this point to state exactly the length of time or the time frame that it takes. But I can say that once a teacher submits that information at least six months in advance, it is more than likely that when that teacher retires that cheque will be available soon afterwards.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, Minister you and I are quite familiar with how this system works and I can remember of no case in my tenure as a teacher where anyone got a cheque on the day they were leaving.

**Hon. Garcia:** Soon afterwards.

**Mr. Karim:** No, and therefore I know, soon afterwards is really could be quantified in any amount, but what I was asking is, assuming all those things were complied with that you indicated that might have been deficiencies in terms of the claim, what is the minimum time?

**Hon. Garcia:** I would say within a month or two.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**10.45 a.m.**

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in the context of vacant posts,

could the Minister tell this meeting how much vacancies currently exist within the teaching service at the level of the secondary and primary school system in the country?

**Hon. Garcia:** The Member for Chaguanas East asked that question and I told him that that information will be supplied to him in due course.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 08, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, you had an allocation of \$8 million in 2016 for Vacant Posts (without incumbents) and no money was expended according to the Revised Estimates, but in your estimate for 2017 \$1 million is allocated. Could you give us an appreciation of what happened with your Estimates and then Revised Estimates, nothing was there; the issue of no vacant posts being filled and are posts going to be filled to the value of \$1 million in 2017?

**Hon. Garcia:** I will have to provide that information subsequently to you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. And would you be kind enough to consider providing the information in relation to these vacant posts without incumbents?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, you would get that information in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, the categorization. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Secondary Education, page 188.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Similarly, Madam Chair, and hon. Ministers, 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, 2016 the Estimate was 1.4 and the Revised Estimates was 1.135. Based on your answer previously, does that reflect back pay and arrears which were paid in 2015, and therefore you did not have to pay it in 2016?

**Hon. Garcia:** The same answer which I gave with respect to the overall payment of teachers—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right.

**Hon. Garcia:**—will suffice for both secondary and primary.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, so that clears it up. Thank you.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Item 32 under Sub-Head 005, Remuneration to Substitute Teachers. Could you tell us how many substitute teachers do you have in the system now—in the secondary school system?

**Hon. Garcia:** We have quite a few substitute teachers in the system but it is difficult at this point to give an exact figure. I will provide that information to you shortly.

**Mr. Karim:** In your view, given the allocation for 2017, of just \$500,000, and bearing in mind the exigencies of the service that we experience now, do you think this is a sufficient allocation?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, simply because in the teaching service we have a plethora of teachers in the various subject areas. In fact, as you would know, some teachers wait—or some persons wait—quite a long time to be appointed and there are a number of teachers who are waiting on appointment, so therefore when a vacancy exists, those posts are filled quite readily. In terms of the substitute teachers, however, that system was really designed to facilitate teachers who would be off for a week or two weeks and from the information I have been receiving, that has been working well.

**Mr. Karim:** Minister, through you, Chair, any of these substitute teachers, are they retirees or are they before the age of retirement—their employment that is.

**Hon. Garcia:** Most of them are retirees.

**Mr. Karim:** Retirees. It might be useful if you can give us some data by education division on the number of substitute teachers. There is a point I wanted to make later.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay, we will make sure that that data is supplied to you.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 05, Government's Contribution to N.I.S., and I do not know if you would want to take the same thing under primary education—Government's Contribution to N.I.S. There has been an increase in NIS for 2017 in terms of the estimated for both primary and secondary. Could you indicate what would have caused this necessity for increased payment for NIS in both secondary and primary, of \$23 million and \$18 million that you are contemplating to pay?

**Hon. Garcia:** NIS contributions have gone up and that is the reason why we have catered for this increase.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sorry, I missed that.

**Hon. Garcia:** I said the contributions that persons have to pay towards NIS, those contributions had been increased and this is the reason why we have an increase in the allocation.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair, to the Minister. With respect to substitute teachers, are any sums of moneys being owed to substitute teachers within the Ministry of Education, and if so, how much and when will these arrears be fully relinquished, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is a question that I cannot answer at this point. I already gave to the Member for Chaguanas East, the assurance that I am going to supply him with as much information on the substitute teachers that he requires.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Primary Education, page 188.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, based on the information you provided that the back pays were paid for both secondary and primary in 2015, could you give us an estimation, a total amount—a rough estimate—of what was the amount of back

pay paid to both secondary and primary teachers in 2015?

**Hon. Garcia:** The total I am informed is about \$5.5 billion—just a while. It is over \$500 million that was paid.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In 2015?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Hon. Minister, you earlier said that the Government contribution to NIS, the increase to it was due to the increase in NIS overall. My understanding is NIS increased by about 13 per cent and you are increasing the amount here by almost 20 per cent. So is it that it is really that, the Government's contribution, or it that NIS remained unpaid from the previous year and you are paying it in this year?

**Hon. Garcia:** My information, the moment the NIS contributions went up in September 2016, this Ministry was really on the ball and they paid those increased contributions. And remember, the employer's contribution is twice that that is paid. Okay? So that accounts—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 010, General Administration (TEST), page 189.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, would you be able to indicate to us that \$10.4 million, how many persons—members of staff—that relates to in terms of the TEST—the amount of persons would have joined the substantive Ministry of Education?

**Hon. Garcia:** Would you mind repeating that question, please?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes. The TEST Salaries and COLA, 01, how many persons that represent payment for under the TEST? Because I am aware you would have had the merging of the two Ministries.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. The information I have here is broken down into public officers, contract officers and daily-paid. Okay? Public officers, we have 190, that is TEST—190. We have contract officers, 234; and we have daily-rated, 37, and that figure, I am told, deals with the staff complement on the establishment.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture, page 189.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, would you be able to tell us how many persons are employed at ECIAF? And if I may ask a related question, with your permission, Madam Chair. Item 29, the overtime daily-rated bill seems to be extremely high. Would have been responsible for that?

**Hon. Garcia:** All right, let me take the easier one first. The figure I gave you with respect to the daily-paid, 37, most of those persons belong to ECIAF. The figure of 190, which is on the establishment, we will have to disaggregate that because that will include employees at ECIAF.

**Mr. Karim:** Item 29, Madam Chair, the substantial overtime payment for daily-rated workers at ECIAF.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay, what your exact question?

**Mr. Karim:** Under ECIAF, Item 29, Overtime - Daily-Rated Workers, I am seeing that you have a very high allocation and use as well, from 2016/2017. What is responsible for that high figure of overtime?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, any time an officer is required to work beyond his hours, those persons have to be paid overtime, and what we have found is a number of those persons were required to work beyond their normal hours and therefore we had no alternative but to pay them overtime. And also, ECIAF, I am told, as you would, I am sure, know, part of the education that goes on there is farming and a

number of those persons will have to work overtime to ensure that the animals and the other plants and so on, are taken care of.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I seek your guidance. I do not know whether—since the Minister raised the issue of the technical/vocational, I do not know whether we have moved ahead in terms of education to 012?

**Madam Chairman:** Well, are we exhausted with 011? Okay, so 012, Technical/Vocational Education, page 190.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, recently I passed in that area, ECI AF, which I live in close proximity, and I saw a set of appliances in the savannah, meaning like fridge and stove and—apparently there was some protest. I wonder if the hon. Minister is aware of this; whether he can enlighten us as to what was the purpose of that protest and whether it was, in fact, resolved.

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not aware of that protest but, again, I can get the information for you. But at the moment, this is the first time I am hearing about that protest.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, might you be able to tell us what is the staff complement of the TVET section of the Ministry and how many vacancies there are?

**Hon. Garcia:** When you say TVET section?

**Mr. Karim:** Well, the technical and vocational education part of it. I am looking at Item 01 where you have an allocation there of \$2.5 million for Salaries and COLA, so that, obviously will be to be paid to employees of the department—the unit. So I just wanted to know, because of the emphasis—and I know that your background is in TVET as well.

**Hon. Garcia:** So, too, is yours, right?



**Mr. Karim:** Sorry?

**Hon. Garcia:** So, too, is yours.

**Mr. Karim:** Yes. So how many persons will that be catering for? And do you have a shortage of manpower in that unit to administer and supervise the various programmes of the Ministry in that vocational sector?

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. This Item deals with the persons who are still at John Donaldson Technical Institute, now UTT, the San Fernando Technical Institute and the Point Fortin Vocational Centre and I am told that there are only about eight persons who are there.

**11.00 a.m.**

**Mr. Karim:** Was there an issue in terms of absorbing them or having them recognized in the Ministry as opposed to where they are? They were on secondment. What is the situation with those persons who continue to be there in terms of their substantive position, and whether they were assigned from the TVET Division to UTT and San Fernando Tech UTT as well? In fact, all the campuses of UTT, the GVC as well in Point Fortin.

**Hon. Garcia:** My information is that there are specific jobs, specific tasks, that those persons have to discharge and that is why they are still there. Part of the wrapping up of the entire system, the movement, well not the movement, but the absorption of those technical institutes into UTT.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 013, Teachers' Colleges, page 190; Item 014, National Examinations Council, page 191; Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division, page 191.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I noticed that we have a decrease of three-quarter million dollars with respect to Salaries and COLA. Oftentimes we will have complaints, and you will hear it in the public

domain as well, where people are not getting the kind of response and the service to their queries and maybe to the assistance in terms of being paid abroad if they are on scholarship. Could you indicate to us, hon. Minister, whether you have a shortage—in fact, it says there so, vacant posts, and what are these vacant posts, and when do you expect to have them filled?

**Hon. Garcia:** There are 36 posts that are approved. Twelve have been filled and that leaves 24 posts vacant to be filled.

**Mr. Karim:** Quite a substantial amount. Do you have an idea as to by when you will want to expedite this, given that you have now a decrease of \$750,000; how are you going to manage it?

**Hon. Garcia:** All posts that are vacant, we have been in contact with the Teaching Service Commission all in an effort to have those posts filled as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Karim:** May I ask, since you raised that matter, are you satisfied with the response of the Teaching Service Commission to the filling of vacancies?

**Hon. Garcia:** You know, there is always a toing and froing. When we bring up the question of the length of time it is taking to fill positions, the Teaching Service Commission will blame the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Education in turn will blame the Teaching Service Commission.

Recently we had a meeting with the Teaching Service Commission and there is an attempt on both sides to ensure that those delays are no more. So that the Teaching Service Commission will be given the information promptly, and therefore, they will not have to blame the Ministry of Education nor will the Ministry of Education have to blame the Teaching Service Commission for delays.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, with your permission if I may ask a follow-up question with respect to the Teaching Service Commission to the Minister? I know

it is not a line Item here, but since he raised the matter of the relationship.

**Madam Chairman:** I will not allow it, Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Minister, you have over a period of time problems with the payments to scholars abroad in particular. Recently someone who won a scholarship and is in Ireland indicated to me—his parent indicated to me that they have not been receiving any moneys,. Is there a listing of the arrears owed to students who are on scholarships and can we get a listing of that; and what remedial measures you intend to take?

**Madam Chairman:** Might I ask, Member, what Item you are relating to?

**Mr. Singh:** Well, I am not seeing a line really under which it comes in but it is dealing with the scholarship areas.

**Dr. Tewarie:** 016.

**Madam Chairman:** But 016 deals with Salaries, Government Contributions, et cetera. Minister could you provide that in writing, please?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, I will provide that in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well it was a question I suppose I can follow up. I wanted to ask—I mean the number of national scholars abroad could not be that large compared to the whole number of scholarships that we give in the country every year, and I wondered if a dedicated effort could not be made to service those scholars better so they do not end up in difficulty with their institutions. You know, I mean, it is not a phenomenal number. I mean it is a handful every year—well relatively, compared to the 400 that we give every year.

**Madam Chairman:** So, Member, you are really asking that in the context of the salary and cost of living allowances, and the numbers of staff to service?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes. I mean, it seems to me—I am raising it because it is important. If you are a student abroad and your fees are not paid, and the institution responds to you in a certain way, it causes a problem. So I am saying could a dedicated effort be made to national scholars abroad in terms of staff service to ensure that? That is all.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes and I can assure you that that effort is being made, however, I think I need to make the point. In some cases, the reason for the delay rests on the shoulders of the scholars themselves in not providing the required information on time.

**Dr. Tewarie:** What would that be? Would that be like transcripts and stuff? Is that it?

**Hon. Garcia:** Say that again.

**Dr. Tewarie:** What information would that be? Would that be the performance at school, the transcripts and stuff like that?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. The students must upload on the system their information, the status with the university, their transcript, all of these things before scholarships. You see, the universities want to ensure that they will get the payment—  
*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is correct.

**Hon. Garcia:**—and, as I said before, in some cases because of the delay by the students you have that consequential delay. And I am told that it is not a small number of students. The number of students is fairly large.

**Mr. Singh:** I have personal knowledge, Madam Chair, and I think that now that it is under your Ministry there is an attempt to computerize everything. So I think it would be much better because prior to that it was manual and data was lost all the time, and the students had to provide the data all the time. So what is happening

now is an upgrade and hopefully it will function better.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, I agree with you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Good and Services, page 192; Item 001, General Administrations, pages 192 and 193.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, I want to guide the hon. Minister to Contract Employment, line Item 16. The Estimates for 2016 was \$197 million and the Revised Estimates 145, so that is \$52 million less in terms of Contract Employment. Could you indicate how many positions were affected as result of the reduction in the Contract Employment of \$52 million; how many positions were on contract employment and did not continue in 2016?

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. While I am not in a position right now to give you the exact numbers, when we talk about the contract employees under this line Item 16, it would include our school safety officers, our business operation assistants, our information/communication technicians, et cetera, and there are about 1,054 such employees.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, Minister, were all these people discontinued in their employment, the BOA—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Garcia:** No, no, no, no!

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So what would have happened?

**Hon. Garcia:** Cabinet has recently agreed to the continuation of these employees and they will be given the three-month contract—it will be three-year contracts.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That includes the school safety officers, the BOAs.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So what happened between in 2015 and 2016 that \$52 million was not paid? Were they not paid? Were they on the job and were not paid, or were they not on the job and were not paid?

**Hon. Garcia:** They were paid under Short-Term Employment and, as a result, they were paid under different votes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That were paid under a different vote?

**Hon. Garcia:** Short-Term Employment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well I see it. I accept that and I appreciate it because there was an increase of \$25 million for the Short-Term Employment, but still that is only half of the \$50 million. If they were given payment under the Short-Term Employment, which was an increase of—if you look at Item 22, from \$14 million estimated to revised estimate of 39, that is \$25 million more, but you had a \$50 million shortfall. So obviously some staff were affected and probably sent home. If you can indicate to us what really happened there.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chair, through you, where is this alleged shortfall of \$50 million?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If you look, hon. Minister of Finance, at line Item 16, you would see 197 was the estimate and the revised estimate was 145 for Contract Employment. So therefore, approximately \$52 million was not paid. What the Minister is saying, that this was shifted to Short-Term Employment, but the estimates for Short-Term Employment \$14 million and the revised estimate is 39, so there was an increase of 25.

**Mr. Imbert:** You should not assume that it is the same thing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Could you give us the answer what happened, the difference between—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** You should not assume it is the same type of employment and the same people.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, the Minister indicated that, so can you all clear it up?

**Mr. Imbert:** You should not make that assumption. We will sort out the details

for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So who were affected in the Contract Employment? The Minister said school safety officers, BOAs and another category. A thousand and fifty-four people were affected and were obviously not paid in 2016. Were they fired; were they dismissed; were they kept on board and not paid?

**Hon. Garcia:** I will give you that information in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You do not have any recollection at all, whatsoever, Minister?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, the only thing I have here is that the expenditure for September 2016 was not included, but in an effort to ensure that the information that is given is correct, we will give you that in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So am I to assume now that 1,054, the employment of these people might have been jeopardized?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, you cannot assume that.

**Hon. Garcia:** No, no, no. Not at all.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well then in the absence of information I am to assume that until I am proven otherwise.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, the assurance you were given is that the information would be sent to you in writing.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on Item 01, Travelling and Subsistence, which you have a decrease of \$2.5 million. I am raising this question in the context of your opening statement this morning that you were moving to a school-based management model. If this is going to a serious cut, it is going to eventually affect the amount of visits. For example, can you tell us how many persons you are short by in terms of school supervision, curriculum officers and guidance officers as a complement to the staff and student ratio?

**Hon. Garcia:** We will have to provide that information subsequently.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you. Can I also ask a follow-up question, Madam Chair? The Item 08, I am aware of the—there is also a substantial decrease in terms of office accommodation and I am aware of the move that you had, but can you tell us what are the offices that you rent/lease now and the amount of money that you are paying for rent/lease?

**Hon. Garcia:** That information also is not readily at hand, but I can tell you that since we have moved into our new offices, a number of the offices that we occupied, we will no longer be paying rent for those offices.

**Mr. Karim:** Just one more on that—sorry—page, Item 17. You had a slash in your training budget by \$2.75 million, does the Ministry have a training policy approved?

**11.15 a.m.**

**Hon. Garcia:** That is still under discussion and what we have realized is that we have a cadre of persons who are well qualified in house to provide that training.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, to the Minister, with respect to Contract Employment, he said, if my memory serves me right, with respect to early childhood education centre teachers, they fall within the line Item of Contract Employment and in this regard, could the Minister indicate to this meeting how much money is owed to the teachers at these centres and when these moneys will be paid, and if there is a plan to incorporate these teachers into the decent work agenda of your Government?

**Madam Chairman:** Might I just ask, is this, Minister, under Item 02, 001?

**Hon. Garcia:** Under 16.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 16, Contract Employment.

**Madam Chairman:** I want to know if it is another Item altogether. Is this under Item 009 or is it under Item 001? That is what I am asking.



**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, when I raised it earlier on this morning, the Minister indicated that this would fall within the line Item of Contract Employment.

**Madam Chairman:** I understand, Member. What I am trying to ascertain is whether we are under General Administration or whether we are under 009. I am trying to find out the question that has been posed.

**Mr. Singh:** Ma'am, just to add some measure of clarity, if you look at 009, it deals with Office Equipment, Furniture and Furnishings, Other Minor Equipment and if it is consistent with the approach we are taking, then we would not be able to ask a question on Contract Employment there.

**Madam Chairman:** So it is under this Head?

**Hon. Garcia:** It is under this Head.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Proceed. Thank you.

**Hon. Garcia:** As I have indicated, not only today but previously, the whole system of early childhood education and care is in disarray. We have cases where the Government pays, we have cases where SERVOL contributes and we have cases where these are run by private persons. So we really are working hard to ensure that there is some sanity to be placed in that system.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, if I could recollect very clearly, I have been trying to get from the Minister how much moneys are owed, if any, to the early childhood education centre teachers; what is the sum, if any, and if there is an existing sum, when will these moneys be settled. And in addition to that, the Minister indicated that they do not fall under the ambit of the Education Act of Trinidad and Tobago, and I indicated to him or I am trying to find out from him, is there a policy, is there a plan to incorporate them within the ambit of a decent work agenda in relation to his Government's policy?

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay, the answer to your second question is yes. This Government is making every effort to ensure that the early childhood sector is incorporated into the Education Act. Okay. And with respect to your first question, as far as we are aware, this is what I am told, they are not owed salaries, the outstanding payments would be in the area of gratuity.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am referencing line Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Minister, I notice there is a reduction of \$25 million here and in the explanation, I see that you have put an allocation of \$32 million into School Transport. The question is: has there been a considerable cut in the allocation for the School Transport component which is very critical to our rural communities and if there was a cut, can you give an indication of if there is a reduction in routes, or even operators on those routes?

**Hon. Garcia:** From the information that is before me, there is no reduction in the routes. Where we are trying to save is we want to make sure that it is more efficient. The information that we have been receiving is that a number of those maxi-taxis that have been contracted by PTSC, in many cases, they run half full or half empty and we want to sure that that waste is cut out.

**Mr. Paray:** Could the Minister advise exactly in terms of achieving that, what exactly is being done? Because I have had at least about eight or nine requests sent through to the Ministry in terms of some additional buses for the Mayaro community to get students to Sangre Grande, to North Eastern College, and so on and the challenge is that we have so many students that the existing buses, the maxis are filled. And right now a few of the maxis, what we are trying to do with some of the parents is for those who can alternate students. So we are asking some parents, some days, to try have your kids travel so we can alternate so the pressure do not reach on some families. So while I hear you, I can tell you in the Mayaro

constituency, our buses are full to the maximum. There is very little room for half run maxis.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, I understand that, but when I mentioned just now that there are areas where the maxis are being run half full, I did not focus on the Mayaro area. But again, in answer to your question, to give you some measure of relief, we will be having discussions with the Minister of Transport to see how best we can rationalize the system.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 23 in relation to Fees, there is a reduction from the revised estimate of \$44 million paid last year to \$25 million estimated to be paid this year. Could you indicate to us what these Fees are for? Is it CXC fees? Is it what?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, these fees represent legal fees, ICT licences, anti-virus agreements, examination fees, CXC with respect CAPE then GCE, SAS, et cetera and also brokerage fees, and the decrease is the Ministry of Finance cut and some of the expenditure occurred in 2016 was for previous years billed.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So the Minister of Finance cut of \$19 million, would it affect payment of fees for students at the various levels of CSEC and CAPE?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, it will not.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and with your permission, I am on 02, Goods and Services which continues on page 193 and my questions relate to line Item 37 and 43, if I may be permitted to. Okay, thank you. Hon. Minister, you had a significant slash in those two important items of approximately \$60 million. Now, I noted the work that you had been doing in terms of addressing violence and indiscipline in schools. Well, with a cut of 36, almost \$37 million in security as also in janitorial services—well we could look at the janitorial services—I am aware in both cases the same company may provide those services, in some cases.

Could you tell us how you are going to address this significant shortfall in terms of these two major Items?

**Hon. Garcia:** Which are the two major Items you are referring to?

**Mr. Karim:** Line 37, Janitorial Services which has a shortage of—

**Hon. Garcia:** Janitorial and Security.

**Mr. Karim:** And security. And very importantly as well, both of them, but security services in view of there is a certain complement of security officers to a student population and I am sure you are well aware. With this now, this is obviously going to affect it, so how do you plan to ensure that we have that kind of security supervision that would not increase the potential for student indiscipline?

**Hon. Garcia:** All right. Again, there are two questions that you are asking here. The first one is with respect to Janitorial Services and as you would quite appreciate the fact that we have moved into one new location would mean then that we would have substantial savings with respect to cleaning of those various offices that extended all over the place.

With respect to security, again, that is an area that we are looking at closely because it is not only one service provider that we have, we have several service providers who provide security and we intend to look at this carefully to see how best we can cut back on the expenses.

**Mr. Karim:** Minister, I was also going on the line in terms of the schools which I am sure this allocation—in terms of the student population, how many security officers, say MTS, will you have for a student complement of 1,200?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, first of all, we do not have schools with a student complement of 1,200.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, let us say 800 or 1,000. Let us say 1,000 for ease of—

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, it is classified according to high-risk schools and schools that

are considered high risk, their complement would be more than schools where we do not have that problem. Just now, I will give you some information.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Hon. Garcia:** And depending on how high the risk is, is between two to eight. So the maximum would be eight and in schools where we do not have much difficulty, it might be about two officers.

**Mr. Karim:** For example, Minister, in a school in my constituency, Chaguanas North Secondary, how many officers—

**Hon. Garcia:** We had eight there. We made sure there were eight there.

**Mr. Karim:** Eight. And how many high-risk schools do you have in the country?

**Hon. Garcia:** I cannot give you that information right now but again, I can provide you with that.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to follow up the issue of the early childhood care teachers. In my constituency, there is a brand new school but you do not have the complement of teachers and there is a ratio to the number of students per teacher. And whereas you have a brand new school, when you do not have the teachers, children cannot attend in the numbers that there is the demand for. The question I have is that is there a plan to remedy this defect where you have a lot of early childhood care centres and you do not have staff available?

**Hon. Garcia:** The simple answer to your question is yes, there is a plan but I can go further to say that—well, I have been saying this all morning. We are embarking on a plan to rationalize the whole system of early childhood education and care because it is really a hotchpotch system.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you again, Madam Chair. In the quest for information this morning, I want to return to this issue of 16, Contract Employment and the early childhood education centres teachers. The Minister indicated that the

moneys that are owed is gratuity, could the Minister provide how much gratuity is owed? And when normally gratuity is paid, it means that people are fired or they are exited out of the system and so on. Could the Minister tell this meeting how many early childhood education centre teachers have been dismissed by this Government?

**Hon. Garcia:** If a person is fired, that person is not entitled to gratuity and all trade unionists and former trade unionists will know that. Yes, real trade unionists.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am asking a question based on what you have been saying to this meeting this morning.

**Hon. Garcia:** If that person is fired, that person is fired because of disciplinary action.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am simply asking the sum of money that is owed.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes but you see when you ask your questions, you are confusing the questions with some statements.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, no, I know my line of questioning and I expect you to answer.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay Members.

**11.30 a.m.**

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I am still awaiting the moneys owed to the teachers from a gratuity point of view, the sum.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, I think it is the question you asked. You said for the teachers who have been fired or dismissed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am asking whether they have been exited from the system. What? I am trying to find out. And I am hoping that the Minister could assist.

**Madam Chairman:** So you want to know the number of former teachers to whom gratuity is owed?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I want to know how much is owed, in terms of gratuity, whether they have been exited from the system, whether they have been, I do not know. I am searching for the information.

**Hon. Garcia:** That information will take some time to compute, but as soon as we get that information—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I see a pattern is developing here this morning. Apparently the Minister has not come with the information within his Ministry, and so on. Everything seems to be one of we will put it in writing. So there is nothing happening at the Ministry, or do you have to research? I do not know. I am a bit confused here this morning.

**Hon. Garcia:** I am also confused by the questions you are asking. Because the questions you are asking are convoluted, so convoluted that they—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, it is not convoluted. It is a question of searching for information.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members. What I want to remind everybody here, when an undertaking is given to provide the information, it is now subject to the Committee of Government Assurances.

Members would have remembered that the policy on a bulletin was circulated regarding that. So that what may have obtained before, as regards promises, or whatever, no longer obtains and I think everybody is duly advised of that. So when a Minister gives an undertaking to provide the information, I think all of us here should have a lessened anxiety, with respect to it being delivered, because it is now subject to the Committee of Government Assurances. Okay? All right. So that I think Member for Couva South, a certain response was given by the Minister, quite a number of those, and I am sure it would be dealt with if it amounts to an assurance according to that document.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you. On the matter of security, which my colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East, questioned, in 2015, \$172 million was the actual expenditure and I can recollect from my days as Minister, that proved to be extremely difficult to provide the necessary security for the schools. Now it has been reduced by \$55 million. And MTS, which is one of the largest providers of security services, have gone up their fees. So it means with this reduction of \$55 million—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Garcia:** Could you tell me what line Item you are referring to, please?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 43.

**Madam Chairman:** Fifty-five million?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Fifty-five million.

**Madam Chairman:** Over what period, Member?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** From 2015, when \$172 million was spent to now \$117 million estimated to be spent, which is about \$55 million less. That is going to have a remarkable diminution of Security Services and support for the school system where there are some schools needing eight security officers. Could the Minister comment on this issue? There is a marked cut and this will significantly affect the security system, particularly in the schools that need much more security officers.

**Hon. Garcia:** I do not share your opinion nor do I agree with you. I mentioned earlier on, in fact when I was making my opening remarks, that we are embarking on a school-based management system and I outlined—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are now embarking. We had it a year ago, hon. Minister. You keep making that statement.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, could you—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You keep making that statement. *[Continuous interruption and crosstalk]*



**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member for Caroni East. Member for Caroni East, we started off on a very nice tone. I want us to keep it. The Minister was giving you a response.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, but he keep—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member, let the Minister finish the response and you could probe after that, with a question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But he did it twice.

**Hon. Garcia:** You are not allowing me to finish what I am about to say, and I am very disappointed in you.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, please answer.

**Hon. Garcia:** I was simply stating that we have embarked, and I stress, we have embarked on a school-based management model which has many facets to it. One of it is the reduction of violence and indiscipline in our schools and you would be aware, I am sure, that over the last few months we have been able to achieve a significant reduction in the incidence of violence and indiscipline in our schools. Okay? And as a result, I am saying quite categorically that this reduction will have very little or no effect on indiscipline in our schools. I can give you that assurance.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Now may I respond? Are you aware that the school-based management system was introduced under the People's Partnership administration one year before we demitted office and all the principals and supervisors and the members of the school-based management team were trained for a significant six-month period? So when you say that you are now embarking, it was there already a year before you came into office and that is what I wanted to correct, hon. Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, the question is whether it existed before?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are you aware that this was so a year before you came into

office?

**Hon. Garcia:** The information that I have is that it was not in existence.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well you are misled.

**Hon. Garcia:** And we are now embarking on it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are misled and you are misleading the House.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, you got a response to your question. Okay?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, allow me to intervene on this particular line Item. I have noticed a trend and it has come to the fore with this particular line Item. Members opposite cannot use the 2015 expenditure to make any predictions about what will happen in 2017, because the Ministry of Education, in this particular line Item, managed school security effectively with \$154 million, not 172. That is what you spent. We spent 154, \$18 million less, with better results. So when you are making your comparisons use the 2016 Estimates, not the 2015.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Let me, let me.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman, am I—[*Interruption*]

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I want to make a follow up question.

**Madam Chairman:** And as I said yesterday, which we may not have remembered, you are entitled to more than one intervention. I am now calling the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, can I just ask a question in respect to same line Item 43, Security Services? Given that the Minister of

Finance just said there is going to be a \$36.9 million decrease in the 2017 estimates from 2016, is it fair to—okay not fair. Is there going to be a reduction in security manpower at schools for 2017?

**Hon. Garcia:** There will be no reduction in the security that we are providing to our schools. What we are doing is rationalizing the security system in our schools in an effort to make it more effective, simple as that.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow up question. Could you expand when you say rationalize meaning, I just want to expand a bit. When you had earlier on answered the Member for Chaguanas East where you said that high-risk schools, the maximum of security officers could be eight at the high end. The question I am asking, given that the reduction in the allocation, would there be a reduction in the security manpower at high risk schools?

**Hon. Garcia:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I think you have hit the nail on its head. The number of high-risk schools, that number has been reducing more and more. And, therefore, where previously there would have had to be quite a large number of security officers in some of those schools, that number could be reduced.

**Mr. Lee:** So then the answer is yes then?

**Hon. Garcia:** Answer to what?

**Mr. Lee:** That the manpower of the security officers would be reduced in high risk schools.

**Hon. Garcia:** No, I am not saying that.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. This is to the Minister. He did indicate that he is in the process of rationalizing the early childhood care system. Am I correct?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, you are.

**Mr. Charles:** Right, and I wanted to know that, in respect of the Reform Early

Childhood Centre that is run by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, the building is completed. It is about 99 per cent complete and it has been in that state for the past six months, and I wanted to know if the opening of that centre is dependent on this rationalization. Or what is the keep back for the opening of the school?

**Hon. Garcia:** All respects that are due to you, Member for Naparima. That question could be dealt with when we are dealing with our development programme.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am just following up on the answer given by the Minister of Finance, that in 2016 they spent \$154 million and that was sufficient to deal with the security of schools. Is he aware that there were significant amounts of school violence taking place across the country in 2016? And, therefore, would he not attribute that to the reduction in the school security officers, when certain schools had to ask for more security officers to be put into their schools? So, therefore, I am proffering that the one hundred and—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, you have asked two questions.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, let him answer.

**Madam Chairman:** So let the Minister answer those two questions, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am aware that under the PNM administration, under the distinguished management of the distinguished Member for Arima and the distinguished Minister of Education and the distinguished Minister in the Ministry of Education, that there was a significant reduction in school violence in 2016, and because of their prudent management and their forward-looking vision, there will be a further reduction in cost in 2017, and even better results.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Follow up question. Are there school safety officers in the schools now?

**Dr. Lovell:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** There are supposed to be 150-plus school safety officers. Are they employed in the schools now?

**Dr. Lovell:** Yes.

**Hon. Garcia:** Of course, yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Secondary Education, page 193; Item 006, Primary Education, page 194.

**Mr. Charles:** I am just asking for clarification, Madam Chair. Item 21, this deals with Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, does that supply only to the head office or the general administration or to the primary schools in the country, J? Thank you.

**Hon. Garcia:** This is under Primary Education so, obviously, it will refer to primary schools.

**Mr. Charles:** No, the Minister of Finance said—Item 21 on 006.

**Hon. Garcia:** Page 194.

**Mr. Charles:** Page 194. Okay. So, therefore, you are right. Go on Minister. If it does, do you think this figure of \$2 million is adequate to repair all the schools that we have? Because I could name in Naparima a number of schools that—

**Hon. Garcia:** That is not the line Item that we use for repairs.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay, well that is what I asked, the first question and you said that this referred to primary schools and that is why. You could go on to the next question.

**Mr. Imbert:** Primary schools are repaired by EFCL during the vacation period and the cost runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars, as the Member for Caroni East would know.

**Mr. Charles:** So what specifically this refers to, Item 21? I just need to know.

**Hon. Garcia:** Just let me explain. You know, in the government primary schools the principals are given a vote where they can effect minor repairs.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, yes.

**Hon. Garcia:** You know a tap is not functioning, he can call in a plumber. Okay?

**Mr. Charles:** Thanks very much.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Item 007, District Services Division, page 194. Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, page 195.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am subject to correction but if two divisions of the Ministry are still located at RCLRC, that is the Director of Educational Services and the Director of Curriculum Development, Item 12, Materials and Supplies, because I am aware if those continue there, there is a substantial amount of publication for schools, you are now facing reduction in the allocation of 66 2/3 per cent. Given that you said you are going to have the school-based management model, again information, how will this impact upon the quality of the delivery of the curriculum? And this is not teachers, this is in terms of publications, materials and supplies.

**11.45 a.m.**

**Hon. Garcia:** Member for Chaguanas East, we have not moved the supervision from the RCLRC, but in terms of the other services, we are making efforts to have those services housed at our head office.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, if I could continue, do you still have the printery in operation at the RCLRC?

**Hon. Garcia:** We still have the equipment there, but in terms of how it operates—all of us would know that there were serious problems concerning the operation of that equipment. That is something that we have been looking at only recently, to

see how best we can ensure that that service that is supposed to be provided, will be provided to our schools.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, in that case then, this is going to be a real constraint for you, because if you have to outsource, if you do not have the printery in operation, how are you going to deal with this matter?

**Hon. Garcia:** You know, with the use of technology we are managing quite well. We have our photocopying machines. We have very advanced photocopying machines in our offices which can do the job almost as well. In addition to that, at our former head office, we have a number of machines which we are thinking, or working out how best we could make use of those machines, and all those things will assist in providing the relevant service to our schools.

**Mr. Karim:** Is it your intention, hon. Minister, to reactivate the printery of the DES at RCLRC?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, as I said just now, that is something that is under consideration.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit, pages 195 and 196; Item 010, General Administration (TEST), pages 196 and 197.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you give us some information with respect to Contract Employment, which has been reduced by \$1.2 million, line Item 16?

**Hon. Garcia:** Just give me one minute. You want to find out how much employment we have in TEST?

**Mr. Karim:** I was asking you in terms of the reduction, but the follow up question, if you could consider it as well, how many persons have not had their contract renewed in the last year? So the question of this is, what does this relate to and how many persons have not had their contract positions renewed?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am afraid I will have to give you that answer in writing, okay?

**Mr. Karim:** Can I ask, through Madam Chair, while you are doing that, if you could address similarly Item 22, the Short-Term Employment, the data for that?

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture, page 197; Item 014, National Examinations Council, page 197; Item 015, Spanish Secretariat, page 198.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you indicate the number of persons who are currently employed in the Spanish—well, it used to be called Spanish Implementation, but the Spanish Secretariat. How many of those are on the permanent establishment of the staff? How many are contracted employees? And what is the complement, the optimal complement for that unit?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, what line Item are we?

**Mr. Karim:** I am on Item 015, Spanish.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, I am there. What line Item?

**Mr. Karim:** Contact Employment.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we are under 16?

**Mr. Karim:** Sixteen.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Garcia:** We only have one person employed at present in that unit; only one person.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, and what is the optimal size you would have had to have in terms of the establishment?

**Hon. Garcia:** About 15.

**Mr. Karim:** So you have a shortfall of 14 persons. Could you indicate to us, hon. Minister, what this Spanish Secretariat will do, or does?

**Hon. Garcia:** That area is supposed to provide training for teachers in workshops,



both primary and secondary, and even teachers in the private sector; conduct classes at the level of the Ministry of Education and other Ministries; assist in the conduct of classes in the private sector; assist in the promotion of cultural visits by secondary school students in other countries; research celebrations of Spanish Language Day; Spanish talent show for secondary school students; end of year Latin Christmas Extravaganza and appreciation ceremony; the Spanish Language Film Festival; the distribution of language learning material. These are some of the activities.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, remind me of two words “omnipotent” and “omniscient”, for that one person. I will ask the question now, by when will you expect to have the full complement on board?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is an area that we are looking at very closely, and in a short time frame, we will be beefing up that area.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division, page 198.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In respect of the questions that were asked by my colleagues before, in terms of the manpower to address this division, could the hon. Minister indicate to us this allocation of \$17 million, a shortfall of \$1 million, how will that impact upon your manpower requirements to service the students who are on scholarships?

**Madam Chairman:** You are on Item 16?

**Mr. Karim:** I am on—thank you, Madam Chair, I am on Item 16.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. I can tell you in that division, the SATD, we have 29 persons or 29 posts that have been filled, out of a total of 80. Therefore, we have 51 vacant posts, and we have 11 persons on contract.

**Mr. Karim:** And these posts would be filled by whom? When I say—not the

person, will it be by the Ministry or Service Commission?

**Hon. Garcia:** The Public Service Commission will be filling these posts.

**Mr. Karim:** So you, Minister, you will not be able to tell us anything about the time, given that the context in which they operate? I mean, you have a good intention, I am sure.

**Hon. Garcia:** The Public Service Commission, they will be better able to supply that answer.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 199; Item 001, General Administration, page 199; Item 006, Primary Education, page 199; Item 007, District Services Division, page 199; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, page 200; Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit, page 200; Item 010, General Administration (TEST), page 200; Item 015, Spanish Secretariat, page 201; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 201; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 201.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, let me just indicate that with a decrease of \$569 million, I will have quite a number of questions to ask, but let me ask this first one, on 01, with respect to CXC. Are we indebted, in any way, to the Caribbean Examinations Council?

**Hon. Garcia:** The line Item that you referred to, is really for membership fees, okay? In terms of our indebtedness to CXC, I am not at this point able to provide any figure or answer that question, but I am told that we are not indebted to CXC.

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

**Mr. Singh:** I am further down under United Nations.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 201.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you tell us who is the Ministry's representative on the Commonwealth of Learning Board?

**Hon. Garcia:** We do not have a representative at present.

**Mr. Karim:** Can you indicate to us who was the last person, if you have no one representing us now?

**Hon. Garcia:** I was told that the last person was Karen Roseman, but she resigned.

**Mr. Karim:** I think you might—

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, United Nations Organizations, page 201.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 31, United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). I see there is a decrease of \$428,913, what is the status of this organization? Has a board been appointed?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, a board has not yet been appointed. It is in the process of being appointed. A board has not yet been appointed. We are in the process of appointing that board.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, International Bodies, page 202; Item 006, Educational Institution, pages 202 and 203.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The line Item 01, Grants to Assisted Secondary Schools, which are denominational schools. The allocation has been cut from what was spent in 2016, that is, \$48 million to now, what you estimate to be \$38 million, approximately \$9.6 million. This is a cut to grants for assisted secondary schools. How would that impact, hon. Minister, on the provision of care and services for these denominational board schools, when there is approximately a \$10 million cut on the grant for these schools? This will impact significantly on the care for these children.

**12.00 noon**

**Hon. Garcia:** Let me begin by saying that we at the Ministry of Education, on behalf of the Government, have been having discussions with the denominational

boards, and our discussions involve many aspects of their operations. One of the first things that we have been saying to the boards is that if you claim ownership of the schools, then you have a corresponding responsibility. When this country could have afforded it, we supported the denominational boards and the denominational schools in almost every aspect of their operations.

We are telling our boards directly that the time has come now when we do not have as much money as we had before, that they have to play a part. We have been having very good responses because some of these boards are engaging their past students, and they are providing yeoman's service. I could pinpoint one school, in particular, where the old boys association constructed a wing without any assistance from the Ministry of Education. The bottom line here is that the boards must understand that if they claim ownership of the schools, they have a corresponding responsibility.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, in essence, hon. Minister, you are telling the boards now, away from the past, that you now have to take the responsibility for providing the financial assistance that your school needs. For instance, the Catholic Board which has over 120 schools, the Anglican which has over 70 schools, the Maha Sabha which has 45, are you telling the boards now that they have to look after their own welfare now for the provision of educational services.

**Hon. Garcia:** I did not say that. I did not say that. What we are telling the boards is let us hold hands together, and work towards the improvement of our schools.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And if they are unable to come up with the finance that is required, what will happen to these students?

**Hon. Garcia:** It will be a matter of discussions. And, as I said before, in the case of some boards, they are engaging the assistance of their past pupils associations.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And if the past pupils association—

**Hon. Garcia:** No. We are not being so pessimistic. We are not being so pessimistic.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, would the Minister of Finance come in then or would you want to get the help of the Minister of Finance if after one term you see that the schools are floundering for lack of supplies, duster, chalk, everything?

**Hon. Garcia:** We do not believe that the schools would be floundering.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You will be coming in to help bail out.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. To the Minister, my understanding was that there was a partnership in which there was a two-thirds/one-third formula for the repairs, minor repairs to the schools. Is this formula no longer applicable?

**Hon. Garcia:** That went out the gate long ago.

**Mr. Charles:** So, what is the current relationship?

**Hon. Garcia:** The Government provides 100 per cent funding.

**Mr. Charles:** The Government provides 100 per cent?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yeah.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. A further question at 09, Grants to Assisted Primary Schools—and I am only asking this in the context of the fact that a number of denominational primary schools are in a state of disrepair, and I could speak to in my constituency, and I could speak to Marac Baptist and whatnot. Does the Minister feel that reducing it by close to \$24 million—and this is just a question, because you may have alternative ways of funding—will this impact on the quality of education given at the primary school level?

**Hon. Garcia:** Again, I have been at pains to state that we will not deviate from our mission to provide quality education to our students. We will work closely with our major stakeholders in ensuring that quality education is provided to all our

children. If there are schools that are in a dilapidated state, we will do everything that is possible to ensure that the physical arrangements will be put in place so that the schools will be able to afford our students that quality education so that our students will be able to operate in an environment that facilitates learning and teaching.

**Mr. Charles:** So, to my constituents in Naparima, I could tell them, the Parents Teachers Association, that the Ministry is amenable to solving the problems, maintenance problems in the schools and, therefore, they should look forward to some remedial action.

**Hon. Garcia:** I think you should also tell them that we are hoping that they will assist.

**Mr. Charles:** They do. Further question—

**Hon. Garcia:** That is a step in the right direction.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 24, Grants to Government Secondary Schools. I understand the need to cut expenditure and whatnot, but given the fact of the performance of government schools, government secondary schools and whatnot: to what extent does the Minister think that the physical environment impacts on the provision of education and, if so, at this time, a \$10 million cut, does he think that this is called for in the circumstance?

**Hon. Garcia:** The physical conditions of the school will have an impact on the delivery of the curriculum. All of us will be aware of that. However, as I have been saying over and over, we need to hold hands with our major stakeholders to ensure that those physical conditions are brought up to standard. We have been engaging with all our stakeholders. We have been talking with the Parent Teachers Association. In fact, since I have come into office, not myself alone, but Minister Francis and I and officers of the Ministry of Education, we have been having

meetings, regular meetings, with the National Parent Teacher Association, and through their influence we are seeing an improvement, not only in the relationship but improvements in what the parents can assist with in the schools.

**Mr. Charles:** I think it would be useful Minister to quantify that support, because with respect to the denominational schools, a board is already in place. There is a framework of a religion to support the schools. I am not too sure that in the government schools, notwithstanding the fact that there are school boards that that same quality and quantum of stakeholder support is available to the government schools. I am only saying this in the context of the performance, and I think all of us would like all our schools to perform optimally, and any action that puts the government schools at a disadvantage ought to be looked at carefully. Having said that, I understand the context and the need to cut expenditure.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I have a few questions. Let me deal with the first one under Educational Institutions, 01. Hon. Minister, with respect to Grants to Assisted Secondary Schools: is it the intention of the Ministry to revisit the Concordat?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. As I had explained, we had a national consultation on education in February this year, and one of the areas of discussion was the Concordat, and that is in the public domain. That report is now before Cabinet and we are looking at it, but I want to make the point that this Government appreciates the role that the church plays in education, and we have absolutely no intention of diminishing that role. In fact, as we have been saying over and over, we want to encourage the church and the denominational boards to increase their involvement in our schools.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you. With respect to the church involvement in education, which we both know about that history, line Item 19, does not really substantiate

that claim. It is not in the context of the Concordat, it is in the context of where the Servol Junior Life Centres are now facing a shortage in their allocation of more than 50 per cent, line Item 19. So, hon. Minister—I am on page 202, line Item 19, hon. Minister of Finance, and I made the request in my contribution for a reconsideration of this, and I am not sure whether—

**Mr. Imbert:** I can speak on this. As soon as the estimates were published, I was contacted by Servol and I am in discussions with them.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chairman, thank you very much. Again, I want to go back to your premise this morning about the school-based model and the effectiveness of it in terms of the teaching and the education system. Line Item 22, Local School Boards—Secondary Schools. I notice you now have, again, a shortage—a decrease of \$2.3 million. Could you tell us how many of these secondary schools in the country do or do not have school boards and how will this impact upon the school boards management?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, to be truthful to you at this point, I am not in a position to say how many. What I can say is that that system has not been working effectively. One of the things that we are discussing, again, as part of the school-based management model is to reactivate the local school boards at both the primary and the secondary schools to ensure that their mandate is being fulfilled.

**Mr. Karim:** Last one on this. Item 29, hon. Minister, Grants for Students enrolled at Private Special Schools and I understand what that is. If you could indicate to us the increase—what are the special schools? If you could give us a list of those. But, more importantly, how much does it cost the Ministry to have a child enrolled at one of these special schools? How much does it cost at the normal government school, the government secondary schools, what is the per capita cost of that student? I understand it would be different, I just wanted to get



the information.

**Hon. Garcia:** Are you finished with your question? There are 13 special schools and, recently, about two months ago, Cabinet has agreed to continue funding these 13 special schools. The rate of funding would depend on the needs of the child because they are grouped in different categories and, therefore, it is a little difficult for me at this time to state what the quantum is. But rest assured that Cabinet has decided that we will continue funding these special schools.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, are you satisfied in terms of these special schools of the reintegration of the students into mainstream?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, as you rightly said, mainstreaming is something that this Ministry is looking at very closely, and because of this we have decided through our Student Support Services Division, to provide student aides in our schools. In other words, there are students in our schools right now who suffer with disabilities and we have a student aide sitting next to that student in the classroom who will provide the requisite attention and support to those students.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, 006, 01. Is the Minister in a position to say what action is going to be taken in relation to the Longdenville Presbyterian Primary School?

**Hon. Garcia:** Could you amplify your question please?

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is a situation in which the school had some kinds of infrastructure problems and were housed together with the Government school in Longdenville, and they have now been housed in a very dilapidated and small structure. I went there recently and it is quite demoralizing for both teachers and students.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. In fact, yesterday I received a telephone call from the chairman of the Presbyterian school board of management, primary school and we

are having a meeting with them to discuss that. There is a plan to construct a school in that area. I think it is Cacique Gardens. I am not too sure of the name right now.

**Hon. Member:** Cashew Gardens.

**Hon. Garcia:** But in discussions with the Presbyterian board of management, we will be ironing out those problems.

**Dr. Tewarie:**—to try and resolve the issue at least?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, it is within this fiscal year.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I just want to touch back a bit on the issue of local school boards. I agree with you that those boards have been totally, totally ineffective. Having sat on two boards at two separate occasions over the last five years, one of the challenges that I found sitting on those boards is that the principals were under no obligation to heed any advice from the boards. So, at times, we would be making recommendations in terms of, you know, procedures that we can put in place in the schools to increase attendance, conversations to take to PTAs that we could get parents more involved.

**12.15 p.m.**

I remember making a suggestion that perhaps the principal could write some of the churches in the area to include a conversation on a Sunday morning after the sermon to remind parents that it is your obligation to make sure your students attend classes, make sure you come to PTA meetings, and not a single action was taken. I am hoping over the last year you may have had some success in terms of getting success stories from those boards, but I think they are very, very important. If your Ministry could revise some of the regulations around how these local school boards operate, I think we can make some meaningful contributions to the school administrations as we go forward.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to take up where my colleague, the hon. Member for Mayaro, left off. This whole question of the local school boards is a critical component in community governance, in local governance. My experience with respect to the Chaguanas Government Primary School—we have a recurring sewer problem and also a teacher shortage. There is no assistance forthcoming. I would want the hon. Minister to look into this.

Every two or three months, the Chaguanas Government Primary School, which is an excellent performing school, perhaps the best performing primary school in the governmental system, but you have to shut down the school because of a recurring sewer problem.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Assisted Primary Schools Equipment and Upkeep of School Premises, is the Minister aware that, as we speak, there are over 63 schools registered in a state of disrepair by the Ministry of Education, and very little is being done to rectify the problems in these 63 schools across the country in a state of disrepair at the moment. The latest is the Mafeking protest, and we have had protests from at least 15 schools within the recent times. Are you aware of that and what are you doing about it, when only \$2 million is allocated for repairs to primary schools and a small amount to secondary schools?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am aware that there are a number of primary schools who are in a state of disrepair, and we are doing our best to ensure that those schools are brought up to standard. I am not aware that nothing is being done by the Ministry of Education. You said that just now, I just want to refute what you said. I am fully aware that at the Ministry of Education we are doing everything to ensure that our schools are brought up to standard.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What are you going to do about the 63 schools that are now under a state of disrepair and seeking urgent attention from the Ministry of

Education?

**Hon. Garcia:** We will fix them.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I wish you well.

No, I have another question. The issue of the local school boards, are you aware that under the People's Partnership administration in 2015, Cabinet appointed 83 school boards to cover most of the Government secondary schools and some of the Government primary schools in clusters? If you are not aware, they are there and therefore you should have them working with the principals and, as you said—

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not aware, simply because the information you are giving us is not correct.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The information is correct, and you can check with your team across—

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please. Member for Caroni East, I just want to ask one question: which line Item are we on?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The line Item of Local School Boards, 22, Secondary Schools. I wanted to correct a myth and a fallacy being perpetrated in this House from since morning.

**Madam Chairman:** So the question is, that?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The question is: is he aware that the People's Partnership Government—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, please. The question is?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are the both Ministers of Education aware, that 83 school boards had been appointed by the People's Partnership Government?

**Madam Chairman:** And these would be 83 secondary school boards?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Including primary.

**Madam Chairman:** I asked you which line Item and you told me 22, so that is why I asked you to repeat the question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** There would be school boards that have both primary and secondary schools under their ambit, and there are 83 school boards that had been appointed in 2015 and were very functional. If the Minister continues to give misinformation to this House, it is very sad.

**Madam Chairman:** So, Member, what is the question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am asking him if he is aware that there are 83 school boards.

**Madam Chairman:** And the Minister said no.

**Mr. Imbert:** He already said no.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** He said no. Well, if you are not aware, make yourself aware.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please. [*Crosstalk*] Minister of Finance. [*Crosstalk*] Excuse me, Members; Member for Couva South, Member for Caroni East. If we persist, I will suspend for us to get a little order. No, not lunchtime, we will suspend for 10 minutes. Would you like us to suspend for 10 minutes so we could get under control?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have to stop the Member for Laventille East.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. This meeting is suspended for 10 minutes.

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

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

**Madam Chairman:** Kindly have a seat everyone and let us resume the people's business. So we are at 006 Educational Institutions at pages 202 and 203.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was about to ask the question with respect to grants to assisted primary schools. Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough to advise? The Endeavour Hindu School is in my constituency, Chaguanas East, when will we be able to see the continuation of

construction and completion of that school, Endeavour Hindu School?

**Hon. Garcia:** I will deal with that when we are discussing our DP, the developmental programme.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 35 on page 203, Direct University Services - Current, a decrease of \$22.7 million.

Direct University Services—hon. Minister, could you indicate to us what these services involve? Is it only for the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus or is it for all campuses? Item 35, Direct Universities Services - Current.

**Hon. Garcia:** That is for the St. Augustine campus of UWI.

**Mr. Karim:** Could you elucidate on us as to what these direct services involve, so that we can assess the impact of this cut?

**Hon. Garcia:** It involves assistance with their recurrent expenditure and also their developmental works.

**Mr. Karim:** The Seismic Research Centre, Item 36, is this research or is it for the centre, it did not indicate here, the decrease of almost half a million dollars?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am told it is for the centre. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, we would like to continue this meeting in a particular kind of tone.

**Mr. Karim:** Item No. 38, Council of Legal Education. You will recall that there is an expansion in terms of the number of persons, an increase in the number of persons who pursue the LEC, and many have to go away to do the LPC. Is it the intention—I know that there is a decrease of \$10.036 million. What is the impact of that, and are you considering as well having another branch of the Council for Legal Education at the Penal/Debe campus?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is strictly within the purview of the university. The

Government will not get involved in that.

**Mr. Karim:** So with respect to the decrease in the subvention, what, in your view, is going to be a considered impact of that cut?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not sure that will cause any negative impact. We have been accustomed to providing tremendous assistance to our university in times of plenty. In times where we cannot provide that amount, the university will make the required adjustments.

**Mr. Karim:** Item No. 39, Advanced Nursing Education. We have heard in this House very often from your colleague that when we attempt to have nurses training, and the amount of nurses that will be required to service our institutions, that we do not have sufficient. Could you tell us how many persons this \$300,000 will be able to train?

**Hon. Garcia:** I will have to give you that information subsequently.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Ministers, line Item 01 Grant to Assisted Secondary Schools. Currently SWAHA College, which is in my constituency, is awaiting assistance with the completion of some classrooms as well as the installation of an elevator. You do not have to give it to me now, but could you advise if this is at all included in the allocation?

**Hon. Garcia:** I can say most definitely SWAHA is not included here.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is there any particular reason why?

**Hon. Garcia:** Because we have to prioritize.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** But this was in a previous—

**Hon. Garcia:** Still, because of the decrease in our funding, we have to prioritize. Therefore, we find that an elevator in a school is not a priority.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** The reason for the elevator, hon. Minister, is as a result of the persons who are incapacitated in the school, and because of where the

classroom is. It is not a luxury item. I just wanted to let you know that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** To the hon. Minister. Are you comforted that the performance in the education system will continue well with the cut of almost close to \$42 million in grants to both the assisted and the government primary and secondary schools—\$42 million cut in grants to these schools? Are you comfortable with that issue?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, I am comfortable.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, could you just assist, which line Item the Member is speaking about?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Three line Items, Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** What are they?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 01, \$9 million, \$9.6 cut; 09, \$23.8 million cut.

**Mr. Imbert:** So we are on page 202?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 02, and 24, \$10.1 million cut. That is a \$43.5 million cut for these three areas. For Grants to Assisted Secondary Schools—

**Madam Chairman:** We have got the answer already, Member for Caroni East. Do you have another question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I want to turn to page 203—well, before that, the Textbook Rental Management Unit Primary Schools, Items 27 and 30. In 2015, \$31 million, nearly \$32 million was allocated for textbook purchase and they were purchased. In 2016 there was an estimate for expenditure of 17 plus 18, \$35 million that the Government believed they would have spent on textbooks. The Revised Estimates show \$6 million have been spent. The Estimates for 2017 show \$9 million.

We, as Members of Parliament, have been besieged with calls by parents that their children have not received any new textbooks within the primary and secondary schools for the last 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic year. Would



the Minister be kind enough to give us an appreciation of where we are with that?

**12.40 p.m.**

**Hon. Garcia:** Thank you very much. We have been visiting schools, Minister Dr. Francis and the officials from the Ministry of Education and every time we visit schools we will take the opportunity to question students and teachers with respect to textbooks. I can safely say, as I have been saying before all along, there is an adequate supply of textbooks in our schools. It is not true to say that our students [*Desk thumping*] are going to school without books in their schoolbags. In fact, there is a surplus. We went to a school and the principal took me to a room where there were more than a hundred, hundreds of textbooks in that room. I want to repeat as I have been saying over and over, there is an adequate supply of books in our schools.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, can I ask the Minister a follow up question? Are you aware that 2015/2016 academic year was the first year for the three-year cycle of purchases of new books based on what the PNM had started and which we continued? And have you purchased any textbooks whatsoever in that 2015/2016 academic year and 2016/2017 based on the issue that the three-year cycle began in 2015/2016 for purchases of new books? Have you purchased any new books for the children of these schools?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. We have purchased books.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many books have you purchased?

**Hon. Garcia:** At the levels of Infants 1 and 2, we have purchased quite a large number of books. In fact, we have decided that we are going to replenish all the books.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You decided that you will. Have you?

**Hon. Garcia:** And, yes. And those books are in the schools right now.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many, Minister? That is in Infant?

**Hon. Garcia:** I can give you percentage, 100 per cent.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What is percentage of what?

**Hon. Garcia:** Of the books that are needed in the schools in levels 1 and 2.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How much is the 100 per cent?

**Hon. Garcia:** I cannot say at this point, but all I can tell you is that in the Infant level 1 and level 2, all the schools have been supplied.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What about Standard 1 to 5 and Forms 1 to 5?

**Hon. Garcia:** Standard 1 to 5 and Forms 1 to 6, we are topping up by 10 per cent, by an average of 10 per cent.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Have you done it so far?

**Hon. Garcia:** It is well on its way.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is well on its way. So it has not been established as yet? It is on its way.

**Hon. Garcia:** In some schools.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is on its way to be purchased?

**Hon. Garcia:** No. No. The purchase has been done, the procurement has been done and, in some cases, the books are in the schools already.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are you aware that during the People's Partnership administration we purchased—

**Madam Chairman:** I am not going to allow that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is a line Item. That we purchased nearly—

**Madam Chairman:** I am not going to allow that. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, page 203, line Item 44, Subsidies to Mt. Hope Students. There has been a reduction of approximately \$20 million. For my own clarification, what are these subsidies about for the Mount

Hope students?

**Hon. Garcia:** The Mount Hope students are students who are pursuing the MBBS in the degree in medicine and we have found that it was necessary to have a decrease in the subsidy.

**Mr. Lee:** But what type of subsidies were these? What do they get, the subsidies as specifics?

**Hon. Garcia:** In terms of tuition, the tuition for Mount Hope students is considerably less than in other areas and we have decided that two things. One is, as I have been saying before, the university has to step up to the plate and this Government cannot continue, under the present circumstances, to fund the university programmes 100 per cent. So where there are pitfalls, the university will be required to step up to the plate.

**Mr. Lee:** So, follow up question, Madam Chair. Is it then that students would be now called upon to pay additional—

**Hon. Garcia:** No. I am saying the university has to step up to the plate.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. Second question. Hon. Minister, line Item 43, just for my clarification, Herbarium Project for \$2 million approximately, what is that? Is it a medicinal—

**Hon. Garcia:** What I have been told is that it is a project of the University of the West Indies. The specifics I am not aware of it.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member of Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, the subsidy, is it in addition to what students are facilitated through the GATE programme?

**Hon. Garcia:** We do not want to confuse the GATE programme with assistance that is given to our students in the schools. But remember the GATE programme

provides assistance where tuition is concerned, but then there are other areas where students might need some support. So I just do not want to confuse it this morning.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas East. Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Items 39 and 40. Item 39 I want to go back to it. For the \$300,000 that was spent in 2016, could you indicate to us, how many persons benefited from this Advanced Nursing Education; and, secondly, line Item 40.

**Hon. Garcia:** I will provide that information for you in writing.

**Mr. Karim:** Item 40, Medical Post Graduate, \$500,000. Could you give us some details as to what that is and where is it going to be available?

**Hon. Garcia:** That will also be provided in writing.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. With respect to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 41?

**Mr. Karim:** Forty-one, thank you. There is a decrease of 15.3. Could you tell us to whom the beneficiaries are? Who are the beneficiaries of this funding, this allocation of \$30 million in 2017 and a reduction of \$15.3 million? What does that pertain to, that line Item 41—Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex?

**Hon. Garcia:** I would have to provide that information—

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Hon. Garcia:**—to you in writing.

**Mr. Karim:** It might be to the scholarships students if you—

**Hon. Garcia:** Sorry.

**Mr. Karim:** It may be provided to be of assistance to the scholarship. Madam Chairman, the National Training Agency received a cut of \$18 million and I am aware that they continue to do work with the Ministry of Education and the

secondary schools. Is there a plan through this cut to [*Cell phone rings*] reduce the number of staff or the workload?

**Hon. Garcia:** No. But the Minister of Finance will deal with that.

**Mr. Karim:** I will ask something later.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. This question on line Item 40 it may just crisscross a bit on—

**Madam Chairman:** 40?

**Mr. Paray:** Yeah. 40, so if it crisscross a bit on GATE you can advise me if I need to say it on another line. Minister, I had a couple conversations with some doctors in terms of getting their post-graduate funding through the GATE programme for that particular programme, and I know it has been discontinued as of 2017 for the post-graduate programmes. Are you aware if the funding for those programmes in 2016 has been stopped or perhaps it may just be delays in the processing?

**Hon. Garcia:** The work has not been stopped.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay. So it may just be delays in the processing.

**Hon. Garcia:** Perhaps, yes.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Item 48, UTT, there has been a considerable cut of \$107 million. Could the Minister give us an idea of whether there will be cuts to programmes, cuts to the students' enrolment or whether it is left to the institution to work around these reduced—

**Hon. Garcia:** There will be no cuts to programmes, to the intake of students, but again, the Minister of Finance will deal with that.

**Mr. Charles:** The Minister of Finance will deal with that.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. With that reduction. He will explain.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. All right. In the mid-year review? And in response to these kinds of responses there must be a thinking behind the cuts. We understand that you have to cut, but if I had to cut my expenses home, I would prioritize, and it seems to me, and I hope the Minister of Finance will give us some idea about the architecture and the trigonometry behind the cuts, and not the arithmetic.

In respect of 49, in respect of 49, the Laventille Technology and Continuing Education Centre, I am not familiar with it, but I get the sense that this deals with at-risk people, young people in our society critical to the challenge with crime, et cetera. That cut of \$10.6 million, will this be achieved without affecting the quality of the services provided by this institution?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, we have been having discussions with MIC where this is concerned and they have assured me that they are doing everything so that our students will not suffer. Right? They have given me their assurance as late as yesterday that have certain strategies that they will be putting in place to ensure that students are not disadvantaged.

**Mr. Charles:** Minister, I know you have a similar concern for the at-risk youth, but in reviewing it just keep an eye to ensure that the at-risk youth are not disadvantaged. I am looking at the MiLAT programme and a number of programmes that have been cut, and I am just asking you, as a fellow citizen, a fellow Mausican, you know, to keep an eye that they live up to their assurance that the quality of education will not be disadvantaged.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item No. 47, Cocoa Research Unit. Could you advise if this unit would be outfitted with lab

as mandated by our EPA agreement?

**Hon. Garcia:** The EPA agreement?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. If you do not know about it, it is not a problem. But would the Cocoa Research Unit, would they be embarking on working towards implementing a laboratory?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is a responsibility of the university. We do not want to get into the actual workings of the university. We will provide the support, but in terms of what the university is doing, we leave it up to the university.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Well, I know sometimes when it is you provide funding, it is sometimes mandated that you provide a policy or a guideline as to what they, and govern them.

**Madam Chairman:** I think that answer was given. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, Item No. 27, Textbook Rental/Management Unit. You were saying that there were books received by the schools and on and so forth. I have a list here of 16 schools that I researched in my constituency, 16 primary schools and in the majority of cases photocopies, no books for the last three to four years. Are you aware of this? Meetings to discuss purchase by parents. Using books available from last year supplemented now by photocopies. Throughout it all, 16 schools I got to each one, spoke to each one and only very few books were received by the Infant departments. Are you aware of this?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, know this please, [*Crosstalk*] you want to tell the hon. Minister, you want to name the specific schools?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry?

**Madam Chairman:** Did you want to names the specific schools?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes. He knows the 16 primary schools in my constituency:

Guaracara Hindu; Mayo Roman Catholic; Riversdale Presbyterian; Brasso Venado Government; Gran Couva Roman Catholic—in this one no books the last three to four years; Tortuga Government, Caratal RC; Springvale Hindu; Voss Government; Happy Hill Hindu; Gasparillo Government; Gasparillo Hindu; Bonaventure Presbyterian; Tabaquite RC; Tabaquite Presbyterian—asked not to purchase by Ministry, using old books; Brasso RC—infant department, no textbooks received, asked to purchase one workbook using last year's books. And this is the information that came from the schools themselves, not something that has been made up.

**Hon. Garcia:** We have also done our action and research. Our school supervisors were mandated to go to the schools and provide us with the information. They have gone out to the schools, they have conferred with the principals and the teachers and they have brought back that information to us. And this is why I can confidently say that there is an adequate supply of textbooks in our schools. I have been saying that over and over, and I am not taking that out of a hat. That is as a result of the action and research that was done.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Item 49, I want to go back to that. That facility is shared by the NESC and the MIC. They have received a cut of \$10.6 million. Is this Laventille Technology and Continuing Education Centre a part of the school improvement project for Laventille that was announced by the Prime Minister?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. It will be brought into that project. Yes.

**12.55 p.m.**

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. The second question is with respect to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. You indicated sometime before in the public



domain and also here that only accredited institutions will be able to access funding through the GATE programme from academic year 2017. What will happen to those institutions which are registered under the Act but cannot be accredited by academic year 2017?

**Hon. Garcia:** I have had some discussions with the CEO of the ACTT, and he has assured me that programmes that are registered will also qualify for GATE assistance. But, it is something that we have to work out. Okay?

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me indicate that the Act provides for the registered institutions, and there are 59 of those, and only 12 are accredited.

**Hon. Garcia:** We are aware of that, yes.

**Mr. Karim:** But this cut now of 3.1 will have an impact on the resource capability to satisfy the quality assurance regime in moving from registration to accreditation. How do you plan to address that?

**Hon. Garcia:** We are having discussions with the CEO of the ACTT. In addition to that, a new board has recently been approved by Cabinet, and we will be discussing with the entire board.

**Mr. Karim:** Line Item 53, MIC Pleasantville Technology Centre. Again, in terms of the allocation for 2017, we are seeing a \$5.8 million shortfall. Would you be able to say which programmes, and how many persons will be unable to access training at that centre in view of this amount?

**Hon. Garcia:** I have been saying all along, today, this morning, after lunch, that the student intake nor the programmes that are available will not be affected. I have been saying that over and over. I have also said that our Minister of Finance will give direction on how we should proceed.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished, Member for Chaguanas East?

**Mr. Karim:** Well, I was just going to ask another question if I can. Hon.

Minister, line Item 57, Chaguanas Technology Centre, again a decrease. What is described as the Chaguanas Technology Centre? What does it comprise of?

**Hon. Garcia:** I have been told that YTEPP, MIC and NESCC, they all make programmes available at that centre.

**Mr. Karim:** When is the programme at MIC going to commence?

**Hon. Garcia:** That, I can give you information in the not too distant future. I meet with the chairman of MIC on a regular basis, so I can provide that information to you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Items 53, 54, 59, 60 and 61—

**Madam Chairman:** Items?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Items 53, 54, 59, 60 and 61.

**Madam Chairman:** Is there one question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, that would encompass all these five line Items.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The cut in these five areas for MIC is approximately \$24 million, how would that affect the level of training for these at-risk students who are enrolled in these programmes across Tobago, Penal, et cetera, across the country—\$24 million cut for MIC?

**Hon. Garcia:** I have been saying repeatedly this morning that although cuts have been put in place where these programmes are concerned, it will not affect either the student intake or the quality of the programmes. I just stated that I meet regularly with the chairman of MIC, and the last time we met was yesterday morning, and we have been assured they are going to use innovative methods to ensure that the programmes are continued and our students are not disadvantaged.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 61, MIC Workforce Assessment Centre. Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us what this centre does?

And whatever it does, how many persons it would have catered for successfully in the last financial year?

**Hon. Garcia:** You are asking hard questions. I would supply that information to you at a later date.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, hon. Members, I think now is an opportune time for us to take the suspension for lunch. I know you all are quite prepared to continue working, but I have to be considerate to the public servants. We will resume here at 1.30 p.m.

**12.59 p.m.:** *Committee suspended.*

**1.30 p.m.:** *Committee resumed.*

**Madam Chairman:** We now resume the Standing Finance Committing meeting, and we are at Item 007 under Sub-Head 04 at page 204, Item 007, Households. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Student Support Services Division programme, line Item 15, there is a reduction in terms of the expenditure that was made in 2016, \$10.5 million, and now it is back down to \$5 million. Could the Minister give us an indication of what is the issue there in terms of why has it been reduced to \$5 million from an expenditure of \$8.5 million the previous year, a decrease of \$3.5 million? Student Support Services Division, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Garcia:** What page are you on?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 204, line Item 15, have you reduced the amount to student support services officers?

**Hon. Garcia:** Your question, please?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will ask it again. There is a reduction of \$3.5 million in the Student Support Services Division of the MOE, down from \$8.5 million to \$5 million, does this mean that there is a reduction of the amount of personnel in the

Student Support Services Division? If it is not, what does it represent?

**Hon. Garcia:** I cannot safely say that this will result in a reduction of personnel. I know in the Student Support Services Division we have approximately 500 persons.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A little more.

**Hon. Garcia:** And that is an area that we are looking at very closely. But at this point, I cannot honestly say whether this will be a reduction, but it is something that we will look at.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What you attributed to from what you—

**Hon. Garcia:** Sorry?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** From examination of this what do you attribute this reduction to be?

**Hon. Garcia:** It might mean travelling. That could be one of the areas.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You will look into it?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, we will look into it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, because that is a division you do not want to—

**Hon. Garcia:** No, and that is a division that provides a lot of support to our students.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, and helps in the reduction of crime, and violence, and so on in schools. So, I would exhort that you look into that. That is the question I have for there.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I noticed on line Item 18, page 204, there has been a 7.1 decrease in the allocation to the TTHTI, might you be able to indicate to us the impact of this decrease?

**Hon. Garcia:** As I have been saying all along, all these programmes that have suffered our cuts, we have been given the assurance that it will not result in a cut

back on services or on personnel. Our Minister of Finance has promised that he is going to look into it, and if there is need for any adjustments, those adjustments will be made.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, thank you. The follow up on Item 19, quite a number of persons have been losing their jobs in the country, some of them also need to be retooled, this reduction of \$7.3 million for the training of displaced workers, might you be able to indicate to us how many persons will now be able to be trained with that \$10 million allocation in 2017?

**Hon. Garcia:** This is one of the areas where YTEPP has been providing service. And again, I am not in a position to say if there will be any persons who will be displaced. In fact, our Minister of Finance, in his wisdom, told us to indicate to the YTEPP authorities that they are to proceed as usual.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you. Line Item 27, again, another substantial cut with the MYPART programme. Hon. Minister, these trainees, have their stipends been cut as well?

**Hon. Garcia:** No.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, and are you going to continue to utilize the facilities at Persto Praesto and Chatham, in addition to Point Lisas for the MYPART programme?

**Hon. Garcia:** The facilities at Persto Praesto and Chatham, we are looking at upgrading those facilities so that our young persons will have an opportunity of being exposed to different trades. So, yes, we will be upgrading those programmes. We will be looking into it.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. So, my question is, it might be rhetorical based on what you said, but will there be any closure of any of the MYPART programmes?

**Hon. Garcia:** No.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 09, Early Childhood Care and Education, there has

been a significant cut of \$9.2 million from the \$24 million expended in the Revised Estimates of 2016. Could you indicate where does this affect in the Early Childhood Care and Education System, \$9.2 million less?

**Hon. Garcia:** You remember before lunch I stated that we are in the process of rationalizing this whole ECCE programme. So, when this is done, it is our belief that the cost to the Government of this programme will be significantly less.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are you aware that Servol provides help for over 72 ECCE centres and their budget is about \$24 million, so if this is reduced to \$15 million, how would we pay Servol there?

**Hon. Garcia:** You remember the Minister of Finance said that he has been having discussions with Servol where this is concerned?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, and in view of the protest that is taking place with Early Childhood Education teachers, how would you address their concerns at the moment?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, I met with them yesterday and I promised to have more formal discussions—I do not want to say anything negative about that, but when we meet, when Dr. Francis and myself, and other senior officials of the Ministry of Education, when we meet with them there are certain things that we have to put before them, because we have information, we would not want to share that information or put it in the public domain, but there are certain things we will want to share with them.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, in view of your thrust to continue and expand the ECCE, which we applaud you for, the question is that we do not want to see the discontinuation of any significant element of this programme, and therefore a cut—we hope that does not mean that parts of this programme will not be severely affected.

**Hon. Garcia:** As I have been saying all along, we had a national consultation on education in February this year, and the ECCE sector focused—well, there was a lot of focus placed on this programme, so much so that it is now part of a report that is now before Cabinet. Pretty soon, with the assistance of the Attorney General we will be proposing amendments to the Education Act so that this sector will be included in the Education Act. I say all this to just re-emphasize the point that we will not neglect the sector.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Good, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** So, can we go on to Item 009, Other Transfers at page 205. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair, just a quick—how many persons are in the DLS and how many persons are supposed to be employed in the DLS?

**Hon. Garcia:** This is an area that we are looking at very, very carefully, because, you know, this Distance Learning Programme has blossomed into all different things. For example, an offshoot of this is the—I just cannot remember the name of it right now, but we have been asked recently to assist in the construction of one of the centres, I cannot remember the name, but we are looking at this sector, and at the moment there are only two persons who are employed.

**1.40 p.m.**

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, the National Schools Dietary Services Limited budget—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** What Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 02, Sub-Item 011.

**Madam Chairman:** But we have not reached there as yet. Member for Chaguanas East, do you have anything else on Item 009, Sub-Item 02?

**Mr. Karim:** No, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Madam Chairman, to the hon. Minister. This \$84 million cut in the School Feeding Programme, from approximately \$230 million prior to this. Could you indicate where this cut is taking place in terms of the meals? Are you reducing the amount of school meals? Are you removing breakfast altogether? Are you going to put in a means test for the students? What is happening here?

**Hon. Garcia:** I will defer to the hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. This is one of the areas that we have identified where there is a lot of wastage and quite possibly some corruption. So we think if we can cut out the waste and eliminate the corruption we will still be able to feed all of the children who need to be fed.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** At the moment there are 155,000 meals per day at a cost of average \$8 or \$9 per day. Does it mean then that you will be cutting the cost of the meals or the amount of students that will be receiving the meals?

**Mr. Imbert:** We will be cutting out the wastage.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, I do not see a wastage at \$8 a meal nor \$9 a meal.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The question is—

**Mr. Imbert:** The answer to the question—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would you continue to provide meals for the 155,000 children who are receiving meals on a daily basis?

**Mr. Imbert:** That is based on a false premise. There is no evidence that these children receive the meals.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in view of the fact that prices have gone up significantly, also the cost of transportation, since all of these



caterers will have their transportation for their vehicles and so on, is there any consideration for increasing the price of these meals to schools?

**Mr. Imbert:** Item?

**Mr. Karim:** Item number—

**Mr. Imbert:** We are going to buy local for starters. So as part of the national thrust to conserve foreign exchange, to reduce the cost of Government project and programmes and also to have more healthy meals, we are going to buy local and we are pretty certain that there is no need to increase the price; there is no need to continue to waste money on this programme.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I move on to another line—sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Caroni East, are you still on the same—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is the Minister aware that in the provision of these meals for the children, at least 70 per cent of the input is local? So when he says he is going to put more local, 70 per cent is already there as local input into the meals. How is he going to reduce that?

**Mr. Imbert:** Is that two questions or one?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Two questions.

**Mr. Imbert:** Answer to the first question is, no. So the second question does not apply.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are not aware that 70 per cent of the—

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You should become involved.

**Madam Chairman:** So can we go on now to—

**Mr. Karim:** If I can go on to Sub-Item 08, Madam Chair. With respect to YTEPP, Minister, you will recognize that almost \$50 million there, decreased. You did indicate to my questions before and I do not want to ask you to repeat, ad

nauseam, in terms of the fact that no student will be denied access to training in spite of the fact that there is a reduced budget. Can you confirm or deny whether in view of this 49.5, whether the cycle time, the contact hours for the skills training has changed? And whether, in fact, any centres will be mothballed with any other centre?

**Hon. Garcia:** Nothing has changed. Cycle 24 will continue as normal and no two centres will be mothballed, according to you, in Servol.

**Mr. Karim:** I just want to confirm that the contact hours for the vocational skills remain at 120 contact hours.

**Hon. Garcia:** What we have been told is that nothing will change, everything is going to proceed as normal.

**Mr. Karim:** Just a follow up. I noticed one of your colleagues, Minister, indicated in an article recently about the performance of students in the education system and he was lamenting the fact that literacy and numeracy skills were a concern. Is there any reason why the special version of the YTEPP component has been disbanded?

**Hon. Garcia:** What is the special version? Tell me, please.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, the special version really emphasizes, bringing proficiency skills to those trainees who have entered the programme in terms of the deficiency with literacy and numeracy skills.

So if it is that you are accentuating, promoting proficiency in that regard I will want to ask, will you consider reinstating the special version in terms of the competency outcome?

**Hon. Garcia:** That will be subject to discussions with the YTEPP authorities.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 205; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. Hon. Members, we will

now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. Sub-Head 01, National Institute of Higher Education (Research, Science and Technology) Sub-Head 01—and we are going on to another book. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 135; 001, General Administration, page 135.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, with respect to the Vacant Posts, I noticed that there is no allocation at all in 2017. Is it that you have all your full complement in terms of NIHERST?

**Hon. Garcia:** What Sub-Item are you referring to, Sir?

**Mr. Karim:** Sub-Item 08.

**Hon. Garcia:** Your question is, there is no allocation.

**Mr. Karim:** Yes. Does it mean that you are up to your full complement?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is an area that we will have to get a little more information and we will provide you with the answer.

**Mr. Karim:** Sure, thank you.

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

**Dr. Lee:** I will wait until we get to that.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 135 and 136. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration, page 136. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 136; 007, Households, page 136.

12 - Board of Industrial Training. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 141; 001, General Administration, page 141. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I noticed that there has been a substantial increase, well there was nothing that was used in 2016. Could you indicate whether a board has been appointed for the BIT?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, a board has not yet been appointed.

**Mr. Karim:** So the expenditure here, that will be incurred, is, where you have remuneration to board members, what is that for?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, in anticipation of the appointment of the board.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Salaries, Item 01, could you indicate to us how many persons are employed in that department, that unit?

**Hon. Garcia:** There are three persons on board at present in that board. Right. But one is there and two others they are in other Ministries, but they are paid under this Item here.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 141. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 141; 009, Other Transfers, page 141.

13 - Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 146. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 146. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 147; 001, General Administration, page 147.

56 - College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 152; 001, General Administration, page 152. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 152; 001, General Administration, page 152. Member for Pointe-à-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. The question is, now that COSTAATT has a new facility in Chaguanas and I am assuming it is now the new Head Office. Could the Minister clarify what will happen to the Dere Street, Port of Spain Campus, that building that is rented?

**Hon. Garcia:** That campus is rented. Also on Melville Lane, those campus—

**Mr. Lee:** Well yes, there is Melville Lane, yes.

**Hon. Garcia:**—that is rented—so as soon as things have been organized the campus will move over to Chaguanas. And therefore there will be no rent occurred to with Bretton Hall.

**Mr. Lee:** A follow up, Madam Chair. Do you have a time span when that will take place?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, but we have been informed by the President that sometime after the budget, after we have concluded discussions in the budget, there will be a formal opening of the campus in Chaguanas.

**Mr. Singh:** I look forward to my invitation.

**Hon. Garcia:** Of course you will be invited.

**Hon. Member:** If you lucky.

**Mr. Karim:** Me too, eh. Thank you, Madam Chair, could the hon. Minister indicate the two facilities that you indicated that were rented. What is the cost of the rental, monthly?

**Hon. Garcia:** I will have to get that to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished, Member for Chaguanas East? Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 153; 001, General Administration, page 153. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 153; 006, Educational Institutions, page 153. Member for Chaguanas East.

**1.55 p.m.**

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just two questions. First of all, how many nurses have been trained in the last fiscal year for \$27 million? And also I notice in the newspaper today that there has been a clamour and a protest by approximately 100 nurses at South/West for their stipends. Could you say whether the stipends are up to date? Well, I will ask the other question. Let me just get this

one first. In terms of how many persons graduated from the school of nursing in 2016.

**Hon. Garcia:** COSTAATT School of Nursing?

**Mr. Karim:** COSTAATT, yes. This is—I am on Item—

**Hon. Garcia:** We will supply you with that information soon.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. And with respect to the nurses at South/West who have been protesting—100 of them—they indicated that they were not paid their stipends. Can you say how many months have being owing to them?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, I am not aware of the protest. I am not saying there is no protest. I am not aware of the protest. I am not aware of which group of nurses are protesting because, you know—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I have said that nobody is going to be lifting up newspapers or anything and displaying it. Please. [*Interruption*] Excuse me? Member—I will just ask everybody, we just had lunch and I would really like us to behave in a particular kind of civil and cordial manner. Minister of Education.

**Hon. Garcia:** As I was saying, I am not sure which category of nursing trainees are involved in that protest. As you know, the training of nurses is done not only by COSTAATT but there are other agencies who are engaged in that training. So I really do not know, not having seen the newspapers this morning.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, can I read further to the article?

**Madam Chairman:** You can.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. You may want to read the *Daily Express*, page 17 where it says: “100-plus students who are studying at COSTAATT...”

**Hon. Garcia:** At COSTAATT, okay. All right. That clarifies it then.

**Mr. Karim:** And I just wanted to ask, when you are giving me something in writing whether you could confirm whether the NIS is being deducted. There is a

claim that NIS is not being deducted from their stipend.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. We will provide you with that information.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, just under Item 006, Educational Institutions, in 2015 a considerable spend was made at the Rio Claro East Secondary to outfit a portion of the school to have some COSTAATT classes and knowing that COSTAATT is so critical for the students who are not going to the UTT and the tertiary education system, is there any intention of the Ministry to continue that campus in Rio Claro in the next fiscal year?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, that will rest with the COSTAATT administration. The President and members of the board, they will decide.

**Madam Chairman:** 007, Households, page 153. Hon. Members we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are therefore changing books.

Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 80. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 80. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 81 to 83.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to go to the Item with respect to NESC and I am asking this question in the context—

**Hon. Garcia:** Which line?

**Mr. Karim:** All right, let me give you the line Item. Line Item 019, page 83, Construction of the Drilling School, \$145,000. Is it that that drilling school with that very minuscule amount of money is earmarked to be closed?

**Hon. Garcia:** I will not say it is earmarked to be closed, but it is something that we are looking at very closely.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Can I ask a related question with the NESC? The previous experience had been that the NESC Debe Centre was closed and the students were

sent to the Usine Ste Madeleine MIC. Is there any intention to close the Debe NESC centre?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not aware of any decision to close the Debe centre—NESC centre.

**Mr. Karim:** 025, Aviation Institute at UTT Camden. Could the hon. Minister indicate whether that facility is being used, and if so, for what?

**Hon. Garcia:** The facility is not being used at the moment. That facility has to be the subject of discussions on how we are moving forward. We have been having discussions with the chairman of UTT, because, you know, this falls under UTT, and we are looking at all different permutations. We know that, for example, a 747 plane was purchased—

**Mr. Karim:** No, a 727—Boeing 727-300 and it was not purchased, it was donated.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay, right. We understand that there is a helicopter; there are flight simulators—

**Mr. Imbert:** All that?

**Hon. Garcia:** All of those things there and we are not sure—

**Mr. Karim:** You have a Cessna as well.

**Hon. Garcia:** A Cessna, right. So we are not sure how we are going to proceed where that is concerned. That is subject to intense discussions.

**Mr. Karim:** Are there plans to use it?

**Hon. Garcia:** Of course, if we have that equipment, we would not let it go to waste. And, in fact, I can tell you, perhaps the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs might not be too aware, but we will be engaging the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs in discussions on this very topic.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, I just wanted to go to line Item 030. Could you,



Minister, indicate to us what this project or programme is about: “Teach Me”? And who delivers this programme and to where?

**Hon. Garcia:** The “Teach Me Programme” really is a programme to facilitate the STEM camps and the STEM documents. The funds that have been allocated here are really to facilitate the utilization of the STEM camps and the STEM documents.

**Mr. Karim:** Just going to Item 33, Acquisition of Capital Equipment for MIC, Legacy Project, and it is highlighted here as “reactivated”. Could you indicate to us what this project that is now being reactivated was?

**Hon. Garcia:** What is happening is that we are looking at the specifications of the equipment and before we procure that equipment we have to be sure of the specifications and make sure that that equipment will be able to serve its purposes.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, 027, the establishment of this National Science Centre, am I to understand, or can I ask whether this involves the construction of the National Science Centre—[*Interruption*] I am on page 83—on lands that were allocated to Niherst—27 acres of land? Is this it?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, that is it.

**Mr. Karim:** Will construction start in this fiscal year?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, the project is ongoing, eh. It is 39 per cent complete. The project was deferred in fiscal 2016 due to not having board approval. Funds are expected to be utilized to commence construction and a Cabinet note is to be drafted regarding the revised scope and cost.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister: At 017, you have here the establishment of a Skills and Technology Centre in Debe/Penal, an estimate of \$500,000. I just wanted to ask what would that money be used for? The centre, to my knowledge, had been established before. So what

exactly is the \$500,000 for? And, secondly, Item 025, Aviation Institute, you had an estimate for 2016 of \$25 million, revised estimate at \$25 million. I am asking how much money was spent on the establishment of the Aviation Institute and what exactly was done if money was spent?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not sure of the quantum with respect to the Aviation Institute, but I was at pains to explain just now how we plan to go forward where this Aviation Institute is concerned.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So no money was spent to your knowledge?

**Hon. Garcia:** I would not say no, I do not have that information.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 01.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I had asked a question before on the Debe—the \$500,000 for the establishment of the Debe Technology. That was established under the Partnership administration.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. The funds here are to be utilized for outfitting the centre and I just spoke about specification of equipment.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, sure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 008, hon. Minister—

**Hon. Garcia:** 00?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 8, on page 82. You have Establishment of UTT, but what is this \$17 million for, and what do you mean by Establishment of UTT? I thought we dealt with that in another—

**Hon. Garcia:** That is really for the funding for upgrade works. It has not yet been established. I am told that the heading there is a bit misleading, it is really for the upgrading of the work that is supposed to be done.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For UTT?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, for UTT.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On the main campus, or across different campuses?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, in Tobago. This is not Tobago?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Upgrading of UTT in Tobago?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, no, no, the main campus.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Line Item 032 on page 83, Establishment of a Training Facility in Chaguanas. Could you identify what is the location in Chaguanas?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not sure of the location but I thought you were about to tell me—I have been told it is in Woodford Lodge. But I was anticipating a question about what is to be done there.

**Mr. Lee:** Well, no, I first had to find out where the location is and then—

**Hon. Garcia:** It is in Woodford Lodge.

**Mr. Lee:** And under what training provider that facility would lie under—responsible.

**Hon. Garcia:** It is a YTEPP Training Facility.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is similarly under Item 32. Is this the existing facility, or is this a new training facility that will be established? Because I see there is no allocation 2015/2016, but there is a \$10 million allocation in 2017. So I really would like an explanation because I am quite familiar with the area in Woodford Lodge, but there are existing facilities of NESC there.

**Hon. Garcia:** This facility is being supported by YTEPP, by NESC and very shortly MIC will play a part.

**Mr. Singh:** So it is really the existing facility.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, with regard to Item Number

021, the Mayaro Skills and Technology Centre, I notice there is no allocation for 2017. What would be the status of that facility? Is it going to be decommissioned?

**Hon. Garcia:** We got no funding and I am sure the Minister of Finance will want to assist me where this question is concerned.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, are you assisting with the answer? [Interruption] I only recognized the Member of Mayaro. Minister of Finance, are you assisting with the answer?

**Mr. Imbert:** Certainly.

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

**2.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you repeat the question?

**Mr. Paray:** Yes, Minister. In lieu of no allocations for 2017 for the Mayaro Skills and Technology Centre, I was wondering what will be the status of that facility, whether it is going to be decommissioned.

**Mr. Imbert:** Why should it be decommissioned? We are dealing with Development Programme here. This is not recurrent. So I think you are operating on a false premise. This is for capital works. It is already there, right? It is not like the fire station.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 84 and 85.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I noticed that we have on Item 037, School Improvement Project for Laventille to the tune of \$31 million, but, in addition, we have line Item 039, Establishment of a Knowledge Centre in Laventille for \$8 million. Can you tell us what this Knowledge Centre is all about and where is it going to be located; what will it do? And that, of course, in addition to the Laventille Technology and Continuing Education Centre which is

there.

**Hon. Member:** 039. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Karim:** No, no, I am sure this is going to happen—I was advised this is going to happen in Enterprise as well. The Enterprise Improvement Project is going to come soon, so I just want to get an idea as to what I will be getting for the constituents of Chaguanas East. [*Interruption*]No, no, I think it is— I am staying on 039. If you could tell me what it is about.

**Hon. Garcia:** We will provide you with that answer shortly.

**Mr. Karim:** The Minister of Finance is here, he could not tell us? Okay. Can I go on, Madam Chair? I would like to go to page 85 if I am so permitted? Oh, sorry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, before you go, I have a question that I—  
[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** We will come back to you because we are still in Item 005. So continue, Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** I am okay with 005.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Item 031, the SES programme, Seamless Education System Project. Ninety million dollars was estimated in 2016 and \$16.5 million was spent, and now the estimate is reduced to five and half million dollars, could the hon. Minister indicate to us what programmes have been removed from the SEMP, or if programmes were there and have not been paid? So that \$95 million was supposed to be, or \$90 million in 2016, and only \$16 million was utilized. That is page 84, Minister, line Item 031, the seamless education programme. [*Interruption*] Go ahead. Answer. Sorry, Minister, do you want me to repeat?

**Madam Chairman:** No, what the Minister said you would be provided with that information.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just two quick questions. On page 84 at the bottom, 017, although this project was transferred to planning, is it a construction of Institute of Marine Affairs or a construction of a building for the Institute of Marine Affairs?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I think we have not had Ministry of Planning—  
*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, I just wanted to be clear on the heading, whether the heading was correct, that title. And secondly, on page 85, 021, Establishment of a South Campus - UWI, we note, Minister, that \$43 million had been estimated, revised downward to \$9.6 million and there is no estimate for 2017, I am just asking out of the \$43 million estimated, how much exactly was spent if any at all, and what was it spent for?

**Hon. Garcia:** That was dealt with this morning.

**Hon. Member:** He was not here.

**Dr. Moonilal:** We are dealing with the document before us now.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, but I am telling you, for your information, it was dealt with already this morning and the position is that UWI South Campus Penal/Debe is totally within the remit of the University of the West Indies.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But that does not answer my question with great respect. You had budgeted \$43 million, did you spend any; and if so, on what?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is an issue that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will not get involved in. It is totally in the hands of the University of the West Indies.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. So no moneys were spent. I am concerned with the expenditure of the capital here stated. I am not concerned with the politics of it, I am concerned with whether the \$43 million or any part was spent.

**Hon. Garcia:** All I am saying is you can ask the University of the West Indies

those questions. We are not getting into that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ask them if a Vote from your Ministry was spent? I can do that.

*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, let me come in here. Let me deal with this because I heard—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, are you going to answer the question?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes—I heard, sotto voce, down there.

**Madam Chairman:** I am talking about the question?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I am.

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

**Mr. Imbert:** With respect to this question, the estimates clearly indicate that \$9,610,000 was spent. It is there in black and white.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That is a revised estimate. Is that an actual expenditure?

**Mr. Imbert:** That is the information at this time. It is right there in front of you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You see, even with the answer—Madam Chairman, all I am asking is how much was spent. The Minister of Finance read what is in the book as a revised estimate. I am satisfied with the Minister of Education response. I did not need any more clarification from the Minister of Finance.

**Madam Chairman:** So we can go on?

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item F 009, Establishment of a Centre for Geography, Environment and Natural Resource Management, an allocation of \$1 million, a reactivated project, could the Minister lend some light on this matter?

**Hon. Garcia:** That allocation is for the purchase of land. That purchase was completed and the funds are to be utilized to pay commitments for the purchase of the property. So in other words, it is a project that is to be reactivated.

**Mr. Singh:** Where is this project going to be located, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Garcia:** Pardon?

**Mr. Singh:** Location of this land?

**Hon. Garcia:** It is a UWI project in St. Augustine.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Follow up question. Item 022 on page 85, Construction of an OPEN Campus Facility in Chaguanas, is this the COSTAATT facility?

**Hon. Garcia:** No. That is different and because of budgetary constraints, because of the downturn in our economy, we cannot fund this project at this time.

**Mr. Singh:** But there is an allocation—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, I know that.

**Mr. Singh:**—of \$20 million.

**Hon. Garcia:** We will not be spending that amount.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** My question was asked already.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I return to 021, Establishment of the South Campus - UWI? Hon. Minister, from the calculations here, \$34 million was not spent in the last fiscal year even though there was an allocation of \$43 million. Since coming into office, the question is, have you met with the incoming principal of the St. Augustine Campus? That is question number one.

Secondly, what did he indicate to you in terms of the continuity of this project, and when will the campus be available to receive students?

**Hon. Garcia:** We met with both the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor and the Principal both past and present, and we have all agreed that that is a project to be undertaken by the University of the West Indies without any interference by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, from my experience as the former Minister responsible, the Minister I am sure will agree that he attends F&andGPC meetings



as well as the University Council, so he represents the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. As the line Minister responsible for UWI, can you tell us whether the agreement is that this facility will continue to be constructed and when will it become operational?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not in a position to say that. I have been saying this over and over. I have been trying to explain that. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will take no part where that is concerned. We have left that in the hands of the University of the West Indies.

**Mr. Karim:** Can I ask a follow up? Did the Principal of the St. Augustine Campus indicate to you that commencing the calendar year 2018, that the campus may become operational to receive students? Has he indicated that?

**Hon. Garcia:** No. The last time we met he did not indicate that.

**Mr. Karim:** Did he indicate that there was a view now to convert it or to use a part of it in addition to law, for science and technology?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, he did not indicate that to me.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of questions. In 032, Support the Enhancement of the Education Strategy. I am just enquiring, is that a programme to better integrate and harmonize a seamless strategy? I am just enquiring.

**Hon. Garcia:** I did not get your last few words.

**Dr. Tewarie:** 032—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, I know that.

**Dr. Tewarie:**—Support the Enhancement of the Education Strategy, is that something aligned to the seamless education project?

**Hon. Garcia:** No. That is a grant that the Government is given by the IDB to facilitate programmes that deal with research. Okay? So it is really a research

grant.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. Related to tertiary education?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Two more questions. I know that the Member for Chaguanas East asked this question, but I am really interested in it. I do not think he got an adequate reply. If you can give me one I will be grateful. 039, the Established of a Knowledge Centre in Laventille, I just want to know what is conceived?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. I have—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Garcia:** I said that I am going to provide that information in writing.

**Mr. Imbert:** I can provide it.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. Minister of Finance will—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** We have a general Laventille initiative.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right, I know that.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is comprised of two components which are—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Tewarie:** I saw the improvement sites.

**Mr. Imbert:**—identified separately. So you have general enhancement of a number of schools in Laventille which is the \$31 million, and then the \$8 million is for the establishment of a centre that will provide services such as ICT and other technology-based learning software and services in Laventille.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Is it for teacher support rather than student support?

**Mr. Imbert:** It will be both.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right. Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is both. Okay?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Then the final question I had—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** The Minister of Planning and Development will give you further clarification.

**Dr. Tewarie:** You want to?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Yes. If I may, Madam Chairman? Thank you very much. I heard one of my colleagues opposite saying is there not a technology centre in Laventille. There is, but this is slightly different because the technology centre deals with adults, whereas this will be dealing with the primary and secondary schools' students rather than adults who have already left school.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, so it is not envisaged to support the teachers as part of the—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** As the Minister of Finance says—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right, so it is both.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:**—it is both.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, the final question I had was 027, the Building of the International Fine Cocoa Innovation Centre, can you just explain to me what that is? I know we have a major initiative in cocoa, I just want to understand.

**Hon. Garcia:** It is a new project as you would see there. A draft Note to Cabinet will be presented soon to outline this entire project. It is part of research into cocoa and we know the University of the West Indies, once they develop the chocolate industry—and that is part of the ongoing research.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So it will be linked to the research centre there?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you. To the Minister of Education. I just wanted to be very clear, Minister, is it the Government policy that having donated the land for the South Campus that the South Campus would be left entirely to the University of the West Indies, and the Government will have no further financial input into the campus?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**2.25 p.m.**

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Item 019—and I want to make it very clear through you, Madam Chair, all my questions are being directed to ensure that there is transparency and accountability of the taxpayers' money. That is my basic premise. The Development Works at the University of the West Indies for \$17 million. Could you indicate what that is? Is part of that money going to be allocated to the 100-acre parcel of land that is in the custody of the University of the West Indies at Orange Grove?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, that is for the further development of the Canada Hall at the University of the West Indies.

**Mr. Charles:** To the hon. Minister on Item 037, that is, again, the School Improvement Project – Laventille Community and 039, Establishment of a Knowledge Centre in Laventille. While commendable, are there measurable improvement targets so that it will not be a case of just throwing money and at the end of the day, we still have a problem. Would the school improvement project be tied to measurable indices that we could see that there is value for money?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is correct, yes, and I can also refer you to the Minister of Finance's budget presentation where he elaborated to some extent on the Laventille project.

**Mr. Charles:** Well, could you indicate to us, what are some of these measures that would be used? We do not want a situation like national security, we keep pouring money and we cannot see the results.

**Hon. Garcia:** It is to improve literacy numeracy. It is to encourage students to attend school because in that Laventille area, we have a very high dropout rate. It is designed to encourage stakeholder involvement, particularly the parents. It is

designed to upgrade the performance of the students. It is designed to enhance the physical aspects of the school. It is designed to provide leadership to principals and all those persons who are involved in the schools in the area. It is intended to decrease the incidence of violence and indiscipline in our schools.

**Mr. Charles:** All right. Is there some baseline bit of information to say attendance today is 60 per cent and at the end of this injection of money, we intend to move it from 60 per cent to 80 per cent? You talked about—well, there is talk about academic performance. There are standardized tests. The average in Laventille is X and at the end of this programme, we intend to get it to Y. In that case, all of us have a stake in Laventille's improvement and I think that we need to see, at end of the day, a measureable improvement in performance.

**Hon. Garcia:** I can share with you, at present we are preparing a Note to Cabinet which would outline the structure of the project, the desired outcomes, the timelines. Exactly what you are talking about, all those things will be outlined in a Note to Cabinet and when that Note, if it is accepted by Cabinet, then we are going to release it to the public.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 023, the Expansion of the School of Dentistry at the EWMSC. Is that project complete or where are we in terms of the expansion or is that being left to the University of the West Indies as another area?

**Hon. Garcia:** That project is 42 per cent complete and the funds that are being identified will be utilized during financial year 2017 to complete the project.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So the estimated completion time is in 2017?

**Hon. Garcia:** Hopefully we will be able to complete the project in 2017, yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. And what is the total cost of the project? Fifteen million dollars was paid already according to the book.

**Hon. Garcia:** A contract has been awarded and the contractor will be tasked with the responsibility of producing that facility at a cost of \$29.174 million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, for all the reasons and good reasons that you gave for the SIP in Laventille community, would you be kind enough to consider including in the Cabinet Note the School Improvement Project for the Enterprise community which has similar criteria?

**Hon. Garcia:** You know we have been saying all along that that project will be used as a template for other areas and I think I gave you that assurance too, you know.

**Mr. Karim:** Might it start in this fiscal year?

**Hon. Garcia:** We do not envisage that it will start in this fiscal year, simply because we want to have a proper assessment of the programme.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, you could undertake the assessment in this fiscal year.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chair, may I please intervene? Thank you very much. Member, as the Minister responsible for planning and development, you would understand that there must be, first of all, a template. This is a new initiative of this Government. Laventille is being used as a template and once we see that the kind of progress that we are anticipating is made, it will be done in other communities. But Laventille is being used as a template, we have started certain things, we are doing it very quietly for now and once there is success, you can be assured that it will be used in other communities that may have similar problems.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to get some clarification here and it has to do with 019, Development Works at the University of the West Indies. It is allocated here \$17 million for development works. And am I to understand, Minister, that this is for

general development in the University of the West Indies? [*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** But I believe the Minister said this is for further development of Canada Hall. Minister of Finance, please. [*Interruption*] We will be here until we finish eight Heads; that was our agreement. Member, I believe that was said, it was for further development of Canada Hall.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The reason I was asking is that I wanted to follow on the response to 021 where the Minister said that that will be left to the University of the West Indies and I wanted to ask him if there was any development funds provided to the University of the West Indies aligned to the South Campus. That is what I wanted ask.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, okay, fine, we now got the question.

**Hon. Garcia:** I have answered that over and over. No, we will not be pumping any more money into the Penal/Debe. We are leaving that to the discretion of the University of the West Indies. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, please. Do you want to assist, Minister of Planning and Development?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much. Madam Chairman, I would like to point specifically to Item 019. I am sure the Member for Caroni Central will recall that with regard to the development of Canada Hall, there was an agreement between the University, the Government and the private sector to complete these works. And that is why as compared to what we are saying about the South Campus, we continue to give the funding for the development of Canada Hall and that was an agreement that was made even before we came into office. It is an agreement which we are continuing because it is important to make sure that the Halls of Residence are developed.

However, as the Minister keeps saying with regard to the construction of the

South Campus, the University of the West Indies has taken this over on its own and they will be proceeding with it, but with regard to Canada Hall, that agreement had been made during your time and I am sure you remember that and that is why it continues to be funded.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, I would just like to say I am not contesting any of these issues.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, there is no contest going here.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** No, but I am just clarifying it.

**Madam Chairman:** Wait, please, Members. We have several hours left so let us just be tolerant. I think you got your answer? Did you get your answer, Member?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah, the reason I asked that question and the Minister of Education answered in a way that was aggressive, “No, we not” so and so, but that was not the issue. The issue was—I mean the Minister of Planning and Development said the university is going to take responsibility for the development of the campus. But whatever development takes place, as I understand the South Campus to be requiring more development funds and effort, the money has to come from somewhere. So I was simply trying to align that to the notion that the South Campus, there has been a commitment that it will be open, that it cannot be open this year or whatever it is, I want to know what is going to happen.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, but I think the Minister of Planning and Development indicated that the university—

**Dr. Tewarie:** The university is going to provide its own funds out of this development—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** They have the money to do it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please. Infrastructure Development Fund, page



287; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 287 to 290.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 424, Construction of Flanagin Town R.C. School, I notice that no money has been allocated for 2017. This is a school that has been housed in a church for 60 years. Can the Minister tell me whether this school is going to be continued because the school has already started and I believe the foundation works—?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 289, Item 424.

**Hon. Garcia:** There are a number of our schools, particularly schools in the primary sector that are in need of refurbishing. However, because of a tight economic situation, we had to prioritize for fiscal 2017. Unfortunately, in our prioritizing, Flanagin Town R.C. was not among those that we had given top priority.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister aware that that school was started, the foundation has been done and are you not going to complete the school, Minister? The children do not have a school in that area.

**Hon. Garcia:** No, I am not aware the foundation has been started.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister prepared to pay a visit—

**Hon. Garcia:** Of course I will visit.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—to see where the children are in the church for 60 years?

**Hon. Garcia:** I give you the assurance that both Ministers—

**Madam Chairman:** Children in the church for 60 years?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** So there is no school?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, I would not say that. Member for Tabaquite, I would not say

there is no school, a school is not only a building. Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So the question was, is the Minister prepared to visit; the Minister said yes.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, both Ministers will visit.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under Pre-Primary 001, \$40 million was put on the estimate for 2016—page 287—and despite 35 ECCE centres under construction and contractors being owed millions of dollars, only \$3 million has been expended from the \$40 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate why this happened when there are a number of schools, even under the IADB as well, have been under construction and—so 35 schools, ECCE centres, were under construction, contractors owed millions of dollars, \$40 million allocated for 2016 and only \$3 million spent?

**2.40 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, do you want to answer that question?

**Hon. Garcia:** The sum of \$40 million has been allocated.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure.

**Hon. Garcia:** What are you saying?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For 2017, Minister, I see that. But for 2016, you had an estimate allocation of \$40 million and from the revised estimates only \$3 million was spent.

**Hon. Garcia:** We are going to make up the shortfall in 2017.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are going to help to pay for some of the work that was done prior to 2015?

**Hon. Garcia:** We are going to make up the shortfall in 2017, as far as possible.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But the \$40 million you have allocated there will not be able to complete the payment for the 35 ECCE centres that are under construction.

**Hon. Garcia:** Again, we will prioritize. I have been saying that over and over.

The pie has shrunk and as a result not everybody can get everything that they want. We have to think in terms of prioritizing what we are going to do so that we can get the best fit.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, so Minister I am not—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Question Member, question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, the question is: there would, therefore, be some ECCE centres that are under construction at the moment that would be left at that level and then taken over subsequently in 2018, or something?

**Hon. Garcia:** I am not prepared to say that. All I am saying is that we are drawing up a priority list and we will proceed on the basis of the funds that are available.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam. To the Minister of Education, I am at 434, page 289. Is the Minister aware that the Ramai Trace Hindu School is 80 per cent completed and there is no provision in 2017 to complete this school? Is the Minister further aware that those students from the area travel 20 miles away to Penal Rock Road to undertake their schooling in a temple, and is the Minister aware that you have budgeted \$2 million for the Cyprus Gardens Government Primary School when, I believe, that school has not even started yet?

**Hon. Garcia:** Minister Francis will respond to you. Dr. Francis.

**Hon. Dr. Francis:** I visited both the Ramai Trace School under construction and the temple where they are housed, so I am very familiar with the situation with the students and we do plan to have discussions with the Minister of Planning and Development and the Minister of Finance to see what can be done to rectify the situation.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, page 289, line Item

437, Construction of Macaulay Government Primary School. In 2015, the construction had started, \$8.4 million was spent. In 2016, nothing happened and in 2017, no allocation has been made.

**Hon. Garcia:** The answer to that is the same answer that I have been giving. We are going to prioritize. We are going to visit the schools. We are going to visit the sites and on the basis of that, with our technical staff, we will decide how we move forward.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I am thankful for the allocation for the Mafeking Government School, which is really in dire need of reconstruction/refurbishment. This is item 420, Mafeking Government Primary School. Now, in lieu of the start of that project, there has been a series of protests by the parents for the last couple days dealing with a couple main issues in the school. Now, I have been in contact with EFCL as early as this morning and what they are saying is that there are proposals in the Ministry right now to deal with those issues, but they are just waiting for some direction from the Ministry. Can you give the parents some assurance that you all can take a look at this and have it expedited because the electrical issue is what is hampering the school at the moment. I do not want, the fact that there is an allocation for the school to do the reconstruction or the rebuild, that, you know, we could wait, because this particular issue is shutting down some of the operations of school at the moment.

**Hon. Garcia:** I can give the assurance to you, Members of Parliament, the national community and the parents, that we are going to look at it. We have been discussing, when I say we, at the Ministry of Education, Dr. Francis and myself and other officers, how best we can meet the needs of the schools, particularly the schools that are in an advanced stage of disrepair and schools in the rural areas.

As you know, we have been able to achieve tremendous success, with

respect to the New Grant Anglican School and it is a new school that has been rebuilt at a relatively low cost. We are just—I want to choose my words carefully—we are giving consideration to adopt that as a model for a number of small primary schools in the rural areas. Because even the Anglican Board has congratulated us for presenting to them a brand new school whose facilities are first-class. So instead of building a school that will cost \$30 million, \$40 million, and \$50 million, perhaps, we can get 20 schools that can be constructed in a matter of weeks, or perhaps one or two months. Okay?

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in your re-prioritization, might you consider line Item 438, 4 per cent, the foundation is already completed. I would like to ask you to consider the Endeavour Hindu School for continued construction.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, we will give it active consideration.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am referring to Item 404. The Minister would recall an undertaking he gave in this House that the Barrackpore ASJA Primary School would be built in 10 months. I see no allocation for 2016/2017. Would the Minister care to enlighten us?

**Hon. Garcia:** You know, I went into a very long explanation what we plan to do. Barrackpore ASJA is one of those schools that we are looking at.

**Mr. Charles:** So that—okay. All right. With respect, I take your word for it. At 435, the Reform Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha Primary School, my understanding is that the contractor is owed moneys and that is holding up the final hand over of the school. Is the outstanding sum \$2 million? Would that be able to handle the outstanding amount owed to the contractor so that we could get—

**Hon. Garcia:** To answer the second part of your question first, we are working together with the Attorney General, acting now, to really decide how best we are

going to make payments to the contractors. We have a sum of money, which I cannot disclose now, that we can make available. I just want to hand out to the contractors the—not hope, it is more than hope—information that they will be getting paid soon, if not all that is owed, but certainly there would be part payment.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Further question. At the side of the Reform Primary School is the early childhood centre that is 100 per cent completed and what is happening now is that the vines and what not are reclaiming the school. I would just ask that you give some priority to the payments to that contractor so that the school does not deteriorate further.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay, good. We will give it attention.

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute. Minister of Planning and Development, you wanted to add something to assist the Members?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. May I indicate that with regard to the contractors for various schools what we are doing is making sure that, first of all, the contracts were in fact executed and also that they are legitimate claims that are now being made and that may take some time and that is why we are still in the process of determining how much is actually owed to contractors.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South. I do have you down Member for Caroni East.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Sorry, Ma'am. I was not quite finished.

**Madam Chairman:** I am sorry.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** In many instances we have already been able to do that and so payments will be forthcoming.

**Mr. Charles:** All I am asking on behalf of my constituents, particularly those in

Reform, that that auditing exercise be completed expeditiously, it has been a year, so that the students can—right now the students are in a top primary school in the top 10 per cent, but they are housed in a dilapidated condition with two toilets for 150 students.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Member for Naparima, may I allay your fears and indicate that the process has in fact been completed. But in an effort to ensure that we did the process properly, we did take some time. The process has been completed and now we can start making the payments.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister, with respect to 426, Construction of Freeport Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha Primary, in 2016, there was an allocation of \$6 million. In the revised estimates, \$200,000 was spent and I see that under the 2017 estimate there is no allocation, could the Minister so advise what the status of this particular school is?

**Hon. Garcia:** The explanation that I gave, with respect to the other schools, that explanation holds for all the schools.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I just want to make a case. The school is severely overcrowded, Mr. Minister, and I would appreciate. Because the catchment area that it serves is not only the constituency of Couva South but Couva North, Caroni Central and surrounding areas, and so on, and I would really like you and your technical people to take a look at this in your prioritizing of expenditure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you very much, Chair. Hon. Ministers, the 56 schools listed hereunder from line Item 276 to 438 under primary section, a significant amount of them have been completed already and there is a certain value still attached to them for estimate in 2017. Is that the payment that is outstanding for them and that would be paid?

**Hon. Dr. Francis:** Yes.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. The Minister of Planning and Development did answer the question about the 700—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Then do not ask it again, please. In the interest of time, if the question was answered, let us not repeat it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I just to get an emphatic answer from the Ministers and if the Minister of Planning and Development and the Minister of Finance will answer. There are over \$700 million owed to contractors, \$600 million I understand—in the construction of these schools at various stages of completion.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I am not going to allow that question in the interest of time.

**Hon. Dr. Francis:** We just answered that question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You answered it?

**Madam Chairman:** I think we have got very clear answers and explanations with respect to that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, ma'am. Let me move on to another number here. I am just focusing on two Items, 333 and—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** That is on page 289?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Ma'am, 333 and Item 394. Minister, between these two line Items there is \$110 million. Could you indicate the nature of works to be done? Which blocks within secondary schools will cost \$20 million, and the secondary school construction infrastructure work that will take \$90 million in the next fiscal, while we cannot complete the Ramai Trace, the Lakshmi Girls, the Shiva Boys', the Parvatee Girls'? [*Crosstalk*] I am through.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 333 and Item 394, if these schools could be identified. I believe that is your question.



**Hon. Garcia:** You want me to identify the schools?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, I was asking on 333 and 394. But the Minister of Finance is disturbing the Minister.

**Hon. Garcia:** You want me to identify the schools?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, which blocks within which school and where is the \$90 million to be spent from 394?

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay, allow me to identify some of the schools: St. Augustine Girls, that would be the science block; Diego Martin Central Secondary; Woodbrook Secondary; Arima Central Secondary; Hillview College. You smile eh; Couva East Secretary; and Vishnu Boys'.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Garcia:** Just now, we have more schools. Sorry, sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, is it a long list?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, I just have a few more.

**2.55 p.m.**

Holy Name Convent. Yes, I missed out Holy Name Convent, yes; Couva West, Five Rivers Secondary, Barataria North Secondary, Mount Hope Secondary, Carapichaima West Secondary, St. Joseph Secondary, St. Augustine Secondary and Pleasantville Secondary and Princes Town East Secondary.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, are you aware that these schools—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I did not recognize you, please. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Ministers, pages 287 and 288, but for 287, line Item 121, Procurement of Furniture and Equipment. The Manzanilla/Nariva Government Primary School has been crying out for furniture for their school and some equipment—

**Hon. Member:** Some time now.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Manzanilla/Nariva.

**Hon. Garcia:** What is your question?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** They have been crying out for furniture—

**Madam Chairman:** Not a statement, the question.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am asking if you will consider including them when you are procuring your furniture, that you will consider that primary school, please?

**Hon. Garcia:** Principals must submit the list of their requirements and we will—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** It was submitted.

**Hon. Garcia:**—we will give them consideration, based on our financial constraints.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And on page 288, line Items 373 and 405—

**Hon. Garcia:** Just now, say that again.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line Item 373 that is on page 288, the construction of the Manzanilla Government, and line Item 405, Construction of Lower Cumuto Government. I see there is an allocation for both and I am kindly asking, if there is a—do you have a date in mind to start the construction of both?

**Hon. Garcia:** Manzanilla Secondary School—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No, Manzanilla/Nariva.

**Hon. Garcia:**—Secondary School?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Primary. In the first part was the primary school.

**Hon. Garcia:** I have been told that they got their furniture.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right, okay.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. The next one, the construction of the Manzanilla Government School?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, and the Cumuto.

**Hon. Garcia:** What is your question about Manzanilla Government School?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I saw that you have allocated funds for both schools, and I am asking, when are you looking at commencing construction?

**Hon. Garcia:** Manzanilla Government School is a new school.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Well, I saw you have it here. So I do not know if you had a—

**Hon. Garcia:** That is a brand new school, situated on the Manzanilla Road. It is a new school. There are some problems and the money that has—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Not the Manzanilla/Nariva, you know?

**Hon. Garcia:** The Manzanilla Government School is situated on the Manzanilla Road, it is a brand new school.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** The Man—sorry, the Manzanilla North School is what I am referring to. That school—

**Hon. Garcia:** You are talking about North Manzanilla Government Primary School.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me, are we at Item 373?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** 373, yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** That relates to Manzanilla Government School.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is it in error, therefore? Is it the Man—hon. Minister, if you remember we had discussions about the North Manzanilla Government School—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I am asking, are you asking 373?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am asking if it is in reference to that school, seeing that there is a line Item here with funding for it with an allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, what is the question, please?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is it for North Manzanilla School or in light of the fact that this school is already—

**Hon. Garcia:** It is for Manzanilla Government Primary School.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Item 395, Construction and Refurbishment of Holy Cross College, an allocation of \$10 million. When is this project scheduled to be started?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, the Board, they have to get the necessary approvals from Town and Country. [*Crosstalk*] Now, you are asking a question and then you are talking to somebody else.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, the—

**Hon. Garcia:** If you were in my class, I would put you to detention, you know. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Singh:**—my apologies. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] Okay, my apologies. I was disturbed by your colleague.

**Madam Chairman:** That is maybe a signal for the Chair.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam, Madam, please. I do not normally pick up for those on the other side, but on this occasion I must say that I disturbed the Chief Whip and that is why he got distracted.

**Mr. Imbert:** Honesty coming from that side?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Imagine!

**Madam Chairman:** Well, all I would want to say is—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** I do not want to be in detention, please.

**Madam Chairman:**—the spirit of cooperation and respect, which—[*Interruption*] excuse me, we now reach a new watershed, okay? Let us continue in that vein, please. Minister of—

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to indicate, there was no intention to snub you anyway; it

is just that she takes precedence over you. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, with respect to Holy Cross, you asked the question when construction will begin? The Board has to apply to Town and Country for outlined approvals, and I have been assured that once that is done—and a contractor has already been appointed, then they will commence work.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, and with respect to Item 433, I take it this \$3 million allocation is for the total—is it for the completion of Munroe Road Hindu Primary School, the Sanata Dharma Primary School or is it for final payment? I just want to be very clear.

**Hon. Garcia:** Final payment.

**Mr. Singh:** Final payment, okay. I am good.

**Mr. Charles:** With respect to 394, Secondary School Construction and Other Infrastructure Works. Is Cowen Hamilton Secondary School included in any developmental projects for fiscal year 2017?

**Hon. Garcia:** What is the line Item? Just tell me.

**Mr. Charles:** The line Item, 394.

**Hon. Garcia:** 394?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, Secondary School Construction and Other Infrastructure Works. Is there anything allocated for Cowen Hamilton?

**Hon. Garcia:** I defer to hon. Minister.

**Hon. Dr. Francis:** The situation at Cowen, I visited the school, it is in my constituency. I visit all the time, but I visited recently and they have an issue in terms of an entire block that perhaps needs to be replaced. It was not in our initial plans, but we will be having discussions with the Minister of Planning and Development and the Minister of Finance to see what we can do to ameliorate the

situation. So I am very much aware of the situation.

**Mr. Charles:** I know you are aware, but we should take comfort that something will be done in fiscal year 2017. It is the only Baptist secondary school in the country and, therefore, I think—I heard all the Hillview and what not, but I think as a Baptist, that some kind of serious priority ought to be given to that school. I am talking about myself. I am a Baptist.

**Hon. Dr. Francis:** The hand gesture was confusing—

**Mr. Charles:** “Doh geh confuse.”

**Hon. Dr. Francis:**—but I will reiterate again. I will speak with the Minister of Planning and Development and Minister of Finance, and we will do our best to make an ameliorative intervention.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah. I just want to have an assurance that the Baptists are not seen as a vote bank. Sorry.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 342 and 344, Shiva Boys’ and Parvati Girls’. There is no provision for the continued construction of these two schools, which is far advanced. Could you indicate why would there have been no provision, seeing that the school is already so advanced, in terms of its completion in the constituency of Siparia?—and Parvati Girls’.

**Hon. Garcia:** We are—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** I hope you remember about what happens to people who disturb the proceedings? It came from the floor. It did not come from the Chair, okay? All right, good, thank you. Yes, Minister of Education.

**Hon. Garcia:** We are giving priority to schools that are in urgent need of repair and refurbishing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** There are about four other schools under the line Item 394,

Secondary Schools to be completed, and about 90 per cent and 95 per cent complete, namely St Joseph, Mount Hope and a few others. What is the Ministry of Education's intention in terms of these five secondary schools that are about to be completed, which I am sure you are aware of?

**Hon. Dr. Francis:** We just called that list.

**Hon. Garcia:** What is your question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What is the Ministry of Education's intention in terms of completion of approximately five secondary schools, which are close to about 100 per cent—

**Hon. Garcia:** All right, let me help you. The intention is to complete the construction of all those schools.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All those schools? And where would the funding come from?

**Hon. Member:** Government.

**Hon. Garcia:** Government, yes. Government. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, but there is no line Item for it here.

**Hon. Dr. Francis:** It is 394, we just called the list.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister, I wanted to get some clarity on your response to my question, with respect to line Items 342 and 344. Is it that you are saying that your Government does not place any priority with respect to Parvati Girls' and Shiva Boys' Colleges?

**Hon. Garcia:** Who said that? I never said that. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Minister, then, could we get a definitive answer with respect to why has there been no allocation for Shiva Boys' and Parvati Girls', seeing that the school is such an advanced stage of construction?

**Hon. Garcia:** The Minister of Planning and Development will respond to you.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, with regard to both Shiva Boys'

Parvati Girls', there is an issue that I am sure those on the other side recognized already. There is an issue with the title to the land upon which those two schools were built. Those schools are in an advanced stage of construction, but once the land title has not been sorted out, we will not be able to hand over those schools for them to be opened.

There is an issue that subsisted from the time those schools were built, that was not sorted out by the last administration. We are now faced with the problem or the challenge of having to sort out those issues, because if those schools are built on land to which they were not entitled, then we have a serious problem that we have to deal with.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, thank you for your intervention. Could you indicate to us at this time, what stage is the Ministry at in terms of having this matter sorted?

**Madam Chairman:** This is the matter of the title?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** The Ministry of Planning and Development could only speak—

**Mr. Padarath:** What progress have you made?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:**—that is not for the Ministry of Planning and Development to deal with. Remember when any construction takes place, the Ministry of Planning and Development has to give the final approval. Once there is an issue with the land, we cannot give final approval for these buildings to be occupied, but in terms of sorting that out, I will pass you back to the Minister of Education.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister of Education, would you be in a position to shed some light in terms to what—

**Hon. Garcia:** The Legal Department is looking into this issue, okay?



**Mr. Padarath:** Okay, but you cannot give us any indication of what progress or any lack thereof has the Legal Department made at this stage?

**Hon. Garcia:** The Legal Department within the Ministry of Education is looking into it.

**Mr. Padarath:** But, hon. Minister, you would acknowledge it has been over a year now, and are you saying there has been no progress from the Legal Department with regard to this particular matter?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town, that was never said. It was never said that there was no progress.

**Mr. Padarath:** Ma'am, I am not making a comment. I am asking a question of whether or not there has been any progress. I am not accusing the Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Maybe it is the way it was framed. Minister?

**Hon. Garcia:** There has been progress in terms of the legal officers at the Ministry of Education. They are studying the issue. So you cannot say there is no progress.

**Dr. Tewarie:** First of all, Minister, through the Chair, I want to thank you for the allocation here to Preysal Government, and I just want to ask one simple question, which is that, is the allocation enough to complete the school?

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, if it is not enough, at least it will give you a start and in fiscal '18, if we have not been able to complete it, then either during the mid-term or in fiscal '18.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, and I want to thank you for the work that you did on the old school, to make it at least liveable for the kids.

**Hon. Garcia:** Well appreciated.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 291. If

there are no questions there, there are just three Items that can be clarified from this morning, and I am allowing the Minister a short intervention to deal with these three Items. These three Items only, so that we can move on. In terms of the number of persons with scholarships studying abroad. I believe a question was asked about that and the information was supposed to be supplied.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, there are 542 Trinidad and Tobago citizens, who are studying abroad, in receipt of Government scholarships.

**3.10 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** And I believe this was also a question coming from the Member for Caroni East. This is page 187 of the Recurrent Expenditure, Personnel 01; 001, General Administration; 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Madam Chairman. This was apparently the first question—I heard it on the radio coming down—as to the reason for the \$50 million difference between the allocation for salaries and wages in this year as opposed to last year or the disbursement of \$50 million less than the original allocation.

The reason was that it was assumed that the Teaching Service Commission would promote a number of teachers to higher positions, such as principal, vice-principal and so on and deans, and there will also be other promotions within the wider civil service. These promotions did not take place, but a provision was made in anticipation that the various service commissions would promote the people to the higher paying positions, and since this did not occur there was a savings of \$50 million.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted clarification on the 541 number.

**Mr. Imbert:** 542.

**Mr. Singh:** 542. Is this a compilation of the advanced level scholarships together

with the other scholarships that the Government provides for other areas of development or is it a combination of both?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is a total number of Trinidad and Tobago citizens in receipt of scholarships from the Government who are studying abroad. It is a large number as you will admit. It is not a handful.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$5billion—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chair—

**Madam Chairman:** I think that was the third Item.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. It is very important.

**Madam Chairman:** This is which Item?

**Mr. Imbert:** This applies to all Items in this—

**Madam Chairman:** The difference between the revised expenditure and the actual?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yeah. It is just for clarity, Madam Chairman. I would just like to advise Members that at this point in the life of a fiscal year you only have revised estimates. The actual expenditure is calculated in January, four months after the end of the financial year. So it is impossible, at this time, unless there is some very good accounting, to have actual figures. So we go with the revised figures in the estimates. I just want to make that point. Okay, because I heard Members asking about the actual expenditure. It is not possible at this time to give actual expenditure. We could only give revised.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 26 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I now invite the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. Just to give Members a sort of time check of where we are, we have now finished the first Item, the first Head for the day.

*Head 68.*

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, \$325,366,379.

Before I invite the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, just on behalf of all of us here, we would like to thank the PS from the Ministry of Education, the Ministers of Education and all their technocrats for their resilience and assistance. Thank you.

I now invite the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

**Hon. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I thank you for the opportunity for having the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs present here today to answer questions pertaining to the Ministry's fiscal 2017 budgetary allocation. In assessing the fiscal 2017 budget allocation, it must be noted that when compared to fiscal allocations of previous years, the 2017 fiscal allocation is notably less, as most or few of the Ministries. Before any premature judgment can be made on the fiscal 2017 budget allocation to the Ministry, I would like to place into context some key pertinent facts, which would have impacted on our budget allocation.

A few years ago, this Ministry was in the international spotlight for notorious wastage, mismanagement of State's funds, as we know with LifeSport, and \$400 million to date that we are still trying to finalize to find. Since then, corrective measures to tighten up on operations and our demands for greater accountability have led to greater scrutiny of requests for funding and payment for goods and services provided. Overall, many questionable applications for funding and business transactions, which would have been entered and entertained in the past, are no longer appearing as requesting or request for funding.

The development projects which are currently being undertaken are now required to have proper planning and prudent monitoring and evaluation for

mitigating cost overrun factors such as ad hoc variations in projects' scope and quality control issues. We are making a concerted effort to ensure the citizens derive value for their money.

In April 2016, the Ministry would have made its final payment for four of its football stadia, which is no longer reflected in the 2017 fiscal budget. We are working closely with sport and youth stakeholders to encourage and promote entrepreneurship and stimulate economic activity which make them less dependent on the State's Treasury. We are actively reviewing business plans and exploring business opportunities to ensure that the assets under our remit are capable of generating income and revenue, thus reducing the burden on taxpayers.

Before handing over, I would like to highlight and reiterate to Members of the Standing Finance Committee, that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is not only about administering funding providing in the 2017 fiscal budget allocation, but we are also playing a critical role in controlling the levels of fiscal haemorrhaging the State experienced by mitigating the amount of fiscal resources spent. The medical sector: by promoting a healthier society through engagement of a society in sporting activity. The security sector to tackle crime issues by encouraging young people to adopt sports as a medium to build camaraderie among themselves for promoting a peaceful society.

As I mentioned in my budget debate, I just want to reiterate on a few points, so when we go into discussion with line items, that the Members on the other side would keep this in mind for the sake of time. The four main issues that we dealt with as a Ministry was the cleaning up of the systems of the Ministry; the maintenance of the facilities that we have; focused mainly on our athletes and our youths and, of course, a database system which will help us with decision making. We want to reiterate to them that it is a marathon and not a sprint. We are here for

five years. We have done one year and we have four more years to go.

I want to reiterate that the Minister of Finance would have told the public that it is \$18 billion in revenue that was earned previously, and now we are down to \$1.7 billion in the last year. I want that to be remembered by the Members on the other side. We all had to do a 7 per cent cut in our budget which represented \$33 million from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Previously, under the last PP Government, of the 12 Ministers that were there—sorry, there were nine Ministers, as I said in my debate with regard to three in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, three in youth and three Ministers in the ministry in youth. So there were nine in total. That goes down from this chair, Madam Chair, to down to the Member for Diego Martin Central to the Ministers in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. It is only me here alone. And just to reiterate to them that there were nine Ministers on that side previously in other Governments. I now hand over to you, Chairman.

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

*Question proposed:* That Head 68 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** The sum of \$325,366,379 for Head 68, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 449, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 449. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, thank you. Hon. Minister, with respect to General Administration, line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, there has been an increase by \$200,000. Could you give us idea and indication as to what

would have accounted for this increase? And, at this time, what is the number of employees at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs?

**Hon. Smith:** We have, right now, 424 staff members at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. And in terms of the increase of \$200,000 in salaries and cost that would have come from us reshuffling and looking at moving of staff with regard to youth and sport and the Sport Company over the next year.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you. Minister line Item 08, Vacant Posts. Hon. Minister, if you can indicate how many posts are currently vacant, if you can list the vacant positions and how many are expected be filled within the next financial year, please.

**Hon. Smith:** We are working with the service commission with that, Madam Chair. With regard to that, there are 208 vacancies right now, and within the next year we are working with our HR departments of all three departments, including the Sport Company and service commission to have a few of those filled to assist us moving forward.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division, pages 449 and 450. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you give us a little bit of background in terms of what this division is particularly responsible for? How does it operate? How many persons do you have employed in this division and whether or not these are public service positions or is it that these are contracted positions or a mixture of both?

**3.25 p.m.**

**Hon. Smith:** There are 97 employees in that department. It is a mixture of

contract and public servants. This department is to ensure that the physical education—we work closely with the schools and the communities to ensure that we have activities going in these communities with leagues and programmes.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Youth Affairs at page 450. Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, pages 450 and 451.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, line Sub-Item 08 under Goods and Services General Administration, page 451.

**Madam Chairman:** We have not reached there as yet.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 451. Item 001, General Administration, pages 451 and 452.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, with respect to line Sub-Item 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, there has been a drastic cut in this area of over \$24.5 million. Can you give us an idea in terms of why such a cut was made, whether or not the Ministry is using other facilities that are state-owned? Just an indication of why such a drastic cut that would account for this.

**Hon. Smith:** I would have mentioned in the beginning of our discussion here that people of Trinidad and Tobago, we have paid off for the four stadia that were built for the Youth World Cup: Dwight Yorke, Ato Boldon, Larry Gomes and Mannie Ramjohn. They have been paid off. That money that you see there would have been paying off over the years, it has finally been paid off and is now finalizing the paperwork to be the property of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Padarath:** I am on line Item 08 Rent /Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage.

**Hon. Smith:** \$24 million?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes. That is the explanation for that?



**Hon. Smith:** Yes, that is the four stadia.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, if you would turn to the issue of line Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, again a decrease by \$1.7 million. Could you give us an idea of what positions in the Ministry would have been discontinued or expired, positions that would have become redundant and what positions are you proposing for the Ministry in the area of contract employment for the forthcoming financial year?

**Hon. Smith:** Again, this is something else I would have mentioned before. With the changes in revenue, we had to make some adjustments. The SDOs and the YDOs, we would have to make some changes with regard to reducing that amount of employment.

**Mr. Padarath:** How do you envisage this would affect the operations and functions of the Ministry with these cuts, with respect to contract employment?

**Hon. Smith:** We will work with the staff, and if again in the midterm review we will come back and make some adjustments to suit.

**Mr. Padarath:** So you have had a consideration with respect to Minister of Finance, there may be the possibility of coming back for the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs under the mid-year review?

**Hon. Smith:** Once we see some improvement in revenue, yes we could look at that.

**Mr. Padarath:** And if there is no improvement and the Ministry continues to be under-resourced then what happens in that scenario?

**Hon. Smith:** That is a very good question, Member for Princes Town, and that is why this Ministry along with the other Ministries have been consulting with a number of NGBs and governing bodies out there. So we are working with the sporting organizations in the communities to make up for that shortfall, and we

will also be working with the youth organizations to make up for that shortfall in the communities.

**Mr. Padarath:** Short-term employment also has been affected with almost a \$2 million decrease in this particular area. Hon. Minister, again, what are your plans in terms of going forward, that would alleviate the problems caused by this short-term employment being decreased in this particular area with respect to the functioning of your Ministry?

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me deal with that, Madam Chairman. This short-term Vote occurs in all the Ministries. It is a phenomena where you have persons just being hired at three-month intervals and rolling over. Really it is an unsatisfactory situation and we really need to migrate these people into either permanent positions or contract positions. So we are trying to suppress short-term employment across the service.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Minister. Hon. Minister of Sport, on the same issue of short-term employment, will you be in a position to give us an idea of what are some of the positions offered in short-term employment in the past in the Ministry?

**Hon. Smith:** We have some short-term, in terms of the quantity, 79, and the positions would have been in Youth Affairs. We had some positions that we filled in Youth Affairs, Monitoring and Evaluation, IT, Project Management Unit, Research and Planning Unit, general administration.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, again, to me it suggests that some of these areas, according to the Minister of Finance, are really areas that you would look for in long-term employment.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me handle that. We are monitoring the situation very closely, and if I need to supplement the contract employment Vote in the various Ministries I will, but I need to migrate people out of this short-term employment. If you

know anything about it, it is really not satisfactory. They do not have vacation leave; they do not have benefits and they do not have security of tenure either. We will get them out of that into contract employment.

**Mr. Padarath:** Line 27 to the hon. Minister. With respect to official overseas travel, there is only an allocation of \$400,000 for the next financial year. Can you indicate if there are any programmes that the Ministry intends on embarking, or partnering with international organizations, international meets, et cetera, that you intend to participate in over the next financial year, that you could give us some clarity as to why such a large allocation for official overseas travel?

**Hon. Smith:** I as Minister have not travelled in my first year, although being given a number of invitations, several invitations. We sent people abroad. I did not go Rio, unlike the former Minister, former, former Minister. However, we have a number of training—and we get invited to Cuba, the Australias, the Chinas and so on, and as Minister I would let my staff or members of the board or the chairman of the board go, and I will stay and man the ship in these rough waters.

**Mr. Padarath:** So you are saying, Minister, you intend to travel this forthcoming year?

**Hon. Smith:** No, I did not say that.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, remember we have reached a watershed of modesty. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, let me answer him. As I said I have no intention of travelling. I did not travel in my first year. We have the discipline, and I think our staff and our members of the board are well capable of doing that.

**Mr. Padarath:** I know the Minister of Finance has addressed this particular issue of university graduates recruitment programmes, and he spoke about all the Ministries in terms of what is Government's policy and vision for this particular

programme. My question really to you on this particular programme is that I am aware there are several areas from the University of the West Indies that are now offering courses in sports management and so on, and a lot of these persons graduating out of these programmes are having tremendous difficulty.

I know that Government has also been looking at specialty areas in terms of what is really needed as it relates to the state sector right now. I am hoping with this University Graduate Programme that you would be able to offer some light to some of these persons who would have engaged themselves in these degree options, or whether or not the Ministry has already started to engage some of them. Could you shed some light on this?

**Hon. Smith:** First of all, I want to congratulate the University of the West Indies, for the first time in 40 years opening a new facility in sport. UTT has had a facility for several years and they have graduates who graduate in sports and sporting backgrounds, administration, science and so on, and I am very pleased. All the Ministers on this side were very happy when the Minister of Finance mentioned that. We want to give young people a chance and opportunity, especially in my Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. We will be looking to these young people to come in, not only at the Ministry but working with Education as well to get into the school programmes to assist with regard to that as well.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was just going to ask the Minister what year was the University of the West Indies' physical education building and centre started?

**Madam Chairman:** Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That was the same in relation to—

**Hon. Smith:** Well it is not an Item here, but—

**Madam Chairman:** Item?

**Hon. Smith:** I could answer; I am very knowledgeable of sport.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I understand that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Ten years ago. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member, please. Item 002 Physical Education and Sport Division, page 452.

**Mr. Padarath:** Again, if we look at line Sub-Item 16 with respect to Contract Employment, I know the hon. Minister of Finance has made some undertakings with respect to Contract Employment. But also if we look at the area of training there has been a decrease by more than a quarter, about a third of the original estimates, from 2016. Hon. Minister, could you give us an idea what type of training would be involved under the Physical Education and Sport Division?

**Hon. Smith:** We had a lot of issues over the last five years under you all tenure with regard to leakage and mismanagement, especially with accounts and auditing. We have already started pumping in that area with regard to training. So they could look out for any issues with regard to leakage and proper management in terms of when people request funds and so on, that we could have proper accounts so we could be on top of the game to ensure that we have no mismanagement and leaking at that level as well.

**Mr. Padarath:** Would this training be done in-house or this would be sourced externally?

**Hon. Smith:** A mixture of both.

**Mr. Padarath:** And you are satisfied with this allocation of \$50,000 you would be able to accomplish—

**Hon. Smith:** Well, we did a lot it last year in the first year. As you know, that was the year to clean up, and we did a lot of it last year, so this year is just to tidy up with regard to a few more people and we should be okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Dwight Yorke Stadium, page 453.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, I know the hon. Minister spoke earlier when I raised the issue of the rent/lease arrangements and so on with respect to storage, that these facilities are now solely owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I know that there has been mention of a programme to upkeep these facilities. Could you indicate what is the status of that programme, as we speak, in terms of the upkeep and maintenance of these facilities, and how have they been budgeted for in this fiscal year?

**Hon. Smith:** Thank you, Chairman. You would have seen the Hasely Crawford training track for instance. In the history of the Hasely Crawford and Jean Pierre, those are over 40 years old. We had a football game the other day that the lights gave trouble to go on, you would recall. We are even having difficulty getting parts for the panel box because it is over 40 years old. So in terms of the three nationals, the aquatic, the tennis and cycling, Shanghai is working with us. They are actually going to be having a software system where the maintenance system would be done online, where they would have alarms and so on for basic things as changing light bulbs and so on. We plan to buy more of those licences this year, where we can expand it to the Dwight Yorke, the Hasely Crawford and so on. So it would now be from a manual to a computerized system.

**Mr. Padarath:** I know you may not have the information at your fingertips, but if you can give us the information with respect to each facility. What is the budgeted allocation for each and what are the scope of works that you intend to carry out over the next fiscal year with respect to some of these facilities.

**Madam Chairman:** This is under Repairs and Maintenance?

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, we are on the Dwight Yorke Stadium.

**Madam Chairman:** What line Item are you on again?

**Mr. Padarath:** Line Sub-Item 15, Madam, Repairs and Maintenance.

**Madam Chairman:** And this will be repairs and maintenance equipment for Dwight Yorke Stadium?

**Mr. Padarath:** For Dwight Yorke, but I am asking whether or not, in light that Minister has indicated that there will be a programme coming forward, he would give an undertaking to give us for some of the other facilities as well.

**Hon. Smith:** You can get it in writing; it is quite extensive. But in terms of Dwight Yorke we already did some work. We are in talks with the THA right now and, again, it is very extensive; I will get that in writing to you for all our national facilities.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Youth Centres, pages 453 and 454.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, line Sub-Item 16 Contract Employment has received an increase of \$62,760. Could you give us an idea with respect to these youth centres, what type of contract employment you intend on providing, and what is currently existing in these youth centres with respect to employment on contract?

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chairman, \$62,000 is a small figure in terms of Contract Employment. But we have a number of youth centres throughout the country that were not being used. In fact, there was one in St. James. They had an opening in August/September prior to the election and it sat there for a while without any programmes. So we are now finalizing with those new ones to have programmes put in for the first time. We are teaching people to sew, to do decorations. We are having aerobics, cooking and so on, and we are having extensive programmes with the people in the communities being able to come in and teach these programmes. So we are utilizing the people in the community to come in there and use the community to teach.

**3.40 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Item—Member for Princes Town. I am sorry.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Ma'am. Hon. Minister, if you turn to the issue of line Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment, where you see a decrease of over \$1 million. In keeping in line with what the Minister of Finance said earlier in terms of moving away from the short-term employment and looking at long-term employment on the establishment, contract positions and so forth. How does this rationalize with the slight increase in Contract Employment and a huge decrease in Short-Term Employment?

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, I really “doh” want to believe that we are going to sit down here to discuss \$36,000 [*Crosstalk*] in the scope of things. That is probably one person we are talking about there—employment.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, with all due respect, this may seem insignificant to you, but to a taxpayer who cannot afford to buy bread, this \$36,000 will mean a lot to them.

**Hon. Smith:** Well this \$36,000 will give one person employment to buy bread, you have to look at it that way. Be optimistic, not pessimistic.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, hon. Minister, while I appreciate your optimism, we also have to be practical and this is not practical.

**Hon. Smith:** To have one person employed, \$36,000?

**Mr. Padarath:** No. No. Minister, what I am saying is that the Short-Term Employment has been decreased by over a million while you have increased—

**Hon. Smith:** The short-term by \$36,000.

**Mr. Padarath:**—you have increased Contract Employment by just over \$60 million, \$60,000, sorry. And what I am asking how do you rationalize the Short-Term Employment cut when you have only increased Contract Employment, meaning longer contracts by only \$60,000? I am just asking for a rationalization of



it.

**Hon. Smith:** We have people doing cutting of grass and so on like that, basic maintenance in the yard and so on, gardening, a little “touch-up” with paint and so on, basic maintenance. People in the community, again, being able to buy bread.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Youth Affairs, page 454. Item—Yes. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Ma’am, line Sub-Item we are looking at is 08 with respect to Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage under the heading Youth Affairs 05. Hon. Minister, can you indicate to us what these facilities are with respect to line Sub-Item 08?—just an idea.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 454.

**Hon. Smith:** That is the one that is going to be in the same head office that is \$4,360 increase is what you are talking about, Member for Princes Town?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Hon. Smith:** 08?

**Mr. Padarath:** 08.

**Hon. Smith:** This occurred when the Ministry—remember the Ministry of Sport was separated and youth affairs was under the Ministry of Gender and Youth Affairs when you all expanded the Government by 10 Ministries, we have brought it back down now. And now that it is going to be working with us the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is going to be one, so that is why you are seeing that reduction there.

**Mr. Padarath:** And, hon. Minister, if you look at line Sub-Item 16, again, just to draw to your attention, you have a decrease of close to \$2 million with respect to Contract Employment in the area of youth affairs. How would this impact on existing employees on contract employment in the area of youth affairs?

**Hon. Smith:** I had mentioned that on a former page. Not only youth affairs, it is sport officers, SDOs as well, and I said we have been consulting with youth groups in the communities and we are going to be making it up. I mean, it is \$18 billion in revenue to 1.7, we have to make some changes and we are going to be making it up by utilizing and working with the youth groups in the areas.

**Mr. Padarath:** So you are in consultation with them with respect to these cuts.

**Hon. Smith:** Always. Always.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item No. 17 Training. Can you identify what training? Who would be trained? Because it is a small amount and I just wanted to know, it is a new line Item. So what is it intended to achieve?

**Hon. Smith:** Yeah. This came out with consultation with the youth groups in the communities, certain basic training that they are going to be needing and they are also going to be utilizing the community centres. As I said earlier, these community centres were just left there without any programmes and we are going to be pumping programmes in there, so basic programmes, very, very, very low cost which going to give employment for people in the communities.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** If you will identify which communities you are going be starting with?

**Hon. Smith:** All where we have youth facilities.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How many is that?

**Hon. Smith:** Nine. Nine youth facilities.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That leads us into the next line Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment. So you are going to have training and you are going

to create employment; that is what you said. This \$500,000 is a new Item that is allocated for Short-Term Employment. What is the nature of this Short-Term Employment?

**Hon. Smith:** As I said before, there was not much going on in the community centres. Case in point is the most recent one that we worked on was in St. James and there was no staff or anybody doing anything in there, so we are going to be utilizing there to have programmes and have people employed to assist us in these facilities, in these nine facilities.

**Mr. Singh:** What is the objective of this exercise? You are making employment, you are going to have training. What it is?

**Hon. Smith:** It is to train the young people of these communities. As I said, these buildings have been standing there with nothing going on in them, we want to ensure that the people in the communities are able to benefit from proper training, and by extension the people in the communities will be given the opportunity to work in the training.

**Mr. Singh:** I hear what you are saying. What areas of training with what objective in mind you are putting forward this project?

**Hon. Smith:** Again, it comes from consultation. Each community is different. We have been consulting with all the youth areas, the youth officers in the areas have been reporting to us, and each is unique although Trinidad and Tobago is small and each has different needs. If you want I could send you a list of the programme for all nine.

**Mr. Singh:** Well, you undertake to do that, but I would really like—let us use St. James as an example.

**Hon. Smith:** Not a problem.

**Mr. Singh:** What will you be doing in that area?

**Hon. Smith:** Not what we will be doing, we have already started.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Smith:** Sewing, cooking, plumbing.

**Hon. Member:** Cooking is a sport?

**Hon. Smith:** It is a youth facility, not sport. Right? These are the kinds of programmes: decorating; dancing; aerobics, those are the kinds of events we have been hosting, and activities that we have been hosting at these youth facilities. That building stood up there for 10 years without any programmes. Ten years.

**Mr. Singh:** I understand. It is becoming clear to me.

**Hon. Smith:** All right. Cool.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, again, the rationalization in terms of what the hon. Minister of Finance just shared with us. He indicated that we were moving—he was trying, well the Government's policy was to move away from this Short-Term Employment and give persons real, sustainable jobs, when I raised the issue of contract employment as well. But I do not understand the rationalization where you have introduced a Sub-Item, Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment, giving it \$500,000 under Short-Term Employment bringing it as a new line Item, but then you are decreasing it. So it is really is a contradiction of what the hon. of Minister of Finance had indicated. Do you wish to give us a rationalization in light of what the hon. Minister of Finance has indicated?

**Madam Chairman:** So really you want to know, why introduce a new Item, a Short-Term Employment.

**Mr. Padarath:** When you are trying to move away from—

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, I think I am being repetitive. I just told two or three Members on that side that for the past five years these youth facilities have been

standing there not doing anything. So, in terms of the youth and the communities we now want to utilize and get people in short-term in the communities, I mentioned bread and helping people in the areas so they will be able to teach the people in their areas.

**Mr. Padarath:** That is your way of rationalization?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Hon. Smith:** I said it twice.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, what it is your Ministry intends to do? Does it compete with what the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts would normally do? Would there be a competition for the same clientele, one; and two, when you speak about \$500,000 for nine communities, you are in fact looking at, if you have to divide it, just about \$55,000 plus for nine communities. I mean, how many persons can you, in fact, employ and give sustainable jobs with that figure? I am just asking.

**Hon. Smith:** These programmes it varies in times. I mean, a course would not last a year. Some courses are six weeks, some courses are three weeks, a month and so on. But if you want I can give you a list of what we have done last year and what we plan to do. In terms of the overlap, I mean, you know a number of the Ministries are close, education deals with young people, we deal with young people, as well as social development will have young people coming to them as well. You, as a former Minister, as the nine of you all on the other side were Ministers before, would understand that sometimes it is a very close line among the Ministries, but we have to work together.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, hon. Chairman. And that is my point. The thing about it is because of the fact that the Minister of Finance has identified very

early the lack of resources, the limited resources and each Minister has been indicating that, is it prudent really for the overlapping to be—so much overlapping to take place, as opposed to now coming together, having an interministerial committee to determine, well this is where we will stop at this point, so not much money is being expended. It is duplicity of programmes.

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, I do not know where the line Item is. It is actually we have an interministerial committee to deal with that, the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, myself. As you would have known as a former Minister yourself where we also have duplication of people coming for funding. Where they will write to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, they will write to the youth arm, they will write to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and they will write to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts and they will get money from the three. So it goes beyond just employment. It also goes with regard to people writing to get funding, and we have an interministerial committee that we have formed and we are looking at ensuring that everybody “bat in their crease”.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to these youth centres and the courses that you are putting on, I have the following questions. Number one.

**Madam Chairman:** We are in youth affairs, eh.

**Hon. Smith:** What line Item?

**Mr. Karim:** Well, Training, you know. You were just discussing training with my colleague. What informs the courses that you will engage in training with in the community? Is there a labour market study? Or is there anything—tell me what informs the selection of the courses.

**Mr. Singh:** Needle and thread race.

**Hon. Smith:** Well, it is good to hear the Member for Chaguanas West making joke and fun of the people in these communities. But that is how they do things.

**Madam Chairman:** It is just for us to endure the process.

**Hon. Smith:** Yeah. Yeah. Sad to say. But no, as I said, we consult with the people, the community, the young people in the areas and we find out what their needs are, when they go to job interviews why they get “blank” and that is why we work with them.

**Mr. Karim:** Do you use any data from any of the agencies within with government service?

**Hon. Smith:** As I said, we work with the interministerial task force and we work together to pull all that information when we are going forward.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Hon. Smith:** But what we try to do is to ensure that the people in the area get employment.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. I am looking at the whole aspect of training and employment. What award do you offer to these people when they graduate?

**Hon. Smith:** They get a certificate. They get a certificate from the Ministry.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Is it articulated to anything else? Could they use that within, say for example, the vocational system?

**Hon. Smith:** Right. So we have follow-up with them. As you know, under the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, you have Persto Praesto and Chatham as well and, of course, we have been directing young people to go to those programmes, who may not be in school, to enter these camps, and so far we have been very successful with regard to that. In fact, I have great news to answer with regard to certification in those two camps that we are working with UTT, for the first time in

the history of Trinidad they will be having a UTT certificate coming out from those programmes.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. I will ask on another Head.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, page 455. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It follows on the answer that the hon. Minister just gave to me. With respect to repairs and maintenance, I am on line Sub-Item 21, Buildings, you mentioned Persto Praesto and the Chatham Youth Camps. Could you indicate how many trainees are currently attending courses at these two youth camps?

**Hon. Smith:** Well, I do not know how—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Just a minute, please. Repairs and Maintenance.

**Mr. Karim:** Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** Because what happens is that you refurbish the buildings to cater for the people, the trainees at these facilities. I just wanted to know in terms of the repairs and maintenance of the buildings, what is the capacity? How many persons are attending these courses?

**Madam Chairman:** Oh. You want to know the capacity of the buildings?

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Smith:** I was very pleased that as Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs I attended both graduations last year. In fact, the graduating class of both Chatham and Persto Praesto, my guess is that two Soca Warriors' games ago some of them never even saw the Soca Warriors play live and they were very pleased, and we have been following up with them after graduation to ensure that they get



employment. We are working with them. This year the programme starts in November and—

**Mr. Karim:** How many are there?

**Hon. Smith:** I am getting to that. The enrolment that “backs on” that we have for both of them is 80 and 80, so 160 young men would be going to these two programmes, two-year programmes.

**Mr. Karim:** The dormitory capacity?

**Hon. Smith:** The capacity is 240.

**Mr. Karim:** And you have 80 in each?

**Hon. Smith:** For the two.

**Mr. Karim:** For the two.

**Hon. Smith:** Yeah. But we are going at 80/80 in terms of making sure that we have a proper ratio to ensure that these students get the best out of everything.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services under the National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, can you give us an idea of what these contract services entail? And also, if you look at line Item, right under, 40, Food and Institutions whether or not these meals are done in house or are they contracted out? What is the function with respect to the food at institutions in line Sub-item 40?

**3.55 p.m.**

**Hon. Smith:** All right, I am told that these contractors do basic maintenance on these facilities; that is what that shows there, and I did not hear the second question.

**Mr. Padarath:** With respect to line Sub-Item 40, is it done in-house? I see an

increase of \$60,000, is it done in-house?

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, they cook in-house. In fact, they have some wildlife.

**Mr. Padarath:** Have you had the chance to sample?

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, actually, and I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries who is working with us to get some equipment in, some tractors and stuff like that. But yes, the three or four visits that I did in the one year they have not seen a Minister there for years, I have visited them a few times. I was able to get a nice warm meal from those guys.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you. I am just dealing with the food and institutions, and I have no problems with that, but this is associated with the various youth camps. I notice in passing the Minister mentioned wildlife. I think that they have domesticated animals that they look after?

**Hon. Smith:** “Dem chicken and dem bad up dey, boy. You come up there they will pick yuh.” [*Laughter*] “So, doh go up there, Chaguanas West, they might attack yuh.”

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, no, when the Minister mentioned yard fowl—

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, settle down now?

**Mr. Singh:** When the Minister mentioned wildlife I hope he went there during the hunting season.

**Hon. Smith:** They have sheep, and goat, and chicken.

**Mr. Singh:** That is what I said, domesticated animals.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 456, Item 001, General Administration, page 456; Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division, page 456; Item 003, Dwight York Stadium, page 456; Item 004, Youth Centres, page 457; Item 005, Youth Affairs, page 457; Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, page 457. Sub-Head, 04, Current

Transfers and Subsidies, page 458, Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 458; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 458. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 02 under Non-Profit Institutions, an increase for the Boxing Board of Control by over \$250,000. Could you give us an indication of why this increase has been made? And whether or not the—sorry, and if you can advise who are the current members of the boxing board?

**Hon. Smith:** This is the quietest the boxing board has been in years. “All yuh doh find so, Madam Chair, we have not had any bacchanalia in boxing, is a reward.”

**Madam Chairman:** Please leave the Chair out of it.

**Hon. Smith:** I am not calling any names.

**Hon. Member:** No boxing Minister.

**Hon. Smith:** So, it is a reward for the quiet man to—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** No boxing Minister. *[Laughter]*

**Hon. Smith:** No, the new chairman is Dr. Barry Ishmael, six degree black belt, and a couple of the other members, I cannot remember, but I could get the list for you in terms of the members. But, he is planning a number of community events where he is going to be working with the young people and the several boxing gyms across the country to assist them.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that there is a decrease of funding, particularly with the non-profit institutions, what criteria would the Ministry use to identify which institution will receive funding? And how does it impact upon them?

**Hon. Smith:** Well, good question. One of the issues that we would have had in the past as you know is leakage and mismanagement in this department with regard to funding. What we have been doing is tightening up on the governing bodies, the elite funding and so on, that all paperwork and documents are accurate, and we are

putting a “lil” more process with regard to giving out funding. So, it is not as easy, you just come and you wave a piece of paper and you get funding, that occurred over the last five years. It is a proper screening process and it has frightened away the people who may have come in the past for money not for the purpose that it was intended for, and we have tightened up on that aspect of it, and so far it has been working quite well and we intend to continue that this year.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Chair, can I ask a follow up?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, you may.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Therefore, you would recommend that persons who are interested in receiving funding, to in fact apply pretty early. Are you suggesting that they do so and what timeframes are you looking at? Because, I understand the stringent methods that you would have persons go through and so forth, so I mean where persons would have sent a request a week before—

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, those days are done. It is not only the communities, all governing bodies. It is written in the laws and the policies with regard to funding. Before people would come, as you say, a week before a tournament abroad and so on, and use the athletes and the children, and go to the media, to get the funding. We are being strict with regard to that, you have a period of time in the policy that you have to bring in your paperwork. All governing bodies have been written a letter that they have to have audited accounts put in, and they have been doing that, or else no funding, so we have been tightening up the screws. As I said, our first year was to clean up, and it has been working so far, so I see no problem with us working with this figure throughout the year.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In the context of maintenance of regional complexes and so on, I see no allocation, Minister. How you plan to address this particular issue?

**Hon. Smith:** What line Item is that?

**Madam Chairman:** Line Sub-Item 34. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Sub-Items 12 and 34.

**Hon. Smith:** Oh, that is not under us anymore. You would have seen that is under Community Development, sir.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, Sub-Item 29, I take it Non-Profit Institutions, \$15 million allocated. I think these are the various sporting bodies that you give allocations to. Does the Ministry see its role not only as giving out funding, but also as directing these organizations to develop structures that could lead to Trinidad being a First World country in terms of sports? So, the question is, Jamaica has a structured programme in athletics, Cuba has in boxing and what not; do we have an equivalent thing so that, for example in football, what happened yesterday does not reoccur.

**Hon. Smith:** Very, very good question. Our sporting policy expires next year, also our youth policy and, as you know we have been consulting, we have started that process for the first time. We brought all the stakeholders in the Olympics, they came and they ventilated, and that just scratched the surface. We are going to have a number of other meetings and we are going to come up with some changes to the sport policy and youth policy. I am in contact with the Minister of sport and youth affairs in Jamaica on a weekly basis, and that is a good point, they lean heavily on their alumni. One of the things that you would have noticed this year for the first time, sport has been very quiet with regard to bacchanal. That assistance with corporate Trinidad and private sector coming on board to support us, and we have been seeing that. We have been seeing a number of international and local companies coming on board and supporting football, cricket and so on,

and we are seeing that as helping us bridge the gap.

**Mr. Charles:** So, the bodies to which you give money would be tied to some kind of informed platform?

**Hon. Smith:** Correct.

**Mr. Charles:** So that, ultimately we could see like in soccer, we are at a certain level, boxing at another level, and in athletics.

**Hon. Smith:** Okay.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Non-Profit Institutions, Minister, you outlined certain criteria and a process, could you make that available to Members of Parliament?

**Hon. Smith:** Oh, sure. There is a policy I could print out. It is online as well. It is on our website as well, for elite funding and for governing bodies, what you have to do to full out to get those funding, and grant funding as well.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 30, Athlete Assistance and Development, I see that there is nothing there, do you care to explain? Has it been moved?

**Hon. Smith:** No, it is now merging with the NPI, Non-Profit Institute, it is now going to be merged with that.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay, so it is merged. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Households at page 458. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 03, Hosting of Vacation Camps, could he enlighten what that is about and where these camps were held in 2016, and where it is proposed for 2017?

**Hon. Smith:** There are two camps, for the first time we have brought back the Easter sports camp and the summer sports camp, and we also brought a youth

camp which was very, very successful in a number of schools throughout the country during the Easter vacation and the summer vacation, and we plan to do that again next year.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, a follow-up, could the Minister—if he does not have it right now—list—

**Hon. Smith:** I could give you the list, it was in the newspaper. We had a full ad, but I could send you the list of locations again, and it is online as well.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister line Sub-Item 03, Hosting of Vacation Camps, we would look forward to that information with respect to the locations and the dates on which—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, a question please, that was already—

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, could you indicate at this time where the hosting of these vacation camps, whether or not corporate support was also incorporated into the hosting of these camps?

**Hon. Smith:** I know we approached a few organizations, I do not know if they came through, but they were not private. I think bmobile and a couple government agencies were approached, but I do not think anything came out of it. But we plan to do that next year as I said, as we clean up sport and we clean up the image of the Ministry, we are seeing now that private sectors are willing to partner with us more.

**Mr. Padarath:** Would you be able to provide us with that information subsequently when you are providing us with the locations of whether any corporate entities had participated in terms of sponsorship and their allocations made?

**Hon. Smith:** No problem.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would the Minister be able to tell me, in

respect of Sub-Item 03, Hosting of Vacation Camps, if any were held in the general area of the constituency of Naparima?

**Mr. Padarath:** He said he is going to give us the list.

**Mr. Charles:** No, I know he is going to give me the list, but at least on that list is Naparima included?

**Hon. Smith:** I am sure in the vicinity of Naparima, yes, Trinidad is a small place. So, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** No, no, no. The question is, is any held in Naparima?

**Mr. Padarath:** I cannot remember, it is several that we did. Remember we did Easter, summer, we did it youth and sports, so for me to remember that list—but we had a full page ad in the newspaper.

**Madam Chairman:** And you promised to supply the information.

**Mr. Charles:** My information is none was held.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers, page 459. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, thank you. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 04, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, an allocation of \$104 million. Hon. Minister, with an allocation of \$104 million, would you be able to be in a position, it may not be today but you could provide it to us subsequently, in terms of what are the projects to be undertaken with this allocation in the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago? Also, whether or not the position of CEO of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago has been filled, or is it still vacant?

**Hon. Smith:** Is that part of the line Sub-Item, the CEO?

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, it falls under the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Smith:** Okay, no problem. In terms of the role of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago, again I could give you it in writing as well.



**Mr. Padarath:** Sure.

**Hon. Smith:** But they also have NGBs under them, and it is a question that you have been asking in the Parliament apart from the question with regard to the summer which you will get a very thorough answer in the Parliament when we return. But in terms of Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago, there is something called the Sport Commission/Sport Institute, where you tend to be confusing with the academy, and I have answered it. I see you asked the Minister of Works and Transport for the thing, and you pulled the question, so I think you are now getting the message—

**Madam Chairman:** Member.

**Hon. Smith:** Well, I am getting to it, Madam Chairman. In terms of Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago, there is a lot of duplication that we are going to be working to morph the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago into the sport—  
[*Interruption*] Case in point, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has governing bodies, they have governing bodies, they fund. They do projects, we do projects, they do maintenance, we do maintenance; it does not make any sense. In Jamaica, there are seven people that work in the Ministry of Sport.

**Mr. Charles:** One, seven, 1-7.

**Hon. Smith:** Seven, and they have three or four companies, one deals with governing bodies, one deals with maintenance and infrastructure. So, we are going to be re-looking at that, and you would be very pleased by next year, fiscal year when we are doing this same process, we may not have a line Item where a sport company may have several or a new dispensation.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, I understand the Minister's point about streamlining in terms of the projects and so on, but it still does not answer the question with respect to the position of CEO of the Sports Company of Trinidad

and Tobago?

**Hon. Smith:** They are finalizing right now the pay structure, not just for the CEO, but for all the employees of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago, we are looking at the entire thing. But, they have isolated someone and they are finalizing that right now.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, is someone acting in the position?

**Hon. Smith:** No, no.

**Mr. Padarath:** So, there is no one acting?

**Hon. Smith:** No, no acting allocation.

**Mr. Padarath:** Can you indicate since when the position has been vacant?

**Hon. Smith:** It was always vacant, because we always had somebody acting. Remember there were a number of people that resigned under the last government, including the chairman and so on. There were three boards, three chairmen, and so on, along with the nine Ministers of Sport, so there was not a CEO at the time, so we have now to go—we had an acting CEO.

**Hon. Member:** That is the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

**Hon. Smith:** Well, let us do not get on to that, Minister of Finance. There was not a CEO at the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago when we came in, there was an acting and now we are finalizing to have the post of CEO filled.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, you have just indicated that no one has been in the position, and then you said that at one point someone was acting.

**Hon. Smith:** You asked the question if there is anybody acting now? No, there is nobody in the position now.

**Mr. Padarath:** There is no one in the position now?

**4.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** So the Sport Company is headless?

**Hon. Smith:** No, we have a very, very, competent chairman and a board.

**Mr. Singh:** So he is an executive chairman?

**Hon. Smith:** No, he is not. We have fantastic directors that work there. But as I said, we will be relooking at the entire Sport Company and move forward. You will be very pleased with the system that we have there.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Sub-Item 13, National Football Development Plan. The estimates were \$7 million in 2016. I know the Minister of Finance has said that the revised estimates are not the actual spend. But I got the sense that that is as close as possible, subject to the final figures coming in. So only \$15,000 was spent. Is there a reason for that? And what is the purpose of this National Football Development Plan and how is it proceeding?

**Hon. Smith:** Well, as I said before through you, Madam Chair, that we are cleaning up sports. You all would have known, I think it was one of your colleagues, there were a number of issues in sport, in football in particular. There is a new board at TTFA and they are cleaning up and for the first time we are able to get funding from FIFA, whether we are getting millions of dollars.

In fact, the Minister of Finance and the Cabinet, we are going to be discussing with regard to some plans that FIFA has for Trinidad and Tobago, finally, because remember all our funding was freezed, based on former advisors that were close to the other side. But my point is that we have worked closely with the TTFA and they have cleaned up their act; they have sent in their audited accounts to FIFA; now that the pipe of funding has been opened back, it has taken off a strain off of the Ministry as well, they have qualified for the Hex which they get some serious US dollars to assist them moving forward.

**Mr. Charles:** So you are satisfied that the \$100,000 would be enough to fulfil our ambitions?

**Hon. Smith:** It would not have been enough before but now based on, they are cleaning up and we are working with them to get their audited accounts done finally, they could move forward to get—

**Mr. Charles:** Would the Minister therefore tell us where we are with respect to football development in the context of the next World Cup? I am asking that in the context of the \$100,000 and you say everything is cleaned up and everything is hunky-dory. Where are we in that process?

**Hon. Smith:** The hunky-dory is the administrative part, the moneys, the dollars and cents, the bacchanal that goes on. The playing on the field, I leave the stars to do the astronomers. That is the coaches and so on, and part of the funding is getting—coaching the coaches, coaching the technical staff to improve them, going to courses throughout the world, Switzerland and so on, and also having young people get scholarships and so on. So we are working very closely with them and I anticipate that Trinidad and Tobago will qualify for Russia.

**Mr. Charles:** For the World Cup?

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at Sub-Item 11, Sports Dispute Resolution Centre. Out of the estimates of \$680,000 only 10 per cent was utilized and 10 per cent had been allocated. Where is this unit located? How many persons constitute this centre and what work has it done? Sub-Item, 11, page 459.

**Hon. Smith:** The PS is just getting me the list of people on that. As you know, there are a number of disputes that occurred throughout the year in sport with the governing bodies, with coaches, with selection of players and so on. So there are a number of issues that occurred. I could send you a list. He has the wrong list here. He has anti-doping which is one of the boards that we have to do. But there is a

board that we are setting up with regard to sport dispute resolutions and I can send you that in writing.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, the follow up question really is, given the small amount that would have been utilized and of course that will be in response to the amount of conflicts that you may have to deal with, do you think this is adequately resourced?

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, I think this will be able to work. We work closely with our legal team, both at the Sport Company and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. So they substitute where there is need to.

**Madam Chairman:** Finished, Member for Chaguanas East? Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 04, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago. In my constituency the Sport Company did some refurbishment work to a ground in John Peter Road. That contract was never completed. I would like to get a status in writing and an update on that?

**Hon. Smith:** It is not only that project. In coming in on September 7, 2015 there were a number of unfinished projects. In fact, I am on call almost every day with contractors who were not paid from 2011, '12, '13, '14, '15. So I could give you a full list, not just by you, because it is Trinidad and Tobago we are dealing with here.

**Mr. Singh:** I want the list.

**Hon. Smith:** I will send you the list with all the contractors for the past five years that were not paid and all the projects that were not finished in the five-year period. It is a long, long list that we do in our audit now to ensure— [*Crosstalk*] Can I finish, Madam Chairman? I am answering the question. There is a long list of unfinished projects, similar to yours, unpaid contractors and that we are doing an audit now that I could give you that full audit list soon.

**Mr. Singh:** We are on contractual repayment and payment is one issue. The issue for the community which I represent, is that you have an unfinished project which is an eyesore in the community. During the rainy season it becomes a reservoir and that, therefore, I want to know when the Sport Company, which is under your jurisdiction, is going to complete that project for the benefit of the community.

**Hon. Smith:** And I am saying, you are not isolated, Member for Chaguanas West. There are a number of projects that were started that were stopped, for whatever reason, including the Brian Lara Stadium in Couva. So you will get a list and I will let you know—

**Mr. Singh:** I want to know, what is your plan?

**Hon. Smith:** I cannot answer you now. I am just telling you I cannot answer you now because it is not just you alone. There are a number of other projects.

**Mr. Singh:** So you cannot answer now? Okay.

**Hon. Smith:** I cannot answer you because there are a number of projects that were stopped under the last regime.

**Mr. Singh:** So you are working on a plan?

**Hon. Smith:** We are doing an audit, because there are some people that—do you know what happened in that project by you? Do you know why it stopped?

**Mr. Singh:** Tell me.

**Hon. Smith:** That is what I am saying. So we are doing an audit.

**Mr. Singh:** So tell me.

**Hon. Smith:** I do not know, it started under you all. So that is what we are figuring out now.

**Madam Chairman:** Would it be that in the listing, the status will be given.

**Hon. Smith:** That and others. Yes, Ma'am. The public will be very pleased to see it. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Singh:** Remedial plan. No, no, I have a next question.

**Madam Chairman:** You have a question?

**Mr. Singh:** I have three questions. Trinidad and Tobago Anti-Doping Organization. You have an allocation of \$100,000 for 08. Is that sufficient to deal with the question of doping now that doping is so highlighted in sports, in every sector.

**Hon. Smith:** Good question. Thank God Trinidad and Tobago has not had any major issues with doping and I bless the people and the athletes for keeping discipline.

**Mr. Singh:** You have not been to horse racing.

**Hon. Smith:** Horse racing is not under me. It is under Ministry of Trade and Industry. You could deal with that when that comes up, but I could speak for sport. This money is to formulate a board. We are going to formulate a board that is going to be dealing with it and when the board comes to us with regard to what they need, we will furnish with regard to what funds is needed.

**Mr. Singh:** Then I deal with—we have not gone to Transfers to State Enterprises as yet?

**Madam Chairman:** No, not as yet. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Next one.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so that we now go on to, Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 459. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. First Citizens Bank, Sub-Item 01, FCB—Repayment of Loan—Brian Lara Cricket Stadium. Could you provide an indication of the quantum of moneys that were borrowed to build this enterprise? The principal, the interest and also the final cost of this stadium?

**Hon. Smith:** Well, I can go backwards. The final cost was ventilated here several

times, \$90 million for us to finish. Remember it was 95 per cent completed. It was stopped for the past five years under your Government. [*Crosstalk*] Let me finish.

**Mr. Singh:** I am requesting it in writing, eh.

**Hon. Smith:** In terms of the other information, Madam Chairman, I will—

**Mr. Singh:** In writing.

**Hon. Smith:** Yeah, yeah, I am going backwards. I was now going to say that. I am going to give him the balance on the capital and stuff in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, thank you. Hon. Minister, Sub-Item 01, again, First Citizens Bank Limited—Repayment of Loan—Brian Lara Stadium.

Hon. Minister, with respect to the Brian Lara Stadium, when you look at the state enterprise investment programme, it says under details of programmes for 2017, the project is scheduled to be handed over in fiscal 2017. The estimated cost was revised from \$1,293 million to \$1,137 million which is really a difference of \$156 million. Would you care to elaborate on that?

**Hon. Smith:** This is the completion of the Brian Lara Stadium?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Hon. Smith:** UDeCOTT is the contractor for it and they have assured us that it will cost us \$90 million to complete it.

**Mr. Padarath:** But, Minister, if you look at, again the State Enterprise Investment Programme, the projected cost for the continued work on the Brian Lara Stadium for completion is \$156 million and not \$90 million.

**Hon. Smith:** You should be happy, Member for Princes Town, PNM at work again. We are saving the people's money.

**Mr. Padarath:** No, no, no, Minister, this is an increase, this is not a decrease. If you turn to page 85 of the State Enterprise Investment Programme—[*Interruption*]



**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Padarath:** I am demonstrating the PNM is spending \$156 additional million on the Brian Lara Stadium. The numbers are in black and white.

**Madam Chairman:** You want to answer that?

**Mr. Padarath:** It is on page 85 of the State Enterprise Investment— [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members! We are at page 459, Item 011, Sub-Item 01. Can I ask the Minister of Finance to intervene here please?

**Mr. Imbert:** With respect to this line Item?

**Mr. Padarath:** With to the Brian Lara Stadium—

**Mr. Imbert:** Sub-Item 01, First Citizens Loan—

**Mr. Padarath:** First Citizens Loan with respect to the Brian Lara Stadium.

**Mr. Imbert:** Sub-Item 01.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sub-Item 01, but when you turn to the State Enterprises Investment Programme, your figures do not add up with respect to what you are saying. [*Crosstalk*] Minister, when the Member for Chaguanas West asked you what is the projected cost, you said \$90 million. I am showing you that in your own State Enterprise Investment Programme those numbers are not reflected. It is in fact \$156 million and if you turn to page 85 it is there in black and white.

**Madam Chairman:** All right? So the question has been asked.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will answer the question. This Sub-Item on page 459 refers to the payment of a loan. It is the amount provided to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs to pay the loan payments that will become due in 2017 with respect to that particular loan. It has nothing to do with the expenditure on that project in 2017. The two are completely different.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, I think the issue comes out of a response from the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but I am answering it now. This is just a loan payment. The \$90 million that the hon. Minister is referring to is expenditure—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members! If you all listen then we will not have to have this restated and then if there are further questions then it could be asked from a platform of information.

**Mr. Imbert:** The \$90 million that the Minister is referring to is the estimated expenditure that would be spent between fiscal 2016 and fiscal 2017 to complete that facility. That has nothing to do with the allocation here for a loan repayment on a previous loan arrangement. The two are completely separate.

**Madam Chairman:** You finished? Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are going on to another book. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Consolidated Fund, page 205; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 205 and 206. Member for Pointe-à-Pierre, is your hand up? Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister, Sub-Item 117, Improvement to Indoor Sporting Arenas, estimated \$6 million for 2017. If the Minister does not have it right now, he could provide a listing of those Indoor Sporting Arenas that are scheduled to be improved for 2017.

**Hon. Smith:** We could get that to you, through you, Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Next question. Finish? Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, Sub-Item 005, Development of a Youth Employment Policy and I know my colleague from Chaguanas—

**Madam Chairman:** We are on Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

**Mr. Padarath:** My apologies.

**Madam Chairman:** If there are no other questions I now go on to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 207. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, with respect to Sub-Item 005, Development of a Youth Employment Policy, I know my colleague from Chaguanas East had asked this in a similar manner with respect to another line Item. With respect to the Youth Employment Policy, can you indicate what factors are driving the establishment—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member, we are now on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

**Hon. Smith:** And I answered that already.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? We are at page 207; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Princes Town, do you have a question here?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** Please thank you.

**4.25 p.m.**

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 009, Development of a Domestic Sport Research Database, can you indicate at this point what has come out of the establishment of this database, and whether or not it is being done in-house or it is being contracted out, and whether or not you are partnering with other intergovernmental agencies to establish this database? Because I know many of them would have had past experience and very good IT people in this field within the Government service.

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, through you, in our consultation with the governing bodies—the 50-plus governing bodies—they were all given questionnaires to assist us with that data, basic data, that was not there before, so were able to do that internally—the first step. The second step is that we have been working with our staff at the IT department and other departments, communications, to help us, but at one point you are going to have to tender out, to go out, to get some

professionals to assist us to pull everything together so we could have a platform where the public could access this information online as well.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 343, Item 004. Social Infrastructure, pages 343 and 344.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am looking at Item 137, Development and Upgrading of Recreational Grounds, Parks and Spaces. I see there is an allocation of \$14 million for the 2017 estimate. Earlier this year I sent both SPORTT and your Ministry a request for consideration of the Mayaro Recreational Ground. Is there any intention to do any work in this fiscal year on that recreational ground, Sir?

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, through you, we got several requests. I have been to most of the constituencies and we are now finalizing with regard to the funds we have, what is the best way forward with regard to the data that we have collected. You would have seen this weekend we opened in—worked with Morvant to have a pro-league being played there. So we want to make sure that we get the best bang for the buck. And, of course, I did remember the letter that was given and we will be giving you some reply soon with regard to that.

But Mayaro is very close to the Government. We know a lot of sportspeople come from there—Cleopatra, and so on—and we intend to—remember I said it is a marathon, not a sprint, and you will get it done.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 149, the Construction of the Diego Martin Sporting Complex. Could you give us an idea of what progress has been made in this area in terms of completion, what percentage of completion? And also if you can provide us with the information as to who are the contractors on this particular project?

**Hon. Smith:** I could get you that in writing in terms of—the contractor, I think

SRI is the contractor. This was a project that started several years ago. When I was chairman of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, I was invited by one of your former Ministers of Sport to start back the project. It never happened and the project has started and we are now finalizing with regard to getting some financing to finish up the project. But I think it is in its early stages still.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, line Item 100, the Development of a Master Plan for Sport and Youth Facilities, an allocation of \$2 million. Could you shed some light in terms of what is this master plan about?

**Hon. Smith:** That goes along with regard to our plan and the audit that we are doing, but more importantly, the software package that we are going to be utilizing to maintain all. Again, we are still in the infantile stage of that plan, but we want to ensure that all our facilities, both youth and sport, the recreational phase as well, are in one place, that we could keep on top of it; that our staff could keep on top of it with technology rather than—with utilizing GPS, and so on, to ensure that with the software that we could be on top of it. So we want to ensure that we have all our facilities under one umbrella, a software package that we could maintain it for the best for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, I know you mentioned in the context of streamlining earlier with respect to the master plan for sport and youth facilities. Do you have a timeline in terms of when you expect this project to be completed?

**Hon. Smith:** The sporting and youth policy expires next year. So right now we have already started, as you would have seen, for the first time the Sports Company, the PS, all the directors, have met with all the governing bodies, not just for sport but for youth, and we have taken back all that data and information. We are now meeting with the athletes, the coaches, the teachers who assist with the young people, and we are all going to consult and come together next year and

finalize changes, not necessarily a new plan, because the plan has been there. We are going to take it to suit.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, again, just to follow up on something that you said a few minutes ago with respect to consultations with the athletes and so on. I know you had also mentioned that you are in constant contact with the Minister of sport in Jamaica. As you are aware, Jamaica has an athlete programme that begins at the primary school level. Any such consideration in terms of if you are looking at the changed management of the structures that deal with athletes—is there any consideration being given with instituting a programme at the primary level here in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Smith:** All governing bodies were mandated for the first time, not just to have a programme in the primary schools, but for females. As you would recall, this is the biggest amount of people that went to the Olympics in terms of females. But not just primary school, but young people as well. So a number of sporting bodies have introduced leagues and programmes in the primary and secondary schools. We are working with the Ministry of Education to finalize a plan and later on in this year you will be seeing something that will really be changing the face of sport in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Padarath:** Ma'am, just one follow—

**Madam Chairman:** You would be able to come back. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am focusing on Upgrade and Rehabilitation of former Caroni Sport Facilities. I see that in 2016 you had an estimate of \$5 million and \$1 million was spent in your Revised Estimate. I do not know, you should be familiar with the Brechin Castle Ground, a ground that has been used for a number of trial facilities and so on.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** What are your plans? Have you abandoned this upgrade and so on?

**Hon. Smith:** Member for Couva South, you know I spend a lot of time in your area working. We did a visit, because there are a number of national facilities in your area—we need some in ours—but, nevertheless, the Minister of Tourism formed a team—myself and the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts as well, was a part of that team, where there are a number of different aspects to that whole facility. As you know, there is a museum there as well, with the sugar, Great House and so on. And they started doing work at a golf course there—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The museum is separate and apart from Gilbert Park.

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, I am getting to the answer. In terms of the golf course, you are asking if work began at the golf course.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, I am concerned about Gilbert Park. Let me guide you to Brechin Castle roundabout.

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, that is one of the grounds that we also spoke about with the Member for Mayaro and we are looking into it as well.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The Member for—

**Hon. Smith:** Mayaro spoke about grounds being worked on. Remember, I spoke on that with regard to a number of MPs have sent information with grounds in their area. We are now finalizing to look at all to move forward.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So Gilbert Park is on your radar.

**Hon. Smith:** It is on the radar. Remember it is a marathon, not a sprint.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I hope you could finish the marathon.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Ma'am. Page 343—and I am focusing on

137 and 150. Minister, you can tell us if you also spent any time in Oropouche East, unknown to us. Development and Upgrading of Recreational Grounds, Parks and Spaces, I see you had an actual in 2015 of \$482,000—half a million dollars—you had a revised in 2016 of half a million dollars and then in 2017 there is an estimate of \$14 million. So clearly this will be something to be emphasized in the Ministry and you would have the institutional capacity to deliver \$14 million in work. Could I ask if there are two grounds in particular? The Suraj Trace Recreation Ground where a site has been found in Debe, and Dubisson Ground—an upgrade programme in Dubisson Ground—which is in the good constituency of San Fernando East, in close vicinity to my residence. But the Dubisson Ground and the Suraj Trace ground in Debe, if work could be started, in one case, in Suraj Trace, and continued at Dubisson Ground. And my second question, which I will just leave with you: 150, Construction of a Swimming Pool - Laventille, you have an allocation of \$1.5 million. Is this a project being undertaken by UDeCOTT? And what is \$1.5 million for? Is it for the design, for some technical survey? This cannot be for the construction of a swimming pool.

**Hon. Smith:** That is a very long-winded question, Chairman. Let me start first of all by answering him in terms of—I was in Oropouche in his constituency just this weekend at a football tournament, in Palmiste, Block 7. They were asking for the MP; they did not see him. But I represented you well down there [*Laughter*] and I did the opening and closing and gave out the trophies. In fact, they were asking for some sponsorship—

**Dr. Moonilal:** And you gave out the prize I donated.

**Hon. Smith:** That will be part of the list of grounds that we are looking at in terms of that, and we will look at those two grounds. And in terms of the swimming pool, you will be surprised, the Ministry—we are now in the infantile



stage of it and you will get it in writing with regard to us moving forward, who we will be contracting, if anybody at all.

**Madam Chairman:** And 150, Minister.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Laventille is also in Oropouche East, as you know.

**Hon. Smith:** Well, to answer, no, UDeCOTT has not been given any contract and we hope that the \$1.5 million, under our prudent and proper management, will be able to complete the pool.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Construct a swimming pool.

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It can fall under Items 115, 131 or 137, but I am dealing specifically with that—the Walker Park in Caroni. Walker Park was developed and it reached a certain level of development with pavilion and seating accommodation by 2002. Subsequently, it was abandoned and remained abandoned. But it is a beautiful location and I want to find out whether, in any one of these Items, the three line Items I have quoted, whether the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs is going to look after the refurbishment of Walker Park; whether in a public sector/private sector partnership, because there are attempts to do that. I have had discussions with the chairman of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation in that area, but certainly it needs a level of leadership from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs in this area.

**Hon. Smith:** Chairman, and again, I am glad the Member for Chaguanas West is saying it. There are a number of projects that started that were not completed and this is one that we will look at as well.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Item 094, Construction of Swimming Pools. I see no moneys have been allocated in the 2017 estimate except for Laventille.

No problem with that. What I would like to get is if you could give us the list of where swimming pools operated by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs are located. And I could tell you here that none is in Naparima constituency. And if in the marathon, at what stage could we look forward to possibly having at least one swimming pool?

**Hon. Smith:** Noted.

**Mr. Charles:** So we could have Olympic swimmers from Naparima also.

**Hon. Smith:** Noted.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Minister, going back to line Item 100, the Development of a Master Plan for Sport and Youth Facilities. To inform the work of establishing that master plan, I just wanted to get a sense from you whether or not you, as the Minister, and the Ministry, have met with the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee to do a post-mortem analysis of the performance of the Olympic team in relation to the development of this master plan in terms of ventilating whatever shortcomings or challenges they would have faced during the Rio Olympics.

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, through you, with the TTOC and with the Paralympics as well, we had a forum for the first time at the Tennis Centre—Racquet Centre, sorry—where we had all the stakeholders and TTOC was on board, and subsequently to that, I have met with the president several times and we are now finalizing a document. But we also have other meetings individually. So, yes, to answer your question.

**Mr. Padarath:** So it would inform the master plan that you speak of.

**Hon. Smith:** It will be part of the master plan, the results from those meetings, yes.

*Question put—[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Ma'am, you skipped out Social and Community Services.

**Madam Chairman:** I skipped out nothing. I was on Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 343 to page 344. I looked up. Nobody else was on the list, and therefore I continue.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 68 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I want to thank the Minister, his Permanent Secretary and his technocrats for their assistance. Now, Members, I know it is 4.40, but we have had the Statutory Authorities Service Commission waiting for some time and I would really want to suggest that we deal with them before we take the suspension for tea. Therefore, I call Head 07, Statutory Authorities Service Commission.

**4.40 p.m.**

[*Chairman: Mr. Forde*]

*Head 07.*

**Mr. Chairman:** We now proceed. Head 07: Statutory Authorities Service Commission, \$4,423,100. I will now invite the Minister of Public Administration and Communications to make an opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The Statutory Authorities Service Commission is an independent body established by Act No. 16 of 1966. The mandate of the Commission as outlined in section 5 of the Act is to appoint persons to hold or act in offices, and to transfer, promote, remove and exercise disciplinary controls over persons so appointed. The SASC is celebrating its 50th anniversary as a public sector human resource agency this year.

The statutory authorities which fall under the Commission's purview are 12 in number, includes the Arima Borough Corporation, the National Lotteries Control Board, the Point Fortin Borough Corporation, the Port of Spain City

Corporation, the San Fernando City Corporation and other agencies. In total, the Commission is responsible for 1,562 positions across all the Authorities. The last fiscal year was focused on the compilation of a master seniority list for all positions across the Authorities and I am available for your questions on how we proceed for the upcoming year.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Welcome to the PS and the technocrats.

*Question proposed:* That Head 07 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$4,423,100 for Head 07, Statutory Authorities Service Commission, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 36; Item 001, General Administration, page 36. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 36; Item 001, General Administration, page 36 and page 37. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 37; Item 001, General Administration, page 37.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 07 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Okay, hon. Members, we will now suspend for tea and we will return at 5.10 p.m. Five-10, Members.

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

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now resume the Standing Finance Committee.

*Head 06.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I would like to welcome the technocrats from the Service Commissions and all the senior executives. Head 06: Service Commissions, \$68,771,000. I will now invite the Minister of Public Administration and

Communications to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The Service Commissions Department was established to supply the human resource capital needs of the civil service with approximately 30,000 persons and acts as secretariat in the nation's four major Commissions, the Police Service Commission, the Teaching Service Commission, the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, and the Public Service Commission. The Commission handles appointments and promotions to the public service. So to change the public service, one needs to begin with the Commission.

In 2014, the Commission embarked on a new phase of institutional strengthening to become better equipped, to fulfil its obligations to various other service commissions. This phase is aimed at correcting inefficiencies such as the slow action on filling vacancies throughout the public service. There are currently approximately 15,000 vacancies to be filled out of the 30,000 officers in the civil service. So that is half of the required human resources in the civil service.

As Minister in charge of Public Administration, it is within my remit to support the Service Commissions through its transformation over the next few year including any support that is needed for legislative changes, organizational structure changes, process enhancement, training and development, the development of improved information systems and other areas. This speaks to a more efficient public service, one that is technologically robust where customer service is second to none and an efficient public servant exists.

The Service Commissions Department will in many ways have a role to play in making certain that public service transformation does become a reality in Trinidad and Tobago. However, in its current state, the department simply cannot fulfil the mandate of an evolving public service within the framework of an

evolving nation.

The Commission has begun the journey towards change and is currently in the implementation stages appropriately themed “Towards Service Delivered”. Through this institutional strengthening exercise, it is envisioned that the Service Commissions Department will be repositioned to provide quality support to Ministries while evolving some of its function.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, over to you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 06 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$68,771,000 for Head 06, Service Commissions, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 30; Item 001, General Administration, page 30.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances. What is the number of persons now employed in permanent positions, and how many permanent positions are there on the establishment?

**Hon. Cuffie:** There are 332 permanent positions.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And how many of those are filled not as contract employees, but filled as permanent employees?

**Hon Cuffie:** One hundred and thirty.

**Dr. Rambachan:** One hundred and thirty. So about 30 per cent of the staffing is filled by non-contact workers?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the rest of the 192 is filled by what? Contract workers?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Forty-five are contract officers and the remainder are public officers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Permanent public officers?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, permanent public officers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So you do not have 332 workers there?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Temporary and acting.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So you have in many permanent positions as it were, contract workers?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No? But of the 332 persons in the establishment, right, how many workers are now in physical bodies as permanent workers in positions?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The figure I have is 158 positions with bodies, 45 without bodies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is 203?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The other 129?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Permanent positions.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, and they are filled with bodies?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So you do have 332 bodies?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, 332 positions, 45 without bodies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the staff that you have now, the number, do you think that they are adequate to carry out the functions of the Service Commissions?

**Hon. Cuffie:** That is an interesting question. Now if you look at the functions that exist now, with the same processes and you are doing it the same way, then it would be inadequate. But through the transformation process, we envisage that the way we operate, the processes will be changed and there will be some devolution of the responsibilities now covered by the Commission, and that is part of work that has been taking place.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Devolution to where, may I ask?

**Hon. Cuffie:** To Ministries.

**Dr. Rambachan:** To Ministries. Does the Service Commission understand the pressure which they are placing upon Ministries and Ministers and so on, and the public, by this low level of productivity in having positions filled across Ministries? And that is why I asked the question whether you have enough staff.

**Hon. Cuffie:** And that is why I said we are going to change the process, the way we operate, so that we will devolve some of the recruitment and the filling of positions to the Ministries. The plan is in train and I can get to that later, but we are—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, with due respect, I have heard that statement the plan is in train, we are doing and so on. Where are you with the plan and how many positions have been devolved in this train that you are talking about that is running? What has really been done by the Service Commissions in the devolution of this authority or the delegation on this authority to Ministries? Which Ministries can you identify where authority has been delegated? This 15,000 positions, every Minister who has been here complained about the Service Commissions and their inadequacy.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, I agree with you that people have complained. I am doing something about it, and the plan that is in train started under your administration. In 2014, we hired a consultant, they produced a report, the report was submitted in November 2015.

As a result of that report, they recommended several changes and we appointed nine committees to implement the changes. The first part of the roadmap to implement those changes is to change the structure of the Service Commissions.

**5.20 p.m.**



**Dr. Rambachan:** And how long do you think it will take to change the structure of the commission? Where are we now in terms of changing the structure of the commission? If you say that is fundamental, where are we on that line?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Okay, I give you the roadmap. The report was submitted in November 2015. Following the submission of the report, it was embraced and we set out a plan. The first part of the plan is to identify different committees to take charge of each major facet of the plan. Now, part of the plan is to change the structure of the Service Commissions and work has been prepared and it has gone to Cabinet dealing with that phase of it, and we expect to complete that by the end of this year, December 2016.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. Correct me if I am wrong, Minister, but my understanding of the Service Commissions is that they are constitutionally independent and are supposed to operate at an arm's length relationship from the Executive. When I hear you talking about you are devolving certain areas of responsibilities to the Ministries, is this allowed in the constitutional framework in which we operate?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Actually, this plan comes from the commission. There was a committee that included the heads of all the commissions. They hired the consultant, they met with the consultant, they were guided by the consultant and they accepted the report of the consultant. So as the Minister with responsibility for public administration, I am simply assisting them with the implementation of the plan that they have agreed to.

**Mr. Singh:** Can this plan, which is so fundamental for the effective functioning of our bureaucracy, be made available to the parliamentarians—the report?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I think at some point, it will have to be. It has legislative implications so it must come before Parliament and we can share it with you.

**Mr. Singh:** What I am saying is that let us not anticipate the legislation because as you have indicated, there is a continuum in Government, that the process started whilst the People's Partnership was in Government and that the plan came about in November 2015 submitted to the current administration. You are working on the plan. Perhaps you should—

**Hon. Cuffie:** Actually, what I am doing is I have to take it to Cabinet and after we take it to Cabinet, then Cabinet can allow us to lay it here. I think that is a good idea.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you indicate whether the consultants might still be engaged to assist with the implementation of this plan?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The current contract period ends in March 2017.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So that means the consultants are still with this.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 30.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. With respect to Item 08, could the Minister just indicate to us who is the landlord? And I see a decrease in \$255,000 of last year, does the contract with the landlord allow for a reduction or is this a renegotiation with the landlord or do you have a new landlord? So I need the building that you occupy and who is the landlord.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Could you give me the page and—

**Mr. Charles:** It is page 30, Item 02, 08 and it speaks to an estimate of \$8.5 million.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I think the landlord there is the Development Finance Limited, DFL building on Cipriani Boulevard. There are two buildings on Cipriani Boulevard. One, the Land Securities is the landlord; the second one, the DFL building is

Cipriani Properties.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. Could you give information on the rents paid to each per month?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The DFL building is \$167,625 per month. The Cipriani Properties is \$582,750 per month.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, under line Item 16, that is page 31, Contract Employment, I notice there is a decrease in Contract Employment and I note that is in keeping with the thrust of the Government. The question I am asking you in relation to that though is: will this reduction affect the electronic document management project that is in train at this time?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I am sure it would not. That programme is important to the Commission in terms of getting faster turnaround in terms of the implementation of the vacancy, capturing the information on records management so that we can get vacancies filled faster.

Now, I suspect I am going to be asked this question or not, the aim is to do more with less. Now, I started by recognizing that there are approximately 30,000 positions in the service, there are 15,000 bodies and a lot of positions that are there, and some of them are contract, are necessarily needed in a lean and efficient organization. So that because you see a drop in the number of bodies, it would not necessarily mean a drop in terms of the efficiency.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So Minister, just to be clear, you are giving the House the assurance that despite the decrease in Contract Employment, the speed of this project is not going to be affected?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I can give you that assurance.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Same page 31, Item 28. What is

responsible for this significant drop in Other Contracted Services?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, I think the Minister of Finance would be better placed to answer that question, but that is the allocation that was given and that is the allocation that we will work with.

**Mr. Karim:** Let me just continue, if I go with Item 22. He is not here, so I do not know if he could answer this one, \$2.8 million decrease.

**Mr. Chairman:** Short-Term Employment.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I think the issue is the same. I understand the question. I think we all know what the state of the economy is and we all know that we need to cut somewhere and the Ministry of Finance has identified these areas as areas to cut. As a Ministry and in terms as a commission, we are all going to work with the cut in expenditure and try to do the job more efficiently with fewer people, with probably fewer bodies, but working with what—we have to rethink how we do business as a Government and that is part of it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. The Minister of Planning would like to add to—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Could I indicate to Members that Other Contracted Services does not necessarily mean Contract Employment because you are comparing Other Contracted Services and short-term contract, there is no comparison. Other Contracted Services is totally different from Contract Employment and short-term contracts, so there is no comparison.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, since he was unable to give me the answer, I was going to ask him what these Contracted Services that you were paying for are.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** These would be, as the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister is saying, these are contingencies.

**Hon. Member:** Like what?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Well, I am sure the Minister can answer that. But I just think it is important to make the distinction that Contract Employment and Other Contracted Services and Short-Term Employment are three distinctly different things.

**Mr. Karim:** Sure.

**Hon. Cuffie:** There are short maintenance contracts like air refreshers, the wireless data network, consultants, subject matter expert—

**Mr. Karim:** Is it possible as well for you to tell us how many of the contracted officers, contract employment, those contracts were not renewed when they expired? In the last fiscal year, how many did not have their contracts renewed?

**Hon. Cuffie:** You gone back to 16?

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, because we are still on that same page.

**Mr. Chairman:** He is correct.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I can get that information and provide it to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, you said a while ago that you are going to do more with less and therefore you are going to increase efficiency. Are you suggesting at all that the civil service is bloated and in fact there are too many bodies in the civil service and therefore, in the thrust for efficiencies, one of the areas is that you will be reducing the actual fiscal size of the public service?

**Mr. Imbert:** I will handle that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Why do you not let the Minister answer? You have no faith in the Minister?

**Mr. Imbert:** Because I make the allocations. We recently determined that there were thousands of contract positions in the public service—thousands. This is outside of the establishment. So we are doing a rationalization of these contract positions because many of them would have arrived there under very questionable

circumstances under your tenure so we have to check it out.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And your tenure also.

**Mr. Imbert:** Under your tenure. And they were not qualified, and they were not interviewed and they just arrived from a parachute out of the sky.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You are making assumptions and that is not right.

**Mr. Imbert:** Some of them were bloggers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You are making assumptions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** I am asking the question in the context of—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, I recognize the Member for Naparima. Is it a question, Sir?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sir, with due respect, you cannot have people making these wild accusations and we are sitting here and just accept.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance answered your question. Do you have a follow up?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Because accusations have a life of their own.

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

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I need to clarify. These contracts have a three- or two-year life and therefore the persons who would have been employed on contract in 2015 would have been employed by your administration, and I can say categorically that in many instances, these people were not qualified, some of them had false papers and some of them arrived from “outta space”.

**Mr. Charles:** We keep hearing about some employees and ghost employees, I just want to raise—*[Interruption]* Arrant nonsense. In the context of Contract Employment and the reduction of employment, would the Minister—*[Interruption]* Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Naparima, you have my attention. [*Interruption*]  
Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Charles:** I seek your protection from this raging bull.

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

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, thanks. Would the Minister tell us whether the Service Commissions in the determination of the optimum staff including the reduction of contract employees as the Minister of Finance alluded to, do they set timeframes for appointments, promotions and whatnot so the country could have a sense that if an application goes for a transfer that there is a turnaround time of two days, three days, five days or forever?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Now that is part of an efficiently-run organization. Now, if we were able to do that, we would not need public service reform. All the problems you identify, we have embarked on a process that would lead to that end where you would be able to say when you make an application, it would take so much, how long and there would be more certainty. But we are now in the early stages of the implementing that plan.

**Mr. Charles:** And that is part of the problem. We say “we are embarking on”, “we are doing an audit on”, “we have spurious numbers of people who are ghost employees” and whatnot. The question is: what timeframe do we have because the citizenry could have—because this is a critical area. I know because public servants are—this is a critical area in terms of giving the public an assurance that the commissions are functioning effectively.

**Hon. Cuffie:** You know, I thought I explained that. This project started in 2014. After that, the report was submitted in November 2015.

From November 2015, we have hired a committee in the Commission to implement the recommendations of the consultant.

**5.35 p.m.**

The first phase was getting the staff to be able to do that and we said by December 2016, we move on to the next phase. And there are timelines. There are deliverables. Since the Member for Chaguanas West asked to see the plan, I think, after it goes to Cabinet then we share some of the information that you require.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. With respect to Sub-Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, I know in our culture there is a tendency to see travel as a “freeco”.

**Mr. Chairman:** Question please.

**Mr. Charles:** And the question is: do you not think that the commissions or the board members should be exposed to best practices abroad and, therefore, perhaps, official overseas travel in this context may be a plus and, therefore, ought not to be reduced significantly?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Member, I remember once hearing your leader say that we could have a meeting of the Commonwealth by Skype. Now, if we take that to its logical conclusion, a lot of the meetings that people need to attend can be done virtually and we could find new ways of getting the same information, rather than hopping on a plane and paying hotel fees.

**Mr. Charles:** I am glad that you are taking advice from my leader. I think it will auger well for your Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Tobago Services, page 32; Item 003, Public Service Commission, page 32; Item 004, Teaching Service Commission, page 32; Item 005, Judicial and Legal Service Commission, page 33; Item 006, Police Service Commission, page 33.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I see Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services, and there is a significant increase of \$1,950,000. Is this money, the



moneys being allocated for purposes of engaging contracting parties for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Singh:** So that is the sum of money?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** The sum of \$1.9 million. Is there an indication as to when this will be done?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, I can tell you where we are in the process. Following the court decision, we had to restart. I should say the Commission had to restart and a consultant was appointed to develop the terms of reference. Someone will be hired to project manage the process and the advertisement for the project manager should appear in the newspapers before the end of the month.

**Mr. Singh:** And then subsequently?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The project manager will take over, manage the whole process.

**Mr. Charles:** Am I hearing you wrong, Minister? You are saying we will do this and we have a process? Is this the Commission is doing this?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I said we and then I said the Commission.

**Mr. Charles:** The Commission, okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that clarity. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 34; Item 001, General Administration, page 34.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund on page 11, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 11.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, with regard to the implementation of that Electronic Document Management System of which we spoke earlier, I see that you had an estimate of \$5 million in 2016, but only \$1.5

million was spent and again the estimate of \$5 million in 2017. Based on this, can you give us an idea of when this project will be completed? How far are we along this?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Parts of the project have started, in terms of scanning, but identifying the software has proven more difficult. And now we have taken a decision to approach iGovTT to be able to get some assistance in identifying a software solution to the EDMS.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Do you have any time frame, based on what you have said?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I would not want to give a time frame now. We are still in a preliminary stage, in terms of the discussion with iGovTT. After that then we would be in a better position to say, well, what the procurement process would bring.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 06 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you PS and other technocrats from Service Commissions.

*Head 31.*

**Mr. Chairman:** We now move on the Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, \$1,006,328,000. Welcome to the Permanent Secretary and the senior executives from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. As they settle in I will now invite the Minister of Public Administration and Communications to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. As the Minister of Public Administration and Communications, I am interested in improving the delivery of

Government services to citizens, monetization and renewal of the public service and the provision of credible government communications and information.

A fundamental aspect of this Government's Vision 2030 is for our institutions to be transformed, to become more efficient and focus on creating value and delivering excellent service. The shrinking of the Government's budget poses a challenge for the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications and all avenues of government.

For fiscal year 2017, we have been allocated \$97.4 million for recurrent expenditure and \$47 million for development programme. Our available funds have been reduced by over \$110 million, but the work required to transform the public service remains substantial.

Our goal is to be much more innovative and efficient in our approach, rising to meet the economic challenges ahead of us. We need to rethink the way we do government and view the budget cuts, not as a challenge but as an opportunity to change the way we operate. We must continue to find ways of developing solutions with minimal or no cost to the Government like the ICT solution that was developed for the Property and Real Estate Division to manage their portfolios online.

Our focus for fiscal year 2017 is:

- to work with the Public Service Commission and the Service Commissions Department to strengthen and modernize the institutions so that they are better equipped and resourced to fulfil their obligations to the various other Service Commissions;
- to improve the staffing situation in the public service and build the capacity that is critical to fulfil the Ministry's mandate;
- utilize more information and communication technology as an enabler for

service delivery;

- provide the training that meets the needs of the public service and is within the budget constraints we have been given;
- develop learning and developmental standards for the public service and foster collaborative relationship with Ministries and other agencies.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications has portfolio responsibilities governing all aspects of administration, inclusive of people, via human resource provision and management; technology, via information and communication technology; planning strategy and facilities, via property and real estate provision and management.

The Ministry is committed to eliminating waste, corruption and mismanagement. We want to restore trust and faith in the public service and dispel the myths of the uncommitted worker that have prevailed for way too long. Our focus is on removing the inefficiencies that are so much a part of doing business in and out of Government. In doing so, we expect to bring the cost of providing Government services more in keeping with our resources. This Ministry's portfolio is a fundamental part of reengineering the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 31 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$1,006,328,000 for Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of*

*Assembly and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme.* We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.*

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 233; Item 001, General Administration, page 233.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, just to address the overall increase in Personnel Expenditure of \$27 million, just to give us a quick explanation for that increase so we have it in perspective.

**Hon. Cuffie:** What Sub-Head are you on?

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 233, 01, Personnel Expenditure in the income line, \$27.2 million.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Because last year it was the Ministry of Public Administration and we are now the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications.

**Dr. Bodoë:** That is fine. I just wanted to be clear on that. If I could just go to 01 then, that increase of \$2,121,347 for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, can you give us an explanation on that?

**Hon. Cuffie:** That relates to arrears of salary to be paid this current year.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay. With regard to Sub-Item 14, Minister, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet Appointed Committees, I see \$385,200 allocated in 2017. Can you indicate the committees and for what purpose these committees would be appointed?

**Hon. Cuffie:** There was a committee dealing with accommodation that was established by Cabinet and this was intended to treat with that.

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

**Mr. Lee:** It was answered.

**Mr. Chairman:** It was answered.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. I am sorry. Are we moving on to Science and

Technology?

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Science and Technology, page 233.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, just to confirm that is now under your portfolio—  
[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:**—and to explain why there is no allocation for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. I am sure there is an explanation, but if we can have it. That would be 002/01.

**Hon. Cuffie:** We will have to take another look at that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I am just curious because I see it appearing in Goods and Services but yet there is no allocation for staff. So I was just trying to reconcile that in my mind.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I have to speak to the Minister of Finance about that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** You have an explanation?

**Hon. Cuffie:** It has been merged with General Administration.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So it comes under General Administration.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay, thank you.

**5.50 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Government Printery.

**Hon. Cuffie:** It has been merged with General Administration.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So it comes under General Administration?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yeah, yeah.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So just to repeat, Item 004, Government Printery, page 234; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services, page 234; Item 006, Public

Management Consultant Division, page 235; Item 007, Public Service Academy, page 235.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, just to confirm the role of the Public Service Academy it is very important in training and so on. I noticed a 2015 expenditure of \$1.9 million, and then there was a decreased expenditure of \$1.3 million. Does this mean that there is a hold on the Mind Project that was initiated in 2014? And would this sum be sufficient for new positions that should be or will be created there? Can you give me a sense of what is happening there, Minister?

**Hon. Cuffie:** You are asking two different questions there. What I can tell you is that we are continuing to operate the academy. It is continuing to do its work. I am not aware of the Mind Project that was started in 2014.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 008, National Archives, page 236; Item 009, Public Service Transformation Division, page 236.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Hon. Minister, through the Chairman. What is the role of this Public Service Transformation Division? I see it is, you know, a modest \$232,160 for salaries and cost of living, and I recognize earlier that you said that your Ministry has a big role to play in the transformation of the public service. How do you intend to do that with what seems to be a small resourced division?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Some of the staffing complement of the division, you would find under Contract Employment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 010, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division, page 237; Item 013, Information Division, page 237; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology Division, page 238.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I was going to 019, Chairman, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Pardon?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Item 019.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, okay. Go ahead. Go ahead with your question.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Are we on 019?

**Mr. Chairman:** Oh, no. We are not on 019 yet. We are coming to it. Item 013, Information Division, page 237; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology Division, page 238; Item 019, Diamond Division, page 238.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, with regard to the Cabinet-Appointed Committee, can you confirm which Cabinet-Appointed Committee this allocation is for?

**Hon. Cuffie:** That was a Committee that they were the assessors for the Diamond Project.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you confirm if this Committee is still operational?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No, I cannot confirm that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** That is a yes or no?

**Hon. Cuffie:** It is no longer operational.

**Dr. Bodoë:** It is no longer operational? Does that mean then that no Government services would have been Diamond Certified in 2016? Would it be correct to say that?—because I understand that this Committee is responsible for auditing the process.

**Hon. Cuffie:** It is based on a formula for effecting public service reform. Now, in 2016, we were looking at the work of the Diamond Division, and trying to make it more in tune with the needs of the public service. Now, they were doing good work. It was just that it was not impacting on the delivery of public services across the board. So we are trying to get them to be more attuned. Some of the work that was done by the Division—and it was commendable work—did not hit the key points in terms of service delivery issues in the public service. What we are doing now, is transforming it to take care of that. So we are in the process of reforming



the Diamond Division.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So it is Diamond, but it will be under a different name. Is that what you are saying? I has not been abandoned. Is that what you—

**Hon. Cuffie:** No, it has not been abandoned. It might be under a different name.

**Dr. Bodoë:** It has been rebranded and transformed?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** But the concept is still—

**Hon. Cuffie:** The concept is still there and if you want to go into more detail, the problem is the—a lot of the situations that were dealt with in terms of the agencies that they were working with, were not agencies that are at the forefront of public service complaints. So we thought that they should really get into the key issues, the ones that people are most intrigued with, in terms of public service delivery, and we are reforming, so that they can address that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 238; Item 001, General Administration and we are on pages 238 and 239.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. I am referring to Item 08, Rent and Lease, in the context of the fact that we keep hearing from that side that you are on this mission to reduce waste and mismanagement and corruption, would the Minister care to explain why in 2015, the rent was \$12.7 million and it doubled in 2016 to \$24 million and still remains at \$23 million. In doing that, could you give us an idea who is the landlord? Where is the building located?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I can provide that in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We have the commitment to be provided in writing.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, under line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, I noticed a sharp increase in expenditure. I know it is a revised estimate of \$5,300,000 in what was—

**Hon. Cuffie:** What page are we on?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on page 239, 02, Goods and Services, line Item 22.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So I am just wondering what would have been responsible for that sharp increase in Short-Term Employment in view of the statements made by the Minister of Finance earlier? And perhaps if you can provide a list of the positions, and the selection process for persons who would have been so employed?

**Mr. Chairman:** Selection process, Member? Member, that is what you want to say, selection process?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I am seeing a \$3.8 million decrease.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Well, the process for recruitment?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I am seeing \$3.8 million decrease.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Now, I am asking about the \$5.3 expenditure in 2016, although it was just an estimate of \$550,000. I do not know if you are following me there, Minister? I am just looking at the trend, 2015, \$1.6 million—

**Mr. Chairman:** And you are referring to the decrease?

**Dr. Bodoë:** I am asking for the sharp increase in 2016. If we can have an explanation for that?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Okay, I will get that information to you.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can we have that in writing?

**Mr. Chairman:** You have the commitment. It will be provided in writing.

**Mr. Charles:** The Minister, a moment ago, promised to provide information on the Rent Lease. The question I have is Item 21, on page 239. If these properties are rented, would the Minister explain \$300,000 considerably high, Repairs and Maintenance? Is it that you are repairing rented properties or are these owned by the State? And you could answer that in writing at the same time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, you will provide it in writing?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, yes.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Okay, it will be provided in writing.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, with regard to line Item 66, I note the allocation of \$1.2 million under Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. Can you indicate whether the CAPAM Conference was hosted or is being hosted? I know Trinidad and Tobago is supposed to be the venue for that event in 2016?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No, we declined hosting. Malaysia was chosen as the alternative venue, and it was held in Malaysia.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Any explanation for that, Minister? Can you share the reasons as to why that decision was—

**Hon. Cuffie:** We could not afford it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I know it is a prestigious international conference so that is the reason I am asking. I know we would have been proud to have hosted that function in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Cuffie:** You know, the last conference we hosted, you all did not support. *[Laughter]* So I am surprised that you are asking us to hold another one.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Science and Technology, page 240; Item 003, National Information and Communication Technology Centre ICT Secretariat, page 241; Item 004, Government Printery, page 242; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services, page 243.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I noticed that there is a \$490 million here under Office Accommodations and Storage Rental and Lease. So I assume that is the total amount of money spent by the Government in terms of the rental of properties. Can we get a list of the properties rented, the owners of the properties, and the value of the rentals on an annual or monthly basis?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Actually those figures refer to the International Waterfront Complex, the semi-annual payments due, January 01, 2017 and July 01, 2017 - each at US \$20,611,680, assuming the exchange rate of \$6.70; and the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Education Towers, the payments due, February 25, 2017, US \$5.6 million; August 25, 2017, US \$5.5 million. Do you want me go through or just, I can provide—

**Hon. Member:** Simply called mortgage payment.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am trying to understand what is this? You are referring to something else?

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, for clarity, we are on page 223, 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage. That is where we are at?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, that is where you at also?

**Hon. Cuffie:** That is where I am at.

**Mr. Chairman:** Nice. Can you provide the—

**Hon. Cuffie:** I was just giving you a breakdown, but I can provide it in writing.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Interesting. So even though the Government owns these buildings, you are saying reflected here are the mortgage payments?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. Sub-Leases. The arrangement with UDeCOTT is that the Ministry pays UDeCOTT, and UDeCOTT would have secured the finances for the construction of the buildings.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The public may not know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division, page 244.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. With regard to line Item 16, Contract Employment, Minister, and if I understood you correctly in your opening statements, the PMCD is a key player in public sector transformation, responsible

for development of new job specs, new job descriptions, approval of new organizational structures, and amongst other functions. So I am looking at that expenditure there, and I am seeing in 2016 an estimate of \$700,000, but an expenditure of only \$207,300, and again in 2017, \$220,000. In view of the importance of this organization, can you explain or give an indication as to why this expenditure was cut?

**6.05 p.m.**

**Hon. Cuffie:** Most of the staff in PMCD are public servants, public service staff, so the drop in contract employment should not adversely affect the ability to do the job that they are doing.

**Mr. Chairman:** And your follow up?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you indicate whether the projects in the Judiciary and the Ministry of Trade and Industry are still ongoing with regard to this division?

**Mr. Chairman:** And you will be on what line Item?

**Dr. Bodoë:** Just a follow up on the same line Item.

**Hon. Cuffie:** What projects?

**Dr. Bodoë:** The transformation projects in those Ministries.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** They are ongoing?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Mr. Minister, I too accept that the Public Management Consulting Division has a very important role to play in the transformation of the public service. Has this division been engaged in reviewing the performance management systems in the Ministries, because assessment is after the fact? Management is how you get people to perform. Have they been reviewing the performance management systems or in the absence of performance

management systems, have they been setting up performance management systems to achieve your goals of efficiency and reduction in waste and X, Y, Z, et cetera?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. In fact, it is almost part of the routine work that they do, and they have been going Ministry to Ministry, agency to agency on a regular basis.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can you point to a report in any Ministry for us where they have actually done a performance management review and established a performance management system that would have led to measurable increases in productivity and efficiency, as well as a higher level of customer service delivery?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Could you repeat for me, please?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Repeat it?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, sorry.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can you point to a report—you said that they go Ministry to Ministry—a report where they have actually gone in, reviewed or implemented a proper performance management system that will show you that there have been increases in efficiency, productivity as well as, most importantly, an improvement in customer service excellence?

**Hon. Cuffie:** All right. Maybe I misunderstood you. PMCD deals with the structure of the various Ministries. In terms of performance management, it is more the Personnel Department that is responsible for the performance management system in the Ministries. Do you need me to explain again?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, you see, I know I can engage you on a conversation on this, but I will have to pass it on, but in reality performance management is different to the assessment. The personnel division does assessments and sometimes those assessments in the public service are done months after so by which time the value is lost, but the performance management system helps you to get the goals achieved.

**Hon. Cuffie:** What you are talking about sounds more like the role for the monitoring and evaluation exercise.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Neither.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. I refer to Item 08, again. This rent is not part of the rent for UDeCOTT that you spoke about.

**Mr. Chairman:** On page 244?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, on 244, 08. The \$1.7 million, this is separate and apart from that.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** The Ministry appears, in addition to that large outlay for UDeCOTT which is admirable, there seem to have a number of significant rental payments for its agencies. Has the Ministry done an evaluation as to the overall cost benefit of rent, lease, purchase, et cetera, so that it could in this trying time of financial stringency that we are operating optimally in terms of cost on rent and lease, because this is significant?

**Hon. Cuffie:** That is almost a routine part of the Ministry's job. Now, the previous figures related to UDeCOTT were for the Government Campus. The Ministry also occupies the NALIS building as part of a PPP arrangement. It is an ongoing exercise, and there are properties leased by the Ministry on behalf of other Ministries and on behalf of its agencies. So at every point, we do that kind of assessment to determine where we should go and what kind of arrangement we should have.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 007, Public Service Academy, page 245. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you Chairman. Minister, with regard to the Public Service Academy—and I am sure you will agree that this, again, is a very important

organization and, perhaps, I could ask maybe through line Item 16, Contract Employment, in terms of whether you believe you have the resources—this agency is getting enough resources to be able to do the job in a timely manner that it is meant to do in terms of re-skilling, retooling public sector employees and so on?

**Hon. Cuffie:** There are permanent employees, but that does not really deal with the point. The point is that we have an allocation from the Ministry of Finance. We have an economic situation that we have to treat with, and wanting more or thinking we should get more would not change the economic realities.

**Dr. Bodoë:** But, sorry. The point I was making, Minister, if I may, is that it is an opportunity and this is where a “lil” investment in the right direction might help to increase the efficiency of the public service, and thereby impact positively on the economy. This is just a suggestion I was making here.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Thank you very much.

**Dr. Bodoë:** It is an opportunity.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I agree. I think this whole situation is an opportunity. As I said in my opening statement that we need to find ways of operating more efficiently.

**Dr. Bodoë:** But to do that we have to spend.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Or we can find in-house resources to be able to do that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I just wanted to make the point.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 008, National Archives, page 246. Item 009, Public Service Transformation Division, page 247. Item 013, Information Division, page 249. Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology Division, page 250.

**Dr. Bodoë:** If I may, under that Item, Chairman, to you Minister, under Contract Employment and I am again asking, I see a decrease allocation of \$2.1 million compared to \$4 million expenditure in 2015. I am seeking clarification whether this sum of this expenditure is being moved to the ICT function or any other



department.

**Hon. Cuffie:** No. It is a—

**Dr. Bodoë:** Am I correct in saying that this department supports the e-government strategy or am I mistaken there?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No, no.

**Dr. Bodoë:** This is the Strategic Services and Information Technology Division.

**Hon. Cuffie:** It is the Ministry's internal division. It does not.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Oh, I see.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division (ICT) Secretariat, page 250. Item 019, Diamond Division, page 251. Sub-Head, 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 251. Item 001, General Administration, page 251. Item 002, Science and Technology, page 252. Item 003, National Information and Communication Technology, page 252. Item 004, Government Printery, page 252. Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services, page 253. Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division, page 253. Item 007, Public Service Academy, page 253.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you. Through you, Chairman, to the Minister. I just wanted to enquire about the status of the Chaguaramas Training Centre and I thought I would ask it under this, in view of the allocation for the Office Equipment and Furnishings in 2017. Minister, can you give us an update? I know that you would have had some training taking place there previously.

**Hon. Cuffie:** It continues. It is ongoing and I have the assurance that they can manage with the allocation that they have.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I was not questioning the allocation. But can you give us an idea of what will take place in the 2017 financial year there?

**Hon. Cuffie:** There are ongoing training programmes at the academy. The

academy is also responsible for the training of the PSs and the Deputy PSs. They have an ongoing training programme for that. Those are some of the issues that they will be doing

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 008, National Archives, page 253. Item 009, Public Service Transformation Division, page 254. Item 015, Strategic Service and Information Technology, page 254. Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division (ICT) Secretariat, page 254. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 254. Item 001, Regional Bodies, and they are on pages 254 and 255. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 255. Item 003, United Nations Organizations, page 255. Item 004, International Bodies, page 256. I recognize the Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you, Chairman. To you Minister, with regard to 01, which is Open Government Partnership, and I believe I might be correct in saying that we were the first Caribbean territory to become a member of this in 2014—of this open government project—with an approved two-year plan. In view of no allocation in 2017, would I be correct in assuming then that this project has been cancelled?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you indicate as to why that may have been?

**Hon. Cuffie:** We did an evaluation of the decision to embrace the project in the first place. I do not think we had the bodies to be able to do it. I was not sure of the value of it, and it required the expenditure of foreign exchange. It was based on a World Bank loan that the Ministry had to pay, and at the time I do not think we could meet the commitment.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Just a follow-up question, Minister. Just to confirm that, you know,

this project would have given us some benefit in terms of participatory governance and so on by engaging civil bodies and so on.

**Hon. Cuffie:** If you could outline the benefits for me, because I did not see it. When I was asked to take a look at it, and I was trying to find out, who requested this? What role was it serving? And, you know, we stopped this project some time ago and nobody has asked us about it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** All right.

**Mr. Chairman:** No comment please, no further comments.

**Dr. Bodoë:** It does not mean that you make the right decision.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks, Mr. Minister. Item 006, Government Printery, page 256. Item 007, Households, page 256. Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 257. And I recognize the Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the Caribbean New Media Group, CNMG, I got the impression from the utterances of the Minister—and I could be wrong—that he was moving towards a restructuring whereby that institution would be less of a strain on the public purse. I am seeing a \$17 million allocation. Is this consistent with my understanding of what you said?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** And \$17 million, you do not consider significant?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, if you look at what was spent before in terms of the operations of both CNMG and GISL, and the \$17 million that has been allocated for this year, it is simply because we have not yet implemented fully our plans for CNMG and GISL. You have asked me this question several times—

**Mr. Charles:** I am now seeing the figure.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Let me finish—and I think you understand that we are in the process of effecting a change.

We need to provide for it as it was before, but until that process is completed we will not be able to see the full effect of it.

**6.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Charles:** But clearly you have a copy of the report. I think it was submitted by the board of CNMG.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** And that would have targeted a reduction in the cost. What could we look forward to in terms of the mid-year review in terms of reduced expenditure, based on what you know you are trying to implement at this time?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The plan went to the State Enterprises Committee. It has gone to Cabinet. Cabinet is examining several options and only after then would I be able to say how we are going.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, two questions here, one under 01—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Fyzabad, some clarity—Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are doing an audit of the assets to see exactly what they owe and the value of what they own before we decide what to do.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Under 01, Minister, National Information and Communication Technology, I believe that would be the iGovTT?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you confirm whether the e-Government platform has been implemented?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Are you referring to the GovNett 3? I am not sure what you mean.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Yes.

**Hon. Cuffie:** We are taking another look at that project for the simple reason the decision to go into it was made in 2013. The procurement process took two years, and a letter of award was issued on September 4, 2015, the last working day before

the general election. We have come into office and the environment has changed substantially. What was envisaged in terms of the plans that were conceived in 2013 cannot meet the demands of the public service in 2016. So we have not yet gone ahead with that, and we are looking at it.

**Dr. Bodoë:** This 04, the Government Human Resources Services Company Limited, I believe there was a project between this unit and UTT. Can you tell us whether that project was implemented? I know that spoke to some new positions in terms of modernising the public sector with regard to management support officers and so on. It would have been a new category to replace the clerical category in the public service. Could you just give us any information on that?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Let me put that information in writing. I have an idea of what you are talking about, but there were certain sensitivities, but I just need to make sure before I can give you something in writing.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Sure, that is fine. Thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Chairman, with respect to Item 02, that is GISL, am I correct in assuming that the same kind of analysis is going on, and we could expect a reduction in the \$17 million, and this is just a figure in case you do not come to the point where you implement during the fiscal year 2017?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 257. 004, Statutory Bodies, page 257. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. 03, Trinidad and Tobago Telecommunications Authority. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, and we are now on page 179. 001, General Administration, page 179. Members we are now on the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory*

*Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and we are on page 179, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 179. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 179. 001, General Administration, page 179.

**Mr. Singh:** Chairman, this seems to be an anomaly at Item 27, where you have official travel of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to be \$810,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** What line Item, Sir?

**Mr. Singh:** Line Item Official Overseas Travel, line 27. That is significant for any statutory authority, any kind of state enterprise authority, \$810,000 estimated travel.

**Mr. Chairman:** And you are saying—so your question is it is too high; it is too low?

**Mr. Singh:** I question what the purpose of this allocation is.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I am aware of the significant responsibility in terms of travel for the Telecommunications Authority. Actually right now the Chairman of the Telecommunications Authority is the Chairman of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization. There are frequent meetings with the ITU. There are a number of telecommunication organizations that deal with satellite as well as communications and information technology that they are required to attend.

**Mr. Singh:** I take your point, but when you are dealing with ITU or the other international bodies, they normally pay your airfare. What I see here is considerable, especially in the context of we are seeking to—the ITU has an annual conference once for the year.

**Hon. Cuffie:** As well as the CTO. I know—

**Mr. Singh:** I think you need to look at this.

**Mr. Imbert:** Member, let me assist you. To assist both of you I will take a very close look at this and minimize the expenditure on foreign travel by this entity.

**Mr. Singh:** You see, I know for a fact that once you get this way they are going to junket trips.

**Mr. Imbert:** I hear you, so I take your point. I give you the assurance we will look at it very carefully.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 180. 001, General Administration, page 180. [*Crosstalk*] Members, you all could have a sidebar at the back please, if it is possible.

Sub-Head Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 180. 007, Households, page 180. 009, Other Transfers, page 180. 53, National Library and Information System, NALIS. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 185. 001, General Administration, page 185. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 185. 001, General Administration, pages 185 and 186. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 186. 001, General Administration, page 186. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 186. 007, Households, page 186. 009, Other Transfers, page 186.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 99. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 99. Item 005, Multisectoral and Other Services, page 100 and page 101.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Under 055 to 057, I see that there are a number of new projects with respect to the construction of a carpark for MPAC, Ste. Madeleine, staff club and golf course development and also the property management information system. Could the Minister elaborate on the expenditure that has been allocated?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The construction of a carpark for MPAC, and the allocation is \$500,000. I am pleased to let you know that that project is already completed for \$496,000. That is the car park that I opened. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** That is the ribbon that you cut?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. The Ste. Madeleine Golf Course and staff club. That is a new project. The allocation is just to conduct a feasibility study.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** A feasibility study for?

**Hon. Cuffie:** To develop the site as a PPP project for a golf course.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** A PPP project?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes; not a PP, a PPP. The property management information system 057, that project is also completed, and we did not spend \$2.4 million. That is the one we did in-house, and we were able to do it without using our allocation.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Tell us the benefits of this programme for your Ministry.

**Hon. Cuffie:** One, it puts all the property resources online, so that you can be able to compare properties, to look at the history of properties, rather than going through files; so that is the first part of it. The second part is that we are going to put all the properties that are rented, you could go online from the Ministries and compare the history of the various buildings. Eventually people can also make offers in terms of the properties that they wish the Government to let from them.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, this line Item would be 040 on page 100, the development of a business continuity plan for the public service. My understanding is that this plan is designed to allow businesses to restart almost immediately in the event of adverse events and so on, and would perhaps play an important role in the public sector. But I note that there was no allocation in 2017. Has this project been cancelled? Can you confirm what the status of this project is?

**Hon. Cuffie:** It was completed in 2015 to 2016.



**Dr. Bodoë:** Completed, so it is there?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The plan is there.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you say in what services or what sectors, or would that have to come as a list?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, I could provide a list.

**Dr. Bodoë:** If I may, Chairman, before I give way to the Member for Tabaquite, with regard to 046 the e-Government and knowledge brokering programme, that project, I know that speaks to a lot of important issues in terms of reforming the Board of Inland Revenue for the e-tax filing, the institutional strengthening of the Public Service Academy, business process management and so on. Can you give us an idea of the status of that project, Minister?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, the gen-tax upgrade and the electronic services for the Inland Revenue Division was completed, and you can file your taxes online. [*Crosstalk*] I hope you would have taken advantage of it.

**Mr. Imbert:** Chairman, you could even get a refund online, and it does not take very long.

**Dr. Bodoë:** I do not want any refund. [*Laughter*]

**6.35 p.m.**

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So the point is that there is no allocation in 2017 because it means that everything has been completed.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. Yes. Including the geospatial data cells for the Ministry of National Security, the institutional strengthening of the Public Service Academy.

**Dr. Bodoë:** The deployment of the drones as well?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No.

**Dr. Bodoë:**—at the data collection in terms of making new mapping of the country

and so on.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yeah. Well that was done for the Ministry of National Security.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Okay. Thank you, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is always concern about productivity in the public service. And line Item 053, Productivity Improvement Programme, can you give us some information with respect to this programme and its impact so far?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The initial programme was tied to the Ministry of Education Scholarship and Advanced Training Unit and since that programme has moved to the Ministry of Education, we have not gone further to that. No allocation was made for it.

**Mr. Karim:** You said it was tied, tied in what way? What kind of collaboration was conceived?

**Hon. Cuffie:** As a pilot project, I think it was aimed to assist the Ministry of Education in treating with the scholarship requests and processing and because we have not—since the division moved to the Ministry of Education, we did not have an allocation for it to treat with a project that is now under the Ministry of Education.

**Mr. Karim:** So is there any future programme like this in your Ministry in terms of increasing productivity? And if so, what?

**Hon. Cuffie:** It was a new way of performing a service. The Scholarship and Advanced Training was a pilot project in terms of doing that, and I am sure we will be looking at it. We had identified the resources at iGovTT and we were about to embark on it. So it is something that, I think, has merit and it is something we will look at again.

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** Public Sector Reform Preparation Programmes 022 on page 100. I see that there are no allocation for the Public Sector Reform Preparation Programme and we have been talking reform and the role of reform throughout. Can you explain why there has been no allocation for that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I will provide that in writing.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And secondly, the establishment of a virtual call centre in the public service.

**Hon. Cuffie:** That is one that the Member for Chaguanas East was asking about.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. Fine. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 299, 299, Members? Infrastructure Development Fund, page 299; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 299. I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister could you give me an idea of the plan on Item 035, the Construction of the Mayaro Library. I see there is a \$2 million allocation. What can we expect during this fiscal year in terms of moving the project forward?

**Hon. Cuffie:** We had some challenges in the last fiscal that had to do with approvals. We have overcome those challenges, so we expect to spend the \$2 million this year on the project.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, with regard to Item 030, the purpose built National Archives and Records Centre, a very important national project. Could you care to share your vision with us and indicate how that \$1 million will start the project?

**Hon. Cuffie:** The \$1 million has to do with—if you know, the National Archives

Centre, it is two separate buildings and what we are trying to do is to join the two buildings together by putting a connecting walkway, as well as a lift to allow the physically challenged to access both buildings.

**Dr. Bodoë:** So it is going to remain on the same site?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. It is going to remain on the same site.

**Dr. Bodoë:** And if I may, 039, the NALIS restoration of the Carnegie Free Library, is this on Library Corner in San Fernando?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Can you give us an idea when this is going to be done? I asked because it is there I borrowed my first book many years ago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Cuffie:** To be honest, the funds that you see here will be transferred to the completion of the Mayaro and Heritage Libraries. We do not plan for fiscal 2017.

**Dr. Bodoë:** That is nice. It is a very important landmark in San Fernando.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes. You know we have fiscal challenges—

**Dr. Bodoë:** With all due respect—

**Hon. Cuffie:**—so we are trying to assist the Member for Mayaro. [*Crosstalk*]

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** 031, Construction of the Chaguanas Library. I see an allocation of \$2.5 million. Would that money complete the library and when is the library scheduled to be opened?

**Hon. Cuffie:** No. The money also there would be transferred to Mayaro and in the Heritage Library in Port of Spain.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So what is going to be the state of that building that is well under construction?

**Mr. Singh:** As soon as the Maraval library is completed.

**Mr. Imbert:** There is no library in Maraval. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance. [*Crosstalk*] Are you answering, Minister?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I will answer.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Public Administration and Communication.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I am quite happy to hear of the Member's interest in the Chaguanas library. But I know that the project started—now, let me just go back. The library modernization project was conceived and started in 2009. The Chaguanas library was one of those. It started under the last administration, then somebody decided to change it and to turn it into a courthouse.

The Judiciary did not like that change, so they left it. And throughout that whole period the contractor abandoned the project because of the uncertainty. So we are left with a half-finished building and we have all these projects, the Mayaro library was not finished, the Chaguanas library was not finished, the Heritage library was not finished, and we do not have money to treat with all of them. So what we have decided—no, let me finish—what we decided to do is to take the allocation for the Chaguanas and place it with the Mayaro and the Heritage library which are the two libraries that we are concentrating on this for fiscal year in dealing with the limited resources that we have.

**Mr. Chairman:** Additional, follow up question, Member for Tabaquite?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes. Yes. Would it not be worthwhile to think of an alternative way to get the library finished by using the private sector and then leasing it back to you over a period of time so that, at least, the people of Chaguanas can have their library service?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I will let the Minister of Finance answer that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance, you are on the floor.

**Mr. Imbert:** Whichever way the library is funded, it still creates an obligation for

the Government of Trinidad and Tobago whether it is completed by the private sector and leased back to the Government, whether the Government takes a loan and finishes it or whether we use general revenues, it still creates an obligation. So you have to be careful not simply responding, you know, instinctively to request like that without looking at the circumstances.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, I am not responding instinctively in the light of what you have described in your budget statement as a shortfall in funds. I think it is imperative that we think about alternatives ways to generate funds in order of get the economy going, get these incomplete projects which are community-service projects of high value to the community, finished. And here is an opportunity for you to have an injection of private capital that will allow them be finished, allow you to own it over the long term by paying lesser amounts in the year, thus not squeezing the amount of available public funds you have. That is all I am saying. And I think it is a worthwhile idea.

**Mr. Imbert:** But that could be achieved through loan financing. It is an obligation, it affects our credit rating. It is not simple matters.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But at the same time, you do not have, Minister, you will agree that you do not have the capacity right now to borrow because you do not want to increase your debt to GDP ratio. And therefore, an injection of private capital on an alternative basis of financing and repayment would save you that kind of horror.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. But any off-budget financing like that will be picked up by the rating agencies as a government liability. It is not a straightforward matter. The money has to come from somewhere and the debt must be accounted for in the Government's book.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Naparima—could I have your—

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. For my information that is Item 036, the Heritage

Library. What is it and where is it located?

**Hon. Cuffie:** That is the Port of Spain library on Knox Street that will be housing the Eric Williams Memorial Collection. It has been handed over to the University of the West Indies or it will be on completion. So NALIS is completing as part of its ongoing library modernization project, but at the end of it, it will be handed over to the University of the West Indies for the Eric Williams Memorial Collection.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West. You still—

**Mr. Singh:** No. I was just contemplating that we will have for another year a white elephant in the heart of Chaguanas with the library building being barricaded right next to the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court. And I think that the suggestion of the hon. Member for Tabaquite is an excellent suggestion. I hear what the Member is saying, but I think that as we, in fact, looked at it today with the stadia with the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, the four stadia were built on that kind of approach where you have a deferment of payment, and if your projections are that you are going to get increased oil and gas revenues post 2017, then perhaps you can find a creative way in order to bring that library into being without significant burden on the Treasury.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Member for Chaguanas West.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Now before the Minister of Finance answers, what I would like to say is that, we spent five years with the completed Government Campus barricaded and being an eyesore and there was no move to finish it. We also had the Brian Lara Stadium under similar circumstances when there was money to finish them. So we built the Point Fortin Highway, we built the Penal/Debe Campus while we left those projects undone. We are living in a totally different period now where funds are at a premium and we have decided to use the limited resources to

complete two of the projects.

Now in terms on the financing of the others projects, that is the Minister of Finance's purview and he could—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Members.

**Mr. Imbert:** I need to say something that is important. There seems to be an incapacity on the part of Members opposite to understand that a liability is a liability whether it is debt service or whether it is a rental obligation. The proposal of the Member would either fall into the category of debt service or rental obligations. It will increase the Government's expenditure one way or the other. So we need to look; [*Crosstalk*] it does not matter. You still have to pay for it. You cannot pay for it with "jumbie beads". You have to pay with money.

So that these proposals sound nice on the surface, but when you dig deeper you are creating an obligation for the Government which affects our ability to pay and our credit rating. You cannot just do it whimsically.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Naparima. Is it a question or to continue the discussion?

**Mr. Charles:** To continue the discussion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well no. I want to move on.

**Mr. Charles:** Because it is a question—

**Mr. Chairman:** I would really like to move on. Right. I will give way to Chaguanas West as the [*Crosstalk*]—Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** I think, Chairman, on a larger note this raises, and I think this is something that the Minister of Finance should sort of take into consideration. The public sector/private sector partnership in Trinidad and Tobago and a large consultation inclusive of Members of Opposition as to how we proceed in this area as we seek to build the—whether it is capital in the public sector and elsewhere.



There is need for that kind of consultation.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that feedback. I think we would have exhausted this discussion and we are moving on.

Hon. Members, the sum \$1,006,328,000 for Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 31 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, thank you, Madam PS and the other senior executives from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. Thank you.

**6.50 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** As the technocrats from the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, you all, welcome and thanks for coming. And we invite the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs.

*Head 65.*

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs \$227,998,200. Ready, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Moses:** Almost there, thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Over to you, Sir.

**Hon. Moses:** Thank you very much, Chair. The Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is the agency mandated to execute the foreign policy of the Government. In this regard, the Ministry guides the conduct of this country's foreign relations with other states and the international entities, mainly through diplomatic initiatives and representation. It also provides protocol and consular services to its many clients. This is effected through the

activities of the Ministry's headquarters and its network of 20 missions and its honorary consulates.

Beginning last fiscal year, efforts have been directed at realigning the Ministry's operations to ensure consistency with Government's policy objectives as highlighted in the official policy framework. These include:

- address the interest of Trinidad and Tobago in respect of trade and investment policies of other countries;
- maintain strong contact with the West Indian diaspora and promote projects of mutual benefit to the diaspora communities;
- restructure the foreign service to reflect emphasis on economic diplomacy, energy diplomacy, security diplomacy, health, sport and culture, and human rights diplomacy;
- intensify relations with Latin American countries;
- repair relationships with Caricom member countries.

The aforementioned objectives are intended to raise the profile of the country in the international fora.

Arena: through the exercise of financial prudence, every effort will continue to be made to realize these objectives, notwithstanding the country's current economic challenges. Consequently, in addition to ongoing operational work, strategies and projects to maximize the efficient use of resources have found their place in our budget for fiscal 2017. Thank you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 65 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$227,998,200 for Head 65, Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of*

*Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 412; Item 001, General Administration, page 412. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much and, through you, to the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. I am referring to Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, I see an estimate for \$20 million, an increase of \$2 million over the previous figure. Would the Minister indicate to us how many people are involved—how many permanent employees are on the establishment and what was responsible for this increase of \$2 million?

**Hon. Moses:** Thank you very much for the question, Naparima representative, the Member for Naparima. The total permanent positions is 268. I could offer more details.

**Mr. Charles:** No, no. And the reason for the increase, is this arrears of payment?

**Hon. Moses:** No, it is not. The focus here centres on filling vacant positions, and the current salaries are pegged at the 2013 figures, and the possibility of some of the positions, more positions being filled. Primarily those two elements would be involved in that figure of \$2 million.

**Mr. Charles:** Would the Minister—you told us there are 268 permanent employees, what is the approved establishment of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs?

**Hon. Moses:** The said figure.

**Mr. Charles:** So, all posts are filled?

**Hon. Moses:** No, no, no, no. I was about to go into such detail but, through you, Chair, I can if the Member so desires.

**Mr. Chairman:** How detailed is it, or would you care to provide it in writing?

**Hon. Moses:** In a very summary fashion. No, I do not prefer.

**Mr. Chairman:** Summary fashion. Okay, proceed.

**Hon. Moses:** Two hundred and thirty-seven positions are filled and consequently 31 are vacant.

**Mr. Charles:** Very well.

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, what difficulties you have in filling the positions? Is it the Service Commissions difficulty, or is it that you cannot recruit the right quality of persons?

**Hon. Moses:** I would wish to send it on the form.

**Dr. Rambachan:** On the?

**Hon. Moses:** On the form, you mentioned two, on the form.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Public Service Commission?

**Hon. Moses:** There you are, that would have contributed, yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, there is no problem in attracting qualified—

**Hon. Moses:** That is not my characterization, certainly not mine.

**Mr. Charles:** Minister, with respect to the IRO's who are contracted employees, I understand that there was a thinking on your part to transition them to permanent employees, is this true, and are you getting difficulty in achieving that?

**Hon. Moses:** I am not sure what is the question, personalize it in terms of what, manned positions?

**Mr. Charles:** My understanding is that there are contract employees who are IROs, is this correct?

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, there are contract positions that are IROs.

**Mr. Charles:** And the goal of the Ministry is to transition them into the permanent establishment, is that correct?

**Hon. Moses:** The policy position is to regularize the system in such a way that some of the inherent difficulties experienced with what is essentially a parallel system are avoided.

**Mr. Singh:** So, when you translate that into real speak, what do you mean?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West, I am not too sure.

**Mr. Charles:** Well—[*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, it is late. It is almost 7.00 p.m.

**Mr. Charles:** So, the idea is, you do not want a parallel system you want to transition them into the public service permanent establishment? And if that is correct, how many contract IROs are involved in that process?

**Hon. Moses:** Right now the total number of contract positions amount to 72, of which 47 are filled and 27 remain vacant.

**Mr. Singh:** Twenty-seven, all right.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 413, Item 002, Overseas Missions, page 412; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 413; Item 001, General Administration, pages 413 and 414. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you give us a status in terms of line Sub-Item 25, Audit of Overseas Missions? What has been completed? What is outstanding or yet to be completed?

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

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, I am just trying to focus on the figures, the line Sub-Item 25, Audit of Overseas Missions, the figures in respect of, please?

**Mr. Karim:** No, I am asking like how many audits—which audits have been completed and which ones are outstanding in view of the allocations so far? Of 2016 and then the proposed 2017? I suppose 2017 will say which ones you would do, I suspect.

**Hon. Moses:** This, as I understand it, this activity is undertaken by the Auditor General's Department, and it is on a rotational basis. So, for example two would be done in a particular year, so it varies. So, that information I am not sure, configure it the way you are seeking it, if it is appropriate that I try to respond.

**Mr. Karim:** Is it possible to find out which audits have been completed in the last three years?

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, certainly, and we can convey that information to you in writing. We would seek the information, and to the extent we have it in the format you want, we would send it to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, we have the confirmation from the Minister, it will be provided in writing.

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

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, I see a \$2 million decrease, does this \$2 million refer to the contract IROs or are there other contracted employees in the Ministry? Item 16, Contract Employment.

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, I am with you. There are other contract employees in the Ministry.

**Mr. Charles:** And it refers to them?

**Hon. Moses:** Excuse me.

**Mr. Charles:** It refers to those other contract employees?

**Hon. Moses:** It does include them, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** And who are they? They provide what services, sir?

**Hon. Moses:** A range of services. *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Charles:** Are they like OJTs? Are they drivers? Could you give me an idea of the top three contract areas, janitors, whatever?

**Mr. Chairman:** That information can be provided, Minister.

**Hon. Moses:** No, no, I prefer to give them to the extent I am seized of the information.

**Mr. Chairman:** Less writing. Okay.

**Hon. Moses:** To the extent that I am seized of the information, I prefer to inform the Member directly.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. So, you would like to get the top three, if it is possible?

**Hon. Moses:** I would give the information—contract staff without bodies, you would not want those, there are 47 with bodies. Itemized to ICT, technical officer we have three of them; we go beyond, Business Operations Assistant I, we have two of them, bodies that is; IROs, this is instructive there are 30 such persons; senior international relations officer, there are six of them; and the list continues.

**Mr. Charles:** All right, a follow-up question. You told me that 30 of them are IROs. Given the kinds of experience that they have, and I know some of them who have had about six years' experience at the UN, et cetera, do you think a decrease would affect the quality of the staff that you have in the Ministry to perform its functions?

**Hon. Moses:** We are very responsible on this side. At the Ministry we take our cue and we are very enthusiastic in implementing the policies of this Government. Accordingly, financial prudence and operating within our budget, taking responsibility, cutting our cloth to suit, that is what essentially is the hallmark of this Government. So, that is the setting within which we would have operated. Earlier in the day the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, in his preamble as it were, would have made reference to the main principles that would have guided his ability to respond to questions, so I share in that stance as well. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Item—[*Interruption*]—Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I just want to find out, under Short-Term Employment, Sub-Item 22, just what Vote do you pay the ambassadors like Dwight York, Hasely Crawford, Brian Lara, and Daren Ganga from? What Vote that comes from?

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chair, I am not—

**Mr. Chairman:** Do the names called come under that Vote?

**Hon. Moses:** I am not sure if rumour is part of this discourse here.

**Dr. Rambachan:** If what, sorry?

**Hon. Moses:** Rumour is part of this discourse. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** “Nah, nah, nah.”

**Hon. Moses:** My preference is to answer directly to questions that have substance.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, I am not into the rumour. [*Crosstalk*] What rumour?

**Hon. Member:** He said you like too much bacchanal.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, no, they were sport ambassadors.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, in terms of the names called, are you able to verify them based on the information that you have before you?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Chair, I want to know what line Item they are paid from. That is all.

**Hon. Moses:** Those names—we cannot go into citing names. I do not think it is the responsible course to conduct business here. I do not think so.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, they do not work in the Ministry again then? They are no longer sport ambassadors?

**7.05 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, the Minister has answered. We care to proceed, Item 002, Overseas Missions, pages 414 and 415. I recognize Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is on the floor Members.



**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. To the hon. Minister, page 414, Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease—Office Accommodation and Storage in respect to Overseas Missions, an increase of \$9 million. Could the Minister provide a listing of all the accommodations and what was the cause for this increase of \$9 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, you can provide that now?

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, that is what I would do. The question is why the increase of \$9 million?

**Mr. Lee:** And in what areas it relates to.

**Hon. Moses:** Yes. This is in respect of office accommodation and storage overseas missions. About \$6 million was deferred because it was not released. Therefore, that figure there is meant to cover the normal office accommodation and storage as well as payments in respect of moneys, deferred payments, which were not released in the preceding year.

**Mr. Lee:** It relates to arrears then?

**Hon. Moses:** I should also add as well, that in a number of the Missions, specifically, Abuja, Delhi and China, payments are required in respect of leases for three-year cycles and the inability or the non-release of funds later in the year was not foreseen when the budgetary preparation around March was in force. So that is the source of the deferred payments that needs to be addressed and is captured in that sum.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Item 63 on page 414 under Goods and Services. Repatriation of Nationals. You have a princely sum, an increase of \$10,000 to \$50,000. I am asking.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you have gone back.

**Mr. Singh:** No, it is the same page.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, but we are on Overseas Mission, Item 002.

**Hon. Moses:** Excuse me please, Member, page?

**Hon. Member:** Page 414.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just now Minister, one second. Member for Chaguanas West, we are now on Overseas Mission—

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, lovely.

**Hon. Moses:** I have it.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, you have it. Well, answer it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Direct it through the Chair please. Go ahead Chaguanas West, go ahead with your question.

**Mr. Singh:** Repatriation of Nationals. There has been an increase by \$10,000. Could you provide a listing of how many nationals we repatriate and to where on an annual basis for 2015/2016.

**Hon. Moses:** I do not have that information. I undertake to make it available to the extent that we are able to source that information.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease—Office Accommodation. Would the Minister indicate how many of our offices abroad or chanceries are owned by the State or how many are rented? There is a follow up question.

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

**Hon. Moses:** In writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** In writing.

**Mr. Charles:** Has the Ministry undertaken a cost benefit analysis as to whether they should rent or lease or purchase? And the reason why I ask is because at the UN we rented for about 50 years, since Independence, since '62, and we were paying up to US \$60,000 per month and it was decided to purchase.

**Hon. Moses:** As part of our ongoing rigour in addressing financial matters, we continue to, in an intensive way, look at such matters and dare I say we are very much seized of the concerns and we are addressing all elements of it.

**Mr. Lee:** The hon. Minister, page 414, Overseas Missions, line Item 16, Contract Employment, a decrease of \$2.2 million. Could you explain if there is a loss of jobs there in that Contract Employment category?

**Hon. Moses:** Once again I make reference to the prelude as it were that was alluded to earlier by the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and the constraints and the necessary cuts that would have been in evidence and, of course, if the summary figures are cut, perforce by our changed fortunes, necessarily the details do reflect this.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow up question. Same line Item, Minister. Does that mean that in the Overseas Mission, there has been a reduction in the staff in respect to the contract employment?

**Hon. Moses:** I have said no such thing.

**Mr. Karim:** Mr. Chairman, can I ask as well on page 4 and page 5 the items continued across.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, thank you. Sub-Item 50, Housing Accommodation very significant. Could you give us some information with respect to that increase of \$4 million?

**Hon. Moses:** Funds were not released in respect of 2016. I can proffer, I can continue by giving more details that perhaps would assist the Member. Average, \$22 million to \$24 million are required per year and if you look at the estimates for 2017, a figure of \$18 million is cited there. That is what it is, it speaks for itself. So the increase would just be geared towards meeting a normal year's expenditure

for that particular item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 415; Item 001, General Administration, page 415; Item 002, Overseas Mission, [*Crosstalk*] page 416. Member for Tabaquite, I will not be going back, please, eh. So I hope you are here with me. Sub-Head 04, Overseas Mission, page 416.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. Overseas Mission 04, Regional Bodies, page 416—

**Mr. Chairman:** Item number?

**Mr. Charles:** It is 01, Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM). What would have accounted for the decrease in the 2016 estimates of \$37.8 million by close to \$10 million last year? Because that figure is retained this year. It is considerable and there must have been a reason.

**Hon. Moses:** I am not sure if I am following you. You said page 416—

**Mr. Charles:** Page 416, 01, CARICOM. And there has been a drop from \$37.8 million in the 2016 estimates, the actual revised estimates. What would have accounted for that more or less significant drop?

**Hon. Moses:** If you look at the first column, 2015, actual \$38,000 an amount of above \$38 million. That was a 2014 payment included there. So that finds—

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah.

**Hon. Moses:**—expression in that number.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 416. Chaguanas East, you want—

**Mr. Karim:** Just another Item 04, 03, Regional Bodies.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 416, okay, go ahead, Member.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, Grenada Consular and Trade Office, I see there is an allocation here. We pay for that? And if so, what is the arrangement?

Why do we continue to pay for a Grenada Consular and Trade Office in Trinidad?  
And where is this located? What is this about?

**Hon. Moses:** You have many questions. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Karim:** I could go sequentially. Let me ask the first one.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us get the first question.

**Hon. Moses:** I could release the Member from his wonderment. His state of wonderment, I could release him.

**Mr. Karim:** It is not about Alice, eh, it is not about Alice. I am so happy you came at this time. A lot of us were tired, but you livened up the session. Let me repeat the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, start over.

**Mr. Karim:** Question number one.

**Mr. Chairman:** One at a time.

**Mr. Karim:** One at a time. What is Grenada Consular and Trade Office about, that relationship with the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs? It is located I suspect in Trinidad, and why do we continue to finance that office? I have other questions, but those are just two.

**Hon. Moses:** Okay, so the Sub-Item 03, \$450,000. The information is that that is in respect of a rental payment.

**Mr. Karim:** But we pay—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Moses:** Port of Spain is the venue, the locale rather.

**Mr. Karim:**—for the government of Grenada?

**Mr. Imbert:** Since you were in Government.

**Hon. Member:** And before that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Since and before that. He was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Turn to your left and ask him.

**Hon. Moses:** This an ongoing arrangement. And in keeping with the rigour which I referred to earlier, we would be looking in a very fixed way at all such items.

**Mr. Karim:** In terms of the rigour, I see we have increased by \$60,000.

**Hon. Moses:** That is part of the reality.

**Hon. Member:** No, not the rigour. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Next question, Member, or are you okay? You are okay, Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** “Hear nah, I eh so okay, but I doh know if I should ask anything else.”

**Mr. Chairman:** You have my blessing. Go ahead.

**Mr. Karim:** How many persons occupy that office and where is it in Trinidad?

**Hon. Moses:** The ongoing commitment to which I referred relate to meeting the rental payments.

**Mr. Karim:** No, how many persons—

**Hon. Moses:** But that is my response to you. Our commitment is in regard to meeting the rental payments, the composition, the number of persons—

**Mr. Karim:** So we do not know what we are paying for.

**Hon. Moses:** The rental, not the number of persons.

**Mr. Karim:** I know what you saying.

**Hon. Moses:** We do not pay for the number of persons.

**Mr. Karim:** No, I did not say that, you know, I was just asking.

**Hon. Moses:** I was just answering the honourable—through you, Mr. Chair, I was just responding to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, okay, fine. Thanks for that. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 416. Item 003, United Nations Organisations, page 417. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** To the Minister. Could you account for the decrease in the estimates for Sub-Item 01, United Nations Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund? I thought that was a standard fee based on your population and your per capita GDP. So there is a decrease of \$3.3 million in our allocation. Could the Minister explain what accounts for that?

**Hon. Moses:** In respect of—

**Mr. Charles:** Item 003; Sub-Item 01. There is a drop in the revised estimates from \$9 million in 2016 to \$5.7 million in 2017. Could you account for the difference?

**Hon. Moses:** Chair, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Hon. Moses:** The figure for 2015, the actual figure, included arrears. Further, I offer the projected expenditure as opposed to the revised estimate. The projected expenditure in respect of their 2016 amounts to \$5.6 million. So \$5.7 million is an appropriate figure. So the perceived decrease is what it is, a perception. The reality, as I go back to the word, reality again, is that around \$6 million or \$5.7 million is what was requested and what was received and would indeed cover the charges.

**Mr. Charles:** Mr. Chairman, it is not a misconception, it is written here, decrease \$3.3 million.

**Hon. Moses:** The explanation is still what I have just said.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 07, Households, page 417. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There has been an increase of \$2.7 million as it relates to Severance Benefits. Minister, is there any—

**Mr. Chairman:** Item number please.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Sub-Item 01, Severance Benefits.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could you elaborate on this and is there any restructuring exercise within—

**7.20 p.m.**

**Hon. Moses:** This Item covers terminal benefits in respect of locally recruited staff at missions and it is a provision that contemplates eventualities which are part and parcel of an employer/employee relationship. So it is not in the direction of consciously separating persons, but rather a provision that seeks to treat with eventualities.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could the Minister tell this meeting the reality, and how many employees you contemplate to send home via severance payments?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I did not think he said that, Member.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, I am trying to find out why this increase of \$2.7 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** He said it is a provision.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, I accept.

**Mr. Chairman:** It is a provision provided.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, but we must know, because it has moved, Deputy Chair, from \$800,000 to \$3.5 million, and there has to be some kind of contemplation at the level of the Ministry from a policy point of view.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, you care to add anything there?

**Hon. Moses:** No, just by way of elucidation, not that I care. It is just to help the discussion along. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Deputy Chair, this is an exercise—

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister is going to shed some clarification.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Deputy Chair, this might entail the sending home of persons and its impact on families and so on—



**Mr. Chairman:** I am not sure that is what is—

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—and the Minister is saying that he does not care?

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us hear the Minister.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** This is what we have for a Minister of Foreign Affairs—

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—that he does not care? I am shocked.

**Mr. Imbert:** He did not say that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva South—Minister, shed some clarity for us.

[*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Moses:** So for the year 2016, the projected expenditure amounted to \$2.6 million as opposed to the revised estimates for the year 2016 which amounted to only \$800,000. So the request came in for \$3.5 million and \$3.5 was granted. Seeking refuge in drama and trying to cast the impression that mass layoffs are part and parcel in a targeted asymmetric fashion is not what we are about. This is just merely provisions for eventualities. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Item 009, Other Transfers, page 418. And I now recognize the Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. 009, 05 Trade Treaty Secretariat. I know that we are not successful in that regard. Could the Minister just explain the sum of \$34,000, what that is for?

**Hon. Moses:** By way of enlightenment once more, we do have quota contributions to pay to international organizations. Not having been successful at actually hosting the organization is quite separate to meeting one's obligations.

**Mr. Charles:** So this has nothing to do with the Secretariat that was supposed to be located in Trinidad? That is what you are saying.

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chair—

**Mr. Chairman:** You answered?

**Hon. Moses:** The distinction was made, meaning that—

**Mr. Charles:** I take it that—

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, yes. That “taking” is correct.

**Mr. Charles:** So this is just fees to the Secretariat.

**Hon. Moses:** That is my understanding, Member.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. And at 004, National Reparations Committee, an allocation of \$500,000, would the Minister care to enlighten us as to what that is, and what is the reason for this half a million dollar allocation?

**Hon. Moses:** Such a provision is tied to cost related to any Secretariat that might find place in that area of reparations.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Perhaps I can give some guidance. Caricom heads took a decision to set up a Reparations Committee and that therefore that is the cost associated with that. So I do not know what you are talking about, Minister, and that is the reality.

**Hon. Moses:** No. Chair, there have been cuts across the board and this figure is tied to, as I said, the establishment of a Secretariat with staff. If you notice, in the revised estimate for the year 2016, there is a dash—no moneys were provided there. I can continue by saying the projected expenditure as well, a more precise figure, is also zero. So no money is expended in year 2016. So given the reality again, of the cuts, it was reduced from \$3 million to \$500,000, showing a level of consciousness and commitment, and that is what it is meant to cover, meaning the Secretariat.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The \$500,000, is it as a result of the decision in Caricom, or is that a decision locally? Is this the set-up, in other words, part of the Caricom

position on the reparation—a Secretariat that Caricom will have?

**Hon. Moses:** Our domestic situation and policies locally are intimately tied and defines our foreign policy. We interface with Caricom and a decision at the level of Caricom does contemplate the setting up of National Reparations Committees and, by extension, Secretariats.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So this is local.

**Hon. Moses:** That is the framework within which—so it is a local arrangement.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 418. Sub-Head 05, Acquisition of Physical Capital Assets.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I had my hands up—Other Transfers Abroad.

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** There are several organizations to which we contribute money and this is a whole list here except for the one—the disaster relief which is something else we do. But this proliferation of organizations to which we contribute money, have we contemplated in the Ministry, doing some analysis of the value that we receive from these contributions? Because there are a number of small organizations and it amounts to a lot of money in the long run. Have you conceived of doing some kind of rationalization by an audit of the results we get from our participation in these organizations?

**Hon. Moses:** Yes. Indeed we have gone beyond conceiving and we are actively treating with such as part of the ongoing rigour which I referred to earlier.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And may I know which organizations we have dropped from the list?

**Hon. Moses:** It is under active consideration. We have not dropped any as yet, but we have treated with payments in such a way that in part reflects some apprehensions that we might be harbouring.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Sub-Head, 05, Acquisition of Physical Capital Assets, page 418. Item 002, Acquisition of Existing Building, page 418. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 183, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 183 and 184.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Page 183, Public Buildings, 002, Establishment of a Diplomatic Academy. Can the Minister give us an update as to where we are with this Diplomatic Academy?

**Hon. Moses:** We do not propose to continue along such a pathway.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Does the Minister contemplate having a more formal relationship with the Institute of International Affairs so that we can engage in more in-depth training of our Foreign Service Officers, utilizing the resources of the University of the West Indies?

**Hon. Moses:** We, at the Ministry, avail ourselves of all opportunities afforded in the institutional strengthening of the Ministry, inclusive of such resources as would have been mentioned by the hon. Member.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Has the Ministry, within the last year, utilized the services of the University of the West Indies for any programme?

**Hon. Moses:** I would have to have recourse to a written response on this.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, on page 184, line Item 036, Refurbishment and Security Upgrade of the New Chancery, Kingston, Jamaica. Is this the final allocation?

**Hon. Moses:** Please, allow me to focus on the—

**Mr. Karim:** Sorry, page 184, line Item 036.

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Karim:** There is an allocation of \$2 million.

**Hon. Moses:** For the residence?

**Mr. Karim:** No, this is for the new Chancery in Jamaica. I had visited it and there were some—they had done some substantial work there. So I was asking whether this is a final—intended to be a final payment.

**Hon. Moses:** I could answer you off—but I prefer to focus on it. 006, you said?

**Mr. Karim:** No, no, 036.

**Mr. Chairman:** 036, Refurbishment and the Security Upgrade of New Chancery, Kingston, Jamaica, on page 184.

**Hon. Moses:** Yes, and the question is?

**Mr. Karim:** I was just asking if this is the intended final allocation and payment, because I have seen—

**Hon. Moses:** The \$2 million.

**Mr. Karim:** The \$2 million.

**Hon. Moses:** No, it is not. In fact, it is a plain, empty flat with land and this amount is—oh, that is the Chancery itself. The \$2 million in the estimate of 2017?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, Sir.

**Hon. Moses:** Okay. That is meant to complete phase two which involves refurbishing the internal offices and installing another elevator and some changes that—electrical installation-wise that needed to be effected to allow the existing elevator to work properly.

**Mr. Karim:** So is this expected to be the final amount that will take care of all of those things? Because I had visited it and—

**Hon. Moses:** Initially that was not the expectation, but given the rigour to which I referred to earlier on, we are thinking of curbing the expenditure so that phase would invariably come under some cuts. The third and final phase, which is phase

three, which dealt with another floor and other matters, invariably that would be cut.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Hon. Minister, I just want to make reference to lines 052 and 058. Line 052 had an allocation in 2016 an estimate with respect to a new embassy in Saudi Arabia. I am seeing now, as a new project, the establishment of a new embassy and trade office in the United Arab Emirates. Does it mean that this will—Saudi Arabia no longer is on the—*[Interruption]* No, it is here.

**Hon. Moses:** What it means is that there is no provision.

**Mr. Karim:** No, I am asking whether you intend to continue with anything in Saudi Arabia, or are you now replacing that intention of Saudi Arabia with the United Arab Emirates?

**Hon. Moses:** That is not my characterization of the note. My response is that there is no provision at this point in time relative to Saudi Arabia. But, indeed, on the other hand, there is a provision for the UAE and that is the pathway that we are currently embarking upon.

**Mr. Karim:** So just to get the question very clear. There is no intention to pursue with any construction or any office acquisition in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chair, I have responded to that question before.

**Mr. Chairman:** You responded?

**Hon. Moses:** I have responded.

**Mr. Karim:** And the answer is?

**Hon. Moses:** And the response again is that there is no provision at present to cover any such eventuality.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. So you expect to commence—

**Hon. Moses:** Perhaps next year, perhaps year after. So I cannot go along. I would not put it in the way you have put it.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Can I ask the question in a different way?

**Mr. Chairman:** Once it relates to the line Item.

**Mr. Karim:** Saudi Arabia—and I am asking this for a very purposeful reason—

**Hon. Moses:** That is why I am trying to be as clear as I can.

**Mr. Karim:** And you and I know why, and it affects a lot of our citizens going to Hajj and so on. Is there still an intention, maybe in the future, to consider having some office in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—in the future?

**7.35 p.m.**

**Hon. Moses:** That may or may not be the case.

**Mr. Karim:** But in terms of UAE, certainly this is a project that will commence in—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Moses:** That is what we are dealing with.

**Mr. Chairman:** New project as identified.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, with regard to Saudi Arabia—I think it is on the line here, I am going to ask it on the line Item here—there is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago now detained in Saudi Arabia and we have difficulties, as I understand it from his father on radio this in morning indicating that it is very difficult to get documents directly to the people in Saudi Arabia. Minister, do you care to enlighten us, in the absence of consular representation in Saudi Arabia, what is being done to assist this national of Trinidad and Tobago in Saudi Arabia to be repatriated?

**Hon. Member:** What line Item?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Line Sub-Item under Establishment of a New Embassy in Saudi Arabia, 52.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** There is no provision for that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well there was a provision in 2016 that was not used, but a line

Item is here.

**Mr. Imbert:** May I just try and bring an end to this discussion about a zero allocation for a non-item. The proposed office in the United Arab Emirates will handle all countries in that part of the world.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Madam PS and senior executives from your Ministry. Thanks for coming.

*Head 11.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Head 11: Registration Recognition and Certification Board, \$3,810,700. I would like to welcome the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, her PS and the other senior executives, and I will now invite you in order to make a brief statement not exceeding five minutes

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I certainly shall try. Mr. Chairman, this Board was created by the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01 in 1972, and the purpose of the Act really is to make better provision for the stabilization, improvement and promotion of industrial relations. The Board comprises nine members which includes the chairman and eight other Board members, and there are alternates. So there is a total of 17 Board members. The chairman is appointed by the President. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

*[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]*

Good evening, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Good evening, Minister.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** The Chairman is appointed by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and the other members are appointed by the Minister on the advice of the recognized bodies for labour and employers. The



RRCB, popularly known as the Recognition Board, has a staff complement of 26 persons on the establishment. In addition, there are four long-term contract positions, and the term of this present Board is for three years which began in February 2015 and will come to an end in February 2018. Therefore, we are pleased to be here this evening, Madam Chair, to clarify any areas that this House would request of us. I thank you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 11 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$3,810,700 for Head 11, Registration Recognition and Certification Board, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are now at page 49. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 49. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 49; Item 001, General Administration, pages 49 to 50. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 50; Item 001, General Administration, page 50.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank you representatives from the Registration Recognition and Certification Board.

*Head 30.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, \$430,699,855. I will now invite the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are all thankful to be here this evening as we discuss our budgetary allocation for fiscal year 2016/2017. The

allocations of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, although a little drop in the entire pool of allocations of billions of dollars, will certainly go a long way and contribute immensely to the socioeconomic development of our nation. Since—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members, I know it is late and I know we all need a little relief, but I think in all fairness to the technical officers and the officers of Parliament, let us try and approach this seriously to get it over and done with so people could get home at a reasonable hour.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Since I took up the mantle as Minister, I can safely say that my Ministry has worked tirelessly to meet and exceed all expectations despite the reductions in allocations which we face and continue to face.

The past year has seen a drastic decline in economic growth and this also impacted greatly on the work plan of the Ministry. The industrial staff at the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development had to immediately shift gears to find innovative and sustainable means of treating with the retrenchment and closure of a number of companies, or part thereof, in the energy and other sectors. The implementation of our 10-point plan is evident of this: to address the issue of retrenchment and also to assist affected persons to reintegrate themselves back into the work force, and be able to sustainably provide for their families.

Madam Chair, under the purview of this Government, the Ministry has also commenced the review of the Industrial Relations Act, the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act and basic terms and conditions of employment code. Amendments to these important pieces of legislation would seek to bring about a more peaceful industrial relations environment, keeping both employers and employees interest in mind. In addition, consultations have been held on the

proposed Bill to amend the Co-operative Societies Act which aims to address the governance of the co-operative sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

In fiscal year 2016/2017, the Ministry proposes to finalize amendments to these items on its agenda, as well as to address amendment to the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies Act. The Ministry has also utilized this economic downturn as an opportunity to reach out to the public at large, by addressing the issues of employee and employer rights and responsibilities. It is a proactive approach to industrial relations that present the services of the Ministry and innovative means of providing guidance to those in need.

Madam Chair, also the labour market information unit, I am quite happy and pleased to say, is back on stream and should have its full complement of staff in the coming months. It is just a week ago members of staff, together with other colleagues across Ministries, were exposed to statistical training by a Caricom team. The unit should be making valuable strides in providing vital labour market information during the course of this fiscal year.

Madam Chair, tripartism plays a major role in the work of this Ministry, and the Ministry engages its social partners in all of its decision-making processes. The recently established National Tripartite Advisory Council, also known as NTAC, is evident of this. The NTAC, which comprises members of Government, labour and employers' organizations, and under the distinguished chairmanship of the hon. Minister of Planning and Development, has been convened to engage in dialogue and discussions on pertinent issues of national development and allow for more evidence-based decision-making, greater transparency, accountability and value for money. To date NTAC has held seven meetings and is in the process of establishing various subcommittees to continue its agenda into this fiscal year. All

of these matters are being addressed in the Ministry's strategic plan which I am pleased to say will be completed in the next couple weeks.

Madam Chair, the Ministry continues to push forward its enterprise development portfolio and is striving to maximize the benefits of investment in the entrepreneurial sector through NEDCO (National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited), and the programmes including the FairShare Programme and the National Integrated Business Incubator System, also known as IBIS. The Ministry is working towards building a more robust small enterprise sector.

In closing, Madam Chair, I urge that today's discussion, I hope that it would be fruitful and productive, and that we continue to work together to contribute to the development of this nation and the enrichment of the lives of all our people. Against that background, we avail ourselves for any clarification this honourable House would ask of us.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Madam Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 30 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$430,699,855 for Head 30, Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

**7.50 p.m.**

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 222; Item 001, General Administration, page 222.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you give

us an idea as to how many persons are employed in the Ministry?

**Madam Chairman:** You are under 01, Salaries and—

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, Salaries and COLA.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Three hundred and thirty-nine.

**Mr. Karim:** Of that number of 339, could you indicate how many are permanent and how many are contract staff?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Certainly. The number of permanent officers, 178; the number of current contract positions, 54.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Co-operatives on page 222; Item 003, Friendly Societies, page 223; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, page 223.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, under 06, Remuneration to Board Members, I see that there has been an increase to \$215,000 in relation to the 2017 estimates. Could the Minister advise if this is as a result of filling vacancies on the Occupational Safety and Health Authority, and indeed if the members represent or reflect the tripartite nature and indeed if the labour representatives on this particular authority is in keeping with the bodies or the unions that are most representative of labour as recognized by the International Labour Organization?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** That was a rather long one. But just to give the information, the Government was in the process of reviewing the composition of state boards and to ensure that we place suitable persons on the boards, not necessarily because of political persuasions but because of competencies. As such, the boards under the purview of this Ministry were mainly appointed in the third and fourth quarter of 2015 and 2016.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Going back to the issue in terms of the remuneration, is there a

full complement of—because I see that there is an increase by \$215,000?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** At the Ministry, we are still in the process of appointing additional boards. Boards that have not been in operation for some time and therefore, we anticipate that these boards coming on-stream, for example, the National Productivity Council, the Friendly Societies Council. These councils have not been reconstituted for several years and therefore, the increase would take into consideration the payment of remuneration for these councils and boards.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I hear you, Minister. I am asking in the context of the Occupational Safety and Health Authority.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am repeating—I have indicated that with respect to the Remuneration to Board Members under the Occupational Safety and Health Authority, that there is an increase in 2017 of \$215,000. So I am asking, will this satisfy a full complement of the board members and so on?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I understand him now, Madam Chair. The former board, just to be quite honest, through you, Madam Chair, the former Occupational Safety and Health Board was not up to full strength and became dysfunctional after a while and therefore, it is not only our intention, we have proceeded to appoint a full board and, as a consequence, that \$215,000 increase is meant to ensure that all members who are on board are paid their remuneration.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me just ask a follow up with respect to that line Item to the Minister. Minister, could you state if presently, right now, we have a board in place?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Oh absolutely. A very competent one under the chairmanship of Dr. Victor Coombs.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 223; Item 001, General Administration, pages 223 to 224.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 08, there has been an increase in the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, could you give us an idea as to what would have caused this increase and may be supply a list of the places you rent and the persons who are the landlords of those various properties?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Just give me a second, let me—would you like the full breadth of information on all the offices?

**Mr. Karim:** No, you could give it to us in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, is it lengthy?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, I do not know which one to listen to.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, I have only recognized the Member for Chaguanas East.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** All right.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, if you could summarize and indicate what has caused this increase of the \$700,000 and then you could supply—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** And you would prefer it in writing?

**Mr. Karim:** You could give me that answer now, but the list, you could give us in writing. What would have caused that additional increase?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Through you, Madam Chair, to the Member for Chaguanas East, that increase would have come about due to additional space for the Co-operatives Division in Tunapuna, rental from Anand Investments Limited. You may be familiar with Mr. Anand Persad, the owner. So that that—also the Occupational Safety and Health Authority, we would have had to relocate part of the authority to Alexandra Street.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister on page 224, line Item 16, Contract Employment, a decrease of \$2.1 million. Could the Minister state—and I think I will just state it again—how many permanent and the number of persons employed on contract in the Ministry? I think you had said 54. Is that correct?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes, certainly.

**Mr. Lee:** And could the Minister state how many new persons were hired on contract for the fiscal year 2016 and were any contract positions discontinued for the fiscal year 2016?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Contract employment is a phenomenon that has developed in the public service where there is a dual public service comprising of contract officers. It is a situation that we are very concerned about and it is part of this Government's policy framework to reduce the dependence on contract employment and therefore, this Ministry is currently reviewing our short-term contract employment.

And it is really heart-rending, once an officer is on short-term contract, that officer cannot stay home even a day. If that officer stays home a day, the officer does not get paid. The officer cannot go to any financial institution and engage in any kind of activity. No financial institution would loan those officers moneys. And therefore, we are in the process of identifying positions, public service permanent positions that have been suppressed over the years, and we are in the process of engaging with the Service Commissions Department to unsuppress those posts and to appoint persons permanently.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, with all due respect, let me ask the question, again, to the Minister and there are two Items there, Minister. Line Item 16 is Contract



Employment and I am asking you about line Item 16. Line Item 22 is Short-Term Employment which, I think, is different from Contract Employment. So I want to ask the question with respect to line Item 16.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Short-Term employment is contract employment.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay, let me ask you my questions again with respect to line Item 16. How many new persons were hired on contract for the fiscal year 2016 and were any contract positions discontinued in fiscal year 2016?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** The number of persons currently on short-term contract, 26.

**Hon. Member:** What is the duration of a short-term contract?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Anywhere between—well three months. And I dare say, Madam Chair, I want to take this opportunity—

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, I just want to go back to line Item 16, with all due respect, which is Contract Employment. There is a decrease of \$2.1 million, Madam Minister. Correct?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** The question I am asking for fiscal year 2016, how many new persons were—in that particular line Item, you said there were 54 individuals on contract. Correct?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Right. So I am asking you two questions in respect to that line Item: how many new persons were hired on contract for the fiscal year 2016 and were any contract positions discontinued in the fiscal year 2016 in respect to line Item 16?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, with regard to your first question, I did answer you but I have no problem in answering again, 26 persons.

**Mr. Lee:** Twenty-six persons were hired in 2016.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. And were any contract positions discontinued in the fiscal year 2016? Minister, if you want to provide it in writing, you can do that.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** “Nah, nah”, two; 49 expired, two terminated and four resigned.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**8.05 p.m.**

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The Minister answered, so I will—

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Co-operatives, page 225; Item 003, Friendly Societies, page 226; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, pages 226 to 227.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Under 08, Office Accommodation, in relation to the Occupational Safety and Health Authority—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I am sorry, where are you?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Office Accommodation.

**Madam Chairman:** Line Item 08, page 226.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** This is the Occupational Safety and Health Authority. There is an increase of \$300,000. Can you advise me if this increase has to do with finding accommodation, as it relates to dealing with, if I should use the word dysfunctionality at the OSH Agency, in relation to the administrative arm of the Agency operating out of Alexandra Street and the inspectors being housed at Duke Street in Port of Spain?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Madam Chair, I am trying to internalize and disaggregate the question. Could the Member simplify that question for me please?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, could it be a two-part question? Ask A and then B.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In the context of Office Accommodation, Madam Minister, I am asking if this addresses the issue of—I am reliably informed that the administrative arm of the OSH Agency operates out of Alexandra Street in Port of Spain and the inspectorate department works out of Duke Street in Port of Spain, if office accommodation has been found to incorporate the administrative and the inspectorate arms of the OSH Agency to house them under one area?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** All right, I think I am a little clearer now, Madam Chair, to respond to the Member for Couva South, my neighbour.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You are my constituent.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** “Yuh coulda ask meh dat last night when yuh pass yuh know.” [*Laughter*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Members. All right, Members, please. Yes, so to answer the question.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Madam Chair, I am happy that the Member raised that question, because when I became Minister I found a situation where the OSH Inspectors had not reported for duty in two and a half years. They were working from home. And, therefore, one of the factors responsible had to do with accommodation. And, therefore, the administrative, the Executive Director, Administration, in collaboration with the Ministry, identified alternative accommodation to house the HR and administrative services. So that would have freed up space at Duke Street to ensure that those officers began reporting for duty and working for the money they were paid every month. And I dare say the situation has improved tremendously. But the intention was to construct an administrative building to house the entire OSH Administration. But because of fiscal constraint that is no longer a possibility at this point in time.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** But it is something that you will keep in mind?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Oh, absolutely.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Hon. Minister, I am still under Contract Employment under 16, and, of course, there is a decrease of \$2.9 million.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I am sorry, Member for Tabaquite, which page are you on?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Same page 226, Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right, the question I am going to ask is this, allow me this short preface. I am very concerned about the number of persons who are seen on construction sites without adequate equipment, on heights without harnesses and what have you, and I am wondering whether, under this Contract Employment here, this cut, these are roving officers also and how do they go about dealing with this situation of flagrant violation of the laws that protect people, workers in particular, on construction sites.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** You are referring to the OSH Inspectors?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, because despite having OSH Inspectors, there is a proliferation of this kind of flagrant abuse all over. No hard hats, no boots, nothing.

**Madam Chairman:** Would you like to provide this in writing?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I have been informed that the inspectors have engaged in a risk assessment. For those high-risk construction sites, they would visit and they would advise and guide instead of issue any notice or citation of any offence, but to guide them in what is correct and what is not correct.

But even at a personal level, I can understand your concern because I too as

a citizen of this country, you pass certain places and you see people without harness and you wonder whether or not the employer is not providing or providing and the employee is not using them. But by and large my experience over the years where workers are provided with health and safety equipment, they do use it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** It is a concern.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I know.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Because people, there have been several accidents. I mean, a lot of the accidents are not even recorded officially, but there are several accidents.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** No, but where any such accident occurs the OSH Authority sends in an inspector, an investigation is done and if the employer is held liable then they are charged.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Minister, what goes on in the construction sector, in terms of how employees are outfitted on jobs shocks me and will shock you if a real examination of sites are done.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just as a follow-up to what the Member for Tabaquite raised. Mr. Minister, I am sure that you would have heard recently from the President of the Industrial Court where there would have been approximately, I think about 103 fatal accidents on the job between, I think, 2006 to 2015 and approximately 7,000-plus work-related accidents. In the context of line Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, is there a full complement of labour inspectors existing at the OSH Agency?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** No, but what I do know is that the board has advertised positions for additional inspectors and they are in the process, as we speak, in conducting interviews to expand the number of inspectors so that greater attention can be paid on those priority areas.

I also want to add that the Authority has certain construction sites, the

owners, in court at this point in time.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, how many vacancies are existing?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** The current process of interviews is meant to fill approximately 24 positions and that—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Should be filled by an approximate time line?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well yes, I gave the chairman of the board no later than mid-November. And based on our discussion he is on target. It would leave another 24 vacancies to be filled.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So you have 48 vacancies for labour inspectors?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Forty-eight, yes. So 24 will be filled now and hopefully next year we are going to fill the next 24 to bring that Agency up to strength.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And these officers who are coming on stream—because I see a decrease in contract employment—will they be full-time employees of the Agency or would they be on contract employment?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, initially they will be on contract. As I indicated earlier, our intention is to decrease dependency on contract employment. So, following that period of contract employment, we hope to move staff into permanent positions on the establishment, because the nature of the function is permanent.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay, so you would have the adequate allocation to deal with salaries and so on?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** For this 24.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** For this 24?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So that, how many? So you have 48 vacancies. How many do you have on staff now, in terms of inspectors, working now?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** About 24.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is very interesting. So you are only up to one-third of your strength, and in recessionary times people cut corners on these sites.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, once we bring the inspectorate up to strength then you would have more inspectors to send out there, especially to pay attention to the high-risk areas. But even at 24, when you look at what they have been able to achieve, can really be deemed to be commendable.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 227; Item 001, General Administration, page 227; Item 002, Co-operatives, page 228; Item 003, Friendly Societies, page 228.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I just want to draw to the attention of the Minister whether she is aware that there is a Friendly Society building in the village of Avocat? That building was refurbished under the URP programme, and whether this building is being utilized as a friendly society building? I think it is important to have a look at the registered friendly societies and see whether they need things, because I believe this building needed furniture and furnishings.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, while I cannot comment on that, what I can say is that the friendly society is an area that we are paying particular attention to. As a matter of fact, we have a consultation carded for 23<sup>rd</sup> of next month where we are pulling all the friendly societies together to look at strategies to strengthen them, because they do play an important role in the society. But more and more, there is need for them to attract young people for the survivability of that sector, because it is primarily made up of—

*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rambachan:** Ageing population.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, page 228; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 229; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 229; Item 003, United Nations Organizations, page 229; Item 004, International Bodies, page 229; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions, page 230; Item 007, Households, page 230. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. In relation to the On-the-Job Training programme, there is a reduction in the allocation of \$20,820,000. Could the Minister elaborate on this decrease and how it would impact upon the On-the-Job Training programme?

**8.20 p.m.**

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** With regard to the On-the-Job Training Programme, we are in the process of restructuring and streamlining the operations to reduce costs, and to increase efficiency and effectiveness of this programme. It will allow us to reallocate funds, you know, as necessary. Additionally, we are also paying attention to possible leakages in that programme, and measures to mitigate them.

We are also in our operations, aligning the skills and qualifications of these young people, and ensuring that they are placed in jobs commensurate with their skills and qualification, because when we do not do that, you go to various work sites and you would find the young people are bored, because they have not been placed in areas where they can—their career paths can be mapped out. So that we are in the process of that realignment process.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, let me just say that we were in that mode of what we call OJT sectorial, in aligning the qualifications.

I have a few questions. Question number one, hon. Minister, could you indicate how many persons, how many trainees are currently on the programme to date? That is the first question. “Tell meh when yuh ready, cause I have ah few”.



**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** How many trainees?

**Mr. Karim:** Are on the OJT Programme—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Right now?

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, totally.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Six thousand, one hundred and twenty-two.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Could you also indicate how many trainees—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** One second. Ask the question, by the time you are finished with the question, I will get the correct answers.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. So, the total number of persons currently on the programme is 6,122. Could you indicate—can I also ask for the last fiscal year, how many persons were placed on the OJT Programme?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Were placed?

**Mr. Karim:** Were placed?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** You mean new placements?

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Go ahead, the answer will be shared shortly.

**Mr. Karim:** The other thing is, these trainees, the numbers you have 6,122 and the additional—the one that would have been included for the last fiscal year, can we get for those who were taken on for the last fiscal year to now, the regions in which they were placed, and the levels of those persons? You know, well, we have a five-level system for the OJT Programme.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Of course, we have four levels.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, I think we added a fifth because of the Associate Degree, but you can check it back. So that is the—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** That response, you will have to get that response in writing.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, sure, no problem. Could you tell us when the new stipends will be paid to the trainees that were promised?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** At the end of this month.

**Mr. Karim:** Right. And will it be retroactive in anyway?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** The one-month arrears will be paid next month.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. The other question I have, Madam Chair, is if you can indicate and you could put it in writing as well, what was the expenditure for payment for stipends for 2015/2016?—and that you could disaggregate in terms of the public sector and trainees in the private sector.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Okay.

**Mr. Karim:** The other question, if you are ready for the—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Karim:**—is do you have a plan, particularly to reduce the unemployment of our young graduates? Because the data shows—and I am quoting from a Ministry of Finance document here, the *Review of the Economy*—that 50.6 per cent of all the persons unemployed in Trinidad and Tobago, are within the age groups of 15—29 years old.

**Mr. Imbert:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Karim:** I am just—“yuh wah me” to produce the evidence? You put it in the book.

**Mr. Imbert:**—because that is illegal.

**Mr. Karim:** I will pull the book.

**Mr. Imbert:** Only 17 years old could be employed.

**Mr. Karim:** Get the *Review of the Economy* “fuh mih”.

**Madam Chairman:** But Member for Chaguanas East, your question is with respect to—

**Mr. Karim:** My question is with respect to what plans does the Ministry have for reducing and—Madam Chairman, can I just quote the relevant—just two lines, with your permission?

*Review of the Economy, Government of Trinidad and Tobago, page 38:*

“A disaggregation of unemployment by age reveals that young people between the ages of 15 and 29 years represented approximately 50.6 percent of all unemployed persons during January to March 2016.”

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, let me clarify that. When the CSO does its tabulations they do it in age groups and, therefore, 15 is the lower level on a particular age band, okay? But in Trinidad and Tobago, the age of employment is 17, okay? You cannot work at age 15, okay? [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** Go in the market and you will see.

**Mr. Karim:** Let me continue with the question.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members!

**Mr. Imbert:** That is child labour.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon Members! Member for Chaguanas East, could you kindly pose your question—

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, sure.

**Madam Chairman:**—because I do not believe that 15—29 is the basis of the question.

**Mr. Karim:** The OJT age band is 16—35 years old, and I am asking, whether there is a plan to reduce the unemployment particularly of our graduates, and graduates could be from CSEC onwards?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** It is not our intention to increase the trainees into the OJT for this fiscal period.

**Mr. Karim:** Sorry, I did not get that. It is not your intention to increase?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** To increase.

**Mr. Karim:** So, you are not taking on anybody? “Yuh placing” anybody else?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Not unless we can identify leakages in the system, once we stem those leakages, then certainly we will be able to bring new persons on board.

**Mr. Karim:** In that case, through you, Madam Chair, hon. Minister, could you indicate how many applications do you have awaiting placements? Can you tell us that?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, outside of your three, I do not know about the rest, but I can provide the information.

**Mr. Karim:** I just have a final question, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you say whether there are outstanding payments to employers, reimbursements? And if so, the quantum, and by what time you expect to honour those commitments? And the final one, hon. Minister, the—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I am informed that once the employers submit the documentation for reimbursements, those reimbursements are paid, but invariably, many of them submit it late. But I just want to say that the actual expenditure for 2015/2016, \$332 million, a little over \$332 million.

**Mr. Karim:** Million?—\$332 million, the expenditure for 2015/2016?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** But, you have to—some—anyway—

**Madam Chairman:** Members, are we not under Item 00—

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, Ma'am.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:**—007, Household?

**Mr. Karim:** That is erroneous, I may just say.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** 2015/2016?

**Mr. Karim:** I think you will want to check that back. And finally, could you, hon. Minister, say how many contract officers positions were not renewed for 2015/2016 by regions and head office?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** You are talking about the OJT Programme?

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah. I am on the OJT Programme.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** How many—

**Mr. Karim:** Contract officers—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:**—contract officers in the OJT Programme—

**Mr. Karim:**—during the period 2015—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:**—2016 by region—

**Mr. Karim:**—and head office were not renewed?

**Madam Chairman:** That would be given in writing.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** In writing, yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, just for clarification. Am I correct in hearing that there will be no individuals joining or being allowed to apply for OJT positions; new intakes?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, I did not say that. What I said was, that unless we can stem the leakages in the programme, we are not in a position to bring new trainees on board. Once we can stem those leakages, then certainly we will be bringing on board as many as the savings that have been effected.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow-up question. Minister, could we have an undertaking, a timing, when you feel these leakages will be stopped, so that new trainees can come on board?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I cannot give a time frame, but it is an issue of concern and, therefore, that concern will propel the priority status of the issue.

**Mr. Lee:** And last question, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Is it correct in my saying—is it being said that from September to now, no new trainees have come on board in the OJT Programme?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I did not say that.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Very quick question, Madam Minister. You just said that the OJT Programme, the amount spent so far 2016 was \$332,800,000. Is that the figure you gave?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** 2015/2016, \$332 million.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. So, in the estimates there, the revised, it had \$300,820,000. So in other words—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Which page and which line are you on?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Page 230, line Item 03, under Households.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Under Households, yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. So it means if you are allocating \$280 million this year, the cut, the decrease is really \$52 million between what you have spent, in the revised estimates and what you are allocating. So it is a bigger decrease that is reflected in the document.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I am not following that mathematical equation, Madam Chair.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. It is very simple. Under Item 03, On-the-Job-Training Programme, revised estimates for 2016 recorded here is \$300,820,000. The Minister said that her figures were \$332,800,000, right?—as the amount that was actually spent on the programme, right? So in other words, this is the true revised estimate because, Madam Chair, throughout the meetings the Minister of Finance—

**Mr. Imbert:** Just let me intervene in this.

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute please, Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me settle this, because we are going around in circles.

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, Minister of Finance, just let the Member finish making his point, and then I will allow you please to clear it up.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, you see the Minister has been showing us even where some of these figures were wrong in the revised estimates, some were down some were higher, right? In this case, it is higher.

**Madam Chairman:** Look, you see, I have been sitting here and my understanding is, that we cannot get actuals until the closing of accounts.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I hear you and I heard that myself, but, Madam Minister, with due respect, the Minister on several occasions indicated that the figure was wrong, and this is the correct figure to use his own tone and language.

**Mr. Imbert:** Which Minister?

**Dr. Rambachan:** You! The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** Me?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, no.

**Dr. Rambachan:** On several occasions.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, no, no.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Several occasions—

**Mr. Imbert:** That never happened.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—throughout our discussions, and in fact, some were lower, some were higher.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, let me deal with this, firstly that did—

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the cut is \$52 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** That did not happen, on no occasion did I say the figure was wrong.

**8.35 p.m.**

Secondly, the Chairman has made the point, I want to reiterate it. At this stage in the budget cycle, which you know because you were a Minister for at least five years, you have to use revised figures. They are not totally accurate, because the actual figures will become available in the next three to four months. So, even if the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development is showing a figure that is different to this, this is what we have to work with at this point in time.

It is the Ministry of Finance that does the accounting and does the accounting. So the figure we are working with now is \$300 million. If at some point later on the Ministry demonstrates to us that in the month of September—because you have to remember as well these documents are produced before the delivery of the budget.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I understand all of that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Hold on. So we close off two, three weeks before the delivery of the budget and it is an estimate. So the figures that are official, the official figures, at this point in time, are what are in the documents. When we close the accounts, we will have the actual numbers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the Minister should not have given that figure. That is what you are saying?

**Mr. Imbert:** Let us leave that alone.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. There is a \$52 million cut in OJT.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, there is no cut.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you. I just want to follow up this figure of \$300 million. If you round it off it is \$332 million, and the Minister indicated that there were leakages and seems fairly convinced the direction and the elements of that leakage.



Could you quantify the extent of the leakage in the OJT programme?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I cannot.

**Mr. Singh:** Why you cannot?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I do not have the information.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished, Member for Chaguanas West?

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, I am good.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, my question really is, if this programme was set up and established to address youth unemployment between the ages of 16 and 35, we are witnessing now, at this period of time as you know, many tertiary institutions, even CSEC secondary school and CAPE, all of these graduates, if you are saying that you cannot take on, you cannot absorb anybody else until you address the leakages: what will we do with these young people?

The University of the West Indies alone—they have graduation coming up at the end of this month—puts out approximately 5,000 graduates. I want to ask the question because I raised this in the debate: what will we be doing with these young people? I want to ask you and the hon. Minister of Finance to reconsider.

**Mr. Imbert:** Now, listen, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** I am listening.

**Mr. Imbert:** If you look at the figures in the document, to the Member, through you, the revised figure in the document is \$300 million, the allocation for 2017 is \$280 million. That is a reduction in an allocation of less than 10 per cent, about 8 per cent. And, therefore, I am certain that the Minister is going to find—she is using a very polite term, the hon. Minister, very polite term—leakages. I would say waste, mismanagement and corruption. That is what I would say. I am certain the Minister will find unnecessary expenditure in that programme that exceeds 10 per cent of the revised allocation for 2016 and, therefore, I am certain that the

number of real people, actual living human beings, employed in the OJT programme in 2017 will be no less than in 2016. You understand where I am coming from? There are ghosts in that programme.

**Mr. Charles:** Is there a requirement, Chairman, for them to have some basis for the statements they make? They come here and give all kinds of vacuous things about ghosts and 10 per cent and I am sure they are going to find leakages. We must have data. Sorry, Ma'am, sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Are we still on 007, Households? Yes? Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, I asked a number of questions, but it is very unfortunate that the statements being made are casting aspersions on people generally in the programme. I think that is very unfortunate.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers, page 230. Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards & Similar Bodies, page 231. [*Crosstalk*] Minister of Finance, I really would like to hear myself. 004, Statutory Bodies, page 231.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft *Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly*. So we are going on to a different book. 17, Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operatives Studies; Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 169. 001, General Administration, page 169. Sub-Head 02, Good and Services, page 169. 001, General Administration, pages 169 to 170. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 170. 001, General Administration, page 170. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 170. 007, Households, page 170. 009, Other Transfers, page 170.

Hon. Members, we would now move on to the Draft *Estimates of Development Programme*. We are going on to another book. Sub-Head 09,

Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 92. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 92. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just very quickly, where does the Minister propose to establish these Community-Based Business Incubators in 2017? I would like a list of the Community-Based Business Incubators that were established in 2016. While the Minister is looking at it, in terms of the list, what was the quantum of money on each one of these incubators as they are called? It is a good project, but I want to know how the money was spent and who were the beneficiaries in terms of the incubators. [*Crosstalk*] Well, the next question is whether the incubators have died or whether they are incubated.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister, are you in a position to answer the question posed?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes, Madam Chair. The current incubators are based in Point Fortin, Sangre Grande, El Socorro and Diego Martin.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can we get a list, Madam Chair, of this and the amount of money expended on each so that we can physically track and see how these things have prospered or not prospered.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** All right. We will have to provide that subsequently in writing. You are asking for how much funds have been allocated to each one of these incubators.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The Opposition would like to do some kind of audit of this incubator programme to understand—[*Laughter*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Members. So, Member for Tabaquite, you are suggesting that the Government considers an audit but by the Government?

**Dr. Rambachan:** But the information that we have, we would also be able to do an audit. This is public expenditure for a big amount, you know.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Member for Tabaquite, I do not want to really—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, I would ask that the Government whether they will perform an audit and report whether it is to the Parliament or whatever or provide a report as to what criterion was used, in the first place, to set up each of the incubators and how successful have they been and along what criterion.

**Madam Chairman:** But I am sure, Member for Tabaquite, with your experience you know we have a number of oversight committees, so one of the other oversight committees may very well take up your challenge.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But am I going to get the list?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, yes. We have passed that stage long ago.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Given the level of inflation and so on, and the thousands of workers who have been dismissed—

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—who have lost their jobs, I see that under 009, Determination and Impact of the Minimum Wage Level on the Economy, could the Minister provide some details on this particular line Item in terms of what will be done in 2017?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, may I just indicate something before the Minister answers. Madam Chairman, I heard the Member for Couva South stressing the level of inflation. Madam Chairman, may I indicate that the inflation level is a mere 3 per cent.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am concerned about the working man and the impact upon his or her ability to purchase goods and services taking into consideration the rate of food inflation and so on, and a poverty report which revealed that 300,000 people are living on \$985 and so on.

**Madam Chairman:** In terms of your question—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister of Finance, you will have your say. I will have my say.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, in terms of your question under 009—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I posed it to the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, and the Minister of Planning and Development made an intervention.

**Madam Chairman:** And your question is?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And I thought I had a responsibility in the context of poverty.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, all of us cannot speak at the same time.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I know.

**Madam Chairman:** The question is what without the preamble?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I already posed it—

**Madam Chairman:** I think we are lost.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—and the Minister was about to make her response.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, could you just repeat the question without the preamble.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—in relation to what is planned by the Ministry as it relates to fiscal 2017 in relation to the line Item which addresses the impact of the minimum wage level on the economy.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Madam Chair, I am delighted to respond to that question because that issue, I believe, was before my honourable Friend when he was in office, and I do not think anything was done on it.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The minimum wage moved from \$9 to \$15.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Madam Chair, I feel as though I am under attack.

**Madam Chairman:** Member. Members, please. [*Crosstalk*] I know we are all tired and may be a bit anxious. [*Crosstalk*] So let us just be courteous and get the

process of the enquiry underway, achieving its objective. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, these funds would be utilized to develop a more scientific, a more robust way for the determination of the minimum wage and for institutional strengthening and building the capacity of staff to utilize the new methodology. As a matter of fact, Madam Chair, a new minimum wages board will be constituted within the next three to four weeks.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 93 to 94. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and other Services, pages 95 to 97. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 296. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and other Services, pages 296 to 297.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 30 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Madam Minister, I thank you. PS and the members of the Ministry, I thank you all for your assistance.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for having us.

**Madam Chairman:** Now, Members, tomorrow, just to remind you all, we start with the Tobago House of Assembly. It was agreed that we will take them first. The Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Wednesday, October 19, 2016 at 10.30 a.m. I thank you all for your participation, contributions and patience. Kindly reach home safely.

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

## **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Wednesday, October 19, 2016*

### **APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016**

**UNREVISED**

[Sixth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

**10.30 a.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will resume.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Chairman:** I will just like to inform hon. Members that Dr. Lackram Bodeo, MP, Member for Fyzabad, has requested leave of absence from today's meeting of the Standing Finance Committee, and the leave sought is granted.

### **APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016**

**Madam Chairman:** We now move on to Head 15, Tobago House of Assembly.

*Head 15.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head 15, Tobago House of Assembly, \$2,333,590,000. We are at page 61. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I think all of us in this House are very familiar with the Tobago House of Assembly which has responsibility for the management of the affairs and the provision of goods and services in Tobago, subject to the Constitution and the provisions of the Tobago House of Assembly Act.

In many instances, the Tobago House of Assembly would have jurisdiction over a number of matters which would normally be the responsibility of a line Ministry. These are contained in Schedule V of the Tobago House of Assembly Act. There are certain matters which are reserved for the Central Government such

as foreign policy and so on.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister of Finance.

*Question proposed:* That Head 15 stand part of the Schedule.

Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,333,590,000 for Head 15, Tobago House of Assembly is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and we are at page 61, Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, may I recommend, since page 61 is just a summary page that we go straight to page 3?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 11—I have it as Page 11.

**Hon. Imbert:** I have it as page 3.

**Madam Chairman:** Is that the summary page?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no.

**Madam Chairman:** I am thankful, I am so grateful for your assistance, Minister of Finance, but I just have to follow a particular procedure.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is no problem.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 001, Tobago House of Assembly, page 61. I now guide Members to move on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. Division One Assembly Legislature, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 11. Item 001, General Administration, Page 11. [*Interruption*]



**Hon. Imbert:** I have page 3; I do not know where this 11 coming from. Page 3.

**Madam Chairman:** I thought we had agreed that we were not doing the summary sheets. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Imbert:** The detailed breakdown from page 3 onwards. The summary is on page 2. I do not know where this 11; I do not know if you have a different copy to us, Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** If that is the wish of the committee, we will start then at page 3.

**Hon. Imbert:** If you all want to skip to page 11—[*Interruption*] start with 3? Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so we are at 01, Personnel Expenditure at page 3.

**Mr. Singh:** I think your approach is the appropriate approach, because this is a compilation of the summary and we can get into the details at Page 11. Yes, it is better we go to 11.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Page 11. Item 001, General Administration at Page 11. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Page 11. Item 001, General Administration, Page 11.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 65, Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies, there is a decrease of \$500,000. Can the Minister give some explanation for that?

**Hon. Imbert:** Apparently at this time there are no Cabinet-appointed bodies, so that would just be a provision in anticipation of a Cabinet-appointed body in the future.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item No. 16, 02, Contract Employment. I would like to know what is the nature of this Contract Employment, and why is this Contract Employment necessary? Allocation of \$2 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** Just for clarity, if you look at the top you see this is the Assembly Legislature, so this is just staff to support the functioning of the Legislature in Tobago.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is this additional staff to that which is included under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance?

**Hon. Imbert:** It would be, it must. The Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance would be civil servants, and this would be people on contract, not part of the civil service establishment.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So in other words, are you saying, Minister, that the people who are employed in the civil service are insufficient to run the affairs of the Assembly Legislature, Division one?

**Hon. Imbert:** Like in any other department of Government you would have vacancies which need to be filled by the various commissions, and you would need bodies to deal with certain issues and perform certain functions. So this would be to cater for vacancies, gaps in the establishment and so on.

**Dr. Rambachan:** May I ask, what is the current establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly?

**Hon. Imbert:** We are just dealing with the Legislature here.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I know. That was part of the problem.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is why I was going with page 3.

**Dr. Rambachan:** It is very important to understand how many people are actually employed by the Tobago House of Assembly.

**Hon. Imbert:** But in the hope and the expectation that you would ask this question only once, and you will not ask it for every other Head—

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, I will ask it once.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you, and hopefully none of your colleagues will ask either.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I cannot speak for them.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am just saying, in the hope and expectation. The THA has 661 permanent employees. You have 661 permanent public servants, 553 temporary public servants, 1,827 contracted officers, 266 short-term employees and 7,725 daily-rated officers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Just a matter of interest to me, do you have a total of all?

**Hon. Imbert:** 11,032.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And what is the population of Tobago may I ask?

**Hon. Imbert:** About 60,000.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So of the 60,000 persons, if 11,000 is of the adult population—

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am just trying to establish—11,000 persons working for the Tobago House of Assembly in a population of 60,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** I think we have gone over that twice now. You want to go over it a third time?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, please. Member for Tabaquite, do you have a question?

**Dr. Rambachan:** What percentage of the adult population of Tobago, the working population of Tobago does 11,032 persons represent?

**Hon. Imbert:** I cannot see how that is relevant to this line item.

**Madam Chairman:** Do you have any other question?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No.

**Miss Ramdial:** Line Item 01 under Goods and Services, Travelling and Subsistence. There is a huge amount allocated, \$600,000 for 2017. Can an explanation be given for that amount?

**Hon. Imbert:** I was trying to attempt to get elucidation to answer the question.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I will work it out.

**Hon. Imbert:** You can figure it out. Sorry, please repeat.

**Miss Ramdial:** Line item 01, Travelling and Subsistence, \$600,000 2016 revised estimates; \$600,000 2017 estimate. Can we get an explanation for such large expenditure?

**Hon. Imbert:** This would be allowances paid to public officers.

**Miss Ramdial:** Allowances—could you clarify, Minister, a little more?

**Hon. Imbert:** There are travelling officers who would be entitled to a travelling allowance. There would be other public officers who would be entitled to subsistence; that is what it is for.

**Miss Ramdial:** Do you have an average of how many officers would fall under this?

**Hon. Imbert:** How many qualify as travelling officers?

**Miss Ramdial:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** I could get that information.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you very much.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No. 66 Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. There was a revised estimate of \$1.5 million in 2016 and a similar amount for 2017. Can the hon. Minister let us know on what kinds of seminars and especially other functions was this money spent?

**Hon. Imbert:** I can get that information for you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And I would like to get it in writing and how it was spent please.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, you will only get it in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, I think we all understand that other information will come in writing.

**Hon. Imbert:** He did not seem to understand that.

**Madam Chairman:** If we could proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I do not know if I missed it, the Contract Employment, there was an increase of \$3.5 million. Could the Minister just tell us what this—

**Madam Chairman:** You are on Item what, please Member?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 16, Contract Employment.

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no increase there. You are misreading it. It is two, two and two flat—absolutely no increase.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 12.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chairman, I was at 02, Official Overseas Travel.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 27.

**Mr. Singh:** You have an allocation of \$425,000 for Official Overseas Travel. If throughout this whole exercise we have had a cut down in overseas travel, all the Ministries are subject to virement or the permission of the Minister of Finance, when you compare this to what it is for, it seems high in relation to what Ministries in Trinidad get for official travel.

**Hon. Imbert:** Let me make a general statement. The THA's allocation for this year is a percentage of the total. It is the same percentage they got last year, 4.4 per cent.

**Mr. Singh:** That is not legislative?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, the minimum is 4.03. We have chosen to give Tobago more than the minimum, 4.4. That is what we gave them last year, and we made a policy decision to give them 4.4 per cent of the total this year. In the run-up to the finalization of the budget documents, there were meetings between the Ministry of Finance and the Tobago House of Assembly, and they were informed of the global figure in terms of expenditure, the \$53 billion and they were told that they would

get 4.4 per cent of that, and then they were given the flexibility to distribute the allocation among the various Heads.

**10.45 a.m.**

So this \$425,000 even though there is no reduction in this particular line Item, you are going to see reductions in other line Items to compensate for the fact they have kept this line Item at the same figure. You follow? But we have cut them, as we have cut everybody else. We had a \$63 billion budget last year and they got 4.4 per cent of that, now we have a \$53 billion budget this year and they get 4.4 per cent of that. So everybody else come down. So nobody has been spared, if that is what you are thinking.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 12; Item 001, General Administration, page 12; Item 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 12; Item 001, General Administration, page 12; Division 02, Office of the Chief Secretary, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 13; Item 001, General Administration, page 13; Item 007, Public Administration, page 13; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 13; Item 001, General Administration, pages 13 to 14. Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Goods and Services 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage, we are seeing an allocation in 2017 for \$3 million, a jump by \$400,000. Can we get an explanation for this, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. First, I want to point out, there has been a reduction in this overall Head of \$8.9 million. So that even though you will see increases in individual Items, there is an overall reduction of almost \$9 million in Goods and Services in this particular Item Office of the Chief Secretary THA. What I am

told is that because of the increasing focus on the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and we in Trinidad have suffered from this where public offices have been shut down by the trade union because of alleged OSHA violations, the THA is facing a similar challenge where the trade union is seeking to shut down its operations based on alleged OSHA violations. So they have made an additional provision to deal with things, I guess, it will be safety equipment, ventilation and other things that relate to OSHA. So that is what that \$400,000. It is in anticipation of OSHA complaints coming at them which they would have to spend money to deal with.

**Miss Ramdial:** Minister, would this also include moving costs, if necessary, to new buildings in the event? Yeah?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, Item 16, Contract Employment. There is a significant increase of \$3.5 million and there is an overall increase of, together, cumulatively of \$36 million when you—

**Hon. Imbert:** Thirty-six million?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes. Cumulatively because when I asked the last question you told me, okay, you have cut the overseas travel. [*Crosstalk*] Now we are dealing with Contract Employment and I am telling you that there is an overall—there is \$3.5 million on this occasion.

**Hon. Imbert:** So you add up all?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, could we just deal with this line Item?

**Mr. Singh:** Well, I am dealing with this in that global context.

**Hon. Imbert:** Please, do not do that?

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. No. No. [*Crosstalk*] You cannot tell me what to do and what not to do.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please.

**Hon. Imbert:** I can. Line Item, please.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Singh:** Line Item 16, dealing with Contract Employment, this \$3.5 million is part of a global sum of \$36.2 million increase in Contract Employment? What is the reason for this \$3.5 million increase? It is page 13.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am getting the information, but procedurally I wish to let you know I will deal with Item by Item. Okay?

**Mr. Singh:** Well, I like a contextual frame for Item by Item.

**Hon. Imbert:** You may like, but I will deal with Item by Item.

**Mr. Singh:** Because you see—

**Madam Chairman:** Members, today I really would like us to be very efficient with the use of our time.

**Mr. Singh:** I agree, Madam Chair, but provocation is not part of—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West, I will say this, that I know that with your experience you know how to go high.

**Hon. Imbert:** What I am told—well I will go straight. What I am told is that they believe that when the accounts are closed for 2016, the expenditure for Contract Employment may be a little higher than the \$10 million shown in the Revised Estimates. So they are just being safe. [*Crosstalk*] They believe that when the accounts are closed at the end of January 2017, which is four months after the end of the financial year, [*Minister has discussion with technocrat*]



yes—and I am being told that if you look at the actual for 2015, you will see that it was \$12.78 million. So they believe that this figure of \$10 million as being the Revised Estimate may be lower than the actual and therefore, they are simply being cautious.

**Mr. Singh:** You mean higher than the actual.

**Hon. Imbert:** They believe that when the actual figures are dealt with at the end of January, the amount for this Item, 16, Contract Employment, may be closer to \$13 million and therefore, in their pre-budget discussions, they having more detailed knowledge that we, they felt that it was better, more prudent to allocate a higher number or ask for funds to be distributed in such a way that you allocate a higher number to this Item, rather than having to come transfer and vire and so forth later on. That is the reason.

**Mr. Singh:** Interesting accounting.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is no problem. That is the reason.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you advise, in the same line Item No. 16, if all the vacancies in this line Item are filled?

**Hon. Imbert:** Vacancies?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Well, all the contracts, are they filled? All the positions?

**Hon. Imbert:** You do not vacant contract positions.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No. All the positions in the Contract Employment?

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no such thing as a vacant contract position.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So each—how many persons are employed under this

contract then, Sir?

**Hon. Imbert:** You will be provided with that in writing.

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

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, through you. I mean, the Minister of Finance's explanation for the Contract Employment increase of \$3.5 million is that they went over the \$10 million revised of 2016, by \$3 million or thereabouts. I mean, is that a reasonable way for the Tobago House of Assembly to proceed?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes. It is standard practice.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is standard practice?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is done in Ministries, it was done in your Ministry when you were the Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, by law the Assembly gets 4 per cent, in this case \$2 billion and whatever.

**Hon. Imbert:** 4.03 per cent minimum.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Good.

**Hon. Imbert:** It can go higher. It can go up to 6 per cent, I think.

**Dr. Rambachan:** If in these estimates including what they have overestimated as it were for Contract Employment, are they going to be entitled to it whether they spend it or not? And if so, do they retain these moneys at the Assembly?

**Hon. Imbert:** They not overestimated anything. They are being cautious. They are of the view that when the accounts are close, the actual expenditure under this Item would be closer to \$13 million, so out of prudence they have asked for an allocation of \$13.5 million in this Item. In order to achieve that, they would have to reduce something else. Because if you look the overall Head, it has been

reduced by \$9 million.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure. So are you telling me, Minister, that the Tobago House of Assembly does not have accurate records of the number of persons who are employed by the Tobago House of Assembly so that they have to do this “guesstimation” of what they will have to pay?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. I am not telling you that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well is that the reality? Because if they had—

**Hon. Imbert:** No. That is not the reality.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—accurate records, we would not be discussing here whether they have to pay money because they do not know how many people they have employed. You have told me already in the morning that they have employed 1,827 contracts. Is it that they have employed much more than 1,827 on contract?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. The answer to all your questions is, no. And it is standard practice when these estimates are prepared for the revised figure to differ from the final figure when the accounts are closed.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair, line Item 22, Short-Term Employment.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 14?

**Miss Ramdial:** Page 14. Yes. There is an increase, a drastic increase by \$1.2 million. Can we get some clarification please? What I am told is that this vote is used to pay recent university graduates and they have an intention to employ quite a number of university graduates in 2017.

**Miss Ramdial:** Do you have a figure or a number?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that in writing.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you. Line Item 28, Official Overseas Travel. Again, we are seeing a huge increase—well not an increase, but 2016 estimate was \$400,000; 2017, \$400,000; and in 2015 when you compare that it is, at least, \$200,000 increase. Can we get some clarification?

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no increase.

**Miss Ramdial:** I know. [*Crosstalk*] Minister—

**Hon. Imbert:** Since there is no increase, I cannot answer the question.

**Miss Ramdial:** No. Sorry. Sorry. Madam Chair, can I, please. 2015 estimate for overseas travel was \$266,707. In 2016, it was \$400,000 with a Revised Estimate at \$400,000 which showed an increase between 2015 to 2016 and, of course, that stayed that way in 2017 at \$400,000. Minister, can you give a clarification with this?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am afraid I cannot clarify a hypothetical question. The estimate for 2016 was \$400,000, the revised is \$400,000 and the 2017 is \$400,000. I am not dealing with the 2015 figures here. I suggest you ask yourself about that.

**Miss Ramdial:** My next question, Madam Chair. Minister, was this \$400,000 utilized in overseas travel in 2016?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I would think that when the accounts are closed the figure might be a little different because this is clearly an exact number. So it could be three-something, it could be \$410,000, I cannot tell you now, but in fact I am not even supposed to speculate. Let me get an answer.

**Miss Ramdial:** Yes. Please, do.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that to you later.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 22, Short-Term Employment, my colleague raised it, the increase by \$1.2 million and there is an overall increase in Short-Term Employment throughout this exercise of \$7.176 million. So you couple that with the Contract Employment increase of \$36 million together with an increase in Short-Term Employment overall of \$7.1 million. So, I mean, is this another accounting approach that is being taken?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Singh:** And what was the actual for 2017 then in terms of Short-Term Employment?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get the actual for you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Hosting of Conferences, Item 66. We note that there was expenditure of \$3 million in 2016 and another \$1.5 million for 2017. Again, this is the Office of the Chief Secretary. What conferences and seminars were held and what is intended in 2017?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide you with that information.

**Dr. Rambachan:** This is a lot of money for a small island.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. It is not. We spend more than that in one conference.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Information, page 14; Item 007, Public Administration, page 15; Item 008, Tobago Emergency Management Agency, pages 15 and 16; Item 009, Occupational Safety and Health, page 16. Member for Couva South.

**11.00 a.m.**

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, under the Occupational Health and Safety Authority, 16 Contract Employment, have a decrease of \$500,000 in the allocation, could the Minister advise if there is a decrease in the amount of labour inspectors and so on operating in this division?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is not the official OSHA Inspectorate. This is the THA's internal department, and they are rationalizing expenditure. And I can now answer on the Overseas Travel. It is far less than projected; it was instead of \$400,000, it was \$166,000.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And whilst I accept the Minister's explanation in relation to this is not the OSHA agency, what does it mean is that there is a reduction in health and safety coordinators and so on within the Tobago House of Assembly?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, what is the reason for the—

**Hon. Imbert:** They are rationalizing expenditure.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Rationalizing?

**Hon. Imbert:** They are being prudent, efficient.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** We hope health and safety is not compromised?

**Hon. Imbert:** It would not be.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 010, Information Systems Department, pages 16 and 17. Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 16, Contract Employment, again a huge increase by \$1.5 million, some clarification again, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is a new department. Look on the right you would see the note, New Department (Executive Council Minute #53 of January 14, 2010).

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** It took a little while for it to get going, obviously.

**Miss Ramdial:** Minister, can you give an average of how many workers would comprise this unit?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, I will provide that for you later. I will provide you with the number of workers later.

**Miss Ramdial:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I was going to 04, sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Item 04, but we have not reached there as yet.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sub-Item 04, but we have no 04 here.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Current Transfers and Subsidies line—

**Hon. Imbert:** On this Item we have no 04.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, no, no, I said I was going—

**Hon. Imbert:** I know that.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head—

**Hon. Imbert:** I know what you said.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, please. Sub-Head 04, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 17; Item 001, General Administration, page 17; Item 002, Information, page 17; Item 007, Public Administration, page 17; Item 008, Tobago Emergency Management Agency, page 18; Item 009, Occupational Safety and Health, page 18; Item 010, Information Systems Department, page 18; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 18; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 18. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. I would like to get an understanding of who are these non-profit organizations receiving a million dollars every year. They received a million dollars in 2016, according to the estimates, and another million dollars

has been provided? And may I also ask at the same time, what is meant by the representation office and for what purposes have \$500,000 been allocated and used for the Partnership for Political and Economic Transformation in 2016 and now in 2017?

**Hon. Imbert:** We would provide that in writing.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You are going to provide for the Partnership for Political and Economic Transformation also?

**Madam Chairman:** I believe it is with respect to both questions.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Both, okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Transfers to Households, page 18; Item 009, Other Transfers, page 19. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, if you do not have, maybe in writing, what is the Establishment of Comprehensive Economic Development, \$2 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am told this is for the development of a comprehensive economic development plan for Tobago. You do not want a plan for Tobago?

**Mr. Lee:** I never responded.

**Hon. Imbert:** I was looking at your face.

**Mr. Lee:** Eh?

**Hon. Imbert:** I was looking at your face.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, you finished with your question? Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Two million dollars was expended in 2016. We would like to know what was achieved in terms of the development of this plan with this \$2 million that has already been expended? And what is proposed to be achieved by the \$2 million to be spent in 2017? This will mean that this economic



plan is now taking two years to develop, and there was a \$916,000 in 2015 also?

**Hon. Imbert:** One of the problems that we suffer from as a country is the absence of medium-term economic planning. In fact, that was the reason for the downgrade of Trinidad and Tobago under your administration. This is a rolling economic plan, it goes from 2013 to 2017, that is the current one, and they are now developing 2017 to 2020. I think it is very, very important that the THA develops a proper medium-term economic plan, and I think this will be money well spent. And this money was spent in the preparation of the 2013 to 2017 plan.

**Madam Chairman:** Division 3, Finance and Enterprise Development, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 20; Item 001, General Administration, page 20; Item 002, Finance and Accounting, page 20. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance there is an increase of \$2 million. I just want to know whether or not, having regard to the fact that the Auditor General Report, the last report, it was in 2007, and this is Finance and Accounting Division, whether this increase is for personnel to facilitate the Auditor General who made certain—the department that made certain recommendations to the THA, so that therefore their accounts can be kept up-to-date in 2016. The last one was in 2007. Is this \$1.2 million increase or \$2 million increase going to address the issues raised by the Auditor General having regard to the fact that THA accounts date back to 2007?

**Hon. Imbert:** Let me correct the record. You would have been here when the Auditor General was examined and he said he has accounts up to 2008 and he is now doing 2015 going backwards.

**Mr. Singh:** But my question is that whether—the Auditor General can only audit what is available to him in terms of data, and whether or not this moneys will be spent to assist?

**Hon. Imbert:** The mere fact that he is currently in the process of auditing the 2015 accounts of the THA, the answer is self-evident, obviously yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, it was asked.

**Madam Chairman:** It was asked. Item 003, Customs, page 20; Item 004, Inland Revenue, page 21; Item 013, Cooperatives, page 21; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 21, Item 001, General Administration, page 21. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** I am on Goods and Services.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, Sub-Head 002, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, page 21.

**Mr. Singh:** Great. Under Overseas Travel Facilities, I see that there has been \$150,000 associated with this department. This is considerably more than you get from Ministries in Trinidad in terms of their allowance. And I see also that similarly in Item 16, Contract Employment, an increase by \$1.2 million, and whether or not the allocation in 2017 has been exceeded—the actual 2016 has been exceeded, and whether this is another accounting exercise? And similarly in Item 22, Short-Term Employment?

**Hon. Imbert:** If you look at firstly 16, 2015 you will see \$2.3 million, so that the \$2.2 million for 2017 is similar to the 2015. Secondly, in terms of Overseas Travel, from what I have seen from the travel for the office of the Chief Secretary where there was an estimate of 400 and they actually spent 166 I am certain that they will exercise prudence with respect to this Item.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, there is an increase by \$400,000. Can we get a clarification for that, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** I will get the detailed information for you on the increase. But I just want to make a point that when you host conferences and seminars in Tobago, they contribute to economic activity in Tobago. There is something called conference tourism, so that I would encourage conferences in Tobago. As long as they are beneficial I would encourage it in order to employ people and boost economic activity in Tobago.

**Miss Ramdial:** So, Minister, can I infer, this is a new thrust in Tobago to conferencing tourism?

**Hon. Imbert:** I would hope so. I would hope so. That is part of the diversification effort.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Finance and Accounting, page 22, Item 003, Customs, pages 22 and 23; Item 004, Inland Revenue, page 23; Item 007, Fiscal Policy Research Unit, page 23. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. I would like to know what this unit does and what is included here under Other Contracted Services? Is that to pay consultants?

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no allocation for that unit in 2017, so I cannot answer the question.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. So you have struck off the unit?

**Hon. Imbert:** There is a zero allocation, so your question makes no sense.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you did spend money in 2016? You allocated money?

**Hon. Imbert:** You did not ask me that, you said what it is for 2017.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 008, Budget Division, page 24; Item 011, Business Development Unit, page 24. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, Contract Employment again. This is a Business Development Unit, I would like to know what kind of personnel are employed here

under this \$3.3 million? What are they doing? And what have been the achievements of this Business Development Unit that justifies this expenditure of an average of \$3.3 million a year?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, as you may know, Tobago like a lot of typical islands like that, they have difficulty in diversifying their economic base, primarily tourism dependent, and this is all part of their thrust towards business incubation and support for fledgling businesses.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What has been achieved, Minister, as a result of the spending of this 6.6—\$9 million in three years?

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem. Could you clarify what sort of information you require?

**Dr. Rambachan:** I want to know what the business incubators have developed.

**Hon. Imbert:** You want to know what businesses?

**Dr. Rambachan:** What has been developed?

**Hon. Imbert:** What businesses were developed? That is what you want to know?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** I would provide that in writing for you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ma'am, are we on page 26 yet?

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are not on page 26.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Keep me in mind, please.

**Hon. Imbert:** We are on 24 and you are asking about 26?

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

**11.15 a.m.**

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Are we on page 25?

**Hon. Imbert:** “Yuh sleeping.”

**Hon. Member:** Page 24.

**Hon. Imbert:** “Both ah all yuh sleeping.”

**Madam Chairman:** Item 012, Consumer Affairs, pages 24 and 25. Member for Couva South, is this where you—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No. I want to focus on the Financial Literacy Secretariat.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 013, Co-operatives, page 25. Item 015, Financial Literacy Secretariat, pages 25 and 26. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Could the Minister just clarify under Contract Employment how many people would be recruited additionally in relation to the Financial Literacy Secretariat? And to do what?

**Hon. Imbert:** I will get that information to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 016, Youth Energised for Success, page 26. Member for Oropouche East.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I like the name of it.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes. Yes, Minister, could you tell us what this Youth Energised for Success Programme is about and what success they have met?

**Mr. Singh:** Sounds like “Red Bull”.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I like the name.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I have another question.

**Madam Chairman:** One minute please. Minister of Finance, are you in a position to answer or that will be given in writing?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is one question coming from the Member for Oropouche East?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, one question so far.

**Hon. Imbert:** This is to introduce young people to the world of work.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, wonderful. I also, in addition to the information system department you have now, the communications unit, the economic management

and research unit, there are several new units coming on stream in 2017. I just wanted to ask the Minister the rationale for the brand new communication unit—  
[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Wait, wait, please. We are still at Youth Energised for Success.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You are still with the Youth Energised—

**Madam Chairman:** Item 016.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Well, then I can hold—

**Madam Chairman:** I recognize your enthusiasm for us to get—

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am energized here.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. We now move on to Item 017, Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit, page 26; Item 018, Communication Unit, page 27. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I took note of this, another new department coming on stream and I wanted to ask the Minister for the rationale for a new department of the Communication Unit and took note as well that the Minister will have his way, that there are conferences to be hosted for \$1.1 million. What is the rationale for this Communication Unit in 2017?

**Mr. Singh:** THA elections.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What is it?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** THA elections.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I must protest. The Members of the Opposition cannot ask and answer their own questions.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, but I am not accepting that answer. What is the answer?

**Hon. Imbert:** My understanding is, and firstly, the reason why I am answering the

questions with the assistance of the Administrator and his staff, is because this Item does not have a line Minister per se. So it is not the Minister who will have his way to have conferences. I just want to clear that up.

Secondly, I am told that this unit and the next one were always contained within the Finance and Enterprise Development Division of the Tobago House of Assembly, but they were subsumed into the general expenditure. The expenditure is now being broken out to particularize the details of the expenditure on these particular items. But these activities were always there.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So the Minister is saying that is the reason why you will now expend a \$10 million on both new units? Okay, I accept that.

**Hon. Imbert:** Nobody is expending it now, it was always being spent.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 019, Economic Management and Research Unit, page 27, Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I noticed that under Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, \$2.5 million has been allocated and in addition to that, Short-Term Employment also \$200,000. And under Other Contracted Services, \$1.5 million. Does Other Contracted Services have the employment of consultants in addition to the Contract Employment? And what is the composition of the Other Contracted Services?

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay. Firstly, I would like to draw Members attention to the Explanatory Note that this was formerly the fiscal Policy and Research Unit. It is simply being reorganized and renamed as the Economic Management and Research Unit. So it was always there. And Other Contracted Services would be all sorts of services not just staff or persons or consultants. It would be all sort of services.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So that you have the Economic Management and Research Unit—is the work of that unit different to the work of the Business Development Unit?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes. As you can see it was formally Fiscal Policy and Research. And I would think that a Member of your distinguished academic credentials—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:**—would know the difference between fiscal policy and economic management.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You care to educate me?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. I think you know.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You tried to educate the Central Bank Governor.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, I now recognize the Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Through you to the hon. Minister. Minister, you mentioned that formally this was the Fiscal Policy and Research Unit and it is now being established as the Economic Management and Research Unit now rebranded and reorganized. Is this the conceptualizing of this new Economic Management and Research Unit in a rebranded, reorganized fashion, is this an attempt that we are being presented with to have the financial reports of the THA more timely, seeing that so many of them have been outstanding.

And also if you can indicate if the answer is in the affirmative, how do they plan to proceed with respect to all those outstanding financial reports?

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. First let me correct some egregious, erroneous statements made in this House. The THA has submitted financial statements to the Auditor General's Department all the way up to 2015. I want to read into the record, they have submitted 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, so that it is no fault of



the THA that audited accounts are not available. That would have to be a matter for the Auditor General's Department. So that the question is moot since the statements have been submitted. The question is moot.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** My question has been asked, Madam Chair.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, through you, the Fiscal Policy Research Unit, the total was \$1.166 million. This Economic Management and Research Unit is \$5.322 million, and \$4 million of that is for Contract Employment and Other Contracted Services. I mean, clearly this is more than the fiscal unit. What is the idea behind this particular unit besides employing people on contract?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I do not think it is clear.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is clear.

**Hon. Imbert:** To you, not to me. This is a Fiscal Policy and Research Unit. It is difficult to answer your questions as I do not agree with the premise.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The unit on page 27, Item 019, is called Economic Management and Research Unit. So clearly it is more than the fiscal unit that existed before and it requires more contract labour of various kinds than before. So I am just trying to understand what is the role and function. I just heard that you have a rolling economic plan, et cetera, 13 to 17, et cetera, and you have another unit to deal with that.

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. We will get a summary for you of the role and functions, duties, responsibilities, aims and objectives of this unit. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Have you determined what the organizational structure of this unit will be? The kind of personnel required and have job descriptions or position descriptions been prepared for these positions?

**Hon. Imbert:** I will provide that in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 27; Item 001, General Administration, page 27. Item 002, Finance and Accounting, page 28; Item 003, Customs; Item 004, Inland Revenue; Item 007, Fiscal Policy Research Unit; Item 008, Budget Division; Item 011, Business Development Unit, page 29; Item 012, Consumer Affairs; Item 013, Co-operatives; Item 015, Financial Literacy Secretariat; Item 016, Youth Energised for Success; Item 017, Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit, page 30.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 30; Item 005, Non-Profit Institution. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. I would like to know, who were the non-profit organizations benefiting from the \$4 million in 2016 and the cut now is for \$2 million. How do they propose to distribute this \$2 million and what criteria is used to make this distribution?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Households, page 30. The Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see in Item 04 under Households, Emergency Medical and Social Assistance Card. There is an allocation of \$500,000. There was no allocation prior. Could the hon. Member explain what is this Emergency Medical and Social Assistance Card?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am told that this is equivalent of the food card in Trinidad. It may have been identified under a separate Head before, but that is what it is.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Sub-Item 03, Payment of Superannuation Benefits to Farmers. There is a \$1.4 million increase—to Farmer. Can we get some clarification for this please?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is a typographical error.

**Miss Ramdial:** That is a what?

**Hon. Imbert:** Typographical error. It should be Former Assemblymen.

**Miss Ramdial:** Former Assemblymen, okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers, page 30. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Madam Chair. I am looking at Sub-Item 25, the Establishment of a Public Private Partnership Unit. You had \$500,000 in 2016, that has gone to a whopping \$2 million now. Could you indicate what has led to this increase from \$500,000 budgeted before to \$2 million for the Public Private Partnership Unit and who are you partnering with?

**Hon. Imbert:** Answer to part (a), it is because there is a new thrust towards the use of this mechanism to provide goods and services. The answer to part (b) will be provided in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I will ask another question but I will put that question in writing.

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister clarify Sub-Item 27, Venture Capital, \$1.5 million. What are they venturing in?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, you know the Venture Capital Programme in Trinidad was not successful but the Tobagonians are of the view that it is still a worthwhile venture, pardon the pun, and they are going to pursue a venture capital arrangement in Tobago in 2017.

**11.30 a.m.**

**Mr. Lee:** A follow up. Could the Minister elaborate a little bit more on how they are going to pursue this venture?

**Hon. Imbert:** A company would be established. I do not know if you know how the old venture capital system worked. People put in capital and they get a tax

write-off for it. But they put their capital at risk. The Trinidad experiment was not successful, but it is something that is used all over the world. It is very well-documented and used in the United States. So entrepreneurs or, you know, investors, put their capital at risk and they get fiscal concession—tax concessions—because of that. So you use a company which would assess the projects, the viability of the projects and determine which projects should qualify for venture capital.

**Mr. Lee:** Last follow up. Is the Minister stating that, or he feels that it might be more successful in Tobago than it was in Trinidad?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, the THA thinks so, obviously, so we are not going to hold them back. If they feel they could find Tobagonians who would have successful projects, we would not hold them back at all.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 24, the Research and Development Council. Can you give us an idea of what is the mandate of this council and what areas of R&D do they focus on?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see under Other Transfers, Item 15, Interest on Project Financing Repayment, I would like to get a listing of what projects that we are financing.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Secondly, Tobago Cassava Products Limited, we had, 2015, \$3 million; 2016, \$4 million; 2016 revised estimate, \$4 million and 2017, \$3 million. So there is a cumulative amount of money invested in Tobago Cassava Products Limited. I want to know—we would like to get a sense of the efficiency of the utilization of this capital because this is effectively a State company, and similarly the Fish Processing Company which you have investments of \$3 million, \$5

million, \$5 million, \$3 million, and there is an increase now of \$2 million in that area. I would like to get a sense of how much money we have invested in these enterprises and what are the returns on our investment, whether it is jobs, whether it is the creation of linkages with the farming community and the fishing community. But I would really like to find out the efficacy of this investment.

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem, but it is decreases, not increases. You are looking at the wrong line.

**Mr. Singh:** Yes, it is a decrease of \$1 million and \$2 million, right, but there is significant investment.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide the information for you.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 23, Productivity Council. There is a \$200,000 increase to this particular unit. I would like to know what this unit does.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that in writing, but I think it is self-evident. But we will provide it in writing.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you. And how many persons comprise this unit?

**Hon. Imbert:** Unit? It is a council.

**Miss Ramdial:** Sorry, council, yes. How many persons are on this council?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, hon. Minister, the project financing repayments, line Item 26, what is the principal amount that is required here in terms of the project? You indicated that you will give the Member for Oropouche East—

**Hon. Imbert:** But, you know, I said I will provide details of this to the Member for Chaguanas West. You want the same details?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What is that?

**Hon. Imbert:** I said to the Member for Chaguanas West I will provide full

particulars.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Of what?

**Hon. Imbert:** Of the projects: what it is all about; what the payment for, et cetera.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Take your time.

**Hon. Imbert:** I have to take my time?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would you give the principal amounts for each project?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have any idea what these projects are, offhand?

**Hon. Imbert:** I said I would—look, you are asking the same question that the Member for Chaguanas West asked—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are being aggressive again.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will provide the information: what the projects are—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Calm yourself down. Do not be aggressive.

**Hon. Imbert:**—how much they cost; what are they for, et cetera.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will give you a Prozac. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, this is not a joke.

**Madam Chairman:** Members—

**Hon. Imbert:** They are asking the same question over and over—

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Minister of Finance—

**Hon. Imbert:**—and when I complain, they are making all sorts of scandalous remarks.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, direct your complaints to the Chair.

**Hon. Imbert:** But I am complaining to you, Madam. I am complaining to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Questions have been asked, Madam Chair—

**Hon. Imbert:** Same question over and over; over and over.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Could I ask a different question? I want the very calm Minister to just give us an explanation as to the difference between the Research and Development Council, which now takes a tune of \$800,000—Item 24 I am at, Research and Development Council—from the work that will be done by the Economic Management and Research Unit and the Business Development Unit. And, Minister, in the context of a cut in budget throughout all the Ministries, I take note that you have moved the other transfers by 62 per cent, from \$46 million to \$74 million, an increase of 62 per cent. Could you explain that?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am going to complain to you now, Madam Chairman. I have answered those questions already. Do I need to answer them again?

**Madam Chairman:** No.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But he has not explained that.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I hope I am not asking a question that was asked already. Line Item 20, Information Technology Centre—that has been asked?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. Lee:** Sizeable transfers have been taking place and contributing to this centre. Could the Minister explain what this centre is about, what it does?

**Madam Chairman:** Item 20?

**Hon. Imbert:** That provides all the IT and ICT for the THA. That is what that is. That is their information centre. It provides all of the ICT services for the THA.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. Madam Chair, I just do not want to go back but I remember—to recollecting there was a new unit formed somewhere early on, an information unit. How does that differ from this centre?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. That other unit, although that is not this line Item, is information in the office of the Chief Secretary. This unit here provides all of the ICT services and I am told it is a 211 call centre that takes the calls and deals with matters when people call the number 211 in Tobago. That would be the emergency services, like our 911.

**Mr. Lee:** Line Item 21, Minister. Industrial Company of Tobago, an increase of \$1 million. What is that—?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, that is the Cove Estate. I wish I could give them more.

**Madam Chairman:** Division 5, Tourism and Transportation. Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 31; Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Tourism.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sub-Item 02, Wages and Cost of Living Allowance of \$17.6 million. Could you give an understanding of the amount of personnel that this will be paying for—\$17.6 million under Tourism? How many personnel would this be the wages for?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide that in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 31. Item 001, General Administration.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, \$2.5 million. Can we get some clarification as to the expenditure here?

**Hon. Imbert:** What exactly do you want? This is for office space. What you want to know?

**Miss Ramdial:** Is it moneys for office accommodation?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Miss Ramdial:** And what about storage, any expenditure on storage?



**Hon. Imbert:** Very little.

**Miss Ramdial:** Where are the offices housed?

**Hon. Imbert:** All over Tobago.

**Miss Ramdial:** Can we get a list of them? Would you take an undertaking to give us a list?

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you very much.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006. Item 002, Tourism, pages 32 to 33.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Page 33, Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. I see there has been a decrease of \$10 million under Promotions, Publicity and Printing. What effect would this have on the occupancy rate of Tobago? And may I ask, what is the current occupancy rate in Tobago, excluding locals from Trinidad to Tobago?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I think it would take a quantum leap to jump from occupancy rate in Tobago to Promotions, Publicity and Printing. So I am afraid that I cannot answer that question.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. Has any consideration been given to destination advertising abroad? Because abroad we see Turks and Caicos, St. Lucia, Barbados, Bahamas and we never see Tobago being advertised. Where is that money going? And could consideration be given to doing what successful countries like Bahamas and Barbados do? Is this only staffing?

**Hon. Imbert:** What I am told is that this is purely for local purposes. There is another line Item that deals with destination promotion.

**Mr. Charles:** When you talk about local, this is internal tourism?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes. There is another line Item that deals with destination promotion. This is what I am told.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 16 on page 32, Contract Employment for \$4 million. Could you give us—?

**Hon. Imbert:** Could I just get clarity? Member for Naparima, were you on page 32 or page 33?

**Mr. Charles:** I was on page 33, Item 62.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is what I thought. The administrator got a little muddled up here. Well, he had jumped.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, no. We are on pages 32 and 33, Item 002, Tourism.

**Hon. Imbert:** I know, but what the administrator was looking at is the 62. There is a 62 and 32, and he thought it was that.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, but that is General Administration, Goods and Services.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah. So we are dealing with this.

**Madam Chairman:** So you are answering the question for the Member for Naparima?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes. This is used for destination promotion, this line Item.

**Mr. Charles:** Could the Minister indicate how many advertisements and with whom abroad have these advertisements been placed?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is in 2016 you are talking about?

**Mr. Charles:** In 2016.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. I will get the information for you.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** And I am just speaking now as the Minister of Finance. If the THA needs to supplement this vote to do more destination promotion, I would certainly assist them.

**Mr. Charles:** I think it is a question of prioritizing, that money is being spent on

tourism in Trinidad; the money is being spent here for staffing and infrastructure rather than doing what it is supposed to do, bringing tourists abroad.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am not fighting you, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay, Sir. Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** In fact, that is an excellent idea. Okay?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, through you, Mr. Minister, is there a correlation between the cut in expenditure on Item 62 in 2015 from \$26 million to \$18 million in 2016, to \$8 million in 2017—a correlation between those cuts and the current levels of hotel occupancy in Tobago, excluding occupancy by Trinidadians?

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not think I can answer a complex question like that just like that. That would probably need the entire research policy division.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can you say, Mr. Minister, whether, in fact, tourist arrivals from foreign destinations have dropped in 2016 over 2015, and by how much?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide you with the information.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was just asking, Item 16 on page 32, the Contract Employment of \$4 million, and same Item 16 on Tourism, \$4 million again, the amount of personnel that would be involved in those contract employments in both areas.

**11.45 a.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Was that question asked already?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, no. I asked it but he did not answer it, the one on 16.

**Madam Chairman:** But he said the information will be given in writing. I believe that is what the answer to that was.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Both areas?

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Transportation, page 33. I know we are all tired, but we need to pay attention.

**Hon. Members:** No, we are not tired.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is not the reason for their inability to pay attention.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Transportation, page 33.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see in Transportation you have Overseas Travel of \$600,000. The Ministry of Tourism in Trinidad has an Overseas Travel Vote of \$320,000. I can understand the necessity for travel, but I would tend to think that the Ministry of Tourism ought to be certainly matched by this department. It seems to be carrying the Overseas Travel. I would like to find out the benefits from this, this significant investment of \$600,000 in Overseas Travel as against the Minister and Ministry of Tourism?

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

**Mr. Singh:** Well, what are the benefits to be gained from this \$600,000 travel as against the \$320 travel for the Ministry of Tourism?

**Hon. Imbert:** I cannot see how you could ask that question.

**Mr. Singh:** Well, I am asking it.

**Hon. Imbert:** What does this have to do with the Ministry of Tourism? Nothing! So if you want to ask what they intend to do with this, I will provide the information.

**Mr. Singh:** Let us get that too.

**Hon. Imbert:** Not too, only.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 33; Item 001, General Administration, page 33; Item 002, Tourism, page 34; Item 006, Transportation, page 34. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 34; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 009, Other Transfers.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Minister, I see here the Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan you spent \$58 million in 2015, but budgeted \$100 million in 2016 and is now estimated in 2017 to be \$70 million. Now that is over \$220 million on

the tourism plan. I am simply asking, would that money not be better spent on housing in Tobago which is a crisis that the people of Tobago face? And my second question, No. 17, Tourism Festivals. You are budgeting \$18 million in 2017 having spent \$18 million in 2015; again, would that money not be better spent on housing in Tobago?

**Hon. Imbert:** The answer is no to both, and you should know that that Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan is airlift which all islands in the Caribbean pay for in order to promote their tourism.

**Dr. Moonilal:** This plan is what, to be subsidy to the airlift?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is airlift. It is buying airlift from international airlines. All islands in the Caribbean do that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Then please take steps to correct these line Items.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is misleading.

**Hon. Imbert:** But you were in Government, you should know.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, but I am telling you that—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members!

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are responsible for this.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** But you knew what it is. You forget already.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East, you have a follow up question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** My follow up question, would the Minister make a commitment to change these headings which are misleading if he is saying that this is for airlift and it is not a tourism plan for \$210 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, they were not misleading for the last five years. It is the same allocation—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Moonilal:** He cannot change it because he knows what it is.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, we have had a certain conception by the words, we got an explanation for it. Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, line Item 17, Tobago Tourism Festivals. Could we get some clarification as to which festivals are being referenced here?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well since you have the Tobago portfolio, it appears, I do not know why—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Ramdial:** That is your assumption, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, you have been stuck on Tobago.

**Miss Ramdial:** Answer my question, please.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, let us just be very crisp with the questions and the answers.

**Hon. Imbert:** You should know.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, could we please have the answer to the question?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am answering. The Member should know about jazz, blue food, dragon boat, heritage and other festivals in Tobago. *[Crosstalk]* “Doh go to Tobago nah.” No problem.

**Madam Chairman:** Could all the crosstalk stop please.

**Hon. Imbert:** He does not like Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, please. Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you. Madam Chair, through you, in light of the festivals highlighted—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Imbert:** You are against Tobago?

**Miss Ramdial:** No—the revenue generation from these festivals have not been to Tobago’s benefit. Can the Minister state whether or not there is an intention to

improve how these festivals are managed, how they are implemented and all of that within Tobago to realize revenue from these festivals?

**Hon. Imbert:** That question is riddled with non sequiturs and impossible to answer. Everything does not follow from what you said.

**Miss Ramdial:** Madam Chair, let me rephrase it so that the Minister could understand in layman terms. These festivals over the past years have not brought any sort of substantive revenues for Tobago. I want to ask the Minister, with an increase by \$8 million to host these festivals, is it in your estimation still feasible to do so?

**Hon. Imbert:** The beginning of that question is a non sequitur. It does not follow, and therefore, the question does not follow. It is not possible to answer a question based on a false premise.

**Miss Ramdial:** Madam Chair, there is data out there to show that these festivals have not been generating revenue to Tobago's benefit, and I think that these are moneys that should be—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Moonilal:** Housing.

**Miss Ramdial:** Of course—put into other areas. I just want to highlight to the Parliament that we should be looking at other ways in which to make these festivals much more—well, of course, to bring revenue, in a way that it can be implemented and managed to bring revenue to Tobago. As it stands right now, it is not generating revenues for the Tobago people.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is? And the question is, Member for Couva North?

**Miss Ramdial:** What is the reason for the increase by \$8 million in light of these festivals not generating revenue for Tobago?

**Hon. Imbert:** The festivals generate revenue for Tobago hence the increase.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** My colleague asked the question.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, again through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister line Item 16 Assistance to Sport Tourism Organisation and it ends there, an allocation of \$2 million, can you give us an idea of what is the mandate of the Sport Tourism Organisation and what work have they been undertaking over the past year?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is assistance to clubs to put on sporting events in Tobago as a means of boosting tourism, such as triathlons and cycling and that sort of thing in Tobago. That is what it is for.

**Mr. Padarath:** And how has that been working so far over the past year in terms of competing with other Caribbean countries, being able to bring in international teams because it is part of the sport tourism thrust it seems?

**Hon. Imbert:** You finished your questions? Well. The answer is well.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well?

**Hon. Imbert:** You asked how it is working, I said well.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Item 13, the Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan and the Minister indicated that this \$290 million from 2015 is for airlift capability. I would like to get—you may not have that information—the airlines and the number of seats purchased over the three-year period, then we can quantify that—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Imbert:** I will provide the information, but we are talking about British Airways, Condor, Virgin, and so on.

**Mr. Singh:** Let us get some details, please.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, I will provide it. Do not beat a dead horse.



**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, to the Minister, line Item 17 again. Given that we are in trying times financially and in 2016 the festivals lived with a \$10 million subvention, why is there a need to increase it to \$18 million this year?

**Hon. Imbert:** You are talking about the local festivals that earn so much revenue for Tobago?

**Mr. Lee:** I am not talking about revenue. I am talking about—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, that is the answer. They earn so much revenue for Tobago that we are increasing the allocation to earn more revenue.

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

**Mr. Lee:** I give up, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 15, 009, the research is showing that small properties, there is a greater multiplier effect than the Sandals-type hotel. In that context, do you not think that consideration could be given to increasing that \$1 million in terms of assistance to small properties in Tobago? And I do not want to hear about the past. I want to hear about the future as we move forward and the multiplier effect for tourist spend.

**Hon. Imbert:** Firstly, I am afraid I cannot entertain your request about what you do not want to hear. You will hear what you have to hear, and there is no evidence to support your theory that the larger ventures contribute less than the smaller ones.

**Mr. Charles:** In my budget address I quoted a book, and research which said that the multiplier effect is less per Sandals-type investment.

**Hon. Imbert:** I could quote 10 books and say the opposite.

**Mr. Charles:** Chair, if we look at a small property, the mortgage is low, the cement is low—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. I think there is a question. Let us do not debate, analysis, question.

**Mr. Charles:** The question is: is it adequate in your view, the \$1 million to all the small properties in the entirety of Tobago?

**Hon. Imbert:** We look at it and if it needs to be supplemented, we will supplement it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Over the last three years under Item 9, sub 13, approximately \$190 million would be spent on this airlift. Has the fiscal policy unit, or the Business Development Unit, or the now transformed unit, done any kind of analysis and research to determine what are the net economic benefits for Tobago as a result of this expenditure over the last three years of \$190 million in airlift?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can that report be made available to us, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** Whatever is available will be provided.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, with due respect through the Chair, you said that it was done and there are economic benefits—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Member, the answer I take it is yes. Whatever there is would be provided. I think that is what you want.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can I just ask him one simple question through you, please?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** All these assurances that are being given, we are taking note and a list of these assurances so that we will be able to have provided to the Opposition a list.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I think I would refer you to, I believe it is Bulletin No. 2.

**Hon. Imbert:** What line Item is that, Madam Chairman?

**Madam Chairman:** This is general information. I think it is Bulletin No. 2 which

was circulated.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure. I am just confirming it, Madam.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, through you, to the Minister. 08 under 009, is that the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute, or is it something else? Just clarification I am seeking.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am told that it is an institute. It is in effect the Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. It is not the Trinidad and Tobago Institute delivering programmes, or is it something else?

**Hon. Imbert:** Apparently it is an independent institution, so that perhaps it should properly be called the Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And that is state-owned or private?

**Hon. Imbert:** State-owned.

**12.00 noon**

**Dr. Tewarie:** Are we at 04 Current Transfers yet, Chair?

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Are we at 04, Current Transfers yet? We are there?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, that is where we are, that is the whole Sub-Head, but we are at 009, Other Transfers.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right, okay. And on 19 there, under 04, Current Transfers, you have Zip Line Management. Is this a state investment in zip line? Is this a House of Assembly investment in zip line?

**Hon. Imbert:** PPP.

**Dr. Tewarie:** There is a private entity in partnership.

**Hon. Imbert:** Private/public partnership. But it is zipping along.

**Madam Chairman:** Division 06, Education, Youth Affairs and Sports; Sub-Head

01, Personnel Expenditure, page 36; Item 001, General Administration, page 36.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The same question in terms of the personnel, the Item 01, the \$13.4 million represents how many workers there to be paid with the \$13.4 million? And while we are on the page, Madam Chair—

**Madam Chairman:** We are on 01, Salaries and Cost of Living—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, in an attempt to avoid a question of this nature on every single Item, I have a document that gives a breakdown for every Division in Tobago for short-term contracted officers, daily-rated, public servants, et cetera. Okay? With respect to this particular one, this is education, there are 131 short-term employees, 636 contracted officers, 488 daily-rated officers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And how many teachers?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will have to provide you with that kind of information, we do not have that breakdown here.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, I appreciate it, you are making a try.

**Madam Chairman:** Was the question asked under General—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, I had asked this under Personnel Expenditure, 01.

**Madam Chairman:** Fine. Item 002, Primary Secondary and Vocational Education.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I asked the question there and he said he will provide the answer.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide it for you. We will break down the public servants for you as well. This is just the contract officers and daily-rated.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Library Services, page 36; Item 005, Sport; Item 007, Happy Haven School - Tobago Council; Item 008, Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language.

We now go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 37. Item 001, General Administration, page 37; Item 002, Primary Secondary and Vocational Education; Item 003, Library Services; Item 005, Sport; Item 006, Youth; Item 007, Happy Haven School; Item 008, Tobago School for Deaf, Speech and Language.

Subhead 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, we are at page 41. Item 001, General Administration, page 41; Item 002, Primary Secondary and Vocational Education; Item 003, Library Services; Item 007, Happy Haven School; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The line Item 03, Assistance to Sporting Organizations, you may not have the answer but could you give us a listing of the sporting organizations and the contributions to these?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Educational Institutions.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Item 03 under that, Trade Centres. How many trade centres are there and how many students are in the trade centres?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get the information for you, cannot be a lot though.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thirteen million dollars a year.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. We will get it for you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Households.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, in the School Feeding Programme for Tobago as well, you have cut \$15 million from the original \$55 million in 2016. Are you going to explain why you have cut this \$15 million—

**Hon. Imbert:** Because—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Because 83 you took in Trinidad, you are cutting 15—

**Hon. Imbert:** I will answer you, there is no need to continue with the question. I will answer you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, go ahead, we are listening to you.

**Hon. Imbert:** Because \$40 million is adequate.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sorry? You are speaking very softly at times and very loudly.

**Hon. Imbert:** “So yuh doh like it when ah talk soft, yuh doh like it when ah talk loud.” [*Laughter*] “Ah doh know what to do.” I would have to walk with a device to measure my decibel level. The \$40 million is adequate.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So it is adequate?

**Hon. Imbert:** Because the expenditure that they are picking up for 2016 is \$38 million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, once the children are not—

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no problem.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are you making sure that the children are fed?

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no problem.

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

**Mr. Singh:** The question was answered but I am going to Other Transfers when you get there.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The Students Support Services Unit, I see an increase of \$2.3 million in the 2017 estimates, could the Minister provide the reason or rationale for this?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, that is for counselling services and other forms of student support and the THA is of the view that they need to intensify their efforts in this area and provide more support to students.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to have an appreciation of

what is Basic Grants because there is an allocation of \$12.5 million for that. And secondly, Grants to Necessitous Students attending Public—I do not know what, public school I take it. So that therefore, with respect to Item 01, Basic Grants, the criteria for that, and how do you go about allocating those grants. What is the process for that? And 06, how many students are the beneficiaries of these and the criteria for that too?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay, the Basic Grants are for situations where students are placed in private schools as we have in Trinidad or had in Trinidad in the past. You would recall in the past, they would pay private schools to take students. Okay? So that is what Basic Grants is for.

**Mr. Singh:** But there is an allocation, with respect, Minister—is this for primary school? Because there is an allocation for—

**Hon. Imbert:** Secondary, secondary. But you must be familiar with the arrangement in Trinidad where students were placed in private schools.

**Mr. Singh:** No, but there is an allocation, Item 20, under 04, for Fees for Students at Private Secondary Schools of \$1 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** But I am advised that these grants are for the placement of students in private schools. Okay? If there is duplication with 20, I will look into that.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, look into it. And then 06.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will find out how many students were assisted and how much and that sort of thing. Okay? I will provide it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, Madam Chair, the question was asked.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Division 07, Community Development and Culture. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 44; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development; Item 003, Culture. Sub-Head 02, Goods and

Services, page 45, Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development; Item 003, Culture. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 46; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development; Item 003, Culture, page 47. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 47; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line 18, Shaw Park Cultural Complex, I see an increase by \$2 million, can we get some clarification for that?

**Hon. Imbert:** Previously it was not operational, it is operational now so the expenses will go up.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. At Item 17, would the Minister indicate, what is the Special Community Programme that spent \$3 million in 2015?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get back to you on that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You will get back to me, okay.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Chairman. Item 02, Assistance to Cultural Groups and I am asking that in the context of the page before where we had 89 Cultural Programmes and we had \$1 million allocation, and now we have to the groups—cultural groups of—an allocation of \$1.5 million. Is this not a case of doubling up on the same Item?

**Hon. Imbert:** What is the other Item that is troubling you?

**Mr. Charles:** No, I was talking about Item 89, Cultural Programmes.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, I know. So you are saying there is duplication—

**Mr. Charles:** For example, you have the heritage fund—I saw it somewhere—91, Tobago Heritage Festival and previously, we had assistance to development of cultural tourism and now I am also seeing Assistance to Cultural Groups. It seems to me that—



**Hon. Imbert:** Well, it is not.

**Mr. Charles:** I am just asking.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I am just answering you. It is not duplication.

**Mr. Charles:** So indicate to me how does cultural groups differ to all the other cultural organizations that get assistance.

**Hon. Imbert:** I think the way to deal with that is to provide you with a list of the groups that received assistance and you can see for yourself.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. That is all I am asking.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Regional Complexes, Item 16, what are these regional complexes that this expenditure takes care of?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Oh sorry. Could you repeat the question, please?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Regional Complexes, line Item 16, what are these regional complexes that the \$4.5 million is being paid for?

**Hon. Imbert:** These would be the complexes that are larger than a typical community centre. It would be regional complexes. We have them in Trinidad as well. So it is just a large establishment; that is what it is.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, I got an appreciation of what you are speaking about.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 26, it is a new Sub-Item, Assistance to Pan Group, \$1 million. Can we get some explanation with respect to this?

**Hon. Imbert:** I would assume it is to help steel bands but I will get the information for you.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thanks.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Chairman, my colleague, the Member for Couva

North, raised the issue.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we are on to Item 007, Households, page 47; Item 009, Other Transfers, page 47. Member for Tabaquite.

**12.15 p.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** Export centres, I see we have spent an average of \$2 million on these export centres. What are these export centres doing, and what are the economic benefits they have brought to Tobago by this \$2 million a year that we are spending?

**Hon. Imbert:** They export.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Export. Can we get a report of what they have exported?

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And what are the net economic benefits that have been brought to Trinidad as a result?

**Hon. Imbert:** Export.

**Dr. Rambachan:** This is an investment. An investment should bring you a return that is higher than the investment.

**Hon. Imbert:** I answered you. I said export.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Have we been getting a net benefit to Tobago as a result?

**Hon. Imbert:** The net benefit is exports. Anything that is exported earns foreign exchange. That is a benefit.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But can we get how much foreign exchange has been earned as a result of the investment of this \$2 million a year in export centres?

**Hon. Imbert:** Of course. If I am going to give you a list of the exports, you will get how much it is, obviously.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Division 8, Infrastructure and Public Utilities; Sub-Head 01,

Personnel Expenditure, page 48; Item 001, General Administration, page 48; Item 002, Maintenance of Roads, page 48.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you very much. Item 02, Wages and Cost of Living Allowance, \$190 million, which is an increase of \$8 million for maintenance of roads. You indicated that you will give the figures for employment, and so on, would you have any information on the number of personnel for the maintenance of roads here for \$190 million? Together with that, if you—I do not know if I could—

**Hon. Imbert:** \$190 million?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** \$190 million for wages for maintenance of roads.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, that would be the daily-rated workers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Daily-rated?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, that is what wages is. Ask your colleague on the left. Salaries is monthly and wages is daily; everybody knows that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. I am asking the number of personnel that is responsible for.

**Hon. Imbert:** This makes up the bulk of the workers at the THA, the daily-rated. In this division there are 5,583 daily-rated workers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Wow. All right, Minister.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** My colleague, the Member for Caroni East, asked the question, Ma'am. I will pass.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Maintenance of Buildings.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A similar question. How many personnel involved in the daily-rated workers for maintenance of buildings for \$44 million? So, together is a \$134 million for daily-rated workers, \$234 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is with contained—do you want it broken down into which workers work on buildings, which work on roads?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, no. It is all right. You said it is daily-rated workers.

**Hon. Imbert:** The five thousand figure I gave you is for the entire division. What do you want?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, it is for roads and buildings?

**Hon. Imbert:** Everything.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right, okay, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** The whole division.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Transport, page 49; Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate; Item 007, Mechanical Workshop; Item 008, Unemployment Relief Programme.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 007, Mechanical Workshop, the figure that the hon. Minister gave of 5,583, is Item 02 included in that figure, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Imbert:** The 5,583 is every single daily-rated worker in the Infrastructure and Public Utilities Division.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. What about Mechanical Workshop, 007, \$10 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** What is the question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many workers are there in the mechanical workshop?

**Hon. Imbert:** I said the total is for everybody. I also said if you want it broken done by roads, buildings, we will provide that to you in due course.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right, okay, well thanks.

**Hon. Imbert:** How many times "yuh go ask meh" the same question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, no, this is a different Item, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me, we are on Item 008, Unemployment Relief Programme.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I am on Goods and Services.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 50; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want clarification. I see recurring throughout the THA there are two Items. I would use this as a reflection of that, Item 02, Overseas Travel Facilities. The actual in 2015 was \$41,722. The 2016 estimate was \$300,000. The revised estimate was \$300,000 and the 2017 estimate was \$50,000, a decrease of \$250,000. Under Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, so you have overseas travel facilities and official overseas travel. Under Official Overseas Travel, you had an actual of \$220,000 in 2015. What is, I mean, I do not understand. So what is facilities, as against official overseas travel? It occurs under each department.

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. This book has all the information in it. I would refer you to page XIX and it tells you what it is and I will now read and I would ask you in the future “read de book, nah”. So, on page XIX, 02, Overseas Travel Facilities is the:

“Cost of Overseas Travel Facilities due to eligible Monthly-Paid Officers whose remuneration is within the purview of the Salaries Review Commission of which is not a Direct Charge on the Consolidated Fund”—formerly called Leave Passage.

Okay?

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** So that is obviously for the Assemblymen, the Councillors, the Chief Secretary, and so on. Okay? All right?

**Mr. Singh:** And Overseas Travel facilities.

**Hon. Imbert:** "Oh, God, that in the book too."

**Mr. Singh:** Well, let me hear.

**Mr. Imbert:** "Go and look in the book nah." Overseas travel is normal overseas travel. Okay? It is not personal to anybody. It would be for travel overseas for conferences and that sort of thing.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I just want to share. To the Minister, 16, Contract Employment has moved from \$7 million to \$16 million; a jump of \$9 million. Could the Minister provide some additional information and shed some light on this jump or increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** If you look at 2015, the expenditure was 14, so there is a view that 16 is required for 2017.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I did not hear you, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not want to shout, you know. You would say I am shouting.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no.

**Hon. Imbert:** But I will try.

**Mr. Singh:** Just remain calm.

**Hon. Imbert:** On 16, in 2015, the expenditure was \$14 million. So it is believed that \$16 million is adequate for 2017.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Mine was answered. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Maintenance of Roads.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. When I look at the total for maintenance of roads, I see a figure of \$53.6 million and when I compare that with what the Princes Town Regional Corporation got for roads and bridges, maintenance of roads, it is \$4 million. And when I look at the Development Programme for the entirety of Trinidad, it is in the vicinity of \$26 million. Would the Minister care to give us a reason why Tobago, with a population of under 50

million, is getting more than, comparatively, the Princes Town Regional Corporation that handles about 95,000 citizens?

**Hon. Imbert:** If you can probably give the line Item.

**Mr. Charles:** The line Item is the total of 01, 03, 04, 05 and the bottom, the total is \$53.6 million, maintenance of roads. I am just asking. When I look at the comparative figures for Princes Town Regional Corporation, I see \$4 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not understand. The question does not follow.

**Mr. Charles:** How it does not follow?

**Hon. Imbert:** Because you have a Ministry of Works and Transport as well.

**Mr. Charles:** Well, I gave you the figure for the Ministry of Works and Transport and the total is under \$50 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** Your arithmetic is wrong.

**Mr. Charles:** For maintenance of roads.

**Hon. Imbert:** Because your arithmetic is wrong.

**Mr. Charles:** It is not wrong.

**Hon. Imbert:** Your premise is false.

**Mr. Charles:** My premise is not false.

**Hon. Imbert:** I cannot answer the question.

**Mr. Charles:** I could point you to—if you look at the Developmental Programme—[*Interruption*]

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

**Mr. Charles:**—on page 144, Item D.

**Madam Chairman:** But this is not Development Programme.

**Mr. Charles:** Ministry of Works and Transport, Roads and Bridges.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is a false premise.

**Mr. Charles:** Page 144.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, this is Goods and Services?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** This is not DP.

**Mr. Charles:** Well I could go to Goods and Services.

**Hon. Imbert:** We do not want you to waste time doing that. You are wrong there too.

**Mr. Charles:** No, I am not.

**Hon. Imbert:** You are looking at the wrong book, wasting people time.

**Mr. Charles:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please.

**Mr. Charles:** You did not answer the question.

**Hon. Imbert:** I cannot. It is a false question.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 82, Studley Park Quarry Operations. Could the Minister clarify or explain why it is necessary to increase that quarry operations by an additional \$4.5 million in 2017?

**Hon. Imbert:** They are restructuring the operations and some of this will be required for severance pay.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow-up question. Is this quarry operations a separate company or is it amalgamated within the infrastructure and public utilities?

**Hon. Imbert:** Currently it is contained within the establishment but the thinking is to make it a separate company. So all of this would take care of that as well.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Maintenance of Buildings; Item 004, Transportation; Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate; Item 007, Mechanical Workshop; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 53; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Maintenance of Roads; Item 003, Maintenance of Buildings; Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate; Item 007, Mechanical Workshop;



Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 53; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions, page 53; Item 007, Households, page 54;

Division 9, Agriculture, Marine Affairs, Marketing and the Environment; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 55; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Agriculture; Item 003, Marketing; Item 004, Natural Resources and Environment; Item 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 56; Item 001, General Administration, pages 56 and 57; Item 002, Agriculture, pages 57 and 58; Item 003, Marketing; Item 004, Natural Resources and Environment; Item 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries, pages 59 and 60; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 60; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002 Agriculture; Item 003, Marketing; Item 004, Natural Resources and Environment; Item 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 61; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions. Item 007, Households; Item 008, Subsidies; Division 10, Health—Subsidies?

**12.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Subsidies, I would like to—there is a—Boat Subsidy of \$150,000, Subsidy for Fisherman. Is the allocation of \$450,000 appropriate for the Subsidy for Fisherman and what is the actual on an annual basis?

**Hon. Imbert:** You want to know if it is sufficient?

**Mr. Singh:** Sufficient, if you want compensation.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will have to get back to you on that.

**Madam Chairman:** Division 10, Health and Social Services; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 62; Item 001, General Administration, page 62; Item 002, Hospitals, page 62.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** To the hon. Minister, under Hospitals, Salaries and COLA, \$9

million. Could you give us the categorization or the various categories of the personnel under Hospitals? Does that include medical personnel and nursing personnel?—under Hospitals.

**Hon. Imbert:** As I indicated previously, we will give you a list of every, single public servant in the THA, this would include these people. This is now the seventh time I told you that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, no, no, no, Hospitals is under various categories.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is still public servants.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You argue with “yuh self”.

**Madam Chairman:**—Health Centres, page 62; Item 004, Public Health and the Environment, pages 62 and 63; Item 005, Social Services, page 63; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 63; Item 001, General Administration, pages 63 and 64.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Goods and Services, I just want a clarification of this Overseas because I read it, Overseas Travel Facilities and Official Overseas Travel. Madam Chair, it is Under Item 02, Overseas Travel Facilities; these are direct charges on the Consolidated Fund. Is it—

**Hon. Imbert:** These are not direct charges.

**Mr. Singh:** This is the explanation.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, it says the word “not” is there. Are you not seeing it? “Ah doh even hah to pick up de book.”

**Mr. Singh:** There is a Passage Leave. No, no, no, direct charges.

**Hon. Imbert:** Which are “not”. Which are “not”.

**Mr. Singh:** Formerly.

**Hon. Imbert:** “Yuh wah me to pick up de book.”

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, “pick up de book”.

**Hon. Imbert:** Alright. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Singh:** Overseas Travel Facilities at page xxvi, 98, Formerly—

**Madam Chairman:** xix?

**Mr. Singh:** No, xxvi.

**Hon. Imbert:** Where are you?

**Mr. Singh:** Twenty-five.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is xix.

**Mr. Singh:** No, you are mixing up.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am mixing up?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is xix.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, okay. [*Laughter*] Expenses incurred—

**Hon. Imbert:** And it says “not”.

**Mr. Singh:** You are right. You are right.

**Hon. Imbert:** I know I am right. I did not even have to look in the book.

**Mr. Singh:** So that is—no, that is line Item 27. I am dealing with line Item 02, which is on page 25.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah, but I explained “all ah dat ah ready, yuh know”.

**Madam Chairman:** We do not have any Sub-Item 98.

**Mr. Singh:** No Ma'am, if we go to the—

**Hon. Imbert:** “What page you on?”

**Mr. Singh:** If you go to page 25—

**Hon. Imbert:** On page 25?

**Mr. Singh:**—you will see Sub-Item 98.

**Hon. Imbert:** Page 25?

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, “buh we doh have” any Sub-Item—

**Hon. Imbert:** “Whey”—

**Mr. Singh:** Overseas Travel Facilities - Direct Charges—

**Hon. Imbert:** No man, we reach page 63.

**Madam Chairman:** But there is no 98 there.

**Hon. Imbert:** You want to go back to 25?

**Mr. Singh:** No there is 27 which is Overseas—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I protest. How can he go back to page 25?

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, no, no, I am not going back to page 25.

**Hon. Imbert:** Stay on 63.

**Mr. Singh:** No. I am on page 63. Just for clarification,

**Hon. Imbert:** Nice, let us go to 63 then.

**Mr. Singh:**—I am dealing with—

**Madam Chairman:** Just a minute, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** Let us go to 63 then.

**Mr. Singh:**—02, Overseas Travel Facilities, and the explanation at Overseas Travel Facilities is on page 26.

**Hon. Imbert:** “Wat you talking about?”

**Mr. Singh:** The Classification of Expenditure Sub-Items, gives an explanation which you referred me to.

**Hon. Imbert:** xix, boss. “Wat you looking at?”

**Madam Chairman:** Member, apart from the description by words, there is also a classification with a number. There is no 98 here.

**Hon. Imbert:** xxvi?

**Mr. Singh:** Look on the side.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, there is no—what you referring here is 98.

**Mr. Singh:** Sub-Item.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, but we “doh have” any 98 here.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, Ma’am. You see, you are not understanding. Let me help guide you. There is an Official—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, no, no. We are dealing this line Item. Which one?

**Mr. Singh:** The line Item is Overseas Travel Facilities.

**Hon. Imbert:** What is it?

**Mr. Singh:** It is at 02, and the line Item is Official Overseas Travel at line Item 27. So there are two Items—

**Hon. Imbert:** I explained that to you already.

**Mr. Singh:**—two categories—

**Hon. Imbert:** I have explained that twice.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** “Yuh wah me” explain it a third time? No problem “yuh know”.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, no. I am trying to get clarification from you, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** I clarified twice.

**Mr. Singh:** Official Overseas Travel says:

Expenses incurred in connection with approved official overseas travel.

I am clear. That is the expenses. That is for line Item 27.

**Madam Chairman:** Right.

**Mr. Singh:** Line Item 02, Overseas Travel Facilities says at page xxvi:

“Cost of Overseas Travel Facilities due to Monthly-Paid Officers whose remuneration is within the purview of the Salaries Review Commission and whose salaries and allowances are Direct Charges on the Consolidated Fund”

**Madam Chairman:** Where is that?

**Mr. Singh:** Formerly—

**Hon. Imbert:** I have already answered this.

**Mr. Singh:**—Leave Passage - Direct Charges.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, what is your problem?

**Mr. Singh:** I wanted an explanation, whether or not this coming from the SRC, these persons who are direct charges on the Consolidated Fund, is this in addition to the allocation to the Tobago House of Assembly?

**Hon. Imbert:** All right, “leh me answer dis”.

**Mr. Singh:** I just want clarification.

**Hon. Imbert:** Firstly, the word “not” is very important.

**Mr. Singh:** “Formerly”, “Formerly”. It says “Formerly”.

**Hon. Imbert:** Forget “Formerly”, we are dealing with now, today. It says “not”, “not a Direct Charge”, therefore, it is contained within the appropriation, okay?

**Mr. Singh:** You forgot are “Direct Charges”.

**Hon. Imbert:** It says “which is not a Direct Charge”. “What happen, yuh cyar see de word “not”?”

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, no. It is not on mine.

**Madam Chairman:** It is not on yours?

**Hon. Imbert:** You are trying to say your document does not have the word “not”?

**Mr. Singh:** I am dealing with Item 98, which “are Direct Charges on the Consolidated Fund”.

**Madam Chairman:** But we have no line Item 98. We “doh” have any line 98 here.

**Mr. Singh:** Not line Item.

**Hon. Imbert:** We have no 98. The Chairman has told you that four times. Come on man.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, all right. Let us proceed.

**Hon. Imbert:** We have no 98.

**Mr. Singh:** There is a 98—

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me please, Member for Naparima.

**Hon. Imbert:** Where is it then?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 02, 16—

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not in this Head.

**Madam Chairman:** Contract Employment. Yes, please pose the question.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, in the context to what the Minister told us yesterday, that there are trying to move people from contract employment into permanent employment. That \$1.4 million expenditure, could you just indicate what it is? And at the same time, a drop in Training of—a decrease in Training, that is Item 17, of \$500 million. One would have thought that training would be critical to the Health and Social Services.

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. Firstly, it is not \$500 million. It is \$500,000.

**Mr. Charles:** Who said \$500 million? I said \$1.4 million increase.

**Hon. Imbert:** You said there is a drop in training of \$500 million.

**Mr. Charles:** No, I said \$500,000. Yes, that is what I meant. Okay, \$500,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. Again, this is a situation where they are looking at their historical trends, and the actual is closer to \$8 million. Historically, the expenditure is closer to \$8 million. Look at 2015, you see 7.5, okay?

**Mr. Charles:** It was 6.6.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, no, that is the provision. You see what the THA—

**Mr. Charles:** No, I understand—

**Hon. Imbert:**—is allowed to do, we had a special meeting with the THA prior to the finalization of the budget documents. So we gave the THA their global figure.

**Mr. Charles:** Right.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. They get \$2.4 billion or whatever it is, and they are then permitted under this PNM administration, they were not allowed to do it under your Government, we tell them, “All right, that is your global figure”—

**Mr. Charles:** But that is not correct, in 2015 was \$7.5 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, let me finish. It is a process. They are now permitted, by this PNM Government when they get the global figure, to look at the provisional allocations within Heads, and they are permitted to move money around, and they will say, “All right, our records show that Contract Employment under this Head is going to be closer to \$8 million. You are provided 6.6. We will prefer if you make \$8 million.” So they take from one place to supplement this.

**Mr. Charles:** I agree. Nobody is disputing that. What I am disputing—

**Hon. Imbert:** What are you disputing?

**Mr. Charles:**—is the fact when you say under—it is now happening. In 2015, it was \$7.5 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is a fact. It is a PNM Government and a PNM THA. “All yuh use to harass dem.”

**Mr. Charles:** In 2015 it was a UNC Government—

**Hon. Imbert:** You did not do this.

**Mr. Charles:**—higher than yours. Yours was \$6.6 million. Ours was \$7.5 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Item 002, Hospitals, page 64; Item 003, Health Centres, page 64; Item 004, Public Health and the Environment, page 65; Item 005, Social Services, pages 65 and 66; Item—

**Mr. Charles:** Item 005, again Contract Employment, increased by \$3.7 million, and I take the Minister’s explanation, but I just want it noted; \$3.7 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Probation Services, page 66. Item—



**Mr. Charles:** Again, an increase in Contract Employment of \$660,000, and I just want it noted.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 008, Litter Eradication Programme.

**Mr. Charles:** Again, an increase under Item 16 of \$591,000, and I just want it noted.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, these are for question, okay? Item 009, General Affairs, page 66, Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 67; Item 001, General Administration; Item 003, Health Centres; Item 004, Public Health and the Environment; Item 005, Social Services; Item 008, Litter Eradication Programme, page 67; Item 009, Gender Affairs, page 68; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 68; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 68.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Can we get some explanation? What are these Special Social Programmes about, and the allocation to them? Line Item 06.

**Madam Chairman:** Line Item 005/06.

**Hon. Imbert:** Special Social Programmes?

**Madam Chairman:** Do you have an answer or can you supply that in writing?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get it for you.

**Madam Chairman:** You will get it for me now?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is for Senior Citizens' Activity Centres. Okay, Disability Unit, Senior Citizens' Activity Centres and so on.

**Mr. Karim:** Might you be able to give us in writing?—because you may not know the—you will not be able to tell me now the list of these centres. So if we could get it in writing.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide more details for you in writing, okay?

**Mr. Karim:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Households; Item 0—

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Line Item 04, Emergency Cases Fund, could you tell us just a little elaboration as to what these types of emergencies are?

**12.45 p.m.**

**Hon. Imbert:** Transfers to Trinidad for health issues, among other things.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Next Item.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 05, Grants towards Necessitous Patients, \$2 million allocated. I just want to get an appreciation. I thought it would have been what my colleague said, emergency cases, but what exactly is this? Who are the beneficiaries of this? Is there a particular situation where you look after patients convalescing? What is it really?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** Yes? Well, the allocation seems small. Could we have an appreciation of the numbers where you provide this geriatric care to people.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get as much information as we can for you.

**Mr. Singh:** And, Chairman, with respect to the Emergency Cases Fund, I am supportive of that, but I would like to get an appreciation of the numbers, and the areas in which you have that so that proper health planning can take place.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Division 11, Settlements and Labour. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 69. Item 001, General Administration, page 69. Item 002, Settlement, page 69. Sub-Head, 02, Goods and Services, page 69. Item 001, General Administration, pages 69 and 70. Item 002, Settlement. Item 003, Labour, page 71. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 71. Item 001, General

Administration, page 71. Item 002, Settlement. Item 003, Labour. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 72. Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 72. Item 007, Households, page 72.

Division 12, Planning and Development, page 73. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Item 001, General Administration, page 73. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, page 73. Item 002, Planning, page 74. Item 004, Land Management, pages 74 and 75. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 75. Item 001, General Administration, page 75. Item 002, Planning. Item 004, Land Management.

Hon. Members, we now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, a different book. We are at page 20. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 20. Item 002, Productive Services, page 20. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, with respect to Item 467, Establishment of Processing Facilities for Coconut, Bayleaf Oil and Pigeon Peas; Item 470, Construction of Marketing Facilities; 474, Establishment of Agro-processing Facilities; 476, Improvement to Roxborough Market and Abattoir; and then you have 478, Market Research Development. There are allocations in 2015, 2016 and a revised estimate in 2017, but there is no allocation in 2017 for these facilities. Now, we have made a significant investment, something like \$5 million plus in each area. What is the thinking behind the non-allocation in 2017? And what is the state of these facilities, having made that investment previously?

**Hon. Imbert:** Quite a few of these projects are being completed.

**Mr. Singh:** Completed? You are telling me that the processing facilities for coconut, bayleaf oil and pigeon peas are completed?

**Hon. Imbert:** Some of them have been completed.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, but I would like to be specific. There are only about four facilities we are asking about. So is it completed? Tell us what is completed and what is not.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised that even though \$400,000 is shown here, there was not any activity under that line item for some time.

**Mr. Singh:** So that is for the bayleaf oil and pigeon peas. What about the marketing facilities?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is built.

**Mr. Singh:** It is built? And the abattoir—the Improvement to Roxborough Market and Abattoir.

**Hon. Imbert:** Improved.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow from my colleague, line item 474, Establishment of Agro-Processing Facilities. Has that been completed, if so, where is this location? And also for the line item 481, Establishment of Pig Breeding/Multiplication Project. Has this been completed also?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised that a lot of these projects are either completed, the work has been done and the THA is prioritizing its allocation of \$288 million on the projects that are listed in these estimates.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, through you, a follow-up question, please. If you are indicating to this House, the committee, that the projects are done, is there an allocation for the maintenance and operation of these facilities?

**Hon. Imbert:** It would not be under DP, it would be under Recurrent.

**Mr. Singh:** Well, I did not see anything on Recurrent.

**Hon. Imbert:** Did you look?

**Mr. Singh:** Maybe it is masked, but I am just telling you.

**Hon. Imbert:** You know you are not good at seeing things. **Mr. Singh:** Maybe you can point me.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 463, on page 21, Agricultural Access Roads, Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** We are still on Item 002, Productive Services.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, I will wait.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, it is now 12.53, and I suggest we take the lunch break now, and we will return here at 1.30 p.m.

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

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

**Madam Chairman:** The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now resumed, and we are now at Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 21 to 30. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 463, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** At the end of page 21.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 463. There was an estimate of \$5 million for agricultural access roads, but \$47 million was spent. Is there an explanation for that and another \$25 million is now budgeted?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah. It is obvious that the original provision in 2016 was inadequate in terms of the work programme of the THA. If you look at 2015, the actual was \$57 million. So that the \$47 million is consistent with the \$57 million in 2015, and the \$25 million is also consistent.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you have reduced it.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Same line Item 463. Can we get a listing of these access roads that were completed?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you. **Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Social Infrastructure,

pages 31 to 43. Item005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, can I ask a question on page 32, line Item 764?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** Line Item 764, Young Scholars Programme. Can I get an idea as to what this is all about, the age group? What is the purpose of it? The second to last one, 764.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will provide you with that information.

**Madam Chairman:** Are there any more questions on Item 004?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you, Madam Chair. 770, New Construction of Scarborough RC. In 2017, \$15 million was estimated and \$15 million spent, and I see \$75 million estimated for 2017. Is the cost of that primary school going to be \$90 million and, if so, what is the size of the school in terms of how many children will be accommodated there, and the square footage area of the school to cost \$90 million, one primary school? In Trinidad, we were building primary schools for 15 and 16 and \$18 million. What has happened?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will have to look into that, and get back to you on that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I want to say that you should look into that very carefully. And 784, Establishment of Childhood Centres. Could the hon. Minister indicate, Tobago under the IDB was—

**Madam Chairman:** Which page are you on, Member?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 31, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Page what?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 31, 004.

*[Cell phone rings]*

**Madam Chairman:** Could the Member please control your device? You are at

page 31?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you at Item 004.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Social Infrastructure.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, I am sorry.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Are we allowed to go back to earlier pages?

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are just on Item 004, which is page 31 to page 43.

**Dr. Tewarie:** But we skipped about six pages.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, no, no, no. Please Members, I said Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 21 to 30. So if somebody wanted to start with 30, they were open to. If somebody wanted to go on to 25, they were open to.

**1.35 p.m.**

In fact, there was no response from anybody. I had reached Item 005 and went back to entertain the Member for Chaguanas East. So we are at page 31.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 784, the \$2 million, is that going to be for help with the construction of five ECCE centres which had been arranged since 2015 for Tobago with part IADB funding and part Government funding?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So this \$2 million is separate for those five ECCE centres?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** As we are on childhood centres, is there anywhere that these five ECCE centres, which were earmarked for Tobago, are incorporated in the budgetary allocation, because you have part funding from IADB and part funding from the Government?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised that the IADB programme did not get off the ground. This is for construction of childhood centres in Tobago through the THA.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Planning and Development.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, there were five centres that were supposed to be built in Tobago and, if I am not mistaken, 21 in Trinidad. *[Interruption]* The centres were done in Trinidad and none were done in Tobago. The IDB is now looking into making sure that we do the ones in Tobago, because there was nothing done in Tobago—nothing done in Tobago with regard to that IDB loan.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, the team from Trinidad went across—

**Madam Chairman:** Is this a question?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Nothing done in Tobago with regard to that IDB Programme. So in an effort to bring equity, the IDB is now dealing with the Tobago centres.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, I want to ask the hon. Minister: is she aware that a team from Trinidad, together with the IDB, had already negotiated where the centres had to be constructed, and they were in the process of starting tenders.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, the relevance of that in terms of the line Item that is here?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, I wanted to just make sure that the Minister knew. It is not fair for the Minister to say something—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, this is for questions. Really and truly, let us try to use the time in a very productive way.

**Miss Ramdial:** Line item 812, Improvement/Refurbishment/Extension to Primary School, page 31. I am seeing page a \$2 million estimate, but really and truly is that just for one primary school? Look at the title to that line Item “Primary School”, is that just for one primary school?

**Hon. Imbert:** Schools.



**Miss Ramdial:** So that would need to be changed. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 44 to 47.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, page 43, 016.

**Madam Chairman:** I am on pages 44 to 47.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just now you said you end with page 31, and you reach 44?

**Madam Chairman:** Members, as I said I know it is day five, and we must be tired, but I know what I said. At the time we were at 004, I said pages 31 to 43. I am now at 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 44 to 47.

**Dr. Moonilal:** If that is what you said, I will forego the question.

**Miss Ramdial:** Line Item 008, Establishment of an Integrated Financial Management System. I am seeing an allocation of \$1.5 million. There is a drastic increase in allocation. Can we get some clarification as to this system?

**Madam Chairman:** We are at page 44, 008.

**Miss Ramdial:** Line Item 008.

**Hon. Imbert:** Could you summarize the question please?

**Miss Ramdial:** 008, there is an allocation of \$1.5 million, a drastic increase for the establishment of that integrated financial management system. Can we get some clarification?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is what the allocation is for.

**Miss Ramdial:** How far are we into the establishment of this system, because we are seeing previous years, allocations were made to it?

**Hon. Imbert:** They are going into the procurement phase in increase 017, hence the increase in the allocation.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thanks.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I notice on page 46, Items 594 to 604 inclusive, 96, 98, 600, 602, 604, the construction of several mini malls. I would just like to have an

understanding as to whether the Tobago House of Assembly is, in fact, constructing malls and whether these malls have been constructed, whether they are rented out?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes and yes.

**Mr. Singh:** I have questions on page 45, Item 542, Construction of Prime Minister's Residence, an allocation of \$500,000 in 2016—a revised estimate in 2016 of \$500,000 and no allocation in 2017. Was this money utilized in 2016?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Miss Ramdial:** Line Item 560, Construction of the Scarborough Abattoir. I am seeing \$3.5 million allocated in 2017. How far are we into this construction, if anything at all, because there were previous allocations of \$1 million and then \$2 million in 2016.

**Hon. Imbert:** They are basically reconstructing the abattoir.

**Miss Ramdial:** Madam Chair, line Item 568, Expansion of the Calder Hall Administrative Complex, there is an increase in the allocation by \$4 million in 2017, to \$5 million. How far are we into that expansion?

**Hon. Imbert:** They are into the construction phase in 2017, previous to that they were doing designs and securing approvals.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thanks.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 641, Construction of Sanctuary Resort for \$25 million. Could we have an understanding of what this resort is and how does THA become involved in that, a Sanctuary Resort for \$25 million, page 47, 641 line Item.

**Hon. Imbert:** The sanctuary resort is a tourist facility in the Black Rock area. The THA has purchased the facility, is going to renovate it, rebuild and so on, and then lease it out to an operator or hire an operator to operate it in the same way the

Magdalena is operated.

**Mr. Karim:** I am on page 44, line Item 024, for the \$600,000 that was spent for 2015 and 2016 with respect to the Networking Department of Education with schools. How many schools have been networked with the department?

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no allocation for that in 2017.

**Mr. Karim:** I was asking a question in terms of what was expended already.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get that information for you.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Miss Ramdial:** Line Item 742, page 47, Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment; we are seeing a drastic increase there, \$15 million allocated in 2017. Can we get some clarification?

**Hon. Imbert:** The equipment and vehicles of the THA have reached the end of their useful life. They are going into a major fleet replacement programme.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just going back to 641.

**Madam Chairman:** Just provide us with the page please; 47?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 47—this resort that the Minister indicated that \$25 million has been allocated for in 2017, he said that it was purchased by the Tobago House of Assembly. Could you tell us the purchase price, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** We do not want to guess, we will get that information for you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could you provide us with the details of who did the valuation report and so on?

**Hon. Imbert:** Anything else you want to know? Because you said “and so on”, so what would you like to know?

**Madam Chairman:** Members.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Why do you seem to be a bit touchy on this issue?

**Madam Chairman:** Members. Member for Couva South, do you want to just

detail precisely what you want, to ensure that the response accords with your expectation? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Imbert:** What does “and so on” mean?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin North/East and Member for Couva South.

**Dr. Rambachan:** We would like to get a copy of the valuation report for Item 641, the cost at which it was bought 642, the Upgrade of Manta Lodge. Is the Manta Lodge owned by the Tobago House of Assembly and was it bought recently and, if so, when and who did the valuation?

**Hon. Imbert:** For both of these things you want to know the purchase price, who it was bought from, the valuation. You will get that information.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 15 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I would like to thank all the members and representatives from the Tobago House of Assembly.

We are moving on.

*Head 42.*

**Madam Chairman:** Members, we are going back to the recurrent book in the interest of time at page 301. Head 42, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, \$2,479,445,800. I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Khan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Distinguished Members of the House of Representatives, it is a privilege to stand before this Standing Finance Committee of the House to answer questions on each line Item on points of

clarification and, in some cases, I guess to be interrogated and I feel rightfully so.

Before I begin, Madam Chairman, I think it is important to put into context where we are in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. You will recall that during the 2015 election campaign, the People's National Movement articulated two key policy areas of fundamental policy shifts; one, local government reform, in particular the devolution of power and authority to regional corporations and in addition to the new responsibilities for the regional corporations, in particular social service delivery; and two, the creation and operationalization of a Ministry of Rural Development to focus on rural infrastructure and improving rural amenities and the basic lifestyle of rural people.

With regard to local government reform, during 2016 we concluded 14 consultations and prepared a policy paper which was approved by Cabinet. As we speak, we are currently in the process of drafting the legislative changes to effect this policy position. So it is in this context, Madam Chairman—and I want to repeat—it is in this context the budget template and the budget figures remain, by and large, the same with no major shift as yet from 2016.

With regard to rural development, we will focus on improved rural infrastructure by budgeting for a myriad of small rural infrastructure projects with one mega project carded under the Ministry of Rural Development, which is the Moruga fishing port and related facility. Bearing in mind other major rural projects, while they do not fall directly under the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Rural Development has input into its formulation. I speak particularly here to the new arterial road from Valencia to Toco and the ferry service from Toco to Tobago.

Additionally, the Ministry of Rural Development which has oversight responsibility for all rural projects and amenities will be working with the relevant

Ministries this year to finalise policies on one, rural banking; two, rural housing; three, rural broadband services; four, rural transport; and five, rural-based industries; and here I speak particularly of agro processing as we link closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

**1.50 p.m.**

**Hon. Khan:** Finally, Madam Chairman, with CEPEP now under the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government we plan to make the operations more efficient and relevant to the new expenditure level that we have now given to CEPEP. With these brief comments, I thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,497,445,800 for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 301; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Through you, Mr. Minister, how many persons are now employed at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government? And how many vacancies there are now? And when I say employed, I mean on permanent positions and on contract positions?

**Hon. Khan:** With regard to contract positions, there are currently 336 contract

positions available in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, 273 are currently filled, there 63 vacancies and there are also 14 short-term employees.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Fourteen?

**Hon. Khan:** One four. Yeah.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Short-term, and what about the permanent?

**Hon. Khan:** Okay. We do not have that figure with us, but I will get it to you. Yeah.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. And the total establishment for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is how many?

**Hon. Khan:** It is approximately 15,000 including the 14 regional corporations.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Approximately?

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah. Give or take, but we can always provide the exact amount at a later date.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 301 and 302. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Again, I noticed under 02, 16, Contract Employment, I noticed that there has been a general decrease in contract employees in 2016 from 25.7 to 20.3 and now down to 19.392. Can the Minister explain, what is the reason this cut back in contract employment?

**Hon. Khan:** There were a lot of vacancies that were not filled; that is why you had the Revised Estimate significantly lower than the original estimate. And this time around, obviously all Ministries have a cut, but we will fill as much vacancies as the funding would require.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So you have less contract workers?

**Hon. Khan:** Yes. We will have less, slight, but we are not laying off contract workers because as we speak there are something like 73 vacancies and even though we may have a chance to fill probably half or even more than half of them with the allocation that we have.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But with the lesser allocation of \$974,000 it is obvious is it—am I right to conclude that you are not going to be able to fill the vacancies?

**Hon. Khan:** Probably not all.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So in other words, are you agreeing then that some people will not get back their jobs?

**Hon. Khan:** No. They are currently 73 positions that are not filled and the Ministry is still running okay. Sometimes these establishments they are made whenever they were made, but when you make your systems more efficient, a lot of the positions—I am not saying they will be redundant, but you can survive and run an efficient operation without filling all the established positions. And that is symptomatic of government right through.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am not disagreeing with you, you know. I am just trying to clarify the numbers.

**Hon. Khan:** Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Similarly, Short-Term Employment has been decreased by \$3.5 million. The reasons are the same?

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah. Those are people with contracts less than three years.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So they have gone home?

**Hon. Khan:** Most of them have been renewed on a month-to-month basis.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, the allocation in 2016 the Revised Estimate



was \$5 million and you are down now to \$1.5 million, so obviously it cannot be the same number.

**Hon. Khan:** I am told the original estimate that you will see here was \$1.528 million.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right.

**Hon. Khan:** We had vired money to bring it up to \$5 million.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right.

**Hon. Khan:** And I am being told by the PS here that we plan to do the same thing this year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** To vire it again?

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you have already decreased it. So you are going to go in—

**Hon. Khan:** We go back to the same 2016 estimate is now turned over to the 2017 estimate, and as and when required, we will probably vire some money because we do have a need for some of those short-term contracts especially for skill sets that are not part of the official establishment, like engineering assistants, quantity surveyors, civil engineers and the like.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 303; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 303; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 303; Item 007, Households, page 304; Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am looking at the Other

Transfers, 04, to the Community-Based Environmental Protection Enhancement Programme. Minister, as you recognize, this programme's vote was moved from an estimate in 2016 of \$609 million, Revised Estimate 2016, \$531 million and now you are down to \$425 million. Could you indicate to us the manpower fallout, in raw terms the unemployment that will result from the thousands of workers who as of now contractors, as you know, have been asked to reduce their teams six to three by October 31st as a deadline. How many thousands of workers do you expect to be relieved of employment in this programme to synchronize with the shortage, the reduced allocation?

**Hon. Khan:** I just want to make the point that, a programme like CEPEP was conceptualized to provide a service.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chair, could I respond to the Minister?

**Madam Chairman:** You could ask a question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I will ask questions in response to his statement.

**Madam Chairman:** No. No. But, Member, what I am saying is, if the Minister has responded and you want further elucidation, you can ask a question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much.

**Hon. Khan:** Madam Chairman, I want to make the point that in 2010 budget the CEPEP allocation was approximately \$350 million. At that point in time CEPEP had approximately 60,000 workers. In 2015/2016 the allocation was about \$600 million with a workforce of 12,000 employees. The country was not cleaner, you know. So what you are saying is, there is tremendous superfluity in the employment pattern of CEPEP. What we are trying to do is reduce income down. It is not to keep inflating that programme.

So \$425 million we think is a reasonable quantum of money for CEPEP

to carry out its original mandate. And while the number will obviously drop from 10,000 to something lower, we will be managing it carefully. For example, I proudly say that we have not touched a single contractor for one year.

**Mr. Singh:** That was a standing directive of the former Minister.

**Hon. Khan:** Okay. So we are now progressively shredding some of the teams, employing some new contractors as we rollout this programme in a balanced format. I will even go further, I mean I do not want to get too political here today, but with 12,000 employees and 264 CEPEP contractors, and I want the nation to know this, the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West which is Minister Young's constituency has zero contractors. Zero. [*Crosstalk*] Twelve thousand employees, 264 contractors, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has zero contractors. The Diego Martin West, the constituency of our hon. Prime Minister, now has two.

**Hon. Member:** How much Oropouche has? It had 12 before.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Oropouche?

**Hon. Khan:** Two.

**Hon. Member:** It had 12 before.

**Hon. Khan:** Siparia has 12. [*Crosstalk*] Two. Twelve. So I do not want to go down that road, we are dealing here line by line—

**Dr. Moonilal:** “Go down de road. Go down de road.”

**Hon. Khan:**—with actual figures, but I am saying confidently here today, Madam Chairman, that \$425 million is a reasonable figure for us to make CEPEP carry out its mandate as an environmental company to have Trinidad and Tobago looking pristine once more. Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for giving me equal

time to respond to the Minister with questions, with questions. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please. It is a question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Minister, I will ask again, have you worked out the figure of the employment fallout that will result from your shedding of labour as per the direct of the CEPEP? My follow up question is, are you aware of the range of work done by CEPEP from 2010 to 2015 including the marine clean up, including the support to community-based organizations, including rural construction, minor work projects throughout the country? Mr. Minister, are you are aware that CEPEP had in reducing flooding throughout Trinidad? Are you aware of projects that were done by CEPEP in the hospital, for example, that the Minister of Health is now aware of?

**Madam Chairman:** All right.

**Hon. Khan:** Are you aware of the projects done by CEPEP in the police stations?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member for Oropouche East, are these rhetorical questions?

**Dr. Moonilal:** No. They are serious questions.

**Madam Chairman:** But, I think, if you want the Minister to answer, you cannot give a barrage one after the other.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Well, I will come back after with the others.

**Hon. Khan:** And therein lies, Madam Chairman, the fundamental problem with CEPEP, because CEPEP drifted away from its mandate. I support the marine initiative, but there are about four contractors that have been cleaning up some of the sea frontage which I intend to keep. But you see the projects, Madam Chairman, CEPEP through some programme called health initiative in

North-West and North-Central Regional Health Authority repaired something like 35 health centres—[*Desk thumping*] Wait. “Doh knock yet. Doh knock yet. Because yuh eh build none”. Thirty-five health centre, repairs for \$134 million. [*Crosstalk*] \$134 million. And the rationale for that programme is that CEPEP was using its project management skills to undertake that programme. But you know why? In the last administration, Madam Chairman, everybody wanted to award contracts. So PASEL had contracts for pavilion, for grounds, for box drain, CISL awarded contracts, rural development company awarded contracts, eastern Port of Spain, everybody. So everybody wanted a portfolio—

**Dr. Moonilal:** They created a lot of micro entrepreneurs.

**Hon. Khan:**—where you must award contracts. CEPEP will be going back to its original moorings. Bunsee Trace Community Centre, something like eight or \$9 million. The community centre still has not been [*Crosstalk*] handed over to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. So all these things were not in cognizance with the CEPEP mandate, and I think we will be bringing back CEPEP to its moorings and \$425 million—I compliment the Minister of Finance—I think that is adequate funding for the CEPEP programme to take care of its original mandate.

**2.05 p.m.**

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, you said there were 12 contractors in Siparia and two contractors, would you also agree that the geographic size of a constituency would also necessitate more contractors in one area compared to another area?

**Hon. Khan:** Well yes, in that context. The constituency that should have the most contractors is Toco/Sangre Grande, Mayaro, Moruga/Tableland, Arima believe it

or not, because Arima takes care way up from Blanchisseuse coming down to thing—so, the rationale for your spread of contractors defies logic.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 304. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, through you, Item 005, what is the status of the Princes Town Regional Corporation administrative building? Is it now on hold, or will be constructed? And may I just add to that, if you permit, the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation.

**Hon. Khan:** Yes. Madam Chairman, I want to answer this question from the top. The regional corporations are housed in extremely poor spaces. The prototype that was being proposed by the last PNM administration, under Mrs. Hazel Manning, was something that resembles the current Chaguanas Borough Corporation. And I am proud to say here as a PNM Senator that the first regional headquarters that we built for the regional corporation was built in Chaguanas. Okay.

Now, we had continued to roll out that plan, and Mr. Jaspal Bhogal was the architect and he designed four regional corporation headquarters: one in Diego Martin, one in Arima, one in Princes Town and one in Penal/Debe. We who build the one in Chaguanas, you know. The UNC went ahead now and took out a loan to build Princes Town, and the Sunday before the election the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in Katwaroo Trace, turned the sod for the Penal/Debe headquarters. The Sunday, you know. I will go even further: the Penal/Debe Regional Headquarters is on Katwaroo Trace, which is flatland. It is a two-storey building with 35,000 square feet of office space, and the contract was awarded for \$124 million. That is

3,500 per square foot. Okay? So, what we did, we cancelled all those contracts. Cabinet took a decision last month to go back out with two corporations, Diego Martin and Penal/Debe, and I was mandated by the Prime Minister to build those two corporations for the same \$124 million, which I intend to do [*Desk thumping*] \$60 million for one, and one of the corporations, Penal/Debe, was already awarded for a stunning sum of \$124 million, a two-storey building on flat land at \$3,000—so, Dr Rambachan, you are a builder, \$3,500 a square foot.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I would just like to ask a question: what were the engineer's estimates for the projects?

**Hon. Khan:** That whole system was flawed.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, what was the engineer's estimate?

**Madam Chairman:** Members, we are on Transfers—

**Hon. Khan:** But, we are on Transfers and Subsidies.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, we are on Transfers to State Enterprises, page 304, Sub-Head 06. [*Crosstalk*] Members! Sub-Head 06, Current Transfer to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 305. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Couva North and Member for St. Joseph! Item 004, Statutory Bodies, page 205.

Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly*. We are going on to a new book, Item, 23, page 224. Item 23, Port of Spain City Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 224; Item 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 224; Item 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed, page 224; Item 004, Transport and

Cleansing, page 225; Item 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees, page 225; Item 006, Stores, Works and Repairs, page 225; Item 007, Cemeteries and Crematorium, page 225; Item 008, Woodbrook Estate, page 224. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 226; Item 001, General Administration, page 226; Item 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 227; Item 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed, page 227; Item 004, Transport and Cleansing, page 238; Item 005, Squares, Playgrounds, and Trees, page 228; Item 006, Stores, Works and Repairs, pages 228 and 229; Item 007, Cemeteries and Crematorium, page 229.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Might I make a suggestion, is it that you must call out each one of these on these pages? In other words, I do not think we have any questions on these, and if it is that you have to call it out we will just have to sit and hear you call it out, or we can adopt it, but there is just one Item—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I really relish your suggestion, but there will be no way I will know, unless, maybe, you would like to suggest to your Whip that you pass to the Chair the pages that you are interested in, otherwise I will have to go through this—where have I reached?—but you can explore the suggestion with your Whip and he can forward it to me.

Item 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed, page 230; Item 004, Transport and Cleansing, page 230; Item 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees, page 231; Item 006, Stores, Works and Repairs, page 231; Item 007, Cemeteries and Crematorium. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 231; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Sub-Item 24, San Fernando City Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel



Expenditure. We are at page 243; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003, Institutions; Item 004, Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005, Transport; Item 006, Local Health Authority. We are at Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 245, Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003, Institutions; Item 004, Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005, Transport; Item 006, Local Health Authority. Sub-Head 03, we are at page 247, Minor Equipment and Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003, Institutions; Item 004, Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Perhaps I may assist, Madam Chair. I have been advised by my colleagues that their first question arises at page 305, so we can proceed, adopt.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, and therefore maybe if I can just call the Sub-Heads and I do not go into the line Items. So, Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, that is page 248; Sub-Head 25, Arima Borough Corporation; Sub-Head 26, Point Fortin Borough Corporation; Sub-Head 27, Chaguanas Borough Corporation; Sub-Head 28, Diego Martin Regional Corporation.

So, therefore, we now start at Sub-Head 30, Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 305, Item 001, General Administration, page 305.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I think page 305, I just want to know, the same list you were calling out, the Item we were interested in is Item 37 on that page 305 where the

corporations are listed; 305 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.  
[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so therefore I could take it Sub-Head 30, Tunapuna Corporation; Sub-Head 31, Sangre Grande Regional; Corporation; Sub-Head 32, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation; Sub-Head 35, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation; Sub-Head 36, Princes Town Regional Corporation; Sub-Item 38, Trinidad and Tobago—

**Dr. Rambachan:** No 37.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, so we are now on page 305, Item 37, Regional Corporation Services General.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right, and that is the question I want.

**Madam Chairman:** So, we are at 305, Recurrent Expenditure, the Sub-Item 37, Regional Corporation Services - General. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I want to know, there is an increase there \$30,255,000, Regional Corporation Services - General, and it is up from \$7.5 million, which was spent in 2016, revised from \$22 million, what is this \$37.755 million for and how is it going to be spent in terms of your definition as Regional Corporation Services - General?

**Hon. Khan:** What happened here, Madam Chairman, is that you will recall that as part of the local government reform process, we had given the undertaking that we will be beefing up the municipal police force to 100 per corporation. Cabinet has already approved that policy, even ahead of the legislative agenda, and we will be starting the recruitment process to beef up the municipal police force, and we have

budgeted \$13.7 million in the first phase for this year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thirteen point seven million, and how many officers?

**Hon. Khan:** About 140 officers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** To be divided among the 40—

**Hon. Khan:** Well, we have not sorted that out yet, because we will be working closely now with the Statutory Authorities Service Commission and the Public Service Commission.

**2.20 p.m.**

Because one of the things we want to incorporate in this municipal police is regionality. Okay? But the way the public service and the statutory service recruits, they recruit nationally. So we are trying to work out a system in which we can accomplish that work.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What provision are you making for accommodation of these new police officers, because they only—are you aware that the only police station that exists—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Khan:** Is Chaguanas.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—is in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Khan:** Yes, I know.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—which was also built during my time.

**Hon. Khan:** Yes, yes.

**Madam Chairman:** So the question is—

**Hon. Khan:** The question is, we will deal with that as and when on an as and when required basis depending on what is the strength of the police. It is an area I am closely looking at.

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

**Hon. Khan:** Sorry, just let me finish here. We have a \$10 million allocated for additional expenditure on the scavenging contracts. As we speak, the scavenging contracts are now being handled by NIPDEC and we expect to make an award on these new scavenging contracts in about a month's time and we expect some additional expenditure there. We always budget something for water trucking in the case of an intense dry season. We have budgeted at \$2 million for that and to top up the \$37 million, we have budgeted \$12 million for retirement benefits for daily-paid workers in the Corporation.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, Sub-Item 32, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. There is a decrease of \$5.36 million—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** No, no. Wait, please. Member for Caroni East, I was given a directive by your Whip and I have acted in accordance with that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, there is a question on the same page.

**Madam Chairman:** There is only one Item according to what I was directed. Okay? [*Crosstalk*] Thank you very much. We are at Sub-Item 37.

**Dr. Rambachan:** On the Minister's statement that \$12 million is being budgeted for retirement benefits. Is that really retirement benefits or do you have a plan to offer VSEP to local government people and this will be a matter of severance?

**Hon. Khan:** No, no, no. Not at all. It is retirement benefits and as we speak if there will be any manpower changes in local government it will be adding new people, obviously with the reform exercise.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, a different book. Sub-Head 09.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What page?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 130, Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, page 130; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 130; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral

and Other Services, pages 131 to 138. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Through you, Chair, to the Minister. Sub-Item 026, the local area and regional development planning process that is now deleted from your portfolio, is that it?

**Hon. Khan:** No, it is not. But we are awaiting the—we have proposed amendments to the planning Bill and based on the outcome of that we would determine what would happen here.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, so in terms—

**Hon. Khan:** The Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, but there is no allocation for it. What does that mean for the course of the year?

**Hon. Khan:** I am told that this was to design a comprehensive local area and regional planning process. That has been completed. But the actual regional corporations doing their own spatial plan has been put on hold for the time being.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, and Sub-Item 030, the CARILED project continues under the corporations to which they were aligned?

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah, yeah.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Chair. Just some clarification from the Minister, I am at Sub-Item 031, Amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act. There was an estimate of \$1 million. To my recollection there was no amendment. Was this the million dollars plus that was used for the Reform and Consultations for Local Government?

**Hon. Khan:** No, no, no, not at all.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, so it was not used?

**Hon. Khan:** This vote was not used.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, thank you. But Minister you had indicated that there would

be no local government election without reform, that still stands or that has also gone?

**Hon. Khan:** There will be a local government election shortly, but it is—

**Dr. Moonilal:** So there will be a reform after?

**Hon. Khan:** We are in the process of doing the reform. We have completed the policy position and we have started drafting the legislation.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 312; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 312. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Ma'am, 312, I am with you here. Page 311, I cannot ask a question on Other Services there?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 311, I believe is a summary page.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. I see the Moruga something. Anyway, this Item 007, Upgrade of Community Infrastructure in south and south east Trinidad, Item 007. The actual spent in 2015 was \$5.8 million. There was an estimate of \$25 million in 2016, meaning Minister, you would have a work programme asking for \$25 million to implement something. This was revised, estimated downward to \$3 million and now you are back to \$10 million. What work does this entail? Which agency will carry out this work? Because you were unable to spend the \$25 million which you plan to spend and would have had a programme to spend that.

**Hon. Khan:** No, actually that money, that \$25 million, most of that figure was budgeted to pay the contractor for the outfitting of, One Alexandra Place, COSL Supplies Limited. After investigations we were advised by the Office of the Attorney General not to proceed with the payment because that matter is now under their review.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, are you saying that last year when we approved the budget, \$25 million was to—we passed with notion and the understanding it was to

upgrade community infrastructure in south and south east Trinidad. It was not used for that and was used for another purpose?

**Hon. Khan:** No, no, it is budgeted under Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited. That is how the budget is structured.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited took the money for infrastructure in south and south east Trinidad to pay for an outfitting of a building.

**Hon. Khan:** Because that was part of infrastructure as an outstanding bill from the previous year.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, I understand that, but it was for the community enhancement and infrastructure. It was not for outfitting.

**Hon. Khan:** That is just how the budget document is written.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But that is a breach; a serious breach where money is budgeted to one Head and it is not spent.

**Hon. Khan:** It is not a breach, it is money signed to Palo Seco Agriculture Enterprises for infrastructure work and it was to pay for a former infrastructure work.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance—

**Dr. Moonilal:** But there is a way you can go to Cabinet and get a funding for that.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me, Members, the Minister of Finance wants to lend some clarity to the situation.

**Mr. Imbert:** For clarification, the former Government used the Palo Seco Enterprises Company to do that project in Port of Spain. That is why it was there with that allocation and that funding in Port of Spain. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Is there a question, Member for Caroni East?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 001, in 2015 the CISL was given some funding, but in 2016/2017, no funding. Does that mean that is the end of—

**Hon. Khan:** It no longer falls with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So where does CISL fall.

**Hon. Khan:** CISL falls under the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the same thing with RuDeCOTT?

**Hon. Khan:** Rural falls with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 313.

*Question put.*

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, just for clarification. On page 311—

**Madam Chairman:** Page 311?

**Mr. Lee:** While you had said there was a summary sheet, there is a line Item there, 001, Moruga Fishing Port.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, I will take it because I am now being corrected by the Clerk. So we will just take, this is 003, Economic Infrastructure. Yes, Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. On this matter Ma'am, I wanted to ask the Minister if he can provide us with the information now or in writing as to the constructions of this integrated fishing port facility in Moruga. What piece of land are you looking at? And the ownership of the land, is it state land, is it private land? Are you acquiring land from a private owner for the purpose of that and at what cost? An estimate of what is the cost of this project?

**Hon. Khan:** The approximate cost of the project, the project is largely an offshore project. It is a causeway with an offshore facility that will dock 150 pirogues. It has all the facilities constructed offshore. So the footprint is really an offshore



structure. There will be some—component of that will be on shore and it is in the heart of Gran Chemin and the RDC is currently negotiating with the land owners to acquire small piece of land.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could you indicate now or in writing as an assurance, the identity of the land owner and the amount of land to be acquired and at what cost?

**Hon. Khan:** I will so do.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, am I entitled to ask a question on the total, on page 314. You have Sub-Head 43; Items 001, 003, 005. But there is a line of total. I just want to bring to the attention of the hon. Minister, out of your estimate of 825—

**Madam Chairman:** Page 314 is the Ministry of Works and Transport.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I thank you, PS and the staff of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

*Head 77.*

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me and just to ensure that we are all on the same page, we are starting at page 543 of the recurrent expenditure. Head 77: Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, \$829,281,240, page 543, under the recurrent. I now invite the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I just want to make four points in the opening. The first is to say that in 2015/2016 this Ministry had to be built out of the former Ministry of Food Production and the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources. The new Ministry also includes the Forestry Division and other parts of the former Ministry of Water Resources and the Environment. The

Ministry also includes parts of the former Ministry of Tourism. I say that because it would be reflected in all documentation where we have made no allocations in certain areas and new allocations that we did not have before.

The second point I would make is on the issue of the recurrent expenditure and I am anticipating some questions. The first is that when the Government took the decision on the 7 per cent cut on the recurrent expenditure, the Ministry offered an 18 per cent cut and actually achieved the objective of reducing expenditure on the recurrent side in the last fiscal year. Even though we reduced the expenditure on the recurrent side, Madam Chairman, we still managed to deal with some liabilities that we inherited from previous financial years and that included about \$30 million in agriculture incentive payments that we have managed to clear; settlement, long outstanding to rice farmers and the National Flour Mills; settlement outstanding to the cocoa farmers and long outstanding compensation payments to farmers.

The third point I would make is on the Development Programme. We started fiscal 2015/2016 with over 100 items on the PSIP, many of which were long standing items which were poorly conceived as development projects. Some of these projects in the PSIP for the last fiscal were either pure recurrent expenditure or partially recurrent expenditure which involved payment of wages and purchase of consumables and other non-development activities.

**2.35 p.m.**

So in this year's Development Programme you would see that we have reduced the number of line Items to about 60, through the removal of what was described previously as projects, to the recurrent side. We have partially executed some of these projects in the last fiscal. We have amalgamated some of the projects to remove silos which existed before, so the projects are coherent, cohesive and

implementable. The focus on the development side is on the areas of IT, water resource management, research, extension and training.

In conclusion, Madam Chairman, overall, we started the last financial year with an allocation on the development side of \$243 million. We took the deliberate decision to defer certain expenditure in relation to EMBD, NAMDEVCO, Moruga Port, which we are not involved in, project in the Zoo which we treated as recurrent and a new project under Forestry, 014, which is still in the development stage. So in reality, while the original allocation was \$243 million, we worked with a development programme that was \$123 million of which \$43 million had already been expended, and all of those programmes reappear in this year's Development Programme.

Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 77 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$829,281,240 for Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 543; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, in terms of Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, and Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts, could the Minister advise, either here or in writing, what is the current staffing level at the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries; what is the ratio of

permanent staff versus contract staff and the amount of vacant posts that need to be filled in fiscal 2017?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Thank you. I will provide the response in writing.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Chairman, to the Minister. I see for the 2017 estimates, under Wages and Cost of Living, there is an increase of \$9 million. Could the Minister account for this increase in expenditure?

**Madam Chairman:** Might I ask what Item number you are at?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 02, Wages and Cost of Living.

**Madam Chairman:** What page are you on?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 02—

**Madam Chairman:** And you are seeing an increase of \$9 million?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes. Unless my—

**Madam Chairman:** You are at page 543?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am on 544.

**Madam Chairman:** I am sorry. We are in 001, General Administration. Item 002, Agriculture, page 544. I will take your question now, Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** As I said, Chairman—

**Madam Chairman:** So you are not even at 002? Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Sub-Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Could the Minister just advise us as to what is the current purpose of this board and who compromises this board at the moment?

**Hon. Members:** Comprise.

**Mr. Paray:** Comprise, sorry—comprise this board at the moment.

**Hon. Rambharat:** That is Sub-Item number 14. Cabinet-appointed committees are committees like the Wildlife Conservation Committee, which is a statutory

committee, and there are various committees in the Ministry which are required to be appointed by law.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under 002, Sub-Item 02, there has been a decrease of \$7.4 million under Wages and Cost of Living Allowance. What accounts for this \$7.4 million decrease?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, as I said at the opening, this Ministry had to be constructed out of two Ministries and some other parts of Ministries, and in bringing everything together, we had, for the best use of the resources that we have had, we have some redistribution of staff. So you would find in some areas we have projected some reductions; in some areas there are small increases and that is because of either redistribution of resources across the Ministry or a deliberate decision not to pursue the filling of vacancies.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair, back to the issue of 02, Wages and Cost of Living. The increase of—

**Madam Chairman:** And we are in 002, eh.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Uh? You still there?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, we are still there.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In pursuit of a similar question to the hon. Minister, in the amalgamation of those three Ministries, you said that there was the question of a few job losses. Could you give us an estimation of the amount of jobs lost as a result of the bringing together of the three Ministries?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I did not say there were job losses. I said that in the amalgamation of Ministries, each of the two Ministries and the other component parts of other Ministries, we would have had a duplication of human resources, and in the area where we had contracted persons, when those contracts expired, in

many cases they were not renewed. And in those areas where we had vacancies which could be filled, based on resources brought in from another part of a Ministry, that was pursued. So in the aggregate, there has been no reduction in the numbers in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give an idea about how many officers were under the contract employment which ended at a particular time?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I could give that in writing to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Animal Production and Health, pages 544 and 545. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to reiterate again to the Minister, this increase of \$9 million, could he account for the increase?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Right. As I said before, in the amalgamation of two Ministries and parts of different Ministries, we have redistributed the resources where they are required. So you would find that there are reductions under some Sub-Heads and there are increases under some Sub-Heads, and this relates to the daily-paid workers and the redistribution of those workers for the—you know, the most efficient use of the human resources.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So the Animal Production and Health Division, how many workers were—in terms of the increase in numbers?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I would have to give you that in writing.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could you please provide—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, Item 004?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, 003.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, the Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, the Salaries and Cost of Living is 11.6, Wages and Cost of Living, 23.5, that is \$34 million, \$35 million, and this is animal production.

What kind of animal production is going on here? And are you satisfied that we are getting value for money? What is the objective of this Animal Production Unit, and what has been their achievements?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I think I have publicly expressed my dissatisfaction and to sum it up, we have engaged a consultant of—a well-qualified local consultant now based in the US, called Professor Marlon Knights. He has had a lot of experience in local livestock—to conduct a review. But even before he started, you know, in preparing the terms of reference I identified that the Ministry, especially in the use of human resources and resources generally, was too inward-looking. We have spent a lot of time on our own farms. For example, the one in Mora Valley, Aripo and across the country, and we have not used the resources to develop the private farms and support private farmers, and I have been saying that we need to refocus. Do less work on just maintenance of herds within the Ministry; focus on things like artificial insemination and supporting farmers, particularly in things like vet services and other technical services, and do more work outside, reducing how much we do within the Ministry unless it is critical.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Does this Animal Production Unit include the sheep farm?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yes, small ruminants, the buffalypso, cattle, all of those.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And what has happened, may I ask, to the black belly sheep project? Has it progressed or has it died?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I think most of those projects have either flat-lined or declined over a period of time because we have not been investing the resources in the right places.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, Minister, there has to be a great concern with the expenditure of \$35 million a year in this unit, without any kind of real benefit for the country.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Of course, it is a big concern across this Ministry and I imagine all—your biggest expenditure is in recurrent expenditure, and if your human resources are not properly selected and properly positioned to execute the work, then, essentially, you are wasting your time. And that is why it is important, especially in creating a Ministry, that we make the best use of the human resources because that is the biggest spend.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, are you in any way considering whether this \$35 million could be used instead to support the smaller private farms—

**Hon. Rambharat:** Exactly.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—and allow them to expand?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yes, exactly. That is the idea. The idea is that we should reduce—except in the areas. So for example, the buffalypso—that is a classic example—since 2003 when Caroni ceased operations, we have maintained a buffalypso herd in Mora Valley. It is a brucellosis herd, which means that it is infected, and we have done absolutely nothing in the last 13 years, in terms of a policy decision on what we are going to do with that herd. But it cost taxpayers \$2 million or \$3 million a year, or \$50 million since 2003, just to maintain that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Fifty million?

**Hon. Rambharat:** So we have to make some decisive decisions in terms of how we use the future of the Ministry's livestock assets, including the herd and the physical assets and how we deploy the human resources.

**Dr. Rambachan:** In that connection, Mr. Minister, what is the size of the herd in La Gloria, and is it a healthy herd?

**Hon. Rambharat:** There is no herd in La Gloria. The herd is—the buffalypso herd is in Mora Valley. It is about 900. Maybe 60 per cent of the herd is infected with brucellosis. So, as I said, Dr. Knights is doing a comprehensive review, but as



he has gone along I have received recommendations from him based on my own observations and the technical input of the Ministry. So in relation to buffalypso, for example, we have to accelerate the culling of the brucellosis herd and we have to preserve the non-infected here and the proposal is to do that in La Gloria.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will pass, because he spoke about the buffalypso.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Is the hon. Minister indicating the inefficiency associated with state sector involvement in the animal production? Are you considering a private sector/public sector partnership with respect to the facilities you have, whether it is in Centeno, whether it is in Mora Valley, whether it is in La Gloria, whether it is in Cunupia?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, again, across the Ministry, but in livestock in particular, the future lies in private/public partnership. I do not think that taxpayers could sustain the level of investment and the sort of work that needs to be done. I think the Ministry's role is in developing the standards, pursuing the legislative changes that have to be made, setting the safety and health standards, dealing with the product quality and those things. But there is a role for the private sector, especially given the investment we have already made in some of the physical assets.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Has the Minister given consideration to a gap analysis between how much, for example, beef we import, how much we produce and what targets we could set realistically to reduce that expenditure—that outflow of foreign exchange?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, I have been very deliberate in the first year in not pursuing production targets but pursuing the policy, the legislative changes and the resource allocations that will lead us to making production decisions. But the

problems across agriculture and fisheries are far too fundamental. Agriculture, on the whole, is too vulnerable for us to make production decisions without dealing with the foundation of agriculture.

**2.50 p.m.**

**Mr. Charles:** A follow-up. Could you give us an idea of when the policy infrastructure and the legislative changes would be made so that at some stage this country will be in a position to have some idea? Because you hear some people say—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Member, we got the question.

**Hon. Rambharat:** In this term, I am confident that legislation will be laid dealing with animal health, food safety, long awaited fisheries Bill which deals with some of the recent problems we have had and we have invested a lot of time. The PSIP—one of the changes in terms of the approach to PSIP is ensuring that wherever we do a development project we engage the appropriate consultants to do the legislative part of it and the regulatory part of it, which is always something that comes way down the road and is not taken into consideration in the project development from the outset.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you advise on where is Professor Knights from? Where is his—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Rambharat:** Where in Trinidad?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** He is local.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, he is based at a university in the United States. He lectures and does his work in the US.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Which university?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I could supply the name, but he has a long affiliation with UTT, with the Ministry, with UWI. He is a UWI graduate and he has done a lot of

work with locals and we have UTT students who are working with him in the US.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is he professor of agricultural and applied economics. I think he is Horn professor. Yeah, H-O-R-N.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004 Horticulture, page 545.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, through you, to the Minister. Minister, just like in the case of animal production in health we are spending approximately \$16 million between salaries and wages on horticulture—\$16 million—and this country imports quite a lot of flowers. What is the production of this particular element of your Ministry in terms of its possible contribution to replacing such imports of flowers into the country and saving foreign exchange? What is your level of satisfaction with this production?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well just to clarify, horticulture could be misleading. The budget for horticulture covers the upkeep of the Botanic Gardens, the work in the Queen's Park Savannah and the work across some horticulture stations that we have in the country. But to answer your question again, there is in the Development Programme, for the first time, a new PSIP to develop in communities the capacity to do propagation of horticulture products and sale and so on. And again, just like plant propagation in the Ministry, horticulture is one of those areas that I believe we should reduce what we spent internally and spend more of the resources to develop the private sector, or to develop community groups and horticulture among those entrepreneurs who are already involved in it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** In pursuing that policy, therefore, that change in your philosophy, would that then mean that you will have to offer VSEP to people in these divisions; and if so, how do you intend to pursue it?

**Hon. Rambharat:** In a lot of these divisions the bulk of the labour force would be the daily-paid workers and we would have attrition over a period of time, and we

also have the opportunity, in many cases, to redeploy workers. So the idea is to preserve the employment levels as far as we could, but we are in constant discussions with the daily representative union, again, to make sure that given the size of the wage bill and the demands, we make best use of the resources.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Land and Marine Resources; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I am looking at the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance under 01 at \$14 million. In terms of the issue surrounding land tenancy and the surveying, is any of that backlog residing inside that area of your Ministry in terms of Land and Surveys as far as you are aware?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Some of the backlog, some of the problems at the end of the chain, rest with Land and Surveys because they are the ones to approve the plan. We just had a new Commissioner of State Lands appointed and she has been given some very clear deliverables and that covers improving the efficiency. She is a GIS Land Surveyor by profession. We have to improve the efficiency not only at Lands and Surveys, but from the time somebody makes a request of the Ministry in relation to the use of state land to the end, there are inefficiencies all along, and you will see in the Development Programme how we have made a commitment in terms of IT infrastructure to deal with some of those inefficiencies.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Land Management; Item 008, Fisheries; Item 009, Agricultural Lands Administration Division; Item 010, Forestry. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 549; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Agriculture.

**Mr. Charles:** Are we on 551?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 551, 002.

**Mr. Charles:** 08, Rent/Lease, and I am only asking this in the context of the fact that you are moving to new facilities, and therefore, \$1 million for rent.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Zero—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Charles:** 008, 551, \$1 million.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Much of the properties are state owned, but we do in fact rent premises in different places in the country including up at El Socorro for the Lands Division.

**Mr. Charles:** These cannot be accommodated in Chaguanas?

**Hon. Rambharat:** No. Chaguanas will accommodate 250 and we have about 250 based at St. Clair.

**Mr. Singh:** Minister, when are you moving into the constituency of Chaguanas West?

**Hon. Rambharat:** By mid-January, assuming that the final works are completed by mid-December.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Animal Production and Health; Item 004, Horticulture; Item 005, Lands and Marine Resources; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping; Item 007, Land Management; Item 008, Fisheries; Item 009, Agriculture Land Administration Division; Item 010, Forestry.

Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 560; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Agriculture; Item 003, Animal Production and Health; Item 004, Horticulture; Item 005, Land and Marine Resources; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping; Item 007, Land Management; Item 008, Fisheries; Item 009, Agricultural Land Administration Division; Item 010, Forestry.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 563; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 005, Non-

Profit Institutions.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you just expand on Animals Alive, please, line 07?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 564.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Animals Alive operates in Oropouche. It is a dog rescue operation that supports several regional corporations around the country.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, under 005, 04 Sugar Cane Feeds Centre. I see a reduction in the allocation of \$1.4 million. What does that entail and is there any possible human resource fallout and so on, or manpower?

**Hon. Rambharat:** No, there is no manpower fallout out of that. All that happens there is that the SFC is going to be better managed in this fiscal. I think you know the history of SFC, it has operated for a long time. It started off as a project funded by CDA and it operated a long time without a direct relationship with the Ministry. It is now being brought into the animal health section of the Ministry and it is going to be managed in a way that it could do what it is supposed to do, and we could manage it especially on the cost side, but there is not going to be any fallout in terms of jobs if we get it right.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, CFTDI has been around for quite a while, I do not know what your plans are with it going forward. At one time there was an intention to move it to another Ministry.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, we have had a comprehensive review of the Ministry's involvement in fisheries. We found that the Ministry is involved through its own Fisheries Division; we also have the Seafood Industry Development Company which is a state company; we have CFTDI which is a hangover from a previous relationship with the regions; we have an aquaculture unit in the Ministry; we have the same SFC with aquaculture operations.

So in this fiscal, we have already taken some decisions to rationalize the involvement in fisheries and it will impact SIDC, it would impact CFDTI, but CFDTI performs a very valuable role in training in the maritime sector, as you know, in the areas that UTT does not provide the training. In fact, they have been used by UTT and THA and other organizations. So there is value in the training element, but there is need to remove some of the duplication across the fisheries sector.

**Mr. Karim:** Just a follow-up question, Minister. I know the location has always been and continues to be at Chaguaramas. In view of the new vision that you have here, do you plan to have any satellites of this in other parts of the country?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, there is a lot of value in leaving CFTDI there, and in dealing with SIDC that SIDC and CFTDI work together, and once we have gotten that structure right there is also value in—as I have said, the Ministry should function through all its offices across the country, offering all the services that we are capable.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 02, that has been another institution around for a very, very long time, I do not know if you are satisfied with the work of CARDI. Or what plans you have for it?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, as a Government, as you know, because of the structure of CARDI, we make a financial contribution and the reality is that—CARDI is undergoing its own review and would present its report to the governors, but the reality is that some of the other islands do not have the sort of Ministry of Agriculture, the sort of resources we have.

**3.05 p.m.**

**Hon. Rambharat:** And the reason for CARDI has always been that they would do work with those islands that do not have the technical capacity and Trinidad, even

though we make very limited use of them, we are happy to have them here because there are times when we do have to call upon them and they are also available to those countries in the region that do not have the capacity.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, line Item 05 and 06, Rural Women Producers' Network and the 4H Young Farmers' Club. Can you tell us about these two, club and network?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, the Rural Women Producers' Network, they do a lot of valuable work. This is a very small allocation that we make to them for specific uses. They do a lot of work in areas like Toco, for example, where earlier this year, they launched a programme for the women in that area to bake bread and sell using an earthen oven, and they source their funding through the international and regional agencies and this is a small contribution we make to keeping them active.

4H, of course, over the years, has been in decline but we have also said as a Government that we intend to promote the growth of gardens in schools. As a Ministry, we recognize the importance of supporting the agriculture curriculum that starts in Standard 3 in the primary school and goes right up through the secondary school and 4H, as a school-based organization, plays an important role and this money is intended to assist 4H in becoming more modern in its approach to dealing with its remit.

**Miss Ramdial:** So can we expect the 4H Young Farmers' Club to have a new work programme in terms of visiting schools across—

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yeah, the work programme, I have been very clear to 4H since last year that the work programme has to be modernized, they cannot be doing what they have been doing for the last 20 years. The Ministry also recognizes that we have to provide them, not only with this subvention that we manage but also some of the technical resources that they require.



**Miss Ramdial:** Thanks.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure. Thank you. Sugar Cane Feeds Centre, I just want to come back to that for a moment. You said, okay, you have moved the Sugar Cane Feeds Centre to the animal production unit. Am I right?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Do you now have a work plan for the Sugar Cane Feeds Centre with measurable objectives as to what they want to achieve? For example, the production of fingerlings, tilapia, is difficult to get if you call them. What kind of work programme do you have for them that can justify this spending of \$8 million to \$9 million a year?

**Hon. Rambharat:** That is part of the remit of the consultancy Dr. Knights is doing and in answering that question, I will say across the Ministry. I am sure you are going to ask me about agricultural incentives. We have been paying out, we have been spending and making what we call investments without measuring the return on that investment and perhaps, that is why agricultural production as a contribution to GDP has flatlined, because we have been making what I consider to be investments but we have not been measuring the impact of that investment.

And bringing SFC in closer to the Ministry and also giving a fresh mandate to the Livestock and Livestock Products Board and engaging Dr. Knights to assist us in charting the way forward are important elements of making sure that we measure and we ultimately boost production.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just two questions but just to go back on what it is you just spoke about, 04, Sugar Cane Feeds Centre. Dr. Knights is assisting with the sugar cane as well as with the animal. Right?

**Hon. Rambharat:** The Sugar Cane Feeds Centre which is—the name is

misleading; it is a livestock operation.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. And you are stating that this \$9.4 million would go towards his fees?

**Hon. Rambharat:** No, no, this \$9.4 million keeps the SFC in operation.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right, okay and line 06, the 4H Young Farmers, I know it is a new project, a new way forward. Would you be able to submit in writing the project schools, the pilot schools that you would be looking at to initially start it, please?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Sure.

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

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Going back to 01, Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute, and I know the Minister has spoken about rationalization of the Institute of Marine Affairs and the other institutions involving fisheries. Which institution in the Ministry is responsible for monitoring fish, the size of the fish, in particular, the pollution and the impact in the context of the fish kill? Rather than wait for it to happen and then we run to do studies, is there somebody constantly monitoring it to give the population some comfort that they are eating healthy fish?

**Hon. Rambharat:** And just in your question, you have criss-crossed so many Ministries and that is the challenge. The EMA has a role under the law and that is why in relation to the recent fish kill, we have been very careful to ensure that the EMA is left to do their work. So from a quality and regulatory point of view, it is the EMA.

In terms of the research side of it, the IMA has that responsibility. The Ministry has a responsibility in relation to the fisherfolk themselves, their physical assets and monitoring them—and I just want to make the point because this

fisheries Bill will reach to Parliament and I expect support for it on both sides because it has been a long time—and I do not think that people realize that in this country, boat ownership, for example, is under the Ministry of Works, the Maritime Division, but the various activities in fishing, including the quality of the fish, is not subject to any form of regulation.

The Minister of Health will eventually lay in Parliament a new version of the food and drugs legislation which includes regulation to modernize fish and the sale of fish and the health issues relating to fish. So we have been really operating in an environment where we have many agencies and Ministries operating but more importantly without a modern regulatory framework to guide—even on the area of trawling and all those things, we have been advocating for a long time, but in this term of the Parliament, we have to settle those issues.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister, Item 008 Subsidies; 04, Relief for Flood Damage. The allocation was reduced in 2016 on the revised estimates to \$4 million and it is further reduced in 2017 to \$2 million—a decrease of \$2 million. Now, two questions really. In the absence of irrigation—proper irrigation systems and you do not have that anywhere—the likelihood of flood with significant rainfall and torrential rainfall increases, so the flood factor is there.

But then there is the other question of what you pay in the relief to the agriculturist, to the farmer, because when you put their input in cost of the plant, cost of preparation of the land, cost of the fertilizer input, insecticide input, you have to increase the relief and that has not been increased for over a decade.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, might I ask what line Item you are under?

**Mr. Singh:** Subsidies, 04, Relief of Flood Damage. You see, when you get flooded out, you pay for the plants, item by item.

**Madam Chairman:** I have not reached there as yet you know.

**Mr. Singh:** Just hold the answer until we reach there.

**Madam Chairman:** So I take it that there are no questions for Item 007, Households. Okay, so we are in Item 008, Subsidies.

**Hon. Rambharat:** You mentioned two factors, I thought you were going to get to number three, the fact that we have people who habitually make flood compensation claims.

**Mr. Singh:** I am not aware of that.

**Hon. Rambharat:** There are people. But there is need to—I accept what you say. There is need to be more realistic in the quantum of the compensation but at the same time, the Ministry is engaged in a review of flood compensation we have made historically to identify those persons. You see, this compensation is meant to deal with unforeseen circumstances and if you are planting year after year on a river bank or in a flood prone area, then it is not an unforeseen circumstance, and we have people—we believe that there are people who are just habitual flood compensation claimants. So, on the one hand, we are committed to review the levels of compensation but on the other hand, we have to weed out those who are habitual claimants.

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to temper your regulatory approach, Minister, with the reality that in some instances, there is no land available other than the land in the flood plains because there is no access to water.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yes, I accept that.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 02, Incentive Programme, I saw in 2016, estimates at \$4 million and then, of course, it went to \$800,000 in 2017. Have you revised your policy on Incentive Programme or can you—?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Okay. There are several things we have done on the Agricultural Incentive Programme. In the opening, I made the point that notwithstanding working with a reduced recurrent expenditure, we were able to deal with long outstanding liabilities in relation to agricultural incentives. So we have entered this fiscal year without the sort of backlog that we have had historically. In other words, we are carrying forward a lower level of liability; that is the first thing.

The second thing is that the Minister of Finance announced last year that inputs in agriculture were going to be made tax free and that included vehicles and vessels. Now, in the Agricultural Incentive Programme, the biggest claim we have comes from vehicles ostensibly for use in agriculture, that is biggest, and under the current system, a rebate is paid to the claimant over three years and based on the average cost of the vehicle, that amounts to about \$13,000 a year. It means that with the tax free status being given to that vehicle, the Ministry will no longer have to pay the rebate because the VAT and the duty and all of that are not going to be paid. Not only does that make it a more efficient system where the buyer does not have to put out the money and get the repayment over the three years, but it also means that the Ministry can make a lower provision under the Agricultural Incentive Programme.

Having said that, that programme is under review because, in its existence, it is not a programme that has been monitored to determine whether the spending we make actually impacts agricultural production. So we have engaged Dr. Seepersad from UWI to review the programme, to identify for us an appropriate model for that programme where, in some cases, it would mean removing particular incentives that do not encourage production and in some cases, improving certain incentives that will improve production. And finally we have to put—the Minister

of Finance has demanded that we put in place a system where people who are granted these incentives for vehicles and equipment are monitored so that we are assured that they actually use it for agricultural production.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Mine is not a question or an answer to any question that has been asked thus far. I am just bringing to the attention of my colleagues, that we have—and I mean on both sides, that we still have the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Integrity Commission, the Office of the Parliament, CAST and Office of the President to be done and we have to be finished by 7.50 p.m. today, and I am sure those on the other side are interested in getting answers to quite a number of areas in these Heads that I have mentioned, and it is now 3.19 p.m.

I am very concerned about the time, because we have so many other Heads to be done.

**3.20 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you so much, Madam Minister.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, we are aware and we are proceeding accordingly.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Maybe I could discuss leaving tea out on this occasion and people could just filter out and get tea.

**Madam Chairman:** I just want to assure all Members, whatever happens we will meet the requisite deadline. The Chair is quite aware.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Hon. Ministers, will there be consultation with the stakeholders before proceeding on any amendment to the incentive programme?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yeah, of course, we have done that.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** My question was answered, Ma'am. Thanks.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. 009, Other Transfers.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon Minister, on line Sub-Item 03, as you are aware, some work has been started on the farmers' market in Woodford Lodge, Chaguanas, do you plan to continue that and to use that as the farmers' market for that area?

**Hon. Rambharat:** We are still uncertain whether that is the best location. So, in fact, we believe that the expansive yard of the new Head Office in Chaguanas is ideal for a farmers' market because if you have seen the way the farmers' market has operated in the Savannah, for example, it is a market that is set up and taken down in half day or one day and we are going to be exploring that location for a farmers' market. The facility at Woodford Lodge would be put to the best use that the Government finds appropriate for it.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 02, the YAPA. In 2016, you had estimated 4.7, so I guess you had some good plans for that programme. But I notice in 2016, the revised estimate is \$500,000, half a million. What has happened to that programme and why has it not borne fruit, as you would have envisioned back in 2015/2016?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, given the timing we had for the 2015/2016 budget, very little could be down in terms of adjustments, but over this fiscal year we have looked at, again, the issue of duplication in projects targeting youth and for the next fiscal year the \$1 million that has been estimated is to provide specific incentives for youth in agriculture in the area of agri-business development.

I meet a lot of young people who have ideas, but the ideas need to be developed and this \$1 million is to create a facility, not a physical facility, to allow them to develop the idea.

**Mr. Lee:** Line Sub-Item 05, Minister, Tourism Development Facilities. Could you

just expand what they are?

**Hon. Rambharat:** The Ministry has responsibility for some, what we call tourist facilities, like the water wheel in Diego Martin and some other smaller facilities, and that is allocated for the continued upgrade of those facilities.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, it is my understanding that on Sub-Item 01, the Livestock and Livestock Products Board has been basically disbanded. The office has been shut for the last nine or 10 months, yet I am seeing a \$1 million allocation. Can you give us a status on that board?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well the Livestock and Livestock Products Board, my assessment of the work of the board is that the board had not—not the persons but the board itself as an institution—performed the development work that it was required to do under the Act and for that reason there was no value in paying board fees to people who were not doing what the law required them to do.

And part of the work that Dr. Knights has been doing would be handed to the Livestock Board as part of their mandate under the law for execution. And that is why we have made provision. The board, after consultation with the appropriate people, the names have been prepared and the board will be appointed.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 565; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 566; Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 566; 004, Statutory Boards.

Hon. Members, we shall now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly*. We are at page 499 of that book; 08, Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 499; Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 499;



Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 500; 001, General Administration, page 500; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 500; 09, National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 505; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 505 and 506; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001 General Administration, page 506; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 506; 009, Other Transfers, page 506; 10, Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 513; 001, General Administration, page 513; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 513; 11, Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 518; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 518; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration, page 519, Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 519.

Hon. Members, we will now proceed on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, new book, page 247. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 247; Item 001, Pre-investment, page 247; Item 002, Productive Sectors, page 248.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Through you, Chair, to the Minister. St. Augustine Nurseries, I see that there is a small allocation for that. What is happening with the nurseries in St. Augustine, Curepe?

**Hon. Rambharat:** We found on a review of the nurseries, including the St. Augustine Nursery, we found that notwithstanding the resources that have been committed, farmers across the country have not been receiving the levels of planting material. With the development of the two new nurseries in Ecclesville in

Rio Claro and Catskill in Moruga, we are going to do both the nurseries for the Forestry Division and the work for plant propagation.

**Dr. Tewarie:** At St. Augustine?

**Hon. Rambharat:** We are going to reduce what we do at St. Augustine, in terms of plant propagation.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So what will be the focus? That is what I am trying to get.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Of St. Augustine?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Hon. Rambharat:** St. Augustine will continue to do what they do now. They will continue to produce at the level that they could produce. But in terms of the future, we are not investing more resources, in terms of expanding St. Augustine.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Could I ask a couple more questions going on or do I, am I limited to two?

**Madam Chairman:** No, you are not limited to anything. We are now within 002, Productive Sectors, page 248.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right, I will wait until we get there.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 249 to 253.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, Item 287, I know there is no provision for 2017. I just wanted to get an update on the Ortoire Fish Landing Facility as to the status of it and if we can expect some activation of it during this fiscal year.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Okay, so just to clarify, 287 has been moved to the IDF so you would see the provision for those facilities. Ortoire, in some areas the work has been completed and in some substantially completed. It would be completed in this fiscal year.

**Madam Chairman:** We are still in 003?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 280, the Orange Valley Wholesale Fish Market (Upgrade), I see \$1 million allocated for that. Minister can you clarify a little bit as to what type of upgrades?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I can supply you the details. As you know, we met with the fisherfolk in that area. There is an issue with parking.

**Miss Ramdial:** No invitation though, yeah. Go ahead.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You were not invited.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South. It is nearly teatime so maybe you would like to start the ball rolling.

**Hon. Rambharat:** My apologies if you were not invited. As a matter of fact, you initiated the meeting.

**Miss Ramdial:** Well, I was not informed that you were coming to have it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, is that a line Item?

**Miss Ramdial:** I asked him a question so he—

**Hon. Rambharat:** So, I would provide you with the details.

**Miss Ramdial:** Minister, is this \$1 million enough for the upgrade of the Orange Valley Fish Market?

**Hon. Rambharat:** It would be enough for this fiscal year.

**Miss Ramdial:** For this fiscal year, okay.

**Dr. Tewarie:** At 536, hon. Minister, through the Chair, Establishment of Community Based Aquaculture Programmes, what is envisaged there?

**Hon. Rambharat:** In some communities there is a demand for this community-type project. So we have one that was started last fiscal in Quarry Street. We have one that would start in the Talparo area in this fiscal. That is both for training and production. But again, it is not using the earthen pond. It is using

the more modern facilities to develop the product.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, so the difference is that you do not use a pond system? You use aquaponics kind of thing.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yes, we do.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right. 359, Establishment of a Central Farmers Wholesale Market, are you thinking of that as the construction of a facility or the establishment of a market, using existing facilities?

**Madam Chairman:** It is on page 251.

**Dr. Tewarie:** On page 251, sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 359, page 251.

**Hon. Rambharat:** That is the facility at Woodford Lodge.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Hon. Rambharat:** That is the facility and as I answered earlier, we have not determined what is going to be the future use of that facility, but in terms of the farmers' market, we have decided to try it at the new building in Chaguanas.

**3.35 p.m.**

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, and page 252, 001, is that okay, Madam Chair?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, it is.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Provision of Agricultural Access to Targeted Commodities and Strategic Crops. Have you determined what those are?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, that was a line Item, but was worded in that way, but the criteria used for development of access roads is based on impact to farmers.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Because what I have found was that roads were being worked on for a variety of reasons, and it is based on impact for this year, for example, the work that was done the last fiscal has been on those food crop areas, those areas

with high output.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. You got my list of agricultural roads?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I got all your lists.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Tewarie:** One more, Chair?

**Madam Chairman:** I will call you back. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 540, under Research and Development, page 250, Establishment of a Packing House Facility for Fresh Produce. There were some packing houses that were built including one at Brothers Road in Tabaquite. Can you give an update on the status of that?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, substantial resources have been put into that particular house, and the one in Brechin Castle. The Board of NAMDEVCO has commissioned an audit into both facilities, in terms of establishing what the contractors were required to do; what has been done; what remains to be done, and whether NAMDEVCO has gotten value for money. That audit, my understanding is that the final report is going to be handed in soon. Once we understand where we are with it, a decision would be made, but I will say—I mentioned it before in relation to that facility, Brechin Castle and the farmers—the wholesale market in Woodford Lodge, NAMDEVCO is considering the prospect of private/public/partnership for the operation of those.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 552, the Forage Farm at Morne Jaloux. Morne Jaloux is in the Caroni East constituency. Could you give us a little enlightenment on what that consists of?

**Hon. Rambharat:** The project on Morne Jaloux—Morne Jaloux was identified as a forage farm, to grow feed material for livestock. It has done a good job in terms

of servicing the central region—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, people come from outside and take some of it.

**Hon. Rambharat:**—right. We have put in a—the Minister of Finance has put in additional funding for both Morne Jaloux and La Gloria, to expand the forage areas that we have, but also to put the infrastructure to work. I do not know how much you know. It is your constituency, but notwithstanding the money that was spent on the development of infrastructure in Morne Jaloux, a simple thing as the connection, the electricity connection to those facilities has never been done. The facilities have been sitting there for several years. So we have some infrastructure work to do in support of those forage farms, and to put the buildings to use by the Ministry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We appreciate that.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Item 427 on page 252, Farm-to-Table Project, it is new project. What do you conceive of doing?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, even though in a sense we put the cart before the horse, by going into this investment we have made in these packing houses and the facilities. We have not developed a policy and an approach to farm-to-table. Farm-to-table means bringing the primary product through to different stages. On one stage, the farmers' market, for example, represents bringing primary production to the end consumer with no middle man. That is one form.

An important part of farm-to-table is also bringing primary production to agro-processors. An important part is bringing primary production to supermarkets and the retail trade, and bringing it to the export market, and we have to establish those linkages. We have to create those linkages in a way that it works, and that has been the missing element of farm-to-table, and this money has been committed to develop those linkages.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, and final question, Item 001 on page 253, Acquisition of Sites for Non-Agricultural Development Purposes. What is that about?—because I see originally it is a pretty high revised estimate, \$20 million and then the actual estimate in 2017 is \$3 million.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Okay. So the Commissioner of State Lands manages land acquisitions across the State, for all agencies and all Ministries, and that has been a historical position. The moneys owed to the owners of lands which have been acquired for public purposes, it is—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So it is that?

**Hon. Rambharat:**—a significant debt, yeah.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I have a couple questions. So I will start on 252 and go back. The first line Item 03, Rehabilitation and Development of Physical Infrastructure of Plum Mitan. I just want to ask what exactly does the Ministry intend to—how do they intend to go forward with the rehabilitation programme?—because as you would be aware, there are a number of problems with irrigation and access roads.

**Hon. Rambharat:** As I said earlier, the PSIP is focused on IT infrastructure, water resource management and research and extension training, and this falls under water resource management, and this is the phase three of the upgrade of the irrigation infrastructure in Plum Mitan. We actually, in this last fiscal year, we have done the phase two of that project.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** In line Item 426, the Rehabilitation of the Cocoa Industry, I see it is a new project. Will this project include the labs that have been made mandatory by the signing of the EPA in 2009? Would it include the—

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, this project will work in tandem with the work of the Cocoa Development Company, and it would produce for the sector, the things that

are required to maintain Trinidad's standing as a fine cocoa producer.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Page 251, line Item 553, the Coconut Rehabilitation and Replanting Programme, how do you plan to proceed with that programme? You could give it to me in writing—

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yeah, sure. Thank you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:**—and also, as you would be aware, Marper Farm is in my area, if you can also provide in the ways that you are going to be developing it and making provision; in writing.

**Hon. Rambharat:** Okay. I will. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 254; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 255—257.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, line Item 005, reference was made earlier on in a conversation with respect to horticulture. I just want to find out this new project, how are you going to—on what basis if you have not already selected, how are you going to select the rural communities and the age group of these young entrepreneurs? How many persons are targeted?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, the Ministry will develop the criteria and I can provide it to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 362; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 362; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 363.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 77 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I want to thank the Minister, the Parliamentary Secretary, the PS and the other officers of the Ministry for assisting us.

*Head 43.*

**Madam Chairman:** Ministry of Works and Transport. Members, we are in



*Recurrent Estimates*, page 307. Ministry of Works and Transport, \$2,488,852,250.

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

**Hon. Hinds:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Forgive my excitement. I just got news that election petition was dismissed; the other side—[*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] and that by a unanimous—

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members! [*Continuous crosstalk*] Members! Minister of Finance, kindly, please allow the Minister of Works and Transport to make his presentation.

**Hon. Hinds:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Ministry of Works and Transport is a large-sector Ministry that comprises several statutory authorities, State enterprises and administrative and technical divisions, established since 1956. The Ministry employs today, some 7,354 employees, who are responsible for providing the infrastructure and transport services necessary, for the social and economic development of our country. These statutory bodies and State enterprises consist of: the National Infrastructure Development Company; the National Helicopter Services Limited; the Vehicle Management Company of Trinidad and Tobago; Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; Point Lisas Industrial Development Company; the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority and the Public Transport Service Corporation.

In accordance with its mandate, the Ministry provides its clients and the general public with the following services: national planning for roads, drainage and transportation, air, sea and land; construction and maintenance of highways, major and secondary roads, dams and drainage systems; land reclamation and coastal management, in collaboration with stakeholders; advise as well as the

construction and maintenance of Government buildings and facilities, of the Ministry of Works and Transport buildings and facilities; advise on maritime-related matters; advise on purchase, repair and maintenance of the transport fleet of State agencies; traffic management; registration, classification, licensing and inspection of vehicles; issuance of drivers permits; enforcement of laws under the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act; management and control of shipping within Trinidad and Tobago waters; registration, licensing, survey and inspection and certification of ships; enforcement of all maritime laws; negotiation and monitoring of air service agreements.

The Ministry's core divisions are: the Coastal Protection Unit; the Construction Division; Drainage Division; Environmental, Health and Safety Unit; the Highways Division, Mechanical Services; Maintenance, Maritime Services Division; National Traffic Management Centre; the Priority Bus Route Unit; Programmes for the Upgrading of Roads Efficiency or PURE; Traffic Management Branch, the Traffic Warden Division and, of course, the Unemployment Relief Programme.

Madam Chairman, given today's new economic environment, and my observations a few days ago in the debate, that I am astounded at the porosity of conditions of roads and infrastructure across Trinidad and Tobago. We embarked upon this journey and we are seeking first of all efficiency, value for money, and as we seek to improve these circumstances and the infrastructure of this country. It is the ethos of the Ministry to save money, save time, because as we develop new roads, for example, the Valencia to Toco and a ferry port there, that will get people to Tobago in quicker time. When we improve the general circumstances of the roads, persons are able to move around more swiftly. So we will be saving money, saving time and, of course, with our road safety programmes and our improved

traffic management, an improvement of the transport division, we propose as well, to save lives.

I thank you very much, and look forward to the questions from my friends.

**3.50 p.m.**

*Question Proposed:* That Head 43 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,488,852,250 for Head 43, the Ministry of Works and Transport, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 307. Sub-Head 001, Personnel Expenditure, page 307. Item 001, General Administration, page 307. Item 002, Highways. Item 003, Traffic Management. Item 004, Central Planning Unit. Item 005, Drainage. Item 006, Mechanical Services. Item 007, Maintenance. Item 008, Construction. Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme. Item 013, General Administration (Transport). Item 014, Transport. Item 015, Maritime Services. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 314. Item 001, General Administration, pages 314 to 315. Item 02, Highways. Item 003, Traffic Management. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Highways, 28, Other Contracted Services. I see there is an allocation of \$29.2 million more for 2017, can the hon. Minister tell us what kinds of other contracted services will be done under this additional Vote?

**Hon. Hinds:** In light of the demands and the requests that we have had from across the country, most coming from the representatives, our colleagues in the House, we intend to increase the infrastructural works generally. It is for that

purpose.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Does the Minister have a list of the projects that are to be done or would these be determined as we go along or do you now have a list?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, we have a conglomeration of all of the requests, as we go along, we will do them. Bearing in mind, of course, most of all, impact, because we are concerned about the citizens and wherever the need is most critical we do so, particularly given the economic circumstances.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, the Minister has not determined the distribution of this \$29.2 million as yet?

**Hon. Hinds:** What we have is all of the requests that have come from the citizens of the country, most of all, from the Members of Parliament who represent them, and that is the pool that we propose to work with on the basis of priority.

**Dr. Rambachan:** At what point in time would a Member of Parliament therefore be able to ascertain what if his or her projects are on this list?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, once he has submitted it, he can be assured that it is on the list.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But then you have a limited amount of funding, as you said, you have to prioritize.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, that is the reality that we are all constrained by.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am agreeing that Members of Parliament have to answer to their constituents, may I therefore ask that if it is possible for the Minister to distribute the list of projects that he will be doing under this so that we can answer to our constituents?

**Hon. Hinds:** What I can distribute is a comprehensive—if you wish—conglomeration of all the requests that I have.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, \$114 million was estimated to be spent under

that same Item in 2016 and \$12 million was spent. Of course, \$102 million was not spent. Could you just indicate what would have stymied the implementation of some of the—

**Hon. Hinds:** I missed your question. What is it?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The same Item 28, under Contracted Services; \$114 million was estimated to be spent on that line Item in 2016 and \$12 million was spent. What would have stymied the implementation of a number of these projects? Is it that you were trying to—

**Hon. Hinds:** I think it has to do with the fact that some of the work had begun, and when the Government changed, I imagine some of the contractors stopped working, because they were not paid initially and refused to continue to work until they were paid. So when the releases came, we were able to pay some of them and then they have recommenced the work in some cases, and we expect that that trend will continue going forward.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, it basically was an analysis and then moving forward with it?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes, indeed.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. So we expect some fast implementation?

**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly, now that we have clarified most of the troubles that afflicted us on that occasion.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Traffic Management. Item 004, Central Planning Unit. Item 005, Drainage.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, through you. Minister, 2016 you had \$145 million allocated but only spent \$15 million.

**Hon. Hinds:** Where is he?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Page 317, Item 005, Drainage, 28, Other Contracted Services.

So you had \$145 million allocated, you spent \$15 million in 2016, and now you propose to spend \$49.6 million in 2017. Do you have also a list of the projects that you intend to do under this or what other services are included under “other contracted”?

**Hon. Hinds:** It is the same situation where you have, as I say, a conglomeration of the requests, because every day as you would know from your last outing there, you received letters, you received communications from citizens who have issues with drainage. You have them analyzed, you have them assessed, you have them costed and you get altogether technically ready to get the job done on the basis of the priorities, as I described them a while ago.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What would have contributed to the vast underspending by \$130 million last year?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, I think, as I said, you know, once we went in there, we had to tread very carefully. I think I expressed some of that in my budget contribution. We had to do a lot of verification and checking to make sure. Because as you heard me say during the budget, there were circumstances where there were no written contracts. You have heard me say, there were circumstances where there were written contracts, and upon investigation there was absolutely nothing in existence out there, in some cases where it was signed off as 100 per cent complete. So we had to be careful in the public interest before we just threw moneys around to make sure that that was properly done.

And, as well, what we did, was to engage a very reputable accounting and procurement set of specialists, KPMG. They came in, they looked at how we were doing it, because I was not comfortable to continue on the road that we had gone previously. They reviewed the entire system and now we have come up with a more centralized procurement process, where we could feel more confident that

procurement is better done along the lines of the anticipated procurement legislation and, therefore, I anticipate in the coming year we should proceed more swiftly.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I listened to the Minister as he indicated that he had to tread carefully, but there is also a human cost when you tread carefully without understanding that there are some things that ought to be completed, because they pose a hazard to human life.

In my constituency, in John Peter Road, a project undertaken by PURE was left incomplete and, as a result, a lady from my constituency fell and she was impaled by an exposed steel bar, and a neighbour had to take a bolt cutter and cut out that steel bar while she was in pain, and subsequently she died. So, that therefore, I understand you tread carefully, but there is sometimes a cost in human life for these things. I just make that comment.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, I simply would like to say, based on the fact that you have expressed it, we the Government and all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago expressed deep and sincere condolences to the pain that was brought upon that citizen. It is deeply regretful. I might take the opportunity to say that contractors and their employers have a duty, under law, to make worksites sufficiently safe in accordance with the law, statutory and statute and common law—well by way of preventing that kind unfortunate situation. Please express my—when you have an opportunity MP—my personnel regrets to the citizen who so suffered.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Mechanical Services, page 318. Item 007, Maintenance. Item 008, Construction. Item 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit. Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit, pages 321 and 322.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Traffic Warden Unit, 010, page 321, Item 16, Contract Employment. Madam Chair, the estimates for 2016 was \$26.5 million under

Contract Employment, revised down to \$20 million in 2016, and now down to a further revision of a further \$3 million to \$17 million for traffic wardens. In view of the increasing number of vehicles on road and the demand for traffic wardens, does this contemplate a reduction in the number of traffic wardens in the country?

**Hon. Hinds:** It does not contemplate that. It does not contemplate that at all. It simply is that this is the reality in which we are put. I mean, we requested \$17 million—no, we requested \$64 million and we received what we did. So there is this deficit and we will proceed. If we find, as you would have heard before during the course of these deliberations that we need more money, we will be able to justify that, proceed and approach to the Minister of Finance and hopefully get further moneys to continue this important work.

For the time being though, I might tell you that some of the contracts of the personnel in the very important Traffic Warden Unit have expired. They continue to be on the job on a month-to-month basis. In the protection of the public interest and with the ethos of Ministry being securing value for money, what we have done is not simply rehire them on further contracts, but we have asked our HR department to closely look at the records and the performance of each and every one of those persons and to satisfy us, the leadership at the Ministry, that these individuals are able and willing and are performing efficiently before we extend their contracts, and we do so in the public interest—**Dr. Rambachan:** Is this—?

**Hon. Hinds:** Just a second—because we are fully aware, unfortunately, that in our country and, more specifically in my Ministry, which is in front of me here today, there are many people who are paid to do work in this country, who are being paid and are not doing that work. We intend to ensure that we get value for money in every respect.

**4.05 p.m.**



**Dr. Rambachan:** Is this analysis of the productivity of these traffic wardens that you speak about going to be done by the supervisor of the traffic wardens, the department or an independent human resource division of the Ministry?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, the supervisors obviously in the conduct of their work as supervisors would make records. This is done on an ongoing basis, but the HR department, the professionals, the specialists, they are the ones who would review these performances and come up with a determination, by which I am guided, because I am not a human resource officer.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister aware that over the years there are traffic wardens who have complained bitterly about discrimination on the part of senior officers of the Traffic Warden Division, in terms of continuation of their jobs and because of those complaints, those behaviours of the seniors about which they have complained, they feel threatened about their continued existence in their jobs? Is the Minister aware of that? That is why I am asking, how independent is the human resource division going to do this?

**Hon. Hinds:** I just told you how independent it would be. It is not the supervisors who will do this evaluation; ultimately it would be the HR professionals at the Ministry. But in respect of this question of discrimination, I do not recall having received any such complaint, but it is something I will keep an eye and an ear out for, because this Government is wholly intolerant of discrimination on any grounds.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, just for a matter of interest, I received many while I was there, investigated them and many had strong foundations of discrimination.

**Hon. Hinds:** I cannot recall having received any complaint about any allegation of discrimination.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. Item

012, Unemployment Relief Programme. Item 013, General Administration Transport. Item 014, Transport Division. Item 015, Maritime Services. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 326. Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Highways. Item 003, Traffic Management. Item 004, Central Planning Unit. Item 005, Drainage. Item 006, Mechanical Services. Item 007, Maintenance. Item 008, Construction. Item 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit. Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit. Item 011, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme. Item 013, General Administration Transport. Item 014, Transport. Item 015, Maritime Services. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 331. Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations. Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Item 006, Households.

**Mr. Lee:** 007, to the hon. Minister line Item under Households, line Item 10, Mentorship Programme. Could he clarify what that is about?

**Hon. Hinds:** One of the things that we take very seriously—I did say in my opening remarks that this Ministry was established as far back as 1956—part of the mandate of this Ministry in practice—I do not know if it was documented, but I do know as well that the Prime Minister has asked me to ensure that whatever we can do to encourage and to provide a place where young professionals, young people can get their feet in the Ministry, we must do so. So the Ministry is very much involved in engaging in programmes where we have young people coming out, whether it is out of university or some training institution, they can work within the Ministry of Works and Transport and be monitored and guided so that they would begin their professional lives that way. It used to be so all along, and that basically is what this is all about.

Recently for an example, I think we had 23 graduates out of a collaborative

programme between the PTSC and the NESC. They did some training at PTSC's compound and they are now all employed, assisting in the management of the PTSC's vehicles. That is just an example.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow-up question to the Minister. Under the same mentorship programme how is that different from the OJT programme that you would get trainees at your Ministry, and also the new university graduate programme that is supposed to be coming in place?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, that is not yet in place, it is of course contemplated. As I said, wherever we the Government can find an opportunity to provide these opportunities, we do that.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow-up question: how does one get into this mentorship programme?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, there is an application process; it is well advertised. It is duly considered and they are brought in accordingly.

**Mr. Lee:** Line Item 9, Minister, Debit Card System for the URP employees. Could you just clarify what that is about?

**Hon. Hinds:** There was a time when the URP was paid by cheques, and from the information that I have, this proved to be particularly problematic. The fraudsters had themselves field days. An attempt was made many years ago to eradicate those possibilities, and we went to a system where those persons who participated and benefited from their participation in the URP, which is a social relief programme, they would be paid through existing bank accounts in their respective banks. So this debit card system was established, and once you are registered into the programme you are issued by the bank with a debit card. The salary goes into that account and you can draw, to avoid some of the issues that I tried to describe a while ago. That is what that is all about.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The debit card has a PIN number that the person uses to

withdraw the money.

**Hon. Hinds:** I imagine.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister aware that there are gang leaders who collect all the debit cards and keep them, and these gang leaders actually go and cash in the debit cards?

**Hon. Hinds:** That could hardly be done without the acquiescence of the cardholders, because every cardholder only gets one, and has a PIN number. If he or she, for any reason allows—

**Mr. Singh:** PIN override.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The system has been beaten, Minister. It is still going on under the debit card.

**Hon. Hinds:** It has to be done with the participation of the PIN holder and the card holder. I will tell you this, there are many people—and this is one of the things, this is where the whole concept of ghosts come in—who sign up and participate in the Unemployment Relief Programme—some people say URP programme, but that is duplicitous and redundant—but there are many people who have themselves on these lists and they get paid, but they have other jobs and they are not really keen on performing—including nurses you said. I have found a couple. So that they are quite prepared to give someone who allowed their names to get on these lists, half or some part of their salary. What we are trying to do is to make the system far more efficient to avoid those possibilities all together.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 008, Subsidies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I notice that the subsidy for 2017 has been increased by \$10 million.

**Hon. Hinds:** Which line?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Page 332, 008, line 01, Port Authority Contribution toward

deficit and operation of the coastal steamers. So the Government is spending \$240 million this year on the operation of the coastal steamers, as the deficit which is \$10 million more. May I ask what is contributing to this \$10 million more that we are going to spend?

**Hon. Hinds:** It is, indeed, as you know a very costly exercise and based on the submissions made by the port it appears as though we would need some extra money in order to do it. For this year we expect to engage in a dry docking of one of them, which is an extraordinary set of expenditure now that has become due. I imagine that is partly responsible.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is that dry docking of the *Express*?

**Hon. Hinds:** Say again.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is that dry docking of the ferry that is called the *Express*?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes, that is the one that is due next for dry docking.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The ferry that is called the *Express*, did it hit the Caricom jetty on Saturday night and ran aground?

**Hon. Hinds:** Not from the information that I have, and mine is a very wise source.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Then why were divers sent to examine the underside of the boat to determine whether in fact it was damaged. Was the Minister aware that it was running on three engines before Saturday night and another engine conked out? It was running on two, and therefore it is possible that the new captains could not control the boat and it hit the Caricom jetty? Is this true?

**Hon. Hinds:** From all the information I have from the most fresh and official sources, that is far from true. On an ongoing basis these vessels need upgrade and improvement which is what the dry docking in the new year is expected to do.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But is the vessel being sent on the dry dock because the other engine went down on its approach back to Trinidad, therefore it hit the Caricom

jetty? Is that true, Minister?

**Hon. Hinds:** No, there is no question of any hit as far as I am aware. Collision or hit, same thing but different, none from my information.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** With respect to 009, under Transfers.

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are at 008. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We will wait for 009.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. Item 009, Other Transfers.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** To the Minister, with respect to 05, the Water Taxi Service, the 2016 estimates were at \$39,040,000, and under the revised estimates it increased to \$60,000,040. There is a decrease in 2017 estimates by \$24,040,000. Given the statistics before us, Minister, could you assure this meeting that the expenditure or the transfers would be maintained within \$36 million, and if it escalates it is just the possibility of a rise in the fare for those who are using the water taxi?

**Hon. Hinds:** We do not anticipate that it will go beyond the estimates as described here in the document in front of us. We do not anticipate that, and therefore your suggestion about an increase in fare does not arise.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The water taxi service—I just wanted to ask whether in fact it is costing less to run the water taxi service with that decrease. What is contemplated?

**Hon. Hinds:** What has happened is that recently we issued a one-off subvention to the tune of \$21 million to do some upgrade of issues on all of those water taxis, and given that, we do not expect that we will be spending as much in this fiscal year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Where, Minister, is that \$21 million included here? Because in 2016 you had \$60 million, but you only spent \$36 million, and that \$36 million relates also to—no, you spent \$21 million more in 2016, that is the \$21 million?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**4.20 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Item 001, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 332 to 333.  
Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Chair. That is 011, Sub-Item 07, NIDCO - Repayment of Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit System and the payment in 2017 is \$21.7 million. Could the Minister describe—

**Hon. Hinds:** Payment?

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah. The payment is \$21 million, the estimate is \$21.7 million. Could the Minister describe that project and the utility and the benefit to Trinidad and Tobago given the \$21.7 million expenditure?

**Hon. Hinds:** I do not understand?

**Mr. Charles:** You do not understand. What is the project? What are we paying this money for?

**Mr. Singh:** And continue to pay on an annual basis.

**Mr. Charles:** That is the supplemental.

**Hon. Hinds:** This has to do with loan repayments, as you are fully aware that are still outstanding.

**Mr. Charles:** With respect to which project?

**Hon. Hinds:** The Rapid Rail Transit System.

**Mr. Charles:** Where is it—if you say it is for this project, what is the status of this project?

**Hon. Hinds:** The current status, you will recall that there was once a programme for a rapid rail in this country. That did not go forward. Recently, the Government had announced that we will consider the establishment of a rapid rail system in this country. We consulted with the IDB. We promised this

country that we would do that. We would not act whimsically on our own energy. We thought that we would get the expertise of the IDB to tell us. Having consulted with them, they felt that Trinidad and Tobago could not afford or venture this big project at this time, and on that basis the Government decided that it would not, for the time being, proceed with this, what some people consider to be a very necessary project.

**Madam Chairman:** Follow-up question.

**Mr. Charles:** To avoid the lack of clarity. Is this specifically related to the feasibility—the \$500 million feasibility study engaged in prior to 2010?

**Hon. Hinds:** It was far more than a feasibility study as has been adumbrated in this House by the Minister of Finance and a former Minister of Works and by yours truly on diverse occasions, it is far more than a feasibility study. If you want to know precisely what it was, I think the matter came up in the course of our debates in the last Session.

**Mr. Charles:** So would you provide in writing, clear, what it is we are paying the money for? Right?

**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly.

**Mr. Charles:** And a follow-up question; when will payments end?

**Hon. Hinds:** All right.

**Mr. Charles:** Because I am seeing on—

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Member. Is that the question?

**Hon. Hinds:** That will be provided.

**Madam Chairman:** All right.

**Hon. Hinds:** Thank you.

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



**Mr. Karim:** Thank you Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, will you give us some information with respect to line Item 04, Term Loan Facility (4 New Fast Ferries)?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes. Well, these are loan repayments via NIDCO.

**Mr. Karim:** They were already acquired?

**Hon. Hinds:** In the process.

**Mr. Karim:** No. You have a loan repayment?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** Are the ferries here? Are they in your possession? I just want you to elucidate us in terms of this question.

**Hon. Hinds:** The Water Taxis. They were acquired a long time ago.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, just give us—

**Hon. Hinds:** These are continuing repayments on those Water Taxis.

**Mr. Karim:** What was the original obligation?

**Hon. Hinds:** I cannot tell you off now, I can give you in writing. I do not know the figure off my head.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Pass and looking to move on.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Hinds:** What number?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sub-Item 01, under 011, page 332.

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, why is it that we have to continue to subsidize

the Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago which should be operating as a profit centre and not being subsidized, given that they get guaranteed work from the police and from others? Why do we continue to subsidize \$10 million a year to this company?

**Hon. Hinds:** Since you oversaw that for a long time, I thought you might be of some assistance in that regard. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am asking you. Because you are in charge.

**Hon. Hinds.** But let me tell you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You are in charge.

**Hon. Hinds:** I appreciate that. I appreciate that. You did hear me outline a number of—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Just on a matter of clarity. Just on a matter of information. I was Minister of Works and Infrastructure, transport was not under my portfolio at time. So, you know, I want to be clear what I was in charge of?

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So, Members, could we just cooperate so that we can get the answer, please.

**Hon. Hinds:** When I say you, I say so with the principle of collective responsibility firmly in mind, the Government.

So the point is, that I did indicate that we had a number of statutory bodies and State companies, all, with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority, are dependent on state subventions, government subventions to carry on their work. So the proposition on which your question is based, I agree with, they all should be viable and the task that is now in front of me, being in charge now, as you just unnecessarily reminded me, is to make

them viable.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What can you present as a transformation plan or a strategic plan to transform that organization to a profitable organization?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well a transformation plan is now being developed by the new board and the people at VMCOTT and that will become available to me and I can quite easily make that available to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you giving that as an assurance that you will make that plan available to me?

**Hon. Hinds:** Of course. It is all public record.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Sub-Item 52 under 06, PTSC. There is a reduction of \$56 million, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Hinds:** Where are we?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 333.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. The Chairman has said 332, 333.

**Madam Chairman:** We have not reached there as yet.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Okay. I will hold.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? So Sub-Head 06, page 333, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004, Statutory Boards, page 333. Hon. Members, we will now move onto the *Draft Estimates of Revenue*. [Crosstalk] Well, do we not do the details in the *Draft Estimates*?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is where my question was when I asked about PTSC, a reduction of the \$56 million.

**Madam Chairman:** But PTSC will come in the book.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is a line Sub-Item here, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** But this is only a summary line Item. That very information is going to be in the—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is a line Sub-Item 52, Madam Chair, PTSC, a reduction of \$56 million on the \$367 million from 2016. What—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, may I just ask you to hold that question while you check page 409 of—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right.

**Madam Chairman:**—your *Draft Estimates under Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies* and see if it is not there, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** With respect, Madam Chairman, may I just intervene. For the benefit of Members, if you go to this book here, all of the—

**Madam Chairman:** Well, we have been doing this for five days.

**Mr. Imbert:**—*Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. If you go there you will see all of the entities under the control of the various Ministries and you will see under Ministry of Works and Transport, Airports Authority, Port Authority, Public Transport Service Corporation and the Civil Aviation Authority.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, we will wait until that time.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. We are at page 375, 39, Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, Sub-Head 01; 001, General Administration, page 375; 002, Passenger and Cargo Terminals; 003, Airports Operations; 004, Runways, Taxiways, Grounds, Car Parks; 005, Security; Sub-Head 02, Goods

and Services, page 376; 001, General Administration; 002, Passenger and Cargo Terminals; 003, Airports Operations; 004, Runways, Taxiways, Grounds and Car Parks; 005, Security; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 378; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 378; 009, Other Transfers, page 379. We are going onto page 390; 50, Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 390. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Personnel Expenditure, Overtime. In 2016, the Revised Estimates for overtime for monthly paid officers was \$6,570,000. How suddenly the Minister proposes to drop this by \$1.779 million and get the same level of efficiency? How do you propose to do that? Or is it that you are saying that in 2016 there was waste, corruption and mismanagement that led you to \$6.57 million?

**Hon. Hinds:** I did not say that, very unlikely to have happened in 2016. Might have happened a lot before.

**Dr. Rambachan:** It was lower in 2015, \$5.114.

**Hon. Hinds:** But in keeping with current economic circumstances and our insistence on value for money, we feel that we can cause the job to be done with a smaller bill or we can get the job done with a smaller bill in terms of—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Then are you saying that the monthly paid staff at the Port Authority for all these years have been really performing under their productive capacity?

**Hon. Hinds:** And as well—that is possible, that is possible, and as well I will tell you this. There are arrangements on the port now that are being reviewed. We are now wanting to move to what they call the five in seven. As it now

stands, current arrangement is that a person can do one day's work and if that is on a holiday or on a weekend, he or she begins to earn overtime before completing eight hours. So we are rearranging that. We are engaged in discussions with the union and other stakeholders and fortunately, we are getting favourable feedback. That is a situation that might exist only in Trinidad and Tobago and current circumstances cannot embrace or accommodate that, so we are attempting to come out of that. You might see a reduction in overtime as a result.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And does that policy hold also for the Engineering Division, the Marine Division and the Wharves Division?

**Hon. Hinds:** All divisions, where ever it exists we want to make it more efficient and save the taxpayers of this country unnecessary and wasteful expenditure while getting the service done in a way, a proper and modern First World country ought to.

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

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Under the Wharves Division, 005—

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:**—line Item 02—

**Madam Chairman:** We have not reached there.

**Hon. Hinds:** We have not gotten there as yet, I do not think.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? 002, Engineering Division; 004, Marine Division; 005, Wharves Division. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, Wharves Division, line Item 02, Wages and Cost of Living Allowance—

**Hon. Hinds:** Yeah.

**Mr. Lee:**—there is a \$30.8 million decrease for 2017. What would account for that major decrease? Is it a loss of jobs in that division? Could you explain?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, I think if—[*Crosstalk*] No. I do not think it has anything to do with any loss in jobs. It is simply that as I indicated a while ago, if we make the adjustments that we expect that we will make, the wage bill altogether would be a lot less and we—

**Mr. Lee:** And how do you propose to make the wage bill a lot less?

**Hon. Hinds:** As I said, we are engaged in renegotiation with the unions, the management is taking a different approach and we are trying to make this situation a whole lot more efficient. If, of course, we need more money, as I said before, we will have to approach the Ministry of Finance for it, but we anticipate a reduction on the basis of our plans.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, can I ask a follow-up question? I hear the Minister talked about making adjustment or call upon the Minister of Finance if they need more funding. But if the Port Authority in their estimate, in this budget they have gotten 60—and I use the line Item 02, \$60.5 million—

**Hon. Hinds:** Yeah.

**Mr. Lee:**—that is their budgeted figure for year, they would have to adjust to suit that figure.

**4.35 p.m.**

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, the other thing is, and this is a point you must take into account, is that there has been a general—given international economic slowdown—reduction in the amount of business that comes to both our ports, Plipdeco and the Port of Port of Spain, and as a result of the general reduction in

the amount of activity, we do not expect that we will have to spend so much money. Of course, we look forward to spending more if you had that on the basis of an increase in economic activity from which we, Trinidad and Tobago, should benefit.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Cruise Ship Complex; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 391; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Engineering Division; Item 004, Marine Division; Item 005, Wharves Division; Item 006, Cruise Ship Complex. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** To the hon. Minister, under Cruise Ship Complex, line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings, \$6.1 million, and also could he clarify what is happening in that area given that we—

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes, we anticipate some civil works in respect of the facilities down there. Yes, it is that that will account for that increase. We plan to do some civil works on those buildings.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 393; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Engineering Division; Item 004, Marine Division; Item 005, Wharves Division; Item 006, Cruise Ship Complex; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 394; Item 007, Households. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, with respect to Sub-Item 03, Gratuities, General Administration, there is an increase in your estimate by \$12.6 million, could the Minister clarify?

**Hon. Hinds:** I am advised that we expect approximately 45 persons to retire in this coming fiscal, and that is what will generally account for that allocation, and of course with gratuities.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers; Sub-Item 52, Public Transport



Service Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 409; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Vehicles and Equipment Maintenance; Item 007, Property Development Services; Item 008, Transit Express Commuter Services.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, page 409, the Personnel Expenditure, the question I was asking, the reduction of \$193 million—from \$213 million to \$193 million—

**Madam Chairman:** What Item are you on, Member for Caroni East?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 01—

**Hon. Member:** We pass there already.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You pass there?

**Madam Chairman:** We are on Item 008, Transit Express Commuter Services.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You pass with a bullet.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You pass there with a bus.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A bullet there. [*Laughs*] You carry me there and you pass me straight. I have to take a bus to pick up with you. [*Laughter*]

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 410; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Vehicles and Equipment Maintenance; Item 005, Port of Spain Transit Centre; Item 006, Para-Transit Unit; Item 007, Property Development Services; Item 008, Transit Express Commuter Services; Sub-Head 03, page 412, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 412; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers; Head 57, Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 422; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 001, just for

my own clarification, how large a staff is at Civil Aviation for \$56.6 million?

**Hon. Hinds:** I can tell you that at a later stage. The exact figure does not—I am not with it at the moment.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, thank you, page 422, line Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, substantial amount. Might we get an idea as to what comprises that \$9.913 million, the allocation?

**Hon. Hinds:** I would provide that to you in writing at the first opportunity, Member.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, may I also ask for a line Item Ma'am?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Karim:**—Sub-Item 28, if you are providing, can you give us an explanation on the Other Contracted Services?

**Hon. Hinds:** Again, I should provide that to you in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Similarly, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, \$3.5 million, I want an explanation of that.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, the Civil Aviation Authority by virtue of what it does appears to have represented Trinidad and Tobago, and plays a major role in the international arrangements in respect of Civil Aviation, and from time to time they are required to participate in these conferences and elections around the worlds, and that is where we allocate the money, for that purpose.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 423; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 423; Item 001, Regional Bodies. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Current Transfers and Subsidies, there is a figure here of \$11,966,900. The Minister said, in his earlier conversation, that the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority does not require subsidies. However, on page 333, of the *Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, and this is why I want to ask under that—Item 57—there is a current transfer of \$20 million this year, \$22 million last year to Civil Aviation. In any case, this 11.966 is less than the \$20 million reported here on the expenditure sheet. What is the difference—?

**Madam Chairman:** But let me just ask you something, we are looking here at Current Transfers and Subsidies, is there an Item here—could you tell me the Item with Civil Aviation?

**Dr. Rambachan:** It is Current Transfers and Subsidies. This comes under Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. Okay? The amount of Current Transfers and Subsidies is \$11,966,900, 2017. But, in this book [*Holds up book*] it shows here that Civil Aviation has a subsidy of \$20 million this year, and had \$22 million last year, but I recall the Minister saying that Civil Aviation is the one body that does not require subsidies or transfers.

**Hon. Hinds:** Let me clarify that. It is a statutory body under the Ministry, and it does receive transfers and subsidies. But, the point I was making is that by virtue of what it does it earns money from other users of our airspace. Well, I would not say earn, it receives money for other aircraft passing through the airspace—

**Dr. Rambachan:** I know.

**Hon. Hinds:**—that we have some jurisdiction over, and that is the basis on which I made the comment that I did. In other words, there is some money available to it through that means, but it is a statutory body.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, why are you subsidizing what is essentially a profitable institution? Why are you promoting a subsidy of a profitable institution?

**Hon. Hinds:** I do not know if you could consider that profit. I will have to get advice on that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, they have excess cash.

**Hon. Hinds:** No, well that does not necessarily mean that it is profitable. It may collect money in the circumstances as I have described it, but I will need advice before I can answer that question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Maybe it need some efficiency?

**Madam Chairman:** Member! Member for Caroni East, we have a certain procedure here. Please!

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you aware that from out of their cash reserves they were able to put up their own buildings, therefore it cannot be that they are unprofitable?

**Hon. Hinds:** That was the question?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Hon. Hinds:** What was the question?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Are you aware that out of their cash reserves they were able to build their own facilities? So, it cannot be that they are not earning enough cash in order to meet their expenses.

**Hon. Hinds:** I do not know. As I said, I will have to seek advice before I can comment further upon those very technical arrangements.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No problem.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, International Bodies; Item 007, Households. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are going to a different book, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. We are at page 140.

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Madam Chairman:** Consolidated Fund, page 140, Item 001, Pre-Investment,

pages 140 to 142. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under Administrative Services, 001, 002 and 003, a certain amount was estimated to be spent in 2016; the revised estimate showed that, well, of course, nothing was done. Would the Minister give us an understanding of this aspect of the development of the National Transportation Plan Establishment of a Transit Authority, and Development of a Railway System? Nothing was spent on that it would seem, so does it mean that no work was done on those issues?

**Hon. Hinds:** We are to embark upon a data collection exercise in respect of the transportation plan. That is the transportation study phase one, and it is for that that this minor allocation has been made. And in respect of the Transit Authority, we are to engage a consultant to develop detailed functions, organizational structure, procedures, legislative requirement, and an implementation plan with respect to the establishment of a Transit Authority.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the railway system, have you abandoned that issue?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, I think I commented on that a while ago.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, with good intention you meant to have it done in 2016 but you were unable to complete.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Chairman. On Item 003, there was an estimate in 2016—

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Administrative Services, are we there?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** 2016 estimate of \$5 million that was not revised, for the development of a railway system, no estimate 2017, could you tell us what the \$5 million was used for with this railway system, and what that entails?

**Hon. Hinds:** It was not utilized from the advice I have.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. So, the money would have returned to the Consolidated Fund? Okay, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 143 to 147. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 005, Flood Alleviation and Drainage Programme, is this the IDB funded programme for drainage of Port of Spain?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes, that is indeed it.

**Mr. Singh:** Hon. Minister, could you give us a quick appreciation of the status of that? Or you could put it in writing.

**Hon. Hinds:** I can give you a quick appreciation. Based on our observation, nothing substantial was done or accomplished before we went to government at the end of 2015, so we immediately begun a process of re-engaging the IDB, and we have been in consultations with them.

**4.50 p.m.**

We are now at the point where we have hired a leader for the implementation unit. We are at the point where we are removing the persons who staff that implementation unit, who have admitted that they were unable to carry on with any of the functions that they were supposed to and we have secured from the IDB an assurance that they will provide for us a consultant at no cost to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to work along with our project implementation unit. So in terms of status the project is well and truly alive and on its way, with great hope to deliver a flood alleviation programme to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the City of Port of Spain.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. 007, Expenses of the Project Execution Unit. A revised estimate of \$2.9 million was spent in that unit and an estimated \$2.5 million is to be spent in 2017. Could the Minister clarify or

explain what kind of expenses would have been—

**Hon. Hinds:** As I just indicated, since the establishment of that Project Execution Unit, very fat salaries have been paid to those persons who were so employed and as you heard me say, without challenge, nothing was done, and therefore—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Singh:** That is not true.

**Hon. Hinds:** Precious little and not commensurate with the moneys that was paid. So in any event, we are now re-scoping the project, we are redesigning the Project Implementation Unit and therefore we expect to spend much less money in so doing and accomplish the goal that we should have set out to a long time ago.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 001, hon. Minister, Major River Clearing Programme.

**Hon. Hinds:** Say again.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 001 on page 143.

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** There was an estimate, an allocation of \$11 million but \$3 million was spent. But we had a lot of flooding in central Trinidad, particularly, my constituency. What would have caused the lack of implementation of this programme that we only spent about 20 per cent of it, when we ought to have done a lot more for the river clearing programme. And that goes hand in hand with 008, Support for the Flood Alleviation Programme.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 143, Item 001, Major River Clearing Programme.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is it, Madam Chair, yeah.

**Hon. Hinds:** Go ahead Member, sorry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You spent \$3 million out of the \$11 million that was allocated. We had a lot of flooding across central Trinidad, in certain areas in south. What prevented the implementation of a more effective and efficient programme so that

we could have cleared more of the rivers and utilize the funding that was allocated to you.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, I am told by the experts that part of the reason for the flooding would have been the sheer excess volume of the rain. So I am not easily accepting that it is the programme or any such thing. I am told by the experts that it has to do with the phenomenal amount of rainfall.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What prevented then the—

**Hon. Hinds:** And of course, as well, clearing of all of the drains, the major river courses and all the smaller ones for which the regional corporations have responsibility for. The experts tell me as well, and this is advice from the ODPM and others, that we in Trinidad and Tobago are engaged in the bad practice of throwing all kinds of things in the drains, from styrofoam and plastic bottles, to fridges and wardrobes and what have you, and all of these are very severe contributing factors to the problem.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure Minister, but notwithstanding these preventive aspects which you are speaking about, but what the about the remediation aspect?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes, well, that is ongoing. We propose—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But not effectively and efficiently based on your figures here not as efficient and effective as we would like.

**Hon. Hinds:** That unsurprisingly is your interpretation. That is not ours.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Two questions, one on page 143 and one on page 144. Page 143, Major River Clearing Programme. If the Minister can give a commitment to provide a list of the rivers that have been identified for this clearing programme so that the Ministry has boldly made an estimation that they require, well much more than \$8 million but they have been given \$8 million. They have \$11 million in 2016. They may have spent \$3 million, because we do not have



actual figures. It was revised downwards to \$3 million from 11. It means that the programme of works was not undertaken as planned by the Ministry. I would like to ask the Minister why he allowed this to happen and if he can provide us with a list of those rivers that they intend to clear in the coming fiscal.

**Hon. Hinds:** Before I tell you anything about the list, I can tell you the Soledad River improvement works which involves walling and paving to mitigate flooding in the Claxton Bay and Gasparillo area is 40 per cent completed. Ongoing rehabilitation works of the facility, pump house and gates, tender documents for the Caroni River improvement works phase two being finalized. Confirmation of funds requested in the first quarter for fiscal 2017 and thereafter tender documents would be done. And the amount owing from fiscal 2016 is \$2.7 million.

In respect of—that is the Soledad River, work is going on there. We have work, 40 per cent to be completed insofar as the Caroni irrigation area is concerned; the Ortoire River improvement works and that is improvement works to tributaries of the Ortoire River and construction of a series of retention ponds and the Caroni River improvement works phase two. This project involves the rehabilitation of the failed sections of the watercourse and also to include berm and embankment works from St. Helena to the Southern Main Road.

But in respect of your request for a list, I should provide you with a more comprehensive list.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And you may want to look at—can you look to see if the Cuchawan River between Debe Hindu School and Gandhi Village is included in that goodly list that you may have?

**Hon. Hinds:** I will most certainly do so. Very familiar with Cuchawan River.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The next question as I had asked, [*Crosstalk*] yes, the Cuchawan. I know the Minister has an addiction to value for money so I rest that there. The

Purchase of 100 New Buses, 050. We noticed in 2016 the Ministry's estimate was \$14 million.

**Hon. Hinds:** Where are we?

**Dr. Moonilal:** We are on page 144, bus transport. Now it was revised downwards to \$1 million but that is not actual. That is just the revision downwards.

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Clearly, your Ministry did not purchase any bus. I wanted to know what went wrong in the year and whether the \$14 million was also returned to the Consolidated Fund.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, let me just for the sake of honesty and fairness and balance, indicate that not a single bus was bought for the last five years.

**Dr. Moonilal:** He knows that is not true.

**Hon. Hinds:** Right, yes. For the last, at least for Tobago where we had a little issue coming to think of it, [*Laughter*] we are in the process of acquiring 35 more. In fact, we need more than that but we are allocating this money to purchase 35 in the ensuing year.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thirty-five buses at \$1 million?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, they will not each cost that, but that is the average of the estimate that we have for that. Because you will have different sizes, you will have some for the disabled, and therefore that is an average figure.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you. [*Crosstalk*] I just want to return to Item 005, Flood Alleviation and Drainage Programme. I just want the Minister, since it is an IDB Programme and there is a dissonance in opinion as to what was done and what was not done, I would like the Minister to provide this honourable House, the Committee, with a listing of the conditionalities and whether or not these conditionalities were fulfilled in accordance with the loan? And the time period for

fulfillment.

**Hon. Hinds:** Most obliged.

**Mr. Singh:** And I listened to your river programme for clearance and I noticed that the Caparo River and by extension, the sink hole that was created, that project which is a major flood alleviation of central Trinidad, nothing has been done or allocated for.

**Hon. Hinds:** It is one that is enjoying or gaining our attention, it requires, from the advice I have from the expert, the Director of Drainage, that it is a tremendous amount of work to be done and we are getting on with it. We did some clearing in anticipation of the rains as they now come, but we have some major works to carry on there and it is well within our focus.

**Mr. Singh:** So whilst it is within your rumination, hon. Minister, I just want to indicate to you that you can utilize the naturally occurring sink hole that took place there that can store something like 221 million gallons of water that can in fact be a dual purpose, both for potable treatment and for drainage.

**Hon. Hinds:** The design, I am reminded that the design is completed and it does take into account that natural phenomenon.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister I just want to ask in terms with your infrastructure, 003, Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Flood Mitigation, that when your—

**Hon. Hinds:** Page please.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Page 143.

**Hon. Hinds:** We are going back.

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are within pages 143 and 147. We are at page 143, is that where you are, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

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

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** 003, Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Flood Mitigation. Hon. Minister, are you aware that in my area, in particular, there is some remedial work being done and it has actually compromised the river bank in a major way and I would like for you to consider having your Monitoring and Evaluation Division, if that is responsible for that, to ensure that works are not compromised and you go against the mitigation plan.

**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Going back to page 144, bus transport, 050. With the commitment that was given to my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East that 35 buses will be purchased in the forthcoming fiscal year. Could I get an assurance from the Minister that the rural bus routes or the rural bus service that was stopped in areas, such as, Phoenix Park and Windsor Park and Indian Trail and so on, will be restored?

**Hon. Hinds:** I am not immediately able to tell you what was stopped, but certainly when we acquire more buses obviously we will be able to meet more routes and provide more service to all people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In the interest of equity and balance and fair play and so on.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to page 144, line Item 050, Purchase of 100 New Buses. Could the hon. Minister indicate to us, what is the size of the fleet in Trinidad and in Tobago? And how many are working and how many are not working.

**Hon. Hinds:** We have in service 220 rolled out today. Two hundred and twenty buses would have rolled out as at today.

**Mr. Karim:** In Trinidad?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** How many cannot roll?

**Hon. Hinds:** I am told, very sadly, that about 95 of them are not serviceable, but about 220, as I indicated, would have rolled out today. I will tell you this, part of the problem you must know, hon. Member, is that we found ourselves as a nation, as PTSC, with something like about 27 or 28 different species or brands of buses in our fleet. That, the experts tell me is very, very, severely untenable. Perhaps you would not find it anywhere else. So right now we are engaged in a process of trying to rationalize the fleet and bring it more soberly and sensibly to three or four as exists as a best practice anywhere in the world. That is part of problem so we are trying to sort that out.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, Madam Chair, you indicated it was two hundred and something that rolled. Is that to Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Hinds:** Let me clarify that. Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** How many are unable to roll in Tobago?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, there are about 18 of them on the road as we speak. We did some repairs to some of them recently. It went severely low. We have come back up to about 18 now, and as I said, I was in Tobago recently at the scene of a very horrific accident and we gave a commitment that out of the 35 we will acquire this year a substantial number of them will go to Tobago.

**Mr. Karim:** How much is that number that you proposed?

**Hon. Hinds:** We expect about 20 of them.

**Mr. Karim:** So 15 will stay in Trinidad and 20 in Tobago.

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes and then, that is just 35 of a number that we hope to acquire. But we are starting with 35 in this fiscal.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, line Item 155, Supply and Installation of New Jersey Type Barrier on Highways Medians, that is page 144.

**Hon. Hinds:** Where are we?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 144. Item 155.

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Supply and Installation of New Jersey Type Barrier on Highways Medians—

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** With good intention you had put in an estimate of \$8 million but unfortunately it seems as though no work was done and \$500,000 was spent. And now you are putting only \$2 million for it. What is happening there? Eight million you estimated in 2016, nothing was done and then you are only putting \$2 million now. What happened? The medians have sorted themselves out?

**5.05 p.m.**

**Hon. Hinds:** No, we have completed the majority of—first of all, we went for the cable barriers—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is the New Jersey median barriers?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes. So now we are using—because we have found that the cable barriers are very expensive, very troubling to maintain. Once they take a hit, it is very costly to maintain them. So we have decided to use, where we can, the New Jersey barriers, and that is what is happening now.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But with your good intention, unfortunately it has not been done yet.

**Hon. Hinds:** It is a work in progress. It is happening all the time. That is just one aspect of the traffic management. That is just one aspect of the road safety programme in traffic management. A lot else is happening.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But based on the answer you gave about the cable barriers, that you found it to be expensive, would you no longer be continuing the barriers that

have been destroyed or damaged—

**Hon. Hinds:** No, we repair them. We repair them.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You repair them. But would you not be putting any more new cable barriers?

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, I would be guided by the experts, because it is—the cable barriers are far more—what they tell me, they are far more forgiving than the New Jersey barriers. The New Jersey barriers, when you go along them, when you hit on them, there is a crash. Whereas the cable barriers absorb the shock and it has a tendency to save lives a little more than the New Jersey barriers. So they are more advantageous for the human who commits the error of getting on them. But they are more costly. So it is a balance we have to find.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I think, yes, you have to look at that very carefully, because patients—

**Hon. Hinds:** And this is the reason why we are very strong on the question of general road management and behaviour of our citizens driving on the road.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In the interest of time, Hon. Minister, at page 144, line Item 221, can you provide a listing of the roads and bridges you intend to rehabilitate, please, particularly from my constituency? Thanks.

**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ma'am, I am on page 145; 831 is part of a new project. Just for clarity, Minister, you have acquisition of two multipurpose vessels, but you have \$100,000. Now what vessel “you buying” for \$50,000? A dinghy? A raft? What vessel do you intend to purchase with \$100,000? And you are buying two.

**Hon. Member:** Pirogue.

**Hon. Hinds:** This sum only envisages preparatory work inclusive out of studies of

various shipyards to be undertaken in fiscal 2017.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. So it is a study money. Thank you.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, you have to think first.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I heard the Minister say the he most likely will be—not replacing but will be using the Jersey barriers now instead of the cable barriers.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well, let me clarify that. Let me clarify that as I sought to do a while ago when your colleague raised the matter. We will continue to maintain and repair what we have. We will install cable barriers where we have to, but if the advice from the experts is that we can safely, or best efficiently, use New Jersey barriers, we would do that.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on Administration on page 145, Expenses of the Programme Management Unit, PURE. Madam Chair, I would like the Minister to give us an appreciation of the moneys owed to contractors by PURE and a payment format for that.

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes. When I came to office we had owed about \$484 million to contractors through the PURE Programme. Today, happily, we are now down at 263. We paid over \$200 million of that and as moneys become available and we verify the work as having been efficiently and properly done, we continue to pay.

**Mr. Singh:** Could the hon. Minister give us an appreciation as to when this moneys owed to contractors would be paid?

**Hon. Hinds:** As I said, as soon as it becomes available and as soon as they are all verified as being properly done.

**Mr. Singh:** And whilst I have you on the payment format and track pathway, Madam Chair, through you, hon. Minister, you know I have made representation for very small sums of money to small contractors on the URP and I have been told that there are no releases under the URP to pay these small contractors. Perhaps



you should pay some attention to that also.

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes, yes. Well, you know, as the country ought to by now know, we are having some challenges for cash—for money—but as soon as the releases come, having verified the work, particularly in the—as soon as we verify, we will make the payments.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 147 and 148. Members, we have to make some judicious use of our time. Page 147 to 148.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, I took note of your comment that you are strapped for cash and so on. Minister, does it concern you that your Ministry has been able to spend less than 33 per cent of the money made available to the Ministry?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And secondly, at page 147, 002 and 001, could you identify the nature of construction of facilities—San Fernando and Tobago—for VMCOTT and the expansion. What expansion at VMCOTT facilities in Beetham that you intend to do in 2017?

**Hon. Hinds:** Yes. In respect of the Beetham, this expenditure, it has to do with water recycle treatment reclaim system, air conditioning upgrade, automated car wash system, car wash building, electrical works for automatic car wash, plumbing for automatic car wash and administrative building, installation of a floor slab for the automatic car wash building. And all of this is designed to generate revenue by offering an automatic car washing system to the general public. And the scope of works involves installation of automatic car wash system and the other things as I have just described, with a view to raising revenue.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You are saying that VMCOTT, a State entity, is now going into car washing for the public?

**Hon. Hinds:** One of the ways that VMCOTT recommended that it can raise

revenue to meet the expectations of our friend from Tabaquite who wonders why the Government must spend money when these should be self-supporting—

**Dr. Moonilal:** But you have spent less than a third of the money.

**Madam Chairman:** Member—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sorry. I am sorry. It is just I am concerned.

**Hon. Hinds:** So that the VMCOTT board and management recommended a long time ago that they should raise moneys by providing services to the general public, and that includes a car wash facility.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You take away the jobs of young people who car wash.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 315. Item 001—  
[*Interruption*] Member for—Item 001, Pre-Investment, page 315. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

**Dr. Moonilal:** At page 315, can I?

**Madam Chairman:** No, I am now at page 319.

**Dr. Moonilal:** 319? Oh, okay.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 43 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, PS.

**Hon. Hinds:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much, colleagues.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, the representatives from the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Okay, Members, it is 5.13. I suggest that we take a 15-minute break. We are back here at 5.30. Thank you.

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

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

[*Chairman: Mr. Forde*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will resume after our brief tea break and we now go to Head 37, Integrity Commission.

*Head 37.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I would like to welcome the Registrar from the Integrity Commission and her senior executives. Welcome this evening. Head 37, Integrity Commission, \$10,876,000,015. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Integrity Commission is a constitutional body created by sections 138 and 139 of the Constitution and established by the Integrity in Public Life Act. The main aim of the Commission is the prevention of corruption of persons in public life by providing for public disclosure, regulating the conduct of persons exercising public functions and preserving and promoting the integrity of public officials and institutions.

The Act empowers the Commission to have an oversight and monitoring role of the integrity of public officials who are grouped into two categories defined as persons in public life and persons exercising public functions. The Commission also regulates the conduct of persons exercising public functions who are subject to a code of conduct in the Act similar to persons in public life.

In order to carry out its functions, the Commission is organized into the following areas: compliance, investigations, public education and communications and its administrative division, and most importantly, the Integrity Commission must exercise its powers and performance of its functions required by the Act independent of any other person or institution.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 37 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$10,876,000,015 for Head 37, the

Integrity Commission, is comprised of moneys proposed for the expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 274; 001, General Administration, page 274. Sub-Head— Member for Chaguanas West?

**5.35 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** You are dealing with Personnel expenditure, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes Sir, 274.

**Mr. Singh:** Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for 2017 it is \$800,000, and there is, which is a decrease of approximately \$700,000 of the Commission's allocation from 2016.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is not correct. If you look at the revised 2016 it is \$770,000. So it is an increase actually of \$30,000.

**Mr. Singh:** So it is an increase now of \$30,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, not a decrease.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 274; 001, General Administration, pages 274 and 275.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, there is a decrease altogether in the allocation in Goods and Services by approximately—when you check up the various decreases—\$900,000 as compared to 2016. What is the reason for this decrease apart from the fact that you have a constraint financial circumstances? This is very small organization.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. This is consistent with the general push to conserve expenditure. However, this is an important institution and if funds are required we

will make the necessary arrangements.

**Mr. Singh:** Your decibel level fell so low, Mr. Minister, that I was unable to hear the end of your sentence.

**Hon. Imbert:** I shall not shout. I said it is an important institution. This is General Administration, eh. This is not the entire allocation for Goods and Services. This is just General Administration and if we consider it necessary, we will supplement the Vote.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I note that the rent has decreased by almost half, is it that they went into smaller—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Imbert:** No, they moved—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Charles:** They moved to—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Imbert:**—to this building.

**Mr. Charles:**—this building. Well, that is good.

**Hon. Imbert:** They were in UTC building before.

**Mr. Charles:** That is excellent.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, I noticed that Promotion, Publicity and Printing was decreased by \$979,000 from an allocation in 2016 of \$1,079,000. So you estimate in 2017 of \$100,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, let us hope they do not have to do a lot of publications in the newspaper.

**Mr. Singh:** No, I am just looking to see the contextual frame of this organization. Their job is to provide for the kind of comfort in the national community and to deal with effective translation and communication of the role and function of this organization. An organization that is under attack in so many areas and that now you have virtually circumscribed them by this elimination of any attempt to bring about publicity.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please come to the question, Member.

**Mr. Singh:** So please, why it is that you have cut them to that sum of only \$100,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** As I have said before, this item is for newspaper advertisements. I hope that in the current year they do not have to do a lot of publication of things in the newspapers. You catch my drift? But if they require additional funding we will make the necessary arrangement.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Chair, just in the context, I am hearing the undertaking of the hon. Minister. I think that is music associated with the undertaking that he is giving, that if they have additional expenses to incur—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Imbert:** What is the question?

**Mr. Singh:** Hold on. Hold on. This is not a ward, eh.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, address the Chair, please.

**Mr. Singh:**—that you will provide the money. All I am saying contextually, it is inappropriate for the Integrity Commission to go cap in hand to the Minister of Finance all the time.

**Hon. Imbert:** That does not happen. They do not have the cap in their hands. It is an open door.

**Mr. Charles:** The question I would like is, since the Integrity—are we on page 276?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on pages 274 and 275. We have not reached 276 as yet, but I can go to it now.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay, so the point holds. Because in the context of the overall decrease and the fact that the Ministry keeps saying that we will amend or review in the context of future needs, I think it puts a dependence on the Minister of Finance, and therefore, I think as far as possible, with an organization like this that

is critical to governance, he should not put them into that kind of position. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** You want to make a comment, Minister of Finance, or shall I move on? You have advanced already?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, let me just make a point.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Hon. Imbert:** There are important institutions in this country like the Auditor General's Department, Integrity Commission, the Judiciary and so on that we will support, but we have a cash flow problem. So we make an allocation and if it is inadequate, we will supplement the allocation to these important institutions. So, do I need to say that 10 times?

**Mr. Charles:** No. But the savings you get here seems to be consequential to the overall—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 276; 001, General Administration, page 276. Hon. Members, we will move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidation Fund, page 115; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 115. Members, you all are there?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, we are here. Just one second. No, no, I just wanted to be clear that I have the—Drafting of Whistleblower Protection Legislation, there is an allocation to \$500,000? No, we are at page 115 of the Infrastructure Development Programme, IDF. Page 115.

**Hon. Imbert:** 158?

**Mr. Singh:** 1-1-5.

**Hon. Imbert:** I think this was already dealt with in another place at another time, but—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Singh:** No, I just wanted to be clear.

**Hon. Imbert:**—since we are on live television and you want to “gallery”, the whistle blower legislation is already before the Parliament. Drafted already, laid in Parliament, sent to a Joint Select Committee—come on—and there is no allocation. There is a zero allocation.

**Mr. Young:** And if I may add to assist the Minister of Finance on that, it is because it was drafted for free. So we saved the country a lot of money unlike previously what would have taken place.

**Hon. Imbert:** “So why is dat?” You see zero and you quarrelling about zero.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Reform of the Integrity Commission, I see there is an allocation of \$500,000 in the fiscal year 2017.

**Hon. Imbert:** As you know, one of the responsibilities of the Integrity Commission is from time to time to consider—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Chairman, I do not know what is—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you go ahead. You go ahead.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, but they are disturbing me.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you go ahead.

**Hon. Member:** It is your own Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** Stop it. One of the responsibilities of the Integrity Commission is from time to time to consider and recommend improvements, amendments to the Integrity in Public Life Act. So that is what that is for. Okay? Ongoing work in progress.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, one final question. Mr. Chair, on Item F, Public Buildings, Retrofitting of New Office Location, I just want to be clear that this allocation of \$420,700 that was done in 2016, since there was none for 2017, whether or not that the retrofitting is complete.



**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised by the Registrar that the retrofitting is complete.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Well, I have no further question.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 37 ordered the stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Thank you, Registrar and your senior executives. Though short, but we appreciate your presence.

*Head 05.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Do I need to declare Parliament? I can proceed? Welcome to the Clerk of the House.

**Hon. Imbert:** This is not a conflict of interest?

**Mr. Chairman:** No conflict.

**Hon. Imbert:** You sure it is not a conflict of interest?

**Mr. Chairman:** I am clear. Welcome, Clerk of the House and your staff. Head 05: Parliament, \$124,428,500. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not think that is necessary. I think we all know the roles, scope, functions and responsibilities of the Parliament in which we are at this point in time.

*Question proposed:* That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$124,428,500 for Head 05: Parliament is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 23; Item 001, General Administration on page 23; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, pages 23 and 24. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 24; Item 001, General Administration,

pages 24 and 25.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 12. As a new Member in Parliament and I think I am seeing a drastic cut in the Materials and Supplies by \$3.5 million, I would like to ask what is the cause for this drastic reduction and what was the expenditure or the budgeted amount that the Parliament would ask for in this line Sub-Item?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, what was the question?

**Mr. Lee:** The question is: Materials and Supplies play a critical role in the Parliament's function, why such a drastic reduction in this line Sub-Item; and I would to also ask what would have been the request from the Parliament for this line Sub-Item?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I am not sure I can tell what the request would have been. I am advised that the Parliament spent \$4.3 million in 2016. So on the face of it, it appears we may have to supplement this Vote. It is for lunch.

**Mr. Lee:** Pardon?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is for lunch, and dinner, and tea, among other things. We will have to supplement—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Lee:** So we have an undertaking that you will review it?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, since I partake of lunch, dinner and tea here, I would think I have an interest.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**5.50 p.m.**

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Sub-Item 17, Training. Training was allocated \$1.4 million in 2015, \$1.6 million in 2016, the revised estimates of just under \$1 million, but now you reach \$50,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** What is that?

**Mr. Singh:** Training on line Sub-Item 17, \$50,000. Hon. Minister, the Parliament—and I am not playing to the crowd or anything—this is an organization that is the third pillar of the State—the Executive, the Judiciary and the Parliament—and that therefore, to allocate \$50,000 for training, who are you going to train with that? It is really absurd. How can you maintain this level of professionalism that we receive in this Chamber and in the other Chamber with training with such a miniscule amount allocated to training? So I think that that is another matter. [*Interruption*] It is untenable for that, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will look at it and if it needs to be supplemented, we will make appropriate arrangements.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West, you have a follow-up?

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, well, the Minister, I tell you I am hearing him from the Integrity Commission to the Parliament, there is music in what he is saying when he says that he will look at it because it seems that he is predisposed to what change—

**Hon. Imbert:** Would you prefer I did not supplement it?

**Mr. Singh:** No, I want you to supplement it.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay then.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. With the increase for Contract Employment and Short-Term Employment and so forth, I would think that you would require the use of a telephone, particularly to get in contact with the various Members and so forth. Why would you have a decrease on your Telephones? Line Sub-Item 05.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I am a little confused at that question because the increase in Contract Employment is \$74,000 out of \$24 million, so that—I have not got my calculator with me but I would think that is less than 1 per cent, so that it does not

follow, and I am sure the Parliament will do its best to be efficient in the use of telephones.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Through you to the hon. Minister, with respect to line Sub-Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, the Parliament, if you look at the figures, has been conservative in terms of overseas travel and I think not many people know that with respect to the parliamentary staff, even when they are entitled to travel that they have not done so unnecessarily.

Minister, with the reduction by over 80 per cent, are you aware that this Sub-Item, in some Ministries, was not so drastically reduced by way of comparison. If you look at AG's office, \$800,000; a reduction in labour with \$700,000, community development where there is an increase of \$500,000. Can the hon. Minister indicate, what was the thinking to reduce this Sub-Item for the entire Parliament by 80 per cent?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised this is primarily the travel of the Members, not staff.

**Mr. Padarath:** Members?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Minister, also in keeping with that, in so doing then, with respect to Members having to participate in several international events, including the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association events throughout the year, do you think a provision of \$300,000 for the entire Parliament in terms of the Members participating in such events would be sufficient or would you took a second look if it necessitates?

**Hon. Imbert:** Question finished? The latter.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Line Item 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, another drastic cut there. I think—page 25. A cut

by \$1.1 million, estimate \$500,000. I know the Parliament, during the last year, I have attended a couple of their seminars and they have been very fruitful, not only to me but the Members, and I am wondering if the Minister, in his humble view, can relook at this line Sub-Item in giving some—

**Hon. Imbert:** Let me just make this very clear. The entire public service has to take a cut. Okay? So everybody has been cut. Some Ministries have been cut far more than this. If it is essential, it will be dealt with at the time of the mid-year review. What the Parliament can do, which it always does, is seek the approval of the Minister of Finance to vire and transfer funds to Votes that have been exhausted and when we come to the mid-year review, we will deal with it.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you and I know the Minister of Finance is a very reasonable individual.

**Hon. Imbert:** If you recall, in this year's mid-year review, we did exactly that with respect to this Head.

**Mr. Lee:** Just to add, Deputy Chair, when we—I know this has no bearing but when I looked at the THA when we went through those different Heads, comparing to the Parliament's Head, I mean there are some inconsistencies and you know. So I am just hoping that the hon. Minister of Finance will take another look at it.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, I cannot allow you to put that on the record. The THA is getting 4.4 per cent of the national budget. The national budget was \$63 billion in 2016, it is \$53 billion in 2017. So by simple arithmetic, the THA has been cut like everybody else—if you do the maths—by 20 per cent.

**Mr. Lee:** I did the math.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay, so do not say these things. What you are saying is not correct.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you and by the same token, I was just looking at Promotions, Publicity and Printing, and as a new Member of Parliament, I get feedback from a number of my constituents that they look at the programmes. Inool Nabbie, one of my youth officers, was involved in the parliamentary young people debate and whatnot. And I think as we move to expand democracy and deepen democracy and get our young people involved, I think that that cut from \$2.1 million in 2015 to \$500,000 is too much.

**Mr. Chairman:** And again, hon. Member, the Minister of Finance has identified the various decreases across the board and any adjustments will be handled by his office.

**Hon. Imbert:** I just want to make a point. The reduction in the Parliament's allocation for 2017, when compared to the original allocation for 2016 is less than 10 per cent of the original allocation for 2016. And therefore, if you look at the \$63 billion to \$53 billion, the Parliament has been cut less proportionately than other Government Departments, so do not make blanket statements, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, pages 25 and 26; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 27; Item 001, General Administration, page 27; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, page 27. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 27; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 27; Item 004, International Bodies, page 28.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 9. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 9. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 272. I will give you all a couple of seconds just to get to page 272, and it will be Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services on page 272.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 004, Restoration of the Red House, there is no estimate in 2017.

In 2016, \$20 million was allocated; \$11.9 million is the revised estimate of expenditure and in 2017, no allocation. Is there a reason for it? Has it gone to another area?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, it has gone to another area.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Which area now?

**Hon. Imbert:** Office of the Prime Minister.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, right. Thank you. What was the allocation in the Office of the Prime Minister?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is being funded in another way.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But give us an approximate value, if you can.

**Hon. Imbert:** Of the what?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no. A value of what?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The cost—the restoration of the Red House.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is still in process. There is a committee, as you should know, that is looking at the restoration of the Red House. The hon. Prime Minister came to this Parliament and made a statement and gave the numbers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So it is still to be determined?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, the Prime Minister gave the figures.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, can you give it because we are in a Finance Committee?

**Hon. Imbert:** I would ask the Deputy Speaker to locate that transcript and give it to you so you can update your records.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Deputy Chair, I just want to have a sense of what kind of funding will be provided to the oversight committees that are so central to the work of the Parliament.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, you know, when I was in Opposition, I made a fervent plea to

the Government of the day to provide funding to these oversight committees which your Government turned down, but we will not treat you like that, so it is under consideration.

**Mr. Singh:** And is there a timeline for the consideration to be completed?

**Hon. Imbert:** Soon.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Madam Clerk and your senior officers. Thank you, Minister of Finance.

*Head 16.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Moving along immediately. Head 16, Central Administrative Services Tobago, \$55,637,500. We now invite the administrators from the Central Administrative Services from Tobago. Welcome to Trinidad.

I will now invite the Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Following the general elections of September 2015, the Office of the Prime Minister, Central Administrative Services Tobago, OPM CAST, was re-established and the Ministry of Tobago Development subsumed into OPM CAST.

The rationalization process would have led to the reduction in the size of the workforce and elimination of services which were being carried out or deemed to fall under the remit of the Tobago House of Assembly. CAST comprises of the following units: Administrative Services, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, Registrar General and Meteorological Services. For fiscal 2017, CAST received an allocation of \$55,637,500. Under recurrent, \$39,977,500 and development, \$15,660,000.



**6.05 p.m.**

At present, we are developing a new strategic plan for CAST within the context of delivering central government services in Tobago, whilst working in collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly to ensure there is no duplication of functions.

Under Registrar General, we intend to provide persons in Tobago with access to land registry and companies registry in Trinidad to assist them in their search of land title and verification of company names. We also intend to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Office of the Attorney General for the regularization of land titles in Tobago.

Under Meteorological Service, we intend to provide adequate accommodation for staff at the new met building and continue to provide weather forecast and climate information for stakeholders such as farmers, civil aviation and small water craft, that is fishermen.

The allocation in the last fiscal was expended on delivering central government service in Tobago such as Treasury function, providing support to other Government Ministries, in terms of transportation when they visit Tobago and logistics, assisting persons affected by natural disasters, providing grants to organizations with social development and intervention programmes and construction of the new met building. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. I would like to also welcome at this time the Permanent Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office and Head of the Public Service and the other executives. *Question proposed:* That Head 16 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$55,637,500 for Head 16: Central Administrative Services, Tobago is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure

under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 63; Item 001, General Administration, page 63.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us how many persons are employed in CAST and if you can give us the complement in categories?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Member for Chaguanas East. Mr. Chair, through you, public officers, we have 49 offices to which persons have been appointed; 52 offices, which are vacant with persons acting in them; 11 offices are vacant and no one acting. So that would give us a complement of 112 offices at CAST. Do you want me to go on to short-term and all of that?

Okay, in terms of Short-Term Employment we have 10 persons on short-term. In terms of Contract Employment, we have 21 persons.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** You are welcome.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Trade and Industry, page 63; Item 005, Meteorological Services, page 64; item 007, Registrar General, page 64; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 65; Item 001, General Administration, pages 65 and 66.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 01, Travelling and Subsistence. We see an increase of nearly \$300,000. Can you give some clarification?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you, that is payment of travelling allowances for six travelling officers to meet the cost of official visits to and from Trinidad, accommodation, meals and subsistence.

**Miss Ramdial:** Six travelling officers?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, Item 17, Training, could you indicate to us what type of training these sums would be expended on? I am not sure whether the answer given to my colleague, the Member for Couva North, had to do with Item 50.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you seeking clarity, Member?

**Mr. Karim:** Both in terms of 17 and 50, just to get some ideas as to what is involved in it.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Training, Item 17.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, through you, in terms of training we are currently developing a comprehensive training plan but I could tell you what we have planned for the fiscal is training in areas such as registry procedures, customer services, protocol and pension and leave. What we recognize is that in order for us to deliver efficient services at Central Administrative Services, we must build capacity within the unit.

**Mr. Karim:** Sure.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, a sharp increase of nearly \$400,000. Can you give some clarification?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you, Member for Couva North, what I recognize is that even though a lot of services are available, people are not aware. So we are using this particular Vote to ensure that we put information out into the public. So printing of reports, putting out the list of void cheques, generally disseminating information and also trying to ensure that the work of OPM proper is transmitted in Tobago. So we are going to also partner with the THA to use some of the airtime on "Let's Talk Tobago" to promote the work

of the Central Administrative Service, the different units, what we do, what services are available to Tobagonians from the Ministries in Trinidad. So, that is it really.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Trade and Industry, page 66; Item 005, Meteorological Service, pages 66 and 67; Item 007, Registrar General, page 67 and page 68; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 68; Item 001, General Administration, page 68; Item 005, Meteorological Services, page 68; Item 007, Registrar General, page 69; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, page 69; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 69.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I have reached to 011, I do not know if you want to go there yet.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, hold on.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us these non-profit organizations, what they might be and the contributions? If you do not have it, you could always supply a list in the interest of time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, we are on 69.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Do you want me to—

**Mr. Karim:** If you have and you could enumerate some of them.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Member for Chaguanas East, do you want me to list all the organizations we assisted or do you want the categories?

**Mr. Karim:** Whatever is convenient to you just to get a sense of what these non-profit organizations are and what sums might be allocated. You could do it in categories.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Okay, so under the Non-Profit Institutions, what we would have done is that we would have tried to facilitate, in terms of social intervention programmes and also in doing that, try not to provide assistance to agencies the THA would have given assistance to. Having said that, we would have given to

churches, sporting organizations, the fishermen's associations, village councils. It depends on the programme, they submit their proposal, we evaluate it, we check with the THA to ensure that they are not funding the project and then we assist if we could.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** You are welcome.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 69.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, is the Human Capital Development Facilitation Company removed to another Ministry?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Chair, through you, no, it was not removed to another Ministry. The Human Development Facilitation Company was actually mimicking the Tobago House of Assembly.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It was, sorry I missed that word.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** It was actually mimicking, shadowing, copying the Tobago House of Assembly. So we took a decision, a Cabinet decision was taken in June 2016, Minute No. 786, to have the company dissolved.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you. That answers the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimate of Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 49; Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 49.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you give us a status, with respect to Item 003, the construction of the building for meteorological services?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Chair, through you to the hon. Member for Chaguanas East, the construction is 99 per cent complete. We are just waiting for official handover and hoping to commission before the end of the year. I will invite

you. Lovely building. State of the art.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 16 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you, Madam Permanent Secretary and the executives from CAST in Tobago. I thank you.

We now move on to Head 01, President.

[*Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George*]

*Head 01.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head 01, President, \$15,487,400. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I do not think I need to go into any great detail on the role/function/duties and responsibilities of the President, our Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

*Question proposed:* That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$15,487,400 for Head 01: President, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

We are now at page 1, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 1; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 1 to 2.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just see there is a significant reduction throughout in Goods and Services in the Office of the President.

**Hon. Imbert:** What page are you on?

**Mr. Singh:** It goes from Goods and Services from page 1 to page 2.

Significant reduction and if you want do a quick “guesstimate”, it would be between 35 per cent to 37 per cent, close to 40 per cent.

**6.20 p.m.**

**Hon. Imbert:** Could you tell me what line Item you are on, please?

**Mr. Singh:** Goods and Services.

**Hon. Imbert:** Which line Item?

**Mr. Singh:** I am just doing it as a whole.

**Hon. Imbert:** I did not know we did that. Could you tell me which line Item you are on, please?

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Let me call out the line Item: General Administration, Travelling and Subsistence a reduction there; Uniforms, a reduction—

**Hon. Imbert:** Increase.

**Mr. Singh:**—Electricity, Items 01, 03, 04, 05, Telephones—

**Hon. Imbert:** Which Item are you on?

**Mr. Singh:**—Items 06, 09, 10, 11, 12—

**Hon. Imbert:** On Item 02?

**Mr. Singh:** All reductions.

**Hon. Imbert:** This is Item 02?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes. Item 02. So I am just trying to—and then you have from 15—98, all those Sub-Items, reductions, which gives you a reduction something between, about 37—40 per cent. Could the hon. Minister indicate why is that? What is the justification and rationale for that?

**Hon. Imbert:** What I am looking at here is that the revised estimate for 2016 for this Item was \$24.25 million, and the 2017 estimate is \$17.5 million. Consistent with the rest of the country, the whole country has to take a cut, okay? Parliament has taken a cut, Judiciary has taken a cut—

**Mr. Singh:** Parliament has taken a brutal cut.

**Hon. Imbert:** Everybody has taken a cut, Integrity Commission.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Tobago Services, page 3; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 3; Item 001, General Administration.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$45,096,877,023 be approved as a grand total.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to:* That the Bill be reported to the House.

*House resumed.*

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, I wish to report that after a very long process of many, many days and nights, a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago, for the financial year ending on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2017, was considered in Standing Finance Committee and passed without amendments. I now beg to move that it be read a third time and passed.

*[Desk thumping and interruption]*

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sorry, Ma'am.

*Bill reported, read the third time and passed.*